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TREDIAKOVSKII'S VISION OF GOD

Although Trediakovskii is considered a literary figure, he was very well versed in philosophy and theology, and next to philology and the theory of literature, philosophy and theology were major topics of his works. The scope and the depth of these works place Trediakovskii among the most respectable Russian philosophers.

Trediakovskii's theoptia

The *Theoptia* is the major philosophical work of Trediakovskii. It is a long poem of almost 5000 verses divided into six letters written to a certain Evsevii who should be considered, as Trediakovskii envisioned, as “any Pious [person] who loves God and serves Him with pure heart” (P 464; Евсевий stems from the Greek εὐσεβής, ‘pious’).¹ The choice of the poetic form is not accidental. As Trediakovskii taught in *An Opinion Concerning the Origin of Poetry and Verse in General*, poetry comes from heaven since “it was poured into human reason by God” (SP 1.161). The ancients said that poetry was the most sacred and first philosophy, since it taught the way of life, showed the way to virtue and praised God, and, in Tredia-

(¹) References – indicating a letter number followed by a verse number – are made to the following works of Trediakovskii:

F – *Феоπтия или доказательство о богозрении по вещам созданного естества*, IP 196-322 (preface is published in P 457-469).

IP – *Избранные произведения*. Советский писатель, Москва - Ленинград 1963.

P – Vasilij Kirillovič Trediakovskij, *Psalter 1753*. Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 1989.

S – *Сочинения*, 1-3. Военно-Учебные Заведения, Санкт-Петербург 1849.

SP – *Сочинения и переводы как стихами так и прозою*, 1-2. Императорская Академия Наук, Санкт-Петербург 1752.

kovskii's view, "all of this is indisputable" (SP 1.162). Creating a right attitude in the reader to the subject is very important and, in particular, the meter enables "the incitement of human heart and setting [properly human] reason" (SP 1.169). Also, as he wrote in the preface, *Theoptia* was not written for scholars but primarily for the youth who did not have an opportunity or were not allowed to study. Because of impatience of the youth, brevity was needed and the poetic form provided such brevity (P 468-469). Interestingly, Alexander Pope, whom Trediakovskii mentioned in the preface, also used brevity as an argument for the choice of the poetic form for his *Essay on Man*.

So, the *Theoptia* consists of six letters or chapters. As Trediakovskii himself summarized it, the first letter includes proofs of the existence of God from natural theology; the second letter uses proofs from physics and astronomy; the third letter – from mechanism and natural history; the fourth – from human physiology and anatomy; the fifth – from psychology; the sixth letter investigates attributes of God. The *Theoptia* is, in a way, a grand tour through the then current status of science. The underpinning conviction is that "the main and first use of all Knowledge lies in this that we should become firmly convinced about the first and main Truth, i.e., about the Creator of all Creation" (P 464).

The *Theoptia* is not entirely an original work. About half of it is the versified version of François Fénelon's *Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieu* (1713), chapters 1 and 2 of part 1.² However, the name of Fénelon does not appear anywhere in the *Theoptia* in

(²) This was first noticed in 1975 by Wilhelm Breitschuh, *Die Feoptija V. K. Trediakovskijs: Ein physikotheologisches Lehrgedicht im Russland des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Otto Sagner, München 1979, p. 1, and by E. Н. Лебедев, *Философская поэзия В. К. Тредиакковского*, "Русская литература", (1976) 2, p. 98. Part 1 of the *Traité* appeared in 1713, both Part 1 and 2 appeared posthumously in 1718, in his *Oeuvres philosophiques*. It appears that Trediakovskii knew only the first edition since there are only a few isolated fragments in Part 2 which could be considered as used by Trediakovskii and any similarity simply stems from similarity of topics. In particular, Trediakovskii did not use Fénelon's discussion of Spinoza in his criticism, nor did he use Fénelon's long discussion of attributes of God (ch. 2.5) in his own chapter 6 devoted to the problem of God's attributes.

order to avoid problems with ecclesiastical censorship: Fénelon was a Catholic cardinal, which automatically disqualified his works as acceptable in the eyes of Orthodox authorities.³ At times the translation is fairly close to the original, but it has many omissions and many additions. The translated part of the *Theoptia* includes primarily scientific facts of the day, although in a few places Trediakovskii added facts of his own. Although Trediakovskii shared with Fénelon some theological views, philosophical and theological discussions in the *Theoptia* are largely Trediakovskii's own.

Theoptia is the vision of God. Whereas theology is the knowledge about God, theoptia is the knowledge of God acquired through mystical vision. Lactantius spoke about the contemplation of God, theoptia, as the feature distinguishing humans from animals.⁴ Dionysius pointed to the special vision granted to angels, Moses, and the prophets, theoptia.⁵ Gregory Palamas spoke about theoptia as the ultimate purpose of life (*Triads* 1.3.42; cf. 1.3.5). While appropriating this term, Trediakovskii changed its meaning. For him, the vision of God is decidedly not of the mystical kind. The mystical vision of God is unmediated, the direct contact of the soul with God. For Trediakovskii, the vision of God is mediated by nature. By watching nature, everyone can see not God, but the manifestation of God's power, care, and love: God "should not be invisible to any of you: / All creation in the world shows Him to you" (F 1.360-361). This wisdom is open to everyone, although it may have been forgotten because of the adverse influence of passions, since everyone can recognize God by looking at the world (F 2.29-32). Only the simple

(³) In the preface, Trediakovskii mentioned approvingly Henry More and Pierre Poiret, and an ecclesiastical criticized him for it since they are heretics and, as such, they do not deserve praise (P 486). Trediakovskii responded that they were not heretics but lovers of God worthy of praise by the Orthodox church (P 494). What would the critic say had he known that half of the *Theoptia* came directly from a Catholic theologian?

(⁴) Lactantius, *Inst.* 7.9.11; theoptia is "the characteristically Hermetic word", Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986, p. 207.

(⁵) *Eccl. hier.* 481b, 537b, *Ep.* 1085a, 1097b; Dionysius also used "the characteristically Hermetic word", Rosemary A. Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist*. Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, p. 33.

gaze (“простый взор”, *simple coup d’oeil* [Fénelon]) is sufficient and diligence (“прилежность”, *attention tranquille et sérieuse*), but not of the kind used when seeking pleasures (F 2.36-38). In this way, theoptia is democratized: it is not limited only to the chosen few mystics and prophets, but everyone by the use of their natural cognitive powers can have a vision of God, although it would not be of the same quality and clarity as the vision of mystics. In fact, this democratization of theoptia was a characteristic feature of the entire physico-theological movement that was widespread in Europe at the time: everyone can see God, if only indirectly relying on one’s own cognitive powers supplied by God Himself.

Although Trediakovskii’s theological and theoptic views are most fully presented in the *Theoptia*, they can also be found in other works, sometimes as one of the major topics (as in *A Discourse on Wisdom, Prudence, and Virtue*, SP 2.236-308; S 1.479-553; cf. F 5.51-272, and in *Fontenelle’s Speech on Patience and Impatience*, S 1.379-397), sometimes as a marginal theme (in many poems and speeches).

Proofs of the existence of God

Eastern Christianity is rather disinterested in proofs of the existence of God. Such proofs are a forte of Western Christianity and Trediakovskii, steeped in the Catholic theology through his education in Astrakhan and at the Sorbonne, was sensitive to this issue and discussed the problem in the preface and in the first letter of the *Theoptia*. Trediakovskii’s sensitivity was also raised by the libertine atmosphere of Western Europe of the time, particularly in Paris. It was even assumed after his return to Russia that his mere presence in Paris in this atmosphere made him an unbeliever.⁶ To some extent

⁶ In 1731 archimandrite Platon Malinovskii stated that Trediakovskii was surely adversely influenced by the kind of philosophy he had studied in Paris, see Петр Пекарский, *История Императорской Академии наук в Петербурге*, 2. Императорская Академия наук, Санкт-Петербург 1873, p. 30; Борис А. Успенский, *Вокруг Тредиаковского. Труды по истории русского языка, и русской культуры*. Индрик, Москва 2008, pp. 117, 361. Serman stated that Trediakovskii was a freethinker and maybe even an atheist in early 1730s, see И. Серман, *Неизданная философская поэма В. Тредиаковского*, “Русская литература”, (1961) 1, p. 164.

that may have been true, as testified in his efforts to translate the *Journey to the Isle of Love*, a secular book that treats the subject of love in at least a playful fashion, which hardly squares well with a Christian given that God is love.

Trediakovskii's battle cry is expressed on the opening page of the preface to the *Theoptia*: "To the profound shame of human Reason", there were and still are "unbelievers who not only doubted in the Existence of God, but also claimed in their supremely foolish heart and by their foul mouth that the infallible GOD, the Creator of the World and different from the World, does NOT exist" (P 457). To counter this irreligious trend, Trediakovskii discussed two types of proofs for the existence of God: one kind is of intellectual nature based on natural reason, another is based on the observation of nature.

One rational proof of the existence of God is the ontological argument which Trediakovskii formulated thus:

It [reason] has the concept of Divinity in itself
That it dares to call satisfactory,
And knows through it the essence of all perfections
And that in it, it is necessarily being and existence
And thus it concludes that God is eternal;

However, it is hard to imagine that a freethinker or atheist could end his *Ode on the Instability of the World* (1730) with an exclamation to God, "In You is all my goodness", or could write in his *Verses Praising Russia* (1728) that Russia is the land chosen by God and that "In you [in Russia] all faith is for the pious, / The dishonest cannot mingle in you; / There will not be in you double faith, / The evil do not dare to approach you. / All your people are Orthodox". Would he exclude himself from these people? But, as also Serman observed, to deflect an accusation of godlessness, Trediakovskii probably felt compelled to explain in his *New and Brief Method* (1735) that in the versified *Letter from Russian Poetry to Apollo*, Apollo should not be understood as the pagan god of poetry, but as "the heartfelt desire I have that also in Russia the science of poetry-writing were developed", and thus there is no blasphemy "for us, Christians", in this *Letter* (IP 390); also, Cupid referred to in an elegy should be understood as "heartfelt passion which, in lawful love and because of its great ardor, nowhere and never deserved to be [considered] blasphemous" (IP 396), И. З. Серман, *Тредиаковский и французские критики 1720-х годов*, in Н. Д. Кочеткова (ed.), *В. К. Тредиаковский: к 300-летию со дня рождения*. Санкт-Петербургский научный центр РАН, Санкт-Петербург 2004, p. 12.

That He is without beginning and is infinite,
 That He is different from the universe and not the same as corporeal
 world:
 God is simple, the world is compound, it could be or not be.
 (F 1.47-54; 6.30-31, 36)

The mind recognizes the fact of its own existence (F 1.89). It also has the concept of perfection, but knows that perfection is not in the mind itself (F 1.90-92), since it recognizes its own imperfection, thus the imperfect mind could not engender the concept of perfection. This indicates that the mind was created by someone (F 1.93-94), by someone perfect who planted this concept on the human mind.

Trediakovskii presented a form of Aquinas' first way, the argument from motion and causal chains. This is based on the assumption that motion cannot come from material entities since they are passive, and motion is not their attribute (F 1.161-163). That is, motion of the body originates in the mind (F 5.176-177). The will is sufficient to move the body (F 5.425-426, 429-433), but power over the body does not come from the will itself; it comes from God (F 5.441, 443, 445-446, 451-452). Moreover, the mind has power to move things, but it did not establish the laws of motion (F 1.169-170). Therefore, the ultimate cause of motion lies beyond the created minds, and to be sure, God is the first cause (F 3.419). One way to abolish the argument is by endowing matter with activity; another way – a subterfuge used by Democritus and Epicurus – is to make the world without beginning and thereby invalidating the question about the first cause. Trediakovskii, however, placed an emphasis in this argument on orderliness of motion as expressed in the laws of motion: it requires not just a mind, but an infinitely perfect mind to devise these laws, and thus God is not just the first cause of any motion, but of orderly motion. Also, in the anti-deistic spirit, these laws by themselves are not sufficient, either. They have to be constantly maintained (F 3.421-423; cf. Heb. 1:3): orderliness in only one aspect of the laws, but the laws do not apply themselves; there is the divine power behind their incessant workings.

Trediakovskii used the traditional argument *ex consensu gentium*. The existence of God is widely recognized by all nations; there is some religion everywhere and some kind of worship (F 1.491-498,

534; S 258). People universally turn to God in the hour of need (F 1.498, 516), in face of uncertain future (F 1.505), etc. Religious rituals are universal, priests are in all nations and so is the fear of God (F 1.499-503); also thanksgiving, particularly after a victory in a battle, is universal (F 1.523-526) and pacts and oaths are made in the name of a divinity (F 1.509-511). No important undertaking is made without calling upon God (F 1.519-522):

Whence comes this similarity
 In people, whose number in the world is enormous,
 If not from the innermost principle
 That is part of man himself?
 If not from the feeling put inside the heart
 And the Creator depicted in it? (F 1.535-540)

Atheists say that the world always existed (F 1.59-60). Trediakovskii responded that things exist as a result of a creative act, which presupposes the existence of a creator (F 1.75-78). They could come from nothing, but how could they without a creator? (F 1.80-82) Or they could come from themselves, but how that could be (F 1.83-84)? The being created them, that "we call God" (F 1.87, 149). In this response, Trediakovskii deflected the issue by not answering to the claim of the eternity of the world. Why, atheists may ask, must the world be a result of a creative act? On a subtler note, he referred to the perishability of things, whereby infinite causal links are needed to explain the eternity of the world. However, in Trediakovskii's mind, infinite parent-child links do not help, since an infinite chain of such links is "contrary to reason" (F 1.156), and again,

An infinite regress is incomprehensible,
 As being totally contrary to reason: thus we maintain,
 Correctly concluding that there is an order of causes
 And so there is among them [a cause] of the highest rank
(F 1.191-194)

Is it a cogent argument that our inability to comprehend the eternity of the world speaks against the reality of this eternity? Atheists very easily may reciprocate that for Trediakovskii God is eternal – He is "without beginning before, existing without end afterwards" (F 1.14) –, although we can hardly comprehend this divine eternity

and yet we accept the reality of this statement. On the other hand, he believed that infinity cannot be defined by the finite. We know the finite through the infinite (F 5.737, a statement repeated after Fénelon), that is, the concept of infinity is inborn. Could not atheists claim the same by saying that the eternal nature somehow formed in humans a concept of infinity? Well, no: in the preface to the *Theopetia*, Trediakovskii stated that according to atheists infinity is an empty sound and is used to describe a being which cannot be compared with anything (P 459). Therefore, Trediakovskii could say that atheists cannot claim that the world is of infinite duration since infinity would be here an empty sound indicating nothing real. The eternity of the world would be defeated by atheists' own counterargument. Incidentally, even if things existed eternally, it does not mean that motion has to be eternal, since motion is not in the nature of things and accidental emergence of motion means that it can stop also accidentally (F 1.179-188). This actually was the reason for Aristotle's introduction of the unmoved mover into his worldview, in which the world was eternal.

Atheists also claim that the concept of God originated in human fear. Sometimes it is true, responded Trediakovskii, but not always, since reason provides us many irrefutable proofs of God's existence (P 459).

Atheists state that unknown causes of various phenomena were ascribed to God; however, the knowledge of causes leads to the knowledge of God and godlessness is the result of ignorance; but it is the atheist who is ignorant: he does not know the origin of his own body and soul; if he did, he would readily accept the existence of God (P 459).

Proof from design

The discussed proofs are for more refined minds. For weaker minds another way should be used to lead them to God (F 2.17-26). Atheists claim that everything is the result of an accident and humans originated in the earth. However, nothing more foolish can be said than that. Why do people not come into being this way today? (P 459). This is the centerpiece of Trediakovskii's investigation: prov-

ing that accident cannot create order and the prevalent existence of order in the world is an undeniable proof of the Creator of this order.

The world is not simple, but compound (F 1.201), and thus is accidental, not necessary (F 1.202); it could not have existed or could have been completely different and must be passive (F 1.203). Accident is blind, deaf, does not sense (F 1.221) and does not have requisite force (F 1.222). Who explains the beauty of order of the world by accident, that it is not the result of "measure, weight, and number" (F 1.228, cf. Wisdom 11:21), is "stupid and loathsome" (F 1.232). Who would believe that Homer's *Iliad* was made by accidental collection of letters (F 1.233-240)? Did anyone count how many a's, b's etc. are used in the *Aeneid* and then throw all these letters together to produce this poem (F 1.241-247)? Already Cicero had said about only one line of Ennius' *Annales* that it cannot be created by accident (*De natura deorum* 2.58); how much less so the entire book (F 1.255-258).⁷ When hearing organ music no one would doubt that someone is playing, not the organ itself (F 1.267-276). The organ itself was not made by accident (F 1.297-298). How can it be claimed that the world was created by accident (F 1.307-310)? And yet some people

impudently are not ashamed to shout,
That this whole world made itself by accident
And was not made orderly by anyone supremely wise.
If there is a drop of natural reason in you,
Then you should quickly change [this] absurd opinion
And from the heart admit with us [the existence of] God.
(F 1.354-359)

Each man who is used to reflect on things (F 2.63), when reflecting on the diversity of things around him (F 2.68-70) and of space whose limits are unknown (F 2.71-72), he will see the greatest empire as only a small corner on earth and the earth itself as a small speck in the universe (F 2.73-77). He wants to know the origin of all this (F 2.78-84). Then, mainly after Fénelon, Trediakovskii discussed the four elements of inanimate nature (earth, water, air, fire) and the many benefits for all creation that are derived from them.

⁽⁷⁾ The Homer and Ennius examples are taken from Fénelon.

Earth “shows us all its treasures / And its mud and dust turns into riches” (F 2.97-98) and “provides us whatever we wish” (F 2.101). Its resources can never be exhausted (F 2.113-114); from it man draws his riches and is poor only by his own laziness (F 2.123-125, 165-166). Also, lands are conquered. However, a farmer and a shepherd are more useful for humanity than war heroes (F 2.135-136). The only result of these heroes’ actions is fallow land (F 2.129, 133-134). The war “opened the door to vice and suffering, / Since then, simplicity was lost in all” (F 2.143-144). And thus, Trediakovskii expressed his pacific sentiments.

The uses of the forest, trees, wood, benefits of orchards, etc., all of this points to the Creator, “Who cares about all of us / And who is our merciful and true Father” (F 2.311-312). Even “An astonishing mechanism in the veins of each leaf / Shows us an astonishing Mechanic!” (F 2.257-258).

Similarly, the benefits of various bodies of water are discussed and three kinds of air: aether, vapors, smoke (F 2.478-483). Trediakovskii mentioned briefly a theory that electricity is the result of friction, which was the theory defended by his colleague, Lomonosov, among others in his *Lecture on Aerial Phenomena Due to Electric Force* (1753). Celestial phenomena, changes of days and night, four seasons – all of them point to the order introduced by the Creator. Trediakovskii explicitly mentioned the ecliptic and alluded to both equinoxes and both solstices as the proof of God’s providential care, since this balances hot and frosty seasons, without which the inhabitants of the earth would die (F 2.694-699). Why do seasons change? To beautify nature with various times (F 2.714), to break the monotonous appearance of nature, to prevent ennui caused by constant light or constant darkness, to increase the pleasant experience from nature by having coldness and warmth, to enjoy the abundance in nature, which creates a good environment for work (F 2.716-723).

In Trediakovskii’s description, the Sun is like a fiery sea, and who keeps its waves in limits (F 2.724-728)? This mention of fiery sea brings to mind similar metaphor of burning ocean waves from Lomonosov’s *The Morning Meditation of the Divine Majesty*. In agreement with the accepted Ptolemaic system, Trediakovskii spoke about the motion of the Sun (F 2.730-731, 738); however, hypotheti-

cally, he mentioned the possibility that “the back side of this luminary is affixed, / But whose power could have affixed it?” (F 2.732-733) and “if we turn around it / Then [...] / Who placed it in the middle” of the universe, and to what is it attached (F 2.740-743)? It would burn anything to which it would be attached; hence, the sun does move (F 2.734-737). Moreover, if such a hard body as the Earth were turning around the Sun, how is it that it was not so far hindered by anything (F 2.745-749)? Trediakovskii – just as Fénelon – leaned toward geocentrism, but he was uncertain about the physical mechanism of the motion of the Earth. However, whether it is explained by pulling or by pushing, a supreme power has to be assumed in any case (F 2.750-753):

The more this power that moves the entire world,
 In which there are no traces of fatigue,
 Is useful to the world and helpful to all living beings,
 Everywhere basically the same, but sometimes particularly fertile –
 The more man should get to know
 The work of the Creator, to understand Him
 And the supreme rule in directing all [things] in the world.
 If there is a sign in us that we cannot understand something
 We leave it to His supremely wise direction:
 God wished to determine what we should and should not know.
(F 2.754-763)

Interestingly, although heliocentrism was only mentioned and immediately criticised, this still raised the ire of some ecclesiastics by saying that Trediakovskii “holds on to the Copernican system”, the system condemned by the Synod (P 504) and, although done hypothetically, it is still contrary to the Bible (P 488). Trediakovskii directly responded to that by saying that the Bible speaks about the Sun going around the Earth, philosophers speak about the Earth going around the Sun, “But in both [cases] we can see the Wisdom and supremely perfect mind, and, consequently, the wise Creator is clearly recognized” (P 495-496). In this response he actually spoke more sympathetically about Copernicanism than in the *Theoptia* (but cf. F 3.273). However, for his big goal, the proof from design, it did not matter which system is true, since both heliocentrism and geocentrism ultimately would rely on God's design.

When discussing stars, Trediakovskii asked for what reason there are so many of them (F 2.790). Meaning probably Fontenelle and the controversy around his book translated by Kantemir, he said that there are some who think that each star is like the sun that accompanies an earth-like planet (F 794-797). “Assuming, this is true, would not the mind be astonished?” (F 798), astonished by the power of God who would exercise His power over all these worlds. In this hypothetical statement he followed Fénelon without outright accepting it as its own, but his praise of God’s power in this context (“How many visible Suns! How many inferior Earths!” F 804) would indicate that he was not averse to the investigation of such a possibility.⁸

His investigation of the inanimate world allowed Trediakovskii to state that

[God is] supremely wise on the earth, in water, in air, in the sky,
 In fire, in all plants, supremely wise in all beauties.
 The Creator who made all that exists
 And continues to be its sole ruler,
 Giving from above to all a beautiful spectacle!
 Thus it is becoming for us to exclaim with delight
 Along with the king [David] declaring the same:
 The heavens proclaim the glory of God! (F 2.870-877)

The animate world is just as abundant in proofs of God’s creative and providential work as the inanimate world. Trediakovskii showed it first in the world of animals discussing many of them, their amazing makeup and their use for the humankind (“All that lives and has

⁸) However, this should be treated only as a hypothesis. In his denunciation (1755) of Sumarokov’s translation of a psalm, he stated that the translation includes a statement about the infinity of the world and multiplicity of worlds, which is not to be found in the original; the statement is false and thus may misguide the reader, warned Trediakovskii, see Петр Пекарский, *История...*, cit., p. 187. However, he aimed his criticism primarily against the infinity of the world (*ivi*, p. 294) and definitely thought that the claim of the infinity of the world is erroneous, see *Извест В. К. Тредьяковского на А. П. Сумарокова*, “Москвитянин”, (1856) 13-16, pp. 273, 275-276. The view of multiplicity of worlds is according to “the mind of newer philosophers and not according to the mind of the Psalmist inspired by the Holy Spirit” (*ivi*, p. 274), and Sumarokov’s error was in meaning “the real multiplicity, not the possible multiplicity of worlds” (*ivi*, p. 275). Trediakovskii also allowed the discussion of possible infinity of the world, but not real (*ivi*, p. 276).

a living soul, / The Creator provided for our benefit", F 3.147-148). For instance, some fish swim from the sea to a river upstream "to be fished almost by hand / When they are crowded there in fresh water" (F 3.150-152). Animals not always are used for food or as material for clothing and the like, not only as guard (dogs), but also as models to learn from. For example, bees form a society like in a city: they have a queen and servants; "Doing each some work for the common good; / Parasites are there judged and punished" (F 3.213-218); the bee thus acts "as [endowed] with reason" (F 3.220); "How much industriousness is there in the ant! How wise is the spider! / Didn't God show them to us for our learning in here?" (F 3.221-222).

Trediakovskii addressed in detail the problem of animals being machines. Only Descartes claimed that animals are nothing more than machines (F 3.909-910) and have no soul (F 3.914), but this is not quite an acceptable solution. Trediakovskii did not consider animals to be just automata: "animals are [...] machines / That are not similar to even one made by us" (F 3.435-436, 921-922; 5.35-36). Animals are not pure machines, they have inside "some psychic vapor" (F 3.690) and "some kind of spirit" (F 3.842). Animals "are machines, but not without a soul" (F 3.901), but their soul is of a different kind than the human soul (F 3.915). He said he did not know what kind of soul animals have (F 3.888-889) and "The Creator is able to create more / Than man can understand with his reason" (F 3.891-892). They can feel and "understand a lot" (F 3.691); "there is some kind of thought in the animal" (F 3.880), there is no doubt, animals have knowledge proper for them (F 3.885-886) and their wisdom is God's wisdom put in them when they were created (F 3.849-852). After a critic did not find the ascription of some form of wisdom to animals to be sufficiently orthodox (P 491-492), Trediakovskii responded with the Biblical verse which states that the ox *knows* its owner and the donkey its master's crib (Is. 1:3; P 498-499).

Humans are sometimes mistaken since they have free will, "the lord of our acts", which sometimes ill-directs reason (F 3.829-832). "I love truth and look at the good, / But, hating the lie and evil, I do just that" (F 3.833-834), which is the sentiment expressed by apostle Paul (Rom. 7:15, 19). On the other hand, "Natural law slavishly pushes the animal / To what is useful for it and sufficient" (F 3.835-

836). Therefore, although animals seem to make fewer mistakes, this does not mean they are wiser than humans (F 3.823-828). Incidentally, this resembles Descartes' argument that the specialization of animals points to the superiority of man.⁹

Animals procreate, but there has to be among them some inclination for a male and female to form a couple and take care of their offspring (F 3.550-551, 553-556); this inclination is a sort of love:

This is a mutual love, heavenly magnet of hearts,
 Not only our genuine union, but all creation's.
 [It is] the mother and the goal of motion, sap of all creation
 Life, beauty, and the flower of beauty
 Imperishable and constant sweetness of the living,
 Ineffable joy of rational beings.
 The cause bringing us to honor and goodness,
 Giving us peace, commanding to remain in peace/world
 Healing venom of enmity, leading toward consent,
 Full of stillness, free from evil
 Enlivening the weak, consoling in sadness,
 It brings us to compassion with all suffering
 Causing that this earthly life here is not dull
 But is perfectly happy;
 It is the ground of freedom, the ground of all wisdom,
 Goodness without it is a nonbeing, a shadow. (F 3.559-574)

This cosmic force of love was variously recognized: as "the firm chain of things", as motion by Descartes, as gravity by Newton, as the world soul by Plato (F 3.575-578). In this hymn to love there is a clear connection to apostle Paul's hymn in 1 Cor. 13,¹⁰ but also to apostle John's statement that God is love. Love fills the entire universe, is a cosmic force that introduces order into it and maintains it, and this love is God Himself. In this way, this cosmic force is not the impersonal force of Descartes and Newton, nor a creation like

⁽⁹⁾ Animals "can do many things as well, or maybe even better, as any one of us, but they would infallibly fail in others, whereby we would detect, that they did not act from knowledge, but merely from the disposition of their organs", *Discourse on Method*, pt. 5; see Adam Drozdek, *Descartes' Turing Test*, "Epistemologia", 24 (2001) 1, p. 7.

⁽¹⁰⁾ As observed by Wilhelm Breitschuh, *Die Feoptija...*, cit., pp. 197-198.

Plato's world, which was molded by the Demiurge who afterward withdrew from the world. It is the always-present and everywhere-present, loving God who cares as much about the affairs of the cosmos as about the affairs in the individual lives of His creation.

God put humans above all animals (F 4.14): "All creation gives you due honor / And it praises You when it hears us" praising you (F 4.15-16). The miracle of man can be seen in the makeup of his body: "In a word, there are so many marvels in the human body / That necessarily must be a Creator from heaven" (F 4.176-177). Even death has its rightful place in the world, although it is the consequence of the fall (F 4.640). If people did not die, the earth would be overpopulated, which would cause constant quarrels (F 4.632-635). Also, immortality would lead to pride (F 4.636). God, "just judge, gave in due time the body to death as offering" (F 4.646-647) and thus God will turn death into eternal blessing (F 4.642-643). The idea of the body as an offering through death is very interesting.

However, man is primarily a spiritual being and in comparison with the mind the body is nothing (F 5.2-3). Through their spiritual side, humans surpass animals since animals do not have "a pure mind" as a human soul, which is immortal and which distinguishes humans from animals (F 3.893-896). Unlike animals, humans can reason abstractly and know eternal truths (F 3.897-900; 5.61-64; 3.431-432) and this is the province of the human soul.

The soul

The soul and body form a union (*unio commercium*) and act upon one another, but the mechanism of their interaction is not known (S 2.260; F 5.173-175). The part where the mind interacts with the body is *sedes mentis regia*, placed sometimes in the head, sometimes outside the head (some ancient thinkers placed it in the heart) (S 2.262). However, Trediakovskii seems to have placed the soul in the head, when he said that in the head is our reason and the ability to speak (F 4.341), or rather in the brain (F 4.356), which has two hemispheres (F 4.351) and is "a treasure [...] the Creator wished to hide generously there [in the skull] just as priceless treasure is buried in the ground" (F 4.351-353). On the other hand, the spirit permeates bodies and performs in them rational acts (F 5.19-20).

It is also uncertain what the origin of the soul (created at the moment of conception? preexistent from the beginning of the world?) exactly is since the knowledge about its origin “was concealed by the Creator from the wise and the reasonable”.¹¹ However, there is no doubt that the soul is immortal. Nothing on earth can satisfy the soul and yet the Creator put in it the desire of happiness (S 2.263, F 6.544-547). This means that, because God cannot lie (F 5.895), this desire must be satisfied in the afterlife; thus, the soul is immortal. Then, by putting in people the idea of immortality of the soul and the desire for it (F 5.891-894), God did not mislead them (F 6.538-543).

The soul lives as long as God does not annihilate it, which He does not do, since this is guaranteed by His nature: by His grace minds could have been created only for perfection, which cannot be if they could die and would exist only when tied to the body, which is a sorry existence; thus, thinking that God could limit the minds’ existence only to the earthly life is simply blasphemous (F 5.871-884). God is just and it could not be that man is not rewarded for good deeds and not punished for evil ones, which can be done in the life after the earthly life (F 5.885-890).

Also, the soul is immortal since it is a simple entity, with no parts (F 5.859-860), just as God is. The body, on the other hand, is divisible, even infinitely divisible (F 5.21-23),¹² and thus a subject of dissipation and death. This is an argument mentioned by Plato in the *Phaedo* and used later by Descartes.

Atheists claim that all ideas originate in sensory knowledge and God cannot be thus known. Not true; not all knowledge comes from the senses (P 458). We have ideas about the law, virtue, rationality, obligations, counsel (P 459) and they, Trediakovskii seems to have meant, could not be simply derived from sensory data alone. He said that the mind can understand things simply (*simplex adprehensio*) by adding nothing to them and generating simple ideas with intelligence (“разумность”) or pure reason (“разум”, *purus intellectus*),

⁽¹¹⁾ Trediakovskii seems to have leaned toward the opinion that the soul is created with the body when he said that there is no doubt that both the body and the soul come together to the world (F 5.191-192).

⁽¹²⁾ This idea would indicate that Trediakovskii did not subscribe to the corpuscular theory of matter advocated by Lomonosov.

gaining thereby knowledge about laws, obligation, virtue, etc. (S 2.238; reason knows it through pure thought, F 5.79-80). The mind also gains knowledge through the five senses (S 2.238). That is, simple apprehension is distinguished from sensory knowledge and the objects of the former are seemingly different from the objects of the latter. However, it is still unclear what the mechanism of understanding things simply is and what these things are. Sensory objects seem to be excluded; thus, the mind would have to rely on its own resources. What would they be if not ideas? If ideas, would any action of understanding be needed to understand simply these ideas to generate simple ideas? The mind does have innate knowledge; at least the concept of God is inborn (S 257; F 1.47, 485).

The soul itself is a marvelous creation. The soul, which Trediakovskii also called the mind, consists of reason and the will (F 5.71-73). The substance and essence of reason and will are the same, but they act differently: reason understands and judges to know the truth; will is freely striving for the good and has a preference for the useful (S 2.237) since, "as Truth is the goal of our Cognition, so Good is the goal of all our Actions. The former enlightens the Mind, the latter purifies the heart" so that people become participants of the ineffable eternal good promised by God (S 2.238). That is, reason has a contemplative character, the will is an active part of the mind, but it is directed by reason: it moves toward what reason judges to be good and turns away from what reason decides to be bad (S 2.240; F 5.93-80).

However, "after the fall of man from the original greatness, [reason] fell into supremely deep abyss of error. Its natural light was weakened and was covered by a dense darkness of irrationality" (S 2.241), and so reason makes mistakes in perception and reasoning, and the will is sidetracked by egoism, love of pleasure, etc. from reaching the good (S 2.242). The mind still has memory of its primal abilities and can try to gain full knowledge (S 2.243), but only with the help of wisdom, prudence, and virtue can deficiencies of cognition be removed, and can the body be fully controlled by the soul, and can the soul know its obligations and its limitations (S 2.244). A wise man acquires wisdom through knowledge and through faith (S 2.246). Wisdom "determines causes proper to human actions" and

thus it leads to happiness, “the ultimate goal of all for all” (S 2.247). The greatest happiness is “the delight in God and the union with Him”. Secondly, wisdom “prescribes the rule for just actions”, which is the foundation of justice, honesty and decorum (S 2.248). Firm wisdom (“wisdom firmly acquired”) consists in knowledge that is clear, distinct and, if possible, proven. Theological wisdom includes knowledge of things revealed in the Sacred Scripture and in apostolic and church tradition. Inquisitive wisdom includes (S 2.251) clear, distinct and useful knowledge that reason can acquire by itself (S 2.252). Inquisitive wisdom is divided into preparatory (logic, mathematics, languages), instrumental and principal (theoretical – theology, pneumatology and physics – and practical) (S 2.253-256). Natural theology is knowledge that through inborn natural light shows what God demands of people. All other sciences take theology as their foundation. God’s existence has to be proven first and on this rests morality and the belief in the immortality of the soul (S 2.256). If the knowledge of God should be the starting point of all knowledge, then what about unbelievers?

Trediakovskii thought that regardless of what arguments atheists wage, they do that to show how wise they are, although “in their heart they were – not even weakly – convinced about the Existence of God” (P 458). They should stop doing this since their obstinacy will cause that “the door of mercy will be closed” (F 1.550) and their unbelief (or rather the pretence of unbelief) will be punished (F 1.552-554). It is impossible not to see the world as God’s creation. How is then blindness possible? It is not blindness, really:

In fact, everyone sees here the rule of God,
But rejects it though deliberate desire,
Which would not like at all that God existed
So that, unafraid of punishment, could live without restraints.
(F 5.847-850)

Reason not blinded by error (F 1.41), not subdued to passions (F 1.43), not damaged by depravity (F 1.44), and making full use of *lumen naturale* (“природный свет”, F 1.42), is simply unable not to recognize God (F 1.45). The main culprit is passions, which very seldom are leaning toward good (F 5.245-247). The root of passion is in self-love (F 5.249; S 273) and the latter is the result of the fall.

Because passions are the forces of the mind (F 5.227) and passions include love, hatred, wanting, hope, fear, joy, sadness, anger and benevolence (F 5.253-258), would that mean that humans before the fall – which would be Adam and Eve only – did not experience love or joy? The emphasis Trediakovskii placed on two parts of the mind – reason and will – would somehow exclude passions, although they must be there, at least since the fall. Would an ideal human be a dispassionate thinker driven purely by rationality?

How can self-love and passions be conquered? The mind is weak in its opposition of passions and is not sufficiently vigilant to guard itself against their adverse influences (F 5.897-898). The mind at least can try this by developing three habits: wisdom, prudence, virtue. Prudence consists in arriving at a goal using certain means dictated by wisdom. To choose such means, attention is necessary, then analysis of various ways. Prudence also includes predicting results. The prudence faculty is inborn, but not prudence itself; it has to become a habit of reason by work, care and learning, which includes reading historical books to see how problems were solved. Experience is the father of prudence (S 2.276-280). What wisdom is to reason, virtue is to judgment of the heart. Wisdom enlightens virtue; virtue shines upon wisdom. Virtue is the habit of the will by which a person incited by rational love gladly fulfills duties prescribed by the law (S 2.287; F 159-160). “Wisdom and Virtue are sisters for one another, from one father and mother, but Wisdom is older, acceptable in its entire breadth both because of prudence and because of Virtue, and only in proper and strictest characterization it is differentiated from them” (S 2.296). Wisdom, prudence and virtue are thus interdependent, develop and enhance one another, or denigrate and bring down each other. There is no substitute for an effort, for learning, for attempts to improve oneself. Actually, the latter desire can be a good motivation for self-love and thus self-love can eventually lead, if not to self-denial, then at least to tempering its adverse influence – through passions – on the course of one's life.

God

Trediakovskii investigated attributes of God in some detail, in which he intended to remain within the domain of natural theology, but his

vision of God goes far beyond the theoptia resulting only from the observation of nature. He expressed his ideas about God's attributes in many places. For example, in his *Ode on the Instability of the World* we read:

In a word, there is and there will be
 Nothing, except for God
 (Who will not cease to exist
 Nor His abundant love),
 That would be eternal.
 He is one, He is eternal,
 He is powerful, He is true,
 Merciful and infinite,
 Omniscient and perspicacious,
 And rules over all. (IP 78)

However, God's attributes are most fully presented in the closing chapter of the *Theoptia* (in the preface to this chapter, he listed over 20 attributes). We learn from it that God is life and spirit (F 6.7), self-aware (F 6.8), always active (F 6.10; a reference to the scholastic pure and perfect act of Aquinas, *Summa th.* 1.2.3, 1.3.1,2, 1.87.1). God is characterized by spirituality, since what is in the created soul must be to a higher degree in the Creator (F 6.11-17). He is self-subsisting (F 6.18, "самодовольность", *aseitas*) and self-ruling (F 6.19), perfect, since the smallest imperfection would rule out self-subsistence (F 6.20-21). He is without any imperfection and, as such, His existence is necessary (F 6.30-31, 36). God is self-sufficient as the cause of His own existence ("себе в причину", *causa sui*); otherwise, He could not create such a multitude of things (F 6.38-40). God is eternal (F 6.42, 52-53) and infinite (F 6.44), but without parts (F 6.45), his attributes are of infinite perfection (F 6.48-49), so that nothing can be added to these perfections (F 6.51). God is in the eternal present: not in the past, nor in the future (interpretation of F 5.55-57). "He is inside and lives outside of everything" (F 6.66, *totus intra et totus extra*, "весь внутри и внеуду", F 6.75); He is everywhere one and whole (F 6.70), contains everything and permeates everything (F 6.71-73). God is omniscient (F 6.76), He has ideas of all things in His mind (F 6.243), in particular, God knows all that would happen necessarily and all that is the result of

free human will (F 6.109-110), and, as Trediakovskii stated in the Leibnizian spirit, God is able to investigate in His mind all possible worlds that could exist (F 6.86-87): "Out of many possible worlds came this one / Order of all things" (F 6.80-81, 128-129, 252-255, 260). God determines the fate of the world in the best way possible, so that everything evolves toward what is best (F 6.137-149).

"The power of God is infinite", i.e., God is almighty, since "God's essence and being are eternal" (F 6.158-160). Infinity of power could, for Trediakovskii, lead to omnipotence, since he apparently saw only one type of infinity. Only later, with Cantor, different levels of infinity were discovered. However, there is a qualification to the omnipotence: although He can create everything, "'everything' does not include contradiction, / Which our mind would find impossible", but creates only perfection (F 6.164-168). Later Shestov will propose unqualified omnipotence in which two plus two could be five. Also, for Trediakovskii, the most perfect being can create only what is perfect; otherwise, this being would not be almighty (F 6.169-171), which apparently signifies that perfection means also perfection of power, i.e., being omnipotent. It is, however, conceivable that an omnipotent being can create imperfection, if the being is not perfect in all respects.

God is immutable (F 6.198; Hebr. 1:12): He could not have had all perfections, but, while having them, He cannot lose them (F 6.205-206) and so His intelligence is immutable (F 6.230), and so is His will (F 6.232).

God is truthful, i.e., unable to lie (F 6.516-518), which is the consequence of his power, omniscience and love (F 6.520-521), since He would have lacked power to accomplish what He promised (F 6.524-525), or He would lack wisdom to give a promise He could keep (F 6.526), or he would have lacked goodness to keep the promise (F 6.528-529).

God is one (F 6.172). If there were many gods, they would hide their knowledge from one another or they could not do this (F 6.182-184). In the former case they would be omnipotent, but not omniscient, in the latter case, they would be omniscient, but not omnipotent (F 6.185-188). "The holy word" speaks about the Trinity; that is, the unity is in the Trinity, whose nature is a mystery to rea-

son (F 6.190-194). In this, “we make the mind a captive of faith, in this, only faith is all the light, not the weak mind” (F 6.196-197; the mind is given in submission to Christ: 2. Cor. 10:5). Trediakovskii also stated that when we “firmly understand” something, we must believe it (F 6.534-535), which is not necessarily the reversal of the *fides quaerens intellectum* principle.¹³ Faith determined by the Scripture has always the upper hand, it is the foundation of reason and it thus leads to firm understanding of things, whereby firm understanding would be confirmation of faith or elaboration of it.

Theodycy

“This is the best of all worlds” (F 6.260) and “spatially, it is the largest” (F 6.261). It has its being out of nothing (F 6.262). Since things are imperfect, they cannot have existed from eternity (F 6.268-270), so, the world was created (F 6.271) by God (F 6.275), not from God’s being (F 6.276), but out of nothing (F 6.278). God created the world out of His goodness and will to make happy all creation (F 6.285-287). God was not forced to create it; He created it since He wanted it (F 6.297). Created beings are so made that they are useful for one another and serve for one another’s happiness (F 6.302-303; 2.197-199). “To believe that He could have created the world better, / Means to foolishly judge that our God is not good nor wise” (F 6.316-317). How is it possible that in such a world evil exists?

Atheists claimed that a good and living God could not create dangerous animals (P 460). However, animals of prey exist to serve as negative examples of behavior that should be avoided; people can also exercise their courage by hunting and thereby avoid wars (F 3.185-188). Moreover, these animals are sent as punishment for sin (P 460; F 3.651-652). In this way, men can come to their senses and abandon sinful life (F 3.659-602).

Although God allows for moral evil, the sin, He turns us away from it (F 6.482-483). “This permission [to sin] could not be contradictory to the best world order: sin is crooked being” and results from free will’s leaning toward evil (F 6.484-487). Due to the existence of sin, the good can be better known (F 6.489). God respects

¹³) As suggested by Wilhelm Breitschuh, *Die Feoptija*..., cit., p. 404.

human integrity and does not compel anyone to do anything, but provides all means needed to avoid evil (F 6.496-499). Also, in the presence of evil, human perfections show their usefulness and are not weakened by not being used (F 6.500-502). If we did not know what evil is, we would perish in our freedom (F 6.515). Also, good people often suffer and evil people live happy; however, rational beings are created not for themselves but for future life and reward for good people in the afterlife far exceeds their suffering (P 460).

In all this, Trediakovskii was convinced that God is just and that God's justice stems from His nature (F 6.554-555). Perfect God in His rule over the world makes everything just (F 6.564-567). In particular, God's justice does not allow that people take one another's possessions (F 6.574-578) and if this were not punished, God would not have been merciful (F 6.578-579). God wants that people care about one another's wellbeing (F 6.580-582). God could not but create a hindrance to sins through punishment and multiplying virtue in us (F 6.586-589). God is an enemy of sinners and sin is an eternally hateful evil (F 6.594-595). He had to wage the war against sin so that the realm of evil would not be expanded (F 6.598-599). However, had God decided to punish the sin in people, humankind would have perished a long time ago, both in the soul and the body (F 6.600-603). "The fact we do not perish [means that] there is an advocate / Who intercedes in regard of vengeance of divine justice" (F 6.604-605). So it was necessary for the Sinless to become a sin so that we could also become without sin (F 6.608-610), and so, as the Bible proclaims, through the cross Christ reconciled people with God (F 6.612-613; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20).

In Trediakovskii's theodicy, the phenomenon of evil remains as mysterious as ever. He addressed the problem of why God allows evil to exist, but did not provide quite a convincing argument concerning its origin: how did evil arise in the perfect world created by all-perfect God? However, he provided an interesting argument concerning the need for the Savior, or, at least, an Intercessor who prevents the destruction of the world and the evil in it. Because the power of such an Intercessor should be comparable to the power of the just God, this is also a faint natural argument pointing to the Trinity. However, the mystery of the Trinity is the province of pure theology

and Trediakovskii tried to stay away from it. He wanted to remain in the boundaries of natural theology realizing full well its limitations. As he stated, natural theology is the main way to know God, but it is insufficient, since it points to the need of a savior but does not reveal him. It is the Bible that speaks about Christ. So, “natural theology only opens the door to revealed theology” (P 466). He only wanted to show with natural reason that God exists and that a savior is needed, to close the mouth of atheists, deists, unbelievers (P 466) and pantheists (P 460). However, the revealed theology is still needed, this “sacred and holy Theology, the pious investigatress of divine things by enslaving reason in obedience to faith teaches [us] to believe”, as he stated in his *Discourse on Eloquence* (1745, SP 3.559). This theology is based on the Scripture that should be “most reverentially honored” as “the most truthful Word, most worthy of acceptance” (SP 3.571); the Scripture is the source of spiritual knowledge that exceeds human learning; it is above reason, but is not an enemy of reason (SP 2.275), and Trediakovskii accepted this because the church teaches it. He accepted these teachings and did not challenge them anywhere; nowhere did he discuss, say, the mystery of the sacraments, the nature of the Trinity; nowhere did he undertake Bible criticism the way, for instance, Lomonosov and Tatishchev did. Dogmas specific to Christian theology – such as whether pagans can be saved without baptism – he deliberately left to Christian theologians (P 467), meaning, to the Orthodox clergy. Although he drew on the theological tradition of the Western church, he remained to the end faithful to the Orthodox church. In this, however, he was more sensitive to theological issues than most of his contemporaries, even among the clergy. He claimed that he was but a philosopher,¹⁴ but by the nature of the subject, he could not refrain from the discussion of theological issues, even if he wanted this to be only theology within the boundaries of human reason. In all that, he did not try to challenge the church. In particular, a hypothetical assumption on the possibility of heliocentrism and the multiplicity of the worlds was

¹⁴ “My poetry is not theological, but philosophical” (P 500). However, philosophy is “a Godly guide” (“Божественная руководительница”, P 463); a critic wanted to rephrase it as “a guide to God” (P 486), but Trediakovskii held to the original since philosophy is wisdom (P 494).

not an argument against the accepted views of the church, but rather an accommodation of views of atheists to show that even with such hypotheses God must be assumed to exist.

The *Theoptia* is the fullest Russian expression of physico-theology widely discussed at that time in Western Europe. Strong physico-theological statements can be found in Lomonosov, but whereas he made them in a somewhat generic theological spirit, Trediakovskii made them with Christian theology in mind and considered them as an avenue leading to Christian faith. A decade earlier, Kantemir wrote *Letters about Nature and Man*, which are a prose translation of fragments of the very same Fénelon's *Traité* with a few additions of Kantemir's own and also without indicating the source. However, both Kantemir's *Letters* and Trediakovskii's *Theoptia* did not see the light of the day and thus indicated only a strong undercurrent of Russian thought in physico-theology.

Appendix

Pantheism was for Trediakovskii a form of atheism and, as such, it should be rejected. In his view, pantheists, like Stoics, are blind in their wisdom (F 3.1010) and their wisdom is really "blind madness" (F 3.1023). This also includes Spinoza, whose views Trediakovskii presented in the preface to the *Theoptia*.

Spinoza claimed in his *Ethics* that there exist only one being, infinite God [definition 1.6; proposition 1.14], of whom other beings are only different modes [def. 1.5; prop. 1.15, 1.25 and its corollary]; God is an internal (not external) cause of all things/modes [prop. 1.18, 1.25] and all things are in God [prop. 1.15] (P 460). Trediakovskii observed that the "damned sophistry of Spinoza" was criticized by Henry More and by Pierre Poiret, as, in fact, it was. More devoted to it his *Demonstrationis duarum propositionum*¹⁵ and his *Epistola altera ad V. C.*; Poiret wrote a long appendix, *Fundamenta atheismi eversa*, in the second edition of his *Cogitationes rationales*.¹⁶

⁽¹⁵⁾ An English translation of this work is to be found in Alexander Jacob, *Henry More's refutation of Spinoza*. Georg Olms, Hildesheim 1991, pp. 55-119.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Petrus Poiret, *Cogitationes rationales de Deo, anima et malo*. Blaviana, Amstelodami 1685.

Poiret analyzed in some detail Spinoza's *Ethics*, but he limited himself only to the introductory definitions, axioms, and the first 10 propositions of the first part, after which he proposed alternative or opposite propositions, since he was convinced that when Spinoza's propositions can be abolished, then the whole pseudo-philosophy erected on them as its foundation will be shaken.¹⁷ Also, Fénelon in his *Traité* offered four arguments against Spinoza (ch. 2.3 on Spinozianism).¹⁸ However, Trediakovskii did not seem to use arguments of the three authors in his own, brief criticism of Spinoza's thinking that comes "from the very bottom of hell" (P 461).

According to Trediakovskii, Spinoza said that 1) such is the essence of God that He has to necessarily come from Himself [prop. 1.11]. This is true about an uncreated being but incorrect about a being that is a subject of another being, said Trediakovskii, but there is no point in this remark. 2) One Being cannot be made by another being, said Spinoza [prop. 1.6]. However, a perfect Being can create a being with limitations. This criticism corresponds to Poiret's *propositio 6 opposita*,¹⁹ and to similar remarks of More.²⁰ 3) The same nature cannot be in the essence of two beings [or two substances: prop. 1.5], since one of them would be the cause of another. The conclusion is Trediakovskii's and it is unclear why it should be so. However, the essence of each being is extension [prop. 2.2] (P 461). As Trediakovskii expounded, in a thinking being, this extension is active; in bodies expanded in three directions it is passive. In an uncreated and necessary Being, extension is active without boundaries; an accidentally thinking being has extension active and passive, also without boundaries; in three-dimensional bodies, it is passive and limited. Is there even a shadow of contradiction in the fact that a perfect, infinite Being can create limited beings (P 462; F 1.461-

⁽¹⁷⁾ *Ivi*, p. 729.

⁽¹⁸⁾ 1. An infinite universe is mutable if all its parts are mutable. 2. If the whole is simple, then each of its parts is the whole. 3. Finite and measurable parts can only constitute a finite whole. 4. An infinite whole requires infinite perfection, but the infinite universal mass has no self-knowledge.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Petrus Poiret, *Cogitationes...*, cit., p. 796.

⁽²⁰⁾ See the English translation in Alexander Jacob, *Henry More's refutation of Spinoza*, pp. 65-66.

464)? Only “damned Spinoza” could conceive it in “his deprived reason”. Also, 1) it is a contradiction to claim that the same being can be infinitely active and infinitely inactive, since it is a contradiction that a being that is only passive can be alive and thinking as it is the case in Spinoza’s God. 2) If created beings really belonged to God’s essence, then Spinoza’s God would not be God in many lawless people. This corresponds to More’s argument that since “stones, lead, an ass, a toad, a louse” are individual beings, then they would be “modes of the attributes of God”.²¹ 3) Since things are mutable, it should be believed that God is too (P 462); this argument corresponds to argument 1 of Fénelon.

It seems that Trediakovskii knew Spinoza from second hand, since at times he tried to reproduce some of his arguments the way not to be found in *Ethics*. It also seems that he did not consult More’s and Poiret’s criticisms of Spinoza. His own criticism is not systematic, not really profound, but fairly competent.

RIASSUNTO

La *Feoptija* è la principale opera filosofica di Trediakovskij; circa la metà di essa è una versione in versi del *Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieu* di Fénelon. La *Feoptija* è la più completa espressione russa della fisico-teologia ampiamente discussa all’epoca in Europa Occidentale.

Riprendendo il termine *feoptija* dalla teologia ortodossa, Trediakovskij ne ha drasticamente cambiato il significato. Con *feoptija* si intende tradizionalmente la visione mistica di Dio, il contatto diretto dell’anima con Dio. Per Trediakovskij la visione di Dio è mediata dalla natura. Guardando la natura, ognuno di noi può vedere non Dio, ma la manifestazione del potere, della cura e dell’amore di Dio.

Trediakovskij ha prima presentato le prove tradizionali dell’esistenza di Dio (usate principalmente nel Cristianesimo Occidentale), poi si è concentrato sulla prova derivante dal disegno divino. Egli ha fornito molti esempi di tale disegno rinvenibili nella natura animata e inanimata, esempi che non si possono spiegare in altro modo che come opera di Dio. Inoltre, Trediakovskij ha esaminato la disposizione psicologica dell’uomo a mostrare la sua provenienza divina e ha poi indagato nel dettaglio gli attributi di Dio. Nel fare questo intendeva rimanere entro l’ambito della teologia naturale, ma la sua visione di Dio va molto al di là della *feoptija* risultante dalla sola osservazione della natura.

⁽²¹⁾ *Ivi*, p. 71.

