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***SANCTA SAPIENTIA* AND THE SCIENCE OF MEDICINE:  
A PAIR OF TWELFTH-CENTURY CANDLESTICKS WITH FEMALE  
ALLEGORIES IN HILDESHEIM**

***SANCTA SAPIENTIA* Y LA CIENCIA DE LA MEDICINA: UN PAR DE  
CANDELABROS DEL SIGLO XII CON ALEGORÍAS FEMENINAS EN HILDESHEIM**

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ABSTRACT

The pair of candlesticks with female allegories in the treasury of St. Mary's Cathedral in Hildesheim epitomizes the appreciation of complex and innovative iconographic programs prevalent in Mosan and French liturgical objects and reliquaries of the twelfth century. The statuettes represent the continents and conflict, medicine, and theory and practice, respectively. The paper argues that the second, seemingly heterogeneous figural group reflects the contemporary discourse on the classification of the sciences and focuses on the notion of medicine as a science. A diagrammatic miniature in an eleventh-century manuscript in Lyon with the personification of medicine offers the definition of the candlestick's center as *divina sapientia* (divine wisdom) embodied in Christ.

KEYWORDS: Liturgical objects; diagrams; Mosan art; history of medicine; classification of sciences.

RESUMEN

La pareja de candeleros con alegorías femeninas del tesoro de la catedral de Santa María de Hildesheim personifica la apreciación de los complejos e innovadores programas iconográficos predominantes en los objetos litúrgicos y relicarios mosanos y franceses del siglo XII. Las estatuillas representan los continentes y el conflicto, la medicina y la teoría y la práctica, respectivamente. Este artículo sostiene que el segundo grupo figurativo, aparentemente heterogéneo, refleja el discurso contemporáneo sobre la clasificación de las ciencias y se centra en la noción

de la medicina como ciencia. Una miniatura diagramática de un manuscrito lionés del siglo xi con la personificación de la medicina ofrece la definición del centro del candelabro como *divina sapientia* (sabiduría divina) encarnada en Cristo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Objetos litúrgicos; diagramas; arte mosano; historia de la medicina; clasificación de las ciencias.

The treasury of St. Mary's Cathedral in Hildesheim has in its holdings a famous but enigmatic pair of candlesticks (Figs. 1-2).<sup>1</sup> Seated atop each of the candlesticks' bases, three female statuettes present small objects whose inscriptions both clarify and obscure the figures' meaning. The 'geographical' group represents the earth and its tripartite order: ASIA holds a receptacle with the inscription DIVITIE (wealth; Fig. 4), EVROPA is armed with a sword and shield inscribed BELLVM (war; Fig. 3), and AFRICA displays an open book with the inscription SCIENTIA (science; Fig. 5). The other group, however, appears quite heterogeneous. It has fewer inscriptions: one figure holds a receptacle with the inscription MEDICINA (medicine; Fig. 7), the figure inscribed CONFLICTVS (conflict) on her garment firmly grips two snakes with her left hand (Fig. 6), and the third figure presents the two busts THEORICA and PRAC-TICA (theory and practice; Fig. 8).

The candlesticks were given to Hildesheim Cathedral by bishop Eduard Jakob Wedekin (r. 1850–1870) with no further documentation. Their provenance suggests that they were to serve as altar candlesticks. Stylistically, they are closely related to a group of liturgical objects with seated statuettes made in workshops in the valleys of the Meuse and the Rhine as well as northern and northeastern France in the twelfth century. Well-known examples are the portable altar probably commissioned by Wibald, abbot of Stavelot Abbey (r. 1130-1158) in the diocese of Liège, and the spectacular foot of a cross presumably made for the monastery of Saint-Bertin in northern France between 1150 and 1180.<sup>2</sup> In both cases, the object rests on the

<sup>1</sup> C. HÖHL, F. PRINZ AND P. RALCHEVA (eds.), *Islam in Europa 1000–1250*, Regensburg, 2022, cat. no. 19, pp. 109–13 (C. HÖHL); M. BRANDT, C. HÖHL AND G. LUTZ, *Dommuseum Hildesheim: Ein Auswahlkatalog*, Regensburg, 2015, cat. n° 41, pp. 90–91 (G. LUTZ); C. DESCATOIRE, "Une paire de chandeliers mosans aux figures allégoriques (vers 1160)," in P. GEORGE (coord.), *Orfèvrerie septentrionale, xii<sup>e</sup> et xiii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Liège, 2014, pp. 148–151; *Une renaissance: L'art entre Flandre et Champagne, 1150–1250*, Paris, 2014, cat. n° 13, p. 75 (C. DESCATOIRE); P. BARNET, M. BRANDT AND G. LUTZ, *Medieval Treasures from Hildesheim*, New Haven/London, 2013, cat. n° 22, pp. 68–69 (C. DESCATOIRE); L. LAMBACHER (ed.), *Schatze des Glaubens: Meisterwerke aus dem Dom-Museum Hildesheim und dem Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin*, Regensburg, 2010, cat. n° 31, p. 78 (Id.); M. BRANDT (ed.), *Schatzkammer auf Zeit: Die Sammlungen des Bischofs Eduard Jakob Wedekin*, Hildesheim, 1991, cat. n° 34, pp. 126–29 (U. MENDE); V. H. ELBERN AND H. REUTHER, *Der Hildesheimer Domschatz*, (Die Diözese Hildesheim in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart 36), Hildesheim, 1969, cat. n° 22, pp. 34–35; E. KÖLLMANN AND K.-A. WIRTH, "Erteile," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, 5 (1965), coll. 1107–1202. O. VON FALKE AND E. MEYER, *Romanische Leuchter und Gefäße: Gießgefäße der Gotik*, reprint of the first edition Berlin, 1935, Berlin, 1983, pp. 8–10.

<sup>2</sup> For the candlestick (Saint-Omer, Musée de l'hôtel Sandelin, inv. no. 2800 bis), see *Une renaissance*, cat. n° 14, p. 76 (C. DESCATOIRE); P. SPRINGER, *Kreuzfüße. Ikonographie und Typologie eines hochmittelalterlichen Gerätes*, (Denkmäler deutscher Kunst: Bronzezeit bis des Mittelalters 3), Berlin, 1981, cat. n° 40, pp. 169–173; M.-M. GAUTHIER, *Émaux du moyen âge occidental*, Fribourg, 1972, cat. n° 88, pp. 348–349. The fundamental in-depth analysis of

shoulders of the four evangelists, who are seated at writing desks. Based on these examples, stylistic analysis has dated a small number of individual bronze statuettes to the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> A rare example of a fully preserved object with similar figures, the foot of the so-called Soltikoff Cross features the archangels Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel holding discs inscribed with their names.<sup>4</sup>

While the Hildesheim candleholders clearly belong to this corpus, their figural ensemble is unique. They epitomize the appreciation of complex and innovative iconographic programs prevalent in liturgical objects and reliquaries of precious metal and enamel of this origin and date.<sup>5</sup> In terms of form and content alike, this object group covers a remarkably broad spectrum. Combining figurative, ornamental, and diagrammatic representations in two-dimensional imagery, relief, and sculpture, the artists created functional objects that intertwine typology, cosmology, and the legend of the Cross with morality, martyrdom, and the Passion of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The figures on the Hildesheim candlesticks, however, were not taken from that repertoire.

This paper, which is the first attempt to come to a full understanding of the two candlesticks' iconography, will argue that the second, seemingly heterogeneous figural group highlights *sapientia* as the embodiment of Sancta Sophia in Christ, though in a highly unusual way.<sup>7</sup> The group reflects the contemporary discourse on the classification of the sciences and focuses on the notion of medicine as a science. The analysis thus departs from the inspiring deliberations quite recently offered by Claudia Höhl in a short catalogue entry. She likewise

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the Stavelot portable altar (Brussels, Musée Art & Histoire, inv. no. 1590) is still S. WITTEKIND, *Altar – Reliquiar – Retabel: Kunst und Liturgie bei Wibald von Stablo*, (pictura et poesis 17), Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 2004, pp. 51–172. See also M. BUDDE, *Altare portatile: Kompendium der Tragaltäre des Mittelalters, 600–1600*, Münster, 1998, vol. 2, cat. n°. 73, pp. 127–143; P. HENRIET, “Relire l’autel portatif de Stavelot,” in GEORGE, *Orfèvrerie septentrionale*, pp. 179–208.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archeologie, inv. no. 887.1.1 (personification of a river of paradise); London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 630-1864 (male figure with the inscription MARE on its base); Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, inv. n°. 194–97 (four figures representing the four elements(?)); Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 5908 (female figure with the inscription PRUDENTIA). *Une renaissance*, cat. no. 12, p. 74 (C. DESCATOIRE); *ibidem*, cat. n°. 48, p. 116 (R. MILLS); A. LEGNER, *Rhein und Maas: Kunst und Kultur 800–1400*, Cologne, 1972, vol. 1, cat. n°. G25, p. 261 (D. KÖTZSCHE); *Une renaissance*, cat. n°. 14, p. 76 (J. DURAND).

<sup>4</sup> London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 7938-1862. SPRINGER, *Kreuzfüße*, cat. n°. 40, pp. 169–173.

<sup>5</sup> This, however, is a specific geographical focus. Workshops in Cologne, Lower Saxony—especially Hildesheim—, and England likewise produced liturgical objects of high quality and complexity. By far the greatest number of extant objects, however, are of Mosan and French origin. For Hildesheim, see, most recently, G. LUTZ, “Hildesheim as a Nexus of Metalwork Production, c. 1130-1250,” in J. McNEILL AND R. PLANT, *The Regional and Transregional in Romanesque Europe*, London/New York, 2021, pp. 69–80; D. KEMPER, *Die Hildesheimer Emailarbeiten des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts. Mit einer kommentierten Edition der Inschriften von Clemens M. M. Bayer*, (Objekte und Eliten in Hildesheim 1130 bis 1250 4), Regensburg, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> GAUTHIER, *Émaux du moyen âge occidental*, still offers the best overview. The exhibition catalogue *Une renaissance*, (Saint-Omer, Musée de l’hôtel Sandelin; Paris, Musée de Cluny; 2013) discusses several important examples. See also GEORGE, *Orfèvrerie septentrionale*, A. MACARENKO, “Mosan Metalwork and Its Diffusion in the Rhineland, France, and England,” in McNEILL, PLANT, *The Regional and Transregional*, pp. 81–89. The classical stylistic analysis is D. KÖTZSCHE, “Zum Stand der Forschung der Goldschmiedekunst des 12. Jahrhunderts im Rhein-Maas-Gebiet,” in LEGNER, *Rhein und Maas*, vol. 2, pp. 191–236.

<sup>7</sup> I will pursue this analysis further in my research on identity claims in liturgical objects of the twelfth century.



Fig. 1. Candlestick with female figures representing the continents, Hildesheim, Dommuseum (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)



Fig. 2. Candlestick with female figures representing medicine, conflict, and theory and practice, Hildesheim, Dommuseum (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)

regards medicine as the figural program's core theme, but assumes a weaker connection to contemporary discussions.<sup>8</sup> The following analysis will be divided into four sections, beginning with a discussion of the 'geographical' figural group before then turning to the second candlestick and its elements THEORICA/PRACTICA, MEDICINA, and CONFLICTVS.

### THE 'GEOGRAPHICAL' GROUP

The candlestick with ASIA, EVROPA, and AFRICA can be described as a three-dimensional T-O map (Figs. 1 and 9). The form and size of the discs held by the figures and inscribed with the continents' names are identical with the segments in the circular map: ASIA, a semicircle, is twice as big as the quadrants AFRICA and EVROPA, respectively. Minimalistic in style and easily recognizable, the T-O map was the most conventional cartographic device for visualizing the known world.<sup>9</sup> Whoever had the privilege to marvel at

<sup>8</sup> HÖHL, in *Islam in Europa*.

<sup>9</sup> C. MAUNTEL, "The T-O Diagram and its Religious Connotations: A Circumstantial Case," in IDEM (ed.), *Geography and Religious Knowledge in the Medieval Worlds*, (Das Mittelalter: Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung 14), Berlin/Boston, 2021, pp. 57–84 (with further literature).

the candlestick will have been quick to understand that its base represented the earth (*orbis terrae*). More specifically, as a candlestick on the altar, it represented God's creation and Christ as cosmocrat.<sup>10</sup>

The inscriptions indicate that the candlestick has a specific front view: they are all visible simultaneously when we stand face to face with the figure representing Asia (Figs. 1 and 4). Asia, then, is the focal point of the base. The decision in favor of this arrangement was undoubtedly based on formal considerations as well as the visualization of the continents in the geometrical T-O map. To begin with, the composition with the semicircle in the middle and the quadrants on either side is symmetrical. Moreover, the arrangement on the base parallels that in the T-O maps. With east as their orientation, the maps show Asia not below, but above Europe and Africa. But even if the consequently 'marginal' position of the figure of EVROPA (Fig. 3) is explained by the T-O map, it is quite at odds with modern Eurocentric perspectives.<sup>11</sup> In fact, medieval notions of Europe in general challenge our present-day understanding of the continents, culture, and identity.<sup>12</sup> For instance, we might interpret the inscription BELLVM (war) on the candlestick figure representing Europe as an allusion to the Crusades—the Christian military campaigns to conquer the Holy Land preached by the popes, led by European rulers, and undertaken by people of all social classes. In fact, however, the Crusades were not considered European campaigns, but the holy war of the *ecclesia* and the *fideles Christi*.<sup>13</sup> Contemporary history might resonate in the inscription BELLVM, but the correlation of war and Europe was inherited from antiquity.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Asia had always been imagined as a continent of wealth (DIVITIE) in the form of natural riches and luxury merchandise. Paradise, where the four main rivers of the earth originate, was its most famous province.<sup>15</sup> Africa's reputation, by contrast, was less clear and often enough explicitly bad.<sup>16</sup> On the candlestick, Africa, now esteemed as the continent of SCIENTIA, holds an open book, but also exposes her bare breast (Fig. 5). Isolated from EVROPA and ASIA by her nudity, she possesses an ambiguous quality. Although the connotations of the nude female body merit further examination, the personification of AFRICA/SCIENTIA is itself a 'scientifically reasoned' representation: her nudity indicates the torrid, unbearable climate zone of Africa in contrast to

<sup>10</sup> For the candle as a symbol of Christ, see K. SEIDEL, *Die Kerze. Motivgeschichte und Ikonologie*, (Studien zur Kunstgeschichte 103), Hildesheim, 1996, pp. 63–107. See also L. EGGERS, "Licht am Altar: Formierung von sakralen Räumen und Zeiten durch Kerzenlicht in der Zeit der Romanik," in E. KOCH AND H. SCHLIE (eds.), *Orte der Imagination – Räume des Affekts: Die mediale Formierung des Sakralen*, Paderborn, 2016, pp. 195–214.

<sup>11</sup> D. WELTECKE, *Minderheiten und Mehrheiten: Erkundungen religiöser Komplexität im mittelalterlichen Afro-Eurasien*, (Das mittelalterliche Jahrtausend 6), Berlin/Boston, 2020, pp. 10–13, refers to the candlestick as a way of shedding light on the specificity of Western medieval worldviews and modern Eurocentric misconceptions.

<sup>12</sup> C. MAUNTEL, *Die Erdteile in der Weltordnung des Mittelalters: Asien – Europa – Afrika*, (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 71), Stuttgart, 2023; K. OSCEMA, *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter*, (Mittelalter-Forschungen 43), Ostfildern, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> OSCEMA, *Bilder von Europa*, pp. 263–290.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 500–501, refers to Lambert of Saint-Omer's summary of Dares Phrygius's "De excidio Troiae historia" in his "Liber floridus" (1121). Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 92, ff. 271v–278r, here f. 272r: *Europam bellicosos homines habere*.

<sup>15</sup> Exemplified by Isidore's description: ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Etymologiae*, 14.3, LINDSAY (ed.), no pagination.

<sup>16</sup> OSCEMA, *Bilder von Europa*, pp. 319–22.





Fig. 3. EVROPA / BELLVM (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)



Fig. 4. ASIA / DIVITIE (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)

well-tempered Europe and Asia.<sup>17</sup> Like EVROPA, who is wearing chain armor over her tunic, AFRICA ‘dresses’ according to her nature.

To be sure, the association of Africa with SCIENTIA echoes biblical references to the Egyptian origin of the sciences.<sup>18</sup> The candleholder’s iconography, however, is a modern—that is, twelfth-century—creation that also reflects the intellectual networks of the time. Starting at the end of the eleventh century, scholars in Western Europe had become aware of the richness of antique scientific and philosophical traditions in the Arabic-speaking world. Generally associated with Toledo and the Ebro valley as the most prolific centers of the so-called Translation Movement in the mid-twelfth century, the process began with translations of a corpus

<sup>17</sup> See, most recently, M. WINTLE, “Gender and Race in the Personification of the Continents in the Early Modern Period: Building Eurocentrism,” in M. CLINE HOROWITZ and L. ARIZZOLI (eds.), *Bodies and Maps: Early Modern Personifications of the Continents*, (Intersections 73), Leiden/Boston, 2021, pp. 39–66; D. KIM, “Domesticating the Body of the Exotic Other: The Multisensory Use of a Sixteenth-Century Brass Candlestick,” *Das Mittelalter*, 25 (2020), pp. 311–337.

<sup>18</sup> For a summary of the different notions of the origin of the sciences, see HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Didascalicon de studio legendi*, T. OFFERGELD (transl. and introd.), (Fontes Christiani 27), Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997, pp. 226–227, note 39; B. L. VAN DER WAERDEN, “Die ‘Ägypter’ und die ‘Chaldäer’,” *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie für Wissenschaften, Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Klasse*, 5 (1972), pp. 210–227.

of Arabic medical texts in Salerno and the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino in present-day Campania. The key figure was Constantine the African, who is documented as having lived in Salerno between 1076 and 1078 and died in Monte Cassino in 1098/99 at the latest. The accounts about him do not provide reliable biographical data but do convey his extraordinary reputation. In his book *De viris illustribus Casinensibus* (*On the Famous Men of Monte Cassino*), Peter the Deacon, archivist and librarian at Monte Cassino (dead after 1159), writes:

Constantine the African, a monk of the same monastery [i.e., Monte Cassino] fully learned in all philosophical studies, a master of the East and the West, a shining new Hippocrates, leaving Carthage, in which he had been born, sought out Babylon, where he learned grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, mathematics, astronomy, necromancy, music, and the physics of the Chaldeans, Arabs, Persians and Saracens. Heading down from that place, he went to India and devoted himself as a learner to their studies. And when he had fully learned their arts, he sought out Ethiopia, where again he might be taught Ethiopian disciplines. And when he was sufficiently fed with their studies, he moved on to Egypt, and there he was instructed in all the arts of the Egyptians. His studies having been completed by learning in this way over the course of thirty-nine years, he returned to Africa. And when the Africans saw him, thus fully learned in the studies of all peoples, they thought to kill him. Constantine, recognizing this, secretly climbed on board a boat and went to Salerno ...<sup>19</sup>

Peter's fascination with Constantine's intellectual itinerary highlights that, globally, there were many places of erudite learning outside of Europe. Tunisia, Egypt, India, and Ethiopia—Constantine travelled Africa as well as Asia in order to amass an encyclopedic, transcontinental body of knowledge. From a modern perspective, Peter's cartographic division of Africa is not altogether clear since, according to his account, Constantine went to Ethiopia and Egypt and



Fig. 5. AFRICA / SCIENTIA (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)

<sup>19</sup> PETRUS DIACONUS, *De viris illustribus*, 23, in H. BLOCH, *Monte Cassino in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge/MA, 1986, pp. 127–129, here pp. 127–128. The literature on Constantine, his translations, and working context is vast. For biographical information, see M. H. GREEN, “Constantine the African,” in T. GLICK, S. J. LIVESY AND F. WALLIS (eds.), *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*, New York, 2005, pp. 145–147; R. VEIT, “Quellenkundliches zu Leben und Werk von Constantinus Africanus,” *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 59 (2003), pp. 121–152.

from there back to Africa, possibly his hometown Carthage, where he was hated for his scholarship. The designation 'Africa,' then, seems to refer particularly to Tunisia which, however, is criticized for its disrespect of foreign knowledge.<sup>20</sup> In view of Peter the Deacon's geography, the Hildesheim candlestick's dignifying combination of AFRICA and SCIENTIA is all the more striking. In the second part of this paper, I will argue that the science of medicine systemized, for example, in Constantine's treatises is of significance for understanding this iconography. This does not imply, however, that the personification AFRICA/SCIENTIA refers to medicine and *Constantinus africanus* specifically. Rather, for Western European scholars of the twelfth century, he exemplified that Africa was a continent of scientific knowledge. They would have been familiar with Constantine's name and origin from his texts. In the preface of his most extensive work, the *Pantegni* (*The Complete Art*), a comprehensive medical compendium largely based on his translation of the encyclopedic *Kamil as-sina'a at-tibbiya* (*The Whole Art of Medicine*) by the Persian physician Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Majusi (late tenth century), Constantine writes that *Constantinus africanus* humbly dedicated this book to Desiderius (d. 1087), abbot of Monte Cassino and, in the last year of his life, Pope Victor III.<sup>21</sup>

The preface indicates that the transfer of new knowledge was a process of interaction. Scholars travelled, found new homes, and made new friendships. Translations were made in specific places, some dedicated to dear fellow scholars, and soon spread broadly. Books transcended geographical boundaries, travelled from hand to hand, and sparked discussions. Looking at the AFRICA/SCIENTIA statuette, then, the contemporary onlooker might have imagined the travel routes of scientific texts he had just received, read, or heard about. For him, the figure represented a dynamic movement. The same applies to EVROPA and ASIA, that is, war and wealth, military attacks and long-distance trade. Though stiff and static, the figures took the onlooker from the candlestick to the whole world. And when he turned to look at the second candlestick, he entered the world of science.

## THE 'SCIENTIFIC' GROUP

Their figures identical in number, size, and pose, the two statuette groups suggest that the two candlesticks correlate in many ways. However, a slight difference in the arrangement of the figures calls into question the assumption that the personifications of the continents

<sup>20</sup> The historic truth of this critique is difficult to judge. It may refer to the Banū Hilāl, Arab nomads of bad repute that migrated to the Maghreb in eleventh century. VERT, "Quellenkundliches," pp. 132–133.

<sup>21</sup> The best edition of Constantine's text is still *Omnia opera ysaac*, Lyon, 1515. BLOCH, *Monte Cassino*, p. 101, cites the dedication. For the preface in early manuscripts, see, for example, Hildesheim, Dombibliothek, MS 748, f. 1r (11th/12th century). The manuscript was donated by Bruno, Bishop of Hildesheim (r. 1153–1161). R. GIERMANN AND H. HÄRTEL, *Handschriften der Dombibliothek zu Hildesheim, Teil 2*, Wiesbaden, 1993, pp. 81–82. Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Amplon. Q. 184, f. 1r (dated 1147). W. SCHUM, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Amplonianischen Handschriften-Sammlung zu Erfurt*, Berlin, 1887, pp. 441–442; D. JORDAN, "The Fortune of Constantine's 'Pantegni'," in D. JACQUART AND C. BURNETT (eds.), *Constantine the African and 'Alī Ibn al-'Abbās al-Mağdūsī: The Pantegni and Related Texts*, (Studies in Ancient Medicine 10), Leiden, 1994, pp. 286–302, esp. pp. 290–298. For further examples of texts written by Constantine and containing his name, see the article on plagiarism by C. BURNETT, "The Legend of Constantine the African," in *The Medieval Legends of Philosophers and Scholars*, (Micrologus 21), Florence, 2013, pp. 277–294, esp. pp. 285–287.





Fig. 6. CONFLICTVS (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)



Fig. 7. MEDICINA (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)

on the one hand and MEDICINA (medicine; Fig. 7), CONFLICTVS (conflict; Fig. 6), and THEORICA/PRACTICA (theory/practice; Fig. 8) on the other correspond and correlate in pairs. The second candlestick has no frontal view. Whereas the inscriptions on the discs of the ‘geographical’ figures indicate Asia’s central position, there is no corresponding feature on the second candlestick. There the formal isolation of the figures from one another makes it difficult to determine the candlestick’s ‘correct’ position. However, it seems obvious that BELLVM/EVROPA and CONFLICTVS belong together. If we turn the candlestick so that EVROPA and CONFLICTVS are in the same position, ASIA/DIVITIE has its counterpart in MEDICINA and AFRICA/SCIENTIA in THEORICA/PRACTICA. Identical, though small details of the garments confirm this arrangement: Europe and Conflict wear the same veil; Africa and Theory/Practice strike the same pose, with the simple garment stretched across the knees in identical manner; the garments of Asia and Medicine are distinguished by the same multiplicity of folds.

On the first candlestick, the arrangement of the figures establishes a complementary rather than hierarchical order. Though the continent of Asia ranks higher in size and offers wealth, EVROPA, and AFRICA do not function as assistant or secondary figures, but possess the same representational status. It is not Asia, but the *orbis terrae* with its three continents that is the theme of this object. MEDICINA, CONFLICTVS, and THEORICA/PRACTICA must accordingly also represent a certain superordinate entity that, however, is much more difficult to determine. Since we do not know where the candlesticks were made or who designed them,

it is impossible to deduce their meaning from a specific intellectual context.<sup>22</sup> The following analysis will be guided by the inscriptions and discuss the classification of the sciences, the notion of medicine as a science, and the significance of the *ars liberalis* dialectics.

## THEORICA AND PRACTICA

The two male busts inscribed THEORICA and PRACTICA are the most unusual details of the ensemble (Fig. 8). Holding them in front of her breast, the female figure presents them like infants. Her belly oddly exposed but lacking an inscription, she is a striking figure seemingly devoid of meaning. THEORICA/PRACTICA, however, must have been easier to decipher, because this pair was closely connected to the notion of *scientia* (the sciences). *Scientia*, in other words, indicates that theory and practice relate to the field of epistemology. The statuettes AF-RICA/SCIENTIA and THEORICA/PRACTICA thus correlate in both form and content.

The distinction between theory and practice was of fundamental significance for defining the nature of philosophy. It functioned as a basic framework for the classification of philosophy in the writings of Boethius (d. 524)—specifically, in his first commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* (*Introduction to Aristotle's Categories*) and the treatise *De trinitate* (*On the Trinity*), the classical reference works in this field.<sup>23</sup> In the twelfth century, the theologian Hugh of St. Victor, canon of the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris, used Boethius's model for his classification of *sapientia* (wisdom) in his treatise *Didascalicon. De Studio legendi* (*Didascalicon, or On the Study of Reading*), written for the students of the abbey's school.<sup>24</sup> Hugh frames his pedagogical advice with an epistemological theory that not only defines the nature of *sapientia* but also explains the necessity, or even moral duty, of learning. In Hugh's conception, to learn means to strive for *sapientia*. He understands the human ability to study the material world on the one hand and to discern transcendental or divine principles on the other as a potential means of attaining salvation. Learning means first and foremost to live up to an intellectual ability bestowed by God. What is more, the deep, all-embracing insights of *sapientia* will guide the pupil in leading a virtuous life. Since this ideal presupposes a correct comprehension of *sapientia*, Hugh proposes a classification comprising the subcategories *philosophia*, *intelligentia*, and *scientia*. "Philosophy, then, is the love and pursuit of Wisdom" (*amor et studium et amicitia quodammodo sapientiae*), the desire for wisdom and the practice of learning.<sup>25</sup> *Intelligentia* (understanding) and

<sup>22</sup> WELTECKE, *Minderheiten und Mehrheiten*, pp. 12–13, argues in favor of Liège despite its intellectual decline in the twelfth century. See R. G. BABCOCK, *The Psychomachia Codex from St Lawrence (Bruxellensis 10066-77) and the Schools of Liège in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, (Bibliologia 42), Turnhout, 2017; S. VANDERPUTTEN, T. SNIJDERS AND J. DIEHL (eds.), *Medieval Liège at the Crossroads of Europe: Monastic Society and Culture, 1000–1300*, (Medieval Church Studies 37), Turnhout, 2017; C. RENARDY, "Les écoles liégeoises du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Grandes lignes de leur évolution," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 57 (1979), pp. 309–328.

<sup>23</sup> J. A. WEISHEPL, "Classification of the Sciences in Medieval Thought," *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965), pp. 54–90; BOETHIUS, *In Porphyrii Isagogem commentarium, editio prima* 1.3, G. SCHEPSS (ed.), Vienna, 1906, pp. 7–9; BOETHIUS, *De sancta trinitate* 1.2, A. GALLONIER (ed. and transl.), *Boèce: Opuscula sacra*, vol. 2, Louvain/Paris 2013, pp. 127–175, here pp. 136–143.

<sup>24</sup> HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Didascalicon*, J. TAYLOR (transl.), (Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies 64), New York/London, 1991 [1961].

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, 1.3, 48.

*scientia* are the components of wisdom. The word *scientia*, Hugh explains, is generally used in two ways: “namely, for one of the disciplines, as when I say that dialectics is knowledge, meaning an art or discipline; and for any act of cognition, as when I say that a person who knows something has knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> *Scientia* is not easy to understand and difficult to translate. In the broader sense, it refers to general knowledge about something. However, it also means *ars*, that is, a “specific field of knowledge” such as the *artes* of the Trivium and Quadrivium. This second meaning confirms our understanding of AFRICA on the first candlestick as a continent rich in scholarly knowledge and expertise.

*Theorica* and *practica* are *species* of *intelligentia* or “understanding”:

Understanding, again, inasmuch as it works both for the investigation of truth and the delineation of morals, we divide into two kinds — into theoretical, that is to say speculative, and practical, that is to say active. The latter is also called ethical, or moral.<sup>27</sup>

*Theorica*, the speculative part of *intelligentia*, aims at understanding the truth (*veritas*); *practica* focuses on the norms of behavior (*morum disciplina*). Hugh’s ideal that learning restores the virtuous soul is based on the practical category of *intelligentia*. The student gathers knowledge (*scientia*) and works hard to grasp the essence of things (*theorica*). Wisdom, however, comprises all aspects of human nature and existence. Only the student who learns to recognize and resist vicious temptations (*practica*) is able to enter the sphere “in which the Form of the Perfect Good stands fixed”<sup>28</sup>, the divine sphere of *sapientia*.

In the second half of the twelfth century, when the Hildesheim candleholders were made, Hugh’s *Didascalicon* offered the most advanced and systematic theory of knowledge and learning. It was widely read in the monastic milieu, but never put into practice to reform monastic education.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, there is no evidence that the busts THEORICA and PRACTICA relate



Fig. 8. THEORICA and PRACTICA (foto: © Dommuseum Hildesheim, Foto: Florian Monheim)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.3, 81.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem* 1.8, 55.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 1.1, 45.

<sup>29</sup> R. GOY, *Die Überlieferung der Werke Hugos von St. Viktor. Ein Beitrag zu Kommunikationsgeschichte des Mittelalters*, (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 14), Stuttgart 1976, pp. 559–569.



Fig. 9. T-O-map in  
Isidore of Seville,  
*Etymologiae*, London,  
British Library, MS Add.  
22797, fol. 99v, early  
13th century (foto: PBL  
Collection / Alamy  
Stock Foto)

literally to Hugh's classification. However, the unusual association of Africa with *scientia* and the overall complexity of the iconography suggest that the person who commissioned the candlesticks was someone who grappled with questions about the types and orders of knowledge. The fact that his ensemble of personifications was by no means intended to illustrate Hugh's systematization becomes overtly clear when we turn to the figure of *MEDICINA* (Fig. 7).

### MEDICINA

Compared to the *artes liberales* of the Trivium—grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics—and the Quadrivium—arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy—, medicine was rarely considered a significant field of human reasoning and knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Hugh of St. Victor's classification is a case in point. Having explained the nature of *sapientia*, in the second book of the *Didascalicon* he turns to *philosophia* and the study of “the causes of all things, human and divine.”<sup>31</sup> The classification of philosophy not only comprises the categories *theorica* and *practica*, but also cultural practices:

<sup>30</sup> WEISHEIPL, “Classification“, pp. 62–68.

<sup>31</sup> HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Didascalicon* 2.1, TAYLOR (transl.), 62.



Philosophy is divided into theoretical, practical, mechanical, and logical. These four contain all knowledge. The theoretical may also be called speculative; the practical may be called active ...; the mechanical may be called adulterate because it is concerned with the works of human labor; the logical may be called linguistic from its concern with words.<sup>32</sup>

Since the *artes mechanicae* do not contemplate wisdom in order to understand the divine, they are ranked significantly lower. On the other hand, they demonstrate the human ability to develop civilization. In Hugh's classification, medicine is mentioned together with fabric making, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, and theatrics.<sup>33</sup> In view of the minor status of medicine, it seems quite unlikely that he would have approved of medicine's prominent position on the Hildesheim candlestick.

Hugh's conservatism in denying the scientific value of medicine is remarkable. The chapter in the *Didascalicon* clearly indicates that he was familiar with a Latin translation of the *Isagoge*, an "introduction" to the medical system of the Greek physician and philosopher Galen (d. 216) written by Johannitius (Hunayn ibn Ishaq, d. 873).<sup>34</sup> It was the first text of the *Articella*, an anthology of medical texts translated and compiled in Salerno in the late eleventh / early twelfth century and soon available across Western Europe.<sup>35</sup> By putting the *Isagoge* at the beginning, the compilers conveyed the Salernitan understanding of medicine as a science:

Medicine is divided in two parts, namely; that is into theory and practice. Of these, theory is divided into three parts: one is the consideration of things that are natural, non-natural, and those which are contra-natural from which knowledge of health, sickness, and the state of neutrality proceeds.<sup>36</sup>

Whereas Hugh of St. Victor truncated and distorted the sentence in order to limit medicine to its practical dimension—"Medicine is divided into two parts"—'occasions' and operations."<sup>37</sup>—, the definition in the *Isagoge* stated that medicine has two species, *theorica* and *practica*, speculative and active. From this point of view there was no fundamental difference between medicine and philosophy. Rather, the definition implied that medical practice

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.20–27, 74–79. M. ARNOUX, "Hugues de Saint-Victor entre mystique et sociologie: Réflexions sur le statut de travail dans le 'Didascalicon'", in P. DOMINIQUE (ed.), *L'École de Saint-Victor de Paris: Influence et rayonnement du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne*, Turnhout, 2010, pp. 227–234.

<sup>34</sup> The anonymous translation was in all likelihood carried out in Salerno. For the attribution to Constantine the African, see D. JACQUART, "A l'aube de la renaissance médicale des XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles: L'Isagoge Johannitii et son traducteur," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 144 (1986), pp. 209–240; VEIT, "Quellenkundliches," p. 142.

<sup>35</sup> It became the main compendium for the academic study of medicine in the thirteenth century. C. O'BOYLE, "Articella," in GLICK, LIVESSEY, WALLIS (eds.), *Medieval Science*, pp. 53–54, here p. 53; G. E. M. GASPER AND F. WALLIS, "Anselm and the 'Articella,'" *Traditio*, 59 (2004), pp. 129–174, here pp. 137–140.

<sup>36</sup> Transl. by A. E. BABUSHKINA, *The King's Sick Body: The Spiritual and Social Implications of Arnau of Vilanova's 'Regimen sanitates'*, PhD Thesis, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, 2022, p. 28. There is no critical edition of Johannitius's 'Isagoge.' Provisionally, see JOHANNITIUS, *Isagoge ad Techne Galieni* 1.1, G. MAURACH (ed.), *Sudhoffs Archiv* 62 (1978), pp. 148–174, here p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Didascalicon*, 2.26, TAYLOR (transl.), 78. D. JACQUART, "Medical Education in the 12th Century," in C. GIRAUD (ed.), *A Companion to Twelfth-Century Schools*, (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition), Leiden/Boston, 2020, pp. 203–225, here pp. 213–214.



requires knowledge of the philosophical framework of the discipline.<sup>38</sup> Constantine the African's *Pantegni* was likewise divided into a theoretical and a practical part. Since it discussed the categories in greater depth, it was the fundamental treatise for understanding and discussing the relationship between medical theory and practice.<sup>39</sup>

An unusual diagrammatic miniature in a manuscript in Lyon dating from as far back as the late eleventh century (Fig. 10) also addresses the theme of medicine's rank among the sciences. In the manuscript it precedes Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, but in terms of content bears no relation to the battle between the virtues and the vices that is the subject of that text.<sup>40</sup> Its most salient motif is the enthroned female personification of Medicine (MEDICINA) at the center of a circle. She wears a crown and opulent robes; her breasts, however, are bare, an attribute she shares with the figure of AFRICA on the Hildesheim candlestick. At the upper edge is a semicircle with a half-length figure in it, identifiable as Christ by the cross nimbus. Here he also appears as an embodiment of SANCTA SOPHIA, or holy wisdom. In the axisymmetric composition, Christ presents a codex or scroll to the personifications of Philosophy (PHILOSOPHIA) and Mathematics (MATHEMATICA). These figures are found afloat on either side of the large circle and overlapping its edges, stretching one arm upwards towards Christ and the other downwards towards the figure of Medicine, to whom they each hand a codex. Beneath the arms of Medicine are further groups of female personifications, most of them half naked. Directly to her right and left are Theory (ΘΗΩΡΥΚΑ) and Practice (ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΑ), who in turn are connected to personifications of their subcategories Physiology (PHYSIOLOGICA), Etiology (ETHIOLOGICA), and Semiotics (ΣΥΜΒΟΛΙΚΑ), Diet (ΔΙΕΤΗΤΙΚΑ) and Care (ΚΥΡΑ), respectively, by means of lines radiating from their breasts and navels.

The science historian Bruce Stansfield Eastwood described the depiction in detail in an article of 1982 in which he also examined iconographic aspects and above all the question of the text sources.<sup>41</sup> Whereas the division of medicine into theory and practice can be traced back to an early, if little disseminated text, the choice of the intermediate disciplines of philosophy and mathematics is more difficult to explain. What is important for our context is that medicine is subordinated to the sciences, while on the other hand, through the two figures, also bearing a connection to Christ as an embodiment of wisdom. In a visually less conspicuous manner, the inscription below the arms of Medicine also addresses the hierarchy: "She [Medicine] lies beneath the intellect, since the physician works with his hands."<sup>42</sup> All in all, what we have here is a strangely ambiguous constellation. The subordination, which the text magnifies by describing it as a demotion, is not visualized; after all, the motif of enthroned Medicine dominates the image. She is not only linked to Christ through the figures on either

<sup>38</sup> O'BOYLE, "Articella," pp. 53–54; D. JACQUART, "Aristotelian Thought in Salerno," in P. DRONKE (ed.), *A History of Twelfth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 407–28, here p. 413.

<sup>39</sup> JACQUART, "Aristotelian Thought," pp. 413–414.

<sup>40</sup> *Ornamenta ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik*, Cologne, 1985, vol. 1, cat. n°. A 18, pp. 70–72 (F. NIEHOFF). R. STETTNER, *Die illustrierten Prudentius Handschriften*, Berlin, 1895, vol. 1, pp. 55–60; vol. 2, p. 9 and pll. 109–126.

<sup>41</sup> B. S. EASTWOOD, "The Place of Medicine in a Hierarchy of Knowledge: The Illustration in Lyon Palais des Arts, ms. 22, f. 1r, from the Eleventh Century," *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 66 (1982), pp. 20–37.

<sup>42</sup> Transl. *ibidem*, p. 22.



Fig. 10. MEDICINA, Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. Palais des Arts 22, fol. 1r, 11th century (foto: with permission)

side, but moreover has her place in this axisymmetric composition directly below him, a position that further reinforces the visual affiliation.

For the comparison to the Hildesheim candlestick, the motif of Christ as Sancta Sophia is of key importance. We have already seen that the latter twelfth-century conflation of MEDICINA and THEORICA/PRACTICA is traceable back to contemporary medical tractates. The miniature, on the other hand, helps to understand why this theme was chosen for a candlestick intended to stand on an altar. Whereas in the miniature Medicine is at the center and thus forms the main focus of the pictorial content, on the candlestick she has been shifted to one side. Now at the center is Christ, symbolized by the candle and its light. The miniature offers a more precise definition of this center as the origin of all knowledge, as *divina scientia* (divine wisdom) or SANCTA SOPHIA. The figural program thus conveys the message that the science of medicine is a form of participation in divine wisdom.

### CONFLICTVS / DIALECTICA

The third figure is clearly the most difficult to understand. Her natural-seeming but ultimately rather unenlightening connection to EVROPA/BELLVM has already been pointed out. The two snakes can be understood as classical attribute of the *ars liberalis* dialectics.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Also proposed by DESCATOIRE, “Une paire de chandelier”, p. 151.

However, snakes are by no means affiliated exclusively with dialectics but can also be an attribute of, for example, *prudentia*.<sup>44</sup> In view of the other two figures in the ensemble—which is devoted to the conception of the sciences or, more specifically, of medicine—dialectics would be an especially logical choice. In the second chapter of the *Pantegni*, in which Constantinus Africanus sums up the merits of his book, he writes: “Thirdly, this book is useful because neither before nor after it are other books of medicine necessary; therefore he who would attain the first rank in this art must have a knowledge of dialectics and of the whole Quadrivium.”<sup>45</sup> For a scientific engagement with medicine, Constantinus thus demands comprehensive knowledge of the *artes liberales*, in which context he assigns dialectics the highest rank. This matter has to be pursued further, but it appears to be sufficiently plausible that it is dialectics that rounds out the candlestick’s figural program. For the time being, its designation as CONFLICTVS remains puzzling. Claudia Höhl proposes an alternative interpretation by deriving the term from contemporary number games whose rules are arithmetical, in other words based on number theory.<sup>46</sup> The player’s aim is to create a sequence of numbers in constant proportional relationship to one another. In this context, the “conflict” is the tension between proportional—that is, harmonious—order on the one hand and disharmony on the other. If we understand CONFLICTVS in this way, it would mean that an imbalance would come about in the candlestick because there would be two figures from the context of medical discourse, including, surprisingly, one that is to be understood as the personification of arithmetic. However, such a ‘disharmonious’ order seems improbable. Instead, the concern is with medicine as a science that derives knowledge from the wisdom of Christ.

## SUMMARY

The Hildesheim candleholders are an excellent and at the same time peculiar example of the twelfth-century interest in using liturgical utensils and reliquaries as objects of complex meaning in image and text. The candlesticks stand apart from the rest of the liturgical utensil group because they do not accommodate any of the usual themes. They are intellectual objects of the kind one would expect on the desks of fifteenth-century Italian humanists.<sup>47</sup> To depict the world at the base of the candle—pictorially speaking, at the feet of the cosmocrat—a T-O map is disassembled, and reference thus made to the field of geography. The other candlestick relates the conception of divine wisdom to medicine, and in so doing manifests the status of this discipline—which was emphasized by the scientific discourse of the time—on the altar, the most sacred place of the liturgy.<sup>48</sup> Presumably, the pictorial program was personalized for

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the medaillon with PRUDENTIA on the foot of a cross in Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, inv. no. 4180, Hildesheim(?) / Cologne(?), ca. 1170/80. SPRINGER, *Kreuzfüße*, cat. n°. 45, pp. 188–190.

<sup>45</sup> Transl. JAQUART, “Aristotelian Thought,” p. 414. For the Latin text, see EADEM, “Le sens donné,” p. 89. See also EADEM, “Medical Education,” p. 219.

<sup>46</sup> HÖHL, in *Islam in Europa*.

<sup>47</sup> D. THORNTON, *The Scholar in His Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven/London, 1997.

<sup>48</sup> The candlestick’s iconography can be compared to the representation of medicine and cosmology in the Anagnini crypt that, however, is similarly unique and part of a fresco program devised in the early thirteenth century. M.

a scholarly donor such as, for example, the portable altar of Stavelot as a liturgical ‘manifesto’ of Wibald of Stavelot. The candlesticks—and other liturgical objects—suggest that the altar in the twelfth century was used to display *intelligentia* and *scientia* in a creative and sometimes highly individual ways. They invite us to conceive of the objects on the altar as playful ensembles of art works that combine cartographic, diagrammatic, and figural representations in order to intertwine secular knowledge and concepts of the divine.

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B. HAUKNES, “Painting Against Time: Spectatorship and Visual Entanglement in the Anagni Crypt”, *The Art Bulletin* 103 (2021), pp. 7–36; K. MÜLLER, “Profane Knowledge, Sacred Insights: The Cosmological Diagrams in the Crypt of Anagni Cathedral”, *Codex Aquilarensis*, 33 (2017), pp. 55–72.

