



P. J. ŠAFÁRIK UNIVERSITY · KOŠICE · FACULTY OF ARTS

# THE FUNCTION OF METAPHOR IN MEDIEVAL NEOPLATONISM



**THE FUNCTION OF METAPHOR  
IN MEDIEVAL NEOPLATONISM**

The Conference Proceedings of International Conference  
of the Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts P. J. Šafárik University in Košice  
4 – 5 October 2013

**Mária Mičaninová – Ivica Hajdučeková (eds.)**

Košice 2014

## THE FUNCTION OF METAPHOR IN MEDIEVAL NEOPLATONISM

Supported by Project VEGA 1/0330/12  
The Ministry of Education, Science,  
Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

Editors:

Doc. PhDr. Mária Mičaninová, CSc.  
PaedDr. Ivica Hajdučeková, PhD.

Reviewers:

prof. Dr. phil. Fac. Theol. Peter Volek,  
*Catholic University in Ružomberok, Faculty of Arts*  
Doc. Mgr. Michal Chabada, PhD.,  
*Komensky University in Bratislava, Faculty of Arts*

© 2014 Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Faculty of Arts

© 2014 book cover and graphics Katarína Blažová

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the Publisher.

URL: <http://www.upjs.sk/pracoviska/univerzitna-kniznica/e-publikacia/#ff>  
Acces from 15.03.2014

ISBN 978-80-8152-123-2 (print book)

ISBN 978-80-8152-124-9 (ebook)

*„Why then, when we have such great possessions, do we not consciously grasp them, but are mostly inactive in these ways, and some of us are never active at all?“*

Plotinus, *Enn V. 1*

## CONTENTS

*Editor's note*

7

*Contributors*

11

### PART I.

#### NEOPLATONISM IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

*Translatio and Antiphrasis: Uses of Metaphorical  
Language in the De Divina Praedestinatione of  
Johannes Scottus Eriugena*

**John M. Dillon**

19

*Metaphysics in Metaphors:*

*Abraham Ibn Ezra's Adaptation of Neoplatonic Metaphysics*

**Tamás Visi**

31

*The Ineffable One and Plotinus's Critical Reflection on Metaphor*

**Pavol Labuda**

41

*Shelomoh ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol and The Summa Theologica  
by Thomas Aquinas*

**Alžbeta Dufferová**

51

### PART II.

#### METAPHOR IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHLOMO BEN YEHUDA IBN GABIROL

*Global Metaphor in Ibn Gabirol*

**David R. Slavitt**

67

*The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of  
Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol – Methodological Preliminaries*

**Mária Mičaninová**

75

*Methodological Starting Points of the Inquiry  
into the Function of Metaphor in ibn Gabirol's Fons Vitae*

**Ivica Hajdučeková**

89

### **PART III.**

#### **PROBLEMS WITH TRANSLATING METAPHOR**

*Hans-Georg Gadamer and José Ortega y Gasset  
on the Translation of Metaphor*

**Kristína Bosáková**

101

*Problems with Translating Some Terms in Fons Vitae  
from the Latin into the Slovak language*

**Anabela Katreničová**

121

### **PART IV.**

#### **ARTISTIC INSPIRATIONS BY IBN GABIROL**

*The Kingly Crown in Creative Art*

**Katarína Blažová**

133



***Editor's note***

In the framework of the project VEGA of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic 1/0330/12 *The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol and Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi*, project leader Assoc. Prof. Mária Mičaninová, CSc., under the patronage of the rector of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, The Slovak Republic, Prof. MUDr. Ladislav Mirossay, DrSc., and of The Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts of the same University, took place on 4th – 5th October 2013 an International conference on *The Function of Metaphor in Medieval Neoplatonism*. Two days' conference was opened by Dean of the Faculty of Arts of P. J. Šafárik University, Prof. PhDr. Ján Gbúr, CSc., in the presence of Prof. PhDr. Vladimír Leško, CSc., Head of The Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy, and of foreign guests and students of the University.

First section of the conference devoted to *Neoplatonism in Medieval Philosophy* was chaired by Daniel Davies, Ph. D. from University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, who contributed to discussion with his paper *Some Images in Isaac Abravanel's Argument for the World's Creation*. In the section read his paper on *Metaphysics in Metaphor* Assoc. Prof. Tamás Visi, Ph. D. from the Centre of Jewish Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the Palacký University in Olomouc, The Czech Republic, and John M. Dillon, professor emeritus of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, with *Translatio and Antiphrasis: Uses of Metaphorical Language in the De Divina Praedestinatione of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*.

In the afternoon, proceedings of the conference continued with the second section, which was chaired by Assoc. Prof. Pavel Milko, Ph. D. from Jan Hus Faculty of Theology of Charles University in Prague, The Czech Republic, who contributed to the discussion of the section with paper *Neoplatonism in Byzantium; μέθεξις in the History of Byzantine Thought*. Pavol Labuda, Ph. D., read his paper on *The Ineffable One and Plotinus's Critical Reflection on Metaphor*, followed by Assoc. Prof. Dominika Alžbeta Dufferová, Ph. D. from the Department of Ethics and Moral theology at Faculty of Arts, University of Trnava, who made an analysis of *Shlomo ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol and Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae*.

Conclusion of the first day of the conference was built by speech of Katarína Blažová, the Slovak paintress, about an inspiration by The Crown of Kingdom by Shlomo ben Gabirol in her art. Her article je zaradený do samostatnej časti tejto knihy.

The second day of the conference beganns in the third section *The Function of metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol*, chaired by PaedDr. Ivica Hajdučeková, Ph. D. from The Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies, and Communication of the Faculty of Arts of P. J. Šafárik University in Košice with paper of David R. Slavitt, Boston, USA, *Global Metaphor in Ibn Gabirol*, followed with paper *The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol* by Assoc. Prof. Mária Mičaninová, CSc. and with *Methodological Starting Points of the Function of Metaphor in Ibn Gabirol's Fons Vitae* by PaedDr. Ivica Hajdučeková, Ph. D. Proceedings of the fourth section, started by PhDr. Kristína Bosáková, Ph. D. from The Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts P. J. Šafárik University, with her paper on *Hans-Georg Gadamer and José Ortega y Gasset on the Translation of Metaphor*, and was finished with paper by Mgr. Anabela Katreničová, *Problem of Translating Some Metaphors from the Latin Text of Fons Vitae into the Slovak Language* from The Department of Romanistic and Classical Philologies of the Faculty of Arts of P. J. Šafárik University in Košice.

International conference, which conference committee were Mária Mičaninová, Daniel Davies, and Ivica Hajdučeková, was characterized by intensive discussions and inspirations to the topic of the conference. Some of proceedings of the conference are published in this book.

We would like to express our thanks to the secretariate of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, to Mgr. Robert Stojka, Ph. D., Mgr. Martin Škára, Ph. D., Mgr. Lenka Cibuľová, and Mgr. Timea Kolberová from The Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, P. J. Šafárik University in Košice for their administrative assistance at the time of the conference.

Mária Mičaninová, Ivica Hajdučeková



### **Contributors**

**Katarína Blažová** attended the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava where she majored in Graphic Art under Professor Gabriel Štrba. After that, she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava where she mastered Free Painting and Tapestry under Professor Peter Matejka. Her works include paintings, tapestries and graphics. In 1990, she won 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in a National Competition for a Curtain for the Košice State Theater. In the years 1994-1996, she accomplished the curtain *Phoenix* for the Košice State Theater and the project of 11 large-scale hand-woven tapestries *Moira* in Moravian Tapestry Manufacture, Czech Republic. She created cycles of paintings with themes often inspired by literature such as *Fragments* (Heraclitus), *Privacy* (J. Johanides), *Three Drops of Blood* (S. Hédajat), *Keter Malkhut* (Ibn Gabirol), *Plays* (S. Beckett). She became the finalist of International Competition „Celeste Prize 2012 Exhibition of the 40 Finalist Works“ in Centrale Montemartini, Roma, Italy, with the painting *Beckets and Godots* (2011, acrylic on canvas 100 x 200cm). She lives and creates in Košice, The Slovak Republic.

**Kristína Bosáková** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. She obtained an MA in Philosophy and German language in 2004, and a second MA in Spanish language (Translation and Interpretation) in 2005. She submitted her dissertation, entitled *Gadamer and Greeks*, and obtained her Ph. D. in 2010. She is a collaborator with the Arbeitsstelle Internationale Feuerbachforschung am Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Westfälische Wilhelms Universität in Münster, Germany. Bosáková gives lectures on History of Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology and Philosophi-

cal Hermeneutics. In her research she focusses on History of Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Philosophical Hermeneutics and 19th and 20th century German Philosophy.

**John M. Dillon** graduated in Classics from Oxford in 1963, and gained a Ph. D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1969, after which he joined the faculty of the Department of Classics at Berkeley, where he remained until 1980, serving as Chairman of the Department from 1977-80. He then returned to Ireland, to assume the Regius Professorship of Greek at Trinity College Dublin, where he remained until his retirement in 2006. He is the author or editor of a series of books in the area of Greek Philosophy, in particular the history of the Platonic tradition, including *The Middle Platonists*, 1977, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1996, *Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism*, trans., with commentary (Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers Series), Oxford, 1993. *Iamblichus, De Anima*, ed., with introduction, translation, and commentary (with John Finamore), Leiden: Brill, 2002, *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy, 347-274 B.C.*, Oxford, 2003, and three collections of essays, *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (1991), *The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (1997), and *The Platonic Heritage* (2012), all with Variorum: Aldershot or Farnham.

**Alžbeta Dufferová** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Ethics and Moral theology at Faculty of Arts, University of Trnava in Trnava, where she lectures topics of Philosophy, Etics, Moral Philosophy and Moral Theology. She graduated in Religious Education and Social Science at the University "Marcelino Champagnat" in Lima (1983); Bachelor in Education (1989) and Master in Philosophy (1991) at the Universidad Feminina in Lima. She gained a Ph.D. at Charles University in Prague (1995), and a Dr. theol. at the Universität Wien, Theologische Fakultät (1998). In her research she focusses on medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and on Bonaventura's Philosophy and Theology and she dedicated many publications to this subject. In particular she works on translation of Bonaventura's works of which she translated: *Collationes ad Hexaemeron : Collatio I. – III.*

**Ivica Hajdučeková** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies, and Communication, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. She studied Slovak language and literature and music teaching at the Faculty of Education of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. After years of teaching at secondary school, she has worked at the Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies and Communication in the Faculty of Arts of Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, since 2006, as a head of the Section of Slovak Studies and literary scholarship. As a lecturer, she pursues literary scholarship (theory, methodology, semiotics). Her field of research includes Slovak literature of the period of Realism and Symbolism, Slovak literature of the interwar period and Didactics of literature.

**Anabela Katreničová** is a lecturer at the Department of Roman and Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. She focusses her research on Latin Medieval literature and translation of the works of Aurelius Augustinus, and Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol.

**Pavol Labuda** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Catholic University in Ružomberok. He gives lectures on Philosophy of Language and Philosophy of Antiquity. In his research he focusses on Philosophy of Language and on the character of language and theories of significance in the works of Plotinus and Aristotle. He is the author of the book *Onto-theologia: Plotinos versus Heidegger* (Ružomberok 2007), and other articles especially on Plato, Parmenides, and Plotinus.

**Mária Mičaninová** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, where she lectures History of Medieval Philosophy, Jewish and Islamic Mysticism, Plotinus' Enneads, the Philosophy of Martin Buber and Émmanuel Lévinas. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts P. J. Šafárik University in Prešov in Philosophy and History (1974) and in German language (1995). On the basis of DAAD scholarship she visited Hochschule für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg (1995), and Rheinische Wilhelms-Friedrich Universität in Bonn (2010).

In the framework of the Oxford Hospitality Scheme she visited the University of Oxford (2001). Her field of research includes Jewish Medieval Philosophy, especially the Philosophy of Ibn Gabirol. She is the author of the first Slovak translation of Keter Malkhut (2003) and a monograph *Koruna kráľovstva rabi Šlomo ben Gabirola s komentárom (The Kingly Crown of rabbi Shlomo ben Gabirol, with a commentary)* Prague: Bergman 2010, as well as a few articles on Ibn Gabirol's philosophy. She was honored by a prize of the Rector of P. J. Šafárik University in 2011 for her results of research in the History of Jewish Philosophy.

**David R. Slavitt** was educated at Andover, Yale, and Columbia University. A poet, translator, novelist, critic, and journalist, he is the author of more than seventy works of fiction, poetry, and poetry and drama in translation. He is also coeditor of the Johns Hopkins *Complete Roman Drama in Translation* series and the *Penn Greek Drama Series*. His most recent collections of original poetry are *Falling from Silence: Poems* (Louisiana State University Press, 2001) and *PS3569.L3* (1998). His latest translations are *Sonnets of Love and Death* by Jean de Sponde (Northwestern University Press, 2001), *The Latin Odes of Jean Dorat* (2000), *The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (1999), *Voyage of the Argo: The Argonautica of Gaius Valerius Flaccus* (1999), Solomon Ibn Gabirol's *A Crown for the King* (1998), Joao Pinto Delgado's *Poem of Queen Esther* (1998), and *Ausonius: Three Amusements* (1998). David Slavitt's other recent works include *The Book of Lamentations: A Meditation and Translation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) and *Get Thee to a Nunnery: A Pair of Shakespearean Divertimentos* (1999). His honors include a Pennsylvania Council on Arts award, a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in translation, an award in literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a Rockefeller Foundation Artist's Residence. He lives in Philadelphia and is on the faculties of Bennington and Yale.

**Tamás Visi** is an Associated Professor at the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centre for Jewish Studies at Palacky University (Olomouc, Czech Republic). He earned his doctorate with a dissertation on the early Ibn Ezra supercommentaries at the Central European University in

Budapest in 2006. In 2012 he was a Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His main interests are Moravian Jewish history, (especially rabbinic literature and other Hebrew sources), medieval Jewish philosophy and intellectual history. Recent publications include: "The Emergence of Philosophy in Ashkenazic Contexts –The Case of Czech Lands in the Early Fifteenth Century" in *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts / Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*, vol. 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009), 213-243. "Remembering and Forgetting Idolatry: Moses Maimonides, Moses Narboni, and Eliezer Eilburg on the Biblical Past" in Lucie Doležalová (ed.), *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 415-438. "Ibn Ezra, a Maimonidean Authority: The Evidence of the Early Ibn Ezra Supercommentaries," in James T. Robinson (ed.), *The Cultures of Maimonideanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 89-131.



**PART I.**

**NEOPLATONISM IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY**



***Translatio and Antiphrasis: Uses of Metaphorical Language  
in The De Divina Praedestinatione of Johannes Scottus Eriugena***

**John M. Dillon**

Both Johannes Scottus Eriugena (c. 815-877) and Solomon ibn Gabirol (c. 1021-1058) were independent thinkers in a period of human civilisation when there were considerable pressures in favour of conformity. They were also both profoundly influenced by Neoplatonic doctrines and formulations. I have ventured into the discussion of each of them on previous occasions (Dillon 1989, 59 – 81; 1992, 25 – 38), ill-fitted though I am as a Classicist to speak of them with any authority. On the present occasion, however, since Ibn Gabirol is being well serviced by a succession of experts, I have resolved to confine myself rather to Eriugena, and to a relatively early work, his treatise *On Divine Predestination*, rather than the *Periphyseon*, to explore the interesting topic of his use of metaphorical language, in this case in an effort to characterize the nature and works of the divinity, and to defuse a troublesome line of interpretation leading to heresy.

The treatise on divine predestination, you may recall, is the product of Eriugena's intervention in a doctrinal dispute over predestination that he was drawn into in 850-1 by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, who called on him, as being a noted dialectician and student of philosophy (and indeed recommended as such by King Charles the Bald himself), to compose a refutation of an heretical position being advanced by the monk Gottschalk of Orbais, who had composed a number of treatises arguing, on the basis of his understanding of the doctrine of Augustine, for what he termed a 'double predestination' (*gemina praedestinatio*), that of salvation for the good, and that of

damnation for the wicked. This argument, like all versions of the argument for predestination before and since, is in fact not by any means unreasonable for those committed to the Christian tradition, in view of a number of well-known utterances by St. Paul and other Judeo-Christian sources, making it all the more troublesome to refute. The problem, as we know, arises from reflection on the relation of God's omniscience to the passage of time. For us mortals, time is an arrow, proceeding straight forward from past to future, the latter of which is quite indeterminate. For God, on the other hand, situated as He is in eternity, time may be viewed as a circle, the totality of which is present to His intellect. Since He has willed everything into existence, and must be assumed to have perfect knowledge of the totality of His own creation, it was difficult for Christian theologians – as indeed for Stoic philosophers before them, who held a similar view of God's relation to the world – to avoid the conclusion that all that occurred in the physical universe, including the overall life-choices of rational beings, is foreseen by God, and to that extent predestined.

Gottschalk, who seems to have been a particularly obstinate and contumacious individual,<sup>1</sup> fortified by his study of the works of Augustine (cf., in particular, Book XXII of *the City of God*, chs. 1-3, but also, e.g., XX 21-22), had come to a conclusion not unlike that of John Calvin, that the lives of both the virtuous and the sinful were subject to separate and opposite predestination by God. From the perspective of the hierarchy, as represented by Hincmar, or indeed of the civil authority, as represented by King Charles, such a doctrine, if accepted by simple minds, is deeply subversive, as suggesting to both the 'saved' and the 'damned' that there is nothing to be done about their fates, and so, particularly in the case of the latter, that there is no point in trying to reform.

So Eriugena finds himself called in to set the record straight. Unfortunately, however, in doing that, Archbishop Hincmar got rather

---

<sup>1</sup> Even when comprehensively anathematized, and sentenced to be flogged and confined in the monastery of Hautvillers, he continued to publicize his views, ultimately appealing to Pope Nicholas I, which did him no good. He died (sometime between 866 and 870) without the sacraments, having been denied them if he did not recant, which he refused to do.

more than he bargained for. Eriugena is fully conscious of the difficulty of the question, and the problem caused by Augustine's pronouncements on the subject, so, in the treatise that he composed, the *De Divina Praedestinatione*, he approaches the issue from a highly abstract and technical perspective, drawing on a number of Neoplatonically-influenced principles as to the nature of God, and of His Will<sup>2</sup>, and above all, appealing to the limitations of ordinary language in attempting to do justice to divine realities.

The first principle that he wishes to establish is that God's will is not subject to any sort of necessity. I quote from the beginning of chapter 3 of his treatise:

Firstly, then, true reason recommends that the divine will is the highest, principal and sole cause of all things the Father has made through his truth, and that that will itself is in every way free of all necessity; therefore it is wholly will. Secondly, in the way that that will is most correctly predicated of God according to substance, so most certainly is predestination predicated. This can be proved by the argument from wisdom and knowledge and truth, and by the other attributes which none of the faithful doubts are substantially predicated of God. In the same way, if all necessity is removed from the divine will, it will most certainly be removed from divine predestination. Indeed for God it is not one thing to will, another to predestine, since everything he has made he has willed by predestining and predestined by willing (*Non enim Deo aliud est velle, aliud praedestinare, quoniam omne quod fecit praedestinando voluit et volendo praedestinavit*).<sup>3</sup>

This doctrine he is able to derive from Augustine's treatise *De Libero Arbitrio*, but it constitutes an important principle of Plotinus' treatise *On Free Will and the Will of the One* (VI 8), to which Augustine probably had access. Here Plotinus is (in ch. 7, 11ff.) countering "a rash argument, stemming from a different tradition" (probably

---

<sup>2</sup> He starts out, in a very business-like manner (1, 1), by asserting that true philosophy is true religion, and vice versa, and that philosophy may be divided up into four parts, Division (*diairetikê*), Definition (*horistikê*), Demonstration (*apodeiktikê*), and Analysis (*analytikê*), probably deriving these from Boethius' *Institutio Arithmetica*, but taking care to demonstrate his knowledge of Greek (as he does elsewhere in the treatise – not always with entirely fortunate results).

<sup>3</sup> All translations of the *De Divina Praedestinatione* are taken from the translation of Mary Brennan (1998). The standard edition of the text is that of Goulven Madec (1978).

Christian or Gnostic), to the effect that, if the activity of the One is not to be regarded as completely random and accidental, its will must be regarded as not free but constrained. Plotinus denies this strenuously, arguing that, just because the One is unaltered in its purposes, it is meaningless to assert that its action is performed under compulsion, there being no superior force that could impose any such compulsion. It is simply ordering all things for the best, and, if this purpose that it has is unalterable, it is unalterable solely from within itself. Any talk of necessity is therefore inappropriate. This is the position that Augustine adopts, and it is thankfully accepted in turn by Eriugena.

Establishing the freedom of God's will, however, is not by itself going to get Eriugena to where he wants to be. His key move is to deny the reality of temporality when applied to God, since only in a context of temporal succession can one speak of 'foreseeing', or, in the case of an all-powerful entity, 'predestining'. It is in this context that a theory of metaphorical language may be appropriately introduced. He sets this out at the beginning of Chapter 9:

Already at this point a structured treatment of the main question requires us to consider whether, in the sacred writing both of Holy Scripture and the holy fathers, it is literally or in a transferred sense (*proprie an abusive*) that God is said to have foreknown or to have predestined either the whole universe, which he himself created substantially, or whatever aspect of the divine administration is to be seen in it, that is to say, in those things which he himself does, not in those he allows to happen. In the first place it is to be noted – since no expression is adequate to God<sup>4</sup> -- that almost no speech-signs, whether nouns or verbs or other parts of speech, can be properly affirmed of God. How could sensory signs, that is, signs connected with bodies, signify with clarity that nature which is far removed from all corporeal sense and scarcely attainable to even the purest mind since it transcends all understanding? Yet toilsome human reasoning, rendered indigent after the sin of man, does make use of them, so that somehow the abounding sublimity of the Creator may be believed and intimated. Besides, if all verbal signs are not according to nature

---

<sup>4</sup> *Quoniam nihil digne de Deo dicitur*. This actually embodies a reference to St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* II, qu. 2, 1: *Ego vero, cum hoc de Deo dicitur, indignum aliquid dici arbitrarer, si aliquid dignum inveniretur quod de illo diceretur*.

but contrived by human convention, why wonder if they are not adequate to describe that nature which is truly said to be?

Eriugena goes on to distinguish between some usages, such as past and future tenses of verbs, and nouns like ‘essence, truth, virtue, wisdom, knowledge’, which may be used of God in a ‘quasi-proper’ manner, but there are others which are not proper at all. These he identifies as metaphorical (*translata*), deriving from three ‘bases’ or sources, namely likeness, contrariety, and difference (*a similitudine, a contrario, a differentia*). He provides a number of examples of the first and the third ‘bases’—the first including references to ‘the arm of the Lord’, or his ‘hands’, ‘eyes’, or ‘ears’, the third to such things as his ‘anger’, ‘indignation’, or ‘sadness’, which would be purely human attributes. What he is most concerned with, however, is the second basis of metaphor, that from contrariety, since that is what he sees as particularly relevant to the question of God’s ‘fo-reknowledge’ or ‘predestining’ (9. 3):

There remain those which are taken from the basis of contrariety. So great is their power to express meaning that by a sort of privilege of their excellence they are rightly called by the Greeks *entimēmata*<sup>5</sup>, that is, concepts of the mind. For although everything that is produced by the voice is first conceived by the mind, nevertheless not everything that is conceived by the mind is seen to have the same power of signifying when it is infused into the ferment of the senses. Therefore, just as the strongest of all the arguments is that which taken from the contrary, so of all the vocal signs the clearest is that drawn from the same basis of contrariety.

Of those, some are stated as absolute, some as in relation (*quorum quaedam absolute dicuntur, quaedam coniuncte*). The form of the absolute is: “I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise, and shall reject the prudence of the prudent.” (1Cor. 1:19, quoting Isaiah 29:14). Which is correctly understood from its contrary, as if he said openly: “I shall destroy the folly of the foolish, I shall reject the imprudence of the imprudent.” That is clearly understood from the words of the Apostle when he says: “The wisdom of this world is folly before God”

---

<sup>5</sup> We seem to have here either a scribal error, or a confusion by Eriugena, whose Greek is not quite so good, at this stage of his career, as he thinks it is. There is no such word in Greek as *entimēma*. What he may mean is *enthymēmata* – even then using *enthymēma* in a rather peculiar sense.

(1 Cor. 3:19). Indeed, if all wisdom is from the Lord God, for what reason shall God be understood to destroy what comes from him? But what is believed about wisdom is similarly to be believed about prudence. For God does not destroy any power in man; an example of this 'absolute' form cannot easily be found referring to God."

He goes on to give some further examples of 'absolute contrariety', such as another pronouncement of St. Paul's (2Cor. 5:21): "He who knew not sin committed sin on our behalf", where it is obvious that no sin could be imputed to Christ, and then turns to expound the other variety of *antiphrasis*, 'contrariety by relation' (ch. 9: 5). Here it becomes plain that he has in his sights the concepts of God's foreknowledge and predestination, which it is his purpose in this treatise to 'deconstruct':

Those are, indeed, said to be in relation because they come together in two bases, that is, likeness and contrariety. For the same nouns or verbs are used partly by likeness, partly by contrariety, of which paradigms are foreknowledge and predestination when predicated of God. For in that regard it might be said that God foreknows something by foreknowledge, or foreordains by predestination, when to him nothing is in the future, because he awaits nothing, nothing is past because for him nothing passes. In him, just as there are not distances of places, so there are no intervals of times. And because of this no right reasoning permits such terms to be understood of God with the claim to be literal (*iure proprietatis*). For how can foreknowledge be said to be his for whom there are no future happenings? Just as no memory of his can properly be spoken of, since for him there is no past; in the same way no foreknowledge since there is no future. And yet it is said: "The just shall be in eternal memory" (Ps. 111:7). But God has seen, has foreseen, has known, has foreknown all things that are to be done before they are done, in the same way that he sees and knows those same things after they are done because, just as he himself is always eternal, so the universe that he made is always eternal in him.

Eriugena is thus able to defuse the problem of predestination by revealing all talk of futurity or planning in relation to God as metaphorical.<sup>6</sup> His next argument addresses the nature of evil, which wo-

uld be the state of those liable to predestination to damnation. The argument he wishes to make is that God's foreknowledge, and thus predestination, even of the non-temporal variety, can only concern what exists, not what does not exist. Evil is not substantial in its own right; it is merely a perversion of true substances, and thus God has no foreknowledge of it as such; therefore he does not predestine it. At the beginning of Chapter 10, he appeals once again to the enthymeme called by grammarians *kat' antiphrasin* to defuse the problem of evil. Having asserted that God cannot foreknow or predestine that which is essentially non-being, he continues (ch. 10. 3):

All evil, then, is either sin or the punishment of sin. Regarding these two: if no true reasoning allows that God knows of them in advance, how all the more could anyone dare to say that he predestines them, except 'by contrariety'. Why, surely we cannot rightly think of God – who alone is true essence, who made all things that are to the extent that they are – as possessing foreknowledge or predestination of those things which are not himself and have not come from him because they are nothing? For if knowledge is nothing other than the understanding of the things that are, by what reasoning should there be said to be knowledge or foreknowledge in the case of things that are not? In the same way, if predestination is nothing other than the preparation of those things which God foresaw were to be made, how can predestination be asserted of those things which God neither made nor prepared to be made? Furthermore, if evil is nothing other than the corruption of good, and all good either is God and cannot be corrupted, or from God and can be corrupted, and all corruption seeks nothing else than that the good exist not, who can doubt that evil is that which strives to destroy good so that it may not exist? Evil, then, neither is God nor from God. And for this reason, just as God is not the author of evil, so he has not foreknowledge of evil, nor does he predestine it.

Now this may well seem a rather contrived, not to say desperate, argument, but its validity is not our primary concern on this occasion. What is interesting in the present context is Eriugena's employment

---

<sup>6</sup> There is another fine passage near the beginning of Ch. 11 (1. 19ff.), where he brings together all the terms that he has been employing (*translate, abusive, a simile, a contrario*) to drive home his point that any account of God's nature or activities must involve metaphorical language, and that there can be no predestination of evil.

of a metaphorical device to get him out of a doctrinal difficulty. It is also of some interest to enquire whence he derived his doctrine of the insubstantiality of evil.

Eriugena is always careful, throughout this treatise, to adduce Augustine as his primary authority – despite having to get round many of Augustine’s clearly expressed views on the fore-ordained damnation of the ungodly – but it is not from Augustine that he derives this doctrine of the insubstantiality of evil.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it must surely be from Dionysius the Areopagite, and specifically from Dionysius’ excursus on evil in ch. 4 of the *Divine Names*. The doctrine contained in this excursus Dionysius, in turn, has been clearly shown to have borrowed from Proclus’ *De Malorum Subsistentia*<sup>8</sup>, so that it is properly a product of later Neoplatonism. Now at this stage in his career, Eriugena has not yet been commissioned by King Charles to translate the Dionysiac Corpus, but we need not doubt that he was already fully familiar with its contents, as the text had been available at the Carolingian Court since being presented by the Byzantine Emperor Michael the Stammerer to Charles’ father Louis the Pious in 827.

At *Divine Names* 4. 716BC, we find the following, which reflects closely Proclus’ arguments in ch. 2 of his work:

Evil does not come from the Good. If it were to come from there, it would not be evil. Fire cannot cool us,<sup>9</sup> and likewise the Good cannot produce what is not good. If everything comes from the Good – and the Good naturally gives being and maintains, just as evil naturally tries to corrupt and to destroy – then no being comes from evil. Nor will evil itself exist if it acts as evil upon itself, and unless it does this then evil is not entirely evil, but has something of the Good within it which enables it to exist at all.

---

<sup>7</sup> Although he is concerned to quote Augustine in this connection, providing in 9.3 a relevant passage from his treatise *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus entitled Fundamental* (27, 29; 35, 39), and then in 9.4 a passage from *the City of God*, XII 7, both of which emphasise the insubstantiality of evil.

<sup>8</sup> Notably by J. Stiglmayer (1895, 253 – 73; 721 – 48).

<sup>9</sup> This image is taken directly from Proclus, *De Mal. Subst.* 2, 41. 7 – 8: “But, as they say, it does pertain to fire to cool, nor to good to produce evil from itself.”

It is this principle of the insubstantiality of evil that Eriugena reiterates all through his treatise, with the aim of undercutting any assertion that God positively predestines damnation for a definite class of evildoers. It is not that evildoers do not suffer punishment; it is just that this is incidental to God's providential care for the world. They really bring it upon themselves.<sup>10</sup>

Sadly, however, the subtlety of Eriugena's arguments, and the convolutions of his dialectic, seemed to Archbishop Hincmar to go too far in the opposite direction to Gottschalk, and to tend towards the heresy of Augustine's great enemy Pelagius. It required the protection of King Charles himself to save Eriugena from a fate parallel to that of Gottschalk. A refutation was issued in 852 by the distinguished theologian Prudentius of Troyes, and Bishop Florus of Lyons, in another refutation, contemptuously dismissed Eriugena's treatise as 'a mess of Irish porridge' (*pultes Scottorum*).<sup>11</sup> His position was condemned by the bishops of France at the Council of Valence in 855, and again at Langres in 859. Eriugena, however, does seem to have been largely undaunted by this reverse, and goes on to greater things in the *Periphyseon*, which in due course meets a similar fate, being condemned by Pope Honorius III at the Council of Sens in 1225 – it took a good deal longer in this case for the theological commissars to work out what exactly he was saying!

But that is another story. Before I leave the treatise on predestination, I would like to highlight just one further creative use by Eriugena of Neoplatonic formulations, though it does not strictly speaking involve metaphorical language. On the question of the nature of man's will, and its relation to human free choice, in ch. 8, he produces a most interesting triadic distinction, which he most probably derived, once again, from his study of Dionysius – though he makes appeal here, without apparent justification, to St. Augustine (8. 1):

---

<sup>10</sup> Judas, in ch. 13, is adduced as a prime example of this.

<sup>11</sup> This gibe was in fact not even original, but borrowed from the polemic of St. Jerome who, four hundred years earlier, in attacking Pelagius, who hailed from Britain, in the Preface to his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, described him as being "stuffed with Scottish porridge."

Now is the time to knock on the door of God's mercy that he may deign to unlock for us the difficulty of a pressing question. Far removed indeed and stored away in the secret recesses of deep intelligence is the question of the difference between man's free will (*arbitrium*), which comes from nature, and his free choice (*electio*) which, without doubt, is manifestly a gift of the creator. As indeed Saint Augustine many times very clearly impresses upon us, it is our belief that the substantial trinity of the interior man is composed of these three, namely being, will and knowledge. For if the highest wisdom which wished to create human nature like itself is in itself one and three, it duly made man in that way, that is being, will and knowledge, for those three are one. Indeed, for the rational life being is not other than willing, nor willing other than knowing, but its being is a knowing will and its will a knowing existence and its knowledge a willing essence.

The first thing to note about this triadic analysis of the nature of the human soul is that, despite his very definite assertion, it is nowhere to be found in Augustine. Either Eriugena is having an aberration, or he is hoping to pull the wool over the eyes of his less well-read readers, and claim the support of his premier authority for this doctrine. It is in fact, however, an interesting adaptation of a thoroughly Neoplatonic theory, probably derived from his reading of Dionysius – though Dionysius does not propound precisely this triad, despite making extensive use of the triad Being – Life – Intellect – or, in Dionysius' more scripturally acceptable version, Being-Life-Wisdom (*Sophia*) – in his characterization of God in His creative aspect in chs. 5-7 of the *Divine Names*. The basis for Eriugena's theory is that God wished to make human nature like himself, and God is endowed with a triadic structure. The triad that he proposes is not being-life-intellect, but rather being, will and knowledge. Here 'will' is made to stand in for 'life' as the dynamic element in man's psychic make-up, but, if one thinks about that for a moment, there is not much of a variation involved: will provides the impulse, arising from man's essence, which enables his intellect to initiate action – rational and virtuous, if the will is uncorrupted, irrational and vicious, if it is corrupt. In the case of God, the life-principle performs the necessary function of linking being to intellection; decision-making is not required.

I produce this detail, however, just to indicate how Eriugena's mind works. What Archbishop Hincmar made of formulations such as

this we do not know for sure, but it is doubtful that he much appreciated them, and that would apply to all his ecclesiastical colleagues. John Scottus Eriugena was in an intellectual world of his own. His command both of Greek doctrine on the use of figures of speech such as metaphor and *antiphrasis*, and of Neoplatonic concepts such as the insubstantiality of matter and intelligible triads, brought him the deep respect of his contemporaries, from King Charles on down, but it also, as we can see, contained the seeds of trouble.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

BRENNAN, M. (1998): *John Scottus Eriugena, Treatise on Divine Predestination*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.

DILLON, J. M. (1992): The Roots of Reason in John Scottus Eriugena. In: *Philosophical Studies* 33. Dublin.

DILLON, J. M. (1989): Solomon ibn Gabirol's Doctrine of Intelligible Matter. In: *Irish Philosophical Journal* 6. Belfast.

DILLON, J. M. (1997): *The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity*. Aldershot.

MADEC, G. (1978): Iohannis Scotti: De divina praedestinatione liber. In: *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis*, 50, Turnhout.

STIGLMAYER, J. (1895): Der neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre von Übel. In: *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16.



***Metaphysics in Metaphors: Abraham Ibn Ezra's  
Adaptation of Neoplatonic Metaphysics***

**Tamás Visi**

Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (c. 1089-1164) was born, brought up and educated in Muslim Spain.<sup>1</sup> In 1140 he left Andalusia for Italy. The reasons for Ibn Ezra's departure from Muslim Spain for Christian Europe ("the land of Edom") are obscure, although there is some reason to believe that financial problems, personal conflicts, and perhaps ideological clashes all played a role in the decision. In any case, from 1140 until his death in 1164 Ibn Ezra lived the life of a wandering scholar in various European cities from Rome in the south to London in the north. He earned his livelihood by teaching rich patrons or their sons (some sources indicate that he had non-Jewish students as well), to whom he often dedicated his various exegetical, grammatical, and scientific works.<sup>2</sup>

His wandering years can be divided into four periods: Italy (1140-1147); Languedoc (1148-1152); northern France (1153-1157); England (1158-1164). During the last two periods, from 1153 to 1164, he stayed in Ashkenazi territories. During these years he composed a

---

<sup>1</sup> On the chronology of Ibn Ezra's life and works, see Renate Smithuis (2006, 239 – 338) and Shlomo Sela and Gad Freudenthal (2006, 13 – 55).

<sup>2</sup> On the role of patrons in scientific and philosophic life, see Gad Freudenthal "The Introduction of Non-Rabbinic Learning into Provence in the Middle of the Twelfth Century: Two Sociological Patterns (Abraham Ibn Ezra and Judah Ibn Tibbon)" in S. Stroumsa and H. Ben-Shammai (eds.), *Exchange and Transmission Across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World* (Jerusalem : The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, forthcoming). I am grateful to Gad Freudenthal for sharing his paper with me before publication.

number of significant works with scientific and philosophical content: the so-called Long Commentary on Exodus, containing two famous philosophical essays on the divine names, and further excursus on philosophical subjects; *Yesod Mora ve-Sod Torah*, containing an educational program including the sciences in addition to traditional Jewish subjects and a philosophical classification of the commandments; and revised editions of many of his astronomical and astrological books. All of these works were written in Hebrew.

Y. Tzvi Langermann characterizes Abraham Ibn Ezra's contribution to philosophy in the following way:

All histories of Jewish philosophy include an entry on Abraham Ibn Ezra, and, judging from his impact on the field, he certainly deserves the recognition that he has received. Just how he earned it, however, poses a difficult historical problem. Ibn Ezra contributed virtually nothing to any of the branches of philosophy; he authored little in the way of strictly philosophical tracts and, indeed, there is no reason for us to suppose that he enjoyed any rigorous training in philosophy. Yet he certainly left his mark on Jewish thought, and his pronouncements are recorded and treated with respect by those who came after him. (Langermann, Y.-Tz. 2011)

I would add to this statement that for some followers of Maimonides during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Ibn Ezra was such a great authority on philosophy that he was second only to Moses Maimonides. An important Jewish philosopher of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, Yedaya ha-Penini, who lived in Languedoc and Provence, explained that philosophy belonged to Jewish tradition originally, but it was forgotten among Jews due to many persecutions. But some extraordinarily individuals in recent times managed to rediscover some of the lost philosophical doctrine which were encoded into the text of the Bible. Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch was the most successful of all these attempts until God had mercy on Israel and sent his angel to reveal the mysteries of philosophy – this angel was Maimonides in Yedaya's opinion.<sup>3</sup> In the fourteenth century some philosophers reported an anecdote that Maimonides said that all the secrets of his philosophy could be found in Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch, and had he known Ibn

---

<sup>3</sup> See Visi, T. (2009, 89 – 132, esp. 98 – 102).

Ezra's work earlier, he would have not written his major philosophical work, the Guide of the Perplexed.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time I have to emphasize that Ibn Ezra did not write a single philosophical tractate in the strict sense of the word in his life. His contribution to philosophy consists of brief and enigmatic statements, which often employ metaphors or parables. Let us examine two examples:

Commenting on the famous theological formula *ehyeh asher ehyeh* ("I am whoever I am" – Exodus 3:14), Ibn Ezra touches upon the ontological difference between universals and particulars:

And the scientists/philosophers [lit. "sages of the heart"] compared the species, which are universal, and which are preserved [as opposed to] the individuals, which perish, so they compared those universal and permanent species to the shadows of trees [visible] on waters that flow without cessation.<sup>5</sup>

The parable employed in this passage is unmistakably Platonic: the flowing water corresponds to the world of Becoming, whereas the trees to the world of Being populated by Platonic Forms .

The second example concerns another famous theological formula: "Let us create man on our own image and likeness!" (Genesis 1:27):

Know that that the whole creation of the lower world was created for the sake [lit. "honor"] of man by the ordinance of God. Earth brought forth all the plants, and water produced all the animals [for the sake of man]. Afterwards God told the angels, "Let us make a man; we ourselves shall be engaged [in this work], not earth and water." And we know that "Torah speaks human language," since the speaker as well as the listener is human being, and human beings cannot talk about things that are above them or below them unless [they employ] human images. That's how we say 'the mouth of earth,' 'the hand [=bank] of Jordan,' 'the head of the dust of the earth'. (cf. Proverbs 8: 26)

God forbid [to think] that God has a likeness. Thus [Scripture] says: "to whom shall you liken Me?" (Isaiah 40: 25). And since the upper soul of man [*nishmat ha-adam ha-elyona*] is immortal, it is compared to God regarding its life. And

---

<sup>4</sup> See Schwartz, D. (1996, 58 – 59).

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Ezra, Longer Commentary on Exodus 3:15. All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.

that it is not body, and it is full of everything [*ve-hi mele'a kol*], and the body of man is like a microcosm – blessed be the Name who began [the work of creation] with the great one and finished with the small one! And the prophet also said that he saw the glory of God “as the figure of a man.” And God is the One; and He forms everything; and He is everything; and I am unable to explain it. And Adam was created first with two faces [*partsufin*] and his power [*hono*] is one and he is also two. And behold there is an angel on the image of God, and he was created male and female.<sup>6</sup>

This passage demonstrates that Ibn Ezra employed metaphoric language consciously and he had a rudimentary theory about the necessity of using metaphors when talking about divine things.

The main problem is still, how Ibn Ezra obtained such authority among thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century Jewish philosophers. I would like to argue that the success of Ibn Ezra is connected to the failure of another philosopher who would have deserved – at least in the opinion of most modern readers – a place in the canon of medieval Jewish philosophical texts much more than Ibn Ezra. Many philosophical texts were translated from Arabic into Hebrew and were appropriated by the adherents of the Maimonidean-Tibbonide tradition. However, a very important and original and inspiring book did *not* become part of the corpus. I refer to Shlomo Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*.

This text was composed during the eleventh century in Arabic. It has been translated into Latin during the twelfth century, and some experts of it have been translated into Hebrew by Shemtov Ibn Falaqera during the second half of the thirteenth century. The Latin version had an enormous impact on Latin scholastic philosophy. The Hebrew version had only a very marginal impact, if any.<sup>7</sup> The Arabic original is lost.

Ibn Ezra was a mediocrate philosopher, an epigon, whereas Ibn Gabirol was a most original and profound philosopher. Still, Maimonidean tradition canonized the first and ignored the second. One explanation that recommends itself is that the very reason why Ibn Ezra

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Ezra, Shorter Commentary on Genesis 1:27.

<sup>7</sup> On some possible instances of Ibn Gabirol's influence on later Jewish philosophers via Falaqera's translations, see Schwartz, D. (1996, 162, 169 – 171).

was accepted was the lower intellectual level of his work. He was no rival to Maimonides, and, more importantly, his enigmatic philosophical statements were easy to reinterpret in a Maimonidean framework. As opposed to this Ibn Gabirol could have been a rival to Maimonides, the Fons Vitae could have challenged the Guide of the Perplexed, and since it was a well-elaborated and complex work it was not easy to appropriate for a Maimonidean reader.

Let us see some examples of Ibn Ezra's enigmatic remarks. In the commentary on Deuteronomy 32:4. Ibn Ezra explains the word *tsur* "rock" as a name referring to God:

The meaning of 'Rock' that He stands forever as a rock; and don't be surprised, because this is how Scripture speaks, '[God] as a lion roars' (Hoshea 11:10) since the speaker cannot but compare the deeds of God to his/its deeds, since everything is His deed. And similar is 'the Rock of my heart' (Psalms 73:26), like "support" or "strength" or "steadfastness".<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Ezra's comment can be contrasted with Maimonides' explanation of the word *tsur* in Guide I,16. Maimonides employs his usual exegetical strategy: he declares that *tsur* is an equivocal word in Hebrew; he shows that it can mean other things than rock in contexts which are neutral from a theological point of view, and finally he concludes that *tsur* means "origin" when it refers to God.

In other words, Maimonides does his best to maintain the thesis that no real similarity exists between God and the created world. As opposed to this, Ibn Ezra simply claims that rocks are indeed similar to God in certain respects and this is why the biblical metaphor is justified. He adds an enigmatic remark that everything is God's deed.

His remarks hardly made any sense to the Maimonidean readers; in fact in a fifteenth-century manuscript skips the formula "everything is His deed" and replace it with "He can be known only through his deeds" which is a commonplace of Maimonidean theology.<sup>9</sup> However, Ibn Ezra's statement makes sense if we interpret it within Neoplatonic tradition. It probably alludes to the theorem that causes contain the things they cause; thus if, God is a remote cause of rock,

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ezra, Commentary on Deuteronomy 32:4.

<sup>9</sup> Vatican, BAV, ebr. 106, fol. 243v.

then there must be something rock-like in His essence, and if God is a remote cause of the lions' roaring, then there must be something like lions' roaring in God's essence.

Another example is taken from Ibn Ezra's excursus on Exodus 33:21:

And behold, Moses turned into a universal. That's why God said, 'I know you by name' (Exodus 33:12). For He alone knows the individuals and their parts in a universal way.

Now the noblest on earth is man – hence the form of the cherubim. And the noblest among men is Israel – hence the issue of the [divine] phylactery.

And that's why it is written in the Shiur Qoma, "God is the Creator of all the bodies and all that are nobler than the bodies." And what is more debased than body is the accident.

And 'Rabbi Ishmael said, whoever knows the measure [shiur] of the Former of Creation [yotser bereshit] it is guaranteed to him that he belongs to the world to come, and I and Rabbi Akiva are giving our words for this.' And this is [the meaning of] 'Let us make man according to our image and likeness' (Genesis 1: 26).<sup>10</sup>

The statement that Moses turned into a universal makes no sense if we take "universal" in an Aristotelian sense. However, if we assume a Plotinian universal, the sentence may have a meaning, although the idea is still unusual. Ibn Ezra probably meant that Moses had obtained a higher level of existence and thus he became a "universal" encompassing the properties of many individuals, perhaps all the perfections of the human race.

This idea can be traced back to Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*, and ultimately to Plotin's Ennead VI treatise 2. The third book of Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae* is devoted to the topic of the occult existence of multiplicity in unity. In this context Ibn Gabirol argues that:

Individua et species multa sunt. Et individua et species sunt in generibus. Ergo res multae habent esse in generibus, et genera unum sunt. Ergo multa habent esse in uno (Ibn Gabirol, III, 33 (11)).

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ezra, Longer commentary on Exodus 33:21. Cf. the English translation by Alexander Altmann (1967, 225 – 280m here 268) is based on a slightly different interpretation.

This thesis is based on Plotinus' theory of logical semantic which is markedly different from Aristotle's logical semantics in two assumptions: first, Plotinus attributes separate existence to universals – this is the basic difference between Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, Plotinus subscribes to Plato's assertion of Forms which are independent of their instances – second, Plotinus claims that the differences separating species and individuals which are subsumed under a universal are contained in the universal itself. Whereas Aristotle holds that the genus "animal" contains only those properties which are common to all animals, and the specific and individual differences are added "from outside" from sources external to the genus itself, Plotinus insists that the differences define the genus "animal" no less than the common traits.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the genus "animal" in Plotinus' theory exists independently of individual animals and it contains all the properties of all individual animals in an original unity, just as white color contains all colors of the rainbow. Emanation is the process through which the differences hidden in the universals become manifest in the species and individuals of a lower ontological level.

This logical semantics is the basis of a famous metaphysical theorem of the Neoplatonic tradition which appears in Ibn Gabirol's book besides many other as well, namely, everything that is in the caused thing must be present in the cause as well. Since God was held to be the cause of the universe, this theorem implied that everything must be present in God's essence in an occult unity.

Returning to Ibn Ezra's comment on Exodus 33:21, Moses' "turning into a universal" probably means that Moses succeeded in getting connected to that level of ontological reality which Ibn Gabirol terms "simple substance," and which he posits between the First Cause and the corporeal world. Ibn Gabirol explains that the simple substance contains "universal forms," which "apprehend" and "sustain" all forms in their essences.<sup>12</sup> When Ibn Ezra claims that Moses "turned

---

<sup>11</sup> See Lloyd, A-C. (1990, 81- 90).

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Gabirol (1895, 167): et cum hoc dicimus, non intelligimus quod unaquaeque istarum formarum sit in unaquaeque istarum substantiarum singillatim, nec quod formae adueniant eis extrinsecus; sed intelligimus quod forma uniuscuiusque earum in se est uniuersalis forma, id est in natura et essentia sua est apprehendens omnis formae et

into a universal” he probably had that sort of universals in mind of which Ibn Gabirol spoke. In more simple terms, Ibn Ezra’s statement means that Moses obtained a universal form which contained virtually all forms and all perfections that a human being may obtain.

Ibn Ezra’s comment continues with a reference to a Hebrew mystical from Late Antiquity. The mystical writ *Shiur Qoma* (“The Measurement of the Body”) itself describes God’s body as consisting of angels bearing mysterious divine names, and gives the “measurements” (*shiur*) of every member of the divine body. The mystical vision ends by mentioning the fact that a phylactery [tefillin] appears on the divine head with the inscription “Israel.”

For Ibn Ezra the semantic key to understanding the text was the theory of the incorporeal world which consisted of Plotinian universals (corresponding to the divine body consisting of angels in the *Shiur Qoma*). Israel’s position on the divine head conforms nicely to the idea of Israel’s election – the universals of the Israelites must have a privileged status within the whole structure. Rabbi Ishmael’s statement also makes perfect sense with this interpretation: “knowing the measurements of the Creator” must mean entering the spiritual realm as Moses did. Finally, the famous sentence about God creating man according to his “image” and “likeness” refers to the process of emanation: our human essences are all contained in the divine essence and all proceed from it – this is how we were created according to God’s “image and likeness.”

The examples analyzed above show that Abraham Ibn Ezra’s enigmatic comments can be understood as simplified and somehow popularized versions of some of Ibn Gabirol’s metaphysical theorems. Conceptual analysis is replaced by gnomic style, and allegorical exegesis of sacred texts. Metaphoric speech, that is to say, a speech in

---

sustinens illam; nec possemus dicere quod omnes formae existant in forma collectiua earum qualiscumque sit forma ex formis substantiarum uniuersalium, nisi essent ipsae formae in potentia.

which words are not taken in the literal sense, is an essential ingredient of both gnomes and allegories. Thus Ibn Ezra transformed Ibn Gabirol's metaphysics into metaphors.

This analysis suggests that one of the reasons for Ibn Ezra's impact on subsequent generations of Jewish philosophers was his successful turning of metaphysics into metaphors. Those gnomic sentences, parables, and allegorical exegesis that medieval Jewish readers encountered in Ibn Ezra's biblical commentaries offered an easier way of consuming Neoplatonic metaphysical ideas than Ibn Gabirol's highly technical and sophisticated *Fons Vitae*. Moreover, Ibn Ezra's brief and enigmatic sentences failed to reveal those Neoplatonic metaphysical principles and premises which were rejected by the Aristotelian tradition. This was an advantage from the beginning of the thirteenth century on, when Jewish philosophical literature began to be dominated by Aristotelian currents. The emerging Maimonidean-Aristotelian canon of Jewish philosophical literature included Ibn Ezra's commentaries on the Pentateuch but excluded Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALTMANN, A. (1967): Moses Narboni's 'Epistle on *Shi'ur Qomā*',. In: *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.

FREUDENTHAL, G. (forthcoming): The Introduction of Non-Rabbinic Learning into Provence in the Middle of the Twelfth Century: Two Sociological Patterns (Abraham Ibn Ezra and Judah Ibn Tibbon). In: *Exchange and Transmission Across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*. Eds. S. Stroumsa – H. Ben-Shammai. Jerusalem : The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities.

IBN GABIROL (1895): *Fons Vitae*. Ed. Clemens Baeumker. Munich: Aschendorff.

LANGERMANN, Y. Tz.: Abraham Ibn Ezra. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/ibn-ezra/>>. (Accessed: 22.11.2013)

LLOYD, A-C. (1990): *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

SELA, Sh. – FREUDENTHAL, G. (2006): Abraham Ibn Ezra's Scholarly Writings: A Chronological Listing. *Aleph* 6.

SMITHUIS, R. (2006): Abraham Ibn Ezra's Astrological Works in Hebrew and Latin: New Discoveries and Exhaustive Listing. *Aleph* 6.

SCHWARTZ, D. (1996): Yashan be-qanqan hadash: mishnato ha-yyunit shel ha-hug ha-neopltoni be-filosofia ha-yehudit be-mea ha-14. In: *Old wine in new barrel: The philosophy of a fourteenth-century Jewish neo-Platonic circle*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute and Bialik Institute.

VISI, T. (2009): Ibn Ezra, a Maimonidean Authority: The Evidence of the Early Ibn Ezra Supercommentaries. In: *The Cultures of Maimonideanism: New Approaches to the History of Jewish Thought*. Ed. J.-T. ROBINSON. Leiden, New York, and Köln: Brill.

## ***The Ineffable One and Plotinus's Critical Reflection on Metaphor***

**Pavol Labuda**

### **Introduction**

The paper examines how we speak about the One. According to Plotinus, the One is the highest principle beyond being, it is unknowable, and thus it is also ineffable. The aim of this study is to (1) explain why and how Plotinus, in spite of insufficiency of language, continues to make meaningful statements about the One, and also (2) to explain the role of metaphors in Plotinus's thinking. The role of metaphor is discussed on the king metaphor.

In the first part of the study, I analyse four methods by which we are taught about the One via language. In the second part, I offer an interpretation of selected passages of *Enneads*, in which the king metaphor occurs. And finally, on the basis of conclusions drawn from the analysis and the interpretation of passages, I show how Plotinus's critical reflection on metaphors helps to clarify limitations of the use of positive and negative language to understand the One.

### **Methods by which we are taught about the One<sup>1</sup>**

Plotinus draws on the old- and middle-Platonic tradition of the way of knowing the First principle. To Plotinus, these ways are not the ways of direct knowing of the One, but they are rather propaedeutic

---

<sup>1</sup> On the ways of talking about the One, see Bussanich, J. (1996, 38 – 42), Karfik, F. (2002, 94 – 101) and also Schroeder, F. M. (1996, 336 – 355).

methods of referring to the One in language. In *Enn.* VI,7,36,5-8, Plotinus says:

We are taught about it by comparisons and negations and knowledge of the things which come from it and certain methods of ascent by degrees, but we are put on the way to it by purifications and virtues and adornings and by gaining footholds in the intelligible and settling ourselves firmly there and feasting on its contents.

Three of four methods find their linguistic expressions in the form of: analogy, abstraction/negation and ascension. All the three language methods used to referring to the One are based on the presupposition that the language expressions of the First principle are insufficient. We are taught about the One:

- (i) by analogy (*kata analogian*) which emphasizes similarity in the realm of distinctiveness,
- (ii) by abstraction (*kata afairesin*) which removes contradictory predicates, and
- (iii) by ascension (*dia hyperoken*), which is a continuous ascent of a chosen quality until it is contained and overflows. On the boundary of intelligible the “overflow” (*hyperoke*) is implied. Here the quality of the One in the form of predicate would not be in the position of the predicate anymore and would flow into its transcendent source.

The result of ascension would be that the predicate is contained within the subject. This method then means transferring (*metaferontes*) the positive predicate from the level of lower beings to the highest level of the first principle. Pre-Plotinian example of this process could be the passage from Plato’s dialogue *Symposium* 211c. In this passage, he speaks on the ascent of quality of beauty: from bodily beauty to beautiful acts, from beautiful acts to beautiful knowledge, from beautiful knowledge to the Beauty itself.

In line with the tradition of Platonism, transcendence of First principle defies predicate structures. Plotinus’s teaching reacts to this challenge – how to use discursive reasoning or follow the transcendent-

ing – using the following methods. (i) By abstraction, which is a continuous eliminating of predicates, Plotinus removes all plurality of logical relations to the simplicity of the first principle. (ii) By analogy, Plotinus deals with the problem of transcendence: he constructs the relation of one unknown which represents the ineffable One and puts it in relations of similar in the distinct. The analogy of a formula “a:b = c:d” can serve as an example. Hence, the One is to its emanations as the king to its king procession. And finally, the ascension method (iii) enables Plotinus to challenge the transcending One by raising the meaning of the selected quality ascribed to the One operatively and then he increases this quality by levels of being up to the boundary of logical relations that determine it in discourse.

Ascension can reach the limits of discourse and refer beyond the limits by combination with the abstraction method, because only abstraction can transfer the predicate beyond the boundaries of logical relations determined by practical discourse, or definition. The nature of ascension method also indicates the role of affirmative utterances when speaking about the One. The fact that we can refer to the One as good, free, etc. In case of Plotinus’s teaching, it cannot be understood as a categorical predication but as an utterance in the sense of *eminenter*.

By its very nature, linguistic expressions (speech) cannot describe what is beyond the boundaries of psychic and intelligible being. Speech cannot express what does not have an intelligible form. We cannot, therefore, express the One as the first principle, not even matter as immaterial reality. Speech, according to Plotinus, can only aspire to define the boundaries using abstraction and ascension of any predicate interpreting a particular intelligible form. This defying of boundaries happens in language and reaches its boundaries without being able to transgress them. Speech can only transgress the boundaries by *showing*. Speech can get beyond the boundaries of discursive reflection of its own limitations. And one way how can the language transgress the boundaries is by using metaphors and by doing a critical reflection on their use.

## Plotinus's critical reflection on metaphor

Let us turn to the way in which Plotinus works with metaphor. It is necessary to discuss how he applies the above-mentioned methods in constituting and interpreting the metaphors when talking about the One. To clarify Plotinus's use of metaphor, I concentrate on one of Plotinus's many metaphors, the metaphor of king.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the use of king metaphor referring to the highest principle goes back to Plato. In the *Second Letter 312d-e*, Plato suggests

[...] you say that the nature of "the first" has not been sufficiently explained. I must speak of this matter to you in enigmas, in order that if anything should happen to these tablets "in the recesses of the sea or land," whoever reads them may not understand our meaning. It is like this. Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the second principle, and those of the third order upon the third. Now the soul of man longs to understand what sort of things these principles are, and it looks toward the things that are akin to itself, though none of them is adequate; clearly the king and the other principles mentioned are not of that sort.

According to Plato's *Second Letter*, the expression "the king" (*basileos*) serves as a secret or, more precisely, a representing name for the Supreme beginning, the cause of everything what exists. The word "the king" is a metaphorical reference to the first principle. The cited passage shows that the man yearns to know and understand the supreme beginning by knowledge based on analogy. And in seeing the similar in the distinct rests the true nature of the analogy method introduced by Plotinus,  $a:b = c:d$ .

If we see Plato as the first to use the king metaphor for the Supreme beginning, it is important to emphasize that not only in *The Second Letter* but also in *The Seventh Letter 343a* as well as in the dialogue *Phaedrus 274b*, Plato only implies, never explains discursively. Plato's resistance to explanation the supreme beginning is caused by his belief that the supreme beginning is inarticulable (*arheton*), i.e. impossible to express by language. In this, Plotinus is a

---

<sup>2</sup> For an elaborate study of the king metaphor, see Dörnie, H. (1970, 217-235).

loyal follower of Plato. The moment of insufficiency of discursive expression of the first principle and preference of referring images or metaphors (the sun, the king, fire, etc.) is woven into the history of Platonism.<sup>3</sup> Plotinus's inheritance of Plato's image of the king is demonstrated in the following excerpt. *Enn. V,1,8,1-14*:

This is the reason why Plato says that all things are threefold "about the king of all" – he means the primary realities – and "the second about the second and the third about the third". But he also says that there is a "father of the cause", meaning Intellect by „the cause“: for Intellect is his craftsman; and he says that it makes Soul in that "mixing bowl" he speaks of. And the father of Intellect which is the cause he calls the Good and that which is beyond Intellect and "beyond being". And he also often calls Being and Intellect Idea: so Plato knew that Intellect comes from the Good and Soul from Intellect. And [it follows] that these statements of ours are not new; they do not belong to the present time, but were made long ago, not explicitly, and what we have said in this discussion has been an interpretation of them, relying on Plato's own writings for evidence that these views are ancient.

Evidently, Plotinus followed Plato's tradition of *The Second Letter*, *The Seventh Letter*, *Republic*, *Parmenides*, as well as the dialogue *Ti-maeus*, to which the expression "the father of cause" refers. Let us turn to a different issue, the image of "the coming of the king". It provides us with a rich fundament to understand and explain the role of the king metaphor in speaking about the One.

*Enn. V,5,3,7-25*: For the First in this progress could not take its stand upon something soulless ... but there must be ... as in the procession before a great king the lesser ranks go first, and then in succession the greater and after them the yet more majestic and the court which has still more of royal dignity, and then those who are honoured next after the king; and after all these the great king himself is suddenly revealed, and the people pray and prostrate themselves before him – those at least who have not gone away beforehand, satisfied with what they saw before the coming of the king. Now in our example the king is a different person from those who go before him; but the king there in the higher world does not rule over different, alien people, but has the most just, the natural sovereignty and the true kingdom; for he is king of truth and natural lord of all his own offspring and divine company, king of the king and of the kings, and more rightly than Zeus called the father of the gods;

---

<sup>3</sup> And this fact is also related to the romanticizing image of greater value or adequacy of hieroglyphs and their role in expressing higher realities (Soul, Forms, Intellect), including the First principle.

Zeus imitates him in this way also in that he is not satisfied with the contemplation of his father but aspire to, we might say, the active power with which his grandfather established reality in being.

The mentioned image of “the coming of the king” contains two basic moments of Plotinus’s philosophy: the moment belonging to the descending way of emanation and the moment of ascending way of *henosis*. The metaphysical moment means that the One is the first cause because it is an active force determining the being of all. The One is the source of which everything emanates as everything continuously springs from it. The epistemological moment means that the One could be understood on the basis of its effect. It is possible to understand the One by ascending the levels of being that precede it. Both moments form the pillars of Plotinus’ philosophy and they are expressed by the image of the king’s procession. The essence and the value of the whole procession is given by the king, and this is the metaphysical moment of this metaphor. From the perspective of the observant (the patient and persistent observant), the king comes only after the whole procession appears. This belongs to the epistemological moment. The supremacy of the One as the First principle and a necessity of the ascending process through the individual *hypostaseis* towards the One, is obvious from the following passage, where the epiphany of the king occurs once again:

*Enn. VI,8,9,18-25*: [...] or rather, not what it ought to be, but other things have to wait and see how their king will appear to them and affirm that he is what he himself is, not appearing as he happened to be, but as really king and really principle and really the Good, not active according to the Good – for in this way he would seem to be following another – but being one, what he is, so that he is not active according to that, but is that.

From the perspective of the enumerated and analysed methods of expressing the One, the last metaphor of “the king’s epiphany” is formed by ascension, i.e. succession of the lesser ranks in the king’s procession before the king, who, as the Good itself, gives the value to his procession. Simultaneously, this metaphor is also a way of abstraction/negation, since the only One (*monachos*) is the value itself and it also negates the value of the It’s/king’s procession. The value of the procession is given by the king (*monarchos*), who is the Good itself. The One is manifested/shown as the one and only overflowing

beginning (*monachos*), and hence it is the king (*monarchos*), of everything royal.

The metaphor of “the king’s coming” expresses the fact that predicates assigned to the One have only an indirect nature, i.e. they clarify the states by which our thinking and the expressing relates to the One. The king is the king for his people and not for himself. Reflecting the limitations of the rational discourse (positive and negative theology) enables us to see the One as the source that manifests itself via its emanations. One reveals. Such a reflection of the rational discourse limitations (positive and negative theology), shifts Plotinus towards the mystical theology. The mystical experience is the coexistence with the manifestation of the One. The mystical experience is participation, and thus it is extra-predicative activity by its very nature. However, the description of this extra-predicative experience is again its repetitive predication.

### Conclusion

Plotinus’s method of speaking about the One is as follows: positive utterances, detection of language boundaries as for the ineffability of the One, aphaeretic predication, reflexive critique of positive and negative predication in form of clarification of the limits of rational discourse (to which Plotinus’s reflection on metaphor belongs). This is the way the two models (model of representation and model of reflection) used by Plotinus in his teaching work together. This is the dialectic which gives rise to philosophy as well as to theology.<sup>4</sup>

An attempt to get mystical extra-predicative experience depends on the recursive process of abstraction. This time, it is not only abstraction in the realm of discursive thinking but also abstraction of our imagination. Hence, it is a spiritual-mystical exercise. This spiritual mystical exercise, which is an extra-linguistic concentration *monos pros monon*, is, according to Plotinus, able to raise the man

---

<sup>4</sup> On relation between two models (model of representation and model of reflection) see Schroeder, F.-M. (1996, 336 – 355).

(his soul via Soul) to the Intellect (by rejecting everything of the sensible world and consequently, refusing (*afairesis*) any intelligible distinction). The Intellect then ceases to relate to itself, and thus, it removes reflexivity. The Intellect reaches up to the limit-less and indeterminate One. This process is known as Plotinian *henosis*. It is a mystical experience of the unity (*parousia*) of our soul and non-reflexive element of the Intellect. This is how it is possible to glance at the One in the sense of resting in the One.

I claim that the reason why Plotinus, despite his own belief in insufficiency of discursive language, continues in formulating the meaningful statements about the One, is due to the fact that philosophy and theology aim at encouraging and leading our soul on the way to mystical unity with the One. Philosophy should enable (by using the critical reflection on metaphors referring to the One) to help the human soul to avoid the mistakes caused by inadequacy of discursive thinking to understand the One. Philosophy as critical reflection of discursive thinking prepares the human soul for the spiritual journey of mystical unity with the ineffable One.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

BUSSANICH, J. (1996): Plotinus's metaphysics of the One. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DÖRRIE, H. (1970): Der König. Ein platonisches Schlüsselwort, von Plotin mit neuem Sinn erfüllt. In: *Revue internationale de Philosophie*, 91, 217-235.

*A Greek-English Lexicon. A New [9th] Edition.* (1940). Compiled by H.-G. Liddell and R. Scott. Revised and augmented by H. S. Jones. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

KARFÍK, F. (2002): *Plótínova metafyzika svobody*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

PLATO (1997): *Complete Works*. Eds. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutschinson. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company.

PLÓTÍNOS (1966 – 1988): *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, ed. A. H. Armstrong, LCL, Cambridge, Mass.

SCHROEDER, F. M. (1996): Plotinus and language. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



***Shelomoh ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol<sup>5</sup>***  
***and The Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas***

**Alžbeta Dufferová**

**Introduction**

The inspiration to write this article came from the publication of Maria Mičaninová "Improving ethical standards" by Ibn Gabirol in *Acta Moralia Tyrnaviensia*, the medieval Jewish philosopher who first made a systematic analysis of an ethical issue and at the same time "associated ethics with psychology and physiological conditions of conduct" (Mičaninová 2007, 125). Finally, "Thomas Aquinas and other medieval scholastics and personalities have also benefited from the general rise of interest ... not only Catholics, but also in general theists" (Michalov 2013, 310).

The study "Shelomoh ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol and The Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas" focuses on the fact that one of the greatest theologians and philosophers of Christian culture did not evade such an important thinker, philosopher, theologian and mystic, who was a Jewish thinker, living in the Arab area of medieval Andalusia, Shelomoh ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol [lat. Avicbron, Avencebrol]. It wants to point out a few selected issues that were the subject of a systematic review of Thomas Aquinas, and which relies on the opinions and beliefs of Ibn Gabirol. It is remarkable how Aquinas

---

<sup>5</sup> Shelomoh ben Yehuda *Ibn* Gabirol after Sarah Pessin giving thanks to professors Joel Kraemer and Peter Cole for the aid by discovery of origin of that name. Cf. Pessin, S. (2013, 1). We have chosen the present spelling of Gabirol's full name in the title of this article.

– and perhaps even his peers, as Alexander of Hale and Bonaventure – is able to pursue the truth considering all available sources, appreciating them, building on them critically and drawing consequences from them as the best route to knowledge, making every effort to avoid error. Whether he drew on non-Christian sources centuries ago, and to what extent, is worth thinking about

Topics addressed by study are taken from the theological set in order that they declare its author. For better orientation we use names from the older German edition of Summa, but it does not interfere with the intention of the study, but rather helps. Aquinas is named the "angelic doctor" and so it is quite well suited to study the following question first: whether an angel is composed of substance and form [I, Q50, 2]. Finally, as illustrated by current research experts on Thomas Aquinas, such as David Svoboda, Thomas, in his doctrine of angels (*De substantiis separatiis*), which he did not complete, appears primarily as a historical and systematic philosopher, theologian and metaphysician. (Cf. Svoboda 2010, 5-6) Secondly, the study addresses the issue of the creation of the world according to the book of Genesis with three difficulties, which Aquinas already noticed (creation, separation and decoration) [I, Q 66.2]. In the third place, it will consider the question of the actions of physical creatures [I, Q115, 1]; in fourth, it will think over what belongs to human activity [I, Q117, 1] and, finally, the fifth question, where does the development of embryos come from, to speak the language of today: from where does the embryo gain its impulse to develop [I Q118, 2]. Everything takes place with regard to the *Fons Vitae*, even with confrontation of other old and medieval sources, because the angelic teacher in these parts of the Summa refers to the doctrine of the rabbi who heavily influenced the academic community of the thirteenth century.

### **Is an angel composed from matter and form? [I, Q50,2]**

The *Quaestio* I, Q 50 (Cf. Von Aquin 1936, 123-144) Thomas' amounts seeks to get to the heart of an angel [*de substantia angelorum absolute*]. He notes that among living creatures there are purely spiritual

ones, which the Bible calls angels, usually the good; the bad are demons. There are purely physical creatures (animals) and finally also to the physical and the spiritual component (people). Thomas, focusing this section specifically on angels and explaining that first it is necessary to think about what belongs to their essence (*ad eorum substantia*), to their understanding (*ad eorum intellectum*) and will (*ad eorum voluntatem*) and not least to the fact, how they were created (*ad eorum creationem*). He asks five questions in detail and examines them prudently (first – asking whether there is a spiritual creature, totally bodiless, second – provided that the angel is really a purely spiritual incorporeal creature, he examines whether it is composed of matter and form, the third deals with the number of angels; fourth, he looks at their differences and, fifth, he considers their integrity and immortality). In our study, we devote to the second question, its second point in more detail. In fact, Ibn Gabirol and his Fons by a considerable number of other medieval scholars, in addition to Thomas. Today we may be pleasantly surprised that the researchers' attention begins again to be directed towards the justification of human thinking and acting on issues related to them.

Mária Mičaninová certainly does not exaggerate, when she considers *The Source of Life* as an important metaphysical treatise, which is an essential work for understanding the philosophical (new platonic) thinking of Ibn Gabirol (Mičaninová 2010, 92), because it corresponds exactly to the medieval understanding of "metaphysics as a philosophical discipline that aspires to a comprehensive interpretation of the world" (Mičaninová 2010, 93) and reflects also the Islamic form of new platonic thinking with the originality of the author's own solutions. His new platonic and Aristotelian thinking can be called in the hierarchy of being as universal hylemorphism. The basis for the emergence of something is universal matter and universal form, which determines what arises. Ibn Gabirol adds a third element, the will of God, without which nothing happens. So he associated, albeit indirectly, Jewish monotheism with the logic of new platonic thinking. Ibn Gabirol's intention is directed to the knowledge of the First Cause and the purposes for which man has been created, and

that he will achieve his true and full happiness. Knowledge thus becomes for Ibn Gabirol a prerequisite to achieving the ultimate goal of human effort – to learn and know something about the First Being. In contact with the First, reason then reveals a higher order, which will encourage him to action (i.e., choosing what for the soul really is good and rejecting what is harmful), which liberates and purifies him. *Fons Vitae* so becomes not only a philosophical, but also a mystical work. Proceeding in accordance with an ongoing of intellectual and moral purification leads to the liberation of the soul from death, because of its connection with the origin of life. It is possible to perceive the desire of Ibn Gabirol, as a new platonic Aristotelian, as expressed by his masterful synthesis of Jewish mysticism. (Cf. Mičani-  
nová 2010, 92 – 95)

Thomas Aquinas in 50 Q assumes the existence of inherent non-physical beings – angels. God in all created things primarily pursues good. Good is to be configured to God and the most he likened to what is reasonable and what has volition, because God created everything with reason and volition. An angel is a being who has a mind and a will of its own, and its spirituality closely resembles God. In examining whether an angel is composed of matter (mass) and form (shape), Thomas considers four objections, which reflect his learning of Aristotle, Boethius, Ibn Gabirol and Dionysus. These objections are reflections of live medieval debate. How is Ibn Gabirol's work *Fons Vitae* indirectly apparent from the comment of Summa? Q 50, 2 has its historical reasons. The high scholastic view of the non-physical nature of angels explained their meaning, but not the nature of spirituality. Many theologians, especially Franciscan scholastics such as Alexander von Hales, Bonaventure and others, were taking into account the spiritual essence of yet another composition of the substance and form, opinions that are held also by Duns Scotus and his school. This shows how Gabirol's work *Fons Vitae* had influence on scholasticism. St. Thomas Aquinas against supporters of such views still stands out, not only for the non-physicality of an angel, but for the total absence of weight in its physique. Thomas's polemical

positions were decisive for the selection of objections. They are located in Bonaventure (2 Sent, Dist.3, and P. 1) and Avicbron. (Cf. Von Aquin 1936, 562)

**On the Order of Creation towards Distinction. Whether the formless matter of all corporeal things is the same? [I, Q66, 2]**

Thomas in this part assesses the position of Ibn Gabirol and argues for his own. When first looking at the Bible, it seems that God created heaven and earth from one and the same substance. However, when one observes the appearance and disappearance of earthly things, on the one hand, and the stability of the celestial, on the other, it seems that that one is fundamentally different from the other. Thomas takes over here the assessment of the world and nature that prevailed at the time when he lived, and therefore he must take into account the different philosophical sources accessible to him, and the original sources he used to study the heavenly and earthly bodies. So he comes to the Arabic thinker Avicenna, to his work *Sufficientia I 3*, who according to Thomas did not affirm that the body is a separate category in the outside world, but only in the intellect. Arabic thinkers called “intelligible” what we are calling angels, and claimed that all the shapes that are material things come from shapes that are created in the minds of spiritual creatures, unlike the synthetic forms, which are in the mind of the artist. Avicenna (Ibn Gabirol also) on this assumption concludes that there is only one flesh, which corresponds to only one substance. The argument of Ibn Gabirol, according to Thomas, displays similar misconceptions, including also those who do recognize God as the creator of everything, attributing the creature’s body mass and its distribution to the devil. That means actually a dualistic perception of reality of creation. It appears that these and similar views are based on one and the same root. Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* distinguishes between basic elements that appear and disappear and heaven, the so-called fifth bodies, that neither arise nor extinguish and are subordinate to other bodies. Aristotle’s commentator, John Philoponus of Alexandria, in the 6th century denies this

difference. According to him, the heavenly bodies appear and disappear, depending on their nature and are also subject to the Creator. Whoever does not want to admit this, must admit the existence of two kinds of materials: one of earthly bodies and another of celestial bodies. Both are somehow linked, and they also have a shared principle. When the dividing material is understood as a form, then such a material must necessarily be composed of substance and form. Schematically it would look like the following: material = material + form. Such a simplified equation is impossible or possible only in one case, namely when the form is equal to 0.

Avicenna nevertheless maintains that there is only one material that is through a form of flesh initially designed and is indifferent to impermanence, as well as to what is absolute barrier. The difference has to be determined by the following distinctive elements or forms of celestial bodies. Aquinas against this doctrine of unique substantial forms a single set both saying that each successive form may bind itself on a being only accidentally, and claims that this doctrine of Avicenna destroyed natural philosophy (*Naturphilosophie*), because the appearance and disappearance of things of nature is attributed to a purely accidental changes within the single, always remaining the same material. (Cf. Von Aquin 1934, 177-178) Thomas in his reply sums up the opinion of Avicenna, but disagrees with him, because one becomes the other and both influence each other, the celestial bodies to each other behave like this. They cannot be the basis for the same substance. (Cf. Von Aquin 1934, 30)

### **Of the Action of the Corporeal Creature I, Q115, 1, whether a body can be active<sup>6</sup>**

This article examines whether there is any body that would be capable of doing something. It contains five objections; we pay atten-

tion only to the first two. First so that we easily break into the issue and so that we could use it as a step to understanding the second objection and consideration by Ibn Gabirol. We will look at two objections of Thomas' consideration. It seems according to the first objection, that there is no body, which would be capable of doing something, because Augustine in his *City of God* 5, chap. 9 says that among things there are those for which there was something, but themselves do not cause anything and are not active – they are bodies; then there is such a thing that causes something, but nothing can act on it – it is God; finally there are things that do not cause anything, but they can act – spiritual separate beings. The second objection Thomas took from *Fons Vitae* II 9, Baeumker, 140.22: Each acting thing, with the exception of the first acting, in its action needs some wearer to accept this action. But among physical things there is no one, which could its acting taken, because such a substance has the last, final and lowest level of entity. (Cf. Ibn Gabirol, 2009, 128. 130) Thomas, on the contrary, through Dionysius' Celestial hierarchy XV says, that the corporeal fire, among other qualities "shows its greatness in its action and power on that of which it lays hold." (<http://dhspritory.org/thomas/summa/> [p. 2]).

Thomas notes that as to the action of bodies some thinkers have made a threefold error. Some of them because they totally rejects the action of bodies. These include Avicbron. The *Fons Vitae* seeks to prove that any element by itself does not work, but that its presence is a kind of spiritual force that penetrates all bodies. In Avicbron's understanding therefore it is not the fire which heats, but a spiritual force that fire passes. It seems from Thomas that this opinion came out of Plato.

---

<sup>6</sup> The title is taken after St. Aquinas (1947), see <http://dhspritory.org/thomas/summa/> (Accessed: 11. 11. 2014).

Another mistaken view (according to Thomas's opinion) can be found in Democritus, who understood the action as a result of the discharge of the smallest particles of bodies recorded in the pores of the receiving bodies. Already Aristotle refuted this view. Would today Democritus view deserve attention and interdisciplinary examination of the veracity of his unusually pervasive intuition?

### **What comes to human activity [I, Q117, 1?]<sup>7</sup>**

Reading this question, one has immediately in his head a quantity of varied activities, taking place in the routine life of today's people. Thomas has only one. He impresses with his surprising answer, because it leaves the impression of certainty and truth that a man beholding his arguments dare not challenge. At the same time one learns, what actually carries out its true activity elevates its own dignity and the dignity of other people concerned.

Already in the introduction to this *quaestio* is specified what's going on and what is necessary to be substantially addressed. Human activity should be first and foremost exclusively, focused on the man himself, namely as the spiritual and physical being, as a creature. More specifically, it is first the human activity, then his promotion. The most important - and in this *quaestio* the unique human activity that is truly important and necessary, and that Thomas explores in different spectrum is – and we would hardly have guessed it – to teach!

In "*respondeo*" Thomas describes and evaluates different erroneous opinions on how a person can know. Averroes considered only one 'possible' understanding and concluded that all people have the same cognitive images/concepts. This only applies (according to Thomas) if the teacher's and practitioner's knowledge are identical.

---

<sup>7</sup> Question 117 is officially titled "Of things pertaining to the action of man (four articles)" see in p. 1, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/>.

Averroes's view is false, because the knowledge of a student is necessarily different from the knowledge of another. It depends on their understanding. He mentions here Avicenna, paraphrasing his *Fons Vitae* I, 46. The second erroneous understanding of the issue is attributed to the Platonists. They believe that knowledge is in our souls from the beginning through participation in forms or ideas. The soul cannot perceive them because it is tied to the body. For this reason, the pupil does not learn anything new from the teacher. The teacher directs him only to contemplation, because he has already knowledge, identical to a kind of remembering (*reminiscentia*). Thomas rejects this understanding through the view of Aristotle. The teacher makes the student acquire knowledge, and leads him out of possibility (*de potentia*) to reality (*in actum*). Thomas reflects an almost exhaustive amount of detail and variety of external and internal influences.

Thomas Aquinas, despite the accusations against Ibn Gabirol, in many ways agrees with him, otherwise he would not even have considered him a partner worthy of discussion. Here we can admire the wisdom which possesses Ibn Gabirol, despite the fact that as a man he could well be wrong. So Thomas, as Ibn Gabirol, is searching the truth and finding the sense of life, and may be a great light for the technically manipulated people of this century.

### **The origin of the development of the embryo [I, Q118, 2]**

Question I, Q 118 *Traductione De hominis ex ad hominem Quantum Anima* (Of the production of man from man, as to the soul) is divided into three articles: the first one asks whether the sensitive soul is transmitted with the semen (it has four objections), the second article wants to know whether the intellectual soul is thus transmitted (five objections) and third, whether all souls were created at the same time (*simul creatae* with three objections). The current topic is such that we can find interesting guidance on some of the confusion we have today. This part of the study will be devoted to each of the three issues, with emphasis on the second, the center of our attention.

In the first article of Q 118, 1, we examine the sensitive soul. Thomas in "*respondeo*" replies that some teach that animals have sensitive souls created by God. This understanding would be meaningful if the sensitive soul was an asserting thing that is itself a being and an action, and if could also move itself. But this is not the case. "The sensitive soul is not a perfect self-subsistent substance." (Q118, 1 St. Aquinas 1947, 4) Only self-subsistent substance is created directly by God. So the sensitive soul is not created by God. Thomas' reply to the second objection is "generating power begets not only by its own virtue but by that of the whole soul, of which it is a power. ... For the more perfect the soul is, to so much a more perfect effect is its generating power ordained" (Q118, 1 St. Aquinas 1947, 4). The reply to the third objection explains that the semen, derived from the soul of the generator, is a certain movement towards the form which is based on the vital spirit in the semen. It is something similar to the tool in which we cannot find the shape of the thing we are creating, but through the movement of the tool we are reaching the thing created. Therefore it is not necessary that this force had some tracts in the embodiment, since the foundation in the very spirit is enclosed in semen. Thomas responds to the fourth objection with Aristotle's doctrine: the active force in perfect animals is in the semen of the male, the foetal matter is provided by the female. As the vegetative soul, present from the very beginning, starting to eat, works in embodiments. This matter is transformed by the power that is in the male semen until it reaches its fulfilment in the animal soul and is brought to completion in the sensitive soul. "As to the active power which was in the semen, it ceases to exist, when the semen is dissolved and the (vital) spirit thereof vanishes." (Q 118, 1 St. Aquinas 1947, 5) It is only an instrumental agent, not the principal.

In that moment appears the principal question, whether the intellectual soul is produced from the semen. Thomas responds to five objections, but we are not going to analyse them all. He based his answer on an ecclesial dogma "the rational soul is not engendered by coition" (De Eccl. Dogmata. XIV, 18), saying a very important principle: "It is impossible for an active power existing in matter to extend its action to the production of an immaterial effect" (Q 118, 2, St.

Aquinas 1947, 7). This principle is undoubtedly important to realize, because it strongly contradicts evolutionary theory and a "qualitative leap" in evolution. Another step that Thomas made in his argument is the simple conclusion: "It is therefore impossible for the seminal power to produce the intellectual principle" (Q 118, 2, St. Aquinas 1947, 7). Reason: the intellectual principle transcends matter. The "third" soul in man is quite other than the first two, not only in degree, but in quality of origin.

For us it is important to mark that precisely here is indirectly mentioned Ibn Gabirol with his ideas from *Fons vitae*. Thomas in the second objection refers to more authors, and covers Aristotle, Halens, Plato, Averroes and others who have dealt with the embryo, especially Ibn Gabirol and what he teaches in his book *Fons Vitae* III 46, ed. Bk 181 n (Cf Note. no. 94 in Von Aquin 1951, 383).

The intellectual soul is independent of the body; it is subsistent and cannot be caused through generation, but only through creation by God. To say that the intellectual soul is transmitted with the semen is therefore heretical (Cf. Q 118, 2, St. Aquinas 1947, 7).

For brevity we pass a cursory overview of the third article Q118, 3 – Whether all souls were created at the same time, at the beginning of the world. It contains three objections. The first objection refers to Genesis 2.2 "God rested from all His work which He had done" and so it is impossible that God would create a soul after his rest. The second objection is based on the perfection of spiritual substances and also refers to Genesis 2, 2. If souls were created with the bodies in the course of human history, „innumerable spiritual substances would be added to the perfection of the universe: consequently at the beginning the universe would have been imperfect“ (Q 118, 3, St. Aquinas 1947, 10). The third objection argues that the soul must exist before the emergence of bodies, because "the intellectual soul remains, when the body perishes" (Q 118, 3, St. Aquinas 1947, 10).

Thomas in his response relies on Church dogma (*De Eccl. Dogm.*, cap. 14; 18) and teaches that while the body is created with the soul is also ("*anima simul creatur cum corpore*") (Sv. Akvinský 1937, 1015 – 1016). Thomas detailed answers to all three objections and gave his

own opinion. We will not analyse them in detail here, because it exceeds our goal and space. Nevertheless, we provide at least one idea for their content. Thomas answers the first objection, namely that God has stopped working, but not completely, by Apostle John: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (John 5:17). He had rested from the creation of new genera and species of things that were not previously in the early works. "For in this sense, the souls which are created now existed already, as to the likeness of the species, in the first works, which included the creation of Adam's soul" (Q 118, 3, St. Aquinas 1947, 12-13).

### Conclusions

When studying Ibn Gabirol in Thomas' Summa we can realize the height and the depth of what they were looking at. Thanks to them we can sense that our outlook on life and the world is very limited; it is often irrelevant things we fight for, but the principal will be missed. Just occasionally we manage to dig into the source, and our thirst is quenched for a certain time. We would like to quench our thirst for a long time. This is one of the reasons why today we are reaching for medieval authors. We find in them a big boost to life and an impetus to the brave overcoming of its difficulties.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Acta Moralia Tyrnaviensia II. Autonómia a autenticita v kontexte morálnej filozofie.* (2007): Trnava : Katedra etiky a morálnej filozofie, Filozofická fakulta, Trnavská univerzita v Trnave.

AKVINSKÝ, T. (2010): *O separovaných substancích.* Překlad a úvodní studie David Svoboda. Praha : Krystal.

AVENCEBROLIS (Ibn Gebirol) (1895): *Fons Vitae.* Ex arabico in latinum translatus ab Iohanne Hispano et Dominico Gundissalino ex Codici-

bus Parisinis, Amploniano, Columbino. Primum editit Clemens Baeumker, Monasterii 1895, Formis Aschendorffianis. *Beiträge zur geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Texte und Untersuchungen*. Herausgegeben von Dr. Clemens Baeumker. O. ö. Professor an der Universität Breslau. Band I. Heft 2-4. Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) Fons Vitae ex arabicus in latinum. Münster : Verlag der Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2010): *Koruna kráľovstva rabi Šlomo Ben Gabirola*. Praha : Bergman.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2007): Zlepšenie morálnych vlastností podľa Ibn Gabirola. In: *Acta Moralia Tyrnaviensia II. Autonómia a autenticita v kontexte morálnej filozofie*. Trnava : Katedra etiky a morálnej filozofie, Filozofická fakulta, Trnavská univerzita v Trnave, p . 125-132.

MICHALOV, J. (2013): *Dejiny filozofie 20. storočia I*. diel. Bratislava : Herba.

PESSIN, S. (2013): "Solomon Ibn Gabirol [Avicebron]", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

URL <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/n-gabirol/>. In: Pessin, S. (2013). *Notes to Solomon Ibn Gabirol [Avicebron]*, p. 1, art. 1, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-gabirol/notes.html> (03.09.2013).

IBN GABIROL, S. (2009): *Lebensquelle. Kapitel I und II. Lateinisch. Deutsch* übersetzt und eingeleitet von Ottfried Fraise. Freiburg, Basel, Wien : Herder.

SVOBODA, D. (2010): Úvodní studie. In AKVINSKÝ, T. (2010): *O separovaných substancích*. Překlad a úvodní studie David Svoboda. Praha : Krystal.

ST. AQUINAS, Th. (1947): *The Summa Theologica* (Benziger Bros. edition). Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Digital file: p. 1, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP115.html#>

FPQ115OUTP1 (Accessed:12.11.2013).

SV. AKVINSKÝ, T. (1937): *Theologická Summa*, První část. Doslovný překlad. Redigoval P. Emilián Soukup Ord. Praed., Olomouc : Krystal.

VON AQUIN, Th. (1934): *Summa Theologica. Das Werk der Sechs Tage*. Herausgegeben vom Katholischen Akademikerverband. 5. Bd. I., Salzburg, Leipzig : Verlag Anton Pustet.

VON AQUIN, Th.: (1951): *Vollständige, ungekürzte Deutsch-lateinische Ausgabe der SummaTheologica. Erhaltung und Regierung der Welt*. 8. Bd. I. Salzburg, Leipzig: Verlag Anton Pustet.

VON AQUIN, Th. (1936): *Vollständige, ungekürzte Deutsch-lateinische Ausgabe der Summa Theologica. Schöpfung und Engelwelt*. 4. Bd. I. Salzburg, Leipzig: Verlag Anton Pustet.

**PART II.**

**METAPHOR IN THE PHILOSOPHY  
OF SHLOMO BEN YEHUDA IBN GABIROL**



### ***Global Metaphor***

**David R. Slavitt**

I must begin by confessing that I am probably not qualified. I don't have a doctorate and I know rather little about ibn Gabirol, the Jewish Golden Age in Spain, Hebrew poetry, or, for that matter, Hebrew – which, with a dictionary, a grammar, and much effort I can puzzle out. Most of my grandchildren read the language and even speak it with much greater facility than I do. I am not even a very good Jew, am not observant, and am not at all sure about what I believe.

But having said that, I can perhaps put your minds at ease a little by saying that it isn't necessary for a translator to be adept in the source language, as long as he is good in the target language. It is certainly not necessary to share the author's beliefs. (Have translated Dante although I am not a renaissance Catholic.) Primarily I am a poet and, from time to time, I do these acts of ventriloquism to see how the work of other writers would sound in my voice – Sophocles, Aeschylus, Ovid, Petrarch, Ariosto, or Manuel Bandeira (a 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian poet who is elegant and very funny). The advantage of my ignorance is that I have as little baggage as possible as I confront the text. I am well aware that I'm not writing these things, but in the translation process that is not entirely dissimilar from the act of creation one can discover things. One does not write a poem so much as enter into a conversation in which the author's intention and the possibilities that arise from what is already on the page correct each other and sometimes suggest improvements, so that the poet is writing better than he can. I feel sometimes as I translate that this is

happening. Auden's test of a poem was to copy it out in longhand and where his fingers hesitated it usually meant that there was something wrong. Housman's [sp?] test of poetry was whether it made the hairs on the back of his neck prickle. Bringing a text into English I am able to feel as much as see or think how the machinery works, what the rhetoric is doing, and whether what I have on the page is any good.

This is a grand claim. But sometimes I have had a degree of success. The worst that can happen is that I miss the mark, in which case the original work still exists and, more often than not, there are other translations to which readers can resort. I can't do any harm – which is a thought that gives me a considerable freedom.

Now for ibn Gabirol, to whom I came rather late. I'd done a number of great works of Greeks and Romans, and a few pieces of biblical Hebrew – *The Book of Lamentations* and some of the Psalms. I thought I should venture further into what my people have done. I was pleased with the way *Keter Malkhut* came out. It convinces me, not just because I did it but because of some private affinity I shall get to.

As I see it, the entire poem is an extended metaphor. There are small, specific metaphors. "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" is a particularly successful metaphor in Eliot's "Prufrock". But it is hardly the whole poem. Some of these specific metaphors are easy to do, but some are impossible. There is a moment in Frederic Raphael's *Two for the Road* when Audrey Hepburn is celebrating the news that Jacqueline Bisset has come down with chicken pox. Ms. Hepburn clucks like a chicken and flaps her arms as if they were chicken wings. Perfectly clear in English, but utterly mysterious in French, where the word for "chicken pox" is *varicelle* and there is no reference at all to poultry. A translator can't do anything with that except admit impossibility and defeat.

An extended or global metaphor, on the other hand, is one in which the entire poem is a vehicle for an altogether different tenor. Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," is hardly

about stopping by the woods, and “The Road Not Taken,” is only notionally about roads. The reader has to realize on his own that death or the choices one makes in life are what these poems are about.

In my effort to translate the *Keter Malkhut*, I needed some kind of handle. I needed a way to transmute the grandeur to terms I could manage. For me to impersonate the voice of a passionate believer like ibn Gabirol would have been presumptuous. I am not that kind of person. What I had to do, then, was find something in the speaker to which I could relate and could render into English. What I did, first of all, was to see ibn Gabirol as a distant, historical, and pastoral figure – remote, even picturesque, but able to utter simple truths without sounding silly. More than that, I had to think of his devotion as the tenor but find a suitable vehicle with which I could work. I had to think of the poem as an extended metaphor.

The vehicle I was looking for was his skin disease. That was a subject with which I was all too familiar because I had had infantile eczema and understood at least something of its discomfort. Ibn Gabirol’s problem was probably furunculosis – which physicians still sometimes call “Job’s disease.” (It might also have been tuberculosis of the skin.) Either way, it was a serious problem not just physically but in terms of religion, because some of the 613 commandments we are supposed to keep have to do with lepers, or running sores. The 513<sup>th</sup> says “That a leper is unclean and defiles” (Lev. 13:2-46). So it’s even worse than eczema because it isn’t merely a disease but a defilement that, theoretically, would have prevented ibn Gabirol from participating in congregational prayer. (This commandment might or might not have been in force in the Spain of his time, but it had been true in the time of the Temple – and he would have known that.) The language of self-abasement was more easily comprehensible to me if I kept the skin disease in mind and its disqualification and shame. As he says in section XXX of the poem:

Defilement shall wander through storms of anger  
and hatred and shall sit alone during all the days of her uncleanness,  
an outlaw, an outcast, a captive and a vagabond,  
and “she shall touch no hallowed thing nor come into the  
sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled” (Lev. xii. 4).

Or in XXXV:

They [the heathens] make a show of innocence but underneath is perfidy.  
They appear to be clean but within there is a leprous spot.  
They are like an amphora of ordure that has been scrubbed bright on the outside, but “all that is in it is still unclean” (Lev. xi. 33) and noxious.

The biblical verses are clearly about women and heathens, but ibn Gabirol uses them because they resonate in his troubled mind as expression of his feelings about himself and his impurity. The vehicle, then, is the assertion that “I am like them.” The tenor of the global metaphor is that, in the face of the awesome perfection of God, the loathsomeness I see in myself is the human condition. “I am like everyone,” converts profoundly and shockingly to, “Everyone is like me.”

We may infer that he is not speaking just for himself but for all of us when he says:

O God I am ashamed, mortified to stand before you knowing what I know:  
as great as is your glory, so is my vileness great and my insignificance;  
as mighty as you are, by that measure am I feeble; as intelligent as you are,  
to that degree am I stupid...

As theological propositions, these are dubious at best. We are God’s creatures, his creations. It is reasonable to suppose that we are endowed with the dignity of having come from God. But reasonableness has little to do with the great mystics of Judaism or Christianity. They take leave of it and go on spiritual and emotional excursions that are dramatic enough to impress the rest of us, either exalting us or making us feel terrible (or sometimes both). The *Keter Malkhut* is read by some Sephardic Jews as a private devotion on the evening before Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

My odd technique – imagining Shlomo as an itchy guy like me – did not involve changing a word or phrase. It was just an energizing way of reading that was helpful for me and which readers may not necessarily share. A poem exists on a page, but it can also be argued that what is on the page is the score and each reading (silently or aloud) is a performance. Alec Guinness has a recitation of “The Four Quartets” in which the words are exactly what Eliot wrote but the

poem is radically different – much gentler, more romantic, more melancholy. I have heard Eliot’s reading, and it doesn’t have these qualities – not because they’re not in the words but because the poet didn’t have the confidence to reveal that much of himself. He’s much more uptight than Guinness and does not do justice to his own poem.

There is no question that *Keter Malkhut* is a great work. The issue, rather, is how its machinery functions, and my suggestion is that it takes the distorted view of a depressive which it posits as a description of the real world. Depressives will tell you that one of the odd features of the condition is the sense that everything before the onset of the illness was a misprision and this new, darker view is the true one. Or, to put it another way, there is a sense of discovery, of having had a veil ripped from one’s eyes so that the terrible predicament of the sufferer is at last clear.

The aim of all mysticism is to achieve a closer relation to God. And this spiritual discovery of a truer truth is suggestive of a greater intimacy and better understanding of the deity, even if it is uncomfortable. I do not pretend to be a scholar of the history of religion, any more than I am a psychiatrist, but as an interested amateur I have always supposed that because ibn Gabirol lived in Spain under the Moors, he knew about Sufism, the ascetic branch of Islam, and its practice and beliefs may have influenced or at least enabled some of his thinking and provided an intellectual underpinning for his emotional predilections.

Whether or is not that is the case, the poet’s concern about his skin is clear throughout the poem. “Do not hustle me from the earth with my arms still filthy from the mixing-bowl of my sins.” (XXXVIII) is both specific and a part of the global metaphor. He compares his eczematous or furunculous arms with those of a cook or baker who has been mixing some kind of batter, except that this mixing-bowl are sins and filth. As we read, we may not be analyzing each trope, and in some ways it is better not to. The power of the poem comes from those connections that are more emotional than intellectual, from things we sense with our gut as much as our eyes.

Dr. Johnson famously said that the prospect of the gallows concentrates a man's mind wonderfully. Depression, I think, has a similar effect, and one can name any number of poets of depression – Les Murray, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Philip Larkin, and so on (You can make this into a parlor game.) With one's jaws clenched tightly, one is less likely to ramble or waste words. There is a pressure that gives force to one's verse. In Eastern Europe even poets who weren't depressed were depressed. Nazism and Communism will break anyone's heart. I think the Polish efflorescence (Milosz, Szyborska, Herbert, Zagajewski, and the others) shares this prompting.

The relation between religion and depression is a more puzzling and in some ways a more troubling one. Despair or accidie as it is sometimes called, is one of the seven deadly sins. Still, St. John of the Cross, a Discalced Carmelite (I love that word, even though it just means barefoot or wearing sandals) and St. Teresa of Avila were both mystics and seem to me to have been depressed. In Judaism, our most famous recent depressive is Rabbi Nachman of Bratislava who told his disciples that they must break their hearts every day. Nachman is the only Hassidic master who goes so far as to question the existence or at least the benevolence of God. So the abasement we see in ibn Gabirol turns out to be an instance of a tradition that goes back at least to Job and continues into the present. Job's torments, the beginning of this tradition, were a part of God's cruel bet with the devil. Even worse than being without a reason, they had a reason that was a trivial and stupid and to which the only possible response would have been rage. That wouldn't have helped Job so he turned the anger inward, which is serviceable definition of depression.

For ibn Gabirol it turned out to have been helpful in the composition of this masterpiece. What I could translate was his words and their machinery as I understood it to get the general sense of the sentences and something of the tone. There is also a lot of word play that just doesn't cross linguistic barriers. His name, for instance, is Shlomo, and while he could be called Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol, it was also possible to refer to him as Shlomo *malaqi* (Solomon of Malaga) because he came from there. Clear enough, but we have to

keep it in mind when Moses ibn Ezra, another important Spanish philosopher and poet, refers to Shlomo as “a lord of language and prince of poetry.” Prince or king would be *hamelekh*. Shlomo *malaqui*? Shlomo *hamelekh*? It is, after all that, a sly pun. But how many puns can stay witty after all this cumbersome explanation?

The only way to approach that kind of dazzle is to learn the source language and then to familiarize yourself with the culture and the habits of speech. I don't think any translation can provide that. At its best, translation can introduce readers to a work in a language different from their own and hope that some of them will be sufficiently attracted to undertake the study of the original. Those of you who know Hebrew and are sensitive to these nuances have the advantage of me and are closer to Shlomo *hamelekh* than I am. And I envy you.



***The Function of Metaphor  
in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gabirol***

–

***Methodological Preliminaries***

**Mária Mičaninová**

**Introduction**

Ibn Gabirol's work is a peak of neoplatonism in the History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages. He, of course, followed the philosophy of Plato, neoplatonized Aristotelianism, and Plotinos – to enumerate the most important figures – and was influenced by islamic thinkers (especially Avicenna). But his works – like *Fons Vitae* (translated from Arabic into Latin in 12th century), *The Improvement of Moral Qualities* (translated from Arabic into English in 20th century), and famous poetry (for example *The Kingly Crown* translated into many languages<sup>1</sup> in the last two centuries) – show that he followed neoplatonic thinking creatively. Besides accepting the methods (dialogue, dialectic, demonstration), and metaphysics (hierarchical cosmology) of neoplatonism, he is the author of an original philosophical work, in which he united an innovated hierarchy of neoplatonic cosmology with Jewish religion and mysticism.

On the one hand, the *Fons Vitae* (The Fountain of Life) is a book of science on universal matter and universal form as the two roots of all created things. According to Ibn Gabirol it is a science, because all

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Slovak language was *Keter Malkhut* translated by Mária Mičaninová and Josef Steiner. In: Mičaninová, M. (2010, 182 – 261). On the interpretation of Ibn Gabirol's *Havtikha* see also Mičaninová, M. – Hajdučeková, I. (2010, 137 – 143).

terms used in it are defined, all assertions demonstrated. Each conclusion is at the same time a rung of a spiritual ladder, through which the intellect of a man can ascend to God. On other hand, Ibn Gabirol uses in *Fons Vitae* neoplatonic metaphors, suitable with their imagery for grasping the unrepresentable God's image and His activity in our intellects. At first glance, it could seem to be a paradox to use defined terms, i. e. concepts, and metaphors, in one neoplatonic metaphysics. But the opposite is true.

Ibn Gabirol's synthetic thinking includes both „languages“ as equivalent parts into one cosmological theory. This equality inspired me to begin research into the function of metaphors in *Fons Vitae*, and in this article I want to present the methodological preliminaries of my research. Before doing so, I would like first and foremost to summarize Ibn Gabirol's philosophy via three samples of *Fons Vitae*, which contain the abovementioned equality of concepts and metaphors, and then to explain my methodology of the inquiry of metaphors against its background. For the purpose of this article I will quote a specially abridged edition translated from the Latin by H. E. Wedeck (1963)<sup>2</sup> and *Fons Vitae* according to the English translation made by Alfred N. Jacob (1984).

### **Philosophy of *Fons Vitae***

Traditionally the philosophy of Ibn Gabirol is presented as a theory of universal hylomorphism. The universal matter and the universal form are one of the three key notions. The other two are First essence, and God's Will. God's Will is an intermediary between First essence and the universal matter and the universal form, because anything created requires a cause and some intermediary between. Only these three alone exist, therefore whole of philosophy is divided according to Ibn Gabirol into three parts: the science of matter and form, the science of Will and the science of the First essence.

---

<sup>2</sup> A sample of the Slovak translation of *Fons Vitae* made by Mária Mičaninová and Anabela Obyšovská was published in the Slovak journal *Filozofia* (2012, 61 – 71).

## Why study these sciences?

Since to know is the most excellent of all the functions of man, what he most of all needs to seek is knowledge; and the most necessary knowledge is to know himself so that in the light of this he can understand all that exists apart from himself; for his nature encompasses and permeates all things and all are subject to his supremacy. He should also pursue knowledge of the final cause or purpose for which he was constituted, so that he may vigorously apply himself to it and thus achieve happiness. (Jacob 1984, 4 – 5)

Knowledge of the First essence, Will and universal matter and universal form is a way knowing the final cause of the generation of man, of the union of soul with the higher world, that everything could unite with its like.

Knowledge leads to activity, and it is such activity that releases a soul from the contraries that injure it and restores it to its true nature and substance, that releases soul from the contraries that injure it and restores it to its true nature and substance. Anyway, knowledge and activity free soul from the bonds of nature, cleanse it of darkness and obscurity, and enable it to return to its own higher realm. (Jacob 1984, 3 – 4)

If we could ask the Master and the Pupil, the two characters in the *Fons Vitae*, how? The Master's answer would be: through a demonstration! When a Pupil will carry out all the Master's advices his soul will be refined, his reason will be clarified and his reason will enter the realm of intelligence (*saeculum intelligentiae*). He will then comprehend the universality of matter and form; and matter with all its forms will be like an opened book before him, and he becomes through his intelligence (*speculator per intelligentiam depictionum*) an observer of its images and through his intelligence he will apprehend its representations; and then he will be able to mount to an apprehension of what lies beyond.

The metaphysical theory of *Fons Vitae* gives an emphasis on three concepts: God (One), universal matter and universal form (multiplicity), and God's Will, through which were created all things at every level of the cosmological hierarchy. God's Will, in my opinion, is presented by Ibn Gabirol from two points of view: ontological, and epistemological. From *the ontological*, when God's Will is the first essence, as well as a motion. In the same context, when Ibn Gabirol explains how matter receives a form, God's Will is a power. And

again, God's Will is a motion, when Ibn Gabirol explains a capacity infused into material substances, which gives them the power to act and to suffer. The universal matter and the universal form must exist, because all that exists is a compound of a matter and a form. Ibn Gabirol situated universal matter in God's Wisdom and universal form in God's Will. From *the epistemological*, when Ibn Gabirol explains how God's Will gives knowledge (and life); God's Will is a word.

Ibn Gabirol begins the hierarchy of created things with simple substances: First intellect (individual soul), Second intellect (intellect after receiving intelligence), and Third intellect (form of the general intelligence). Then follow Souls (vegetal, animal, rational), Nature, Heavens (seven planets), and the Earthly world (sublunar world).

According to Ibn Gabirol there are four kinds of universal matter: particular artificial, particular natural, universal natural, and celestial. To them correspond four kinds of forms: particular spiritual form, corporeal material form (it is the last one), and intermediary forms between them; first form connected with matter is simple and spiritual, the last form is corporeal material. Intermediary forms tie-up and connect them. Ibn Gabirol uses here a rule: the closer a form is to the first spiritual form, the more subtle and hidden it is; the closer a form is to the last corporeal form, the more it will be denser and manifested. From a description of the first matter we know that it is per se existent substance, bearer of differentiation, one in number, able to accept all forms. From a description of the universal form we know that it is a substance constituting an essence of all forms, perfect wisdom, and purest light.

Relationships between matter and form are based on their properties: matter sustains, form is sustained; matter is hidden, form manifests; matter is perfected, form perfects a material being; matter is designated and form is a designator; matter is differentiated and form differentiates; matter is separated and form is separating. First acting unity without matter is above matter and form. A unity, which follows is double, because it consists of a substrate – hyle – and unity. Ibn Gabirol's conclusion therefore is: matter and form differ

in essence; in existence they are united. So much for the philosophy of Fons Vitae.

First sample I choose to present the abovementioned theory, as well as Ibn Gabirol's methods, through which he examined one of the key topics of his metaphysics, the existence and properties of the simple substances. In this sample we can find Ibn Gabirol's explanation of creation and generation of the hierarchical nature of the universe. The form of the text was done by me to accent the logical form of *Fons Vitae*.

Because the First Author<sup>3</sup>, sublime and holy, dispenses the abundance that he has with him, for all that exists flows from him.

And since the First Author is the dispenser of the form that is with him, he does not prevent it from flowing out; he is therefore the source that maintains, envelops, and comprehends everything that is.

Hence, it is necessary that all substances should obey his action and imitate him in giving their forms and bestowing their energies, as long as they find a matter ready to receive them.

Now by emanation of substances is understood their motion and desire to communicate the action, wherein they imitate the First Author.

But they differ in this according to their perfection and imperfection, for some of them flow beyond time, and others in time;

and the different superior substances, in the emanation of their flow, are in relation to the inferior substances just as the First Author is to the superior and inferior substances in regard to his emanation over them, although their flow is different in each case.

Similarly the superior substances are in relation to the First Author, in their passivity in regard to him, just like the inferior substances in relation to the superior substances in their passivity in regard to them.

In short, the first emanation, that embraces all substances, makes it necessary that the substances emanate into others.

And in this regard take an example from the sun that does not emanate by itself and does not communicate its rays except for the reason that it falls under the first emanation and obeys it.

„(4) The emanation of the spiritual forms on the corporeal forms and the subsequent appearance of the corporeal forms in the corporeal matter may be compared to the emanation of light on bodies and the subsequent appearance of colors (Weddeck 1963, 35 – 36).

.....

---

<sup>3</sup> In the Latin text „Factor primus“ is used.

„Master: I did not believe that you could doubt that the heavens, that are the substance supporting the categories, are moved without an intermediary by the First Mover, after the logical proofs given according to the two methods that we have indicated for discovering the existence of the simple substances, that is, the method that consists in examining the properties of the First Author and those of the substance that supports the categories, and the method that consists in studying the impressions and the actions of these substances on others: since the substance that supports the categories comes from another essence from which it emanates. Understand from this that this substance does not emanate from the First Mover (Weddeck 1963, 117).

The title „Factor primus“ could be understood as one of the names of God, which seems to support the analogy of a maker, but if the thing made is „something from something“ we could speak about a similarity between Factor primus and Demiurgos; in *Fons Vitae* this „something“ is the universal matter and the universal form, both of which are immaterial! All that was created *flows out* from Him, who is therefore metaphorically interpreted as the *source* that *maintains*, *envelops*<sup>4</sup>, and *comprehends* everything, an idea that goes beyond Plotinus to Plato’s *Timaeus*. The emanation as a hierarchical process, with a series of emanated substances imitating Factor primus’ creative action by their *motions* and *desires* to communicate this action, is, generally speaking, of a plotinian provenance, with some infusion of stoicism, especially of its logic. Motion is a potency *flowing out* from the Will, which is the divine faculty that pervades all, spreads in

---

<sup>4</sup> On the platonic background of enveloping, which it is possible, in my opinion, to associate with the metaphor of a circle, Gina Zavota wrote: „The figure of the circle, however, is not meant to serve as a straightforward representation of a theological or ontological truth. Rather, it belongs to what could be called the Plotinian lexicon, a type of discourse which challenges both traditional philosophical and metaphorical linguistic forms in the same way that Plotinus’ emphasis on mystical, contemplative practice challenges traditional notions of the nature of philosophical texts. Understanding the purpose of the circle image, as well as Plotinus’ unlikely goal of combining philosophical analysis with an exhortation to engage in contemplative practice, thus necessitates an investigation of the imagery and discourse of *On the Presence of Being Everywhere*. There is a precedent for such discourse, however, in the cosmogony of Plato’s *Timaeus*.“ (Zavota 2008. I would like to express my many thanks to Gina Zavota for agreement to quote her unpublished paper.) On the Plotinos language see also Chlup 2009, 28.

all *as light* through the atmosphere and as a soul in a body, and intelligence. There is a form of *flowing out* upon matter and *flowing into* matter.

Second sample:

Master: You must know that the substance intermediary between the First Author and the substance supporting the categories is not one substance, but many. Now we can investigate in two ways the existence of those substances that are intermediary between the First Author and the substance that supports the categories. One of these ways is to consider the properties of the First Author and the properties of the substance that supports the categories; and it was according to this method that we established all the proofs that we have adduced up to this point. The second method is based on an investigation of the existence of the substances intermediary between the First Author and the substance that supports the categories according to the effects and actions of these substances and according to the emanation of their powers from each other. I call actions and effects of these substances the figures that appear in the substance that supports the categories and which it receives from the action on it of the simple substances, and the passions that, in each of the simple substances, are the effects of these substances upon each other. The difference in these methods consists in this, that the first leads us to the knowledge of the absolute existence of the substance intermediary between the First Author and the substance that supports the categories. The second method leads us to a knowledge of what the intermediary substance is, how it is, and why it is (Wedek 1963, 31).

Both methods of investigation lead to a knowledge of the hierarchy of the universe, which is in harmony with the goal of *Fons Vitae*, because knowledge is a way to God. A substance is an energy – this leads us to an understanding of why there are no contradictions between the conceptual and metaphorical languages of Ibn Gabirol’s philosophy. He unified concepts with metaphors through definitions of concepts (and categories) in his explanation of how a substance can be emanated from a superior one. Another question is whether there are some defined metaphors in *Fons Vitae*. My answer is, yes, there are. For example, emanation is defined as a motion and a desire. In this case, it depends on the point of view, what language and why is preferred. It seems to me that the conceptual language (in regard to substance and its properties) is used by Ibn Gabirol to describe a changeless, static, aspect of the universe. When he wants to

describe a dynamic aspect of the universe he used the metaphorical language (like in the case of energy, taken by him without any doubt literally!). According to the dynamic aspect of the universe, a substance is an energy, a dynamical power, i. e. a motion. According to the static aspect, the universe is described as a set of intellects, souls, nature, heavens and earthly world, a result of God's Will; as a compound of universal matter and universal form; as many substances, as well as a substance, which supports nine categories, etc. In short, the static aspect needs a „static“ language, i. e. defined concepts, because a substance once it has flowed out, exists. I find this point-of-view method to be a way of removing the generally accepted opinion that there are some contradictions in the text of *Fons Vitae*. But are they really contradictions?<sup>5</sup>

The third sample presents the logical and metaphorical character of *Fons Vitae* in detail. This part I arrange in a form that underlines the logical order of the Master's argumentation.

Every corporeal substance has a limited essence.

Now everything that has a limited essence cannot extend in every place.

Therefore the essence of the corporeal substance cannot extend in every place.

Then, inversely:

The spiritual substance has an unlimited essence because it is neither quantitative nor finite.

Now when a thing has an unlimited essence, the essence extends and exists in every place.

Therefore the essence of the spiritual substance extends and exists in every place. Next, I take this conclusion as a premise and I assert:

Now everything that extends, flows and does not remain motionless.

Therefore the spiritual substance flows and does not remain motionless“.

(Wedek 1963, 48 – 49)

Pupil: ... But how can one say that some simple substances emanate from others and that the essence of the substance supporting the categories emanates from the simple substance that follows it hierarchically?

Master: The essences of the simple substances do not flow at all, but it is their energies and their rays that flow and spread. For the essences of each of these

---

<sup>5</sup> A sensitive study of a text of a Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages see in Davies, D. (2011). Specifics of reading of a text and a discussion on the non-discursive thinking in the text of Plotinos see Sarah Rappe (2000).

substances are finite and limited and not extended to infinity, while their rays emanate from them and cross their boundaries and their limits on account of the subordination of these substance to the first emanation that proceeds from the Will. Just as the light that, from the sun, is diffused in the air – for this light transcends the limits of the sun and extends through the air, while the sun in itself does not go outside its limits – and just as the animal power flows from the rational faculty, whose abode is the brain, in the sinews and the muscles – for this power penetrate and spreads in all parts of the body, while in itself the substance of the soul does not spread and does not extend – so every simple substance extends its ray and its light and spreads them on that which is inferior, although the substance retains its rank and does not cross its boundaries.

Pupil: So, according to your statement, it is necessary that whatever emanate from the simple substances should be energies and qualities and not substances themselves.

Master: I shall show you that the rays that emanate from each of the substances do not exclude the concept of substantiality, although they are energies since they emanate from them. (Wedeck 1963, 120) ... But although the inferior is not equal to the superior in the concept of substantiality, it still does not exclude the concept of substantiality, for there emanates from the superior an energy that is a substance for that which emanates from it. That is why nothing prevents substance from emanating from substance, when the substance from which it emanates is a simple substance (Wedeck 1963, 121).

From the abovementioned, it follows that it is possible to speak about two natures of *Fons Vitae*: the logical and the metaphorical (with its own logic). *The logical nature of Fons Vitae* (a dialogical discussion between Master and Pupil on the properties of God and of the substance that support the categories, is supported by proofs<sup>6</sup>) is a system of defined concepts organized in a hierarchy according to genera, species, difference, individual, property, accident, etc. (Wedeck 1963, 32), through which Master and Pupil acquire the affirmative, or negative knowledge of God, although God is, of course, indefinable<sup>7</sup>.

*The metaphorical nature of Fons vitae* results in a system of metaphors (for example source, emanation or flowing, or more precisely,

---

<sup>6</sup> „...until such time as we can put them into sequence in conformity with logical patterns after determining their limits, their nature and everything connected with them“ (Jacob 1987, 3).

<sup>7</sup> Or it would be possible to say unsayable, as we associate with mysticism. For more, see Michael A. Sells (1994).

flowing out, maintaining, enveloping, embracing, power, desire, ray, boundary, etc.), whose interrelations create, in my opinion, another system of Ibn Gabirol's interpretation of the universe. These systems of defined concepts, of defined metaphors, as well as of non-defined metaphors were unified by Ibn Gabirol in a coherent whole of his metaphysics. When I am speaking of systems of defined and undefined metaphors I take into consideration Ibn Gabirol's non-rhetoric and non-poetic ways of using some metaphors in the framework of his philosophy. Other expressions taken by Ibn Gabirol as metaphorical don't belong in the systems of defined and non-defined metaphors. The question is, what is the function of the two systems of metaphors in the philosophy of Ibn Gabirol.

### Methodological preliminaries

It was a work of Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms zu einer Metaphorologie* (1960) or *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, translated into English by Robert Savage,<sup>8</sup> in which I found the necessary methodological preliminaries of my inquiry into the function of metaphor in *Fons Vitae*, with Blumenberg's explanation of the relationship between logical concepts and metaphors, of which I will follow some ideas:

- Development of the philosophical language in Antiquity from myth to logos led to a transformation of some metaphors into a part of philosophical language. If a peculiarity of these metaphors is that can't be conveyed back into concepts they are *absolute* metaphors and they have their legitimacy in philosophy. Therefore, I will look for some metaphors in *Fons Vitae*, which will satisfy this condition.
- One of the functions of a metaphor is to be a *model*. A metaphor, understood in this way, is the paradigm of a given scientific discipline. For example the metaphor of a cosmos served as a model of an explanation of how a cosmos works. According to my opinion, there is

---

<sup>8</sup> The Slovak translation of the Introductory of *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* made by Mária Mičaninová, and Eleonóra Dzuriková was published in the Slovak journal *Filozofia* (2012, 592 – 601).

a system of defined metaphors, which could explain exactly the same.

- If we understand a metaphor in this context, then Kant is right when he argues *that all our knowledge of God is only symbolic*. If this is accepted, we could eliminate both anthropomorphism and deism from philosophical speculations on the cosmos. Although Ibn Gabirol didn't know Kant, he have agreed. Some of metaphors in *Fons Vitae* are non-anthropomorphic, some anthropomorphic. I will make a comparison their functions.

- Metaphor contains opinions. In connection with a truth it can become a tool for epistemology, only make clear what is before a theory (before-theoretical). Metaphors of *Fons Vitae* are a tool for epistemology, but in the context of my research they can not be analysed from a before-theoretical point of view, i. e. from their ethymological background.

- Metaphor helps with examples (machine, book) to understand relationships in reality. Thus in the background of an example there is still a relationship „world – man“; the relationship mediates the metaphor's content. As a model a metaphor gives a possibility to model a certain situation. There are a lot of metaphors – examples of this kind in *Fons Vitae*, because the Pupil wanted his Master to give him examples of his explanations. And he did, like in a case of a form, properties of which the Master explained by analogy with the properties of the light of the sun. Examples in *Fons Vitae* are usually analogies. A metaphor is connected there with an analogy.

- When we see a metaphor from artificially constructed propositions, an interpretation will be „opened“ for us only when we will be able to enter into a horizon of the images of an author, to find his „translatio“. Such a translatio is „background metaphor“, i. e. an implicit use of a metaphor. It can be awoken again in a realization of an interpretation. Ibn Gabirol's „background metaphor“ is taken mainly from the philosophy of Plato, Plotinus, and Arabic philosophy. For a complete analysis, it would be necessary to make a comparison of

metaphors and their function first and foremost in Plato, Plotinus, and Ibn Gabirol,<sup>9</sup> which is not an aim of this article.

- Metaphor allows us to understand terminological utterances, and allows us to eliminate some mistakes in understanding. I couldn't agree more! This could be one of the reasons why Ibn Gabirol used metaphors. It must be examined!
- Negative theology is not a status of knowledge, but a way/path, praxis, method of behavior (interesting idea of Blumenberg: „metaphors, which repress an opinion“). In my opinion, two systems of metaphors in *Fons Vitae* are part of a method of the negative theology and fits this idea of Blumenberg. I try to detect with their help the function of negative theology of *Fons vitae*.
- Metaphysics is a metaphor taken at its word; the decreasing of metaphysics calls a metaphor back into place. As a principle of my inquiry, it will lead me to an inquiry into a relationship between both the conceptual and metaphorical systems of *Fons Vitae*.

## Conclusion

Ibn Gabirol's methods of investigation into the science of universal matter and universal form lead to the knowledge of the hierarchy of the universe, and knowledge leads to God. This knowledge is a result of the ontological and metaphorical viewpoints of Ibn Gabirol on the universe. Both viewpoints work with different languages according to the nature of the investigated topics. On the basis of my preliminary analysis of these languages I suggest that Ibn Gabirol's metaphysics contains three interrelated systems of expressions: 1. defined concepts, 2. defined metaphors and 3. undefined metaphors<sup>10</sup>, created by Ibn Gabirol to catch a complexity of the changeless, as well as the changing character of the universe. It is not possible to say that Ibn Gabirol's metaphysics could work without any of them. I suggest

---

<sup>9</sup> An interesting analysis of this background is offered by Sarah Pessin in her newest book (2013).

<sup>10</sup> In the category of undefined metaphors I would put metaphors like power, ray, etc., which can be understood intuitively.

that the function of metaphors in *Fons Vitae* is to be a model of Ibn Gabirol's explanation of how a cosmos works.

My article is only a preliminary part of my research into the function of metaphor in the philosophy of Ibn Gabirol. Because of the interdisciplinary character of this research I have been cooperating with my colleague Ivica Hajdučeková, who describes an analysis of her methodological ideas in her article *Methodological Starting Points of the Function of Metaphor in Ibn Gabirol's Fons Vitae* published in this book.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BLUMENBERG, H. (2010): *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*. Trans. and with an afterword by Robert Savage. Ithaca – New York: Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library.

DAVIES, D. (2011): *Method and Metaphysics in Maimonides The Guide for Perplexed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CHLUP, R. (2009): *Proklos*. Praha: Hermann & Synové.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2010): *Koruna kráľovstva rabi Šlomo ben Gabirola, s komentárom*. Praha: Bergman.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. – HAJDUČEKOVÁ, I. (2010): Miloval som ťa (Ahavticha). Filozofická a literárna analýza Ibn Gabirolovej básne. In: *Identita - Diferencia*: zborník príspevkov zo 4. slovenského filozofického kongresu: 13. – 15. septembra 2010, Smolenice. Bratislava: SFZ pri SAV a FiÚ SAV. p. 137-143. On internet: [http://www.sfz.sk/sites/default/files/zborniky/2010\\_Identita\\_a\\_diferencia.pdf](http://www.sfz.sk/sites/default/files/zborniky/2010_Identita_a_diferencia.pdf).

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2012): O metaforách podľa Hansa Blumenberga. In: *Filozofia* 67 (7), 592-601.

PESSIN, S. (2013): *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire. Matter and Method in Jewish Medieval Neoplatonism*. Cambridge University Press.

RAPPE, S. (2000): *Reading Neoplatonism. Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*. Cambridge University Press.

SELLS, M. A. (1994): *Mystical Languages of Unsayng*. University Chicago Press.

IBN GABIROL, Sh. Ben Y. (2012): Fons vitae. Foreword and translation Mária Mičaninová, and Anabela Obyšovská. In: *Filozofia* 67 (1), 61 – 71.

*The Fountain of Life (Fons Vitae)* by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. Avicbron. (1963): Specially abridged edition translated from the Latin by H. E. Wedeck. Introduction by Theodore E. James. London: Peter Owen.

*The Fountain of Life (Fons vitae)*. (1987). Transl. by Alfred N. Jacob from Clemens Baeumker's edition of the Latin version of Johannes Hispanus and Dominicus Gundissalinus published in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*. Münster 1895). Chicago: The Aries Press.

ZAVOTA, G. (2007): *The Circle and its Center: Metaphysical and Metaphorical Language in Plotinus On the Presence of Being Everywhere (VI. 4-5)*, American Philological Association (APA), San Diego, CA. (January 6, unpublished paper).

The article was written as a part of the project VEGA 1/0330/12 *The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol and Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi* at the Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice.

***Methodological Starting Points of the Function of Metaphor  
in Ibn Gabirol's Fons Vitae***

**Ivica Hajdučeková**

1. Our interpretational view of Ibn Gabirol's medieval treatise *Fons vitae* is embedded in contemporary Slovak literary-critical methodology that has lately continually dealt with metaphorical imagery. We will lean on theoretical knowledge coming from Slovak linguist and religion scholar Viktor Krupa and his broad research of metaphor and on the semiotic research of imagery from which Slovak linguist and semiotician Ján Sabol devised his theory of symmetry/asymmetry as a base for the arbitrary and the iconic-symbolic principle.

1.1 Our starting point is Viktor Krupa's monograph *The Metaphor on the Interface of Branches of Science* (1990) where the author defines the function of metaphor, the principles it works on and the classification of metaphors. The scope of Krupa's research interest enables us to specify basic hypotheses for the inquiry into Gabirol's philosophical treatise *Fons vitae*.

As the author states, metaphor makes it possible to socially communicate not only about familiar facts and phenomena but also about less familiar ones. It gives people insight into the world, and the following principle holds: the higher the degree of abstraction is used in cognition, the higher the degree of subjectivation of concepts and the higher the motivation of terms. Thus, metaphorical statements have „a subjective denominator“ (ibid., p. 14). Most frequent are anthropocentric metaphors, anchored in the human sphere, where anthropofugal imagery is prevalent. Strictly cognitive meta-

phors can also include those which draw upon extra-human conceptual domains and apply zoomorphous and reific images upon human being, particularly in depicting mental processes and heading from concrete to abstract to mediate new experience by way of a well-known cognitive scheme (i. e. construction of a human body, course of actions in nature etc.).

The sphere of emotions and spirituality depends on indirect, mediated cognition; therefore languages differ in abstract rather than concrete vocabulary. However, an application of natural phenomena on mental life by way of metaphor is a universal human event (*ibid.*, p. 17).

Conventionalised metaphors can then stand in for new expressions, „gaps in vocabulary“ (*ibid.*), or confirm invariance in cognition (like in folklore). Wherever a metaphor is to be found, according to V. Krupa the rule is

that a metaphor cannot be properly understood without taking account of its function in a particular language community, of personalities of its creators and finally of the whole historical, cultural and social hotbed from which it grew up“ (*ibid.*, p. 22 – 23). For example, in science it mainly appears in days of turns, or the changing of theories (*ibid.*, p. 33).

The author also pays attention to the structure of metaphor (*ibid.*, p. 23 – 25) that mutually relates two domains: it uses one (B) to characterise the other (A); A being the theme or starting point (tenor), while B is the vehicle that gives new information about the tenor, highlighting the feature that is inconspicuous in the domain A. Both domains are connected by the common basis, i. e. the correspondence of features in the opposition conspicuousness – inconspicuousness. The metaphor constructed in this way can also be a core of the whole work of art thanks to its condensed content and connotative-associative vagueness.

V. Krupa lays the groundwork for the classification of metaphors (*ibid.*, p. 26 – 28 and p. 157 – 163) in their functionality:

a) cognitive – with cognitive function (epiphors),

b) affective – with aesthetic function (diaphors); their task is to make an impression upon the recipient; and in the conceptual domain:

a) anthropomorphous – applying the vehicle from the realm of human world on the tenor from the sphere of nature of social phenomena,

b) zoomorphous – applying the vehicle from animal world on the tenor from human world,

c) reific – drawing from the realm of inanimate objects.

Metaphor, associated with creativity both in art and in science, brings new impulses into the cognition process, mediates their intersection, „finding connections at places where they do not seem to occur“ (ibid., p. 31 – 32). Therefore due to its allusiveness it bridges the old with the new, revealing the depth and the continuity of reality. If the recipient wants to break into its utterance value he must know the intention and the context in which it was created.

Of special character is „scientific metaphor“ (ibid., p. 46 – 50) that has heuristic mission and hypothetic nature because it helps to reveal new qualities and deep, substantial connections, „being present in the birth of new ideas, where new hypotheses arise“ (ibid., p. 49). At the same time, the function of metaphorical mechanisms is to create concepts by way of an unconventional expression (ibid., p. 67).

V. Krupa also pays attention to factors influencing the recipient in his interpretation of metaphor that makes hidden relations obvious, and states (drawing on Weiner, 1984): salience of the basis, asymmetry of the metaphorical relation, incongruity of both conceptual domains (tenor and vehicle), hyperbolicity of the metaphor, or prototypicality of the basis. He sees its function determined by a shift from concrete, more illustrative, exemplifying towards abstract, more distant and less familiar (ibid., p. 120).

His opinion on the relation of analogy, i. e. subjective estimation of the expected homogeneity of two phenomena, and metaphor is clear:

[...] metaphor cannot be identified with analogy. It would be a deprivation of the content of the metaphor and a misunderstanding of the hierarchical difference between the two concepts. Analogy as a hierarchically superior concept is related to the way of thinking that has several products, metaphor being one of them (ibid., p. 115).

However, it is a functional-analogical relation that is in the foreground in cognitive metaphor (ibid., p. 121). At the same time he points out that metaphor occurs in scientific style more often than synecdoche or metonymy because „revealing or at least postulating hidden relations gives metaphor a certain philosophical depth“ reaching as far as to the substance of phenomena (ibid., p. 141).

1.1.1 On the basis of the theory of metaphor according to V. Krupa, we can specify the following hypothetical starting points for the interpretation of Ibn Gabirol's text:

a) The use of a metaphorical expression in a philosophical treatise signals a deeper penetration into the described and reflected phenomenon, or to a certain point it indicates an individual ambition to go beyond historically established philosophical thinking, or rather cognition.

b) On the basis of genre definition and thematic orientation of the philosophical treatise, we presume the prevalence of cognitive metaphor. However, since the point is idea-oriented space of philosophical cognition, we do not presume the prevalence of an anthropocentric or an anthropofugal type of metaphor.

c) We presume that marked elements of metaphorical affectiveness will signalise the turning point – an individual falling beyond its scope where the individuality of the author indicates further possibilities of cognition in his effort to point at new relations or original perception of phenomena.

d) Since we can differentiate metaphors according to the spheres of professional specialisation (Krupa, 1990, p. 106), we can presume that metaphor in a philosophical treatise will correspond to the au-

thor's intellectual background and at the same time it will be in accordance with culturally conditioned philosophical canon of the period, to a certain point also influenced by fixed poetics of (specialised or artistic) literature.

1.2 In his linguistic-semiotic research focused on the principles of the semiotic nature of biblical texts, Ján Sabol (1997, 2002, and 2004) applied procedures of a bilateral model of language that is established by form and content also in relation to the reality it reflects. With the symmetrical-asymmetrical relation of form and content in the background, the author studies the functional development of imagery that predominantly applies the iconic-symbolic or the arbitrary principle. In his interpretation of an absolute semiosis in biblical texts, the world as a sign gives evidence about its Creator (2002, p. 199). At the same time he explains its development as a movement from „iconic-symbolic to arbitrary, higher, more abstract structure of a sign“ which „involves the prediction of the semiotic development of mankind“. As J. Sabol states, the higher quality of semiosis facilitates a permanent development of human thinking and cognition thanks to the relation of symmetry and asymmetry in the structure of a sign“. It is arbitrariness that overcomes the „rigidness“ of iconic-symbolic signs (2002, p. 200).

Arbitrariness makes cognition, thinking and language expand, stimulates the processes of abstraction and generalisation (that count among the essential qualities and dispositions of human brain), makes language more dynamic (also as a ‚reflection‘ of its relation to thinking), while motivation gives language systematic character and order (ibid.).

In connection with Isaiah's prophecy J. Sabol points at „regrouping“, „overlapping“, „stratifying“ or „balancing“ of iconic-symbolic and arbitrary, which creates a spiritual perspective of ultimate meaning.

As emerges from Ján Sabol's semiotic research, imagery, not only in a biblical parallel, is based upon reinforcing the iconic-symbolic principle, and its illocutionary dimension opens a new/other view of familiar phenomena (ibid., p. 203). It helps the semiotic image of the

world – in the structure of a supersign – gain a „superstructural“ dimension that changes the quality of imagery, giving it „vertical, meditative depth“.

On the basis of these outcomes of biblical texts research that reveals a spiritual perspective, J. Sabol specified a semiotic unit – „a spiritualeme“.

For our research, it is important to define the iconic-symbolic and the arbitrary semiotic principle (Sabol, 2004, p. 30):

a) iconic-symbolic (motivated) signs (as older from the developmental point of view), based on a metaphorical principle, are characterised by symmetry („correspondence“) between form and content (form is motivated by an outer reality);

b) arbitrary (unmotivated) signs predominantly based on a metonymical principle, are characterised by (inherited) symmetry but also asymmetry („non-correspondence“) between form and content (form is not motivated by an outer reality).

In the binary system of elements the author designs at his thinking about imagery, he places metaphorical principle, that is realisation of elements on the basis of similarity, at the pole of associativeness, while the metonymical principle, depicting elements on the basis of adjacency, is linked with linearity.

1.2.1 Drawing from J. Sabol's theory of sign, we can extend already specified hypotheses by the following presumptions:

a) If the author strengthens the figurativeness of his expression in uncovering the depth of his consciousness, the degree of iconic-symbolic is supposed to increase;

b) in expressing the unusual, unknown and abstract, arbitrariness will participate, too, with its potential to internally dynamise the development of semiosis. We can thus assume that it is „layering“, „overlying“ or „balancing“ that will signalise this process;

c) The development of the metaphorical-metonymical principle of imagery in mediating new or deepened knowledge is connected with conventional-unconventional expression.

2. Our hypothetical presumptions about the possibilities of the application and the development of imagery can be confronted with the first treatise *About what must be initially established in order to situate universal matter and form, and to situate matter and form in compound substances* in which the author uses the form of a dialogue between a master and his pupil to specify the method of research comprising rules of arguing by way of question and response and dialectic rules of logic, premises.

In the very initial words the master urges his pupil towards harmony of anthropomorphous and anthropofugal succession: knowing oneself leads to knowing others which proves the function of cognition. He explains the relation of will and movement by the expressions „tied“, „affiliation“ denoting adjacency and referring to the principle of arbitrariness that is typical of higher degree of abstraction. Thus the image of the road expresses the way of cognition, heading, succession, and development, which indicates linearity.

An important role in the process of cognition is ascribed to sensory perception that enables us to know „the highest one“ indirectly: by way of works created, i. e. cognition is understood as the gradual decoding of semiotic nature in which semiosis leads to the knowledge of primordial substance. The study uses analysis (unbounding), scrutiny (withdrawing), and abstracting (generalisation). As the first treatise reveals, the course from ignorance to knowledge has various lines/forms: from possibility to effect, from sensually observable to invisible, from general to individual, or from obvious to hidden.

According to the dialogue between the master and his pupil in the treatise, diversity is essentially dual. The relation of form and matter in a figurative – or iconic-symbolic – way is represented by „a root“ having two elements in it that „procreate“ and „bind“ everything. As can be seen, the very first treatise illuminates things by drawing from

a sensually responsive domain – nature (vegetation), i. e. natural domain, but also taking a binary opposition of active – passive into account. However, science indicates ternary relation among substance, will and matter. Let us point out that the focus of this relation is concentric.

In discovering the relation of form and matter, he chooses the metaphorical image of the human body, the arrangement of its limbs (parts) that form a whole, i. e. anthropomorphness. At the same time, form and matter are called „branches of will“ with a characteristic kind of movement – branching. Again, in addition to a human domain, it draws from natural processes in arguing so we can analogically create a term „naturomorphness“.

Knowing a human body and nature is a two-way road, that is anthropofugal and anthropopetal, while knowing oneself is anchored in an anthropocentric position of a reflecting subject.

An interesting impulse towards the change in dialogical arguing is the pupil's appeal to the master to explain the relation not just generally, but also „in his opinion“ by which he imitates the departure from conventional to unconventional expression, thus from general to more individual, abstract, with the possibility to develop a certain degree of affectiveness. The foundation of forms is clarified by way of relating natural (organic and inorganic) with artificial in dialogue. In this connection opposition is emphasized again from which procreation arises heading from duality to binarity (perhaps even to ternarity), which can be transferred into the following relations on the semiotic level: duality that corresponds with a parallelism of elements – binarity that corresponds with an opposition (also contrast) – ternarity based on the centrality of elements of a sign.

In the end, he finally mentions concepts of spirit (spiritual quality) through an image of heaven that does not procreate, and does not cease to exist because its „body form“ is special among other forms.

Our reasoning evokes an opposition of variant and invariant we can include into the proposed methodological base and follow the dynamic movement of elements.

2.1 The first treatise confirms that the chosen methodological starting points are appropriate. Imagery, and also figurative nature applied in thinking and arguing will predominantly be influenced by its cognitive function taking a vehicle from natural and human world (compare Krupa), in anthropofugal and anthropopetal movement expressed by way of anthropomorphous and naturomorphous analogies. It also confirms the possibility to watch a symmetric-asymmetric relation of the iconic-symbolic and the arbitrary principle (compare Sabol) that reveals the semiotic image of human procreation and the world.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

AVENCEBROLIS (Ibn Gebirol) (1995): *Fons Vitae*. Ex arabico in latinum translatus ab Iohanne Hispano et Dominico Gundissalino ex Codicibus Parisinis, Amploniano, Columbino. Primum editit Clemens Baumker. Münster : Aschendorff 1995. Quoted from yet unpublished manuscript of the Slovak translation of the I. tractate of the book. Translated by Mária Mičaninová and Anabela Katreničová.

KRUPA, V. (1990): *Metafora na rozhraní vedeckých disciplín*. Bratislava: Tatran.

SABOL, J. (1997): Z problematiky znakovosti biblického textu. In: *O prekladoch Biblie do slovenčiny a do iných slovanských jazykov*. Ed. J. Doruľa. Bratislava, Slavistický kabinet SAV, 123 – 134.

SABOL, J. (2002): Lingvisticko-semiotické pohľady na biblické texty. In: *Studia Academica Slovaca*. 31. Prednášky 38. letnej školy slovenského jazyka a kultúry. Red. J. Mlacek. Bratislava, Stimul, 198 – 207.

SABOL, J. (2004): Semiotické pozadie komunikačných sústav. In: *Súčasná jazyková komunikácia v interdisciplinárnych súvislostiach*. 5. Medzinárodná konferencia o komunikácii. Banská Bystrica 3. – 4. 9. 2003. Ed. V. Patráš. Banská Bystrica, Univerzita Mateja Bela, 30 – 36.

The article was written as a part of the project VEGA 1/0330/12 *The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol and Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi* at the Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies, and Communication, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice.

**PART III.**

**PROBLEMS WITH TRANSLATING METAPHOR**



***Hans-Georg Gadamer and José Ortega y Gasset  
on the Translation of Metaphor***

**Kristína Bosáková**

**Introduction**

Hans-Georg Gadamer and José Ortega y Gasset were two important figures of the 20th century continental philosophy and modern philosophical hermeneutics. They both incorporated the problem of translation and interpretation into their hermeneutical theories, treating primarily the theme of meeting the other in a dialogue. In their opinion, one of the very specific forms of communication, is the communication through the work of art, frequently associated with the translation and apprehension of some special message hidden in the metaphorical expression.

We can clearly see, how wide their understanding of the concept of metaphor and the metaphorical meaning can be by analyzing the texts of *Truth and Method (Wahrheit und Methode)*, opus magnum of Gadamer, and two key works of Ortega y Gasset, dedicated to the problem of translation and of the art, *The Misery and the Splendor of Translation (Miseria y esplendor de la traducción)* and *Dehumanization of Art (Deshumanización del arte)*. The metaphorical meaning is not a secondary one after the literal meaning, because we never use the words only literally even in everyday communication, so spoken language as much as the written text is always based on more or less consciously formulated metaphorical expressions. Despite some small differences caused by the more radical, more pessimistic standpoint and the more expressive style of Ortega y Gasset in comparison

to Gadamer, it is evident that both philosophers have found very similar ways to cope with the problem of translating the metaphors that are present in every kind of communication between humans.

### **The roots of both translation theories**

The roots of their hermeneutically understood translation theory go back to the ancient Greek hermeneutical and rhetorical tradition, to the German pietistic hermeneutics and to the hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who influenced by German romanticism unified for the first time in history different hermeneutical branches into one autonomous philosophical movement called modern hermeneutics. Although the phenomenon of philosophical hermeneutics had changed some of its aspects with every subsequent philosophy, none of the changes have affected the structure of its nucleus, which has been preserved since its foundation by Schleiermacher.<sup>1</sup>

While in the case of Gadamer and Schleiermacher the first reflections about language and the first theoretical activities in the area of translation appear with the attempts to read and to translate the work of Plato, in the case of Ortega it definitely starts with reading and translating German thinkers. Hermeneutical thinking is something secondary for Schleiermacher and Ortega and it is rather a product or a method (understood as in the ancient Greek, as *methodos*) something that comes on the way towards theology, ethics, aesthetics and linguistics. For Gadamer, philosophical hermeneutics is not only one of the many philosophical branches, but an expression of his lifelong philosophical statement and orientation.

Both Gadamer and Ortega were inspired by Schleiermacher's long search for the authenticity of the textual legacy especially in the works translated from different languages. Schleiermacher noticed very early – already as a student of the seminary that used to prepare young boys for the studies of theology, that many of his professors were not interested in preserving the authentic messages written in

---

<sup>1</sup> See Grondin (2001, 28).

the text of the Bible. Instead they often preferred to use their interpretations to support the dogmas proclaimed by the church, as we can read in the letters addressed to his father.<sup>2</sup> In the same way as Schleiermacher Ortega also felt disappointed by political and religious dogmatism, trying to find an alternative approach to the methods frequently used at his time. Gadamer formulated a very critical statement against the scientific dogmatism based on Enlightenment philosophy and he tried to reach new access to our own tradition through the rehabilitation of the prejudice.

And the best way of avoiding different kinds of dogmatisms in reading and translation is to attribute metaphorical meaning (understanding the word metaphor and metaphorical in a wide sense) to the sentences and expressions as much in the written texts as in the dialogues practiced in the spoken language. William Slaymaker in his study *Tradition and Liberation: A Critique of German Cultural Modernity in Heinrich Böll and Hans-Georg Gadamer* shows how a playful and metaphorical reception and use of language can free us from any kind of dogmatism.

He says:

For Gadamer, the cultural critic, historian and hermeneuticist, past and present interpretation of a poetic text merge, maintaining the continuity of its interpretations while overcoming its aesthetic temporality. Gadamer finds the combined historical and aesthetic experience of art in poetry. Poems point the way to liberation within limits and a spiritual transcendence that is grounded. Gadamer comes to the very important conclusion in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* that *tradition means transmission rather than conservation and transmission is equivalent to translation...* Tradition is dynamic and productive, and contemporary encounters with linguistic tradition promote liberation in the present as more important than the freedom from the past. More importantly for a hermeneuticist, freedom as a component of human liberation is encountered in its dialogues with texts and their speakers. For Gadamer, freedom is a disciplined encounter and a trial understanding of the words of another. It is a serious game. As he writes in *The Verse and the Whole*, *poetic reading is more than an ability or an art, it's learning how to submit to the measure (Mass) which gives freedom* (Slaymaker 2005, 226).

---

<sup>2</sup> See Kantzenbach (1967).

But we should not forget that the first to come with the wide understanding of metaphor and who was proclaiming the impossibility of translation of philosophical texts and poetry despite the proposed methods of *paraphrases* and *imitation* is Schleiermacher. He had been inspiring next generations of philosophers, also Ortega and Gadamer among the others.

For Schleiermacher the most important category in his translation theory is the *spirit of the language* (*Der Geist der Sprache*) which he understands as a thorough expression of the linguistic, cultural and social tradition of some nation or ethnical group. According to Schleiermacher, we can reach the faithful reproduction of the original text only following the *principle of the equality of impression* (*Prinzip der Wirkungsgleichheit*), if we try to emphasize the spirit of the original language through the medium of *estrangement* (he calls it *Verfremdung*). (Schleiermacher 1838, 207 – 245)<sup>3</sup>

### **José Ortega y Gasset on translation**

José Ortega y Gasset not only accepts the ideas of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, but works on their further development and makes them more radical through their incorporation into the vital context of Spanish culture and society at the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the thinking of Ortega y Gasset does not appear in a systematic form, according to Pedro Chamizo Domínguez we still can find some kind of internal coherence in his work. That means there are very typical aspects present in the orteguian philosophy in general and in his translation theory in particular. (Chamizo 2000, 110) So it's necessary to understand his thesis about language and about translation in a the context of his anthropological, epistemological, metaphysical, hermeneutical and political theories.

According to the study *El legado de Ortega y Gasset a la teoría de la traducción en España* written by Emilio Ortega Aronilla, the intention of Ortega's philosophy should be inspired by such a great think-

---

<sup>3</sup> See also Schleiermacher (1974).

ers like Plato, Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. Especially since the late 1920s the thinking of Ortega is strongly influenced by Heidegger's opus magnum – *Being and time*. His central standpoints can be also described as *circumstantialism*, *perspectivism* and *raciovitalism*. (Ortega Aronilla 1998, 104) They come from the confidence that we are living in certain historical, geographical, philosophical, cultural and linguistic circumstances rather than in an empty space. These influence our mental ruts and predestine the thinking reflected in the use of language in a certain way. This is what we call a *hermeneutical situation*. The raciovitalism consists in the proclaimed instability of language, because human thinking representing the current situation of the historical conscience has been and will always be exposed to the incessant movement that can be at least partially explained by the etymological analysis.

The affirmation *I am me and my circumstance* (*yo soy yo y mi circunstancia*) represents Ortega's attempt to escape from the systematic philosophy supported by neokantianism and from the neokantian methodological heritage to the non systematic existentialism which emphasize the *referential bipolarity* in communication. This referential bipolarity implicates both the difference between what is *spoken* about (*hablar*) and what is actually *said* (*decir*), on the one hand, and between the person who is speaking and the one listening, on the other and it reflects the vision of the same world from *different perspectives*. Ortega Aronilla divides Ortega y Gasset's concept of language into two basic aspects: in *linguistic activity* (*actividad lingüística*), *energeia* and *its product* (*su productio*), *ergon*.

An essay *The Misery and the Splendor of Translation* (*Miseria y esplendor de la traducción*) is the fundamental text in orteguian translation theory and it resumes the lecture presented in the reunion of French professors; at the same time it represent Ortega's reaction to the proclaimed division of German philosophical texts into those that can be translated and those whose translation is impossible. The text does not only present Ortega's wide understanding of metaphor and metaphorical meaning, but even the form of the text recalls of the metaphorically written platonic dialogues. Ortega, probably inspired by heideggerian philosophy, divides his essay in two chapters, called

*Destruction and Construction*. Both of them are very pessimistic, and rather than by Heidegger they seem to be inspired by the nihilism of Friedrich Nietzsche.

### **Ortega's understanding of metaphor and its translation**

Just like Nietzsche, Ortega sees a human being as an incomplete animal and every human activity is condemned to fail even before starting as a consequence of this tragic incompleteness. So he considers all the human activities as pure utopia and the most utopist one among these activities is the act of translation. The impossibility of communication in general and of translation in particular comes from the fact that "... for a long, long time humanity, at least Western humanity has not spoken seriously" (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 105). Not to speak seriously means not to say exactly what you mean – to speak as if would be kidding (*hablar der broma*), to articulate your vision of the world conventionally or in a metaphorical way. According to Ortega this is the case of all the Indo-European languages, which have left behind the period when speaking still meant having knowledge.

A very typical example of a conventionally and metaphorically used expression is the sentence: *The sun rises in the East (El sol sale por oriente)*. This sentence occurred probably in the period when a sacral meaning used to be attributed to the word – a meaning still conserved in the concepts like *brahma* and *logos*. According to Ortega, the sun was seen as a masculine object rising every day from some very distant place called East in those times. In this way the Indo-European language taught its speakers to distinguish the genders of every known being and to attribute to them the manners that were considered typical of their gender automatically. Ortega claims:

The structure of the Indo-European phrase transcribes an interpretation of reality in which events of the world are always the actions of an agent having a specific sex. Thus the structure necessarily consists of a masculine or feminine subject and an active verb. But there are other languages in which the structure of the phrase differs and which supposes interpretations of what is real that are very different from the Indo-European (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 106).

The problem of this interpretation lies in the fact that every nation or ethnic group contains masculine and feminine inhabitants, otherwise it could not survive and persist.<sup>4</sup> And there are different tasks and different kinds of behavior attributed to each gender, not only when it comes to human beings but also in the case of almost all living creatures in most cultures. The differences between the Indo-European languages themselves represent another problem. For example the Slavic languages or German have, aside from first two genders, also third one – the neutral is used. Similarly in the English morphology – the differences between the genders are only referred to human beings and the rest of the nouns should be considered to have a neutral gender.

But there are more examples introduced by Ortega with the aim to persuade us of the impossibility of translation and communication between humans. And again they have something to do with metaphor understood so widely that even in the language of natural sciences – characterized by him as *pseudo-language* – we can hardly find a direct meaning of the used concepts which express exactly the authentic content of scientific theories.<sup>5</sup> For example the concept *set theory* would be translated to German as *Mengentheorie* and to Spanish as *teoría de los conjuntos*, and as we can see, there is a certain semantic coincidence between the English and the Spanish word, but there is no coincidence between those two and the German version of the word. Otherwise we would have to replace the word *Menge* – which in English means *amount* and in Spanish would be *cantidad* – by the concept *das Ganze*, although in German the expression *Ganzentheorie* would sound quite strange.<sup>6</sup>

The same happens in everyday communication. Even if we believe we are able to move confidently inside the language we speak –

---

<sup>4</sup> A different understanding and interpreting of metaphor was created by Hans Blumenberg in his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*. An introduction to his conception of metaphor see in Mičaninová, M.: O metaforách podľa Hansa Blumenberga. (On paradigms of Metaphors according to Hans Blumenberg). In: *Filozofia* 67 (7), 592-601.

<sup>5</sup> For more about the use of metaphor in the language of natural sciences see Ortega y Gasset (2007).

<sup>6</sup> See Ortega y Gasset (1992, 94 – 95).

which means we can use the vocabulary and the grammatical system properly, there is no such modification of the language that would make it intelligible for everyone. Our everyday life and communication gives very special nuances to all of the used words affecting their usage in the concrete situation to such a degree that the meaning of the word finally becomes so distant from its original definition, like in case of metaphors and idioms. Ortega is very radical when he says there is no semantic coincidence even between the German and the Spanish word “forest”. In his opinion the German word *Wald* never means the same like the Spanish word *bosque* and of course it doesn't depend on how good the translation is. No, these two apparently very simple words will never be real equivalents – not even if we would define both of them as a *group of trees* – because there is no coincidence between the German and the Spanish linguistic world.

Another example is the expression *Jaungoikua* – the Basque word for God, which translated literally means *lord over the heights*. According to Ortega the Basque concept of God represents very important testimony about the violent Christianization of the Basque nation. But if the Basque word for God contains this kind of information, it's necessary to extend it to all the European nations because the churchgoer speaks to God as to a noble man in every European language and at the same time they know and they use the separate concept of God. Even in the Slovak language we have a separate concept of God (*Boh*), although there are many historical sources testifying to pagan rebellions that took place in Slovak territory in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century. So now we have to ask, if an expression *lord over the heights* doesn't contain a common medieval theistic imagination of God rather than a special testimony.

This of course doesn't mean Ortega would only see the negative side of the metaphor. On the contrary, he gives the metaphor very high artistic and an important psychological value, as we can read in his essays *Las dos grandes metáforas* (Ortega y Gasset 2007) and *Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo* (Ortega y Gasset 2007), or in the most important text written by him on the theme of the modern art which was published for the first time in 1925 under the name

*Dehumanization of art (Deshumanización del arte)*. In *Dehumanization of art*, in the chapter called *Taboo and Metaphor (El "tabú" y la metáfora)*, where Ortega derives the origin of metaphor from the human ability to avoid the taboo, he claims:

The metaphor is perhaps one of man's most fruitful potentialities. Its efficacy verges on magic, and it seems a tool for creation which God forgot inside one of His creatures when He made him. All our other faculties keep us within the realm of the real, of what is already there. The most we can do is to combine things or to break them up. The metaphor alone furnishes an escape; between the real things, it lets emerge imaginary reefs, a crop of floating islands. A strange thing, indeed, the existence in man of this mental activity which substitutes one thing for another — from an urge not so much to get at the first as to get rid of the second. The metaphor disposes of an object by having it masquerade as something else. Such a procedure would make no sense if we did not discern beneath it an instinctive avoidance of certain realities (Ortega y Gasset 1968, 33).

Despite its high artistic and psychological value in Ortega's philosophy the metaphor represents an important obstruction in communication and translation. It often causes an incommensurability of the discourses – a phenomenon called by Ortega the *flo* of thoughts (*el flo del pensamiento*). The *flo* of thoughts can be explained as thinking that is *not very clear, confused, blurry*.

The shapes of the meanings of the two fail to coincide as do those of a person in a double exposed photograph." (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 96) According to Ortega the phenomenon of *flo* impedes the reader of the translated text and prevents perceiving the authentic image of the original work. "This being the case, our perception shifts and wavers without actually identifying with either shape or forming a third; imagine the distressing vagueness we experience when reading thousands of words affected in this manner. These are the same causes, then, that produce the phenomenon of *flo* (blur, haziness) in a visual image and in linguistic expression. Translation is a permanent literary *flo*, and since what we usually call nonsense is, on the other hand, but the *flo* of thoughts, we shouldn't be surprised that a translated author always seems somewhat foolish to us. (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 96 – 97)

The *flo* of thinking is a direct consequence of an enormous abyss that arises between the creator of the metaphor, an artist, a writer or a poet and a poor servant of translation – a translator. Ortega reveals his definition of the author of the original artistic text from the exaggerated role of an artist and intellectual in society. The role of an

author – understood as a modern Messiah – is primarily explained in his sociological and political texts (Ortega y Gasset 1957) but is still present even in his philosophy of art and translation theory. According to him:

To write well is to make continual incursions into grammar, into established usage, and into accepted linguistic norms. It is an act of permanent rebellion against the social environs, a subversion. To write well is to employ a certain radical courage (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 94).

And of course if the rebellion against the dictatorship of the grammar is an intellectual protest against the norms that control thinking in each society, Ortega requires a certain grade of high spirit from the author of the original artistic work. He sees a writer or a poet as a hero, whose destiny is to fight against social prejudices through his texts.

Hence the role of an intellectual in Ortega's philosophy can be described in the following ways: 1. It's a person, or rather a man, involuntarily elected due to an extraordinary power. 2. It's a man – who against his own will – is in charge of the mission to contradict to the masses. 3. Due to not being afraid of the disagreement of his own opinions with public opinion – with *doxa* – an intellectual is a man with an enormous freedom of thinking. 4. An intellectual has the eloquence to seek and to discover the real opinion – *paradoxa*. 5. Afterwards he is obligated to inform the masses – deformed by public opinion – about *paradoxa* with the conscience that he is going to risk by doing it. 6. For this reason an intellectual is a very unpopular man, because he revolts against the habits of the common people (*populus*).

The contrary represents for Ortega the translator. It's a shy person, unable to assert oneself.

He will be ruled by cowardice, so instead of resisting grammatical restraints he will do just the opposite: he will place the translated author in the prison of normal expression; that is he will betray him. *Traduttore, tradittore*. (Ortega y Gasset 1992, 94).

Ortega attributes to the cowardice of the translator the fact that the translation becomes a betrayal for the readers of the translated

text as much as for the author of the original work. In the above terms Ortega requires from the translator to get out from his shy humility and to find the position that he really deserves through the cultivation of the translation as an autonomous genre of literature. This is only possible in understanding and transmission of the spirit of the language by the person of the translator who would be able to combine an excellent knowledge of the foreign language and of the foreign culture with a distance to the original work. By that he would achieve a faithful reproduction of the sense of the translated text using the *method of estrangement* (*el método de enajenación*).

Although the method is inspired by schleiermacherian hermeneutics, which for both Ortega and Schleiermacher means the process of approximation of the linguistic world of the foreign author to the reader of the translated work in the way that the reader himself feels like in an absolutely foreign world, there are some differences in the practical approach of the method. While Schleiermacher prefers the modification of the language usage, but without losing the formal and the aesthetical aspects of the original text, Ortega proposes “an *ugly translation* with footnotes, in contrary to the one that would give no clue about the original text as whole and would be *aesthetically beautiful*” (Ortega Aronilla 1998, 113). It’s difficult to say, whether the proposed exactly method would be appropriate for the translation of any artistic texts. It would probably be less so than the one proposed by Schleiermacher.

### **Gadamer’s hermeneutical concept of understanding and translation**

Although Hans-Georg Gadamer – a philosopher that who was active almost one whole century – never followed directly the hermeneutical theories of José Ortega y Gasset and didn’t include them either into his own philosophical hermeneutics, he definitely knew and reflected several ideas from Ortega’s philosophy. This fact is indicated

in one of his studies – called *Dilthey und Ortega*<sup>7</sup> – where he finds some important interfaces between the hermeneutical theories of both above mentioned philosophers. Gadamer's statements towards on the hermeneutics of Dilthey – especially on his methodology of human sciences – are mostly critical, but just like Ortega he accepts and further develops Dilthey's concept of *historical conscience* (*historisches Bewußtsein*).

While Ortega's understanding of historical conscience is primarily negative, he perceives it like a chain that converts us into the slaves of our own past, for Gadamer his *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein* represents not only a historical perspective transmitted to the present time, but a constant bond to the roots of our own thinking established across the many centuries lasting tradition. The limitations which Ortega sees as pure restrictions – as bothering obstacles on the way towards the accomplished human existence – represent for Gadamer rather natural borders of human space, the limits that aside from their restricting function, can be perceived as an important source of enrichment, because they contribute to the panorama of our existence similar to the frame that bounds and completes the image of a picture. Gadamer and Ortega – they both aspire to create new human sciences – the humanities that would not be underestimated because of their methods and their content. Ortega wishes to create them in close cooperation with the modern natural sciences; Gadamer desires the human sciences, which due to their very different aims would be absolutely independent from the tasks and approaches of the natural sciences.

For Gadamer and for Ortega y Gasset – the central problems of their hermeneutical theories are the language and the possibility of understanding each other in communication. Contrary to Ortega, who considers an effort to understand another person in communication as pure utopia like any other effort of incomplete humanity, in Gadamer's philosophy – it is possible to accomplish the purpose of communication, to understand each other in the dialogue. According

---

<sup>7</sup> See Gadamer (1987).

to Gadamer, despite all the differences between us – human beings – we are able to reach the comprehension in communication.

Grondin in his essay *Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding* points out four different meanings of the concept of understanding in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Based on the German expression *sich verstehen* (*to understand each other*) Grondin distinguishes between *understanding as an intellectual grasp*, *understanding as practical know-how*, *understanding as agreement* and, finally, *understanding as application and translation*. He shows precisely how these apparently different meanings of the same word are closely related to each other. The last two especially – understanding as agreement together with understanding as application and translation – definitely confirm the possibility of adequate understanding and translation, which contrary to Ortega y Gasset, - would not be based on the total, hence impossible reconstruction of the author's intention, but on the basic understanding of what the text is talking about (*die Sache*). Grondin formulates it in connection with Gadamer in the following way:

First he wishes to take issue with the notion that to understand is to reconstruct, in a disinterested fashion, the meaning of the text according to its author (*mens auctoris*). This notion prevailed in Dilthey and the epistemological tradition. Gadamer deems it too *aesthetic* or too *contemplative* in the sense that it does not do justice to the fact that the interpreter is also very much concerned by the matter at hand. The notion of *Verständigung* (agreement) here underscores the fact that the reader or interpreter of a text shares a basic *agreement or understanding* (hence the important relation) about what the text is about. When I read a text of Plato on justice, for instance, I do not merely want to record Plato's opinions on the subject. I also share (and put into play, Gadamer will say) a certain understanding of justice, in the sense that I know or sense what Plato is talking about. According to Gadamer such a basic understanding of what he emphatically calls the *Sache*, the matter at hand or the subject matter is inherent in every understanding (it also applies in conversation where the discussion partners share a common ground). If Gadamer insists on this element of agreement, it is to underline the point that understanding is primarily related to the issue at hand and not to the author's intention as such (Grondin 2002, 41).

So it's evident that in Gadamer's translation theory there is not such an abysmal difference between the author, the translator and

the reader of the original or of the translated text. He does not overestimate the personality of a writer or a poet in the same way as he does not underestimate the personality of the translator or of the reader, moreover, according to Grondin he even admits the possibility of considering them as discussion partners on the same ground – something Ortega could hardly imagine in his own hermeneutics and translation theory. This of course doesn't mean Gadamer in his philosophy does not care about the author and his intention at all. Respecting the author of the work he only wants to say that we as readers will be able to understand what the author of the text wants to tell us only after having some basic information about what the whole text is about. It's the fundamental precondition that establishes the mentioned common ground of the discussion and creates the universality of hermeneutical experience.

Grondin claims:

It is thus a misunderstanding to see in Gadamer's applicative model of understanding a complete rejection of the notion of the *mens auctoris* (the authors intention). Gadamer never says that there is no such thing or that it can never be the goal of any interpretation (which would be preposterous); he only says, aiming polemically at its exacerbation in nineteenth century hermeneutics, that it is never the primary focus of understanding which is always first and foremost guided by the subject matter. Furthermore, it is obvious that I can only hope to reconstruct the author's intention if I also have an idea of what he is talking about. There is thus a precedence of the understanding (or the *agreement*, though this might sound awkward in English, but it's also not all that evident in German either) of the *Sache*, the thing at stake, over the *mens auctoris* (Grondin 2002, 41).

Gadamer also admits the differences between human beings when it comes to understanding – differences caused by the subjectivity of our historical conscience – but in contrast to Ortega he doesn't see humanity as a disparate group of individuals isolated from each other through their different mental routes. For Gadamer all the different approaches and thoughts in human minds always take place in terms of one universal hermeneutical experience – an experience based on the universality of common human conditions.

### **Gadamer's understanding of metaphor and its translation**

In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics the universality of hermeneutical experience and common human conditions represent the key to understanding and to translation of the metaphor articulated in the work of art. Every work of art features the universality of hermeneutical experience anticipated in communication, therefore it can be understood and translated. According to Gadamer's essay *Aesthetics and Hermeneutics* (Gadamer 2007, 123 – 131), an author shouldn't write his text with the purpose of speaking exclusively to the audience of his time but always with an option of creating a work which would include a message that would be open also to future generations. Hence in Gadamer's opinion every work of art is a historically unlimited timeless presence that can be understood and considered generally valid without any previous logical argumentation. An artistic text, even from previous centuries, despite its apparently foreign character, has a lot to tell us. It says something important just by itself, it communicates a universal message enriched by the secondary aesthetic worth.

For Gadamer the claim that the work of art tells us something is not a phrase – a pure metaphorical expression – but an articulation of the fact that every work of art has its specific language, a language that has to be translated into our own to enable us to understand what exactly it said. Every process of understanding is translation from one language to another; it's a relation between two different languages even if the mentioned work does not proceed from a foreign author. If according to Gadamer understanding is a translation, than translation can be characterized as integration. To understand and to translate an artistic text or any kind of a text means to understand its sense and to integrate it into the self-understanding of every human being. An understanding of the work of art brings the world of the foreign author to the reader giving to the reader the difficult task of integrating the sense of the foreign text into his global experience. The universality of the hermeneutical experience articulated in every work of art consists in the process of integration of something foreign into our own orientation in the world.

“Being that can be understood is language” (Gadamer 2006, 470) says Gadamer in his opus magnum *Truth and Method* – claiming this is not a metaphysical phrase – but a reference to Goethe’s pronouncement that *everything is a symbol*. We are supposed to understand the world around us only through the symbols offered by language. Therefore, Gadamer attributes wide meaning to the concept of language – every work of art speaks its own language as mentioned above – and to the concept of metaphor, because every kind of expression linguistic and nonlinguistic is a metaphorical expression that is full of symbols each of which can have a variety of meanings.

Gadamer – in contrast to Ortega – doesn’t derive the sense of metaphor from the taboo, although even he attributes to the symbol articulated in the metaphorical expression a vicarious function. Its task is not primarily to stand for something that is forbidden, but it’s rather to represent the unity spread in the partial meanings of individual understandings of the readers or of the audience members. Hence there is nothing else that could express the universality of the hermeneutical experience better than a metaphor implied in the work of art.

He claims:

As universal as the hermeneutical idea is that corresponds to Goethe’s words, in an eminent sense it is fulfilled only by the experience of art. For the distinctive mark of the language of art is that the individual art work gathers into itself and expresses the symbolic character, that hermeneutically regarded, belongs to all beings. In comparison with all linguistic and nonlinguistic tradition, the work of art is the absolute present for each particular present, and at the same time holds its word in readiness for every future. The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It’s not only a *This art thou!*, disclosed in joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; *Thou must alter thy life!* (Gadamer 2007, 131).

Moreover the language of poetry speaking in a work of art is not an exclusive source of metaphor – even a common everyday language contains an abundance of metaphorical expressions and it embodies the same degree of universality as the hermeneutical experience made by reading, interpreting or translating an artistic text.

Common everyday language is as *speculative* as the language of poetry. Gadamer of course understands the word *speculative* in a different way like, for example, Plato or Hegel in their dialectical teaching. According to him, being speculative means having a *mirror effect*, being reflected in something else, substituted for something else. It's a point of view of one and the same thing – an image (gr. *eikon*) – seen in place of the real thing. He uses an example of the castle reflected in the lake as well as in the mirror. There is a specific relation between the real thing and its reflected image. Although we as observers are only supposed to see the image of the castle, there is no doubt about the real existence of the castle itself. The fact that the reflected image perceived by any observer has practically no effect on the real thing should be applied to the language of poetry as much as to a common everyday conversation between human beings.

Even in the most everyday speech there appears an element of speculative reflection, namely the intangibility of that which is still the purest reproduction of meaning. All this is epitomized in a poetic word. Here of course it is legitimate to see of poetic speech in the poetic *statement*. For here it's really meaningful and necessary that the sense of the poetic word is expressed in what is said as such, without invoking the aid of occasional knowledge. If in the process of reaching understanding between people the notion of the statement is distorted, here the concept of the statement achieves its fulfillment. The detachment of what is said from any subjective opinion and experience of the author constitutes the reality of the poetic word. But what does this statement state? It's clear first of all, that everything that constitutes everyday speech can recur in the poetic word. If poetry shows people in conversation, than what is given a poetic statement is not the statement that a written report would contain, but in a mysterious way the whole is as if present. The words put into the mouth of a literary character are speculative in the same way that the speech of daily life is speculative: as we said above, in his speech the speaker expresses a relationship to being (Gadamer 2006, 465).

It's clear that aside from the individual conditions that prejudice our point of view during communication, there are also universal human conditions<sup>8</sup> with an influence as significant as the individual or collective prejudices. So if we are reading or translating an expression

---

<sup>8</sup> See for example Solomon (2004, 11 – 33).

of death articulated in a metaphor, than apart from whether we belong to some concrete religious community or we are atheists in the moment of reading this expression, we all have to cope with the fact that we, as humans, are all mortal. This is the universality of our shared hermeneutical experience and despite our individual perspectives, it's a precondition of any possible translation or understanding in communication.

### **Conclusion**

The fundamental task of the translation consists – according to Gadamer and Ortega y Gasset – in the approximation of the linguistic world of the foreign author to the reader of the translated work accentuating the differences between both types of thinking. The translator cannot adapt the language of the author to the language of his foreign reader, but he has to overcome the stereotypes, the prejudices, in the thinking of the reader by moving him to the dominium of the foreign culture. It's – spoken with Heidegger – destruction and construction of the text at the same time, which attempts to discover and to overcome current approaches in the translation and interpretation instead of destroying the sense of the original text. Its aim is not to reach an unanimous translation, but to describe the differences between the variety of interpretations and translations of the same work. Their translation theory rather than requiring the literal reproduction of the meanings prefers the accentuation of the differences – in the case of Gadamer – comprehended in the universality of the hermeneutical experience.

Although the orteguian statement about the identification of language with the thinking or with the certain vision of the world seems quite exaggerated, the effort to understand each other in communication persists even today. Ortega y Gasset was impressed by the language and philosophy of Heidegger, whose most famous student – Gadamer – expressed an opinion that the effort to understand another person should be considered as a hermeneutical experience, because we have to break down the opposition in our interior during the conversation to be able to listen to the other as the other. This

hermeneutical experience probably represents one of the fundamental aspects of human existence.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

GADAMER, H. G. (1987): Dilthey und Ortega. In: GADAMER, H.-G.: Neuere *Philosophie II, Probleme – Gestalten*. GW 4. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck.

GADAMER, H. G. (2007): *Esthetics and Hermeneutics*. Translated by David E. Linge. In: *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings. My translation of the Gadamer Lesebuch plus 3 essays marked\**. Ed. by Richard E. Palmer. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.

GADAMER, H. G. (2006): *Truth and Method*. Second revised edition. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum Publishing Group.

GRONDIN, J. (2002): Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

GRONDIN, J. (2001): *Von Heidegger zu Gadamer. Unterwegs zur Hermeneutik*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

CHAMIZO, D. (2000): Ortega a jazyk. Translated by Roxana Maliti. In: *Filozofia* 55 (2), 110-117.

KANTZENBACH, F. W. (1967): Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. In: *Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*. Rowohlt, Reinbek.

MIČANINOVÁ, M.: O metaforách podľa Hansa Blumenberga. (On paradigms of Metaphors according to Hans Blumenberg). In: *Filozofia* 67 (7), 592-601.

ORTEGA ARONILLA, E. (1998): EL legado de Ortega y Gasset a la teoría de la traducción en España. In: *La traducción en torno a al '98, Volumen I. de las actas de los VII Encuentros complutenses en torno a la traducción*.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1968): Dehumanization of art. In: *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture and Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (2007): Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo. In: *Prólogos (1914-1943). Obras completas, Vol. 6*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (2007): Las dos grandes metáforas. In: *EL ESPECTADOR IV. Obras completas, Vol. 2*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1992): The Misery and the Splendor of Translation. Translated by Elisabeth Gamble Miller. In: *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Ed. by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1957): *The Revolt of the Masses*. 25th anniversary edition of authorized English translation, *New York: W.W. Norton*.

SCHLEIERMACHER, F. (1974): *Hermeneutik*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1838): Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens. In: *Friedrich Schleiermacher's sämtliche Werke. Dritte Abtheilung. Zur Philosophie*. Zweiter Band. Berlin.

SLAYMAKER, W. (2005): Tradition and Liberation: A Critique of German Cultural Modernity in Heinrich Böll and Hans-Georg Gadamer. In: *The force of tradition, Response and Resistance in Literature, Religion and Cultural Studies*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., Lanham, Maryland.

SOLOMON, R. C. (2004): Radosť z filozofie: abstraktné myslenie a vášnivý život. Translated by E. Višňovský. In: *Filozofia ako problém?* Bratislava: Kalligram.

***Problem of Translating some Metaphors  
from the Latin Text of Fons Vitae into the Slovak Language***

**Anabela Katreničová**

**Introduction**

The translation in linguistic understanding is seen like the choice of the adequate equivalents in the target language to preserve the exact meaning from the source language. The problematic situation can occur if the target language lacks equivalent terms to express the real meaning or whether the equivalent term has an undesirable connotation. Several terms have been observed difficult to translate from Latin to Slovak in the process of translation of the medieval philosophical text *Fons Vitae* written by Ibn Gabirol. These words can be divided into three categories. The first one includes the terms whose equivalents are not easy to find because they do not exist in the target language. The second group contains the terms which differ in its translation according to the syntactic structure in which they are used. The third group is represented by those terms the translation of which depends on the context. In this paper we try to trace out the mentioned groups of terms taken from the philosophical treatise of *Fons Vitae* written by Jewish philosopher Ibn Gabirol and explain the cause of their problematic translation.

**Terms with no adequate equivalents in the target language**

In every language we could find some specific words which are impossible to translate into other languages. The reason is different

lexical system in every language. The Latin language is not exceptional. While its grammatical structure is very similar to the Slovak language system (above all the declensions and the conjugation) the lexis totally varies from the Slovak vocabulary. Therefore in the Latin language there are some words which are difficult to translate into the Slovak language. In the philosophical text of *Fons vitae* written by Ibn Gabirol we can find some of them. First, we will discuss the example of the triplet of words taken from the word family „*apprehendere, comprehendere and deprehendere*.“ The meaning of these verbs as used in the source text is „*to understand, catch by mind*.“ In the Slovak language it is not possible to match them with the equivalents from one word – family and so we are forced not to preserve the same root of word. Fortunately, in the Slovak language there is the group of words that derive from the same family and which in the target language contain the same base represented by the consonants ch and p taken from the Slovak equivalents „*chápať*“ or „*chopiť*.“ The verb „*apprehendere*“ can then be translated using the Slovak verb „*chopiť*“ and the prefix „*po-*“, so the equivalent is „*pochopiť*“ meaning „*understanding*.“ We can illustrate the translation of the verb „*apprehendere*“ on the following text:

*M. Unde non licet ei apprehendere quod ordinatum est supra se. Nec hoc dicimus absolute, quia intelligentia apprehendit quod est supra se secundum hoc quod fixa est in illo et stans per il lud (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 29).*

Latin verb „*comprehendere*“ is translated using the Slovak verb „*chopiť*“ preceded by prefix „*u-*“, in the form „*uchopiť*“ meaning „*catch by mind*.“ The translation of the verb depending on the context by some illustrated example:

*D: luro quia iam diu est, quod intendi intendi in scientiam animae et in subtilem eius inquisitionem, et inde consecutus sum scientiam qua cognovi eius nobilitatem, perpetuitatem et subtilitatem ad comprehendendum omnia in tantum quod, cum videam eius substantiam omnia, miror si quo modo hoc esse possit. Fons vitae I. 8 (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 11).*

The whole problem arises in the translation of the verb „*deprehendere*.“ Compare:

*D. Ex omnibus praemissis nostrae inquisitionis usque modo iam deprehendi scientiam de substantia quae sustinet novem praedicamenta, et cum hoc*

*etiam deprehendi scientiam eius quod nos inquisivimus a principio, hoc este, quod in substantiis sensibilibus in sua universalitate sive particularitate non est nisi materia et forma; et hoc est quod voluimus patefacere (Avengebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 69).*

It cannot be translated into slovak as „chopit“, instead, we must use the equivalent of Slovak verb with similar meaning „chápat.“ In addition, this term does not only corrupt the main connotation of „deprehendere“ which is not translatable into the target language, in our case the Slovak language, but we are have to break the phonological and semantic similarity of these three verbs in our translation.

Thereby the problem at translating this verb consists in the necessity of semantic change of the words, because we are forced not to preserve their meanings and introduce a different connotation to the text. It can be agreed that the change of connotation is an intruder which influences the whole text in an undesirable way. It results also in the loss of the contextual interpretation so important for the philosophical text.

### **The change of meanings according to the syntactic structure**

The second group of hardly translatable substantives is represented by the words which differ in their syntactic suffix. In the medieval Latin with no rigid gramatical set of rules it poses a problem. Mainly if it is a question of suffix with preposition. In classical Latin this kind of structure is known only from several well defined cases. (Špaňár, Horecký 1993, 131 – 140) In contrast, the medieval Latin influenced by the developement of national languages and modified by its own natural progress starts to use them. In addition, in many manuscripts it is possible to observe this situation which is caused by misunderstanding and poor knowledge of the Latin language from the side of author of the text or the person who copied it.

For this reason, it is not possible to state if the alternation between different prepositions and syntactic structures is caused by a simple mistake or it is used on purpose in Latin of Middle Age. The

similar situation can be observed in the Latin text of the studied treatise *Fons vitae*. The problematical word in this case is the substantive „*scientia*“ meaning of which in the classical Latin is the „*knowledge*“ and „*science*.“ In the treatise *Fons vitae* this term is used twice. Once in syntactic suffix with genitive as „*scientia alicuius rei*,“ then attached to preposition „*de*“ as „*scientia de aliqua re*.“ It is well seen from the examples:

*D: Planum est mihi ex his scientiam esse causam finalem, generationis hominis. Sed video quod debemus inquirere perpetuitatem animae in se, et quid in ea operatur scientia quam discit, et quae scientiae permanent in ea post separationem eius a corpore et quae non* (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 6).

*D: Sed istae inquisitiones non sunt de hoc in cuius sumus; iam enim cognovi eas, cum intenderem in scientiam de anima* (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 6).

In this case we could not count it as the mistake because the writer have introduced this alternation to underline the difference of the meaning in these two possible meanings of the term „*scientia*.“ Hence we can observe the use of the word „*scientia*“ attached to genitive in the meaning of the „*knowledge*“ and the expression „*scientia de*“ standing for „*science*.“

The same problem we can encounter with the verb „*inquirere*.“ This verb is used in its transitive form „*inquirere aliquem rem*“ and also in its intransitive form „*inquirere de aliquo re*.“ See the following example:

*D. Iam cognovi de anima quod scire mihi possibile fuit, et si non pervenerim ad extremum eius quod de ea scire debui. Incipiamus tamen nunc inquirere de materia universalis et forma universalis“* (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 11).

In the case of this verb we are also absolutely convinced about its ambiguous meaning. Transitive form of the verb „*inquirere aliquem rem*“ is applied to express an „*action of research*.“ Contrariwise the intransitive form serves to give notion of the „*looking for*.“ Compare:

*M. Et inquirere scientiam de istis substantiis quae sunt mediae inter factorem primum et substantiam quae sustinet praedicamenta possumus duobus modis* (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol), 1895, 102).

## Terms depending on the context

The group of terms depending on their contextuality is the last and the most difficult one. The words belonging to this group differ in the meaning only according to the context in which they are used. The problem of their translation in this case does not consist in the non-existence of adequate equivalents or in the undesirable change of connotation, but it stems from small nuances hidden in the context.<sup>1</sup> The substantive „*substantia*“ is an apparent example of such word. It is well known that there are two different ways to understand the word „*substantia*“ based on the different philosophical concept.<sup>2</sup> The first one matches the substance to the Greek term „*ousia*,“ meaning „*being*.“ Compare:

*M. Et sic manifestabitur tibi per hanc considerationem quid est post **substantiam** subiectam corpori de ceteris **substantiis** quae sunt subiectae sibi ipsis et subsistunt aliae in aliis, donec venies ad primum subiectum quod est materia universalis de qua intendimus* (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol) 1895, 19).

In this case the substance is understood as the foundational or fundamental entity of reality. In the second, more specific use, term „*substantia*“ denotes only a particular kind of basic entity. Example:

*M. Scias quod, nisi fuerit hic res subiecta contrariis, evenit hoc ut sit **substantia** ex non – **substantia**, et quod non est **substantia** sit prius quam **substantia*** (Avencebrolis (Ibn Gebirol), 1895, 18).

The problem of translation of this term is well set in the Ibn Gabirol work *Fons vitae*, because he uses it in its double meaning. If we do not want to follow the other translators who leave the term substance without translating into the target language we can use the Slovak term „*podstata*“ denoting the substantive „*substantia*.“ However, the mentioned Slovak equivalent matches to the substance viewed as the being typified as an object, or a kind of object. For this reason we cannot use it in the second meaning, the ontologically basic being. This meaning of the word substance needs a different word

---

<sup>1</sup> The problematic translation of such word exists in all branches of the scientific translation. See the studies based on the alternance of scientific terminology: Kolaříková (2012, 35 – 46); Šimon (2008, 49 – 54); Olejník ( 2009, 147 – 159).

<sup>2</sup> The term of *substantia* is well studied by M. Mičaninová ( 2008, 427 – 432) and (2008, 215 – 231).

to be applied. Unfortunately it does not exist in the Slovak language. Therefore, it is advisable not to translate the Latin substantive „*substantia*,“ but leave it in its adapted Slovak form „*substancia*.“ Nevertheless, this word may cause misunderstanding and lead us to doubt about the hidden meaning of these terms because also in the Slovak language, the term „*substancia*“ has two meanings.

If the term „*substantia*“ is used in its adapted Slovak form „*substancia*“ in both cases, the translation does not satisfy the task to propose the unambiguous equivalent of the translated word. On the contrary, it does not illustrate the context but obscures it and the whole interpretation remains on the recipient of philosophical text.

### Conclusion

The Middle Ages Latin treatises must be studied very carefully. The medieval text usually contains the group of the words and terms difficult to translate, as we have already seen. The lack of the rigid grammatical rules and the bad knowledge of authors could cause many syntactic and morphologic mistakes to be detected and corrected. In many cases, these differences according to the norm of Classical Latin cannot be understood as mistakes. Mostly when they were produced on purpose as in the case of Ibn Gabirol's work *Fons vitae*. The translation of these words is up to the translator to pick up the conventional meaning of translated word.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

AVENCEBROLIS (Ibn Gebirol) (1995): *Fons Vitae*. Ex arabico in latinum translatus ab Iohanne Hispano et Dominico Gundissalino ex Codicibus Parisinis, Amploniano, Columbino. Primum editit Clemens Baer. Münster : Aschendorff 1995.

KOLAŘÍKOVÁ, Z. (2012): K otázke existencie synonym v anglickej botanickej terminológii. In: *Od textu k prekladu VII*. Praha.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2008): Filozofická terminológia Koruny kráľovstva rabína Šlomo ben Gabirola. In: *Filozofia* 63 (5), 427-432.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2008): The synthetic thinking of Solomon ibn Gabirol. In: *Studia Judaica* 2. XI, (2), 215-231.

OLEJNÍK, V. (2009): Problematika odbornej terminológie v prekladoch latinských kanonických vizitácií. In: *Sambucus IV*. Trnava, 147-159.

ŠIMON, F. (2008): Poznámky k prekladu medicínskeho textu. In: *Sambucus III*. Trnava, 49-54.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. – OBYŠOVSKÁ A. (2012): Šlomo ben Jehuda Ibn Gabirol: Fons vitae. In: *Filozofia*. 67 (1), 61-71

ŠPAŇÁR, J. – HORECKÝ, J. (1993): *Latinská gramatika*. Bratislava.

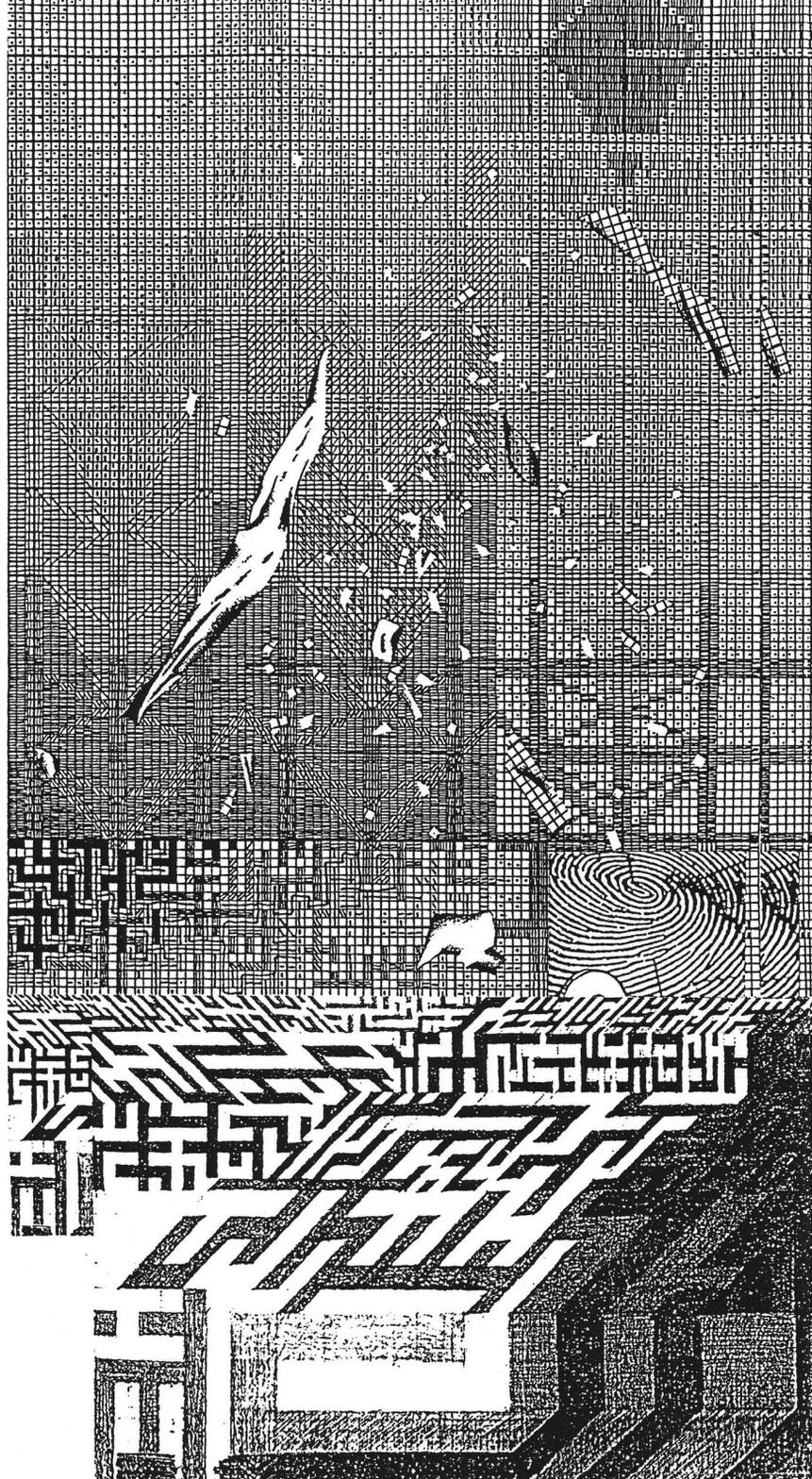
The article was written as a part of the project VEGA 1/0330/12 *The Function of Metaphor in the Philosophy of Shlomo ben Yehuda Ibn Gabirol and Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi* at the Department of Roman and Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice.



**PART IV.**

**ARTISTIC INSPIRATIONS BY IBN GABIROL**

Katarína Blažová, *The Kingly Crown of Ibn Gabirol*, 2003





## ***The Kingly Crown in Creative Art***

**Katarína Blažová**

The cycle of life breeds art which immediately becomes a part of life. I found the idea written in my drawings, I quote it in my introduction, and I live by it. I am fascinated by the idea “Creatio Perpetua” that the creative principle has the ability to communicate and give energy; it is the greatest art form of life. I can only approach the broad-spectrum topic of life and art through my personal story and my experience. I would like to introduce you to my basic point of view that determines me. I am a woman, a mother, an artist. Through the prism of these roles, I am going to attempt to express myself to the topic of The Kingly Crown in Creative Art.

My artistic and creative thinking has always been influenced by written word, by books. I am curious about the world of strong stimuli, the uncovering of myths, the archetypes and the return to fundament. In general, the greatest inspiration in creative art is the real tangent life in confrontation with the invisible inner life of a person. In search for the balance between the body and soul, the dialogue with the past helps me. Words mirror our knowledge. By knowing the artistic masterpieces of the past, we can better understand the present and by our thinking in the present, we can create the future. About 13 years ago, I read the first Slovak translation of Keter Malkhut – The Kingly Crown written by Solomon Ibn Gabirol, a Jewish thinker and poet of the 11th century from Arabian Spain. This poetic work caught my interest by the author’s power of the inner world,

brought me to the study of Kabbalah and inspired me to create the graphic prints and the book cover.

The word *kabbalah* means to receive. Kabbalah is a part of Jewish, Greek and Christian traditions in Europe. The Kabbalistic diagram of the Tree of Life is an image of Creation. It contains a scheme of the repetitive solid system and the principles of the universe and human actions. The Tree consists of ten sephirot and 22 paths, which cross four worlds. Sephirot, paths, triads and octave create simple, yet diverse system for an analysis of any organism. The graphic image of the Tree portrays a form of a crystal. The upper part of the Tree is the Crown - Sefira Keter, and the lower part is the base, the Kingdom - Sefira Malkhut. Like a glimpse of a thunderbolt, the divine power of creation migrates in this integrated system of energy according to our thoughts and actions.

The Keter is the beginning and the end. It is an open crown through which the soul enters and leaves, sometimes to come, sometimes to return (Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi 2001, 163).

The creative principle of Sefira Keter – The Crown transforms the tension of all Sephirot in the Tree of Life and flows back through the lower Sefira Malkhut – The Kingdom. Malkhut is the body, the human point between the Heaven and the Earth, it is an image of the Creator. The Kingdom collects passive and active energies and it processes entering from the upper Sephirot. It is the Mother Earth, the Bride, the Empire of elements and physical environment, it is our temporary form of a body. Sefira is a female and a place where life is born.

Keter is in Malkhut, spirit in mass (Halevi 2001, 77) .

We can better understand the invisible world by looking at the diagram of the Tree of Life. What is up is also down. Keter is in Malkhut and Malkhut is in Keter. The mirroring goes on constantly and it is up to us how the world is formed. The battle for harmony and balance of our souls and the world is in motion.

I illustrated the graphic of The Kingly Crown as a theatre stage. I placed Jacob's ladder – the stairs to Heaven – to a structure of a net in the background. The lower part of the graphic contains the stage

of our lives, the labyrinth of our mistakes by which we move on. The human fingerprint in the right corner of the stage expresses unrepeatable and exclusive identity of every human being. Above the terrestrial horizontal line – above the stage – is a space where you can see our floating consciousness, a soul hidden in the body, a torso of human or angelic being. A desire to fly over one's own horizon is deeply inscribed in us all. The Point – Soul – Divine Spark in us seeks perfection and the harmony of the lost Eden, it longs for the return to the Golden Age and craves the power of the Secret.

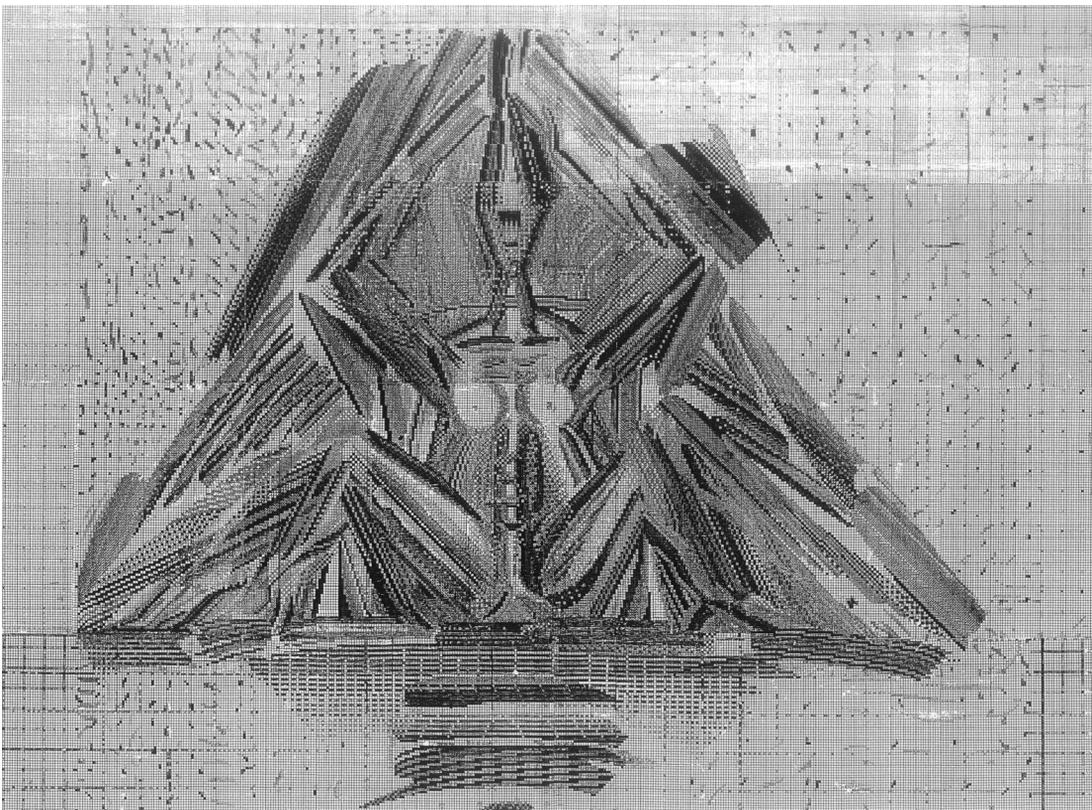
A word is a point, an energy, a sign of life. The interactions of lines of energy change both space and time and they create the spirals of worlds, even as the lines on the skin of our fingers. I selected a metaphor of a net for a graphic expression of human knowledge. The net is a holotropic foundation for the tapestry of life where every square carries a sign of one fiber knot, color, tone, word. The vertical outline of Universe is inwrought with the horizontal line of human narrative. The intercept of the vertical line of a spirit and the horizontal line of a life constitute the magical power of a cross. The cross forms a net, holds the system together and becomes a part of human history. The cross conveys a human desire to understand the secret of life, influences relationships,avigates to balance, symbolizes spirituality, redeems and alters consciousness.

The intention is always important – where a person casts his or her inner vision. A thought versus an action – this intercept carries a logo of quality, a plus (+) in its heart. A creative relationship to ourselves and others; love and compassion link the worlds together and enlighten the darkness. Personally, a cross symbolizes one's altered conscious concept of a life's purpose. For me, the basic system of a network is also a metaphor for physical expression that the universe is homogeneous and isotropic despite its constant processes and changes of mass in time and space. As the great Roman poet and philosopher Publius Ovidius Naso writes in his *Metamorphoses*, *a person and the world change, but the essence does not.*

The original design for the book cover *The Kingly Crown* by Ibn Gabirol was also used as an information leaflet for the international conference in Kosice 2013, *The Function of Metaphor in Medieval*

*Neoplatonism*. I inserted the scheme of the Tree of Life – a crystal – to the graphic network. The crystal's characters expand in the squares of the net into space, its structures transmit energy in time. I embedded the colorful net into this black-and-white scheme which symbolizes a part of Mother Earth's body. The lifted arm, a part of my previous work, is taken from my preparatory cardboard for hand-knotted tapestry of *Moira*, the Goddess of Destiny. The cardboard has squared black raster into which I have inscribed graphical marks of individual colored knots of the whole tapestry and Moira's body. In the tapestry, one can see the sublimated particles of body's elements which create new structures, systems and fractals, the fight of the black and the white drops. Two systems clinched together against the background of the past. New colorful world develops in the given black-and-white scheme. Faith, perhaps destiny? The kaleidoscope of world, and energy vibrations. I am inclined to the holistic model which, in addition to tangible visible universe, also accepts emotional, intellectual and intuitive component of human existence is another „reality“ (Bentov 1998, 13), the physical body is a product of the interaction of our subtle, intangible, „informative“ bodies and that communication in the entire universe is immediate and continuous (Bentov 1998, 160). Space is a teaching as well as a learning machine and its goal is to understand itself (Bentov 1998, 166).

When I review my creative work, I am often amazed by the thread of thoughts and processes and I feel like someone is pushing me forward. What I am concerned with inside of me gives me the possibility to suddenly realize it. To materialize a thought, an idea, through artistic notion is an interesting creative process. It is one of the ways how to spend a life in a dialogue. Drawings and sketches are important records for me. They have their own structures and energy, I connect them into new units and get delighted of new discoveries and fortunate coincidences. In the spirit of post modernism, I put my puzzle of impulses together, I search for the answer.



Katarína Blažová

Artwork-Cardboard for a realization of hand-knotted tapestry *Moira*, 1994



The basic truth of all the teachings is our conscience. The Ten Commandments are contained within us, a decision of which side of scales we choose is up to us. Human questions are always the same, I proceed from the details of my life to its entirety. Each life gives its own answer. As many people, as many worlds. My artistic work saves me, helps me understand and solve life challenges and the dark aspects of life. The internal creative dialogue reconciles me with the present and gives me the power to live.

When I had finished all of my eleven tapestries at the tapestry manufacturer, I have spread their photos on the floor of my studio and only then have I realized with amazement that together they create one story. I was surprised myself because they were all created separately without any intention of linking them together. I was deeply immersed in the work of individual themes and I was solving problems related to the realization itself. In a short period of time, I had to select from a vast amount of drawings, designs and unfinished sketches, created over the twenty years of my free painting. I had to work economically, focus and solve everyday provisional weaving problems, since I was the weaving director in the tapestry manufacture. It provided a creative environment amid the professionals, masters of their work, who dwelled on results. We were delighted with every well finished centimeter, we were testing possibilities of the textile expressions, and we even had to unweave at times. I have learned a lot, professionally and personally. So then one evening I had put together a story from my tapestries, my story of a woman with the name *Moira* (destiny).

The spark of creation, the touch of God's logo, which can run through a person while art making remains. The power of focus when creating art – life, this creative charge inserted into a masterpiece ultimately radiates at the viewer. Creative activity made with love enriches. I realized that while weaving the theater curtain Phoenix for the Kosice State Theater and the cycle of eleven large-scale hand woven and bound tapestries called *Moira* in the Moravian Tapestry Manufacture, Czech Republic in 1994 – 1996. Faith or destiny? I documented my testimony about the search for faith and love in my creative catalogue of tapestries *Moira*.

There are moments in the deep concentration of art making, when we can see a certain problem in a different light. Suddenly, we see a solution, we have a new idea. The moment of suggestion, discovery, touch of Energy that does not come from the world of concentrated mass is the God's inspiration, the touch of a Muse. It often comes unexpected, while we are in peace, when we are not locked within the walls of our desire, spasticity. It is a gift, an answer to our plea.

Once, in one unwitting moment, I drew a drawing within couple of seconds that gave direction to my creative work for years to come. This drawing was crucial for the selection of themes and designs in the realization of the tapestries. The tiny drawing made with colored pencils, a woman coded in a firm triangle, the Triad of God's logo. The drawing of a woman is the symbol of the Mother, the Earth, and the Kingdom that contains the imprint of the Tree of Life. She is opened on the top so the energy can flow through, her womb is opened for new life. She is capable of creation as well as destruction. It depends on our approach of life. We live in the time of Confluence, the time in which all the energies and life challenges are at their peaks, but we have ample opportunities for a change. The cycles are repetitive, the decisions of what we are going to contribute to, the dark or the light, are up to us. We learn to take responsibility for our decisions.

Mother Earth warns us of our aggressiveness by the global changes. Mother's role is important, she influences children and the world with her love. As the years go by, I think more of my parents, my ancestors and creative people who have impacted my life. My Mother influenced me the most in my life. She gave me life, she lead me to verity.

The character of Spirit is giving, mass consumes stimuli and forms itself. The constant question – life and the law of sacrifice. Logos. The Kingdom of Spirit expands with love, truth and humility.

While writing, I think back of the Kingly Crown by Ibn Gabirol and I realize it brightened my view of the world and my life as well. I also became more aware of relationships in my art themes. Portraits, the

theater curtain *Phoenix*, the *Cycle of Tapestries*, *Moira*, paintings inspired by *Heraclitus's Fragments*, *Siddhartha*, *DNA – Faith, Love and Hope*, the *Golden, Silver and Iron Ages*, *The Kingly Crown*, *Triad*, *Theatro Mundi*, *Three Drops of Blood*, *Beckets and Godots*, *The Expulsion from Eden*, *Paleolithic*, *The Black Swan*, etc. My ideas are captured by a drawing, a stroke of a brush, which materializes energy. The rhythm of writing in my later paintings creates a network, it becomes the center point of a painting. The subject of the rest of the painting is an energy that shapes the human inner world. *Freedom, Love, Forgetting* – the three Eights of infinity in red, black and white colors against the grey background – determine the power, direction and form of human life. Freedom, love, forgetting are the principal Triad in the Octave, they are the central pillar of the Tree of life scheme and the poem Keter Malkhut/The Kingly Crown.

The forms of art are diverse. Every artistic technique has specific qualities. However, there are rules which should be respected for the sake of a resulting art piece. A painter has to step back from the painting as often as possible so that the model and the painting can be seen in one shot because by comparison, with a step-back the offsets can be spotted. If we want to create a good portrait, a true masterpiece, we have to step back so that the unnecessary details do not interrupt the essence. The power is in simplicity.

To preserve the step back of a viewer, to follow the basic network of context such as actors or creators in different professions. This conjecture is generally applicable in real life as well. Retraction from the model, an art work, life, oneself, this animosity opens the horizon of the Great Plan. We see and feel only up to a point, we do not know the end of a story, but our being flourishes through this experience and a love for life and truth.

The memory of past and its observer – that is our soul. For soul's harmony, we should retract to the inner meditation as much as we can and recognize our position in the Jacob's ladder, in the drama of life. The truth is liberating. Immersing oneself in silence brings peace, even reading the poetic works by Solomon Ibn Gabirol does.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

BALABÁN, M. (1993): „*Víra – nebo osud?*“ Praha: Oikoymenh.

BENTOV, J. (1997): *Tajemství a síla kyvadla*. (Pojednání o mechanismu vědomí.) Praha: Pragma.

HALEVI, Z. Sh. (1997): *Strom života. Úvod do kabaly*. Prel. Peter Bugár. Praha: Trigon.

MIČANINOVÁ, M. (2003): *Koruna královstva rabína Šlomo ben Gabirola*. Z hebr. preložili Dov Goldstein a Mária Mičaninová. Prešov: Michal Vaško.



## THE FUNCTION OF METAPHOR IN MEDIEVAL NEOPLATONISM

Mária Mičaninová – Ivica Hajdučeková (eds.)

Publisher: Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice

online: <http://www.upjs.sk/pracoviska/univerzitna-kniznica/>

Year of issue: 2014

Print run: 100 copies

Number of pages: 144

Number of authors' sheets: 6,8

First edition

Print: EQUILIBRIA, s. r. o.

ISBN 978-80-8152-123-2 (print book)

ISBN 978-80-8152-124-9 (ebook)



ISBN 978-80-8152-123-2



9 788081 521232