

GREEK SYNTACTIC FEATURES IN DIMITRIE CANTEMIR'S NEO-LATIN: THE DETERMINER PHRASE¹

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Abstract. Neo-Latin syntax can be discussed in different terms depending on the author under consideration. The present research focuses mainly on the Latin of Dimitrie Cantemir, but also extends to the works of other humanists to highlight an ingenious way of constructing the determiner phrase by borrowing the definite article from Ancient Greek. Thus, our study explains, on the one hand, why late authors resort to a syntactic pattern that is foreign to Classical Latin, and, on the other hand, presents the detailed structure of these constructions and how they fit into the sentence.

Keywords: Neo-Latin, Greek, determiner phrase, definite article, definiteness, nominalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to explore a little-discussed feature of the syntax of the Neo-Latin language³ which concerns the borrowing of foreign grammatical tools in order to satisfy the need to express functional categories which Latin, in certain contexts, cannot express. It is about taking the Greek article as such and integrating it into contexts where it is necessary to mark definiteness, as well as case.

It is not at all unnatural for the Renaissance authors to refer to the Classical Greek model, whether we are talking about philosophy, literature, or language. The borrowing of Greek terms is a practice to which they frequently resort: sometimes words are transliterated and adapted to the Latin linguistic system, sometimes they are quoted as such, even using the Hellenic alphabet. The latter is the strategy adopted by some writers when

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³ The last stage in the evolution of the Latin language, Neo-Latin is born with the Humanist Age (so from the 14th century), which is why it is often also called Humanist Latin, and stretches chronologically to the present day. It has functioned as a *lingua franca* of the entire European culture. In the Romanian area, the adoption of Neo-Latin is linked to the penetration of Humanism, with the 16th century. For more information on the periodization and specificity of Neo-Latin in Europe, but also in Romania, see Nicolae (2006: 13–23). For an overview of Dimitrie Cantemir's Humanist Latin, see Tărnăuceanu (2008: 27–44) and Vasileanu (2019: 32–38).

they resort to the use of the neuter Greek article *τό* in works written in Latin: the combination of this particle with Latin or foreign terms gives rise to hybrid constructions in which the Greek alphabet is combined with the Latin alphabet.

2. CORPUS

Our observations start, first of all, from Dimitrie Cantemir's treatise on "theologo-physics" (*theologo-physice*), *Sacrosanctae scientiae indepingibilis imago (SSII)*, written at the beginning of the 18th century in Latin. Given the philosophical-scientific nature of the work, which requires a special language, working with concepts from the fields of philosophy and physics, often of Greek origin, the author resorts to neological lexical creations with Greek etymology, but also quotes words and expressions directly in Greek. Cantemir's use of the Greek article is also part of this series, since, given the technical, difficult language, the need for precise expression, that leaves no room for interpretation, is apparent. Thus, recourse is made to the borrowing of the Greek article, preferred for its versatility (Faure 2014: 443–444), which disambiguates nominal contexts and gives them a precise syntactic framing in the utterance. Although we started from the work of the Moldavian prince, our research shows that not only Cantemir resorts to this artifice, but also other authors of the respective centuries (e.g. Ludovico Marracci, Leonardus Vandevalus, etc.), proving that this linguistic practice, non-existent in Classical Latin, was specific to the Renaissance period in the evolution of the Latin language.

3. THE ARTICLE: GREEK VS LATIN

The grammatical system of the two classical languages, Latin and Ancient Greek, has undergone a similar evolution over time, with the influence of Greek on Latin also being crucial in the field of syntax. However, as far as the class of determiners within the noun phrase is concerned, Latin has never had an article, unlike Greek, which to this day has a definite article. Quintilianus proudly states: "Our language has no need of articles" (*Noster sermo articulos non desiderat – Inst. 1.4.19*). Although the grammars discuss many different contexts in which the values of the Greek article are actualized (Humbert 1960: 44–56), its main function remains that of marking "the discourse referent as identifiable" (Bakker 2009: 162); in other words, the presence of the proclitic article, accompanying a noun, marks that noun as definite, while its absence is tantamount to a lack of definiteness.

For Latin, however, only the context or the existence of other determiners in the sentence (demonstrative pronouns or various other indefinite pronouns, for example) allow distinguishing a definite from an indefinite noun, or a referential from a nonreferential NP. In the post-classical periods in the evolution of Latin, starting with Medieval Latin and, of course, in Vulgar Latin, with the syncretism of the demonstrative pronoun system and the disappearance of the formal distinction between them (i.e. proximity/distance/identity/intensity), *ille* will also acquire the function of definite article, and the cardinal numeral *unus* will also be used as an indefinite article (Goddard Elliott 1997: 35–36). From here, the evolution to Romance languages is well-known (see Ledgeway 2012: § 4.2).

In Greek, the article is capable of projecting a functional category of its own, namely the determiner phrase: [DP [NP]] (Faure 2014). It selects as complements common and proper nouns, infinitives, participles, finite and nonfinite sentences alike, but not only, being a multifunctional and indispensable grammatical tool that individualizes Greek language in many ways.

4. TREATMENT OF INDECLINABLE WORDS

The Greek article in Neo-Latin writings not only functions as a mark of definiteness, but is also an ingenious way of marking cases, especially when it comes to foreign words, which are not adapted to the Latin language and for which synthetic case marking (through case desinences) is not possible. Indeclinable nouns show different treatments in Cantemir's work, sometimes even within the same work (i.e. *SSII*). We will dwell first on the name *Adam*. A word of Hebrew origin (אָדָם), *Adam* was borrowed into Greek (Ἀδάμ) and Latin without being included and adapted to the paradigm of any declension at first. Predictably, the term later developed declinable forms (Gr. Ἄδαμος, -ου, Lat. *Adamus*, -ae/-i), but the indeclinable variant remained dominant in usage (the *Vulgate*, for example, attests only the indeclinable form).

In *SSII*, the author uses both the form *Adamus*, -i, of second declension, and the indeclinable form. The noun included in the paradigm of the second declension, the most frequently used one, is attested in all cases: nominative (1), genitive (2), dative (3), accusative (4) and ablative (5), with the exception of the vocative, while the indeclinable variant of the noun occurs in nominative (6), genitive (7), accusative (8) and vocative (9) cases.

- (1) Cum **Adamus** vidisset incolatum suum a se longe recessisse. (*SSII* 3.2)⁴
'When **Adam** saw that his dwelling place had departed from himself.'
- (2) Vnde clarescit secundam definitionem complecti fere omnem **Adami** [...] progeniem. (*SSII* 3.2)
'Hence it becomes clear that the second definition embraces almost the entire offspring of **Adam**.'
- (3) **Adamo** pelliceae tunicae a Deo datae mysterium. (*SSII Index*)
'The mystery of the leather tunic given by God to **Adam**.'
- (4) **Adamum** in maledictione benedicit. (*SSII* 2.29)
'[God] blesses **Adam** in the curse.'
- (5) Et fit a Deo **pro Adamo** et uxore eius pellicea tunica. (*SSII* 2.29)
'And a leather tunic is made by God for **Adam** and his wife.'
- (6) Homo, id est generis simul atque peccati progenitor **Adam**. (*SSII* 2.28)
'The man, that is **Adam**, the ancestor of both mankind and sin.'
- (7) Siquidem constructio Babylonicae turris ab omnibus Orientalibus filiis **Adam** inchoata est. (*SSII* 3.28)
'For the building of the Tower of Babel was started by all the Eastern sons of **Adam**.'

⁴ The Latin and Greek texts are taken from the editions listed in the bibliography of the article, under "Sources", while the translations belong to us.

- (8) **Post Adam**, Abel, Enoch atque Noë sortiti sunt. (*SSII* 3.2)
 ‘**After Adam** were chosen Abel, Enoch and Noah.’
- (9) “Vbi es, **Adam?**” Aeterna vocat Charitas. (*SSII* 2.29)
 ‘« Where are you, **Adam?** » Eternal Love is calling him.’

Although our study deals with the non-Latin means of rendering functions in the noun phrase, we have also exemplified the contexts in which the declinable form of the noun *Adam* appears to show that, when Cantemir uses the indeclinable variant, it is in fact a form of linguistic *variatio*. As regards strictly the noun phrases in which the indeclinable form *Adam* appears, in the absence of case morphemes, word order is the main method by which case functions can be expressed. In fact, late Latin will to some extent fix the word order of constituents in the nominal phrase, with modifiers and complements tending to be placed after the head of the phrase (Halichias 2018: 206), a rule that is maintained in Romanian. Thus, whether we are talking about the influence of late Latin word order, or the influence of Romanian, which is also obvious in Cantemir’s writing in many ways, it is clear that we are not discussing the customs of Classical Latin when the possessive genitive follows the head noun (*filiis Adam*, in (7)), since Classical Latin presents a rather loose, in any case inconsistent, word order in the case of a NP consisting of a noun and a genitival modifier/complement (Spevak 2010: 265). In the context of a temporal adjunct, the accusative case is marked by the corresponding preposition (*post Adam*, in (8)).

While in example (7) above, the genitive of an indeclinable noun is marked by means of word order, in another work (*Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae*), Cantemir renders the genitive of a Turkish proper noun, not adapted to the Latin language, by means of the definite article taken from Greek (10). As Nicolae (2013: 43) points out, “in this context, the lack of article in Latin and Turkish requires the author to resort to the Greek article *τοῦ*, which becomes necessary for the expression of the genitive case, for a non-Latin proper name”.

- (10) Aga [...] punit, eademque fere munia explet, quae inter Turcas *τοῦ* “**Ieniczer Agasi**” esse solent. (DM, A 106, *apud* Nicolae 2013: 43)
 ‘The Agha punishes and performs much the same duties which, among Turks, are usually called *those of* « **Ieniczer Agasi** ».’

5. INFINITIVE IN THE DP

In what follows, we will consider a particular feature of Dimitrie Cantemir’s Latin, which consists in the use of the Greek definite article to nominalize infinitives and whole phrases. In Ancient Greek, the article had the ability to transform the infinitive, together with all its complements, into NP, which in turn was subordinated to the article, head of DP. This use of the infinitive was called *articular infinitive* (Van Emde Boas *et al.* 2019: 601). As a nonfinite verb form with nominal properties (Pinkster 2015: 57–58), the Latin infinitive can cumulate functions such as subject (11) or direct object (12), having the value of a singular neuter noun.

- (11) **Dolere** malum est. (Cic. *Fin.* 5.84)⁵
 ‘To suffer is bad.’
- (12) Quia vix arma secum **efferre** hostis potuit. (Liv. 3.22)
 ‘Since the enemy could barely **take** his arms with him.’

The Greek infinitive with nominal value⁶, on the other hand, can appear in two instances: without an article (as in Latin) and with an article. When used without an article (13), the infinitive has limited functions (subject or object), whereas, by articulation, a DP (14) is obtained, in which the article selects the infinitive (NP) as its complement. By the inflection of the article, the phrase obtained (DP) contains case information, which the infinitive, being indeclinable, does not have in itself.

- (13) Τοῖσιν δ' Ἡφαίστος κλυτοτέχνης ἦρχ' **ἀγορεύειν**_{direct object}. (Hom. *Il.* 1.571)
 ‘Hephaestus, the skillful artist, began **to speak** to them.’
- (14) Ὁ δὲ οὐτε ἄλλως ἐστὶν ἀφύης πρὸς τὴν [DP **τοῦ μανθάνειν**]_{genitive modifier} δύναμιν φιλότιμός τε θαυμαστῶς. (Pl. *Ep.* 338.d.7)
 ‘He is not only endowed with an innate ability **to learn**, but is also a great lover of honor.’

Thus, the infinitive in DP, together with the neuter definite article, behaves just like an ordinary noun, expressing various syntactic functions, of which, in Cantemir's work, the subject(ive) predicative complement is most often found (15), (16), (17) and (18). Sometimes the article is doubled by the intensive demonstrative *ipsum*, functioning as an emphatic determiner (19). At the same time, the DP consisting of the article and the infinitive may appear as a direct object, as in (20) and (21), or as a restrictive modifier in the genitive case (22), (23), (24).

- (15) Quod est [DP **τὸ esse**] eorum. (*SSII* 5.2)
 ‘This is their **being**.’
- (16) Hoc est „Deum esse [DP **τὸ esse**]”. (*SSII* 4.3)
 ‘That is, God is **the being**.’
- (17) Forma nihil nisi [DP **τὸ esse**], et vita rei. (*SSII Index*)
 ‘Form is nothing but **the being** and the life of the thing.’
- (18) Siquidem quaelibet forma non est, nisi [DP **τὸ esse**] aut vita rei. (*SSII* 5.7)
 ‘That is, form is nothing but **the being** and the life of the thing.’
- (19) Quae est forma, anima, vita, et [DP **ipsum τὸ esse**] hominis. (*SSII* 5.4)
 ‘This is the form, the soul, the life, and **the very being** of man.’
- (20) Quae forma, eo quod rei vere attribuat [DP **τὸ esse**] sui, vere ‘forma essentialis’ est atque dicitur. (*SSII* 5.8)
 ‘This form, because it truly assigns to the thing its **being**, is and is truly called « essential form ».’

⁵ In abbreviating the names of ancient classical authors and works, we have followed the guidelines established by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition), available online, at URL: [www.oxfordre.com/classics/page/ocdabbreviations].

⁶ In this chapter we deal exclusively with the infinitive with nominal value. However, in ancient languages, the infinitive was frequently used predicatively, in subordination, in complement clauses (i.e. *nominative/accusative and infinitive*). The predicative use of the infinitive in main clauses is rare: see Ernout & Thomas (2002: 270–272) for Latin and Sfirski-Läudat (2022: 36–154) for Greek.

- (21) {{Quae}} incomposita atque exanimis est, [DP τὸ **esse**] et vitam rei non potest dare. (SSII 5.7)
 ‘This [i.e. matter], since it is unformed and inanimate, cannot give **the being** and the life of the thing.’
- (22) Momentum [DP τὸ **intellectualiter intelligere**]. (SSII 1.2)
 ‘The moment **of intellectual understanding**.’
- (23) Ipsum etiam minimum [DP τὸ **intellectualiter intelligere**] punctum. (SSII 1.9)
 ‘The very smallest point **of intellectual understanding**.’
- (24) Punctum [DP τὸ **intellectualiter intelligere**] ineffabile. (SSII Index)
 ‘The point **of intellectual understanding** is ineffable.’

In these examples, we notice a reduced lexical variation, the infinitives in DP being only *esse* and *intelligere* – basic terms, specific to philosophical speech. As for the syntagm *τὸ esse* ‘being, essence’, this renders the Greek phrase *τὸ εἶναι* (article + infinitive of the verb ‘to be’), which has become a philosophical concept and is frequently used in Aristotelian writings, from which Cantemir draws inspiration. Although the Latin philosophical vocabulary has the abstract noun *essentia*, which closely reproduces the Greek concept mentioned above and which Cantemir himself uses very often in his treatise, this does not prevent the author from varying, thus coming closer to the Greek model. Moreover, Greek philosophical language also uses, interchangeably, with slight differences in meaning, *τὸ εἶναι* and the corresponding abstract noun *οὐσία*.

On the other hand, in the case of the syntagm *τὸ intellectualiter intelligere*, the DP consisting of article and infinitive could not be replaced by a simple NP, because the corresponding abstract noun (*intellegentia*) does not fit in the given contexts, where ‘understanding’ is thought of as a complex process, and the process can only be rendered by the infinitive, due to the information of time, respectively of aspect, that it embodies, unlike abstract nouns (Allen & Greenough 1903: 286). At the same time, the DP in examples (22), (23) and (24) is more complex in structure than (15)–(21) in that the infinitive is joined by an adverb modifier (*intellectualiter*). The whole expression (adverb + infinitive) is thus nominalized by the article *τὸ*.

Looking closer at the situation of emphatic determination in example (19), we notice in the structure of the syntagm *ipsum τὸ esse* the pattern of a complex DP, specific to the Greek language, in which overdetermination by demonstrative pronouns is possible and is very frequent. To illustrate the syntactic deep structure of the *ipsum τὸ esse* phrase, we turn to the interpretation model of constituent projection provided by Faure (2021: 291).

[DP [DemP toúto] [D' τὸ [NP chōrion]]]

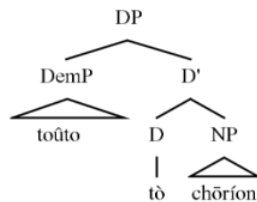


Fig. 1 (Faure 2021: 291)

[DP [DemP ipsum] [D' τὸ [NP esse]]]

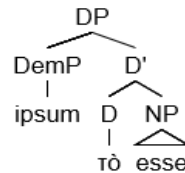


Fig. 2

According to this analysis, the intensive demonstrative *ipsum* occupies the Specifier position of the DP, functioning both as an overdeterminer and as an intensifier.

6. COMPLEX DPs

Not only infinitives can be nominalized using the article in Greek, but also whole sentences of any kind. In this regard, Faure (2021: 284) points out that the Greek article “is more powerful than the English or French definite article”. In example (25), in the DP τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν, the article τὸ substantivates a finite imperative sentence (γνῶθι σαυτὸν ‘know thyself!’), whereas in τὸ μηδὲν ἄγαν (‘nothing in excess’), a complex AdvP (μηδὲν ἄγαν) is nominalized.

- (25) Λέγω δὲ δεδημοσιευμένα ὅτιον [DP τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν] καὶ [DP τὸ μηδὲν ἄγαν]. (Arist. *Rh.* 1395a21)
 ‘I’m talking about maxims like « **know thyself** » and « **nothing in excess** ».’

Dimitrie Cantemir resorts to the use of the Greek article with this function in two difficult syntactic contexts. In (26), the author quotes the biblical expression *in quacumque die* (*Genesis* 2: 17) and subordinates it, as a whole, to the predicate *opponitur*, placing it in the syntactic position of dative (a position proper to an implicit, unexpressed indirect object NP with the meaning ‘expression’, in relation to which the phrase *in quacumque die* can be interpreted as a denominative modifier). Thus, the DP in (26) is also analyzable as a fragmentary structure, not only as a substantivation of a prepositional phrase. In the following example (27), the adverb *semper* is nominalized, and the DP containing it is placed in dative position, as a complement of the adjective *contraria*. Both situations contain sentences in which the absence of the article would give rise to ungrammatical expressions. In these contexts, the word order cannot be used to mark and express the dative case of the given syntagms, as in the case of the indeclinable nouns discussed above, because, first of all, in the absence of the article, they are not nouns.

- (26) Adverbium “Nunc” (quod opponitur [DP τῷ “**In quacumque die**”]). (*SSII* 2.32)
 ‘The adverb « Now » (as opposed *to* « **On the day when** »).’
 (27) Cum enumeret non entia, utpote [DP τῷ **semper**] contraria. (*SSII* 4.13)
 ‘When he lists the non-beings as contrary *to* « **Always** ».’

In other places, to refer to similar phrases, Cantemir uses a noun to which they are subordinated as denominative modifiers.

- (28) Proponuntur [NP **adverbia** [“**nunc**”]_{Modif}, [“**ne forte**”]_{Modif}] et conditionale [NP **praeceptum** [“**in quacumque die**”]_{Modif}]. (*SSII* 2.32)
 ‘The adverbs « **now** », « **lest** » and the conditional command « **on the day when** » are proposed.’

7. THE GREEK ARTICLE IN OTHER NEO-LATIN AUTHORS

Chevillard (2007: 16) points out that Roman grammarians naturally used the Greek article $\tau\acute{o}$ in their treatises to explain concepts and terms, since the science of Latin grammar was tributary to Greek grammar. However, we do not find this practice in Classical Latin, but later in the language of the Middle Ages, without it becoming common practice. The grammarian Priscianus, who lived and wrote between the 5th and 6th centuries AD, uses $\tau\acute{o}$ to quote the demonstrative pronoun *idem* in apposition (29). In the absence of the article, the syntactic status of the quoted word can become ambiguous. Here, therefore, $\tau\acute{o}$ serves to mark the introduction of a quotation.

- (29) Vnum solum pronomen compositum invenitur apud nos, [DP $\tau\acute{o}$ 'idem'], quod secundam notitiam eiusdem personae significat. (GL III: 124)
 'Only one compound pronoun exists in our language, *idem*, which marks the second mention of the same person.'

However, the use of the Greek article in Latin remains specific to the Humanist Era (IJsewijn *et al.* 1995: 47) and can even be found in texts written in other languages, for example in French in the treatise *Nouvelle méthode latine* from Port-Royale (Chevillard 2007: 16–17).

In this era, authors who write in Latin resort to the use of the Greek article, like Dimitrie Cantemir. Ludovico Marracci, known, among other things, for his translation of the *Qur'an* into Latin, adopts, in one place, the dative form of the article $\tau\acute{o}$ to introduce a proper noun not adapted to the Latin language, and therefore indeclinable (30), the DP thus obtained having the function of an indirect object and being assigned the theta role of Goal.

- (30) Ne forte [...] turbas excitarent ac per technas Imperium a se [DP $\tau\acute{o}$ *Aly*] destinatum praeiperent. (ATU: 29)
 'Lest they stir up the crowds and, by their plotting, get their hands on the Empire he intended *for Aly*.'

In a letter written in 1522 by a Flemish physician named Vandevalus to the Humanist Craneveldius, the article $\tau\acute{o}$ appears when quoting an Arabic term. The use of $\tau\acute{o}$ is imposed by the need to highlight a foreign, unintelligible word with a very small phonetic body, which could raise problems of interpretation in the utterance from a syntactic point of view, in terms of its function in relation to the other words in the sentence. In this sense, the article nominalizes the quoted term and provides it with case information, marking it as a subject in the nominative.

- (31) Nam [DP $\tau\acute{o}$ 'al'] articulus est Arabum. (IJsewijn *et al.* 1995: 47)
 'For *al* is the article of the Arabs.'

8. CONCLUSIONS

The tireless attempts of Humanist writers to produce texts in Latin encountered a natural problem: this language had not been spoken naturally for centuries; therefore, any attempt to use it became inevitably marked by artificiality. At the same time, the influence

of vernacular languages on humanist writing was very strong. This explains the use of the Greek article in their writings. While Classical Latin had no need for it, the article plays an important role in modern languages. Although it has a low frequency, the use of the Greek article in Neo-Latin becomes necessary in complicated syntactic contexts, which can give rise to ambiguous interpretations. The borrowing of this grammatical tool from the Greek language is justified precisely by the features of the Renaissance period, the most important of which was the return to ancient classical roots, Greek and Latin having always formed an inseparable pair.

In Cantemir, we have observed that the article $\tau\omicron$ accumulates several values: first, at the functional level, it projects the determiner phrase; then, it nominalizes infinitives, prepositional and adverbial phrases, it imprints the case category over indeclinable nouns and, finally, introduces quotations. At the same time, our research has shown that not only Dimitrie Cantemir resorts to the use of $\tau\omicron$, but also other authors of the Renaissance. Therefore, we can affirm that this is a specific practice of the Neo-Latin language.

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