



AGRIPPA VON NETTESHEIM'S INFLUENCE
ON SEBASTIAN FRANCK

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Abstract

Sebastian Franck commented and translated parts of Agrippa's *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, confirming that Franck knew at least some of this philosopher's work. However, there is no detailed research on the influence Agrippa had on Franck—a gap this paper tries to fill. In a comparison of the metaphysical belief systems of both Franck and Agrippa, important parallels concerning the soul and Christology can be found. Notably, Agrippa and Franck were both believers in the Platonic doctrine of the tripartite soul. According to this doctrine, the human being consists of the mind, soul, and body, the spiritual mind being the part that never dies. However, one difference between Agrippa and Franck was that Agrippa had a cosmological perspective that was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism and Hermeticism. In contrast, the Neoplatonic concept of the world soul did not make sense in Franck's philosophical system of beliefs because Franck denies the idea that the world is conducted by rationality. His pessimistic view of the world and the human being did not blend with this idea of the world soul. There were some similarities between Franck and Agrippa, but ultimately, this investigation shows that Franck only adopted the ideas of the wise "Agrippa" that were compatible with his own philosophy, but the metaphysical concept of both philosophers was still very similar.

Keywords: Agrippa von Nettesheim, Sebastian Franck, mind, soul, inner Christ, world soul, Christology, conception of god, astrology

1. Introduction

Sebastian Franck translated and commented on parts of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* of Agrippa von Nettesheim in his second *Kronbüchlein*.¹ Therefore, we know that Franck read Agrippa.² However, Lehel³ investigated the influence of the hermetic books of Franck and found they referred only very briefly to Agrippa. Moreover, there are no definitive indications of Agrippa's *Occulta Philosophia* in the works of Franck, and this book was not found in his library after his death. The fact that Franck took great care in his translation and commentary on *De Vanitate Scientiarum* means that it could be assumed he knew Agrippa very well, so why is Agrippa's other significant work *Occulta Philosophia* never mentioned by Franck?

Lehel mentioned that Agrippa made a lecture in Padua about Hermes Trismegistos in the year 1515, which this paper suggests introduced an interesting aspect of Agrippa's philosophy to Franck, to which he closely adhered in his fourth *Kronbüchlein*:

The word of god is infinite as god/infinite/unspeakable/a mind/no human being can talk about it/it is not possible to see or to hear god/... only one can speak about it metaphorically/the word of god is not different/than the emanation/being/Emanation/Image/Character/and illusion of god/in all creatures/especially but in heart of all calm human beings/... it has enlightened and taught/ Adam/ Abel/ Noha/ Loth/ Abraham/ Job/ Trismegistum/ Mercurium/ Plotinum/ Corneliu/and the heart of all pious pagans.⁴

¹ Franck, *Sämtliche Werke*, 117-185. There is no English translation of the collected works of Sebastian Franck.

² Agrippa's *De vanitate scientiarum* was founded at this library after his death 1542 (Bruckner, *Verzeichnis der hinterlassenen Bücher Sebastian*, 289). Franck also mentions Agrippa in his fourth *Kronbüchlein* where he enumerates wise philosophers like Hermes Trismegistus and Plotin together with Cornelius Agrippa (Franck, *Sämtliche Werke* (complete works), 244).

³ Lehel, *Narrheit, Paradoxität und Hermetismus bei Sebastian Franck*, 162.

⁴ Franck, *Sämtliche Werke*, 244. The text in original: Gottes Wort ist wie Gott/ onendlich/onaußsprechlich/ ain Gaist/das kain lebendig mensch reden/ sehen/ oder hören kann / und leben. So vil man aber menschlich davn und bildtlich reden kan/ so ist Gottes Wort nichts anders/ dann der außfluß/ wesen/ außguß/bild/Character/unnd schein Gottes/ in allen Creaturn/ sonderlich aber in aller gelassenen menschen hertz/ als ain siegel getruckt/ das in allen Creaturn weset/ in allen glaubigen prediget/ in allen gottlosen kifet/ küplet/ hadert/vnnd die Welt vmb die sünd strafft/ und das von anfang/ Adam/ Abel/ Noha/ Loth/ Abraham/ Job/ Trismegistum/ Mercurium/ Plotinum/ Corneliu/ unnd aller frummen Haiden hertz hat erleücht und gelert.“. Franck cites from the fourth *Kronbüchlein*. The text from Franck was translated by the author from the Old High German language. There are no translation into English in the literature.

Franck listed “Cornelium” Agrippa beside Plotin and Hermes Trismegistos as “illuminated philosophers.” In the literature, Franck himself was classified as theological spiritualist.⁵ The influence of Johannes Tauler and Meister Eckhart was mentioned, and Franck cited these authors in many works. Dejung⁶ is one of the most famous researchers in the literature on Franck and he wrote a dissertation about the philosophy of history of Sebastian Franck, which mentioned Agrippa many times.⁷ According to Dejung, Franck cited Agrippa word for word very often.⁸ However, his research does not focus on the influence of Agrippa on Franck.

In the twenty-first century, there have been a few investigations about the influence of hermetic philosophy on Sebastian Franck.⁹ Hannak produced a very detailed investigation of the influence of hermetic philosophy on Sebastian Franck (a German translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was found in the library of Augsburg, and scholarship generally accepts that Franck was the author, though this translation was never published). She suggests that Franck’s doctrine of the “inner word” or “inner Christ” can be found in the *Pimander*. At the beginning of her treatise on Franck, she mentions the influence of mystical spiritualism and Agrippa;¹⁰ however, she did not investigate the influence of Agrippa in detail. Barbers¹¹ analyzed Agrippa’s influence on Franck very shortly and referred extensively to German Mysticism but only briefly to Gnosticism. Johannes Tauler was very relevant in German Mysticism, and his strong familiarity with Caspar von Schwenckfeld, Hans Denck, and Johannes Bänderlin was also emphasized in Barbers. A very well-known name in the research of Franck is Siegfried Wollgast, who has published a great many papers and books

⁵ Especially the very well known Franck-researcher Christoph Dejung emphasizes the spiritualism of Franck (Dejung, *Wahrheit und Häresie. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichtsphilosophie bei Sebastian Franck* (Truth and heresy. An investigation of the philosophy of history in the works of Franck.); C. Dejung, *Kryptoradikalität in Francks Ulmer Declaration* (cryptical radicality of Franck in his declaration of Ulm), 107-140.

⁶ Dejung, *Wahrheit und Häresie. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichtsphilosophie bei Sebastian Franck*.

⁷ Dejung, *Wahrheit und Häresie. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichtsphilosophie bei Sebastian Franck*, 38 und 45.

⁸ Dejung, *Wahrheit und Häresie. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichtsphilosophie bei Sebastian Franck*.

⁹ For example: Lehel, *Narrheit, Paradoxität und Hermetismus bei Sebastian Franck*, 145-171; Hannak, *Geist=Reiche Kritik. Hermetik, Mystik und das Werden der Aufklärung in spiritualistischer Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit* (Ingenious critique. Hermetism, Mysticism and the coming into being of the enlightenment in the spiritualistic literature of the early modern era); Wollgast, *Kryptoradikalität in Sebastian Francks Guldin Arch und Das verbüthschiert Buch* (Crypto radicality in Sebastian Franck’s Guldin Arch and of the „Verbüthschiert Buch“), 141-163.

¹⁰ Hannak, *Geist=Reiche Kritik. Hermetik, Mystik und das Werden der Aufklärung in spiritualistischer Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit*, 73.

¹¹ Barbers, *Toleranz bei Sebastian Franck* (Tolerance in the works of Sebastian Franck).

about him.¹² Wollgast's thoughts about the influence of Agrippa on Franck were that Franck interpreted Agrippa only in such a way that he fit into Franck's own philosophical approach. We will borrow from that approach in this paper. For example, Agrippa's main conclusion of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* was that sciences and art are not compatible with the word of God. Franck's reception of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* shows that he did not want to be influenced by dogmatic or scholastic scholars. Wollgast accentuated that Franck did not want to suggest the complete negation of all knowledge and sciences, as he felt Agrippa had done.¹³ Wollgast tried to bring Franck near to a materialistic pantheism. However, he ultimately had to reject this thesis, meaning that for him Franck's understanding of God was more compatible with an idealistic pantheism (for Wollgast, each form of pantheism is also a kind of pantheism).¹⁴

Agrippa's philosophy is interpreted as syncretism in the literature. The hermetic influence on Agrippa has been analyzed very well by Wouter Hanegraaff.¹⁵ Hanegraaff focused on the influence of the Christian Hermetist Ludovico Lazzarelli, who has not been studied much in the literature. He proved that the relationship between Hermeticism and magic is very complex. Frances Yates¹⁶ underestimated the complexity of that relationship. Yates taught that Agrippa was a representative of the hermetic tradition in the Renaissance, whereby she did not make a distinction between magic and Hermeticism. Hanegraaff demonstrated that one reason for Yates's interpretation was that she was citing systematically from the *Asclepius* and not from the *Pimander*.¹⁷

Beside Hermeticism, Agrippa was also influenced by Neoplatonism,¹⁸ from kabbalah, astrology,¹⁹ and manticism.²⁰ He covers these topics in the *Occulta philosophia*, but not in *De*

¹² For example: Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus im 16. Jahrhundert. Sebastian Franck und seine Wirkungen auf die Entwicklung der pantheistischen Philosophie in Deutschland*. See also: Wollgast, *Kryptoradikalität in Sebastian Francks Guldin Arch und Das verbüthschiert Buch*, 141-162.

¹³ Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus im 16. Jahrhundert*, 90.

¹⁴ Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus im 16. Jahrhundert*, 151-165.

¹⁵ For example: Hanegraaff, *Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa*, 92-98. Hanegraaff, *Better than magic. Cornelius Agrippa and Lazzarellian Hermeticism*, 1-25.

¹⁶ Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the hermetic tradition*, 130-144.

¹⁷ Hanegraaff, 'Better than magic', 2.

¹⁸ For example: Lechner, *Transzendenz und Immanenz Gottes bei Giordano Bruno*, 34-37.

¹⁹ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia. Libri tres*, Book I, Chapter XXII-XXIX. In Chapter XXII you find at the beginning: „Manifestum est, quod omnia inferioria subsunt suberioribus & quodam modo (ut inquit Proclus) sibi invicem insunt, scilicet in infimis suprema & in supremis infima“ (Agrippa von Nettesheim, I, XXII).

²⁰ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia. Libri tres*, I, LIX-LX.

Vanitate Scientiarum, where he condemned all such “sciences.” The major message of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* was that only Jesus Christ has spoken the truth. Bowen²¹ wrote a paper that dealt with the paradox of Agrippa’s two contradictory theses in his two major books. She concluded that such a paradox is not a rarity in the Renaissance (e.g., Erasmus, Rabelais), and Agrippa was one example of that. A version of *Occulta Philosophia* had been circulating since 1510, and Agrippa published the book in an extended form in 1533. His refusal of magic, astrology, hermeticism, and manticism, and his confession to Jesus Christ and to the Bible in *De Vanitate Scientiarum* can be interpreted as protection against the scrutiny of church authorities. Because *De Vanitate Scientiarum* and *Occulta Philosophia* are very different in the content, it is assumed that the Bowen’s thesis is correct, and *De Vanitate Scientiarum* was a diversionary tactic Agrippa used to avoid condemnation by the authorities.

We know from Franck that he only cited *De Vanitate Scientiarum* and not *Occulta Philosophia*. The question is why Franck believed that Agrippa was an “illuminated philosopher” when he wrote such contradictory works? Is the thesis of Wollgast correct that Franck interpreted Agrippa only in so much as Agrippa fit his own conceptualization? With this question in mind, we will investigate the influence of Agrippa on Franck in terms of metaphysical concepts like god, Christ, or the soul. The focus of the investigation will be the doctrine of the soul and world soul of both philosophers, because the similarities as well as the differences will appear very clearly when analyzing these concepts. This investigation will also reveal why Franck did not use the *Occulta Philosophia*. We will also look closely at the translation and commentary of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* by Franck.

2. Conception of god, Christology, and the angels

As will become apparent, the conception of god and Christology are central concepts in the works of both Franck and Agrippa. Their definitions of god were very similar, because both philosophers embraced a Neoplatonic conception of god, where god is above all things and cannot

²¹ Bowen, ‘Cornelius Agrippas de Vanitate: Polemic or paradox’, 249-256.

be described with words or any other medium. On the conception of god, the influence of Agrippa on Franck was low, because both took the concept of Plato, Plotin, and other representatives of the Platonic tradition. More important was the influence of Agrippa on Franck concerning Christ. Agrippa's Christology has never been studied in detail, however, several works make very interesting references to it. As already mentioned, Agrippa gave a lecture about Hermes Trismegistos in Padua in 1515. Only the introduction of this lecture is extant; the rest is lost. It is quite possible that Franck had more detailed information about this lecture than we have today, however, the text which still exists is still useful for our investigation. The introduction of the lecture can be found, for example, in the Opera-edition of 1600,²² which has the title *Oratio habita Papiæ in praelectione Hermetis Trismegisti De Potestate et Sapientia Dei*. The content of the lecture was the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* through Marsilino Ficino. The most interesting statement about Christology is the following:

Favente nobis ipso ter maximi Mercurij Pimandro, mete divinae potentiae domino videlicet nostro Iesu Christo Nazareno crucifixo, qui verus Pimander, qui magni consilij angelus, vero mentis lumine illustrat: quem verum deum et verum hominem, regenerationis autorem consitemur, futuriq; patre seculi iudicem expectamus.²³

Hanegraaff²⁴ concluded correctly, that Agrippa believed that Christ revealed himself to Hermes long before Christ incarnated in Jesus. Christ, or the word of god, was not only speaking to Jesus, but also to pagan philosophers. Hanegraaff²⁵ referred to Lazzarelli, who was used as a source by Agrippa in the *Oratio habita Papiæ*. According to Hanegraaff, Lazarelli even believed that Poimandres (Christ) reappeared as Giovanni "Mercurio" da Corneggio during his lifetime.

²² Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos.

²³ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera II, 1098. Agrippa obviously referred to the Poimandres (Corpus Hermeticum, Chapter 1)

²⁴ Hanegraaff, 'Better than magic', 17.

²⁵ Hanegraff, 'Better than magic'. Yates mentioned Lazzarelli and Joannes Mercurius da Corregio repeatedly in her work. However, she did not mention the cited passage. Only Hanegraaff has emphasized the importance of the statement of Agrippa (Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, 171-173)

Franck dealt with Christ in the *Guldin Arch* and in his *Paradoxa*. As in the lecture of Agrippa, the word of god or Christ was spoken in the *Poimandres*²⁶ to Hermes Trismegistos:

“This Hermes writes/how the word of god spoke to him (which he called mentem Dei or Pymander) and taught and showed him everything/and it asked him/that he should listen...and says to him/inwardly/. I am that light/a soul/your god/older than the nature/however the birth of the light/blossom and glance is the son of god/...”²⁷

Franck and Agrippa both believed that Christ spoke to Hermes Trismegistos. This was consistent with Franck's Gnostic theory of inner Christ (*Christus in nobis*).²⁸ He believed Christ had spoken to other philosophers like Plato or Plotin by this means.²⁹ The difference for Agrippa is that Christ is a cosmic essence who was incarnated in Hermes. This means that the essence comes from outside and not from inside. Agrippa believed, together with Lazarelli, that Christ reappeared in Corneggio, thus the cosmic essence comes from outside into the human being. For Franck, the essence was the inner Christ. That means if the human being recognized his spirit or the inner Christ, it had recognized god.³⁰ Agrippa's thoughts on the spiritualized human being will be discussed in more detail below.

²⁶ Hermes Trismegistus, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Ch. 1.

²⁷ Franck, *Die Guldin Arch – darein der Kern und die Hauptsprüche der heyligen Schrift, alten Lehrer und Väter der Kirchen/auch der erläuchten Heyden und Philosophen*, Chapter XLI. The text in the original language: „Nun dieser Hermes schreibt/ wie Gottes wort mit ihm geredt (daß er mentem Dei oder Pymander nennt) hab innerlich on inn alles gelert und gezeit/ und in darzü gebetten/ er solle nun hören ... und sagt zü im/inn im. Diß liechte bin ich/ ein gemüt/ dein Gott/ elter dann die natur/aber deß liechts gepurts/plü und glanz ist Gottes Sun/...”

²⁸ Hannak, *Geist=Reiche Kritik. Hermetik, Mystik und das Werden der Aufklärung in spiritualistischer Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit*, 128. Franck refers to his very important doctrine of the „inner Christ“ on many passages. In *Paradox* 102 Franck refers to the St. Lukes Gospel (Luk, 17), where you find: „The kingdom of god is in yourself“ (for example in: Franck, *Paradoxa*, 169).

²⁹ For example in: Franck, *Guldin Arch*, Title at the beginning. At the beginning of the *Guldin Arch* Franck emphasizes: “*Divine people/have talked/driven by the Holy Spirit*”. Additionally, Franck numerates eight Christian and eight Pre-Christian authors (for example: Platon, Aristoteles, Pythagoras and the sibyls). Hermes Trismegist is added to the „illuminated“ (as Agrippa) at another passage. See also: Hannak, *Geist=Reiche Kritik. Hermetik, Mystik und das Werden der Aufklärung in spiritualistischer Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit*, 126.

³⁰ Therefore, the christology of Franck is not identical with the gnostic doctrine of Basilides and Valentine who assume an incarnation of Christ. According to Valentine Christ incarnates in Jesus at the baptism of Jordan and left Jesus at the condemnation of Pontius Pilate. (Irenäus, *Des heiligen Irenäus fünf Bücher gegen die Häresien*, I,7,2).

Franck and Agrippa both held the belief that there are supernatural beings like angels and felt that in the visible cosmos, there are other invisible worlds. Therefore, their philosophies clearly cannot be interpreted as pantheism. Agrippa mentioned in the *Occulta Philosophia* beings like angels, demons, and guardian spirits.³¹ Franck covers the topic of angels and fallen angels in the *Guldin Arch*. Like Agrippa, he distinguished between good and evil angels. For Franck: “The evil spirits are called part of god/because they are his prisoners.”³² The fallen angel is the devil who tempted the human soul. Franck’s answer to this temptation: “All inner thoughts of the heart/we are certain/that the devil does not see them/from the movement of the body/from the indication of the affects/... the secrecy of the heart/only knows/from whom is stated/that only you recognize the secrecy of the heart/.”³³ For him, the answer to how to encounter the devil you can only find in the human spirit, that is, the inner Christ (see below). The heart is a synonym for the spirit, that is, the inner Christ. Franck cannot be interpreted in that the human being possesses both good and evil inside, and beyond that there is nothing (pantheism). The human being has god inside, however, there is the invisible world of the angels. We can see that the chapter in the *Guldin Arch* does not rely on the third book of the *Occulta Philosophia*, where Agrippa talked about angels, guardian spirits, and demons, because Franck does not differentiate between these two categories.

3. Doctrine of the soul of Agrippa and Franck

The doctrine of the soul investigates the terms “world soul” and “human soul.” In this, Agrippa’s doctrine has an important influence on Franck. Agrippa’s philosophy of the tripartite soul originated from the Platonic tradition, which subdivided the human being into mind, soul, and body. The mind is the divine and immortal part of the human being. In this sense, god is inside the human in the Platonic and hermetic tradition. Many philosophers share Agrippa’s doctrine of the

³¹ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia*. Libri tres, III, 21-23. Agrippa differentiates between good and evil angels. He also mentions the „fallen angels“. There are also evil demons who want to seduce human souls to evil deeds.

³² Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXIII. The text in the original language: „Die bösen Geyster werden auch Gottes genennet/darumb das sy seyn gefangner seind“

³³ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXV. The text in the original language: „Alle innwendigen Gedancken des herzens/seind wir gewiß/daß der Teüffel nit sihet/sonder aus bewegnuß des Leibs/vnd anzeygung der affect/nimpt er vilmals die gedanken etwas ab/die heimligkeyt aber des herzens/weyßt allein der/von dem gesagt wird/du allein erkennst die heimligkeyt der herzen/.“

soul, as discussed in *De Vanitate Scientiarum*. Some do not assume a soul, like Grates Thebanos, who believed that the body is moved by Nature. Others like Euripides believed that the soul emerges from behind the Earth as cabbage.³⁴ Agrippa did not explicitly tell us his doctrine of the soul. However, in the *Occulta Philosophia* he referred directly to this question, and his attitude becomes clear. In the first chapter of the third book, Agrippa explained how the human being can find the truth through divine religion. There is only one possibility, namely, soul and body have to be in union. The magician assumes that a human being can be healthy only when the mind, soul, and body are consonant. The ascent of the soul to god was approached in chapter six of book three (*Quomodo his ducibus anima humana scandit in naturam divinam, efficiturque; miraculorum effectrix*).³⁵ The knowledge of god is possible only at the peak of spiritual life. In this condition, our divine mind attracts full truth about all things. The human being does not envision only things that happened in the past but is also able to obtain prophecies about how the things will be in future.³⁶ The mind receives the power to change things at will. However, one is only able to act through religion when one has a spiritualized mind.³⁷ Such a spiritualized human being could heal people or even bring them back to life. However, whosoever commits such good deeds without purification, picks up judgement over himself.³⁸ That means a human being must be purified in order to become spiritualized. To summarize, the soul of the human being is immortal and the spiritualized mind is the highest part of the human being, which never sins and returns to god.³⁹ When humans successfully recognize the spiritual mind, they can achieve magic such as, for example, the art of manticism and the art of healing.⁴⁰

The doctrine of the soul of Agrippa was very similar to Franck's. The latter says in the *Guldin Arch* in chapter 81 (on the natural human being/the mind of the human being): "Mind/body and

³⁴ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, Ch. 52 (De anima).

³⁵ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, III, Ch. 6.

³⁶ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, III, Ch. 6. The exact wording is: „*Hinc provenit, quod nos in natura constituti, ea quae supra natura sunt cognoscimus, ac inferiora queque intelligimus, atque non modo ea quae sunt, & quae fuerunt, verumetiam eorum quae mox fient & quae longe post futura sunt, assidue recipimus oracula.*“

³⁷ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, III, Ch. 6. At the end of the chapter it is stated: „*sed nemo potest operari per puram & solam religionem, nisi qui totus factus est intellectualis.*“

³⁸ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, III, Ch. 6.

³⁹ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos, III, Ch. 36.

⁴⁰ Agrippa damned all human arts in *De Vanitate Scientiarum*. To human arts you can add manticism, astrology and the art of healing.

the soul/ are three different parts/however for the human being/the mind dictates/the soul appears/body echos.”⁴¹ Like Agrippa, he followed the Platonists concerning the tripartite soul. The mind not only dictates, but is also immortal.⁴² In the chapter “On Soul” in the *Guldin Arch*, Franck discussed the different ideologies of “Philosophi” and concluded that the spiritual mind is the immortal part of the human being. Agrippa only concluded that in the *Occulta Philosophia*, but nowhere does Franck cite the *Occulta philosophia* in the *Guldin Arch* or in *Paradoxa*. Franck had other influences like German Mysticism, where the doctrine of the soul had been assumed by the platonic philosophy. For Franck, Agrippa was an influential philosopher who was mentioned from time to time. However, it is conspicuous that the *Occulta Philosophia* was cited nowhere. How can this coincidence be explained?

Franck and Agrippa did have a very similar concept concerning the creation of the soul. Both believed in its preexistence. Franck borrowed that concept from Johannes Tauler and from the Neoplatonic philosophy that the soul emanates from god.⁴³ That means the soul is not created from god as in the orthodox Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism). Agrippa discusses this concept with ambivalence, however, he shows a strong tendency toward the concept of emanation.⁴⁴ The difference between the ideology of emanation and the ideology of orthodoxy was derived from the theistic idea of god, in which God as a person creates the soul, while the concept of emanation does not assume such a process or event. Neoplatonic philosophy, Gnosticism, and Hermeticism all include concepts of emanation.

⁴¹ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXXI. The author translated to English. The text in the original language: „Also seind Geyst/ fleysch/ und die seel drey ding/ aber ein mensch/ der Geist dictiert/ die seel wirckt vnnd schlächt/ der leib gibt den hall/“

⁴² Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXIX. “...what the soul is/should be sufficient for us/that we believe and know that she is/and is an immortal wind and mind“. The author translated to English

⁴³ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXIX.

⁴⁴ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia*. Libri tres, III, 37. The soul not only emanates from god, but is also a number: „*Est anima numerus substantialis, uniformis, ad seipsum conversiuus & rationalis, corpora omnia & materialia longo superans intervallo, cuius partitio non est secundum materiam, nec ab inferioribus & crassioribus, sed ab efficiente causa proveniens; non est enim numerus quantus, sed semotus ab omnibus corporeis legibus; unde nec divi ditur, nec per partes multiplicatur.*“

Because the soul is preexistent, it was not created by god and will not be condemned by god. It would be logical that the doctrine of transmigration would be part of the doctrine of the soul.⁴⁵ All Greek Neoplatonic philosophers, Hermes Trismegistos, and most of the gnostic philosophers believed in the transmigration of the soul, which means the soul must return to a body until it is completely free of all sins. For Agrippa, there was already in *De Vanitate Scientiarum* a very unexpected tendency toward transmigration of the soul.⁴⁶ In chapter 52, he cited Pythagoras, where the latter talks about reincarnation.⁴⁷ Franck developed this idea very similarly to Agrippa in his chapter “On soul” in the *Guldin Arch*, where he discussed many doctrines of philosophers concerning the concept of transmigration. In the end, he is indifferent concerning the question whether transmigration exists or not. Agrippa is more explicit concerning the question of transmigration of the soul in the *Occulta Philosophia*.⁴⁸ In chapter 41 of the third book of *Occulta philosophia (Quid de homine post mortem, opiniones variae)*, Agrippa discussed the doctrines of philosophers concerning transmigration of the soul. It is interesting that he cited Origenes: “*Et hac doctinae ratione etiá magnus illus Origenes enarandum censuit illud Christi evangiliú; Qui gladio ferit, gladio perit. Quin & ethnici philosophi eiusmodi retaliatiois ordine Adrastiam esse pronunciant...*”⁴⁹ Very similar to Agrippa, Franck discussed the difference between the doctrine of metempsychosis and the doctrine of reincarnation. Metempsychosis had been represented by Plato which means that a soul was incarnated in the body of a human, but if it was very sinful, it has to reincarnate in the body of an animal in the next life. The doctrine of reincarnation differs in that it proports that a soul that incarnates in the body of a human cannot reincarnate in the body of an animal in his next life. Agrippa cited the Hebrew cabalists: “*Verum Hebreorum cabaliste animas in bruta precipitari non admittunt.*”⁵⁰ Franck has the same approach as Agrippa in his chapter “On soul” in the *Guldin Arch*. The former cited Hermes Trismegistos and Iamblichus, who believed in reincarnation and not in metempsychosis.⁵¹

⁴⁵ From a perspective of the Christian Platonism the concept of the Cambridge Platonist Cudworth can be mentioned who links Christianity and Platonism. Cudworth rejected the doctrine of pre-existence of the soul very consistently. Therefore, he was not under strong suspicion of being a representative of the doctrine of transmigration of the soul (Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe, The First Part*, 38).

⁴⁶ See also: Lechner, *Die Transmigration bei Agrippa von Nettesheim*.

⁴⁷ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Opera in duos Tomos (2)*, Ch. LII.

⁴⁸ Lechner, *Die Transmigration bei Agrippa von Nettesheim*, 88-112.

⁴⁹ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia. Libri tres*, III, 41.

⁵⁰ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia. Libri tres*, III, 41.

⁵¹ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXX. See also citation 45.

One major difference between Agrippa and Franck was that they did not agree on the question of whether a world soul reigns over the world. Agrippa had a Neoplatonic belief in this question, whereas Franck had a gnostic belief. In the first book of the *Occulta Philosophia*,⁵² there is an exact definition of the term world soul (*anima mundi*): “*Hic quidem spiritus talis fermè est in corpore mundi, qualis in humano corpore noster; sicut enim animae nostrae vires per spiritum adhibentur membris, sic virtus animae mundi per quintam essentiam dilatatur per omnia.*” This definition relies on a hermetic microcosm-macrocosm doctrine. In neoplatonic philosophy *nous* is “above” a world soul and is the idea of god.

Hermeticism and astrology do not play an important role in Franck’s philosophy (in contradiction to Agrippa). The papers cited in the introduction show that Franck’s works deal with the conception of god, the word of god, and the creation in hermetic philosophy. Franck only cited Trismegistos from his first book (*Pimander*). Franck never investigated the microcosm-macrocosm doctrine or addressed astrology seriously or systematically. He also thinks poorly about the concept of the world soul, because his view did not recognize a difference between the Neoplatonic world soul and the Christian Holy Spirit. Franck tried to read the Holy Spirit into the books of pagan philosophers Plato, Porphyrius, Plotin, Hermes Trismegistos, and Numenius. In Porphyrius, he found a concept that was very similar to the Christian Trinity. However, Porphyrius named the “third god” the world soul and not the Holy Spirit. It seems to be that Franck only saw a terminological difference. Franck defined the Holy Spirit in the *Guldin Arch* as follows: “The Holy Spirit is nothing else/then grace of god/power/wind/emanation/respiratory/finger and goodness/that he shines in all things/.../and he has in mind and being no difference to the word of god/...”⁵³ In contrast, Agrippa was a representative of the neoplatonic philosophy, and there is a difference between *nous* and world soul; however, in the gnostic philosophy the term “world soul” was not important, because the world is not led by reason. In Franck’s citing of Plato and Plotin, it

⁵² Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Occulta philosophia. Libri tres*, III, 14.

⁵³ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXII. The translation has been done by the author. In the original text: „Der heylig Gottes Geyst ist nichts anders/ dann Gottes gnad/ kraft/ wind/ außguß/ außfluß/ athem/ finger und gütte/ damitt er inn allen Dingen leücht/ glastet/ lebt/ schwebt vnnd webt zu güttem/ und hatt im Geyst vnnd Wesen kein unterscheyd von dem wort/ ...“

is difficult to find a synthesis between Platonic philosophy and Christian orthodoxy.⁵⁴ For a reasonable world, his concept of the world and of the human being is too pessimistic.⁵⁵ Wollgast confirmed this thesis about Franck. He even goes beyond it, because he argued that Franck was an antitrinitarian, which seems to be justified by a letter from Franck to Campanus.⁵⁶

Very similar to the works of Agrippa is Franck's concept of the relief of the soul from the body or the ascent of the soul to god, which he approached in nearly all his works. In *Paradoxa*, Franck identified the human mind with the inner Christ, which resides in each human being. The pagan philosophers Plato, Trismegistos, Seneca, and Cicero recognized the divine mind in the human being and often called this "reason": "Seneca named sometimes god as nature and reason (as Francesco Petrarca), the divine mind in us..."⁵⁷ The knowledge of the inner divine mind (inner Christ) should be the target of each human. Insofar as this, Agrippa and Franck agreed. Agrippa connected this knowledge with magical skills of humans that can be reached if a human is fully spiritualized. Franck did not say the latter explicitly, but one can conclude it from his remarks, which included that Jesus recognized his inner Christ and he had the ability to heal humans. However, magic, astrology, and the hermetic microcosm-macrocosm doctrine always remained secondary for Franck.

As Wollgast ascertained, Franck cited in *Paradoxa* (*Paradox* 89) directly from *De Vanitate Scientiarum*.⁵⁸ Agrippa emphasized in chapter 58 of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* that it is not necessary for humans to build sanctuaries and temples. God cannot be known from temples or ceremonies, but rather human beings have to find god by looking inward. In Agrippa, one has to differentiate between the inner Christ and "being of Christ" who incarnated in Jesus. Insofar as

⁵⁴ Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXIX.

⁵⁵ For example: Franck, *Guldin Arch*, LXXXVIII. "Human being is foolish by natur in divine things/ignorant/and a fool/his wisdom is foolishness". The original German text: „Der Mensch von Natur aus inn göttlichen Dingen thorecht/ unwissend/ und ein narr/ und sein weißheyte ein thorheyte“.

⁵⁶ Franck, Letter to Johannes Campanus, in: *Der linke Flügel der Reformation*, S. 219-233. See also: Wollgast, *Der deutsche Pantheismus im 16. Jahrhundert*, 161.

⁵⁷ Franck, *Paradoxa*, 227. In German: „Seneca nennt zuweilen Gott die Natur und die Vernunft (wie auch Francesco Petrarca), den Geist Gottes in uns, ...“

⁵⁸ Franck, *Paradoxa*, 144. Wollgast makes a remark in *Paradox* 89 (temple, pictures, Celebrations, sacrifice and ceremonies do not belong into the New Testament) that Franck cites directly from *De Vanitate scientiarum* (Citation number: 115).

this, Franck only used parts of the doctrines of Agrippa to substantiate his own thesis. Therefore, it is not surprising that Franck nowhere used the *Occulta Philosophia*, which did not support his views. The preface of the lecture of Agrippa in Padua of 1515 (*Oratio habita Papiae*) was also never mentioned. Schimansky proposed that Franck believed in “Christ without church,”⁵⁹ and from that perspective, there was no difference between him and Agrippa. However, the Christology of the two authors does show a difference.

4. The importance of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* for Agrippa and Franck

Franck only translated and commented on a small part of *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, but we can see that the philosophy of that book definitely influenced him. The beginning of chapter 100 of *De Vanitate Scientiarum* agreed very well with his spiritualistic philosophy:

*En audistis modo quam sint omnes disciplina ambiguae, quam bisulquarae, quam incertae, quam plenae periculo ut quantum ex ipsis est, nescire cogamut ubinam quiescat veritas, etiam in Theologia, nisi fit, qui habeat clavem scientiae & discretionis, clausum enim est veritatis armarium, variisque obductum misteriis, atque ipsis etiam sapientibus, sanctis praeclusum qua ad tantum, tam incomprehensum thesaurum nobis paretur ingressus.*⁶⁰

Franck borrows from that idea of Agrippa in his *Paradoxa*, specifically in Paradox 121 (*Scriptura occidens litera. Verbum Die vivificans spiritus est*) and Paradox 122 (*Veritas non potest scribi, aut exprimi*), where theological spiritualism appeared. An essential argument of the soteriology of Franck was not described in detail, but for Franck, the knowledge of the inner Christ (god inside human) is the key for the ascent of the soul. Franck translated chapter 102 (*ad encomium asini digression*) from *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, and in the end, he concluded in a way that does not arise from Agrippa:

⁵⁹ Schimansky, Christ ohne Kirche (Christ without Church). Rückfrage beim ersten Radikalen der Reformation: Sebastian Franck. Schimansky believed that Hans Denck had the strongest influence on Franck.

⁶⁰ Agrippa von Nettesheim, Opera in duos Tomos (2), 233.

Therefore, Agrippa concludes in his peroration/you aces/you desire heaven/not the forbidden tree/but the vivid timber/you want wisdom/throw away all the arts/... to deeply inside of you/and you will recognize all things.⁶¹

The consequence of Agrippa's "Lob des Esels" (praise of the ass; chapter 102 of *De Vanitate Scientiarum*) is that a person has to look inward to realize the inner Christ. This interpretation arose for from Franck, but not for Agrippa. For Agrippa the word of god was an encoded secret.⁶² The latter is only true for *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, because in the *Occulta philosophia* Agrippa occupied himself very intensively with the arts that were condemned in *De Vanitate Scientiarum*, such as astrology, manticism, and kabbalah. Franck seemed to interpret this paradox of Agrippa's works by believing that the *Occulta philosophia* was just not as important, and so nowhere in his work was this text cited or mentioned.

5. Conclusion

The investigation of the influence of Agrippa on Sebastian Franck revealed very interesting similarities between the two philosophers. The conception of god is Platonic in the works of both, but a small difference can be detected in their Christology. For Franck, Christ or the word of god is transcendent and in human beings. All wise philosophers and Jesus recognized their inner Christ. To follow Christ, human beings have to recognize their spiritual mind or the inner Christ. Agrippa differentiated between the mind as an immortal part of a human being and the being of Christ, who was "incarnated" in Jesus and Hermes Trismegistos. Both Franck and Agrippa agree that the ascent to god is successful when a human being recognizes the spiritual mind. However, for Agrippa the spiritualized human has occult-like abilities, for example, healing or the art of manticism. According to Franck, one could argue that Jesus also had these abilities, because he detected Christ inside himself. However, Franck does not mention the latter argument specifically. Both philosophers assumed the tripartite soul, made up of the mind, soul, and body. The spiritual mind

⁶¹ Franck, *Sämtliche Werke* (complete works), 134. Cited from the second „Kronbüchlein“. In the original language: „Derhalb schleüßt Cornelius inn seiner Peroration/ Nun aber/ O jr Esel/ so jr diese ware himmlische/ nit des verbotnen bawms/ sonder des lebendigen holtz/ weyßhait zu erlangen begert/ so werfft von euch aller Menschen kunst/ ... Vnd gehet in euch selbs/ so werdet jr alle ding erkennen“.

⁶² Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Opera in duos tomos* (2), Ch. 100.

is immortal in the perspective of both, and they are both influenced by Platonists and Mysticism. Agrippa and Franck also speculated on the theory of transmigration or reincarnation, in which the soul emanates from god, not created by god as in Christian orthodoxy. Agrippa has a strong tendency to transmigration in the *Occulta Philosophia* and Franck remains neutral. As previously mentioned, Franck did not mention the *Occulta Philosophia* in his works. The reason for that is probably that he was not a follower of astrology, manticism, kabbalah, and the microcosm-macrocosm doctrine. All these concepts are part of a syncretistic philosophy of Agrippa. Therefore, it is also logical that the concept of the world soul was not suitable for Franck. In conclusion, we agree that Wollgast was right that Franck only integrated the parts of Agrippa that fit in his own philosophy. Thus, philosophy of Franck and Agrippa are congeneric concepts, but there are small differences.

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