

# The *Lex secundum quam disponuntur omnia*: Trichotomic Trees in Jan Amos Komenský's Pansophical Metaphysics and Metaphorics

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**Abstract:** The goal of this article is to detail the opposition to “Ramean tree” dichotomic divisions which emerged in the age of swelling Antitrinitarianism, especially Socinianism. Scholars such as Bartholomaeus Keckermann, Jan Amos Komenský and Richard Baxter made a point of preferring the trichotomic to the dichotomic division of Petrus Ramus and the Ramist tradition. This paper tracks the origin of Komenský’s “universal triadism” as present in his book metaphorics and in his metaphysics. Komenský’s triadic book metaphorics (the notion of nature, human mind and Scripture as “the triple book of God”) has its source in late sixteenth-century Lutheran mysticism and theosophy, mediated perhaps by Heinrich Khunrath and, above all, by Johann Heinrich Alsted. Komenský’s metaphysics follows the same triadic pattern. What is more, Komenský illustrates both these domains by means of Ramist-like bracketed trees; regarding book metaphorics, clearly his sources are Khunrath and Alsted. Although inspirations from Lullus, Sabundus and Nicholas of Cusa are most probably involved, the crucial role has to be ascribed to the influence of Lutheran mysticism and Alsted’s “Lullo-Ramism.”

**Keywords:** division, metaphorics, metaphysics, early modern philosophy, Lullism, Ramism, Trinitarianism, Lutheran mysticism, theosophy

## *Introduction*

Although it has been shown that the famous bracketed, horizontal “Ramean trees”—which became increasingly widespread in the sixteenth century due to the novel technology of letterpress printing—were not as ground-breaking

as previously supposed,<sup>1</sup> they still remain one of the most characteristic pedagogical innovations of Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) and his followers. Representing arts and topics by means of such trees was the most visible innovation to have made Ramism widely influential and popular, first among textbook writers and later among encyclopaedists.

This study concentrates on the problem of trichotomic division, which is—according to later post-Ramist Protestant authors such as Bartholomaeus Keckermann (1572–1608), Jan Amos Komenský (1592–1670) and Richard Baxter (1615–1691)<sup>2</sup>—a more natural division than dichotomy (promoted by Ramus himself) and also tetrachotomy and polychotomy in general, because it is based on the Triunity of God himself. Using the example of Komenský, I argue that—at least in his case—the priority of trichotomy to dichotomy and polychotomy, although officially defended with reference to Plato and Aristotle<sup>3</sup> and to Christian orthodoxy, has its genuine source not only in Nicholas of Cusa—strongly and convincingly argued by Jan Patočka<sup>4</sup>—but also (and perhaps above all) in Lullism and late sixteenth-century Lutheran mysticism, both apparently largely conveyed to Komenský by Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638). Nevertheless, Komenský could also immediately acquaint himself with the primary Lullist and Lutheran-mystical sources. The goal of this study is to show that Komenský projected this mystical triadic conviction not only onto his elaborated metaphors of “God’s books,”<sup>5</sup> but also onto his

<sup>1</sup> See Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966. But see David Newton-de-Molina, *A critical select history of the classical arts of memory and their interpretation, with special reference to English arts of memory, 1509–1620*, dissertation thesis defended in Cambridge, 1971/72, p. 354. I owe this reference to Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 65, footnote 79. See also Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, pp. 475–476.

<sup>2</sup> This paper does not devote itself to the Trinitarianism of Richard Baxter. For a thorough study of the topic see Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter’s Methodus Theologiae*, Leiden: Brill, “Brill’s Series in Church History” 57, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> See Jan Amos Komenský, *Lexicon reale pansophicum*, in Jan Amos Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, 2 vols., Prague: Academia, 1966, vol. 2, p. 669: “Trinitas an cum Ternario idem? Si Trinum et Ternum omnino. (Rerum omnium principium, etiam juxta Philosophos, Platonem p. 376. Arist. 1. de Caelo [...] ubi dicit Ternario contineri omnia, et esse quasi legem secundum quam disponuntur omnia.)”

<sup>4</sup> See Petr Pavlas, “Jan Patočka’s Transcendentia and Categories on Jan Amos Comenius’s Triadic System and Its Cusan Inspiration,” *Acta Comeniana* 30 (2016), pp. 187–211. See also Petr Pavlas, “The Book Metaphor Triadized: the Layman’s Bible and God’s Books in Raymond of Sabunde, Nicholas of Cusa and Jan Amos Comenius,” in Simon J. G. Burton, Joshua Hollmann, Eric M. Parker (eds.), *Nicholas of Cusa and the Making of the Early Modern World*, Leiden: Brill, series “Studies in the History of Christian Traditions,” 2019, pp. 384–416.

<sup>5</sup> I understand the term “metaphorics” as the use of metaphor generally. Inspired by Hans Blumenberg, I ascribe the world-view-structuring function to metaphors (see Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1960). Therefore, it makes a good sense to deal with metaphorics in connection with metaphysics. In this particular case,

metaphysical system of predicaments. In the conclusion, attention shall be paid to the attitude of Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld (1605–1655) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716).

The dichotomic disposition, which according to Ramus and Ramists is the most natural, was considered a danger to Christian orthodoxy no later than the turn of the seventeenth century. In his monograph *Bartłomiej Keckermann i filozofia*, Danilo Facca has shown how vehemently Keckermann defended the orthodox Christian Trinitarian doctrine against Anti-Trinitarian polemical reasoning, which is, as Keckermann argues, only seemingly “rationalist” and logical, but actually inadequate and gravely heretical.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, Simon Burton has pointed out a passage in *Praecognita Logica* (1604) where Keckermann criticizes the violent dichotomies of Ramists and their reduction of trinity to duality.<sup>7</sup> As Keckermann puts it: “Ramists often violently confine to duality the things, which are multiple by nature and in terms of their parts. They make duality out of trinity, paucity out of multitude.”<sup>8</sup> Burton also takes note of another passage where consciously preferring “trichotomy to dichotomy” is Keckermann’s argument in favour of the Aristotelian (and at the same time against the Agricolan and Ramean) division of logic.<sup>9</sup>

Although still not very strongly pronounced by Keckermann, his criticism of Ramist dichotomizing is an important clue. It helps us understand Komenský’s later attitude to this issue. Johann Heinrich Alsted, Komenský’s teacher at the Herborn academy, was the editor of Keckermann’s works and heir to his efforts. Moreover, he was an ardent proponent of Lullism. However, the influence of Keckermann and Lullism via Alsted definitely does not fully explain Komenský’s “universal triadism.”<sup>10</sup> There are other sources which must be taken into consideration, such as Raymond Sabundus (c. 1385–1436), Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) and to a greater extent certain figures in Lutheran heterodox mysticism.

I rank the metaphor of the book among the “absolute metaphors” (see Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> See generally Danilo Facca, *Bartłomiej Keckermann i filozofia* [Bartholomew Keckermann and Philosophy], Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii, series “Renesans i Reformacja. Studia z historii filozofii i idei” 26, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> See Simon J. G. Burton, “From Minority Discourse to Universal Method. Polish Chapters in the Evolution of Ramism,” in Simon J. G. Burton, Michał Choptiany, Piotr Wilczek (eds.), *Protestant Majorities and Minorities in Early Modern Europe: Confessional Boundaries and Contested Identities*, Göttingen: V&R, series “Refo500 Academic Studies” 53, 2019, pp. 61–90.

<sup>8</sup> Bartholomaeus Keckermann, *Praecognita Logica*, Hannover: G. Antonius, 1604, p. 135: “*Res sua natura et partibus plures [Ramei] ad duo saepe cogunt violenter; ex trinitate dualitatem, ex multitudine paucitatem facturi.*”

<sup>9</sup> See Keckermann, *Praecognita Logica*, pp. 220–226.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, Alsted also could be a mediator of the ideas of other, less distinctly triadic thinkers like, for instance, Francesco Patrizi. See Jan Čížek, “Johann Heinrich Alsted: A Mediator between Francesco Patrizi and Jan Amos Comenius?,” *Acta Comeniana* 26 (2012), pp. 69–87.

*Lullism and its journey to Komenský via Johann Heinrich Alsted, Nicholas of Cusa and Raymond Sabundus*

Although Komenský's direct acquaintance with the works of Raymond Lull (1232–1316) definitely cannot be ruled out,<sup>11</sup> in this respect the major figure of influence was Johann Heinrich Alsted. When Komenský matriculated on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1611 in Herborn,<sup>12</sup> Alsted, only four years older, had recently obtained the professorship of philosophy and just published two Lullist encyclopaediae: *Clavis artis Lullianae* (1609) and *Systema mnemonicum* (1610).<sup>13</sup> Another Lullist publication, *Trigae canonicae* (1612), was to follow.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that we find many Lullist features in the pansophy of Komenský. One of them is Lull's triadic theory of correlatives. Leaving aside the question whether Lull's theory of correlatives was influenced by Augustine (354–430),<sup>14</sup> Ernesto Priani briefly and aptly expresses the core of this fundamental Lullist doctrine:

According to the theory of the correlatives, the nature of a being is something defined by its activity. Therefore, being and activity are inseparable and identified (*esse* and *agere*). Consequently, according to the theory of the correlatives, the nature of a being is based on (a) its activity, that which makes it active and allows it to execute different intrinsic and extrinsic actions; (b) its passion, that which affects the being either intrinsically by itself or extrinsically by another; and (c) its action, that which makes it being in act and being in constant movement. This structure [...] is presented in the book *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus* as follows: every being has a natural virtue, which can be "active," "passive," and "connective." These virtues are the correlatives that Lullus linguistically distinguishes using suffixes. For the active nature he uses -tivus (e.g., *bonificativus*), for the passive, -bilis (*bonificabilis*), and for the connective, -are (*bonificare*).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, it is probable given the fact that the collected works of Raymond Lull, *Opera*, Strasbourg: L. Zetzner, 1598, enjoyed a great popularity (not only) in Herborn and had been reprinted three times by 1651.

<sup>12</sup> See Max Lippert, *Johann Heinrich Alsteds pädagogisch-didaktische Reformbestrebungen und ihr Einfluß auf Johann Amos Comenius*, dissertation thesis defended in Leipzig, 1898/99, Meissen: C. E. Klinkicht, pp. 12–13.

<sup>13</sup> See Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Topica universalis. Eine Modellgeschichte der humanistischen und barocken Wissenschaft*, Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1983, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. XLII, Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865, p. 960: "*Tria quaedam in charitate, velut vestigium Trinitatis. [...] Ecce tria sunt; amans, et quod amatur, et amor.*"

<sup>15</sup> Ernesto Priani, "Ramon Lull," in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online entry [accessed 24 October 2019], <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lull/>. See Raymond Lull, *Liber de ascensu et descensu intellectus*, in Raymond Lull, *Opuscula III*, ed. with introduction by Erhard-Wolfram Platzeck, Hildesheim: H. A. Gerstenberg, 1973, pp. 1–399.

Komenský, for example in his mature yet unauthorized and posthumously-published *Janua rerum reserata* (1681), writes similarly: “There is a triple substantial principle in every complete substance: ACTIVE, PASSIVE and CONNECTIVE; out of which, by which, through which.”<sup>16</sup> Later he does not hesitate to add: “These three concur in motion: something which moves, something mobile and movement [...], similarly these three concur in every activity: something which does, something able to be done and action.”<sup>17</sup> Only a few pages later he continues: “*Concurrunt in passione tria: (1) patiens, (2) passionem inferens, (3) mediumque seu instrumentum.*”<sup>18</sup>

Komenský also abundantly applies this rule to his lexicon of definitions entitled *Lexicon reale pansophicum*<sup>19</sup> as well as in the unfinished masterpiece *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, both of which remained unpublished until 1966. To show some examples of correlatives from the latter work: *generans, generatum, generatio; amans, amatum, amator; intelligens, intellectum, intellectio.*<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the mind is “*spectans spectabile spectaculum seu speculum, eligens, eligibile, electio, agens, agibile, actorium.*”<sup>21</sup> It is interesting that instead of mentioning Lullus, Komenský refers in this context to the medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1135–1204): “Maimonides therefore, at the beginning of the book *De fundamentis*, did not distinguish in God between that which recognizes, that which is recognized, and recognition.”<sup>22</sup>

Another source of Komenský’s Lullism is Nicholas of Cusa. He uses the correlatives in, for example, *De docta ignorantia*,<sup>23</sup> *De filiatione Dei*,<sup>24</sup> and in his sermon *In principio erat verbum.*<sup>25</sup> The influence of Lull and Lullism on

<sup>16</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *Janua rerum reserata* (1681), in Jan Amos Komenský, *Spisy o první filosofii* [Works on First Philosophy], ed. and trans. with introduction by Vojtěch Balík and Věra Schifferová, Prague: OIKOYMENH, series “Knihovna novověké tradice a současnosti” 66, 2017, p. 358: “*Est autem principium substantiale triplex in qualibet completa substantia: PASSIVUM, ACTIVUM et CONNEXIVUM, ex quo, quò, per quod.*”

<sup>17</sup> Komenský, *Janua rerum* (1681), p. 380: “*In motione tria concurrunt: movens, mobile et motorium [...], similiterque in omni actione tria, agens, agibile et actorium [...].*”

<sup>18</sup> Komenský, *Janua rerum* (1681), p. 384.

<sup>19</sup> Komenský, *Lexicon reale pansophicum*, passim.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *Mundus archetypus*, in Komenský, *Spisy o první filosofii*, p. 648.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *Mundus possibilis*, in Komenský, *Spisy o první filosofii*, p. 550.

<sup>22</sup> Komenský, *Mundus archetypus*, p. 648: “*Hinc Maimonides initio libri De fundamentis non distinguit in Deo inter id, quod [cognoscit, quod] cognoscitur, et cognitionem.*”

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, in *Nicolai de Cusa opera omnia*, vol. I, ed. Ernestus Hoffmann, Raymundus Klibansky, Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1932, p. 82: “*Non potest enim contractio esse sine contrahibili, contrahente et nexu [...].*”

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De filiatione Dei*, in *Nicolai de Cusa opera omnia*, vol. IV, ed. Paulus Wilpert, Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1959, p. 51: “*[Intellectus] est ipse intelligens et id quod intelligitur atque actus ipse qui est intelligere.*”

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *In principio erat verbum*, in *Nicolai de Cusa opera omnia*, vol. XVI, ed. Rudolf Haubst, Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1970, p. 7: “*In omni autem actione perfecta tria correlativa*

Cusanus via his teacher Heymericus de Campo (c. 1395–1460) has been investigated elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> For the sake of our present investigation what matters is whether evidence can be found which confirms the influence of Cusanus on Komenský.<sup>27</sup>

In one of Komenský's polemics with the Socinian Daniel Zwicker (1612–1678), *De iterato Sociniano*, Komenský first cites Zwicker's question on what he considers to be a geometrical contradiction, and what entails the theological contradiction of the orthodox Christian doctrine on God who is both three and one: "From what do you prove that the centre and the circumference are the same at the point? Or on the basis of which author or adherent you suppose it to be so?"<sup>28</sup> Komenský answers: "Look into the *Speculum Intellectuale* of Nicholas of Cusa, who lived two centuries ago, and of Ulrich Pinder [?–1519], who lived 150 years ago. You will find this and many similar schemes, by means of which these wise men wanted to show how finite proportions in Infinity vanish into the infinite and how our finite concepts do not reach the infinite."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, one of the ways by which Lullism came to Komenský was via Nicholas of Cusa. Cusanus' own Lullist library also included a manuscript of Raymond Sabundus' *Theologia naturalis seu Liber creaturarum* with a few marginal

*necessario reperiuntur, quoniam nihil in se ipsum agit, sed in agibile distinctum ab eo, et tertium surgit ex agente et agibili, quod est agere. Erunt haec correlativa in essentia divina tres personae, quare Deum trinum vocamus. Est enim Deus deificans, generans, iustificans, amans cum ceteris infinitis perfectionibus, quem Patrem vocamus. Est Deus deificabilis, generabilis, iustificabilis, amabilis etc., et hunc Filium a Patre procedentem nominamus. Est postea deificare deificantis et deificabilis, id est Patris et Filii, et sic iustificare, generare, et amare amantis et amabilis, et hunc Spiritum Sanctum ab utroque procedentem nominamus.*" I am grateful to Simon Burton for drawing my attention to this passage.

<sup>26</sup> See generally Eusebio Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Llull. Aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek*, Berlin: De Gruyter, series "Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie" 2, 1961, reprinted 2016; Charles H. Lohr, "Nicolaus Cusanus and Ramon Lull: A Comparison of Three Texts on Human Knowledge," *Traditio* 59 (2004), pp. 229–315; Theodor Pindl-Büchel, "The Relationship Between the Epistemologies of Ramon Lull and Nicholas of Cusa," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1990), pp. 73–87; Ermenegildo Bidese, Alexander Fidora, Paul Renner (eds.), *Ramon Llull und Nikolaus von Kues: Eine Begegnung im Zeichen der Toleranz*, Turnhout: Brepols, series "Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia" 46, sub-series "Subsidia Lulliana" 2, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> See generally Pavlas, "Jan Patočka's Transcendentia and Categories"; Pavlas, "The Book Metaphor Triadized."

<sup>28</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *De iterato Sociniano*, Amsterdam, 1661, p. 117: "Unde probas Centrum et Circumferentiam in Puncto idem esse? Aut quò Authore vel adstipulatore ita sentis?"

<sup>29</sup> Komenský, *De iterato Sociniano*, pp. 117–118: "Inspice Nicolai Cusani, qui ante duo secula; et Udalrici Pindari, qui ante 150 annos vixit: Speculum Intellectuale, utrumque hoc schema, et similia plura reperies: quò sapientes illi Viri, quomodo finiti ad infinitum proportiones in Infinito evanescent, finitque conceptus nostri infinita non attingant, ostendere voluerunt."

notes.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, in 1661 Komenský published an amended version of this work of Raymond entitled *Oculus Fidei*.<sup>31</sup> However, Raymond's influence upon Komenský was relatively late. In his *Praefatio* to *Oculus Fidei*, Komenský writes that he had recently (*nuper*) taken his first look into the Frankfurt edition (1635) of *Theologia naturalis* and that then he looked through it avidly (*avide*):

I wondered that [this book] had been so long unknown to me and at the fact that it was not recommended to me by any of my former teachers or later friends. I suspect that few people read it and even fewer understood it. That cannot be explained entirely by the fact that his meditations are prolix and permeated by many tautologies. The reason is rather that they are described in insufficient Latin (in the style of his age).<sup>32</sup>

Sabundus was, therefore, another Lullist author whose works Komenský read and whose ideas he adopted—obviously neither on Alsted's nor anyone else's recommendation. However, there is another possible source of Komenský's "universal triadism" and his preference for trichotomies over dichotomies, namely Lutheran mysticism. Unlike the case of Lullism, it seems that Alsted's mediation of this tradition played a crucial role and can explain Komenský's acquaintance with it. On the other hand, Komenský certainly read Jakob Böhme's (1575–1624) *Mysterium magnum* (1623) and it is unimaginable that he had not read Johann Arndt's (1555–1621) *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (1610)<sup>33</sup>—although there we meet "tetradism"<sup>34</sup> rather than triadism—and perhaps also other works from this rich and interesting movement.

<sup>30</sup> See Friedrich Stegmüller, "Einführung," in Raimundus Sabundus, *Theologia naturalis seu Liber creaturarum*, Stuttgart: F. Frommann (G. Holzboog), 1966, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, (*Oculus Fidei*) *Theologia naturalis sive Liber creaturarum*, Amsterdam: P. van den Berge, 1661.

<sup>32</sup> Komenský, *Oculus Fidei*, "Praefatio," p. 15: "In cuius praefatione quia Raemundum Sabundum philosophica subtilitate materiam hanc excoluisse scribit, hunc etiam videre diu gestivi: nactus vero nuper demum (editionis Francofordanae) avide perlegi: miratus tamdiu mihi fuisse ignotum, nec ab aliquo vel Praeceptorum olim, vel amicorum postea commendatum. Suspicio etiam illum a paucis legi, a paucioribus etiam intelligi: non tam forte quia meditationes suas prolixae, et multis tautologiis pertexuit, quam quod parum Latine (Stylo nempe illius temporis,) descripsit."

<sup>33</sup> Komenský knows and mentions Arndt. See Jan Amos Komenský, *Letzte Posaun über Deutschland*, in *Johannis Amos Comenii Opera omnia*, vol. 13, ed. Josef Brambora, Stanislav Králík, Marie Kyrálová, Dana Martínková, Amedeo Molnár, Julie Nováková, Rudolf Říčan, Martin Steiner, Prague: Academia, 1974, p. 117.

<sup>34</sup> Comenius once, in an eschatological context, admits like Arndt in addition to the triple book of God the fourth book: the book of eternity or God himself. See Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 540: "Tunc enim [Deus] hos quasi Classicos libellos dimitti jubebit, aperietque magnum Aeternitatis librum, hoc est Seipsum cum omnibus nunc inaccessis mysteriis."

*Komenský and Lutheran mysticism: The Triple Book of God*

In the spirit of the tradition leading from Augustine through Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096–1141), Bonaventure (1221–1274) and also Nicholas of Cusa, the Lutheran heterodox mystic Valentin Weigel (1533–1588) utilized the metaphor of the book to express his vision of God's word, speaking not only by means of the Holy Scripture and the created universe, but also—and most importantly—from the depths of the human mind. The two traditional metaphorical dyads “the book of nature—the book of Scripture” and “human books—the book of the mind” converge in Weigel's thought to allow the later emergence of the new metaphorical triad “the book of nature—the book of the mind—the book of Scripture.” Weigel, daringly echoing some of the motifs of Meister Eckhart (1260–1328), comes near to a kind of autotheism: “For the right book is in the most inner ground of man and it is God himself.”<sup>35</sup>

Elsewhere, Weigel compares the book written inside man with the dead letter outside, concluding that this “book inside man” should be followed more than the books read by scholars:

This book is in me and in all people, in both small and large, young and old, literate and illiterate, but too few, yes, too few can read it. Yes, many well-learned people are capable of refusing and denying it, of sticking to the dead letter which is not of them, and of leaving the book of life that is written with the finger of God in the hearts of all men.<sup>36</sup>

As Martin Žemla has shown,<sup>37</sup> perhaps the first occurrence of the triad of God's books can be found in the Pseudo-Weigelian *Studium universale*, written about 1590. The pseudonymous author develops a kind of logocentric theology and speaks about three sources of knowledge, literally a trinity of God's Word, namely macrocosm, Christ and microcosm:

For a better understanding of this heavenly and earthly philosophy, you should know that there are three books: each one in the other, no one without the other.

<sup>35</sup> Valentin Weigel as quoted by Walter Lehmann, *Deutsche Frömmigkeit: Stimmen deutscher Gottesfreunde*, Jena: E. Diederichs, 1917, p. 162: “Denn das rechte Buch ist im innersten Grunde des Menschen und ist Gott selber.”

<sup>36</sup> Valentin Weigel, *Der Güldene Griff*, in Valentin Weigel, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Siegfried Wollgast, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1978, pp. 433–434: “[...] dieses Buch ist in mir und in allen Menschen, in großen und kleinen, in jungen und alten, in gelehrten und ungelehrten, aber gar wenige, ja freilich, gar wenige können dasselbe lesen. Ja, viele der Wohlgelehrten dürften dasselbe in sich verneinen und verleugnen, kleben also am toten Buchstaben, der da außer ihnen ist, und verlassen das Buch des Lebens, das doch mit dem Finger Gottes eingeschrieben ist in aller Menschen Herzen.”

<sup>37</sup> See Martin Žemla, *Valentin Weigel: Mystik, paracelsián, theosof 16. století* [Valentin Weigel: Mystic, Paracelsian and Theosopher of the 16th Century], Prague: Vyšehrad, 2013, p. 157.



The first great book is the globe of the earth: this big world with all creatures. The second great book, which God makes, prints and sells, is Jesus Christ, God and man, the crucified Lord. The third great book is the man, who is all creatures.<sup>38</sup>

Another occurrence of the triad can be found in the work of Bartholomaeus Scleus, a mysterious and little-known author from Little Poland.<sup>39</sup> As he puts it in his *Pater noster*, written in 1595 and published in 1639 by Abraham von Franckenberg (1593–1652), we find God “in his threefold Word: body, soul and spirit.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in his *Theosophische-Schriften*, written one year later (1596) and published not until 1686, Scleus changes the scheme and the title page reads that his work is “based and reliant on the threefold book of divine revelation: the Holy Scripture, the big world and the little world.”<sup>41</sup> In the “Author’s prologue” he continues:

And these three books are and are called a living book of the living God. One is macrocosm, the second is mesocosm, the third is microcosm, i. e. the big, the middle and the little world. [...] The first is the Holy Scripture, the second is heaven and earth, the third is man.<sup>42</sup>

Last but not least, Benedictus Figulus (1567–after 1619) in his *Pandora magnalium naturalium aurea*, published in 1608 in Strasbourg by Lazarus Zetzner (1551–1616), speaks about the book of nature as *Macrocosmus*, the

<sup>38</sup> Valentin Weigel (pseudo-), *Studium universale*, [S. l.], 1695, no pagination: “Zu mehrerem Verstande dieser himmlischen und irrdischen Philosophiae, solt du wissen, daß drey Bücher seynd, ie eins in dem andern, keins ohne das andere. Das erste grosse Buch ist der Erden-Glob, diese grosse Welt mit allen Geschöpfen. Das ander grosse Buch, das Gott Machet, drucket, verkäufet, ist Jesus Christus Gott und Mensch, der gecreuzigte HERRE. Das dritte grosse Buch ist der Mensch, qui est omnis Creatura.”

<sup>39</sup> See Christian Gottlieb Jöcher (ed.), *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon: Vierter Theil S–Z*, Leipzig: J. F. Gleditsch, 1751, p. 427: “SCLEUS (Bartholom.), ein Mysticus, lebte am Ende des 16 Seculi in Klein-Pohlen, und schrieb eine allgemeine Gottes-Lehre in drey Theilen; allgemeine Buß-Rede; geheime und allgemeine Betrachtung des Vater Unsers, samt 16 geistlichen Betrachtungen unterschiedlicher hohen und geheimen Glaubens-Lehren, welche Werckgen 1686 unter dem Titel Scler theosophische Schriften, oder eine allgemeine und geheime, jedoch einfältige und deutsche Theologie, 1686 in 8 zusammen gedruckt worden.”

<sup>40</sup> Bartholomaeus Scleus, *Pater noster*, [S. l.], 1639, p. 88: “Wir finden Ihn [Gott] [...] in seinen Gedancken und in seinem Dreyfachen Worte: Leib, Seel, Geist.”

<sup>41</sup> Bartholomaeus Scleus, *Theosophische-Schriften*, [S. l.], 1686, title page: “Gegründet und angewiesen in dem dreyfachen göttlichen Offenbarungs-Buche, als der H. Schrift, der grossen und der kleinen Welt.”

<sup>42</sup> Scleus, *Theosophische-Schriften*, “Vor-Rede des Authoris,” no pagination: “Und diese drey Bücher sind und werden genennet das lebendige Buch des lebendigen Gottes. Das eine ist MACROCOSMUS, das ander MESOCOSMUS, und das dritte ist MICROCOSMUS. Das sind nun die grosse, die mittel und die kleine Welt. [...] Das erste ist die H. Schrift, das ander ist Himmel und Erden, das dritte ist der Mensch.”

book of man as *Microcosmus* and the Holy Scripture as the third book, the “divine chronicle written by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>43</sup> The proliferation and variety of the triadic book metaphors in Lutheran theosophy is finally brought into unity two years later in the famous *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* of Johann Arndt.<sup>44</sup> These four books are—as Arndt proclaims—the book of Scripture, the book of life (namely Christ), the book of the human mind (or conscience) and the book of nature.<sup>45</sup>

From the triadic and trichotomic perspective, however, Heinrich Khunrath’s (1560–1605) *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae* (first published 1595) is of much greater importance. This seems to be the first published work introducing the triad of God’s books:

KNOW GOD from the Sacred Scripture, Creation, as well as Thyself. [...] KNOW THYSELF from the book of Sacred Scripture and from the book of Nature of the whole Universe, which is the whole macrocosm, and microcosm, or Thyself [...].<sup>46</sup> KNOW NATURE universally and particularly from the book of Sacred Scripture and from the book of Nature itself, which is the whole big world, and the little world, i. e. man.<sup>47</sup>

As Khunrath puts it, the triad of objects (God, Nature and “Thyself”) is knowable through a dyad of books (the Bible and Nature); Nature, however, is both extrinsic and intrinsic: it is both the universe (macrocosm) and man (microcosm). It is easy to see how these two dyads (with the second dyad subalternate to the second member of the first dyad) in fact constitute a triad.

<sup>43</sup> See Benedictus Figulus, *Pandora magnalium naturalium aurea*, Strasbourg: L. Zetzner, 1608: “Das Dritte Buch ist Nehmlich Sacra Biblia, [...] die Göttliche Chronica vom H. Geist beschrieben.”

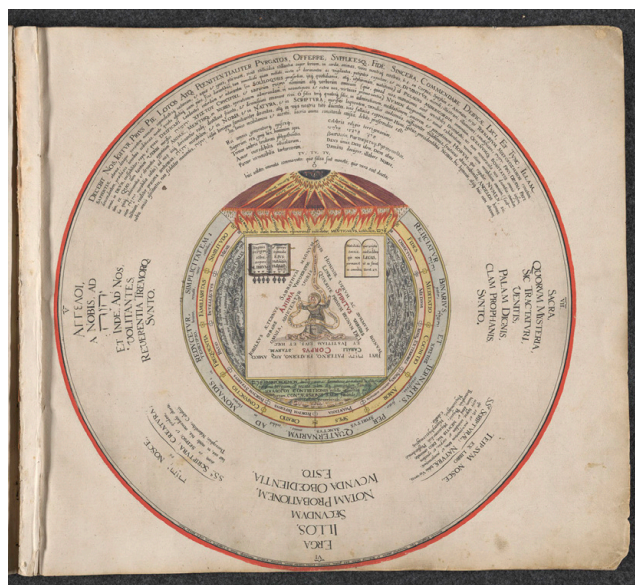
<sup>44</sup> See generally Hermann Geyer, *Verborgene Weisheit. Johann Arndts ‘Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christentum’ als Programm einer spiritualistisch-hermetischen Theologie*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001. See also Hermann Geyer, “Libri Dei. Die Buchmetaphorik von Johann Arndts ‘Vier Bücher von wahren Christentum’ als theosophisch-theologisches Programm,” in Hans Otte, Hans Schneider (eds.), *Frömmigkeit oder Theologie. Johann Arndt und die vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, Göttingen: V&R, series “Studien zur Kirchengeschichte Niedersachsens” 40, 2007, pp. 129–161.

<sup>45</sup> See Johann Arndt, *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum*, 4 vols., Magdeburg: Francke, 1610.

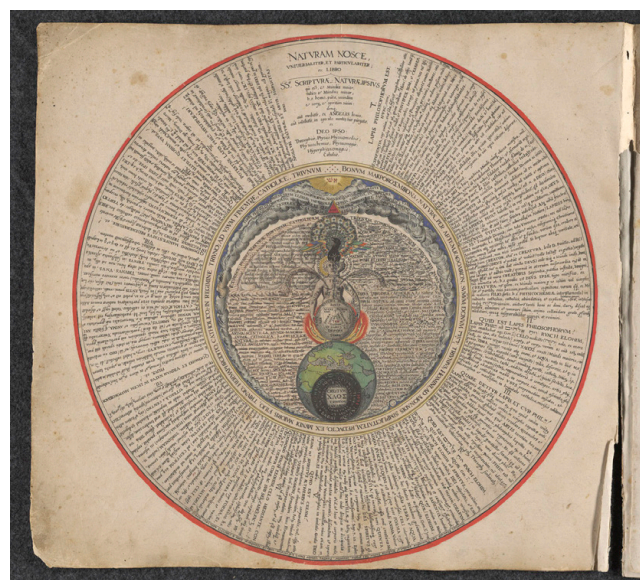
<sup>46</sup> Heinrich Khunrath, “Isagoge siue Introductio in figuram Amphitheatri secundam, breuis,” in Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, Hanau, 1609, p. 189: “JHWH NOSCE ex Sacrosancta Scriptura, Creatura, etiam ex Seipso [...]. TEIPSUM NOSCE, ex libro Sacrosanctae Scripturae, Naturae totius Universi, qui est makrokosmos totus [et] mikrokosmos sive tuiipse [...].”

<sup>47</sup> Heinrich Khunrath, “Isagoge siue Introductio in figuram Amphitheatri tertiam, breuis,” in Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum*, p. 190: “NATURAM NOSCE universaliter et particulariter ex Libro Sacrosanctae Scripturae [et] Naturae ipsius, qui est et Mundus maior totus, et Mundus minor, h. e. homo [...].”

Moreover, in the first edition of *Amphitheatrum* of 1595 the scheme is—in the form of a bracketed, although vertical, tree—inserted into two impressive coloured engravings (see figures 1 and 2).<sup>48</sup> Last but not least, in the edition of



**Figure 1.** An “Androgynous Adam” (coloured engraving). Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, [Hamburg?] 1595. Source: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/UWSpecColl.DuveenD0897>



**Figure 2.** An “Alchemical Hermaphrodite” (coloured engraving). Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, [Hamburg?] 1595. Source: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/UWSpecColl/UWSpecColl-idx?type=article&did=UWSpecColl.DuveenD0897.i0008&id=UWSpecColl.DuveenD0897&size=M>

<sup>48</sup> Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, [Hamburg?] 1595.

1609, the scheme is elaborated to make up a Ramist-like trichotomic epitome (see figures 3 and 4).<sup>49</sup>

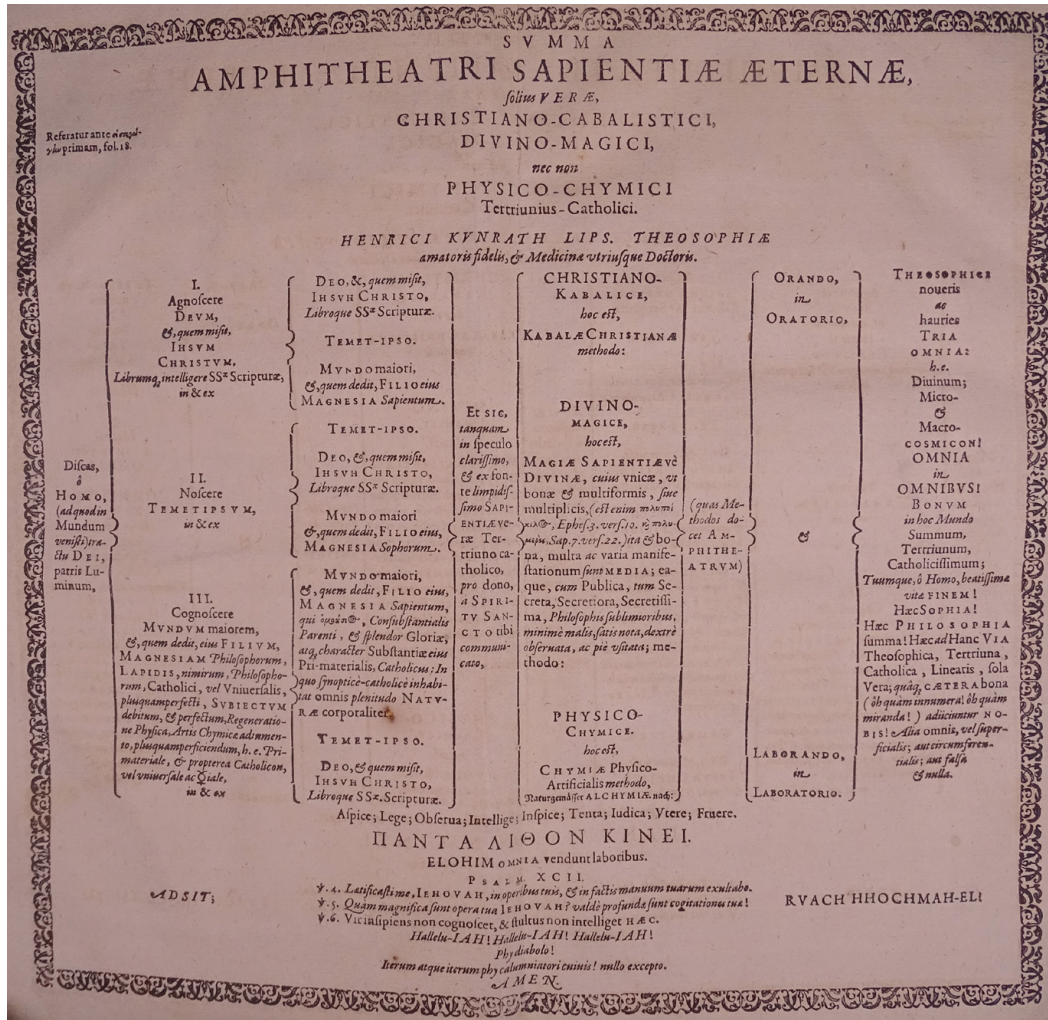


Figure 3. “Summa Amphitheatri sapientiae aeternae” (the whole of the bracketed tree). Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, Hanau, 1609. Reprinted with permission from the Library of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov, Prague.

<sup>49</sup> Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum*, Hanau, 1609.

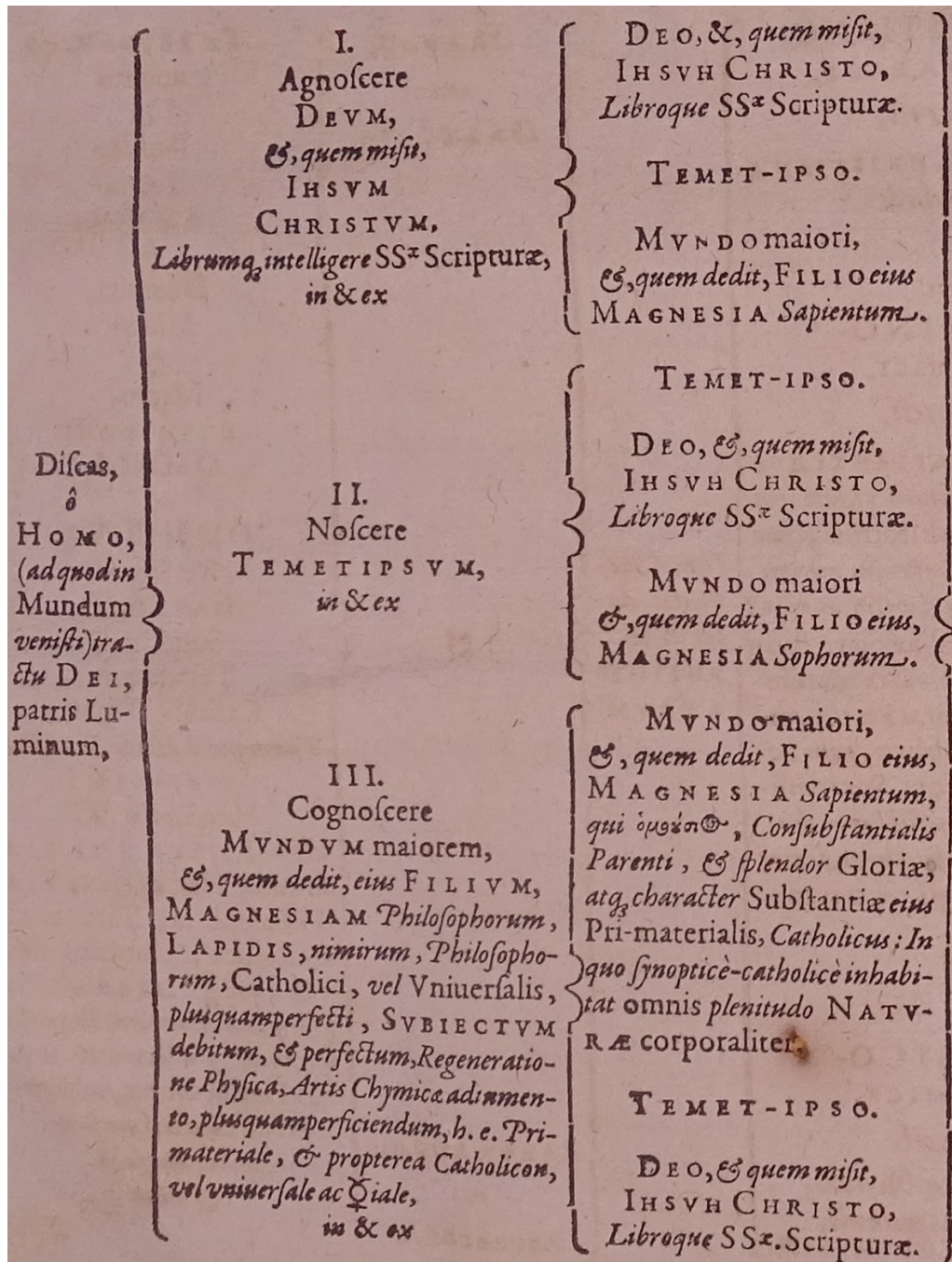
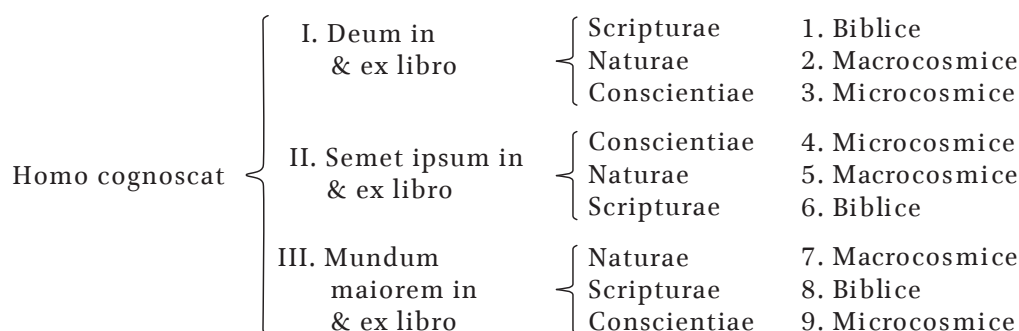


Figure 4. "Summa Amphitheatri sapientiae aeternae" (a detail of the bracketed tree). Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae, solius verae*, Hanau, 1609. Reprinted with permission from the Library of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov, Prague.

What does all this mysticism and theosophy have in common with the post-Ramist encyclopaedism? The link is Johann Heinrich Alsted's *Theologia naturalis* from 1618. It adopts not only the book triad of Khunrath, but also the trichotomic scheme of its reading methods (figure 5). Furthermore, Al-



**Figure 5.** Alsted's bracketed tree representing an epistemological schema of the three books of God as a triple subject, method and mode of human knowledge (redrawn from the original version). Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia naturalis*, [Frankfurt am Main?:] Antonius Hummius, 1615, Pars 2, p. 243

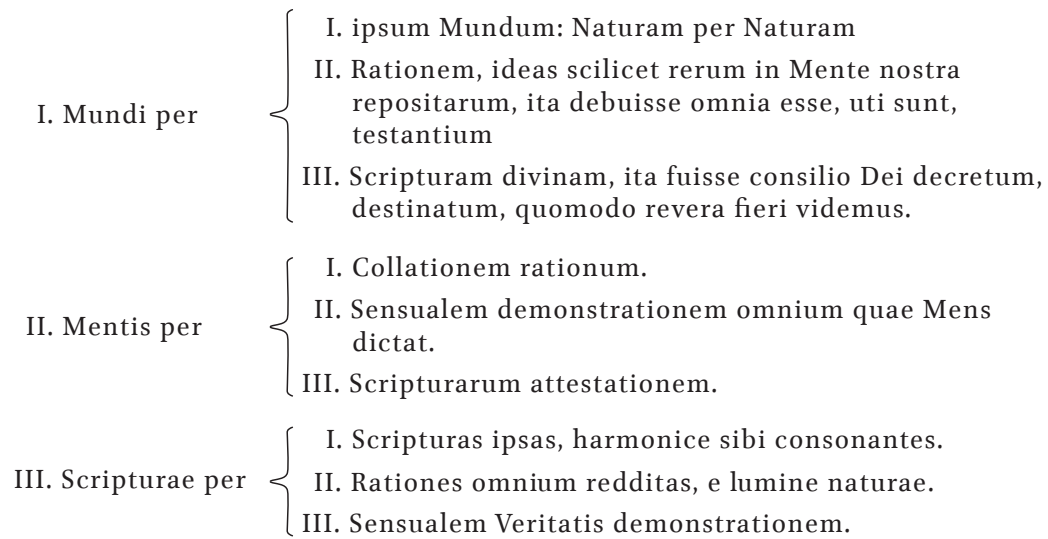
sted writes: "The general [*Catholicus*] book of God is triune, namely the Sacred Scripture, nature and our mind."<sup>50</sup> Via Alsted and his "Lullo-Ramism," Khunrath's triadic metaphor most probably came to Komenský, who in his major but unfinished encyclopaedic work *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica* writes: "As there is everything in the triune God, so in his triune book will everyone find everything and agree on everything."<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Komenský adds a trichotomic tree (figure 6), which is very similar to those of Khunrath and especially Alsted. One general difference is that Komenský's metaphors of the triple book of God is, in comparison with his sources, Khunrath and Alsted, throughout his texts much more elaborated. In fact, it functions as one of the basic frameworks of his *Pansophia*, i. e. "human omniscience" (*omniscientia humana*), which God not only permits but also requires.<sup>52</sup> *Pansophia* should be an *epitome* of God's books, a book of books.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia naturalis*, [Frankfurt am Main?:] Antonius Hummius, 1615, Pars 2, p. 242: "*Liber Dei Catholicus est triumus, videl. Sacra Scriptura, Natura et Mens nostra.*"

<sup>51</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 224: "*Ut in triuno Deo omnia sunt: ita in triuno ejus libro Omnes Omnia invenient, et in omnibus convenient.*"

<sup>52</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 108: "*Hunc ergò trinum Dei Librum si intelligeremus, omniscii essemus: Omniscientiã nempe humanã, qualem permittit, aut etiam à nobis requirit, Deus.*"

<sup>53</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, pp. 153, 180 and 223.



**Figure 6.** Komenský's bracketed tree representing an epistemological schema of the three books of God as a triple subject and method of human knowledge (redrawn from the original version). Jan Amos Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, Prague: Academia, 1966, vol. 2, p. 54.

### *Komenský's metaphysics*

Komenský's metaphysics, the “universal norm in the construction of the great pansophical work” (*in magno pansophico opere construendo universalis norma*) and the “door of things” (*Ianua rerum*),<sup>54</sup> also abounds with trichotomies. In his *Mundus archetypus*, a part of the great unfinished encyclopaedia, Komenský begins with the metaphysical triads:

All creatures have a common beginning, middle and end, because everything which is, comes from somewhere, goes through something and tends to some place, where it either ceases or at least rests. And from what else, if not from that first Archetype that is from itself, through itself and in itself, and created that other things are from another, through another and in another.<sup>55</sup>

Then, however, Komenský moves into the sphere of cosmology:

<sup>54</sup> Komenský, *Ianua rerum* (1681), p. 240.

<sup>55</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 242: “Commune est omni Creaturae Principium, Medium, Finis: quia quicquid est alicunde venit, aliquò transit, aliquò tendit, ibique aut desinit aut quiescit saltem. Hoc autem unde, nisi ab Archetypo illo, qui ut A se, Per se, In se est, ita alia ab alio, per aliud, in aliud, esse fecit?”

Likewise, the whole universe consists of the three genera of the visibles (which are bodies), the invisibles (which are angels) and of those with the participation of both (which is man, the horizon of both the visibles and invisibles).<sup>56</sup>

Komenský's basic physical triad follows:

And the great visible world, the imprint of the eternal archetype, is as a whole joined from the three [elements] of matter, light and spirit. If any of these were removed, the world would perish; as any minor bodies of the world perish when their matter, their form or the nexus of both is taken away.<sup>57</sup>

The list of triads continues with particular natural beings (the triple nature of the sun, the three colours of the rainbow, the three constituents of man and the triple spirit of nature) and then returns to metaphysics: Komenský derives nine categories from the traditional transcendentals "*unitas–veritas–bonitas*," much like in his early textbook *Prima philosophia* (figure 7).<sup>58</sup> Three of them are non-Aristotelian: "*ordo–usus–amabilitas* (or *amor* or *jucunditas*)."

Here in *Consultatio catholica*, however, the triadic deduction is taken further: time is trichotomised to "past (before)–present (now)–future (then)"; *locus* to three dyads "before–behind, up–down, left–right"; and quantity to "multiplicity–size–weight." After an intermezzo in which Komenský accounts for the primality of the number three and qualifies it as *communa rerum mensura*, the next triadic deduction continues: size has three primary forms, i. e. "line–surface–body"; line consists of two endpoints and a "flow of the third point through the middle"<sup>59</sup>; surface consists of three lines, and a body of three dimensions, "length–width–depth."

Considering qualities, Komenský finds the most notable to be shape, colour and activity. The prime shape is the triangle (*tri-angulus*); "bodies, light and position of surface" contribute to the production of colours; the conditions of activity are "*posse–scire–velle*" and an agent, instrument and object are necessary for its development. For instance, according to Komenský

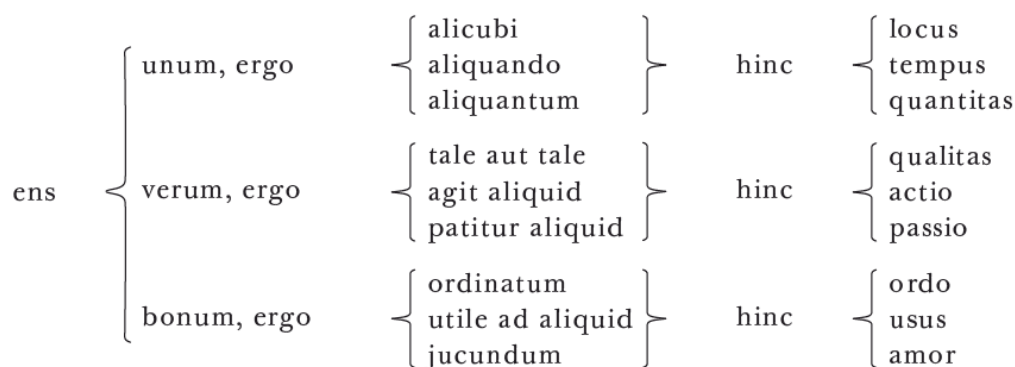
<sup>56</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 242: "Item, Totum Universum triplici Creaturarum genere constat, Visibili (ut sunt Corpora) Invisibili (ut sunt Angeli) et ex utroque participante (ut est Homo, visibilium et invisibilium Horizon)."

<sup>57</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 242: "Visibilis autem Mundus magnus, aeterni Archetypi ectypus, è tribus coagmentatur totus, Materia, Luce, Spiritu: quorum quicquid tollatur, Mundus peribit. Sicut et quaelibet Mundi Corpora minora, ademptâ illis materiâ, aut formâ, aut utriusque nexu, pereunt."

<sup>58</sup> Jan Amos Komenský, *Prima philosophia*, in *Johannis Amos Comenii Opera omnia*, vol. 18, ed. Vojtěch Balík, Jarmila Borská, Jaromír Červenka, Julie Nováková, Rudolf Říčan, Prague: Academia, 1974, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, vol. 1, p. 243: "Et Linea iterum unde nisi è duobus extremè fixis punctis, tertiiqve per medium fluxu?"





**Figure 7.** Komenský’s bracketed tree representing a triadic deduction of nine accidental predicaments from the transcendentals and, at last, from *ens*, i. e. substance (re-drawn from the original version). Jan Amos Komenský, *Prima philosophia*, in *Johannis Amos Comenii Opera omnia*, vol. 18, ed. Vojtěch Balík, Jarmila Borská, Jaromír Červenka, Julie Nováková, Rudolf Říčan, Prague: Academia, p. 14.

the activity of writing “runs” (*emanat*) from the mind of the writer, “passes” through (*transmanat*) the hand and pen and “flows” into (*immanat*) the paper.<sup>60</sup> The fourth quality, passivity, is analogical to activity. Komenský’s illustration is an example from optics: the triad “shine–mirror–eye” corresponds to the triad “alien activity–its impact–reception.”

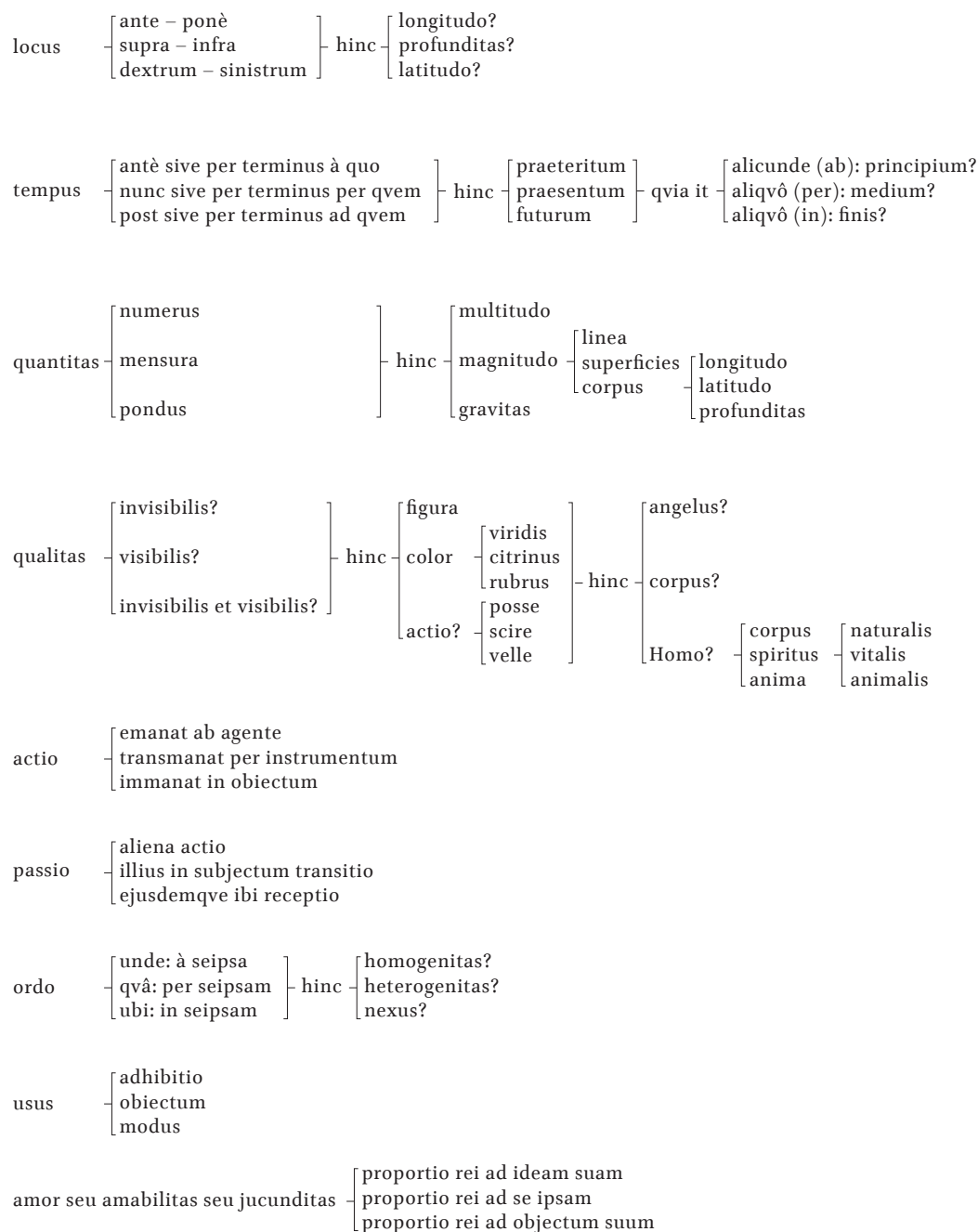
Yet the most original aspect is Komenský’s thought regarding the triad of categories “ordo–usus–amabilitas”—and even their structure is triadic as it is easy to see from a quasi-Ramist schematization (figure 8), extracted by me from Komenský’s text.

### Conclusion

The above-described process of “trichotomization” within the post-Ramist tradition in general, and in Komenský in particular, begs some important questions: What do we learn about post-Ramism from that passage from the “dual” to the “trichotomic” model? Does this passage show any consequences on the epistemological level? Did this make a starting point of a process that was later to develop in the German writing territories or otherwise? How does this transformation process help us to understand better Komenský’s philosophy? Does this mean that Komenský should be separated from the Ramist tradition hermetically, or not?

I can provide only a provisional indication of the answers here as the whole theme requires more synthetic and interpretive study in the future. As Howard

<sup>60</sup> Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, p. 243.



**Figure 8.** A schema of Komenský's mature triadic system of accidental predicaments (extracted by me from his text). In some cases Komenský's categorization is not fully clear. Where a question mark is inserted, it signifies my uncertainty about the correctness of that branch of the schematic tree. See Jan Amos Komenský, *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, Prague: Academia, 1966, vol. 1, pp. 242–243.

Hotson has shown, Komenský drew a clear and very concrete inspiration from the Ramist tradition.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, he can be labelled, *cum grano salis*, as a post-Ramist thinker. However, his inspirations from Lullism and Lutheran mysticism are no less intensive. Whilst it seems untenable strictly to separate the early modern intellectual traditions in general, it is even more problematic in the case of seventeenth-century Protestant encyclopaedism/pansophism, the movement working on such a wide and multifarious intellectual heritage.

Given the programmatic nature of Komenský's triadic conviction, trichotomies are omnipresent in his philosophical writings. Instead of listing them in detail, however, I shall conclude this study by indicating the attitude of two other important post-Ramist encyclopaedists, both coming from the German Protestant milieu and closely linked with Alsted and Komenský, to the dispute on dichotomy and trichotomy: Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Bisterfeld's position is illuminated by his letter to Komenský of 9<sup>th</sup> January 1643—he, as well as Komenský, appreciates the “study of trichotomies,” but at the same time prefers “bringing trichotomies back to dichotomies.”<sup>62</sup> Leibniz, on the other hand, appreciatively recalls Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) criticism of Ramus and his followers for the exaggerated, unnatural and obscure use of dichotomies, but without favouring trichotomies instead.<sup>63</sup>

After Komenský, other philosophers also made use of trichotomies in the very cores of their philosophical systems—Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) among others—yet without any clearly expressed (or acknowledged) intent to triadize. Philosophical and scientific tradition has never adopted a straitjacket made-to-measure for exclusive dichotomy or exclusive

<sup>61</sup> See Howard Hotson, “The Ramist Roots of Comenian Pansophia,” in Steven J. Reid, Emma Wilson (eds.), *Ramus, Pedagogy and the Liberal Arts: Ramism in Britain and the Wider World*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 227–252.

<sup>62</sup> Johann Henrich Bisterfeld to Jan Amos Komenský 9. 1. 1643, in *Hartlib Papers* 7/63/1A-2B, online transcription [accessed 24 October 2019], <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib/browse.jsp?id=7%2F63%2F1a-2a>: “*Mirè arridet Tua in Metaphysicis quorum primum folium tantum vidi, Distributio Entis in simplex, combinatum et conglobatum. Plurimum quoque se mihi probat trichotomiae studium, licet quamlibet trichotomiam ad dichotomiam referri posse censeam. [...] Sic ens conglobatum puto esse combinatum. Non tam sensu quàm verbis discrepamus. Ens est simplex, vel combinatum; combinatum, combinatione simplici, vel multiplici.*”

<sup>63</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Reihe VI: Philosophische Schriften (A VI), 6 vols., Darmstadt, Berlin: Akademie, 1930–, vol. 1, p. 296: “*Nam, ut recte Petro Ramo Ramistisque objecit incomparabilis Verulamius, effecere illi anxietate dichotomiarum, ut rem coangustarent magis quam comprehenderent, quae interea velut anguilla elabebatur, aut pro grano proprietatum inutiles divisionum paleas relinquebat.*” I owe this reference to Giovanna Varani, “Ramistische Spuren in Leibniz' Gestaltung der Begriffe ‚dialectica‘, ‚topica‘ und ‚ars inveniendi,“ *Studia Leibnitiana* 27/2 (1995), p. 156, footnote 125.

trichotomy. The division of categories, species and classes has remained free in the choice of the number of members as the subject demands. Neither Ramist dichotomy-obsession nor the theosophical appetite for trichotomies were compulsorily imposed upon the disposition of taxonomies, nomenclatures and classifications.

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