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# REVIEW IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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# ON THE CHURCH AS COMMUNICATION<sup>1</sup>

LÓRÁNT BENCZE

## ABSTRACT

According to Goethe style is the dress of thought. According to Coleridge style is the incarnation of thought. If style is the dress of thought, style can be changed without changing the thought. If style is the incarnation of thought, style cannot be changed without changing the thought. Following these two contradictory views of style, one could ask: Is a metaphor only the dress of an idea, or is it the incarnation of an idea? If a metaphor is, for example, the dress of a religious idea, then religious metaphors can be replaced with one another without changing or damaging the idea or dogma. But if a metaphor is the incarnation of a religious idea, then one religious metaphor cannot be replaced with another. These are questions that have arisen not only about translating a holy or a theological text, but whenever the Church intended to adapt herself to historical and social changes. Theologians have been preoccupied with the interpretation of metaphors, and they have denied the possibility of changing “official” metaphors. After Christianity had become an established and institutionalized religion, theologians and particularly the clergy were inclined to interpret metaphors as non-metaphors, i.e. they stuck to the literal sense. This is a development that can be observed at the institutionalized stage of every religion. When the Catholic Church faced a culture and a society, or a cultural and social change which challenged the whole system of metaphors, the insufficiency for the literal interpretation of religious metaphors manifested itself and the problem of introducing new metaphors or even a new system of metaphors emerged (cf. the early Jesuits in China). What can theologians do with the expression *Lamb of God* if, for example, lambs are despised in a particular society and swine are respected?

The question can be solved if we consider the very nature of metaphor and its interpretation. A metaphor is both cognitively and socio-culturally determined

<sup>1</sup> See also Lóránt Bencze, *On the Church as Communication*, L.A.U.D., Duisburg, 1996. Lóránt Bencze, *Erneuerung und Entfaltung: Kognitive und kulturelle Annäherungen an Religion und Gesellschaft*, Gabriele Schäfer Verlag, Herne, 2011.

and interpreted. Socio-cultural interpretation can be various and almost unlimited according to geographical, climatical, historical, cultural and of course social conditions. Cognitively based interpretation is determined by the same rules every time and everywhere (assuming that mankind is one race) and therefore, cognitive interpretation in this sense is limited. A proper, well-balanced and deliberated procedure can and has guaranteed the changing of metaphors and even systems of metaphors with only minor changes or damage to “the original idea.” This procedure is not a quick changing of dress but the living growth of an incarnated idea.

## ON THE CHURCH AS SEMIOGENESIS

The 20th-century international word *style* comes from Greek and Latin (*stulos*, *stylus*) yet as a technical term with its modern meanings it was unknown for the ancient Greeks and Romans, though the concept of style itself was known. They used different terms such as *genus dicendi*,<sup>2</sup> *oratio*,<sup>3</sup> *dictio*,<sup>4</sup> *quo modo*,<sup>5</sup> *genus*<sup>7</sup> etc.

The same is true of the word *communication*, which became internationally accepted by the end of the 20th century. Although it comes from Latin, its current meanings cannot be found in the Latin translations of the Bible and in Christian theology (cf. *communicatio fractionis panis*, Acts 2,42 or e.g. the apostles were persistent in the *didach/doctrina apostolorum and in the koinonia/communicatio*).

However, the concept of communication was not unknown, but other terminologies were used (*fides ex auditu*, etc.). One may state that communication is a key concept in Christianity. I might even risk stating that Christianity differs from other religions in that its essential starting point is the question of communication, and its whole theology is permeated by the question of communication. Furthermore, if communication is removed from Christian theology, not even one dogma remains, quite simply nothing remains. There is no Holy Trinity, no inner life and communication of the true one God, no incarnation, no opening of God towards the world, no personal communication of God with man in *Logos*, no Church, no “teach all peoples”..., no assignment, no sacraments, i.e. no *katexochen* communication signs, and so on. The development of dogmas,

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *DM.*, *Tulli Ciceronis scripta quae manserunt omnia*, Fasc. 5, Orator, Edidit Rolf Westman, Leipzig, Teubner, 1980, 22, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Cicero, *M.*, *Tulli Ciceronis scripta quae manserunt omnia*, Fasc. 4, Brutus, Recognovit H. Malcovati, Lipsiae, 1965, 325.

<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *DM.*, *Tulli*, Orator, 90, 101.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, *M.*, *Tulli*, Brutus, 325.

<sup>6</sup> Cicero, *DM.*, *Tulli*, Orator, 43.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

the history of heresies and schisms can be considered mere communication disturbances. In contrast to *kaqolikos* communication, all of them can be seen as a kind of limitation of universal or comprehensive communication. What is traditionally indicated by the term *heresy* in Catholic theology, is no other than some communication type in Catholic teaching or its possible negation. The anathema of *ecclesia catholica* keeps possibilities open, defends the abundance of types. It has to be mentioned in advance that when I spoke on the one hand about a communication type, semiosis, etc. and heresy, anathema etc. on the other hand, I walked into two different communication paradigms. I tried to turn the two paradigms into each other without mixing them, stating that this in one paradigm correlates with that in the other.

It is clear from the above that I do not want to talk about the external structure of Church communication, how the faithful communicate with the priest, the priest with the bishop, the bishop with the archbishop, the primate or the pope, the pastor with the superintendent etc. but about the internal, semiotic structure of Church communication. However, if this internal, semiotic structure is considered not only statically, but also dynamically, or procedurally, as it is of course presumed by the concept of communication, then I have to speak about semiosis, more precisely about the Church as a kind of semiogenesis. Is this semiogenesis

particular and unique in human development?

a particular and unique development of verbal communication?

Has it been almost entirely neglected by semiotic studies? (from a non-religious point of view)

Would it give very promising research possibilities and results for scientists and scholars, and therefore their neglect is hard to understand? (studied with a semiotic approach)

Would it give the Church herself a unique possibility to find the solutions for her internal crises? (because of the nature of semiogenesis)

Has it always provided a means of solving the problems for the Church?

In this paper analogies will be used. It complies on one hand with the traditional theological thinking, especially if the analogy is functional, and on the other hand it complies with the Anglo-Saxon scientific fashion of our time, where analogy might be only formal. I also follow the technique of *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium*,<sup>8</sup> which, when describing a phenomenon, used the phenomenon itself. I will use the phenomena of analogical metaphor in describing metaphorical phenomena.

<sup>8</sup> Tamás Adamik (trans.), *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium – A C. Herenniusnak ajánlott Rétorika*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987.

1. On the basis of the works of Ch. S. Peirce,<sup>9</sup> Thomas Sebeok<sup>10</sup> and those of others, we can rightly state that communication and life are each other's *sine qua non*. Starting with the fact that if a one-celled organism cannot release any molecules into its surroundings, it poisons itself, and if it cannot build in molecules from its surroundings, it starves; the same happens in high-level communication when the new-born gets every kind of nourishment, sunshine, care, but lacks the love of its mother, and there is no other loving person nearby, the baby dies within a month; even the prisoner in solitary confinement or the selfish lonely adult goes mad. The reproduction, multiplication, life-blood of living beings is semiosis, even at the DNA molecular level, as the division of molecule textures and later the *negative* and *positive* resupplementation, are based on a certain kind of recognition, on semiosis. The technical term *life* is nothing else in Christian theology than the pronouncement of communicational necessity, whether we speak about divine internal life (the *Holy Trinity*), or the relationship between Christ and the Church, or spiritual life, etc. Eternal life is phrased in theology in the concepts of Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, namely it is none other than the perfect communication that is deduced from the human experience of fragmentary communication through physically perceptible signs. Hell, eternal death mean a total lack of communication, a lack of communication unbelievable even for human beings who live with the necessity of fragmentary communication.

2. Furthermore, and because the internal communication structure of the Church is built on the analogy of biological life, we find the principle *gratia supponit naturam* (*grace relies upon nature*). In other words, synergesis is the basic feature of the communication structure. It is well-known that synergesis is "the cooperative action of discrete agencies such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the discrete effects taken independently."<sup>11</sup> Synergesis characterizes not only communication but life itself. The amount and fullness of discrete physical and chemical processes, inherent in life are more and greater than the amount of these processes taken independently. This surplus can be considered as semiosis. Synergy characterizes communication and most types of communication signs. For example in the case of *signals* (the starter's gun-shot or the green traffic light), the released energy (40 000 hp at the Formula 1 Championship) is in no way proportion to the energy of the signal. But the synergesis of metaphorical expressions is even greater. Simply it is immeasurable, unlimited, but as we will see later, it is not uncertain. Synergesis is always included in semiosis.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Hartshorne – Paul Weiss Peirce (ed.), *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 1-8. vols., 2. print., Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1931/1958.

<sup>10</sup> Sebeok, Thomas (ed.), *Style in Language*, New York – London, 1960.

<sup>11</sup> Yishai Tobin, *Semiotics and Linguistics*, London - New York, Longman, 1990, 48.



István Örkény, a twentieth-century Hungarian writer describes synergesis in an artistic way in one of his “one-minute” stories. It is not by chance that the title of this short writing is: *The Meaning of Life*.

*If a lot of cherry-peppers are strung, we get a cherry-pepper wreath.  
But if we do not string them, we won't have a wreath.  
Though we have the same amount of peppers, they are just as red, just as hot.  
But there is no wreath.  
Does it depend on the string? No, not really. The string, as we know, is not important, it is something inferior.  
Then what is it?  
If we think about this, and try not to let our thoughts wander, but make them follow the right direction, we can find fundamental truths.<sup>12</sup>*

Dezső Kosztolányi, perhaps the greatest twentieth-century Hungarian writer and poet could be quoted after János Balázs about object symbols or object metaphors:

*Only pole and linen,  
but not pole and linen,  
but flag.  
...  
My soul, should be, should be-  
no pole and linen -  
be flag ( Flag, 1928 )<sup>13</sup>*

Communication, and verbal communication within it, is always more than the amount of its individually added discrete units (sound, morpheme, lexeme, phrase, sentence, turn, text).

3. Communication, semiosis and sign itself belong to a relation system. This is described as a whole world concept in the fable about the blind and the elephant in the Udana collection (cf. Bencze, 1996).<sup>14</sup> Here nothing is equivalent with itself, only in its relations, or rather it is itself in connection with the individual. There is no independent individual, but the individual exists only in relations, and these relations obviously differ and depend on given circumstances. What is common and constant, is the existence that exists necessarily in a relation system and the

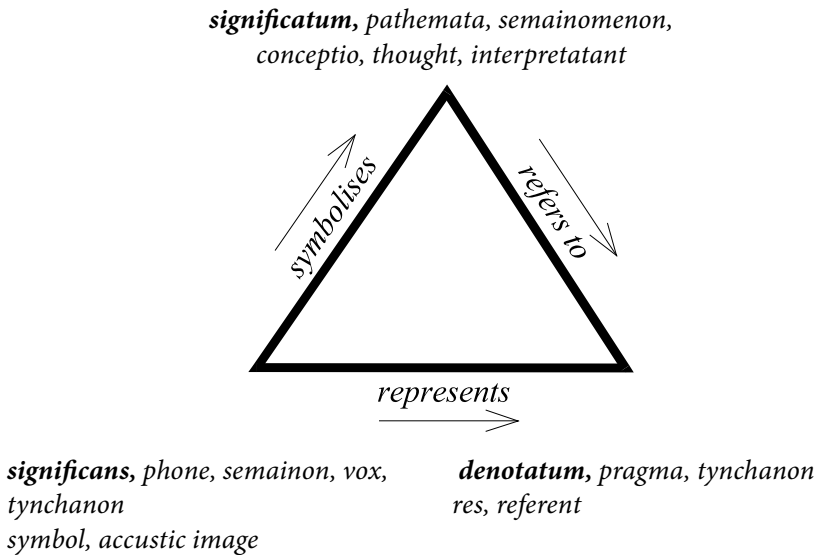
<sup>12</sup> István Örkény, *Egyperces novellák*, Budapest, 1981, 397.

<sup>13</sup> Dezső Kosztolányi, *Összegyűjtött versei*, Budapest, Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> Lóránt Bencze, *Style and Interpretation in Verbal Communication*, (BIBLIOTHECA SEPTEM ARTIUM LIBERALIUM), Budapest, Corvinus, 1996, 30.

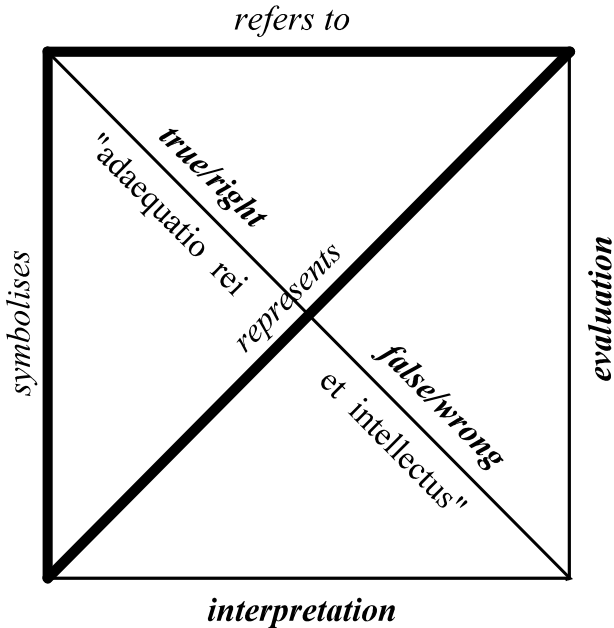
related nature of beings. Beginning with the Christian, more precisely perhaps with Saint Thomas Aquinas's creation concept, the creation of the world by God implies that God keeps the world in constant existence, consequently the world exists only in relation with God, up to the point that bread and wine in relation with the faithful, remain bread and wine in their mere physical and chemical features, but by their nature, namely by their total psycho-socio-somatic relation, they are the body and blood of Christ. Just as a letter is only paper and letters of the alphabet for the postman, yet for me, though it remains paper and letters of the alphabet, beyond that it may mean life or death. The letter transforms itself (*transsubstantiatio*) in relation to me, becomes my mother's letter, my love's letter, such that it is by no means only paper and letters of the alphabet.

To illustrate the above semiogenesis in a relation system and to get nearer to the understanding of the phenomenon that we traditionally call *metaphor* (in its widest sense), we need to outline some traditional and recent terms of sign components and those of the relationship of sign components:



significatum

denotatum

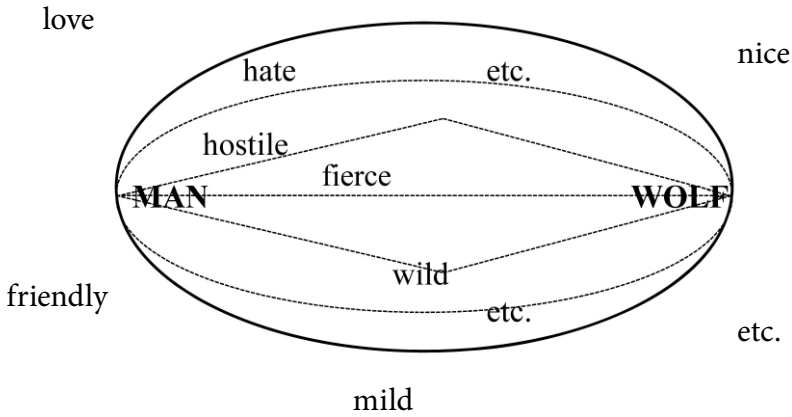


significans

users' knowledge about denotatum

This relation system in the metaphor is a dynamic, oscillating meaning-relation set, some kind of a fuzzy set. It is more or less uncertain what the metaphor might signify but it is clear what it cannot signify. It is similar to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, in which measurement influences the experiment, and we know either the exact place of the electron or its exact velocity, but never both. Similarly, Church communication or councils mostly did not declare dogmas but stipulated what cannot be considered dogma, or what cannot be taught. If we look at it from the point of view of semiosis, anathematizing was the absolute certain recognition of the nature of metaphor and – we might as well add – mystery, in which we certainly know what cannot be said (what kind of semantic marker is excluded), but it is not certain what can be said (what kind of semantic marker is included) within given limits.

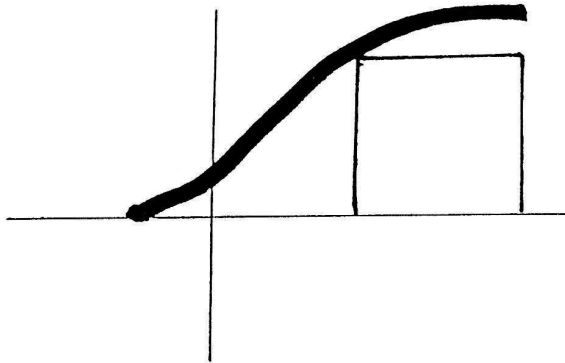
In the famous saying *Homo homini lupus* it can be outlined in the following way:



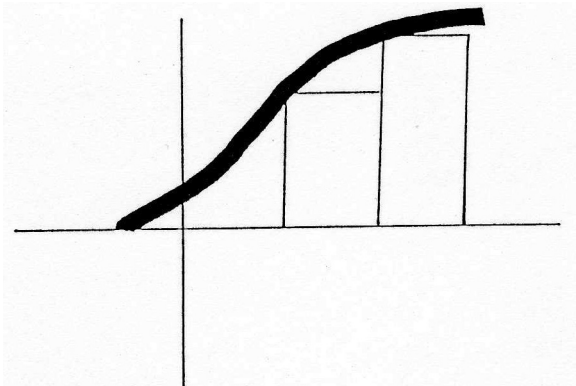
Generalizing and abstract conceptual thinking in contrast with metaphorical thinking select only one or a few of the possibilities (of semantic markers) of the metaphor, and reduce the metaphorical sign. This is why it was important that the anathema always expressed – through abstract, conceptual thinking – only those ideas, i.e. those semantic markers, which were unacceptable for the Church, and not the ones that were acceptable.

4. There is the well-known basic duality in communication that the world itself is *continuum*, but we interpret this continuum as *contiguuum*, i.e. by interconnected and hierarchically arranged discrete elements that we call *categories*. We create the categories in hierarchic order. The first and classical model of the hierarchy of categories is based on the Aristotelian category theory, and it is the so-called *Tabula Porphyriana*. Also zoological and botanical taxonomies originate from this model, as do all kinds of scientific classifications.

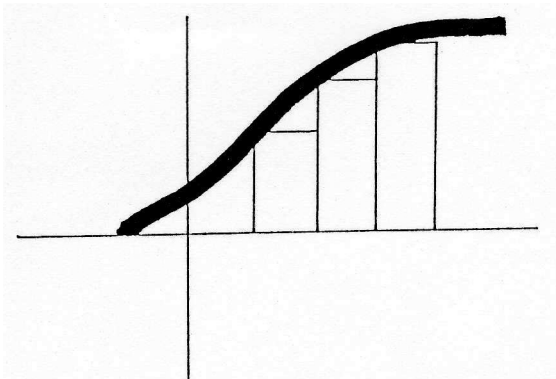
A given society and a given individual operate with smaller and larger divisions/units, or with more or fewer divisions/units depending on how many and what kind of conceptual system relations are needed to interpret the world in a given situational context. Consequently the interpretation of the world in conceptual categories appears as a rougher or finer approach to the world as *continuum*, i.e. in categories the world appears as a *contiguuum* of larger or smaller discrete elements. It can be illustrated by the analogy of the *Lebesgue-approximation*. E.g. the Hungarian word *fa* is the only verbal sign for various concepts (*tree, wood, wooden, timber*):



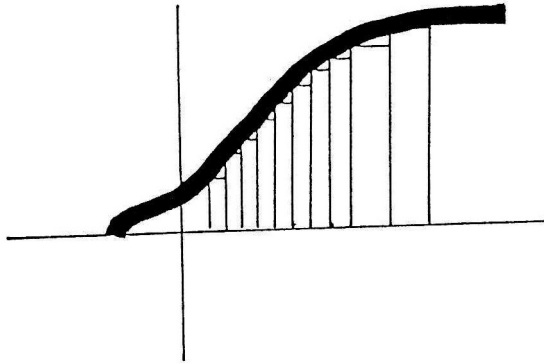
In German two signs are more or less equivalent to the Hungarian *fa*: *Baum*, *Holz*:



English has one verbal sign *bell*, whereas Hungarian uses at least three: *csengő*, *harang*, *kolomp*:



Hungarian has one verbal sign for *snow* (*hó*), whereas the Eskimos use more than fifty:



5. All religions, Christianity among them, prefer a certain kind of sign type. This sign type is called metaphor in semiotics, *trope* in traditional stylistics. Certain variations of this sign type, or metaphor (in a broader sense) characterize everyday language, much more than an average speaker would think. Other variants – I have to stress variants, not uniformity – characterize dreams, tales, legends, myth in general, poetry and rhetorical speeches and texts. Porphyry was the first who thought that myths were symbols, (in our current terminology) metaphors. Much later Vico did the same. This was rediscovered by the 20th-century depth psychology (see more details: Bencze, 1996)<sup>15</sup>. But it should not be forgotten that the name of the so-called *Apostles' Creed* or *the Athanasian Creed* is also *Symbolum Apostolorum*, and *Symbolum Athanasium*, and the title of the famous Denzinger handbook, the collection of dogmas is *Enchiridion Symbolorum*.

*Symbolon*, *assembling*, as we know, was an object broken into two pieces, an object to identify, e.g. a broken coin which would certify the owner, who could claim a previous friendship after a longer absence. Thus it expressed a particular relation and reference. In the 3rd century A.D. it was Saint Ciprian, the bishop of Carthage, who used the word *symbol* to mean *dogma*. The stoics regarded symbols as references concealing philosophical and theological truths; Porphyry has already been mentioned, and the Alexandrian Philo also used *symbols* to interpret the Scripture. This was followed by Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Scripture, and so on. Later symbols, in a special poetic period of European literary history, in the symbolism of the 19th and 20th centuries, received a new application; then in the 20th-century semiotics it became the technical term of an arbitrary (and

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

conventional) sign (cf. Peirce<sup>16</sup> and the above introduction on the history of the terms *style* and *communication*).

6. A given religion, culture, language, period or writer, all have their own “symbol” systems. A system of such symbols can be called a system of metaphors. From the point of view of theory of science, history of science and sociology of science a system of metaphors is a paradigm of communication. In stylistics, a system of metaphors is a characteristic of style. When religions, cultures, languages, periods and writers are compelled to communicate for some reason, metaphors and metaphor systems clash, disrupt one another, or even the individual and group user, or ultimately the society as the collective user; at this point a change of paradigm takes place. This is similar to the process whereby the virus attaches itself to the DNA molecule, and forces it to form a different kind of cell with different characteristics (cf. Kuhn’s theory)<sup>17</sup>. If a lad in India wishes to please his love – some people say – he might call her: *my little elephant*. To address a Hungarian girl this way is not advisable for a Hungarian lad unless he wants to offend her. What is pleasing in one paradigm, can be offensive in another irrespective of the language. When a Gypsy woman whose mother tongue is Hungarian, says to a crook furiously: *Go to hell!* (Menj a pokolba!), a grammar school teacher in the same situation would only say: *What a shame* (Ejnye, ejnye!). The meaning of the two scolding expressions differ, their stylistic values and qualities are not the same either, but in the given usage their reference, pragmatic meaning can be similar, that is to say it could be the mild scolding of the same person by two different speakers (cp. with Frege’s well-known *Abendstern*, *Morgenstern*, *Venus* examples and question, namely the references are the same, but the meaning is different).<sup>18 19</sup>

At the time when the prophet put a yoke on his neck and walked around the city of Jerusalem, the king arrested him immediately and sent him to jail. If I went around Budapest with a yoke on my neck today, respecting my extravagance, nobody would even notice me, at worst, I would be taken to a mental hospital after a while. The two different kinds of attitudes are the results of two different paradigms. In the first one the yoke is a symbol/metaphor, in the second one it is not a sign simply because it is an unknown object, or it is the sign of something else.

When St. Paul stood on the main square of Athens, and talked about the statue of an unknown god in his preaching, he changed paradigms. The baptism of the

<sup>16</sup> Hartshorne – Weiss Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 1931/1958.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1962/1970.

<sup>18</sup> Gottlob Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik: Eine mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl*, I, Breslau, Koebner, 1884, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Gottlob Frege, *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, 100 (1892), 25–50.

Greeks in the ancient Church involved a change in paradigms, and metaphors different from the Judeo-Christian metaphors emerged. This is clearly shown in St. John's Logos theory. The change in paradigms began much earlier with Philo, with the Septuagint, and the spread of Jewish culture in the Greek language.

The story of Cain and Abel can be considered the memory of an early change in paradigms, where nomadic society clashed with agricultural society, while the author of the text was undoubtedly on the side of the earlier, nomadic society.

When the bishops of the first councils reshaped the image of the Old and New Testament God through the concepts of Greek philosophy, they actually had to face communicational, linguistic and language philosophical questions, the question of reference. They solved this as if it had been God who had solved it about himself and by himself (cf. Bencze, 1995).<sup>20</sup> It really means that they were forced to create the theory of the Holy Trinity in the Greek philosophical paradigm (three persons, one nature), not only for biblical or theological reasons, but above all for linguistic, semantic and language philosophical reasons. The same happened in Christology (one person, two natures).

When the first missionaries reached Hungarians or proto-Hungarians, sometime at the beginning of the 5th century or earlier, they tried to change paradigms from the Judeo-Hellenic Christian theology; about the pregnant woman, the Holy Mother (*Boldogasszony*), who gave birth to the world in pagan Hungarian mythology, they said she was the Holy Mary, the mother of God; similarly concerning the Hungarian world-tree that reached the sky in Hungarian sagas, the missionaries said that it was the tree of life, the life-giving cross of Christ. So much so that even in the 14th-century Germany they called the crucifix on which the Christ figure was nailed to a living tree *Ungarkreuz* (Hungarian cross). These missionaries acted like the ancient Church, or St. Paul in his experiment on the Areopagus. When the Jesuit missionaries reached China, and dressed in Chinese clothes, they did the same as well, changed paradigms not only in their clothing, but also manifesting the change in theology. Again the same seems to happen when in the second half of the 20th century in American religious textbooks the apostles, instead of the fishermen's guild, appear as a pop-group, and Peter or his primacy is cast as a solo-guitarist. Similarly, a recent translation of the Bible for a tribal community and language uses *the swine of God* instead of *the Lamb of God*, because lambs are detested and swine are respected. We have to remember that biblical animal metaphors, e.g. *the lion of Judah*, are really embedded in the fauna of the one-time Palestine. What can an Eskimo do with this? And what about the modern child

<sup>20</sup> Lóránt Bencze, Reference and Socially Determined Knowledge I., in Richard A. Geiger (ed.), *Reference in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Philosophical Object, Cognitive Subject, Intersubjective Process*, Hildesheim, Olms, 1995, 391–393.



who gets to know the lion in its zoo cage? Furthermore, in the animal and plant metaphors of a given society animals (and plants) are not only defined biologically, actually not biologically in the first place, but culturally. In Hungarian culture for example *deer* are considered *meek*, although deer are the only bloodthirsty wild animals in our forests, as they are not really satisfied with driving away the intruder, but they also kill it.

It is the same with plants. No wonder that in some parts of the world mass is celebrated with banana pieces as Host. The much talked-of *inculturatio* efforts are similar. The only question is, which changes in paradigms can or cannot be successful, acceptable for a *katholikos* Church community, and what are the criteria for acceptance or rejection. Metaphor-symbol is directed towards the whole person, not only the intellect. What gets lost in a new metaphor and symbol or in a new system of metaphors, and what will get distorted in them? What remains of metaphor's *katholikos*? Up to what point is it still *katholikos*, and when is it no longer *katholikos*? (At this point we can think of the question of media communication, which – of course – has different purposes. This is the question of the so-called *broad-casting*, *narrow-casting* and *non-casting*). Why do we call a change of paradigm later successful, that is to say *katholikos*, for example that of St. Paul in Asia Minor or the Hungarian missionaries, whereas we revolt against the thought of another, happening at present, e.g. the banana Host or Peter as a solo-guitarist, even if we are not the Argus-eyed prefect of the religious congregation in Rome? The answer may be found in the seventh analogy.

7. If style in language is the *attire of thought* as Goethe believed on the basis of ancient rhetorics, then style can be changed without alteration of thought. If style in language is the *incarnation of thought* as Coleridge and Dániel Berzsenyi stated also after ancient rhetorics, then the changing of style is not possible without alteration of thought. If a metaphor is the attire of a dogma, the religious metaphor can be substituted for another metaphor without harming, damaging, limiting or abolishing the dogma. But if a metaphor is so to say the incarnation of a thought or a dogma, religious metaphors can never be substituted. Thus, the question of the translation of biblical and liturgical texts leads to the same problem as the question of the change of paradigms, but the latter is broader.

The Church faced the question of change of paradigms from the beginning, and also the semiotic questions of alteration. This meant the renewal and continuance of the Church under different social paradigms. The Church was able to do this because its source, existence and mission is *the* communication itself. Consequently, so that the Church should remain what she is, she had to change continuously, she had to be different from her earlier self. This is, however, an absurdity in logic. It looks a philosophical contradiction. How was this contradiction dissolved, or how could this contradiction really be illusory in the Church that aims at being

*katholika*? How can this contradiction be merely the paradox of belief, and not a logical contradiction? It is obvious from the above that in using a metaphor a cognitive and a socio-cultural interpretation are implied. Socio-cultural interpretations may differ for geographical, climatic, historical, cultural reasons, and naturally according to other related social conditions. Cognitive interpretation is, however, limited, as mankind is biologically one species and consequently its way of thinking is always and everywhere defined by the same rules. Thus the Augustinian natural signs (*smoke is the sign of fire*) are intercultural. What is uniquely significant in the theory of sacraments of the Catholic Church from a semiotic point of view is that sacraments are archetypal signs and actions. They are related to human life, and in this relation they are reinterpretations of natural signs. That is why semiosis can come into existence in any kind of cultural paradigm, so to say without damaging truth or dogma. Baptism is related to the beginning of life, birth; the last sacrament is related to danger in life, illness and death; the sacrament of marriage to reproduction, etc. However, this does not exclude that a given socio-cultural context – in which we use a metaphor, or in this case a sacramental sign or a biblical symbol or a visual symbol – should postulate the joint operation of the cognitive and the socio-cultural interpretation, and it should partly be its result. For this reason there is a possibility for a balanced, organically built, slow change or alteration of a symbol/metaphor system without losing or damaging the *original dogma*. Thus in theory it can happen that not only a metaphor is changed, but also the whole system of metaphors, whilst the natural signs remain at its core. When the change of a paradigm is considered *successful* in this sense, then beyond the above-mentioned characteristics some kind of an alloy is realised, just as it happened first between Jewish and Greek Christianity, and later between the Judeo-Christian and Greek-Roman way of thinking in Christianity. This happens similarly but not identically (!) to the technique of translation of literary works, when, for example, the translator brings the rhyme used earlier in the original (source language) back after a few lines in a given work (in the target language), or comes across a fairly identical metaphor in the other paradigm. As for example in Hamlet translated by János Arany the idiom *lép a rigónak* (*a bird-lime to a thrush*) can be considered perfectly identical with the Shakespearean English *springes to catch woodcocks* (*hurkok szalonkákat fogni*) both from the point of view of the English and Hungarian grammatical differences, and the point of view of meaning and cultural paradigms.<sup>21</sup> Frankly, what is lost for the translator on the swings it is gained on the roundabouts. In the successful alteration of a paradigm, a metaphor can be reinterpreted by a metaphor itself. It is well-known that the

<sup>21</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare, Hamlet*, I, 3, London, Chancellor Press, 1982/2002, 803.

introduction of the Gospel of St. John is none other than the reinterpretation of the Logos-theory of the Jewish Old Testament and the Jewish-Hellenic books on *Wisdom*. The creative word of God (of Genesis), later (in writings on Wisdom) the word playing in the presence of God, the personified word becomes a visible person in the interpretation of St. John's Gospel.

This example, however, shows that semiosis cannot be traced back in a simplified way merely to translation. As we shall see, we have to acknowledge that functionally equivalent codes do not necessarily substitute for one another. A given situational context can never be neglected, and it can never be estimated sufficiently so that we could state equivalence with a naive, positivist, scientific certainty. Christian theologians – following the preaching of Jesus and the Early Church – solved the above problem in a way that they talked about prototypes and types in the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, but they did not unconditionally identify them with one another.

The change in paradigms practically threatened catholicity in Christianity even in Jesus's life (the question of the Samaritans, or that of the curing of pagans by Jesus, etc.), and even in the Apostolic Church (the argument of Peter and Paul on the observance of the Mosaic laws). And it is also threatened at the end of the 20th century. If we sum up the research into the semiotic structure of communication with an example, and we approach semiosis dynamically, the much-disputed problem of women priests in the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, can be considered simply as difficulty in communication, or as the question of semiogenesis. So the solution – if there will be any in the Catholic Church – can be found only on a semiotic basis. It is impossible to have women priests in the strongly Near-East-oriented and patriarchal culture-based Christian metaphor system, resting on the thousand or million-year-old natural signs of the masculine and feminine – and on the archetypes of man and woman. It is simply out of the question. In the Old Testament, on which the New Testament is based, only male priests existed, but there were female priests in religions of “pagan” fertility myths. The relation between God and his people was characterized by the prophets in the Old Testament as a metaphoric relation, namely that of a husband and a wife. In the New Testament the internal life of God originates from the metaphoric relation of the *Father* and *Son*; the relation of Christ and the Church is again similar to that of a husband and a wife. Christian mystics describe the relation of Christ and Christian soul in the lovers' metaphor. The Church is feminine in the relationship between Christ and the Church. However, the bearers of the Christian vocation were the apostles first, and later the bishops, all of whom were men without exception, while lay people were – not only in great numbers, but also in their theological nature – *receptive women*. The idea of women priests simply does not fit in this paradigm, in this metaphor system. If the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox Church introduced women priests,

and thus they unexpectedly disregarded this paradigm, this would do more harm than good to the faithful in this ancient paradigm. Until these Churches find the appropriate, socio-culturally prepared change in their paradigms, and a semiotic system, which differs from the earlier, but is still adequate in its contents, woman priesthood is impossible. The question arises whether it is possible, whether there will be such a change in paradigms at all. As in the Church, the relationship between the clergy and the faithful is in correlation with the active man and the passive woman. The distribution of active and passive differs totally in the paradigm of the female emancipation movement. If we look at this emancipation from the earlier, traditional Church and social paradigm, the emancipation movement caused only trouble and chaos with its destruction of the family, with not accepting the responsibility of having children, with free abortion. All the achievements of emancipation – which are achievements from the paradigm of emancipation – have worked against the introduction of women priests in the Catholic Church. Moreover, it is also implied in this semiotic system that through the celibacy of Jesus and the highly praised celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church as the perfect following of Christ, man conquers manly pride and violence, and rejects the subjection of women and the weak. Had Jesus been a woman, he could not have taught this with his existence in this paradigm, because a woman is, as a matter of course, subjected, weak and poor in this paradigm. *He has dethroned rulers, but has lifted the humble high* (Luke 1,52) etc. are the lines of the song that once broke out of a released, redeemed woman. In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church this woman is the new, already redeemed Eve, whose redemption was the condition that the redemption of man might take place. In the above paradigm, this woman is the metaphor-symbol of a complex moral and world system. She is a uniquely particular archetype because she combines the ideals of *a virgin and a mother* that can be realized in a woman's life sequentially. Today's emancipated woman tries to eliminate both from her life. Therefore in today's socio-cultural paradigm the *childless-whore* archetype, the *well-dressed female consumer* type have taken the place of the *virgin mother* archetype. It was the reformation that paved the way to the deconstruction of the *virgin mother* archetype (verbal information from the presbyterian Imre Lázár PhD).

In the 20th century it can be expected that – from the point of view of semio-genesis – a new and functionally combined change of paradigms could take place in the Roman Catholic Church, but I do not dare to state that it will happen. By no means in the near future. However, it is possible that a part of this change has already taken place unobservedly by the Roman Church. The 20th-century change might not have needed such outstanding figures as Luther and Calvin. Consequently the Reformation of the 20th century may already have taken place in the Catholic Church, or it may be happening just now in a way that those who

live it do not perceive it and do not consider it reformation. We may remember that using incense in the paradigm of the ancient Church was a greater sin than adultery. Using incense in a later paradigm of the Roman Catholic Church became an integral part of her liturgy. An act of sin in one paradigm became an act of virtue in another. It could happen for the metaphor of using incense was reinterpreted and reevaluated with the change of paradigms.

Reformation in the 16th century was an attempt to change paradigms, and the change took place in the Catholic Church paying the price of the Protestant breakaway. From a Catholic point of view, it is beyond doubt that Christian information, namely the dogma system suffered and was reduced by Protestantism. The Second Vatican Council was supposed to bring change in paradigms, and I dare to say it partly fulfilled this task because it established a limited change, which was widely considered as a kind of balancing act towards Protestantism. However, it is a shallow superficial opinion.

The theology or theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar seems to be a more profound, rational solution, or at least it seems to lead to a feasible solution. One of the central ideas of this theological aesthetics is image and imagery (... *das Bild, das das endliche Weltwesen notwendig ist, im ewigen Ur- und Überbild eingeborgen werden kann...*)<sup>22</sup> The following detail of chain of thoughts: Bencze, 1996 etc.)<sup>23</sup> Balthasar rejected the two extreme standpoints, namely

the (rationalist) attempt at constructing a mere conceptual language (rational), and the (idealistic-mystical) attempt at constructing a language without concepts, a language consisting merely of images.

The starting point is the same in both extremes, i.e. how to grasp phenomena, how to judge the imperfect relation between phenomenon and what we want to depict. Both arrive at the same emptiness:

*Beide Systeme vermögen die Beziehung zwischen Erscheinung und Erscheinendem nicht herzustellen; beide sind Spielformen eines gleichen grundlegenden Mangels. Beide wissen zwar um das Vorhandensein eines Geheimnisses, aber da das eine die Wahrheit im begrifflosen Bild, das andere sie im bildlosen Begriff sucht, gelangen beide nur zu einem leeren Geheimnis.*<sup>24</sup>

*The metaphysical is empty without the metaphorical, the metaphorical without the metaphysical remains blind (Das Metaphysische ohne das Metaphorische ist*

<sup>22</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik, III., II., I.*, Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1961–1969, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Bencze, *Style and Interpretation*, 241.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik*, Vol. 1, Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1985–1987, 150–151.

*leer; das Metaphorische ohne das Metaphysische bleibt blind*). (Söhngen quoted by Balthasar).<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup> Therefore Balthasar, on the one hand, keeps the well-known scholastic theory of knowledge principle (*there is nothing in the intellect which had not been in the senses earlier*), and on the other hand, he emphasizes the ancient character of imagery, i.e. that of metaphors (emphasized by Vico and in romanticism by Herder and Goethe).<sup>27</sup> Imagery inevitably induces concepts and phenomena in people, but images/metaphors cannot be entirely put together out of concepts. (Semantics would probably use here the term *seme* instead of the term *concept*). An image/metaphor can be decomposed into concepts by analysis, but the conceptual abundance of images always remains. An image/metaphor is always more than the concepts which are its components, and the amount of concepts which emerges from the image/metaphor<sup>28</sup> (cf. above with the certain and uncertain elements of metaphor, or the illustration *homo homini lupus*). The transcendental concepts of beauty and truth are expressed in the perfect unity of an image. The image is eternal surplus–secret which constantly urges us to find new knowledge<sup>29</sup> (cf. *sensus plenior – the concept of a more complete meaning*). Images are not incomprehensible cryptographs, but meaningful signs of reality.

*Die Bilder sind gewiß nicht unverständliche Chiffren, sondern unmittelbar deutbare Zeichen der Realität. Aber diese Zeichen müssen nicht anders behandelt werden als die Buchstaben in einem Buch: man sieht sie, man liest sie, und doch steht nicht das Schriftbild im Bewußtsein, sondern der in ihm sich ausdrückende Sinn. So müssen die Zeichen des sich offenbarenden Seins zugleich gelesen und übersehen werden...<sup>30</sup>*

However, images have to be understood in their changeable characters and directedness. Thinking in images is dynamic (*Das Phänomen des Ausdrucks aber war kein statisches; vielmehr lag im Bild die Aufforderung, in beweglichem Denken durch Bild hindurch nach dem Wesen forschen.*)<sup>31</sup> This might be one of the most important thoughts of Balthasar. Abstraction is alienation in ideation, but in real knowledge, i.e. in the knowledge that exists in images ideation returns to perceptibility.

<sup>25</sup> Gottlieb Söhngen, *Analogie und Metapher: Kleine Philosophie und Theologie der Sprache*, Alber, 1962, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Balthasar, *Theologik*, Vol. 2, 248, Fussbemerkung 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 150, 152.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

*Reflexion bedeutet Verzicht auf die Breite und Fülle der bunten wahrnehmung, um einer scheinbar armen leeren Begrifflichkeit willen. ... [Abstraktion ist] ein Verlust gegenüber dem Reichtum der Welt der Bilder... Der Begriff hat die Möglichkeit, sich vom Wahrnehmungsbild zu entfernen, sich in seiner Abstraktheit zu verselbständigen und damit einer ähnlichen Irrealität zu verfallen wie das anschauliche Bild. Er entfernt sich dadurch in einer Weise von der Lebendigkeit der Wahrheit... ihm [=das Denken des Subjekts] in der Gestalt des Seins eine doppelte Regel vorgezeichnet ist: die Buntheit und Fülle der Sinnlichkeit verzichtend preiszugeben in die Eintönigkeit des allgemeinen Begriffs, diesen aber nicht anders zugebrauchen, als in einer immer neuen Hinwendung zur Irrealität der Bilderwelt (conversio ad phantasma), mit welcher verbunden allein der abstrakte Begriff Wahrheit und Leben erhält.<sup>32</sup>*

There is undoubtedly some kind of abandonment of the conceptual essence in images, but this very conceptual abandonment leads to the essence most. (In der Funktion des Bildes liegt auch *ein wesentlicher Verzicht eingeschlossen, und dieser Verzicht ermöglicht die höchste Offenbarung des Wesens. Es ist der Verzicht des Bildes auf sich selbst als ein für-sich-seienden, für sich wichtigen Realität.*)<sup>33</sup> Images assure the freedom of comprehension-interpretation, (but not its complete liberalisation), as the signs in them are not completely closed entities (cp. with the so-called fuzzy sets as analogy). In the perceptible diversification of an image, essence disintegrates for an individual, just like conceptual abstraction is accompanied by an alienation from essence (*Das Wesen zerfällt in der Buntheit des Bildes genauso wie es sich in der Abstraktheit des Begriffes entfernt.*)<sup>34</sup> Thus, some specific non-recurring particular always remains in the perceptible (*Gegeben ist in der Sinnlichkeit ein Besonderes, Individuelles, Partikulßres.*)<sup>35</sup> while the conceptual is always general. They are both united in the image itself. This way, the general does not become mere abstraction, but analogical relations are created, just as we do not meet man as such, only its individual realisation.

*Das Allgemeine existiert aber ebensowening außerhalb der Individuen, es manifestiert seine Ganzheit ausschließlich innerhalb ihrer jeweiligen Besonderheit. ... es besteht zwischen beiden eine Unterscheidung ohne mögliche Trennung, ein gegenseitiges sich-Einschließen... Was Mensch sein heißt, erfährt man nur, wenn man einen einzelnen Menschen zu Gesicht bekommt, mit seinem einzel-*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 165–166.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 169.

*nen Charakter, seinem einmaligen unverwechselbaren Schicksal. Aber immer wird dieses Besondere ein Mehr sein gegenüber dem Allgemeinen, das in diesem nicht vorgesehen war, aus diesem nicht einfach ableitbar ist wie eine mögliche Anwendung aus einer allgemeinen Regel.*<sup>36</sup>

Myth is always the appearance of the general in the specific. (*Der Mythos ist, wie gezeigt, immer das Allgemeine im Besondern.*)<sup>37</sup> There is mutual complementation in the relation between language and image concerning interpretation. The interpretation of image and thought is only possible if it is joined by the openness and “co-thinking” (reciprocal text-construction) of the interpreter.

*...daß Begriff und Wort auf die durch unsere Welt hin offenen Sinne und von ihnen vermittelten Bilder angewiesen sind, hat jede Philosophie in irgendeiner Weise anzuerkennen, die aristotelisch-thomanische hat es konsequent durchdacht, wobei immer das Komplementäre mitzubedenken ist, daß das vollkommene, das heißt in seinem Wesen erkannte Bild nicht allein durch die Sinne, die Einbildungskraft und das Gedächtnis, sondern nur durch den schon immer in den Sinnen miteröffneten Geist zustande kommt.*<sup>38</sup>

In Balthasar’s opinion the boundary between metaphor, parable and allegory is very delicate, as Quintilian already stated.<sup>39 40</sup> However, it is not important from a theological point of view. What is important is the images and the arche-image of God in the New Testament (*Urbild*), the image of the invisible God (*ikon*, Col 1,15),<sup>41</sup> i.e. Jesus wanted and was able to make himself understood through images.

*Jesus Christus so unentwegt durch Bilder (in allen Spielarten der Gleichnisse) das Wesen und die Ankunft des Gottesreiches verständlich zu machen suchte. ... Die zahlreichen Bilder, die er verwendet, haben einen für die Hörer seiner Zeit und Kultur ohne weiteres verständlichen Sinn, einen, den sie nicht zu begreifen, sondern auch unmittelbar bejahen können.*<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2, 239.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Quintilianus, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. M.E. Butler, Vols i-ii, IX, I, Cambridge, Mass, London, Harvard University Press, Heinemann, 1953–1960, 1–2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 71, 240.



Jesus always indicated to his audience that they should move towards an image comprehension and interpretation, when he began his preaching with *Heaven is similar to...*<sup>43</sup> These openings are unmistakable signals, just like the opening in Hungarian folk-tales *Hol volt, hol nem volt* (Once upon a time... cf. below the theory of Origen saying that there are some kind of references [*skandala*] in the text whether it is metaphoric or not, or compare with the opening of the famous Székely leg-pulling riddle: *No, akkor mondjunk! – Well, let's say...!*).

Consequently Jesus is the *expression* (Heb 1, 3), the *image* (Col 1,15; Cor 4,4), the *word* of God (1Jn 1,14; Rv 19, 13). At the same time Jesus can be a *symbol* in Balthasar's opinion, if we consider symbol in its original meaning, as an object broken in two, which put together makes the possessors recognizable and credible for each other (cf. Plato Symposium;<sup>44</sup> sümballein<sup>45</sup>). This recognition – in Ricoeur's understanding – is also a process.<sup>46</sup> But the application of the concept of metaphor should be handled with care, because in *analogia entis*, namely the similarity of the beings, which has spread since scholasticism, we have to emphasize greater difference between God and other beings (*major dissimilitudo*), preferably negative theology should be used (i.e. saying what God is not). The basic difficulty was present among the apostles and the audience of Jesus, so to say when should the words of Jesus be interpreted metaphorically and when not, if he did not explicitly refer to them (cf. above). This is the conflict of interpretation (cp. Ricoeur,<sup>47</sup> Balthasar,<sup>48</sup> cf. below when literal interpretation spread as a religion established its status).

Balthasar also elaborated another complete theology on the similarities of theatre and mythical language. Similarity was raised by Saint Thomas Aquinas and later by Calvin that the world is *theatrum gloriae Dei* – *the world is the theatre of the glory of God*, i.e. on the *topos* world-theatre.<sup>49</sup> This is theodramatics, in other words, the divine-human comedy-drama theory (*Theodramatik*). When Balthasar studies Christian theology with the help of the terms of the entire drama theory, drama history and theatre performance, he really does not do anything else but translates the ancient, symbolic and mythical language into the language of a present-day field of art (European drama), more precisely into the language of present-day sciences and humanities (the language of drama theory) – it seems, *salva veritate*, i.e. with the aim of saving the original content. This aim appeared

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Patón, *Összes művei*, Budapest, Európa, Bibliotheca Classica, 1984, 191d.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>46</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Conflict des interprétations*, Paris, Seuil, 1969, 324.

<sup>47</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Le métaphore vive*, Paris, 1975.

<sup>48</sup> Balthasar, *Theologik*, Vol. 2, 249.

<sup>49</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Válogatás a teológus műveiből*, trans. Ferenc Szabó – Gábor Kerényi, Mai írók és gondolkodók, 3, Róma, Detti, 1989, 35.

in the work of Protestant Paul Tillich<sup>50</sup> and others, and even in official Roman Catholic Church statements.<sup>51</sup> These efforts can be traced back to the influence of Karl Barth, who considered historical criticism merely *thinking after* (*Nachdenken*), whereas the real interpretation of biblical texts is *thinking together* (*Mitdenken*). In the latter an indirect identity is established between the exegetist/reader and the biblical author, and the Bible becomes the reader's own idea. *The relation of this God to this man is established* (cp. Barth,<sup>52</sup> Balthasar<sup>53</sup>). Balthasar also relies on this, and therefore Christian theology and Christian religion in his interpretation are no other than hermeneutics, in which the hermeneutics of the former is directed towards the latter, while the hermeneutics of the latter gives the norm to the former.<sup>54\*\*</sup> As a consequence there is a certain restriction in interpretation, which is combined with a certain freedom in interpretation (cf. the question of actualisation and manipulation in interpretation<sup>55</sup>). This harmony of restriction and freedom, namely the limitation of both is the same for every (verbal or sign-like) manifestation, similar to the possible interpretations of the metaphor in contrast with the theories of total deconstruction and total reconstruction (cf. above the interpretation of the anathema, or the illustration: *man is to man a wolf*).

8. The appearance of the media in the 20th century accelerated the change in paradigms, or at least forced acceleration on the Church. One of the most famous representatives of the media wrote about the *idiot media*. In this paradigm a media consumer on the other hand is a *consumer idiot* (Gábor Czákó, verbal information). As a consequence of the already mentioned so-called *broad-casting*, *narrow-casting* and *non-casting*, the media censors in such an effective way that Church censorship never rivalled it, only the communist terror came close to it. The freedom of speech propagated by the media is rather pseudo-freedom, just as the Great October Revolution was a pseudo-revolution in Antal Szerb's opinion, or pseudo-change happened in the political system of the Eastern-European countries in 1989, and

<sup>50</sup> Paul Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. I-X, Stuttgart, Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959/1968.

<sup>51</sup> *L'interprétation de la Bible dans l'Eglise*, La Documentation Catholique 91, 1994, 13-44.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Barth, *Szöveggyűjtemény Karl Barth műveiből*, ed. József Poór, trans. Károly Pröhle, Budapest, 1984, 98-102.

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Válogatás*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> \*\* *Sofern alle Theologie Auslegung der göttlichen Offenbarung ist, kann sie als ganze nur Hermeneutik sein. Sofern aber auch die Offenbarung Gottes in Jesus Christus Selbstausslegung Gottes ist – worin zudem Gottes eigene Deutung seines Weltplans im ganzen und im einzelnen enthalten sein muß –, ist auch sie Hermeneutik. Die erste kann nur auf die zweite hin ausgerichtet und durch sie normiert sein. Aber da die zweite sich nicht in sich selber abschließen kann, ohne die Freiheit des Menschen und damit sein freies Verstehen zu berücksichtigen, ist diese zweite wiederum auf die erste hin offen* (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik*, II/I, Einsiedeln, Johannes, 1973-1983, 81.).

<sup>55</sup> *L'interprétation*, 1994, IV.

the pluralism of the media is entirely pseudo-pluralism. The consumer idiot will never know what really happens in the world because the completely free “game” of the media with *broad-casting*, *narrow-casting* and *non-casting* makes it almost impossible. Since in this game we never know when manipulation takes place and to what extent, manipulation is almost complete and perfect. The media create the world for the media consumer. The media choose elements, fragments, viewpoints, etc. of the existing world, and put them together arbitrarily. The duality of fiction and reality in earlier literary forms (novel, narrative, travel diary) simply ceased to exist. The manipulation produced by digital technique cannot be proven and followed. A consumer idiot has a theoretical right to freedom of opinion and information, but in practice he hardly can live and hardly lives with this right. He neither has the time nor the money for this. What can the poor consumer idiot do if he goes to protest *against* the government, and in the evening he can see himself in the news cut in the wrong way at the protest *for* the government. If a typical corner is not filmed near him, how can he prove which protest he took part in, and who will be interested in it the following day, or three days later if any correction happens at all.

It is possible in any changes of a paradigm that what appears an unsolvable question in one paradigm, does not even appear in the other (cf. *incensing* above). In Christianity for example *sin* and *redemption* (the latter is a paradigm which emerged in the time of an ancient economy and slave society), *good* and *evil*, *true* and *false*, *sincerity* and *falsehood*, etc. are concepts excluding each other, contradicting each other; they are constantly, obsessively reoccurring Christian concepts in the opinion of a radical liberal society. These concepts simply do not exist in the media. Consequently, with a slight exaggeration, the communication of the Church and the media is nothing other than the conversation of the deaf. Sometimes it happens that the Church – just like in the analogy of the Indian boy’s love declaration – addresses the media or today’s society, and the address seems the same as if the Hungarian boy addressed the Hungarian girl by saying: *my little elephant*, and of course the *idiot media* and the *consumer idiot* are offended. Well, naturally it is also true the other way round. Both the media and today’s Hungarian society are against life, family and children if we consider them from the paradigm of the Church. It is indisputable that the Church cannot give up her standpoint, cannot be against life, family and children. The question is whether the standpoint of the Church could be expressed in the paradigm of the media. It could be done, yet it will be a difficult, painful process to change paradigm in her communication. In other words, how can the Church manage to have a change of paradigm exclusively in communication, and at the same time ensure that dogmas do not change, get distorted or disappear. The Church ought to change to the fast and effective paradigm which characterizes the media. It was in this way that

Apostle Paul did not begin his preaching with condemning idolatry, but talked instead about the idol of an unknown god, without approving polytheism. (From a rhetorical approach Apostle Paul used the device of insinuation with success at the beginning of his preaching, but without success at the end.)

However, there are some means the Church cannot use, and some in which it cannot compete with the media, even if the Church acts in accordance with “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season*” (2Tm 4, 2). Yet the Church should communicate, if possible, in the paradigm of her audience, as Jesus’s preaching took place in the paradigm of his contemporary audience (Near-East, agricultural-nomadic, etc. society). What is the case today? What is the current paradigm?

First of all, we have to acknowledge that the media does not belong to the Church, and it never will, the Church has missed the opportunity. The Church has no media experts in Hungary. Today’s religious programmes broadcast on radio and television are sometimes rather anti-Christian in their impact for they are not media-like. Actually, they show an old-fashioned socio-cultural paradigm on the screen and through the microphone. Neither the archaic Hungarian of the Protestant sermons, nor the baroque scenery of the Catholic mass broadcasts are really media genres, especially if consumer idiots have to watch them in pubs. I asked a pious, twelve-year-old boy, who attended mass and religious teaching regularly, what would happen if television broadcasts of religious teaching were shown in pubs. He reacted: *They would throw beer bottles into the TV screen* – and he showed how to throw the bottle with great expertise. He did not know that religious teaching could be watched on television in pubs, for he did not visit pubs, yet he knew what to expect from the crowd living in a different paradigm. How come Church leaders, priests, ministers who organize these broadcasts, do not know it? Why is it not on their agenda? Why is it not clear that all media programs are for a heterogeneous audience? Both competent and non-competent, both the faithful and non-believers can watch it everywhere, in bed, at the sink, in a pub, and in ministries. Why do they have mass broadcastings in pubs, and make lovers watch it in bed?

Effective ways of giving information must be acquired not only in theory but in practice, and in the paradigm in which we live, using the language and the means of the media, but with certain distinctions. Similarly, the New Testament was written in Greek, and also the classic European (pagan) culture was available in Greek, but the two cannot be considered the same. From a certain point of view the two cannot be separated, but at the same time they cannot be confused.

To use a quite rough and simplified example, but still quite well-founded one: A parish priest is not supposed to post advertisements on the door of the parish church with a naked woman hugging the ad, as happens in certain media commercials, in order to draw the attention of the people to priests, churches, and the

Church. This really would be a change in paradigm. But the result is questionable. For the very reason that people would note only the change in paradigm not the advertisement itself. I, myself, have had similar experiences in teaching. The image which draws the attention beyond measure, the extremely special analogy (in other words the mode of transmission) fascinated my students and took the place of the information (the message) I intended to convey. After all the Church should not compete with the media in the sense that it should pour out better hogwash for the consumer idiot than the media. Firstly, because there is a possibility that she will not succeed in producing hogwash, and secondly because pouring out hogwash contradicts quite obviously the mission of the Church. It is similar to the situation when a priest wants to become a pimp so as to *get closer to the people and have a sense of reality*, etc. I can tell in advance that he will not be successful. In the first five minutes somebody will strike a knife in his back. If not, he will starve because he will talk the girls out of their work, he will not beat them, etc.

Failure does not easily go away and lasts a long time because it is not only the Church who cannot change paradigm or only with difficulty. Ordinary people cannot do it either, least of all scientists. In 1993 a proud professor from one of the well-known universities in Hungary asked a Catholic professor who taught at a re-established Catholic college: *“Just tell me whether the clerics suppress you?”* “No” said the appalled Catholic professor. *“There is no Catholic priest at our College. Theology is taught by a young father of three.”* But the Marxist professor from the university did not give up easily and asked a further question: *“Do you have to wear a cassock?”* Seeing this stupidity the Catholic teacher almost lost his patience and said: *“No, it is compulsory to wear the latest fashion.”* And this was the end of the edifying conversation. Stupidity remained petrified. This professor instructs future teachers in pedagogy at the university.

From the standpoint of semiosis this university professor is neither dull nor stupid. Simply he cannot change paradigms. In fact priests or the faithful who think according to the traditional Church paradigm are unable to understand why liberal parents who grew up on pornographic fiction revolt against the crucifix in a school. Speaking in the paradigm of such parents, one can say they revolt at the sight of the *convulsing, bloody, naked body of a man nailed on the gallows*. Let us try to think about it a while. Had Jesus not been crucified in the Roman way, but been executed on the gallows, we would wear small, silver gallows and not crosses. Churches would be full of gallows, the bishop would wear gold gallows on gold chain, and so on. And if Jesus had died for us in the twentieth-century America, we would have small electric chairs on our necklaces. It is really horrible just to think of this for us Christians in our traditional paradigm. However, as *God sacrificed his only-begotten Son on the cross*, it obviously implies the image of ancient, superstitious human sacrifice. When the soldiers of King David besieged a

town, the king of the town sacrificed his son on the town wall, and David's soldiers marched away because from that time on they thought the town unconquerable (cf. the Hungarian Kelemen Kőműves Ballads). The same happens if we consider that in the Eucharist we take Christ's body and blood. From the point of view of another paradigm, this is nothing else than sublimed cannibalism. The metaphor of the love act found in the Old and New Testaments is interpreted literally in certain religions and Christian sects. And when a bishop in the 4th century tore the picture of Christ off a church wall, or later the icons were broken into fragments, it was nothing other than disruption in interpretation. It was not noticed that *unio mystica* is really *unio semiotica*. We can say after Heidegger that a metaphor-symbol interpreted as a non-metaphor or as a metaphor is similar to that of striptease and artful fashion. Striptease hides beauty by showing a woman's body whereas refined dressing reveals beauty by concealing the body.

The changing of interpretation itself is a change in paradigm. István Vas, a Hungarian poet – for quite different reasons and without semiotic terms – stated in the 1960's that Judaism was graphocentric in the first thousand years B.C. if we compare it to the iconcentric religions which surrounded it. We can add that when a religion becomes rigid, the interpretation of its sacred texts will become graphocentric to such an extent that the metaphors are interpreted literally (cp. the metaphors of Exod 13, 14–16 and Deut 6, 1–8 and the development of tefillim). How rigid is the religion of the Roman Catholic Church? And to what extent does she interpret her metaphors as non-metaphors? At the very moment when a metaphor is not interpreted as a metaphor, the question of interpretation in communication becomes simplified. A sacred text, for example, can easily be translated into another paradigm or language, but at once this religion is stuck in a ghetto that is surrounded by an iron-curtain. Origen<sup>56</sup> observed previously, the laws and moral principles of sacred texts cannot be interpreted as metaphors. But at the moment when we interpret any texts non-metaphorically, we treat it as a law (cp. tefillim above), and there is no way out. In the second half of the twentieth century, liberation theology in Latin America, which developed under the pressure of external social and cultural paradigms, does not differ in any way from tefillim. The image of biblical redemption and that of liberation, the glorification of the poor and weak, etc. originally really referred to social poverty and political liberation. However, in the Old Testament usage and quite certainly in the New Testament, this terminology is metaphorical and refers to moral conduct. They cannot only

<sup>56</sup> Origen, *De principiis*, Origenes Werke, Fünfter Band, *De principiis*, IV, Hrsg. Im Auftrage der Kirchenväter-Commission der Königl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften von Hofrat prof. Dr. Paul Koetschau, Berlin, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913, 2, 9.

be taken literally. Indeed if we follow the development of the usage of metaphors, in the first place they should not be taken literally.

When a religion is institutionalized, its *preaching*, message become theology, just like philosophy it will proclaim abstract, general, timeless truths in contradiction to its early paradigm, which was a given message in a given situational context. Stress is strongly shifted towards the particular message in the case of prophets, charismatics, founders of religious orders, in the life of saints, with Buber's terminology<sup>57</sup> towards *I and Thou* relation. As soon as a saint founds a religious order or writes rules, his charismatic movement becomes institutionalized, the particular situation becomes general, the unique novelty becomes accepted paradigm (cf. Balthasar's quoted concept on the relation between image and concept, and their complementation).

In Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church compared to graphocentric Protestantism and iconocentric Eastern Christianity seems to be the representative of a comprehensive semiosis. Stress in the Catholic Church is not only on verbal signs, words, iconic and metaphoric signs or their conceptual expression (i.e. on theology), but on semiosis itself. This is the reason for sacraments, these complex signs mediating grace, which have been emphasized in the Catholic Church. Therefore not only denominations, but also ecumenism is a question of semiotics. In the Catholic Church both verbal and visual communication – the communication of the five senses altogether – mediate grace, as the incarnation of *Logos* included semiosis manifested by all five senses (cf. *Communio et progressio*).<sup>58</sup> For the faithful, Jesus was not only a master of effective communication, but he was *the* communication of God himself.

The Church and incarnation contradict with one of the most immoral media principles which says: *information is sacred, opinion is free*. The etymology of the word information shows (*in-formare*, to intrude on somebody and mould him – after Károly Csébfalvi, but also cf. *Concilium*)<sup>59</sup> that this is a lie. I usually illustrate this by one example, and this might be sufficient. A mother visited her daughter in a hospital. Entering the ward she saw her daughter's empty bed and asked the patient in the next bed: "Where is my daughter?" The patient answered: "In the mortuary." This answer carefully complied with and observed the sacred media principle. The patient told the truth, not his opinion. But he did not take into consideration that the information intrudes on the other person and moulds that person. It kills or keeps living beings alive from the communication of the

<sup>57</sup> Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, 10., Auflage, Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1979.

<sup>58</sup> *Communio et progressio* on the means of social communication written by order of the Second Vatican Council, 1971.

<sup>59</sup> *Concilium*, 1995, 31/3.

protozoa onwards to the personal communication of man. For the faithful, in the incarnation of Christ and in the foundation of the Church by Christ, Christ informed, and God informed the world.

The trinity of the Gospel, the Church and society with its given culture are in dynamic interaction.<sup>60</sup> Members of the Church have to acknowledge that our entire *knowledge is socially justified*.<sup>61</sup> The knowledge justified by the Church is a certain interpretation of the Gospel, and it is confronted with the socially justified knowledge. The Church, as the continuation of Christ's work, should not only be speaker-oriented – as she is now, just as God would be in himself without the world he created. The Church should be also listener-oriented, just as Jesus was in his parables. The Church should be like God is in Christian faith, i.e. a Holy Trinity, who is the creator of the world, who was incarnated to redeem the world and who has manifested his internal life to the world.

Therefore, Christian communication will be effective if beside an adequate change in paradigm and semiosis, the Church finds a complex, integrated, comprehensive – in this sense *katholikos* – communication, which evades and surpasses the media. Now the media, under the leadership of the *intolerant liberal orthodoxy* (it is again an American socio-political term!) are on the point of becoming a conservative, out-dated means of communication. In the current socio-cultural paradigm, the Christian good news (*Gospel*) can only be professed effectively against the media through means that are technically and with regard to semiogenesis at a more advanced stage than what we call media today.

One of the possibilities could cost a great deal of money. However, the Church does not really have capital, so some other ways should be sought. Nowadays there are hundreds of multi-millionaires who have much more money than the Vatican with its much talked about richness. I would like to illustrate the way out again with an analogy. When the production of popular films, which attracted millions of people, started to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, some brilliant directors made films for ten thousand or even for one or two thousand dollars. These films, costing only a few thousand dollars, brought in just as much profit. We have to look for such “films”, or we just have to find them because they exist. Only a fragment of the budget of the traditional Churches in Hungary should be spent on this purpose in the next few years. There are still some Christian experts, they are ready with their elaborated programs, but Church authorities have not invited anybody to do the job. Church authorities have no idea of paradigms changing around them.

In human communication both coding and decoding depend on culture. They

<sup>60</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Abschied vom Gott der Europäer: Zur Entwicklung regionaler Theologien, Mit einem Vorwort von Edward Schillebeecks*, Salzburg, Pustet, 1992, 43.

<sup>61</sup> Philip J. Davis, *Applied mathematics as social contract*, ZDM 1, 1988, 11.



take place in a situational context, but semiosis itself is given in man. In communication, a message appears in a certain socio-cultural paradigm. Message and paradigm must not be confused, though they cannot be separated either – especially not in metaphors. The earlier mentioned cognitive and socio-cultural interpretation also cannot be separated and must not be confused either. This double opposition allows for the possibility of reading a message but makes it also very complicated. The development of the Church in her entire history – from a semiotic-stylistic viewpoint – is nothing other than the fulfilment of this possibility.<sup>62</sup> This possibility is a kind of Christological model (*inseparability and inconfusability*). This model gives the Church not only the possibility but also the certainty in communication to generate semiosis at the time and in the case of a change in paradigms. If either the principle of inseparability or that of unconfusability is violated, the message is damaged, and troubles occur in communication. When members of the Church are inclined to judge literary, cultural and media phenomena, they tend to break the principle of inconfusability. They do not notice the special signs (*skandala* in Origen's terms) in the way or genre of communication or in the different circumstances of situational context, though – as I have mentioned above – Origen previously called the attention to them. Origen's idea could direct us in interpretation, practically indicating: *watch out, this is not your world, it is different, this is a metaphor in this paradigm*. In such cases, members of the Church are inclined to act in the same way as a country woman, when she sent money to the slave heroine of a Brazilian television series. At the same time, the metaphorical meaning is inseparable from the non-metaphorical (literal) meaning. We cannot, so to say, throw out the so-called original meaning from the metaphorical meaning because the metaphorical meaning is based on the original one, as Aristotle stated.<sup>63</sup> In other words, we must not violate inseparability. This happens in the banana mass, at least for the traditional European Christians.

Traditional rhetoric dealt with this as a question of onomasiology and semasiology. Accordingly, it may happen that we have the *name*, but there is confusion about what it refers to. Jesus's name is in the New Testament, but it can also appear in a novel. The *name* is the same, but the content is not necessarily the same, and we do not have to expect the same content. Naturally, for the members of the Church Jesus's name is inseparable from the Jesus of the Christian faith, and therefore Jesus's name and figure is interesting in any kind of context. But the faithful must know that Jesus may appear in another paradigm.

<sup>62</sup> Matthias Wörther, *Vom Reichtum der Medien: Theologische Überlegungen, Praktische Folgerungen*, Würzburg, Echter, 1993, 68.

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle, *Topica*, transl. introd. E. S. Forster, Cambridge, Mass, 1960, 139b. See also Lóránt Bencze, *Uncertainty Principle and Symmetry in Metaphors: Computers & Mathematics with Applic.*, Vol. 17, No. 4–6, (1989), 697–708.

It may also happen that the content is similar or the same, but the *name* differs. These are Christ-like figures, characters of a novel or film. They must be discovered by the faithful even if quite different names are used. But the faithful should not confuse the grains of truth with Truth itself, the *logoi spermatikoi* with the personal, incarnated *Logos*.

Inseparability and inconfusability can be found in other relations (Church – world; grace – nature). The Church exists in the world, but cannot be identified with the world, thus she exists unconfusably with the world. In the relation of the two sexes, for example, love and sexuality are inseparable but cannot be confused. Nowadays Christians on the one hand tend towards separation, radical liberals on the other hand towards confusion.<sup>64</sup>

We can state (mainly following Balthasar) that in communication and semio-genesis which is the Church herself, there is always a particular communication, as it is lived by the faithful here and now. But there is communication as such, communication in itself, incarnation, independent from a man, even if he does not live in it. In other words, inseparable and inconfusable, according to the analogy of the Christological model.

## ON THE LITURGY AS ECOSEMIOSIS

It is a general Christian teaching that the Church, the deeds of the church, her words, especially the sacraments are signs that

mediate grace,  
mediate divine life,  
fulfil human life.

According to speech act theory, these signs can be said to be illocutions or/and perlocutions or performative verbs, at least for the faithful.<sup>65</sup> Various types of liturgical performances (eucharist, liturgy of the word, prayer in the community etc.) are always

calls for action and/or  
performance of action and/or  
fulfilment of what is said for the faithful who participate in it (e.g. declaring a marriage).

In the “technical terms” of the New Testament the words that are uttered (by Jesus and by the Church) come true immediately (cf. Lk 4,21; Mt 8,8; Lk 7,7). It is also well-known that Thomas Aquinas put *sacramenta in genere signi*, i.e. he looked

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>65</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford, 1962.

at sacraments as sign types.<sup>66</sup> He was and the Roman Catholic theology has ever since been interested first of all in the *defectus* of sacraments, i.e. – in linguistic terms – how a speech act is damaged or how and to what extent communication fails in sacraments. Theologians have also been interested in categorizing liturgical acts, in defining subtypes of them, and have been preoccupied with the possibilities of interpreting them (i.e. which should be interpreted as law, which as allegory, etc.). In the theology of the Eastern Church, liturgy has been religious teaching and religious experience.<sup>67</sup> This attitude of the Eastern Church was neglected in the Western (Latin) Church – except in the practice of the Benedictines – till the liturgical movements of the 19th–20th centuries. The reason for this neglect was the overemphasis of the *ex opere operato* factor in the West.

Following the viewpoint of Thomas Aquinas and considering the question from the viewpoint of semiotics, it is obvious that if the sacraments are sign types, they are in one *genus* with human speech. Besides, sacraments are connected not only to human speech acts but also to human nature as a whole for they are connected to basic turning-points of human life, e.g. the sacrament of baptism is connected to birth, the sacrament of marriage is connected to sexuality and race preservation, etc. That is why liturgy as religious experience and as communication is also a kind of ecological system. It is also a pattern that reinforces ecological thinking and acting in those who participate in it. Liturgy is a vital part of human communication and of (human) ecology. According to the Christological model liturgy, communication and ecology cannot be separated and cannot be confused.

The sine qua non of liturgy and that of the sacraments as signs within the liturgy are

the matter (*materia*), i.e. perceivability, and

the symbolic/metaphorical nature, i.e. the perceivable thing symbolizes and refers to something else, it is not simply itself, it is for something else. The symbolic/metaphorical nature is not just the result of a cognitive procedure. It is of psychosocio-somatic character and is socio-culturally justified in a given community.

Attention must be called to the fact that information flowing in communication is *in-forming* – as the etymology of the word reveals it. Information penetrates into human personality and forms it (cf. above ch. i.). Information is creative.<sup>68 69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Opera omnia* ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis et ex aliis medii aevi auctoribus curante Roberto Busa S. I., III, qu., Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt, Fromann-Holzboog, 1980, 83.

<sup>67</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Lectures and Essays on Christian Development Through Liturgical Experience*, 2nd ed, Department of Religious Education, New York, Orthodox Church in America, 1983.

<sup>68</sup> Bencze, *Style and Interpretation*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Concilium*, 1995, 176.

In the liturgy the experience through the five senses is semiogenesis at the same time. This experience is a symbolic/metaphorical one, and is a type of holistic human communication, for liturgy is connected not only to

the five senses, but also to  
turning-points of human life as mentioned above, to  
seasons, to  
constellations of the sun, moon and stars, i.e. to the  
cosmos.

The place of the liturgy is also a metaphorical sign, the shaping of the liturgical space is also a sign and/or a system of signs. This architecture of the liturgical place is also of psycho-socio-somatic character. This character includes the socio-culturally justified cosmic determination. We can think of the churches in an eastward position, of light effects in churches, pictures and statues and their arrangements, black Madonnas in Africa, etc. Thus the liturgical space communicates just like people and objects in it.

The liturgy prefers both verbal and non-verbal signs that are iconic, especially metaphors (cf. the categorization of signs by Peirce).<sup>70</sup> As we have seen above in metaphors artificial, conventional and iconic signs amalgamate in a special harmony. Certainty and uncertainty in the interpretation of a metaphor are a semiotic incarnation of predictable and unpredictable, of expected and unexpected.

In theological terms the aim of semiosis in liturgy is *metanoia* (*conversio*), i.e. radical conversion of life, a renewing without destroying. In ecological terms the aim of the liturgy is to achieve a sustainable development of man and his physical and socio-cultural environment, i.e. to achieve balance and harmony without the extermination of conflicting factors. The idea of ecological democracy is a struggle for harmony by preserving opposites without curtailing them within reasonable limits. The violent elimination of opposites in human society is tyranny, while the violent freedom of opposites is anarchy. In ecology both have been eliminators of balance ever since homo sapiens appeared on earth with his autonomy. Ecological thinking cannot even exist without theonomy. Theonomy – in opposition to autonomy that characterizes modern European thinking and results in the destruction of ecological balance, in merciless exploitation of man and his environment, in environmental pollution beyond description – is a humble approach not only to the Creator of the world, but also to the created world. Creation is not just a past action of unknown temporal distance. It is a permanent creating, i.e. a continuous action of creation without any time limit as Thomas Aquinas suggested, as a free-thinking philosopher and not as a faithful theologian (cf. Sth.<sup>71</sup> *Videtur*

<sup>70</sup> Hartshorne – Weiss Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1931/1958.

<sup>71</sup> S. THOMAE AQUINATIS, *Opera omnia*, I, XLVI, 1–2.

*quod universitas creaturarum, quae mundi nomine nuncupatur, non incoeperit, sed fuerit ab aeterno. ... Respondeo dicendum quod mundum non semper fuisse, sola fide tenetur, et demonstrative probari non potest: sicut et supra de mysterio Trinitatis dictum est. ... Unde demonstrari non potest quod homo, aut coelum, aut lapis non semper fuit*). The basic consequences of theonomic and ecologic thinking and behaviour in man are:

1. A respect of the individual and difference. This respect is that of a social interest. In this respect individuals, persons are planted in the family, nations in the Church, peoples in mankind, reason in emotions, virtues in instincts, grace in nature (as Bishop Prohászka pointed out)<sup>72</sup>.

2. A respect of tradition and an openness to something that is new in opposition to tradition. We are able to walk only if we take a step forward with one leg and leave the other in its place (as an adage by Baron József Eötvös pointed out).<sup>73</sup> We look forward all the time like a car driver, yet we have mirrors in our car that enable us to look backwards and sideways if necessary (after Károly Csébfalvi, verbal information).

3. Our love of man and nature manifests itself neither in crazy transformations of man and nature, nor in underutilization or waste. It manifests itself in a wise coexistence of living creatures through the journey of life.

Liturgy can be said to be the main source and shaper of such a theonomic and ecologic thinking and behaviour. Liturgy informs the world of the infinite love of its Creator. The liturgy is an unconditional, universal (*katholikos*) and love-principled participation in the world. Liturgy is a direct support to man who suffers from the world and an indirect support to the world that suffers from man.

Finally, we should not be surprised that the death of God in the 20th century has simultaneously been the death of nature. The consequence of the unlimited autonomy of man was the devastation of the internal and external environment of man. If we look at environmental pollution, nuclear, chemical and political catastrophes that have been taking place up to now in the 20th century, we realize that our rationality of sciences has resulted in a crazy irrationality (e.g. nuclear catastrophes, chemical pollution). Theonomic and universal (*katholikos*) ecological thinking and behaviour have been aborted by capital, by media and politicians controlled by capital and media.

On the contrary, in liturgy one can meet the wisdom of ecology, for liturgy is of theonomic, universal and holistic thinking. Liturgy is the hope and demand for the end of fear, terror and expulsion. The *metanoia* (*conversion, renewal*) that is

<sup>72</sup> Ottokár Prohászka, *Elmélkedések az evangéliumról*, Róma, Anonymus, 1952.

<sup>73</sup> József Eötvös, baron, *Vallomások és gondolatok*, comp., ed. Miklós Bényei, <http://mek.oszk.hu/05200/05249/05249.htm>, accessed 12 February 2017.

required in liturgy is the restoration of achievable harmony and sustainable balance. While ecology is *the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment*,<sup>74</sup> liturgy is – as its etymology shows – a common work and a work of community for each other and for each other's environment. Ecological relation and cosmic mutual dependency in liturgy is *koinonia*, i.e. the unity of departed, living and future mankind and world. Liturgy is a unique ecological information flow that is directed by the above-mentioned inseparable and inconfusable respect for the Creator and the creature. For the faithful it includes the revelation of the information flow within the Creator (Holy Trinity), the information flow between Creator and mankind (incarnation of the *Logos* in Jesus Christ) and of course the information flow between Creator and creatures in general (*logoi spermatikoi*). The ecology relation and the information flow include daily giving and receiving, taking and dropping, building and unbuilding, etc. In the liturgy of the faithful, in this common action of a human community, the daily forbidding and allowing takes place (cf. Mt 16,19, *potestas solvendi et ligandi*). Both are to sustain balance and to achieve harmony (following the ideas of *Human Ecology* by Imre Lázár).<sup>75</sup>

According to the above explication, liturgy is also an ecological pattern system that aims at a psycho-socio-somatic synthesis, a holistic life and synergetic actions. Though this pattern concerns the total regulations of the whole man and his environment, yet its actual appearance is socially justified in a given society and culture. Originally, not in the 20th century, bread and wine as sacrificial/metaphorical gifts could appear only in an agricultural society of a given climate, in a society that could produce bread and wine and in which they are items of daily consumption. The same can be said about religious and theological terms. The term *Logos* could appear in the hellenistic society in which it had various meanings like *order, speech, word, order of the world*, etc. The theology of this *Logos* can be partly identical with, partly different from its Hungarian – more or less – equivalent term *Ige*, the meaning of which is connected to *word, verb, yes (igen), true, (igaz), truth (igazság), igéz (to enchant, to charm, to fascinate)* etc. See also the Hamlet translation of János Arany which is similar to, as well as different from Shakespeare's Hamlet (cf. above). Consequently liturgy – as an ecological pattern system and as (metaphorical) actions which aim at sustaining an (human) ecological system – depends also on climatic parameters and can gradually change as much as a given socio-cultural system changes, also depending on climatic differences or changes.

Therefore the symbolic/metaphoric system and the linguistic system of liturgy can gradually change. Verbal and non-verbal metaphors and iconic phenomena in general can be universal (*katholikos*) on the one hand, for and if they are connected

<sup>74</sup> *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>75</sup> Imre Lázár, *Human Ecology*, manuscript, 1996.

to universal human phenomena (like baptism is connected to washing with water, etc. cf. above). On the other hand they change, if they are connected to changing (socio-cultural) phenomena (cf. the above-mentioned theologies of *Logos* in Greek and of *Ige* in Hungarian). We can also think of the different and identical semantic markers in *Our Lady, the Holy Mary, Gottesmutter, Regina coeli, Boldogasszony* (“happy woman” in current Hungarian and “pregnant woman” in old Hungarian) and of the identical reference of the enumerated “names.”

Liturgy is an ecological pattern system not only in theory, but in praxis. Liturgy preplays an ecology that man needs to have to sustain human and environmental ecology. It is well-known that the playing of children (and young animals) is a preparation for situations to come in life. Playing is a simulation of expected and unexpected situations. The more we play, the more we might be able to cope with forthcoming events. Thus playing aims at decreasing unpredictability and increasing predictability, i.e. at negentropy. This playing is also similar to first language learning, in which the more attempts at learning a given (phonological, morphological, syntactical, textual, metaphorical) structure, etc. are produced by a child, the more probably and more quickly he will acquire the proper knowledge and usage of a given language phenomenon.

Liturgy is a performance and/or imitation and/or representation of patterns, examples, models, archetypes and archetypical/metaphorical acts. Ancient cannibalism appears in a sublimated and “innocent” way in the eucharist whenever Jesus’s words are repeated: *Take this and eat, this is my body, ... drink from this wine, for this is my blood* etc. Ancient human sacrifice appears in the biblical and theological expressions that God as Father loved the world so much that he sacrificed his only son for it. The so-called *orans* gesture (the opening of arms) is even more ancient. It also reminds us of animals, especially of dogs when they surrender themselves in playing. This gesture is probably the same as that of approaching and embracing a friend, a child or a lover.

The basic difference between liturgy as playing and (theatrical and other types of) playing is that liturgy is not only imitation but also a fulfilment of what is played. What is performed comes true for the faithful (cf. the *Theodramatik* of Hans Urs von Balthazar). Thus liturgy is not just a special system of (metaphorical) sign types, a special system of playing, a performed drama of aesthetic values, etc., but for the faithful, liturgical events are metaphors of real events and real events themselves like Jesus’s death and resurrection were both symbols of rebirth, human sacrifice etc. and real rebirth and real sacrifice. In theological terms liturgy is

the appearance of heaven on earth,  
 the appearance the divine in the human,  
 the appearance of the supernatural in the natural.

The various technical terms I have used here express various approaches and meanings, but identical references. Following them, we can look at liturgy as a play and simulation that aims at sustaining ecological balance, establishing harmony. Liturgy in its psycho-socio-somatic nature treats and conducts events that are lived by man as tragedies of dissonance and imbalance in his ecology (death and resurrection, birth and rebirth, etc.). Liturgy is a therapy of ecological disaster that occurred to man, and a means of avoiding imminent disasters.

Liturgical play includes dialogues in the sense a dialogue takes place not only between two, but among many. Dialogue in liturgy is not only a cross-cultural communication, but a cross-creature communication (cf. the interpretation of Solomon Marcus that *dia* in Greek does not mean only *two* but also *through*).<sup>76</sup> Dialogue is a human and linguistic type of ecological information flow as it is mutual. Mutuality in dialogue ensures the respect of the other. The very essence of dialogue is – among others – the acknowledgement of the necessity of mutual attention, mutual dependence, etc. Therefore dialogue is the best means for man to achieve harmony without the elimination of opposites. Liturgy is nothing other than dialogues between God and man, between Christ and Church, between Christ and soul, between priest and faithful, between individual and community, between two people within a community.

If we consider liturgy as a semiotic and ecological play and a guarantor of system it will throw light on some of the crises of Western European (especially Roman Catholic) Churches, on the lack of priests and the uncertainties of the faithful. Both in the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestant Churches priests/pastors became social leaders. This type of leader appears both in the demands of priests/pastors and in the expectations of the faithful. In the terms of analogies and approaches outlined above we can say that priests became *regisseurs*, directors or/and playwrights in the same way that man in Western European thinking won for himself the right to become an absolute ruler of internal (human) and external (environmental) ecology. If we look at the role of a priest at the beginning of the 6th century in the Rule of Saint Benedict, we are shocked to find that a priest is not a leader, not a director, not a manager. He is “simply” a sacramental instrument:

*If any ordained priest asks to be received into the monastery, do not agree too quickly. However, if he is fully persistent in his request, he must recognize that he will have to observe the full discipline of the rule without any mitigation ... He should, however, be allowed to stand next to the abbot, to give blessings and to celebrate Mass, provided that the abbot bids him. Otherwise, he must recognize*

<sup>76</sup> Solomon Marcus, A Dialogue about Dialogue: Confrontation Among Various Perspectives, *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* XXX/1 (1986).



*that he is subject to the discipline of the rule ... Whenever there is question of an appointment or of any other business in the monastery, he takes the place that corresponds to the date of his entry into the community, and not that granted him out of respect for his priesthood (Rule Ch. 60. Translation from the edition by Timothy Fry).<sup>77</sup>*

*He ... must not presume to do anything except what the abbot commands him ... he may not therefore forget the obedience and discipline of the rule ... He will always take the place that corresponds to the date of his entry into the monastery, except in his duties at the altar, or unless the whole community chooses and the abbot wishes to give him a higher place for the goodness of his life. Yet, he must know how to keep the rule established for deans and priors; should he presume to act otherwise, he must be regarded as a rebel, not as a priest (Rule Ch. 62).<sup>78</sup>*

In these quotations the role and function of a Christian priest was – so to say – clearly defined and declared. The distinction between *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* was not yet confused and this confusion did not impose an unbearable burden on priests and an irresolvable contradiction on the faithful. In the community planned by Saint Benedict the freely elected head of the community (the abbot) – after his election – runs the community as one man management. At the same time this manager is obliged to ask for the advice of the whole community that elected him, or at least that of the seniors (Rule Ch. 3).<sup>79</sup> Yet he is not obliged to follow the advice. In addition there is no discrimination concerning either the eligible person as abbot or the persons who may give advice: *Goodness of life and wisdom in teaching must be the criteria for choosing the one to be made abbot, even if he is the last in community rank (Rule Ch. 64).<sup>80</sup> ... The reason why we said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger (Ch. 3).<sup>81</sup>* The (human) ecology and the balance of individuals, society and their environment in the Rule of Saint Benedict are guaranteed in the rules that aim at struggling for a harmony that preserves contrasts and opposites uncurtailed. This harmony of uncurtailed contrasts and opposites is – among others – guaranteed for the Rule states that

the manager should rule and decide, but at the same time in his decisions he should adapt himself to the circumstances, – in other words – to the situational context that is made of the given individuals, society and environment,

<sup>77</sup> Fry, Timothy (ed.), *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, MN, 1982.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

he should rule first of all by his example and actions, not with his words,  
 he should not neglect either the internal (intellectual, spiritual, emotional, etc.)  
 or the external (natural and man-made) environment, playing one off against the  
 other, consequently

he should not be discriminative (e.g. not only a priest, but also *a man born free  
 is not born to be given higher rank than a slave...*), yet

he should *apply the same discipline to all according to their merits ...* ,

*he must vary with circumstances ...* ,

he must *serve a variety of temperaments ...*,

*he must accomodate and adapt himself to each one's character and intelligence...*

(Rule Ch. 3).<sup>82</sup>

The question of woman priesthood is put in another light in the ecosemiotic view of the liturgy (cf. the semiotic approach above in ch. i.). In the ecosemiotic view of the liturgy, the question simply either does not arise or if it happens to arise, it is of no significance. Emancipation movements in European culture were born parallel with the destruction of environment in European civilization. If – in the traditional Christian thinking – one compares the *ex opere operato*, i.e. *the sacramental* function of priests to the archetype of Holy Mary cult (*virgin, mother*), then priesthood looks insignificant, undesirable and almost contemptible for a woman who thinks in an ecological way. Current European thinking – wherever spread on the globe – is in plain contradiction to (theonomic) ecological thinking. It caused troubles both in the external and in the internal environment. As we have seen this anti-ecological thinking totally changed the biologically and psychically determined role of a woman. It replaced the archetype of *virgin and mother* with the archetype of *sterile whore* (cf. above ch. i.). As in all fields of environmental pollution, this European civilization wants to get rid of the trouble by means of substitute actions (cf. conferences instead of actions – in opposition to the Rule of Saint Benedict: action instead of words, etc. as mentioned above), women want to be put into the archetype of (celibate) priesthood. There are several ecological and ecosemiotic somersaults in this emancipational thinking and desire, among others that priesthood and celibacy are not connected to each other by a divine law (not even in the Roman Catholic Church), that sterility and celibacy can easily be confused, yet should not be. They have totally different aims. The sterility that most emancipated women undertake is a flee from responsibility and destroys both internal (psychic) and external (childlessness) ecological harmony. European welfare societies will not be able to pay pensions for there will be too many retired people and too few young people who are active workers. Celibacy aims at the unconditional support and service of disadvantaged strata of society, e.g. widows,

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

children, handicapped, mentally retarded, sick, etc. Consequently celibacy aims at a kind of restoration of (human) ecological harmony and balance.

As we have already seen liturgy is an action that is multimedial and includes the operation of all the senses. Besides and within action and speech essential parts of liturgy are

the art of singing and (instrumental) music,  
 the art of gestures and mimicry,  
 the art of moving the body,  
 the art of clothing the body,  
 distance in actions,  
 dancing, etc.

All the actions and speech in liturgy have both literal and figurative (metaphorical) meaning. Thus in Christian liturgy the essential and existential convergence of metaphorical and non-metaphorical opposites, of timeless and time, of divine and human, of eternal Creator and permanently created, etc. cannot be either separated or confused. This convergence results in humble, forgiving and honouring behaviour in man and guarantees an (human) ecological harmony. When on the one hand one speaks of the therapeutic function of liturgy, one acknowledges the balance-producing and restoring function of liturgy. On the other hand one cannot do anything with liturgy if one has no ecological thinking, i.e. one is selfish, powerful, satisfied with oneself, has no sense for the metaphorical etc.

Liturgy is a series of ecological and ecosemiotic actions that *in-forms* self-restraint in man (cf. above ch. i.). Liturgy broadens man's view towards the metaphorical in the non-metaphorical in his experience of the world around him. The metaphorical calls his attention to the characteristics in creatures that are beyond usefulness. This stimulates man to turn to a sustainable development.

Repetition and memory also play an essential role both in metaphorical thinking and in liturgy. Ecological and ecosemiotic balance are permanently endangered. Therefore ecology and ecosemiosis must be permanently sustained by repetitive actions. In liturgy repetitive actions, i.e. tradition and creative actions, though they seem contradictory are kept in harmony (as mentioned above). Just as the metaphorical can be interpreted on the basis of the non-metaphorical, liturgy is neither pure emotion nor pure rationalism, neither exclusive mysticism nor exclusive science (cf. the ideas of Balthasar and Prohászka in ch.i.), neither rigid tradition nor superficial renewal. In liturgy emotion and rationalism, mysticism and science, tradition and renewal, etc are inseparable and inconfusable. European civilization has tried to find substitutes for all of these harmonized contrasts and opposites of liturgy. In these substitutes contrasts and opposites are both confused and separated. In liturgy the greatest sinner is tolerated, but the smallest sin is intolerable. In European civilization, for example, in tyranny the smallest sinner

is not tolerated, while in anarchy the greatest sin is tolerated, etc. In both cases the (human) ecological and ecosemiotic system is destroyed.

Liturgy is a perfect pattern of ecology and the producer of ecological thinking for liturgy always takes place in a community (*koinonia*), as we have seen above. Therefore it is also not accidental that metaphors of love are mainly of nature (external environment) and of religion and liturgy. On the other hand metaphors of the liturgy are also and mainly from nature and from love (cf. Christ and Church as lovers in the New Testament, the poetry of John Donne,<sup>83</sup> Saint John of the Cross,<sup>84</sup> etc.).

Another consequence of the *koinonia* of liturgy is that it requires personal presence. Therefore radio and television broadcasts of both the catholic mass and the Protestant liturgy of the word are against the very essence of liturgy. Broadcasting and media require the production of new religious genres to fulfil the missionary task of the Church, not murdering her “old genres”, and not shaping the liturgy into cheap imitations of media genres.

Ecology and ecosemiosis of liturgy include a behaviour and state of permanent gladness, joy, happiness and jubilee. This is the joy of being, the joy that “I am and thou art,” and “it is good to me that thou art” (after Prof. Péter Nemeshegyi). I happened to see a Catholic programme on television in Hungary. All the time everybody complained, everybody was bitter: “*Only three of us work at the parish*”... “*How terrible it was for forty years of communist suppression*”... “*We do not have this, we do not have that*”... “*We have failed because Hungarian society is such and such, people are such and such*”... etc. If there is no liturgy, no faith then *in-forms* participants of liturgy, these catholics are right. Yet if liturgy exists, they are all liars.

It is also not accidental that aesthetics has occurred implicitly whenever I have analysed any (human) ecosemiotic aspects of liturgy. Any neglect of the aesthetic aspect weakens the very nature of liturgy, decreases the effectiveness of liturgy as a psycho-socio-somatic phenomenon. Therefore the translation of the artistic Latin texts of the liturgy into a cheap colloquial Hungarian after the Vatican Council II. in the 1960's was a crime against liturgy.

Theonomic human ecology is an integral part of ecology as a whole. Liturgy shapes human ecology and ecosemiosis, and that is why with the neglect of liturgy the whole ecology is damaged. This is what mankind has faced in the last two centuries. Autonomy without theonomy cannot result in a sustainable ecology. Ecology cannot exist without the ecosemiosis that liturgy imbues into its par-

<sup>83</sup> John Donne, *The Works of John Donne*, <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/donnebib.htm>, accessed 12 February 2017.

<sup>84</sup> John of the Cross, *The Works of Saint John of the Cross*, [http://www.jesus-passion.com/John\\_of\\_the\\_Cross.htm](http://www.jesus-passion.com/John_of_the_Cross.htm), accessed 12 February 2017.

ticipants. Without the renewal (metanoia) that is produced by liturgy freedom becomes media-slavery, environmental pollution and self-destruction. The problem of metaphor looks an ephemeral and insignificant question if it is considered only from a literary or linguistic point of view. Yet, if we look at it from an ecological and ecosemiotic point of view metaphorical thinking is of vital importance for man and his world.

*Translated by Lóránt Bencze, Justine Mercer, Kinga Széchenyi*

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# MIN KÅRE SON ...

## Direct or Indirect Folk Belief Data Behind Medieval First Commandment Catechism Stories<sup>1</sup>

VILMOS VOIGT

The grand master of living Finnish scholars of both folklore and religion Uno Harva,<sup>2</sup> referring to Ljungberg's book<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> after having quoted some sentences from the famous 1551 psalter foreword by Mikael Agricola, mentions that heathen traditions in Catholic times in Scandinavia have been preserved in various documents. In a Swedish manuscript from the end of the 14th century, "Själinna Thröst", kept in the Royal Library in Stockholm the following words can be read:

*"Wilt thu dhet första budhordit wel halda tha skalt thu ey thro vppa tompta gudha alia oppa wättir, ey oppa nek, ällir forsa karia, ey oppa skratta ellir tompt orma. Thu skalt ey thro oppa maro ellir elfwa, oc oppa enga handa spook ellir willo."*

(Harva's Finnish translation, which is itself worthy of attention because of the terms borrowed from Finnish folk beliefs, runs as follows. "Jos sinä tahdot ensimmäisen käskysanan hyvin pitää, niin sinun ei pidä uskoa kartanon jumaliin tai maahiisiin, ei näkkiin tai koskenhaltijoihin, ei kratteihin tai karta- nokäärmeisiin. Sinun ei pidä uskoa moraan tai keijukaisiin eikä minkäänlaiseen kummitukseen tai harhaan."<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> For experts of early Finnish folk religion sources the list of various folk belief figures is of the utmost importance. This is the reason why Honko

<sup>1</sup> We owe special thanks to Szabina Cziria for her technical assistance in the production of the essay. (Ed.)

<sup>2</sup> Uno Harva, *Suomalaisten muinaisusko*, Porvoo – Helsinki, 1948, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Helge Ljungberg, *Den nordiska religionen och kristendomen*, Uppsala, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> The book also appeared in a German version (Helge Ljungberg, *Die nordische Religion und das Christentum*, Gütersloh, 1940.), which remained practically unknown in Scandinavia, and for our topic it does not give further data.

<sup>5</sup> Harva, *Suomalaisten muinaisusko*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Because I shall later quote the critical edition of this text, I do not here give any correction of Harva's Swedish text (which was borrowed not from the original, but from Ljungberg's book), nor to his Finnish translation, which might be rendered at some points also in other ways.

quotes it again in his very condensed history of Finnish list of gods by Agricola.<sup>7</sup> In his opinion Agricola

*“Als solches hatte es Vorbilder: wir weisen nur auf das Vorwort zur 1547 veröffentlichten Übersetzung des Katechismus von dem Litauer Martinus Mosvidius und den aus dem Ende des 14. Jahrhs. erhaltenen schwedischen Text ‚Själinna Thröst‘ (Trost der Seele) hin, wo beidemale mythische Wesen und Gottheiten aufgezählt werden und das Volk gewarnt wird, an sie zu glauben.”*

Although the idea that *Själinna Thröst* (hereafter ST) might serve as a pattern (*Vorbild*) to Agricola is not quite the same as the view expressed by Harva, it is not far from the position of Haavio<sup>8</sup> who denies the influence of some unknown scholarly or poetic systematization upon Agricola's list. Even Haavio does not deny this influence in principle, but only as far as the Olympic character of Karelian “gods” is concerned.

As far as I can see, although in this way ST occurs among the oldest sources of Finnish folk religion, none of the Finnish scholars have studied it separately.<sup>9</sup> The short encyclopedic article, probably the latest concise treatment of the subject offered by Ronge<sup>10</sup> from a Scandinavian point of view, not referring to possible Finnish contacts, can be summarized in the following way. The lengthy medieval Swedish work ST is known in its Stockholm manuscript (*Cod. Holm. A 108*), and was probably written down in the Vadstena monastery between ca. 1438 and ca. 1442 as a copy of a somewhat earlier text (most likely from about 1420 also in Vadstena), which has been lost. Its origin was a Low German work (*Der Grosse Seelentrost*) from the mid-14th century. There are various other manuscripts in Sweden which have more or less common themes or stylistic features. More interesting is the fact that there are two more fragmentary Danish texts *Siälla trdst* in *Cod. Ups. C 529* and *Cod. Holm. A 109* from about 1425, probably independent copies of the lost original of *Cod. Holm. A 108*. Since both in textual editions and philological works about the texts there are important findings which have not been analysed

<sup>7</sup> Lauri Honko, *Finnische Mythologie*, in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, Bd. 11, Stuttgart, Hrsg. von H.W. Haussig, 1963, 297.

<sup>8</sup> Martti Haavio, *Karjalan jumalat, Uskontotieteellinen tutkimus*, Porvoo–Helsinki, 1959, 7.

<sup>9</sup> At least I was not able to find any reference to the Swedish text in Krohn's two pertinent summarizing works (Kaarle Krohn, *Skandinavisk mytologi*, Helsingfors, 1922 and Kaarle Krohn, *Zur finnischen Mythologie*, I., FFC 104, Helsinki, 1932.). I also tried to compare this list of folk belief figures with the often mentioned early medieval German *Indiculus superstitionum*, a topic which deserves further study. For the first seminal edition see the publication very difficult to get (H. A. Saupe, *Der indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*, [Program des städtischen Realgymnasiums], Leipzig, 1891.).

<sup>10</sup> Hans H. Ronge, *Siälinna thröst*, in *KHLNM*, 15. columns, 1970, 307–310.



by scholars of Finnish (and Swedish) religion in the Middle Ages, I shall try to give a historical survey of results achieved hitherto as regards the origin, distribution and interpretation of the above mentioned “list” of folk belief figures.<sup>11</sup>

As we know from the preface by G. E. Klemming<sup>12</sup> to the first philological edition of the Swedish text, it was A. A. von Stiernman, who in his lecture *Tal om de lärda vetenskapens tillstånd* in 1758 first mentioned the existence of what he supposed to be a translation from Latin into Swedish of the educative work *Själinna Tröst*. Klemming has pointed out that many of Stiernman’s attributions as to the scribe and the origin were not particularly accurate, and working primarily from German philological literature such as the work of Geffcken (to whom we shall return later), he has justly shown that the source of the Swedish text might well be a Low German (Low Saxonian) work from the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century, also existing in a copy written by Johann Everzen in 1407. As to the compiler of the German work of exempla and suchlike, J. G. Grässe already referred to a certain Johann Moirs Sultz, who lived in Cologne in 1445. According to Klemming a Dutch translation (first from 1478, then also in other versions) was made from the German text, as well as a Swedish one, the latter being the source of the Danish text from the very end of the 15th or the very beginning of the 16th century. The critical edition contains two (and not, as Harva said, one) exempla concerning the first commandment: one is “den unge mannen som försvor sig till djefvulen”<sup>13</sup> and the other is “S. Germanus och tomtare.”<sup>14</sup>

There is also a second critical edition of the Swedish ST text by Henning, who accepts Klemming’s dating of the work at around 1430, but uses the arguments raised by Thorén<sup>15</sup> to say that the lost original text of the Swedish manuscript was

<sup>11</sup> Here I am not going to deal with problems examined in my other paper (Vilmos Voigt, On Baltic and Balto-Finnic Lists of Gods, in *Festschrift in Honor of Velta Ruke-Dravipa*, Stockholm, 1986.), concerning the lists of gods by Agricola and by (recte) Martin(us) Mosvidius. I was able to collect most of my data during my visits to Sweden (1984), Finland (1985) and the Federal Republic of Germany (1985). I owe thanks to many libraries and colleagues there for their generous help. I would wish, however, to make special mention of Professor Tryggve Sköld (Umed), Professor Lutz Röhrich (Freiburg i. Br.) and Lassi Saressalo (Turku) for their kindness in providing me with good advice and xerox copies. As usual, I was able to use the facilities at the Finnish Literary Society in Helsinki, too. I thank all of my colleagues and friends there.

<sup>12</sup> G. E. Klemming, *Själens tröst: Tio Guds bud förklarade genom legender, berättelser och exempel*, Efter en gannal bandskrift utgifven av (Samlingar av Svenska Fernskrift-Sällskapet 57–60.), Stockholm, 1871–1873, iii–viii.

<sup>13</sup> Klemming, *Själens tröst*, 26–30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> Ivar Thorén, *Studier över Själens tröst*, Stockholm – Köpenhamn, 1942.

a direct translation from the Low German *De seelen trost*.<sup>16</sup> As for the Hanseatic transmission, or the spread of the ST among brotherhood communities, the scholars do not agree.

Here is neither space nor reason to list all the remarks and achievements of Swedish philology concerning this text. Ljungberg in his book (which was evidently known to Harva, thus providing the ultimate source for the Finnish scholars) quotes both of the ST texts of importance to us, connecting the whole text with “medieval religion and identifying its roots in German religion and magic.”<sup>17</sup> He also refers to the well-known compilation of Boudriot (1923) in which the author tried to collect data concerning Old German religion in church literature of Western Europe between the 5th and 11th centuries. Based upon the critical source remarks by Klemming, which index the Low Saxonian, High German and Dutch parallels to the Swedish text, Ljungberg expresses the opinion that the Swedish translator was not “slavishly following the German sources, but rather adjusting the text to the Swedish circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> This remark might inspire both Harva and Honko to think that there could be a direct reference to North European folk religion in the Swedish text.

Thorén in his thorough monograph of the Vadstena text of ST confirms the years 1438–1440–1442 as the time of the existing *Cod. Holm. A 108* text, which according to him is not a translation itself, but a copy of a translation.<sup>19</sup> In his careful analysis of the text *Den unge mannen som försvor sig till djävulen* he supposes that parts of the story remain in contact with the texts of the *Fornsvenska legendariet*, and both of them go back to some Latin work.<sup>20</sup> We must add, however, that the two lists of folk belief figures were not listed among the correspondence, and in this way Thorén did not in fact say anything about the topic which concerns us here.

Thorén already suggested that the ST text (together with the Swedish *Barlaamsaga*) could be related to the territory of later Finland. Henning, returning to the problems of the author, scribe and translation of the ST sums up his views in the following way: “Thorén söker leda i bevis, att den fornsvenska Barlaamsagan och Själen Trösts original flutit ur samma penna och att översättaren av b8da verken är en Vadstenamunk, Olaus Gunnari, som sedan blev biskop i Västerås. Denne var en av de klosterbröder, som från Vadstena den 16 maj 8r 1442 sändes till det nygrundade dotterklostret i N8-dendal, varvid som g8va medfördes inte blott den

<sup>16</sup> Sam. Henning, *Sie linna thrtfst: Forste delin aff the bokinne so m kallas sixlinna thröst*, Efter cod. Holm. A 108 (f.d. cod. Ängsö), Kritisk upplaga, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapet 209, Uppsala, 1954, ix.

<sup>17</sup> Ljungberg, *Den nordiska religionen*, 287.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>19</sup> Thorén, *Studier över Själen tröst*, 7–9, 187.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 56

svenska Barlaamsagan utan - även Själens tröst.”<sup>21</sup> If this is true, we find another list of probably local pagan belief figures 109 years prior to Agricola’s list of gods in Nödendal (today’s Naantali), South-western Finland. According to Henning’s linguistic and philological remarks the connections between Vadstena and present-day Finland seem to be even more striking. The Swedish ST is without a doubt a product of the famous Vadstena monastery, and has close connections with *Arboga lagbok*, and with the Swedish *Barlaamsaga* too. Orthographic peculiarities like *her* (for *här*) bear a relation to the district of Åland/Ahvenanmaa, *endast* to South-west Finland, or more exactly to Åbo/Turku and to Nödendal/Naantali e.g. as for *elgna* (for *egna*) and to Tavastland/Häme, or again, more precisely, to Kangasala (as for *eidh* for *ett*).<sup>22</sup> According to Henning the Swedish translation of Rimbert’s *Vita Anskarii*, together with the St. Barlaams “saga,” were sent to Nödendal in 1442 (and both works were written by a monk in Vadstena, Johannes Hildebrandi). At the same time other manuscripts were also sent to Nödendal: among others the copy *A 108* of the ST, which was put down on paper by another Swedish monk from Finland between 1438 and 1442 “utgjorde en utlovad fortsättning p8 Själens törst, ville man troligen dessutom som g8va till Nödendalsklostret överlämna en avskrift av själva huvudarbetet. Denna avskrift, *A 108*, verkställdes antagligen i Vadstena av en skrivare, som sannolikt var av finlandssvenskt härkomst, under tiden c:a 1438–1442...”<sup>23</sup> The Finnish-Swedish connections were also mentioned by Ronge,<sup>24</sup> but without much further specification, which probably explains why it has escaped the Finnish scholars’ attention.

As for the Danish texts, which by some scholars were sometimes closely related to the Swedish ones, even supposing that they were translated not from some German or Latin, but from the Swedish variant, the current view is that the fragments known from two manuscripts (*Cod. Ups. C 529* and *Cod. Holm. A 109*) might have originated from Sk8ne in about 1425. The Danish fragments are translations less influenced by the Latin, and most probably not later copies, but closer to the original.<sup>25</sup> Its critical edition appeared so slowly that no Finnish scholar paid any attention to it at all. It is a pity that the part of the Danish text of *Cod. Ups. C 529* of importance to us is so fragmentary that the critical edition gives the Swedish text as a parallel in order to render the scattered Danish words or letters more intelligible.<sup>26</sup> For the other Danish text I was not able to find any direct parallels.

<sup>21</sup> S. Henning, *Skrivarformer och vadstenaspråk i Sjaelinna thrdst*, Uppsala, 1960, 6.

<sup>22</sup> For further literature see *ibid.*, 161–162.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>24</sup> Ronge, *Sjaelinna thrøst*, 307–310.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 307–310.

<sup>26</sup> Nils Nielsen, *Sjaelens trost* (“*Siae-la trøst*”), I-II. København, 1937–1952, 24.

Thus those Danish variants which are older than the existing Swedish manuscript, do not offer us much help in understanding the topics which we wish to deal with.

German variants considered to be the source for the Scandinavian ones enjoy a very rich philological research tradition of their own which is far from finished or complete. Just to refer to the most important summaries, we can start with the book on Decalogue by Geffcken, who more than a century ago already listed four (and later two or three more) manuscripts (the oldest are from about 1407) and ten printed editions (followed later by one more printed variant) between 1478 and about 1523 in various German libraries or archives,<sup>27</sup> suggesting that even more copies of such a widespread work might well have existed. Another classic study of the topic was that of Reidemeister, who after reviewing previous works gave a synoptic survey of 39 manuscripts (among them a Swedish and a Danish text) mostly from the 15th century, but in some cases probably even from an earlier period as well. He was able to list 23 printed versions (from 1474 to 1759, all German or Dutch). He also provides a detailed table of contents to the texts, and the parts “Ein Jungling verschreibt sich dem Teufel” and “Bischof Germanus vertreibt Teufelsspuk” occur in most of the texts.<sup>28</sup> In general he accepts Cologne and the end of the 14th century as the place and the date of the original German version, which might have been completed by a Dominican friar, but he does not say much in particular about the direct origin of our topic.

After World War II, when Margarete Schmitt published with painstaking care the critical edition of the German *Der grosse Seelentrost*, she was able to use 27 manuscripts (she did not include the single Swedish and the two Danish texts), and 13 printed versions. The others, mentioned by earlier scholars, were either lost during the wars or she was unable to find them again. On the other hand she could include some new material, both to the manuscripts and to the prints. In general she agrees with Reidemeister that the German *Grosse Seelentrost* originates from the second half of the 14th century, from Low German, the western central part of that area, and was written by a learned priest, whose name has remained unknown.<sup>29</sup> She submitted subtitles to the separable thematic parts of the text.

Surprisingly the sentences of importance to us are to be found in three chapters. At the very end of chapter 6, “Ein Jungling, der sich dem Teufel verschrieb,” there are the following sentences:<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> J. Geffcken, *Der Bildercatechismus des fünfzehnten Oahrhunderts*, I., *Die Zehn Gebote*, Leipzig, 1855, 47–49, additions: 110–111.

<sup>28</sup> G. Reidemeister, *Die Überlieferung des Seelentrostes*, 1., Halle a.S., 1915, esp., 10, 39, 44–45, the last is I, 8, 9, in „Inhalts’ Tabelle III.

<sup>29</sup> Margarete Schmitt, *Der Grosse Seelentrost: Ein niederdeutsches Erbauungsbuch des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Niederdeutsche Studien - Band 5, Köln – Graz, 1959, 118\*, 136\* etc.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, lines 34–36 and 17, lines 1–2.

“Kynt leue, wultu godes bot holden, so ne schaltu nicht gelouen an de guden holden vnde an de beteren, noch an de elue, noch an de guden wichtecken, noch an neynerleye spoknisse, wente dat ys allet des vyendes droch, da he de lude mede bedruget, de kranken louen hebben. Suwe gantzen gelouen heuet, deme nemach dat droch nicht schaden.”

Then follows a short exemplum about bishop Germanus, which is of no interest to us here. Then again the whole subchapter 8, “Über den Schicksals-glauben”<sup>31</sup> belongs to our topic. One might comment that textual variations are not very great here, and do not specify the belief figures. Reidemeister<sup>32</sup> already called the attention to this part of the text, which occurs in practically all of the important variants.

Later studies have dealt with more variants (mostly fragments), or with the possible sources of the exempla.<sup>33 34 35 36</sup> These are of no direct relevance to our topic, but it has been supposed that the 14th-century Dominican version may have been preceded by a somewhat earlier Franciscan text, directed towards the religious education of boys. After more than twenty years of silence Andersson-Schmitt has recently published her first sample of the sources of the exempla in *Grosse Seelentrost*. Concerning chapter 6 (“Ein Jungling..”) she admits a close connection with *Legenda Aurea*, and probably also with the *Speculum historiale* by Vincentius Bellovacensis, and concerning chapter 7 (“Bischof Germanus”) probably also the *Legenda Aurea*.<sup>37</sup> These connections, however, belong to the exempla, and do not affect our list of belief figures. The same could be said about the exemplum index by Tubach,<sup>38</sup> in which stories rather than belief motives have been registered.<sup>39</sup>

If we try to sum up the results of philological studies upon *Seelentrost* (“conso-

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

<sup>32</sup> Reidemeister, *Die Überlieferung des Seelentrostes*, 44–45, part 10 „Warnung vor Zauberei und Aberglauben” in Tabelle III.

<sup>33</sup> Margarete Andersson-Schmitt, Über die Verwandtschaft der Alexander-sagen im Seelentrost und in der ersten niederländischen Historienbibel, in *Beiträge zur niederdeutschen Philologie, Niederdeutsche Studien*, Köln – Graz, 1960, 78–104.

<sup>34</sup> Margarete Andersson-Schmitt, Ein Seelentrost-Fragment der Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala, in *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch* 86, 1963, 75–81.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Murjanoff, Zur Überlieferung des Seelentrostes, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 86, Halle, 1964, 184–224.

<sup>36</sup> Lotte Kurras, Der grosse Seelentrost, in *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum und Deutsche Literatur*, 104 (1975), 247–250.

<sup>37</sup> Margarete Andersson-Schmitt, Mitteilungen zu den Quellen des Grossen Seelentrostes in *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch* 105, 1982, 22.

<sup>38</sup> Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, FFC 204, Helsinki, 1969.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. the various references under the catchwords “devil” and “soul,” and more precisely “pact with devil I–VII,” Nos. 3566–3572 (Tubach, *Index*, 276–277.) etc.

latio animi”) material, the following picture appears. German works, at least in 30 variants, and later in numerous prints, were very widespread and well-accepted in the area from Cologne to Danzig, and from the Low Countries to Prussia. Their primary redaction might have already existed in the second half of the 14th century. More than 230 stories (mostly exempla or suchlike) have been incorporated into it, and were collected from various ecclesiastic works, world histories, biblical or apocryphal legends, etc., and were arranged according to the Ten Commandments of God. It is the scope of the so-called “great” *Seelentrost*, which in many cases was followed by a “little” *Seelentrost*, containing material about the seven sacraments, prayers, confessional texts etc. In both cases the addressee is usually a young person, who is often addressed by his teacher or priest as “dear son.” The extremely popular educative work arrived in Scandinavia in all probability at the beginning of the 15th century, and was popular in Vadstena, where a Swedish translation was made. At least a copy of the translation in 1442 was sent to the Nådendal monastery, together with other writings popular at the time. Even the orthography of some Swedish texts shows close contact with the Finnish territories of the Swedish kingdom. The 332-page-long Swedish text contains several hundreds of stories and motives, most of which can be traced directly back to Low German sources. In many cases philologists none the less think that the Swedish friar who compiled the text was using other, generally known works too.

The list of belief figures, whom one is not allowed to serve because of its placing under commandment one, chapter 6 (“Ein Jungling..”) comes directly from the German original. After chapter 7 (“Bischof Germanicus”) there is a Swedish variant of the two chapters 8 and 9 (“Über den Aberglauben” and “Über den Schicksalsglauben”) similarly borrowed from the German work. This second list (in fact consisting of two lists) is more exhaustive and more clerical than the first one (at the end of chapter 6). As a matter of course, any translation of a list of (folk) belief figures might pose a serious problem for the translator as to which terms could express the same meaning in a different language. Supposing that the German ST text is also a translation (of course from Latin), the belief figures listed there ultimately represent a kind of “interpretatio Germanica,” whereas the Swedish counterparts may be referred to as “interpretatio Suecica.” If we want to list folk belief data in the list, there may be no less than five differentibilities.

(a) As Boudriot<sup>40</sup> and others have already clearly shown, in German medieval church literature there are traces of Old German pagan traditions end terms. This factor may not be excluded even as regards the German *Seelentrost* works.

<sup>40</sup> W. Boudriot, *Die altgermanische Religion in der amtlichen kirchlichen Literatur des Abendlandes von 5. bis 11. Jahrhundert*, Bonn, 1928.

(b) Popular folk beliefs as reflected in the Latin texts probably used in compiling the German *Seelentrost*.

(c) German folk or popular belief figures contemporary to the German text's compilation.

(d) General Swedish, or more precisely Vadstena Swedish folk beliefs behind the terms of the Swedish *Själens tröst*.

(e) Because of its affiliation with Nådendal, Tavastland, Åbo, etc., one might speculate as to a direct or indirect influence upon the Swedish text from the Swedish-speaking areas in Finland. If we can identify such characteristics, the possibility of its reflecting non-Swedish (i.e. Finnish) folk beliefs should not be permanently ruled out.

It would require a thorough analysis to decide whether German, Swedish, Finland-Swedish or even Finnish elements can be found in the list of belief figures of the Swedish ST. As far as I know, no attempt has been made to study the problem. Despite its fragmentary character, the Danish *Sjzzlens tröst* offers one or two words<sup>41</sup> which state a close connection with the Swedish terms, but on the other hand do not exclude the possibility of using non-Swedish but Danish belief terms in the respective sentences.

If we cannot solve this problem by means of a direct philological analysis, there is also a more complicated way, namely to look at decalogue and catechism history in Sweden during the 15th century, and thus to weigh the possibilities of pagan or folk belief references in a Swedish work of 1442.

Both decalogue and catechism history are special fields of research, with an enormous literature, great achievement along with certain dark spots from a comparative point of view. Thus I shall not enter into the general history of the subject.<sup>42</sup> In a short summary, anticipating a close investigation, I tend to be of the

<sup>41</sup> See "selfver" (Nielsen, *Sjaelens trost*, 24, line 6) and "swikir fol..." (line 7), with Swedish counterparts. For the first good orientation on the Danish version see Johs. Brøndum-Nielsen, *Om fragmenterne af den gammeldanske Siæla Trøst, Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 9 (1934–1935), 187–192.

<sup>42</sup> See, however, some of the most often quoted classical works as e.g. Gerhard von Zezschwitz, *System der christlich-kirchlichen Katechetik*, Bd., 1, *Der Katechumenat*, Bd., 2, *Der Katechismus und der Katechese*, Leipzig, 1863–1869.; Peter Gobi, *Geschichte der Katechese im Abendlande vom Verfall des Katechumenats bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Kempten, 1880.; M. Hezard, *Histoire du catéchisme*, Paris, 1900.; E. Chr. Achelis, *Lehrbuch der praktischen Theologie*, (3. Aufl.), Leipzig, 1911 with rich excerpts from medieval source material. Geffcken, *Der Bildercatechismus*, 1855 was already quoted in this paper. Some of the new summarizing works give new aspects too: Leopold Lentner, *Katechetik und Religionsunterricht in Österreich*, Bd., 2, Innsbruck, 1959 (with rich material concerning the shift between medieval /Roman Catholic/ and Reformed /Protestant/ religious teaching in Austria), Ernst Christian Helmreich, *Religionsunterricht in Deutschland*, Hamburg – Düsseldorf, 1996 (about Germany), A.

opinion that the popularity and shaping of the text of the ST is due to its catechesis character, typical of both pre-reformation and Lutheran educative literature. Addressing the reader with the words (my) “dear son...” is a clear reflex of this.

Having assumed this much, contacts with Scandinavian (or even with Finnish) folk beliefs should not be overlooked. Catechistic questions have very often been asked heightening the significance of the questions themselves in the same way as certain factors in the spreading of witchcraft in Europe were also the results of some questions asked at the trials. Thus, in a roundabout way, the Vadstena/Nådendal text is in fact a source for – and not of – Swedish (and to some extent also for Finnish) folk beliefs. If it is not the oldest source material of Swedish supernatural beings, rather a part of a manual against them, which in culture history (in a very typical way) has contributed to their popularity. This very European, one might say “slavish,” translation does not I think reflect the pagan religion’s late survival in the North, but mirrors the uninterrupted medieval and reformed tradition which questions and teases folk beliefs there.

As is well-known, even the first known forms of the Decalogue (viz. the Elohist variant in Exod. 20:1–17, and the Deuteronomist variant in Deut. 5:6–18) are not the same word for word. Jewish and especially the (Jerusalem) Talmudic tradition have added new forms and various new explanations. It was Saint Augustine (who died in 430 A.D.) who placed the Ten Commandments at the very centre of Latin church ideology stressing the accepted division between the first three (relating to God) and the seven later ones (relating to other people). His list differs from the Talmudic one, and also from the list by Philo (who died in about 40 A.D.). In Jewish tradition the first law was about the special position of Jehovah, and the second was about his adoration as the only God, prohibiting the cult of idols. (The third law was about the defence of his name.) Philo of Alexandria, representing the Judeo-Christian view, accepts the adoration of the only god as the first commandment, the second is in his list being the interdiction of the cult of idols. Cults, and beliefs as related to other supernatural beings thus could be a topic of narrative relating to the first and the second explicit commandments. On the other hand, Augustine subsumes all the related elements into the first commandment (the second according to him being the prohibition of mentioning God’s name in vain). All stories about “heathen” or “pagan” gods and beliefs fall into the explanation of the first commandment.<sup>43</sup> Between Philo and Augustine different views occur as regards

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Läpple, *Kleine Geschichte der Katechese*, München, 1981.; Wolfgang Nastainczyk, *Katechese: Grundfragen und Grundformen*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, 1983, etc. all with further literature. See also the works mentioned in notes 51 and 53. About Decalogue problems see the works mentioned in note 43.

<sup>43</sup> There is no wonder that the literature about the Decalogue is very rich. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Le Décalogue*, Paris, 1927.; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späten Fassungen, die ori-*



the list, the words and the meanings of the commandments. We cannot say that learning of them was considered a prerogative of the catechumens or of the believers. Still the church fathers speculated much about the exact order and number of the commandments. Origen (184–254 A.D.) e.g. tries to combine what he also saw as the two separate first laws *non erunt tibi alii dii praeter me* and *non facies tibi idolum neque uilam similitudinem*, otherwise number ten of the Decalogue would collapse: *Haec omnia simul nonnulli putant esse unum mandatum. Quod si ita putetur, non completitur decem numerus mandatorum. Et ubi jam erit decalogi veritas?* (in *Exodum homilia VIII*, No. 2 = *Patrologia Graeca* tom. XII, col. 351.) Because of the varying character of the tradition, Augustine wanted to fix a clear and valid system of the decalogue, also relating to the catechism of the Christians. (See in details data already collected by Rentschka.) His list was accepted by, among others, Pseudo-Jerome, Isidore of Seville, Alcuin, Hugo de Saint-Victor, Petrus

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*ginale Komposition und seine Vorstufen*, Freiburg i. Br. – Göttingen, 1982.; or Frank Crusemann, *Bewahrung der Freiheit: Das Thema des Dekalogs in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, München, 1983 represent the main different lines in interpreting the origin and development of the Ten Commandment texts, and it is generally accepted that the best summary is E. Dublanchy, Decalogue, in A. Vacant – E. Mangenot – E. Amman (ed.), *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, IV, Paris, 1939, 161–176, from a theological point of view. Geffcken – not only in his quoted book (Geffcken, *Der Bildercatechismus*, 1855.), but also in his earlier treatise (Johannes Geffcken, *Über die verschiedene Einteilung des Decalogus und den Einfluss derselben auf den Cultus*, Leipzig, 1838.) – deals with the system and the order of the commandments. Other classical studies present different views, as Johann Mayer, *Geschichte des Catechumenats und der Catechese in den ersten sechs Jahrhunderten*, Kempten, 1868.; F. L. Steinmeyer, *Der Dekalog als catechetischer Lehrstoff*, Berlin, 1875.; L. Lemme, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung des Dekalogs*, Breslau, 1880.; Paul Rentschka, *Die Dekalogkatechese des heiligen Augustinus*, Kempten, 1905. (as a dissertation completed in 1904), R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue*, London, 1923.; J. J. Stamm, *Der Dekalog im Licht der neueren Forschung*, (2nd ed.), Bern – Stuttgart, 1962.; E. Nielsen, *The Ten Commandments*, London, 1968. (originally a Danish book: E. Nielsen, *De ti Bud*, København, 1965.), G. Bourgeault, *Decalogue et morale chrétienne: Enquete patristique sur l'utilisation et l'interprétation chrétienne du decalogue de ca. 60 à ca. 220*, Paris, 1971, etc. A good summarizing work is Bo. Reicke, *Die Zehn Worte in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Zählung und Bedeutung der Gebote in den verschiedenen Konfessionen*, Tübingen, 1973. For late medieval German material see above all Egino Weidenhiller, *Untersuchungen zur deutschsprachigen catechetischen Literatur des späten Mittelalters, (Nach den Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek.)*, München, 1965. It is very important that there are good summaries on Swedish catechisms (Bengt Ingmar Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen i Sverige under Medeltiden*, Uppsala, 1958.), resp. on confirmation (Carl-Gustaf Andrén, *Konfirmationen i Sverige under medeltid och reformations tid*, Lund, 1957.), with direct references to our topics. Dieter Harmening, Dekalog, in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, 1980, *Op. cit.*, Bd. 3, Lief. 2–3, 377–379. gave a good summary (also from a folkloristic point of view) on the German Decalogues von Nikolaus de Lira (died in 1340 A.D.) to Johann Schott, *Spiegel christlicher Walfart*, 1509, including 25 different works. On particular medieval and German problems see also the works mentioned in note 46.

Lombardus, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Bonaventura, Duns Scotus etc., i.e. by his contemporaries up to the 14th century. At the same time some church fathers still insisted on the Talmudic list. Strange and unprecedented variants also occurred. E.g. the Anglo-Saxon Decalogue of King Alfred (after 871 A.D.) lists the tenth (!) commandment as against gods of gold or of silver i.e. against idols (Schilter<sup>44</sup> and later he quotes other specific German variants too.)

In catechism manuals of the 13th century the Augustinian order was kept, as in *Speculum Ecclesiae* of St Edmund of Canterbury. During the 15th century the majority of the manuals (as e.g. *ABC des simples gens* which was republished in various works, like in *Liber Jesu Christi* or the *Manuale curatorum*) followed the same tradition. During the Reformation Luther kept the Catholic (and Augustinian) tradition alive. Calvin and his followers came back to the list of Philo. Socinians, Anglicans, the Greek United Church and some other denominations also accepted the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is absolutely inevitable that the words, systems and explanations of the Decalogue were thus always a matter of conscious decision, carefully taught, examined and explained. This preoccupation with the Decalogue was intimately connected with prayers, confession and religious traditions<sup>45</sup>. Theologians, jurists, philosophers and church councils often explained the meaning of the commandments in various ways (using philosophical, logical, legal, theological etc. arguments), and at church services more popular narratives served the same purpose. Exempla about the abrogation or danger of serving other supernatural beings than God belong to this tradition, created and controlled by the church everywhere. Obligation, divine and natural law, charity and mercy, sin and its confession all of those were connected with the topic.

The proper history of catechism from the first Christians to the time of the Reformation is a very complicated subject. We might think that it was Augustine who put the Decalogue at the very heart of catechesis exams and teaching. Even before him important Christian theologians like Clement of Alexandria (who died in about 215 A.D.) in his *Paidagogos* stressed the importance of the topic, but it was Augustine, who used the catechetical material for debating the heresy about the Decalogue in his sermons against Manichaeans, Donatians, Pelagianism etc. His tradition later became almost like a schoolbook, as in such works as *Questiones in Vetus Testamentum* by Isidore of Seville (560–636 A.D.), *De psalmodum libro exegesis* (traditionally attributed to Beda Venerabilis) and in many other works widely used during the Middle Ages.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> J. Schilter, *Thesaurus antiquitatum teutonicarum*, Ulm, 1728, 1, 76.

<sup>45</sup> See for summary Herm. Jos. Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche und das kanonische Bussverfahren*, I–II, Mainz, 1883–1898. (Nachdruck: Graz, 1958.)

<sup>46</sup> Especially from German point of view there is a very old and large literature, beginning from e.g. Schilter, *Thesaurus*, 1728, and followed by classical works, as F. U. H. Wasserschleben, *Die*

If we want to understand the importance of the Decalogue in North Europe, we should remember that the Ten Commandments of God served as the “preface” to the *Leges* of the Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred (soon after 871 A.D.).<sup>47</sup> Probably the first important clergyman in Northern Europe who paid serious attention to God’s law was the archbishop of Lund, Andreas Suneson (who died in 1228) in his *Hexaëmeron* following the theological conclusions of Hugo de Saint-Victor.<sup>48</sup> A Dominican theologian, Augustinus de Dacia (who died in 1285) has a short chapter on the topic in his *Rotulus pugillaris*. St Birgitta (1303–1373), the foremost religious personality of Medieval Sweden is another well-educated person, who organized around herself the famous Vadstena monastery, mentioned often above. In her Revelations (*Uppenbarelsen*) she also emphasizes the importance of God’s commandments. The same problem was also raised at various church meetings and synods. Northern cultural history places ST along this line, mentioning as a very typical catechetical work the Danish translation of Martin Luther’s *Betbuchlein* in 1526. The most important post-reformational catechetical work, by the Jesuit Petrus Canisius (died in 1597) *Summa doctrinae christianae* (1555) was already printed in 1579 in a Swedish translation.<sup>49</sup>

Just how complex the question of the Decalogue (and catechism) in every country actually was, we can see from some German data. There, besides Augustine and Isidore’s *Questiones in Vetus Testamentum* the *Sententiae* by Petrus Lombardus (1095–1160) was also popular, as can be seen from the precious Strasburg *Biblia*

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*Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, Leipzig, 1851, (Nachdruck: Graz, 1958.); V. Hasak, *Der christliche Glaube des deutschen Volkes beim Schlusse des Mittelalters*, Regensburg, 1868.; Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher*, 1883–1898.; Franz Falk, *Drei Beichtbuchlein nach den 10 Geboten aus der Frühzeit der Buchdruckerkunst*, Münster i.W., 1907.; Stephan Beissel, *Zur Geschichte der Gebetbücher*, (Stimmen aus Maria Laach.), Freiburg i. Br., 1909.; P. Sprockhoff, *Althochdeutsche Katecheti*, (Dissertation), Berlin, 1912.; P. Schulze, *Die Entwicklung der Hauptiaster- und Haupttugendlehre von Gregor dem Grossen bis Petrus Lombardus und ihr Einfluss auf die frühe deutsche Literatur*, (Dissertation), Greifswald, 1914.; Georg Domel, *Die Entstehung des Gebetbuches und seine Ausstattung in Schrift, Bild und Schmuck*, Köln, 1921.; Paul Althaus, *Forschungen zur evangelischen Gebetsliteratur*, Gütersloh, 1927.; Bernhard Poschmann, *Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im Ausgang des christlichen Altertums*, München, 1928.; B. Poschmann, *Die abendländische Kirchenbusse im frühen Mittelalter*, Breslau, 1930.; Josef Andreas Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Innsbruck, 1932.; W. Matz, *Die althochdeutschen Glaubensbekenntnisse*, (Dissertation), Halle, 1932. etc. In all new handbooks or encyclopedias of German literature or culture history there are good summarizing entries on religious literary genres. International contacts, e.g. Celtic-German or French-German were studied carefully. From those only to German-Scandinavian contacts we shall refer.

<sup>47</sup> See Schilter, *Thesaurus*, tome I, appendix Monumenta catechetica, 76–77.

<sup>48</sup> Gertz, M. Cl.(ed.), *Andrae Sunonis Hexaëmeron libri XII*, Havniae, 1892, 86–106.

<sup>49</sup> See for a short summary Jarl Gallén, Buden, *KHLNM II*, 1957, columns 335–338.

*latina cum glossa ordinaria W. Strabonis* (1480). Just before the Reformation a Catholic priest in Basle, Johann Ulrich Surgant in his manual of practical theology *Manuale curatorum* (written in 1502, printed in 1503) published the French and German texts of the Augustinian commandments. More interesting is the fact that in Basle in 1526 Sebastian Münster (1489–1552) translated the famous medieval Jewish treatise *Decalogus praeceptorum divinatorum* (printed in 1527) by Abraham Ibn Ezra, also, however, including the Augustinian version of the commandments.<sup>50</sup>

Luther (1483–1546) was in this respect a very typical representative of his age too. Already from 1516 on he was referred in various ways to the Decalogue as understood by the Augustinian tradition. He published his “shortened” German version of the Ten Commandments *Eyn kurzcz form der zehen gepott* first in 1518 (?), then again in 1520. A “complete” version is to be found in his translation of the Pentateuch (1523). Both his “small” and his “large” Catechism (1529) start with comments from the Decalogue. “*Der kleine Catechismus*” and to some extent the larger “*Deudsch Catechismus*” were later followed and often translated in most of the protestant countries, soon available in the Scandinavian, Baltic and also Finnish (!) languages. Already in his 1520 treatise *Von den guten Werckkenn* Luther deals extensively with the problem of not having other gods, in his German words “Du soit nit andere Gotter haben”. The influence of Luther’s catechetical writings is more considerable than one might imagine. Between 1529 and 1546 (the year of Luther’s death) his small Catechism was published in 88 printed versions, and even in the 17th century multilingual editions of it appeared (e.g. a version in 8 languages was published most probably in Sweden, without year and place: *Catechesis minor octo linguarum hebraice videlicet reddita et cum explanatione in graecum, latinum, germanicum, italicum, gallicum, bohemicum et sveticum sermonem conversa*). Even in Italy Luther’s catechisms were in actual use until the 20th century.<sup>51</sup>

For the Calvinists Calvin’s famous *Institutio* (1536) already have clear instructions on commandments and catechisms. The most important special catechism was written by a Basle priest, Johannes Oekolampad (1482–1531). Its first edition *Frag und Antwort in Verhörung der Kinder*, Basle, 1537, was an anonymous publication, but in later editions (from 1540 on) his name did appear. In 1544 a

<sup>50</sup> Reicke, *Die Zehn Worte*, 11–12.

<sup>51</sup> On Luther’s catechisms see primarily the critical edition: D. Martin Luthers *Werke* 30, 1, Weimar, 1910., with commentaries to *Der kleine Catechismus*, 1929., by O. Albrecht, and to the *Deudsch Catechismus* by O. Bremer. See furthermore O. Albrecht, *Luthers Catechismen*, Leipzig, 1915. A good bibliography of Luther’s pertinent works J. Benzing, *Lutherbibliographie*, Lief. 1–3, Baden-Baden, 1966. For a more general view see J. Meyer, *Historischer Kommentar zu Luthers kleinem Catechismus*, Berlin, 1929.; E. Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, I–V, Leipzig, 1902–1913. and F. Chors, *Die evangelischen Catechismusversuche vor Luthers Enchiridion*, I–V, Berlin, 1900–1907.

Latin translation was published, with additions from Oswald Myconius. His “small” and “large” catechisms were very popular until about 1627. Both the grouping of the commandments (three–seven or four–six) and the wording of an expressive prohibition of portraying God (the major points of difference between Lutherism and Calvinism) vary in the different editions, and after the intransigent Calvinist Johann Jakob Grynaeus (1586–1617) the ban of pictures was expressively added to the text. In general the “small” Calvinist catechism was used in oral teaching and in the examination of (school)children.<sup>52</sup>

Roman Catholic catechisms, following the popularity of Luther’s, were very similar both in purpose and in content. The numeration of the commandments was in both cases the same (i.e. the Augustinian order), and explanations were also very similar. Luther spoke out against the adoration of pictures, but not against pictures as such, and did not urge their destruction – another common point with the Catholic church. This is the reason why some of the authors of “Catholic” catechisms were not in fact members of the Roman Catholic Church. Erasmus wrote his *Explanatio symboli, decalogi praeceptorum et dominicae praecationis* (1533) in Freiburg/Breisgau. Typical Jesuit works were Petrus Canisius’s “large” catechism *Summa doctrinae* (1555) and his “small” one, *Kurzer Unterricht* (1560), directed at German Catholics. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) decided to revitalize Catholic “*propaganda fidei*.” As early as 1566 a larger work *Catechismus romanus* was published, which some years later in an Antwerp edition (1574) was explained to a greater audience (A. Fabricius Leodius: *Catechismus romanus ex decreto concilii tridentini editus, nunc elucidatus*).<sup>53</sup>

We have referred to German data above because it was from this territory that Scandinavian countries received the most important influence. In Germany from the 14th to 16th centuries religious life became very complex, sometimes allowing the expression of extremist views.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Reicke, *Die Zehn Worte*, 17–20.

<sup>53</sup> On Roman Catholic catechisms see, among others: C. Moufang, *Katholische Katechismen des 16. Jahrhunderts in deutscher Sprache*, Mainz, 1881; F. Probst, *Geschichte der katholischen Katechese*, Breslau, 1886.; P. Bahlmann, *Deutschlands katholische Katechismen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Münster, 1894.; Rudolf Padberg, *Erasmus als Katechat: Der literarische Beitrag des Erasmus von Rotterdam zur katholischen Katechese des 16. Jahrhunderts, Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Katechese*, Freiburg i. Br., 1956.; K. Schrems, *Die Methode katholischer Gemeinkatechese im deutschen Sprachgebiet vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt–Bern–Las Vegas, Hrsg. von Wolfgang Nastainczyk, 1979. Text edition: Streicher, F. (ed.), *Catechismi Jatini et germanici*, 1–2, (Societatis Jesu selecti scriptores II, 1, 1–2.), Romae, 1933–1936.

<sup>54</sup> See for an initial introduction Hasak, *Der christliche Glaube*, 1868.; Weidenhiller, *Untersuchungen zur deutschsprachigen*, 1965.

There is a good specialist literature on catechisms in medieval Sweden.<sup>55</sup> According to it from the 13th century the Ten Commandments played a central role in catechetical tradition, following scholastic schools (e.g. Bonaventura *Collationes de decern praeceptis*, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Edmund of Canterbury *Speculum ecclesiae*, Laurentius Gallus etc.). Councils in Clairmont 1268, Lambeth 1281, Cahors 1289, Lavaur 1368 etc. stressed the importance of the Ten Commandments in practical catechetical teaching. The Chancellor at Paris university, John of Gerson in the introduction to his *Opusculum tripartitum de preceptis decalogi, de confessione et de arte moriendi* (beginning of the 15th century) – a book (favoured so much by Huizinga) which is also available in the medieval collection of Uppsala library – gives practical instruction concerning the combination of Decalogue and confession too. The decisions of the Tortosa Council (1429), J. U. Surgants *Manuale curatorum* (printed in 1503) and other documents were also known in Sweden. A famous work, *Summula* by Laurentius of Vaxala or magister Mathias's *Homo conditus* deal with the Ten Commandments from a catechetical point of view. The so-called “Old Swedish Pentateuch”, the revelations of St Birgitta and other medieval manuscripts in Sweden show a zealous interest in catechetical interpretations. As a manuscript attributed to a certain Ericus Johannis (from Vadstena, under number C 36, from 1470's) shows, the Augustinian tradition was very much alive in medieval Sweden. ST is a part of this tradition. Another Vadstena-manuscript (C 923) *Nota tabulam de decern preceptis* versified short summaries of the Ten Commandments and several sermons about them show an uninterrupted Swedish tradition from the middle ages to the age of the Lutheran reformation in the North.<sup>56</sup> As it was already mentioned about the history of confession and penitence in medieval Sweden,<sup>57</sup> and later more specifically concerning the sources of Agricola's prayer book,<sup>58 59</sup> Finnish tradition has been inseparable from the Swedish.

Several scholars have also studied the breakthrough of the Reformation in Northern Europe from the point of view of religious cults and beliefs. General

<sup>55</sup> Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, especially 235–257.

<sup>56</sup> Besides the general works, quoted elsewhere in this paper special attention might be paid to the Scandinavian tradition of prayer books, sermons and alike. See e.g. R. Geete, *Svenska böner från medeltiden*, Stockholm, 1907–1909.; Sigfrid Estborn, *Evangeliska svenska bönböcker*, Stockholm–Lund, 1929.; Anne Riising, *Danmarks middelalderlige praediken*, København, 1969. etc.

<sup>57</sup> Jaakko Gummerus, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Buss- und Beichtwesens in der schwedischen Kirche des Mittelalters*, I, Uppsala, 1900.

<sup>58</sup> J. Gummerus, *Mikael Agricolan Rukouskirja ja sen lähteet*, I, Helsinki, 1941.

<sup>59</sup> In its final form J. Gummerus, *Mikael Agricolan Rukouskirja ja sen lähteet*, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia 44, Helsinki, 1955, [Finnish ed. of 1941.].

histories of religion<sup>60</sup> as well as special studies<sup>61</sup> tried to explain, why and how the medieval church practice had been changed into a new model. For our topic, the problem of a shift in the character of prayer books and communion seems to be the most important,<sup>62</sup> but other topics, like psalter changes might also be of interest, especially when we remember that Agricola's list of pagan gods appears in an introduction to his Finnish translation of psalms. Although it is not easy to give a concise picture of this many-sided change, we can say that the ecclesiastic reform took place in Sweden (and Finland) within a very short period of time. At the Strängnäs legislative assembly meeting (*riksmöte*) in June, 1529, the Swedish king ordered the (re)shaping of the Swedish holy mass ritual. In October, 1536 at the coronation of Queen Margaretha Eiriksdotter, in Uppsala the Swedish language mass and the necessary handbooks were discussed. During 1538 (and 1539) the entire Swedish kingdom accepted the new ritual. Special care was taken in Finland, where the new church life was established in an even more rapid way. Bishop Martti Skytte (1480–1550), then his secretary and follower, Bishop Mikael Agricola (1510–1557) were the two people who completed the shift in religious traditions in Finland. Agricola studied at Wittenberg University from 1536–1539. His first book (*ABCkiria* between 1538 and 1543) belongs to the catechetical tradition. Another of his typical works *Rucouskiria Bibliasta* (1544) is in fact a later version of a common prayerbook.<sup>63</sup> For the same topic this Finnish translation of the psalms (1551) is of the greatest importance, containing the famous list of Karelian and Häme pagan “gods.”<sup>64</sup> Together, the three books by Agricola clearly testify as to how long and uninterrupted a tradition existed around the ST in Finland.

Another interesting fact is that the famous C III 19 manuscript of the Helsinki University Library, *Mathiae Joannis Westh Codex* from Vemo/Vehmaa (about 1547–1549) contains a text on fol 111–123 called “*Seiuin vachuistos iohutus /a iäki-*

<sup>60</sup> E.g. Hjalmar Holmquist, *Reformationstidevarvet 1521–1611*, in *Svenska kyrkans historia*, utgiven av Hjalmar Holmquist och Hilding Pleijel, III. bandet, Stockholm, 1933.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Olav D. Schalin, *Kulthistoriska studier till belysande av reformationens genomförande i Finland*, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland 305, Helsingfors, 1946.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Estborn, *Evangeliska svenska*, 1929.

<sup>63</sup> See Gummerus, *Mikael Agricolan*, 1941., with references to themes mentioned above.

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. Martti Haavio, *Karjalan jumalat, Uskontotieteellinen tutkimus*, Porvoo–Helsinki, 1959. Agricola's text available in various publications, both by folklorists, linguists, historians of religion. There are some hitherto neglected aspects, from the point of view of comparative philology (see Voigt, *On Baltic and Balto-Finnic Lists*, 1986.), I cannot deal with in this paper. Haavio's quoted interpretation is neither the first, nor the last word on the problem, nevertheless a very interesting attempt to connect the list of “gods” with the ecclesiastic calendar. For general orientation see Gummerus, *Mikael Agricolan*, 1955., further literature quoted in Rapola, Martti (ed.), *Ruotsin ajan kirjallisuus*, (Suomen kirjallisuus II), Helsinki, 1963, 593–595.

*tys aina kyliän keuluoline, mutta caicken enimmään cooleman tuskas*” from the year 1546, which is in fact a translation from a printed Swedish text from 1537 “*Sielenes tröst och läkedom*.”<sup>65</sup> This text, in fact unknown to international ST researchers, might deserve a special study.<sup>66</sup>

Swedish church history in general stressed the importance of the years of change between 1544 and 1560, and called them a “turning point in folk religion.”<sup>67</sup> From the above it might be clear just how complicated the term “folk” is in this formulation. Ljungberg in his famous book read once by Harva, discussing the origins of the problem of possible Finnish belief contacts of ST texts, and in mentioning ST wanted to speak about the Viking times (!) and among the twelve chapters of his book only in the 11th chapter did he deal with connections between high religion, low religion and magic, as he says. In his book the only late medieval case is the ST, without a detailed commentary. The reason for such a treatment might be that he, following Boudriot, sees in ST a reflection of Scandinavian folk beliefs much older than those of medieval.<sup>68</sup>

Another area for further research might be the study of medieval Scandinavian prayer books. Besides older, mostly German literature<sup>69</sup> Scandinavian prayer books were examined already before the veent ST publications. Since then a magnificent multivolume edition of medieval Danish prayer books has been published,<sup>70</sup> referring to early English, medieval European and German parallels. Besides other important data about folk beliefs in the Middle Ages, *AM* 75, 8<sup>e</sup> contains a prayer (*No. 516a*, attached to the first commandment) which refers not only to Augustine, but also warns about magic, fate beliefs etc., much along the lines of ST.<sup>71</sup> Not very common in ethnographic literature, there is a good review of the Danish prayer books publication, even a small monograph, but this, dealing with only the first two volumes, does not make any comments relevant to our topics.<sup>72 73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Schalin, *Kulthistoriska*, 218.

<sup>66</sup> On the codex in general see P. J. Kurvinen, *Suomen virsirunouden alkuvaiheet vuoteen 1640*, Helsinki, 1929.

<sup>67</sup> Holmquist, *Reformationstidevarvet*, 310–318.

<sup>68</sup> Ljungberg, *Den nordiska religionen*, 286–289.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher*, 1883–1898.

<sup>70</sup> Karl Martin Nielsen, *Middelalderens danske brfnebog*, I–V, København, 1945–1982.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Josef Szövérfy, *Volkskundliches in mittelalterlichen Gebetbüchern*, Randbemerkungen zu K. M. Niensens Textausgabe, *Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser udgivet af Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab* - Bind 37, nr. 3, København, 1958.

<sup>73</sup> Besides the mentioned works see also Axel Mante, *Ein niederdeutsches Gebetbuch aus der zweiten Hälfte des XIV. Jahrhunderts*, (Bistumsarchiv, Trier, Nr. 528,) Lund – Kopenhagen, 1960.



As for the complete understanding of the ST story on the first commandment, it was also a Danish scholar who emphasized the general importance of a generic approach to medieval legends, and also in particular to the ST exempla.<sup>74</sup> Another new attempt might be to involve iconographic studies in the ST-research. Illustrations of the Decalogue are very popular and continuous in medieval Europe. Laun in her special study practically starts from *Concordantiae Caritatis* of Ulrich von Lilienfeld, and later deals directly with ST.<sup>75</sup> According to her we cannot yet find any direct iconographic sources to the supernatural beings mentioned in the first commandment stories in ST. Only very recently folklore research once again stressed the importance of Decalogue studies.<sup>76</sup> Here again the true exempla, and not the small insert texts seem to be more important.<sup>77</sup> The German “large” ST

<sup>74</sup> Tue Gad, *Legenden i dansk middelalder*, København, 1961, especially 270–271., as about one of the summarizing works in the Middle Ages.

<sup>75</sup> Laun, Christiane (geb. Gocht), *Bildkatechese im Spätmittelalter: Allegorische und typologische Auslegungen des Dekalogs*, München, 1979, 88–89, 133–134.

<sup>76</sup> Harmening, *Dekalog*, 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Studies of exempla and preachers’ stories have recently become a very important field of folklore, literary and religious studies. There is no need to list here all the important works along this line. Still I think I have to refer to some of them, as e.g. L. Mehler, *Beispiele zur gesamten christkatholischen Lehre, nebst Schrift- und Väterstellen nach der Ordnung des Katechismus von P. Canisius*, I, Regensburg, 1851.; C. G. N. de Vooys, *Middelnederlandse legenden en exempelen*, (Dissertation, Leiden), ’s-Gravenhage, 1900.; R. Windel, *Zur christlichen Erbauungsliteratur der vorreformatorischen Zeit*, Halle, 1925.; J. Th. Welter, *L’Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen age*, Paris – Toulouse, 1927.; H. Willms, *Eikon*, München, 1935. Still the best summaries are, especially for German material: Wolfgang Stammeler, *Mittelalterliche Prosa in deutscher Sprache*, in *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriss*, (2., Überarbeitete Aufl.) 11, Berlin, 1960, 749–1102.; Moser-Rath, Elfriede (ed.), *Predigtmärlein der Barockzeit: Exempel, Sage, Schwank und Fabel in geistlichen Quellen des oberdeutschen Raumes*, Berlin, 1964. Methodologically important: Rudolf Schenda, *Stand und Aufgaben der Exempelforschung*, *Fabula* 10 (1969), 69–85. A first attempt to a catalogue: Tubach, *Index*, 1969. Important collective work: Bruckner, Wolfgang (ed.), *Volkserzählung und Reformation: Ein Handbuch zur Tradierung und Funktion von Erzähstoffen und Erzählliteratur im Protestantismus*, Berlin, 1974. See further E. H. Rehermann, *Das Predigtexempel bei protestantischen Theologen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, 1977.; W. Bruckner, *Narrativistik: Versuch einer Kenntnisnahme theologischer Erzählforschung*, *Fabula* 20 (1979), 18–33.; Claude Bremond – Jacques Le Goff – Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L’Exemplum*, Paris, 1982.; the necessary and rich summaries in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*: Michael Chesnutt – Wolfgang Bruckner, *Exempelsammlungen*, in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, *Op.cit.*, Bd. 4, Lief. 2–3, 1983, 592–626.; W. Bruckner, *Erbauung, Erbauungsliteratur*, in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, Bd. 4, Lief. 1, Berlin–New York, Hrsg. von Kurt Ranke, 1982, 108–120.; Christoph Daxelmüller, *Exemplum*, in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, *Op.cit.*, Bd. 4, Lief. 2–3, 1983, 627–649. Concerning medieval Dutch legends and exempla, important to our topic see still C.G. N. de Vooys, *Middelnederlandse legenden en exempelen: Bijdrage tot de kennis van de prozalitteratuur in het volksgeloof der middeleeuwen*, (2nd ed.), Groningen – Den Haag, 1926 (which is the second version of de Vooys, *Middelnederlandse legenden*, 1900).

figures here again as one of the most important sources. As we know from the exemplary book by Kouri<sup>78</sup> among others, German religious literature has directly influenced Finnish religious works, in later centuries as well. (Other, more complicated influences, as e.g. from Celtic or Jewish sources might deserve more attention than usual.<sup>79</sup>)

In sum, our investigations of ST have shown us that there is no direct reference in ST to folk beliefs in Sweden (or among the Finns) in the way believed by earlier research. On the other hand, because of its cultural historical circumstances, the Swedish translation of ST (especially with its Finnish contacts) i.e. the whole work is a most important source for comparative folk religion studies in Northern Europe. Furthermore, I hope, I have been able to verify that the same trend leads straight into Agricola's famous Finnish works.<sup>80</sup> (That is the reason why the relatively short

<sup>78</sup> E. I. Kouri, *Saksalaisen käyttökirkjallisuuden vaikutus Suomessa 1600-luvulla*, Ericus Ericin Postillan lähteet, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia 129, Helsinki, 1984.

<sup>79</sup> See e.g. Karl-Erich Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott: Eine rabbinische Homilie zum Ersten Gebot, (PesR 20)*, Bern – Frankfurt, 1976.; Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Die Stimme von Sinai: Ein rabbinisches Lesebuch zu den Zehn Geboten*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien, 1981.; Raymund Kottje, *Überlieferung und Rezeption der irischen Bussbücher auf dem Kontinent*, in Löwe, Heinz (ed.), *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, 1, Tübingen, 1981, 511–523.; already Szövérfy, *Volkskundliches*, 1958. etc.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps I should mention here two further points of possible research. Excellent entries in the famous Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid (e.g. “buden” in Vol. II /1957/, “botsakrament” *ibid.*, “bot,” “bön,” and “bönböcker,” *ibid.*, “bibelkommentarer” in Vol. I /1956/, “katekes och katekisation” in Vol. VIII /1963/, even “religiös prosalitteratur” in Vol. XIV /1969/) give very good summaries, and are for our topic even more important since their major author is Jarl Gallen, an expert in medieval Finnish church. From the Supplementum volume (XXX in 1977) in entry “bönböcker” Finnish data are collected by Kustaa Vilkkuna. Pagan versus Christian beliefs are in general well-contrasted in summaries, and traditional formulas or alike are since generations carefully studied by scholars (see e.g. H. F. Massmann, *Die deutschen Abschwörungs-, Glauben-, Beicht- und Betformeln vom achten bis zum zwölften Jahrhunderts*, Quedlinburg – Leipzig, 1839, reprinted in 1969.; or Saupe, *Der indiculus*, 1891., as an exemplary treatment.) Despite the efforts by Krohn, Harva, Haavio, Honko etc., Finnish folklorists did not clear up all the possible cases for such interaction. Kuusi in his seminal essay (Matti Kuusi, *Pakanuuden ja kristinuskon murros suomalaisen kansanrunouden kuvastimessa, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia*, 56 (1955), 145–164.), forgotten by his colleagues, warns from too quick conclusions in this respect, especially interpreting folk poetry in terms of old “pagan” beliefs. “Kansanrunot eivät ole sen enemää historiaelisia kuin uskontotieteellisiä asiakirjoja. Neovat ennen muuta runoja. Uuno Kailaan ja P. Mustapään runoista voi 3. vuosituhatannen tutkija löytää arvokasta valaistusta 1920-, 1930- ja 1940-luvun historiaan ja uskonnollisiin katsomuksiin, mutta epäkriittillinen lukija voi niiden nojalla johtua päättämään, että nyky-suomalaiset ovat palvoneet muinaiskreikkalaisia jumalia ja käyneet sotaa keihäin ja kiivin. Sama vaara uhkaa sitä, kansantradition avuin tunkeutua esimerkiksi 12. vuosisadan kirkkohistoriaan ja kansanuskoon.” (Kuusi, *Pakanuuden*, 148.)

catechetic story in ST remains in fact a key source for understanding late medieval folk beliefs in Northern Europe.)<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> In my paper finished by autumn 1985 I could use as latest general summaries on German texts: Köttelwesch, Clemens (ed.), *Bibliographisches Handbuch der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft 1945–1969*, I, Frankfurt, 1973, Sp. 1245–1249, and Ewald Erb, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1160*, Berlin, 1976, 253–254, knowing that important later summaries might be published soon. As far as I know there is no direct Hungarian aspect of the topic, still once I shall use the same method as for the first Hungarian catechisms, following Canisius, i.e. the rich material translated and edited by Gergely Vásárhelyi (1561–1623), and others. See in general Dezső Szentiványi, *A katekizmus története Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1944.

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# “DEATH OF GOD”: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This essay will consider the philosophical and theological implications of the famous notion, familiar to the West since its pronouncement by Nietzsche, of the Death of God. I consider Nietzsche's dictum essential for a proper understanding of contemporary modernity. Not that Nietzsche invented this notion; before him classical German philosophy used it in a certain sense and a version of this idea belongs to the central tenets of Christianity. Yet post-Nietzschean thought gave a particular emphasis to the “death” (in a certain sense) of “god” (in a certain sense) so that new approaches to the divine emerged beginning with phenomenologists like Scheler, Husserl, or Heidegger to philosophical theologians like Richard Swinburne. However, the focus of my text will be given to the experience of “Auschwitz” and the subsequent realization of the need for a radical rethinking of the Classical concept of God in Jewish and Christian philosophical theology. Hans Jonas and Johann Baptist Metz are the most important authors I want to analyse, but other thinkers, such as Richard Rubinstein receive some consideration as well. I argue that the notion and reality of the divine has not fulfilled its fate with the experience of the Death of God in contemporary history and culture. A rebirth of the divine in some form, as for instance Levinas' *L'Autre* or Heidegger's *Ereignis*, is already underway; the variety of theistically oriented philosophies indicate surface phenomena of such a process. Finally, I raise the question whether the notion of the Death of God can be seen as representing evil; and if yes, then what role this evil may have in the history of the notion of the Death of God.

## INTRODUCTION

The notion of the Death of God should be distinguished from the phrase “God is dead” originally formulated by Hegel and Nietzsche. The former refers to a complex cultural phenomenon stemming from ancient beliefs of dying and rising gods in Egyptian and Middle-East religions, religions fundamentally determined by the experience of biological and astronomical circulations. This kind of belief was



reinterpreted in Christianity so that the notion of the Death of God has become intrinsic to Christian faith. Nietzsche's dictum refers to the experience of the invalidity of nineteenth-century theistic beliefs and their metaphysical implications. As a result, the dictum "God is dead" can be seen as a modification of the ancient experience of the notion of the Death of God, a modification which led to intense cultural discussions throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. These discussions often refer to Nietzsche's dictum and the ancient notion of the Death of God as interchangeable; however, their relationship is like that of a genus and a species. In order to assess the significance of the related discussions in contemporary religious studies, theology and philosophy, we need to investigate various dimensions of the general notion and locate the significance of the phrase "God is dead" in this context. Only on the basis of such investigations will we be able to make an overall evaluation of the problem of the Death of God with special reference to its connection to the problem of evil. On a general level, the history of thought about the Death of God is also the history of thought about evil: while in our earlier sources evil is naturally present in all goings-on in the world, or even in the divine as well, later notions of evil gradually display its non-synthesizable, ultimately inconceivable character.

## DEATH OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

For the scholar of the history of religions it is a surprising fact that a fairly common motif in religious history, such as the death of a divine being, could have caused such an influential intellectual movement as the notion of "God is Dead" did throughout the twentieth century. For not only has death always been one of the central targets of reflection in religions and religious-like forms but the death of gods or a god is a recurring topic found in a number of religions. The significance of the death of a god is never small; death itself is central in all human endeavours. In most of the religious forms we are familiar with, nevertheless, the death of a god is one of the most important contents of their related mythologies, liturgies, philosophical and theological reflections. Charles-Francois Dupuis, the first systematic historian of religions in modern times, demonstrated this fact in a complex fashion in his monumental *L'origin de tous les cultes* of 1795. Although Dupuis' interest mainly concerned the Western history of religions, based especially on classical authors, his central thesis can be considered as the first promulgation of the modern notion of the Death of God. He quotes Firmicius' statement against the followers of the cult of Mithras: "It is a known fact that your god is dead" (Dupuis 1795, vol. V.: 241). Dupuis suggests that all important religions had an explicit or implicit astronomical framework, in which the birth, life and death of the chief god were

moments of an allegorical narrative of the experience of the daily and yearly circulations of the sun and other stellar bodies. Just as the sun sets every day and in the winter period it loses its energy, Tammuz, Marduk, Osiris, or Mithras were doomed to lose their life as well. Even if their death was conceived on the basis of a natural process, they were seen at the same time as victims of the murderous act of an evil god. As the Christian God is nothing more than a late reiteration of ancient forms of the sun-cult, as Dupuis simplistically held, this god can be considered “dead” not only in the metaphorical sense, but also in the sense that this genealogy reveals this god’s imaginary character.

Just a few decades after the death of Dupuis, Herbert Spencer began to develop the outlines of the “ghost-theory”, according to which divine beings of various sorts emerged from the belief in ghosts of deceased human beings. Accordingly, to be divine is to be dead, whereas the meaning of death here certainly differs from our sense of death today. As Spencer explains, death was considered as “a suspended animation” by primitive tribes, yet dead beings can be causes of natural occurrences, return to life and be killed and die again (Spencer 1921, vol. 1). The close connection between death and divinity, or supernatural causation, is variously argued for by Spencer, who did not change his euhemerism in view of the important criticism of Chantepie de la Saussaye. The latter is right in pointing out that, in most religious forms, the cult of the dead and the cult of the gods are clearly distinguished (Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 38ff.). As he writes: ‘Animistic conceptions may enter into the worship of ancestors, heroes, and saints; but other ideas are so essential to these cults, that they cannot be regarded merely as modifications of the worship of souls. Sometimes living persons as well as the dead enjoy divine veneration’ (*ibid.*: 112–3). Yet Spencer and E. B. Tylor have an important point in demonstrating the significance of dead beings in religious forms, beings that are divinities of some sort.

J. C. Frazer too realized the importance of the motif of the Death of God in various religious forms in the framework of his theoretically inspired anthropology. As he writes, for example,

*The Greenlanders believed that a wind could kill their most powerful god, and that he would certainly die if he touched a dog. When they heard of the Christian God, they kept asking if he never died, and being informed that he did not, they were much surprised, and said that he must be a very great god indeed ... A North American Indian stated that the world was made by the Great Spirit. Being asked which Great Spirit he meant, the good one or the bad one, Oh, neither of them, replied he, the Great Spirit that made the world is dead long ago. He could not possibly have lived as long as this (Frazer 1911: 3).*

Frazer also mentions commonplaces from the classical literature, which were quoted by Dupuis as well:

*The grave of Zeus, the great god of Greece, was shown to visitors in Crete as late as about the beginning of our era. The body of Dionysus was buried at Delphi beside the golden statue of Apollo, and his tomb bore the inscription, Here lies Dionysus dead, the son of Semele ... Apollo himself was buried at Delphi; for Pythagoras is said to have carved an inscription on his tomb, setting forth how the god had been killed by the python and buried under the tripod (Frazer 1911: 3).*

With the rise of the phenomenology of religion in the late nineteenth century, the relationship between death and religion became even more obvious. Chantepie de la Saussaye calls attention to two aspects of the importance of death in ancient Egypt. On the one hand, deceased human souls become united with the god of death, Osiris; on the other hand, Osiris himself dies a violent death; he is the archetype of the dying-and-rising-gods well-known from other religions of the Near-East (Chantepie de la Saussaye 1891: 421). Gerardus van der Leeuw speaks of the importance of death in Greek mystery-cults (van der Leeuw 1925: 65, 92 and 127). Mircea Eliade, the most important historian of religion in our age, emphasizes the moment of death in the framework of “the Myth of Eternal Return” (Eliade 1959 a). Eliade was planning to write a history of the mythology of death (Eliade 2010: 16), which he never accomplished. In his various works, he proposes outlines of such an overall consideration. Thus in *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade often returns to the motif of an initial and decisive death of a god. As he writes,

*According to the myths of the earliest cultivators, man became what he is – mortal, sexualized, and condemned to work – in consequence of a primordial murder; in illo tempore a divine being, quite often a woman or a maiden, sometimes a child or a man, allowed himself to be immolated in order that tubers or fruit trees should grow from his body. This first murder basically changed the mode of being of human life. The immolation of the divine being inaugurated not only the need to eat but also the doom of death and, in consequence, sexuality, the only way to ensure the continuity of life. The body of the immolated divinity was changed into food; its soul descended underground, where it established the Land of the Dead (Eliade 1959 b: 101).*

Ancient Greek imagination was flexible enough to create complex notions of serene immortality and miserable mortality with respect to various members of its pantheon. In Homer, the gods are passionately involved in human matters, but their passions are those of the never-dying. In a different tradition, though,

the genealogy of the gods is the genealogy of their death, a death which however rarely results in a cessation of all kinds of existence. Cronus violently seizes the highest power from his father Uranus; Zeus revolts against Cronus and dethrones him. Cronus castrates Uranus and Zeus overthrows Cronus in the war of the Titans – tales which contain in a certain form the notion of a divine death. While Uranus becomes a *deus otiosus*, Cronus has to remain in Tartarus, the realm of the dead. The well-known story of a lacerated Dionysus (and his alter-egos) leads to revival; still, the horrendous death of this mythological figure is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, his cruel death is unique in ancient mythologies; second, the reappearance of this figure in philosophical works in the nineteenth century led to the emergence of a new interpretation of the notion of the Death of God (Woodard 2007).

One well-known and perhaps historical instance of the notion of the Death of God is famously described by Plutarch. The point of the story about the death of the “great Pan” is the mortality of divine beings. Plutarch writes:

*As a lamp when it is being lighted has no terrors, but when it goes out is distressing to many, so the great souls have a kindling into life that is gentle and inoffensive, but their passing and dissolution often, as at the present moment, fosters tempests and storms, and often infects the air with pestilential properties* (Plutarch 1999: 403).

In the Christian interpretation of Eusebius, the story of the death of the Great Pan referred to “the overthrow of the demons of which there was no record at any other time” (Eusebius 1903: 90–1, Ch. V/XVII). On a more general level, Clement of Alexandria speaks of divine death in a cryptic fashion, when he compares the fragments of divine truth, recognized by pagan philosophers, to the torn pieces of the body of Christ: “The barbarian and Hellenic philosophy has torn off a fragment of eternal truth not from the mythology of Dionysus, but from the theology of the ever-living Word.” Just as Christ (and by implication Dionysus) was brought back to life after a painful death, a new life of wisdom is generated from the dead fragments of the one truth (Clement 1913: 313). Since the one truth is the expression of divine reality, its tragic fragmentation can be seen as an early version of a theology of the Death of God.

## DEATH OF GOD IN THEOLOGY

Christianity developed a delicate blend of the various kinds of notion of the divine that were present in its original cultural matrix. An overemphasis on the role of Judaism in this respect would eclipse the theological role of the Alexandrian syn-

thesis of mythology, tradition and philosophy, a synthesis ultimately determined by the cosmo-theological view of the universe (Calabi 2008; Mezei 2013: 34–5). The gospels often refer to the “heavens” in the plural (a remnant of a spherical understanding of the sky), and Jesus’ unique relationship to the divine is described in terms of his all too human life. At the same time, Christianity defines a notion of God in its official documents, which surpasses the mythological and cosmo-theological conceptions and leads to the emergence of “a transcendence of God known in Christianity and in Christianity alone” (Altizer 2003: 4).

There are two fundamental aspects of divine mortality in Christianity: first, the precise meaning of the death of the god-man Jesus Christ in a historical perspective; and second, the various theological interpretations of divine mortality in the framework of Christianity. In the gospels, the death of the god-man is put into the context of his pre-existence and resurrected life, that is, his eternal being. The authors of the gospels do not overemphasize the death of Jesus Christ, yet they offer factual and solid descriptions. The relevant texts call the reader’s attention to natural phenomena, such as the darkness during daytime, earthquake, the opening of shrines and the resurrection of many (Matthew 27:45ff.; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44f.). These phenomena are meant to signal the cosmic significance of the death of the god-man, a significance missing in the Gospel of John where the passing away of Jesus is depicted as a peaceful event. For John, death on the cross and elevation to glory coincide in the sense that it is death itself which glorifies Jesus (John 12:33). In the Pauline letters death is “the last enemy” to be defeated (1Cr 15:26); or rather death is already defeated by the death of Christ, which the faithful are invited to share (Rom 6:3). Death is annulled by the resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:9), which leads to eternal life (Rom 6:23). The general tenor of these texts is that the death of the god-man is centrally significant, since the faithful gain divine life in virtue of this death, whereby the death of Christ receives a universal importance.

In the early Christian literature it is nevertheless not the passion and death of the god-man that is the centre of attention but rather his resurrection and the human participation in it. “Death” is a means of salvation; and salvation proves to be incomparably more important than the death of Christ. This general feature of Christian theology in the first centuries is well expressed by the words of John Chrysostom:

*Hades is angered because frustrated, it is angered because it has been mocked, it is angered because it has been destroyed, it is angered because it has been reduced to naught, it is angered because it is now captive. It seized a body, and lo! it discovered God (Chrysostom 1862: 721).*

On the other hand, as Hans Urs von Balthasar points out, Patristic literature sometimes emphasized the deeper significance of the notion of death with respect to the godhead; for instance, Origen formulates the question as to whether even the Father takes part in the suffering of Christ (von Balthasar 1990: 36). In a historical perspective we can say that the overwhelming insight into the crucial importance of the death of Christ as a divine occurrence only gradually emerged. The debates about the supposed teachings of Sabellius and related heresies, such as monarchism, circled around the problem of the nature of God. If the emphasis is put on the eternal and immortal nature of God, as the Fathers usually teach, then the death of Christ shifts into a salvational perspective, where the significance of his death is aligned with the general framework of God's eternal happiness. If however we turn away from this Greek philosophical pattern and emphasize Christ's concrete uniqueness, his personal character and thereby in some sense the personal nature of the godhead as well, then there is a better chance to reach a more solid view of the passion of Christ and thus God's close relation to its significance. Sabellianism possibly taught that God's unity precedes the plurality of divine persons, who are merely aspects or modes of the one divine substance. Monarchism likewise overemphasized the unity of God. In these perspectives, the personal nature of the godhead and thereby the importance of the personhood of Christ can only be weakly stressed. In the orthodox view, which was established between the two ecumenical councils in Constantinople (381 and 680), God's personal nature is unambiguously confirmed in the sense of the unity of the one substance and the three divine persons; thereby the theological emphasis on Christ's death received a sharper outline.

In this development, the emergence of the notion of the Death of God depends on two factors: on the one hand it depends on the proper appreciation of the person of Christ as truly human and divine at the same time; and on the other hand it depends on the recognition of the personal nature of God. While Greek and Latin theologians both applied these emphases, they did so differently. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the perception of the human nature of Christ remained in a fairly general framework, represented by the traditional iconography and expressed in the ecumenical dogmas. In this context, the divine substance, as opposed to the "persons" of the Trinity, cannot be meaningfully characterized as "personal". In the West, however, the legal traditions of the Roman notion of personhood led very early to a different emphasis, an expression of which was the introduction of the *Filioque* into the Nicene Creed. As a consequence, an emphasis was added to the individual human character of Christ. The personal nature of the divine substance, which never received a dogmatic formula, could arise only on the basis of this emphasis on personhood. The main difference between Greek and Latin medieval mysticism consists in this, that the Greek tradition retained a massive Neo-Platonic influence, mediated especially by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius,

while in Latin mysticism we see the growing importance of a personal relationship between God and man, Christ and the believer (Haas 1996). This feature developed into an ever more natural perception of the divine as expressed in the concrete human personhood of Christ.

The great synthesis of Thomas Aquinas was influenced by Greek theology and philosophy; its soberly rational and synthetic character, however, was a peculiar achievement. Aquinas's realism in his description of the human life of Christ is noteworthy (Aquinas 1933, Part III, q. 46). As Francesca Murphy has shown, this treatise was the first "life of Jesus" in a systematic Christian theology; and its simple directness reflected a non-mystical perception of the divine which has since become characteristic of Western theology (Murphy 2015). Aquinas's explanation of the passion of Christ with respect to the godhead is especially significant, because we find here a sophisticated solution of the problem of divine suffering. As Thomas writes, "The Passion is to be attributed to the suppositum of the Divine Nature, not because of the Divine Nature, which is impassible, but by reason of the human nature." (Aquinas 1933: 12) As to the death of Christ we find a similar solution: "The union of the Godhead with Christ's flesh never dissolved; Christ's soul is united with the Word of God more immediately and more primarily than the body is; Christ truly died." (Aquinas 1933, Part III, q. 50) Thus, to speak about the death of the divine nature is theologically possible if and only if we conceive this death with respect to the unity of divine and human natures in Christ.

The profound presence of the motif of death in Western mystical literature is too obvious. In such authors as Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, or Thomas à Kempis we find an ever deeper understanding of the need to share the death of Christ by the faithful. For instance, in *The Imitation of Christ*, à Kempis writes:

*In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life ... Take up therefore thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He went before thee, bearing His cross and died for thee on the cross, that thou mightest also bear thy cross and desire to die with Him on the cross* (Thomas a Kempis 1959: 102–3).

This mysticism of death continues the emerging Western tradition of the concrete personhood of Christ with the additional emphasis on the most personal feature of his death.

The Theology of the Cross, as Jürgen Moltmann expounds it, can be seen as a logical consequence of the Western tradition of theology. The specific emphasis on a *theologia crucis* has been the merit of Protestantism, which delineated the notion of the "crucified God" in various ways (Moltmann 1993: 200). On the one hand, Protestantism deepened the perception of the concrete personal nature of Christ; on the other hand, it has succeeded in offering a Trinitarian solution

to the problem of divine suffering by stressing that “the divinity of Jesus is revealed precisely in his humiliation and his manhood in his exaltation. We can say with Karl Barth that ‘*God* was in Christ, *God* humbled himself, *God* himself was on the cross” (*ibid.*: 203). Yet “theopaschite talk of the ‘death of God’ can be a general metaphor, but on closer inspection it will not hold”. If “there is a Trinitarian solution to the paradox that God is ‘dead,’ to conceive it properly we need to abandon ... the simple concept of God” (*ibid.*: 203). This simple concept of God is thoroughly criticized and transformed by von Balthasar’s formula of a “kenotic” theology, in which not only Christ’s death is depicted as the Father’s self-emptying in a crucial historical instance, but the Trinitarian nature of the godhead itself is conceived in terms of the unity of mutual acts of an eternal *kenosis* (von Balthasar 1990: 23ff.).

A narrower kind of death-of-god theology emerged in the works of Gabriel Vahanian, Paul van Buren, William Hamilton, John A. T. Robinson, Thomas J. J. Altizer and the rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein. We must distinguish between the properly so-called theological approaches to this important subject and the philosophical ones (about which see below). Admittedly, in Protestant theology most theological and philosophical interpretations of the Death of God coalesce. Nevertheless, we may safely say that Vahanian’s ground-breaking work of 1957, *The Death of God*, was meant to be a critical reflection on liberal developments of then contemporary Protestant theology, a theology attempting to face the explosion-like unfolding of a non-Christian secular culture first in the United States, then in Western Europe. There have been two characteristic reactions to this development. On the one hand, strong death-of-god theologians, such as Vahanian, van Buren, or Hamilton argued for the end of Christian theism, or even theism in a more general sense as well, because

*The mythological view of the world has gone, and with it went the possibility of speaking seriously of a Heilsgeschichte: a historical ‘drama of salvation,’ in which God is said to have acted at a certain time in this world to change the state of human affairs* (van Buren 1963: 11–2).

Weak death-of-god theologians, such as Robinson, Altizer, rabbi Rubenstein and the classical Protestant theologians of the twentieth century (Barth, Tillich, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, and Pannenberg) are in line with the diagnosis of the former group, but proceed to a different conclusion, namely the need to renew theology and faith in accordance with the challenges of modern secular culture, especially the post-Second World War situation of Western civilization and the emerging new media world with its crushing effects on the traditional forms and contents of religion and religiosity.



However, the notion of the Death of God remains deeply embarrassing. If we follow the kind of interpretation offered by Alasdair MacIntyre in his review of Robinson's *Honest to God*, where MacIntyre identifies the problem as the sign of "plain atheism", we do not only simplify the problem; rather, we fail to comprehend it (MacIntyre in Edwards 1963: 214). First, the historical presence of the notion of the Death of God should be an indicator to the effect that this is one of the most important problems of religious history. Second, to form a well-balanced assessment of this notion and its significance we need to scrutinize the exact meaning of the expression of "the Death of God" (we need to "abandon the simple concept of God", as Moltmann suggested). Here we nevertheless meet various obstacles, for what most of the interpretations offer is only an aspect of the richness of the notion. It must be noted (see the following section) that there is a significant difference between the phrases "God has died" (as Hegel has it) and "God is dead" (in most English translations). If "God has died", he certainly lived a life still worth considering. On the other hand, the semantic narrowness of the expression "God is dead" suggests a different picture, a good starting point for a narrow kind of death-of-god theology, which may well be just the matter of an inappropriate translation. On a general level, the notion of the Death of God is not merely about the rise of a methodological, practical, or philosophical atheism; it is not only about the uncontrollable spread of laicism and secularism in modernity; it is not just about the end of a certain world-view or a kind of culture our forefathers lived in; it is not just a linguistic problem and perhaps not even a narrowly defined theological problem. Rather, the Death of God is like a cultural meme which propagates itself in ever new forms, while its core reality remains hidden in all its variations. Or in a deeper sense the Death of God may be seen as being an occurrence, which belongs not simply to history but rather to a realm the exact nature of which is still to be outlined. Perhaps we need to go beyond theology in order to grasp the genuine significance of this notion and even recall Carl Gustav Jung's insistence on the mysterious character of this notion (Jung 1964: 255).

The strong kind of death-of-god theology was too closely attached to premises it did not sufficiently investigate; often it accepted a state-of-the-art philosophy without questioning the underlying epistemology, such as the too simple conclusions of van Buren, which reveal a certain state in then contemporary philosophy of language, a state which has been repeatedly overwritten. The idea of the impossibility of meaningful talk of God in theological language has not only been successfully criticized by theologically interested philosophers over the last decades of the twentieth century; theologians of the same period were reluctant to accept strong death-of-god theologies and offered instead various interpretations of the weak kind. Such an interpretation is presented by Johann Baptist Metz, who accepts the expression of the "Death of God" in quotation marks so that he

can analyse what he rephrases as “the Crisis of God”. The Crisis of God entails a certain understanding of the death of God, the death of a theological vocabulary, a methodology and above all a general theological attitude, which turns its back on the universal presence of suffering in human persons and societies. The notion of the Crisis of God does not abolish the valuable developments of theological thought which were instrumental to the radical change in our theological culture, but reassess this change in a way that allows us to believe that the Death of God is dependent on a more fundamental notion, that of the everlasting and ever-changing God. This God remains an inscrutable mystery while at the same time being a legitimate theme of theological investigation now and in the future (Metz 2006: 69ff.).

## DEATH OF GOD IN PHILOSOPHY

It is a rarely noticed circumstance that the meaning of “death” has importantly changed throughout the centuries. In Plato, death is defined as “the separation of the soul from the body” (e. g. *Phaedo* 64 c), a definition which remained influential during the Christian centuries. In this notion, death is not only a separation but a transition too, a transition from one kind of existence to another, from the earthly existence to a transcendent one. This notion is further developed in Christianity into the ultimate occurrence of a total resurrection. Christianity’s emphasis on the death of Christ, which became especially strong in the Middle Ages, added a particular weight to the importance of human death. This importance, however, became decisive only with the emergence of the notion of a unified person as the essence of human individuals (especially in the works of Fichte and Kant). If human beings are ultimate unities, then the end of life does not only concern one “part”, the body, but rather the whole human being as such. A different conclusion, namely that human personhood has a basic permanence or immortality, emerges only rarely in philosophical arguments, because the relationship between a dissoluble physical body and a permanent centre of personhood is not easily clarified (Taliaferro 2005: 161ff.). Nevertheless, a dramatized notion of death receives apocalyptic emphases only on the basis of a certain epistemology, which may be labelled as simple empiricism, according to which the unity of human beings is given in their physical identity. As the cumulative effect of all these factors – the drama of death in Christianity, death as the end of a unified human individual, simple empiricism as the underlying epistemology – we gain a new notion of death already distant from the idea of the ancient notion of separation or transition. Death, then, is something definitive. This latter notion of death appears fundamental in philosophical theories of the Death of God.

In Hegel, however, the dramatized notion of death, as an ultimate and ultimately isolated occurrence, is not yet fully displayed. It is indeed Hegel who first formulates the notion of the Death of God on a philosophical level. In the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* we read:

*Formerly, the infinite grief existed only historically in the formative process of culture. It existed as the feeling that 'God himself is dead,' upon which the religion of more recent times rests ... By marking this feeling as a moment of the supreme idea, the pure concept must give philosophical existence to what used to be either the moral precept that we must sacrifice the empirical being, or the concept of formal abstraction. Thereby it must re-establish for philosophy the idea of absolute freedom and along with it the absolute passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday (Quoted in Anderson 1996: XVI).*

Similarly we read in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that “God is dead” (“Gott ist gestorben”, Hegel 1977: 455 and 585). In both passages, Hegel broadens the historical idea of a divine death into the general significance of negativity in the universal history of the Spirit. This negativity, even if crucial in an important sense, is not ultimate but calls for the positive and overwhelming reaction of the Spirit. Thereby Hegel remains attached to the pattern of the historical framework, in which the notion of the Death of God as the death of Christ is emphatically pronounced. Indeed, Hegel’s reference to the Death of God originates in Protestant pietism, especially the seventeenth century church hymn of Johann Rist (“O grosse Noth! Gott selbst ligt todt”). Hegel universalizes this simplified theological notion into a phase in the universal history of consciousness, in which the Absolute Spirit is outside itself, alienated from itself, and thus is in an external or dead state. The death of God as a phase in the universal history of the Spirit is superseded (*aufgehoben*, sublated) by the fullness of the Absolute; the “speculative Good Friday” is followed by the fulfilment of the Spirit. Negativity or the consciousness that “God has died” belongs essentially to the process of the universal synthesis. Thereby Hegel continues the Western emphasis on death and attributes a universal importance to it in the framework of his system.

As soon as this system is questioned, its moments begin an independent life. This is what happened to the notion of the death of God in the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach. For him, the notion of God is already a matter of abstraction and thus it embodies the end, or death, of the natural life of human beings. More concretely, Feuerbach says that “The Divine Being is the human being glorified by the death of abstraction; it is the departed spirit of man” (Feuerbach 2008: 60). Feuerbach comes close to the “ghost-theory” we saw above; and thus he expressed the growing dissatisfaction of Western intellectuals with the traditional Christian notion of

God and formulated its implausibility in the framework of his otherwise mystical kind of anthropology. In art, especially in the music of Wagner, a similar insight is formulated in a musical form of mythological content, such as the *Twilight of the Gods* of 1876, at the end of which the gods are consumed by an apocalyptic fire.

While Feuerbach refused to use the Hegelian language of the universal Spirit, Friedrich Nietzsche, the next influential author in the present context, returns to a figurative language closer to the hymn of Rist. Just as Rist expressed spiritual pain over the death of Christ by referring to the death of God, Nietzsche applies a poetic style in his writings. In *The Gay Science*, the “madman” seeks God in vain in the marketplace and then gives a peculiar explanation of the reason why God cannot be found:

*‘Where is God?’ he cried; ‘I’ll tell you! We have killed him – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?’* (Nietzsche 2001: 119–20).

During the same period of the 1880s, Nietzsche used a more moderate formula in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “God is dead; God died of his pity for mankind” (“Gott ist todt... ist Gott gestorben”, Nietzsche 2006: 5 and 69).

Nietzsche still moves in the then traditional framework of the notion of the Death of God: God is dead, because “we have killed him” and he is dead, because he died of his pity for mankind – motifs we regularly find in Christian theology and mysticism with respect to Christ. However, Nietzsche’s understanding of a figurative death of God was clearly meant to express the idea that not only Christ is the victim of our sins, as traditional Christian mysticism would have it, but God himself, the very notion and reality of God is victimized by the human race. Thereby he expressed his deep conviction of the implausibility of the classical notion of God in the *fin de siècle* atmosphere, and charges his own generation with committing an act of metaphysical murder.

The most important interpreter of Nietzsche’s dictum has been Martin Heidegger. It was Heidegger who created a complex yet enormously fruitful philosophical explanation of Nietzsche’s idea and thus determined the course of philosophical discussions in the subsequent decades. There are two important parts of Heidegger’s interpretation (Heidegger 2002: 157–200). In the first part, Heidegger elucidates Nietzsche’s understanding in the context of the latter’s thought. In the second part, Heidegger offers his own ontological interpretation of the importance of Nietzsche’s dictum in general and the notion of “God is dead” in particular. In a general sense, Heidegger defines the importance of Nietzsche’s phrase so that “for Nietzsche, Western philosophy understood as Platonism is at an end” (*ibid.*: 162).

As he explains, the end of Platonism is the beginning of “nihilism”, that is the notion that the God of the Biblical revelation has become implausible and thus “the highest values devalue themselves” (*ibid.*: 166). Devaluation is expressed especially in Nietzsche’s “revaluation of all values”, which is the inversion of the traditional Platonic understanding of reality. Heidegger’s appraisal of the philosophical importance of the notion of value can be grasped in that “value” for him is only a variant of the Platonic idea; and once Platonism as such becomes implausible, the talk about values does not help to stop the tide of nihilism and its consequences, such as “world catastrophes” (*ibid.*: 163). On the other hand, Nietzsche’s teaching of the “will to power” – which is of a metaphysical and not of a quotidian political importance – can be seen as the actual possibility of a new becoming, the central actor of which is “the overman” (*ibid.*: 187). The overman expresses the fundamental feature of all reality, the will to power and realizes by it a new shape of humanity leading beyond the tradition of Western metaphysics in which “Being has become value” (*ibid.*: 192). This change is identical with the forgetfulness of Being, one of Heidegger’s notions in which he goes beyond the narrow interpretation of Nietzsche and offers a more encompassing understanding: Nietzsche is regarded as the ultimate metaphysician who not only brings Western metaphysics to its fulfilment by unmasking Platonism and pointing out the emptiness of the supranatural, but defines a new understanding of Being as the will to power in the context of which Western metaphysics proves to be “an epoch of the history of Being itself” (*ibid.*: 198). Nietzsche opens the possibility of a broader and deeper experience, in which nihilism appears as a shadow of Being, which is conceivable only by our “remembrance” (*Andenken*). Yet Nietzsche was not able to grasp the essence of nihilism, because he never reached Be-ing (*Seyn*), in which thinking as thinking of Be-ing originates. Only this thinking of Be-ing is capable of sublating nihilism, or the onto-theological understanding of Being, into a newness of, what Heidegger calls, enowning (*Ereignis*): “The flight of gods must be experienced and endured. This steadfast enduring grounds the most remote nearness to enowning. This enowning is the truth of be-ing” (Heidegger 1999: 20).

The reception of Heidegger’s study on Nietzsche began in the 1950s and led to various approaches to the notion of the Death of God. Some of these approaches were explicitly theological. However, no theological reflection on the notion of the Death of God was initiated merely in the framework of theology; not even the theology of Karl Barth, which was a reaction to anthropomorphic religion and its theological implications, directly reflects on the crisis of the Death of God. Von Balthasar’s *Mysterium Paschale* is indicative of a kind of theological response, which goes far beyond the scope of the original impetus and produces a forceful theological structure, in which at least the problematic of the Death of God appears. The philosophical reactions, however, have already built a complex tradition, which is

still present; here we can identify the following types: a) Theological-philosophical responses, such as those of Altizer, Hans Jonas, or Metz; b) Critical philosophical responses, such as those of Emmanuel Lévinas or Jacques Derrida; c) Reductive philosophical responses, such as those of Gianni Vattimo or John. C. Caputo; d) We also see a response which answers the challenge by reshaping earlier forms of metaphysics and conceptual argumentation.

a) Among the most faithful death-of-god theologians Altizer's work is unique. Although he belonged to the founders of the movement in the 1960s, his development went far beyond the scope of the narrow kind of death-of-god theology and reached a peculiar philosophical and religious climax in which the notion of the Death of God is not simply the end of God, not even the impossibility of belief in God. Rather, the notion expresses a fundamental change in the divine itself, a change leading to a new development within the godhead. This latter cannot be termed religious, if "religion" is conceived as onto-theology; I suggest that Altizer's most appropriate term for it is "*coincidentia oppositorum*", the coincidence of opposing powers of light and darkness, good and evil, past and future, a coincidence in which "truly" apocalyptic thought becomes possible (Altizer 2002: 69; Altizer 2003: 35, 69 and 105). We have fulfilled the destiny of Western metaphysics and religion, the God of onto-theology is "dead"; we have thereby already trespassed into another age's understanding of the divine which cannot yet be properly described. What we can offer is a description of the metaphysical and moral dichotomies we inherited from classical systems of thought. We are facing "an absolutely new totality", that is 'possible only through the *Nihil*, only through the dead body of God, but this is that abysmal body which is not only a body of nothingness, but a body of nothingness embodying an ultimate sacrifice of itself, and only that sacrifice releases an ultimate and final joy' (Altizer 2003: 158; for a criticism of Altizer's "Gnosticism" see O'Regan 2001: 66ff.).

Hans Jonas' reaction is summarized in his text *The Concept of God after Auschwitz* (Jonas 1987). Jonas attempts to answer rabbi Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz* (Rubenstein 1966), in which the author offers a weak death-of-god theology from the perspective of Judaism. Rubenstein raises the question of God's non-existence or death after the historic trauma of the Holocaust. Jonas' answer to this challenge – again "A Jewish Voice", as the subtitle has it – is twofold: on the one hand, he rejects the simple epistemology behind a plain interpretation of the Death of God; on the other hand he describes a story, a "myth", which he borrows from the Cabalistic tradition of *tzimtzum* or God's self-restriction. It is God's self-restriction that makes possible human freedom – and also the emergence of various evils at the same time. God's self-restriction is in a sense God's death, a death which bestows epochal responsibility on human beings to restore God to a new life. In Jonas' interpretation, Auschwitz cannot be rationally explained; however it still

can be put into the narrative of the *tzimtzum*. The possibility of an understanding, however, is not given merely by a narrative, but rather the understanding and practicing of responsibility on the cultural, political and theological levels. This responsibility is capable of contributing to the emergence of a new notion and reality of God (Jonas 1984; Mezei 2013).

Metz's theological reflection on the problem focuses on "the crisis of God". His theological assessment is based in many ways on the work of contemporary philosophers, such as Jürgen Habermas, but as a whole his understanding of God as going through a "crisis" in modernity is the best example of a theological *Aufhebung*. By emphasizing the importance of suffering, Metz outlines a "political theology" by which Christians living in the age after Auschwitz may become able to face the overall presence of horrendous evil in our world without losing their faith in an omnipotent and benevolent God. The living "memory of passion" helps us to develop an alternative to weak or strong death-of-god theologies, an alternative indicating practical changes in the life of the faithful (Metz 2006).

b) Some of the philosophical responses to Heidegger's study of Nietzsche can be qualified as critical, because their opposition to the notion of Death of God, and especially Heidegger's interpretation of it, goes beyond the mere hermeneutical framework. Lévinas' thought can be read as a continuous discussion with Heidegger's fundamental points, among which the idea of onto-theology – that is the misleading understanding of Being in terms of particular beings – plays an important role. Onto-theology as the criticism of Western metaphysics is central for Lévinas as well; it corresponds to his idea of the full exteriority of God, his complete otherness, his appearance as the Other, as Infinity. Lévinas criticizes Heidegger on the ground that genuine onto-theology is not merely about the reduction of Being to beings, but rather the reduction of God to Being itself. God signifies "the other of being, the bursting and subversion of being"; God is not reducible to the Same, he remains Difference with which an ethical and responsible relationship between Man and God becomes possible (Lévinas 2000: 121ff.).

While his work was contemporaneous to the rise of death-of-god theologies, Lévinas is seen as having surpassed their scope in so far as his work stimulated what is now widely regarded as a theological revival in post-modernism. Derrida is perhaps the most influential thinker who left his previous secularist background and became an important representative of theologically inclined post-modern philosophers with a special commitment to a revised understanding of Judaism. This return to religion is indeed the most interesting development after the death-of-God movement, a development indicating two things: First, that the notion of the Death of God does not block the way to a renewal of a faith in a God, and second, that some of the new, theologically-inclined theories may still remain under the spell of the "nihilism" Nietzsche wrote about, a nihilism of a lifeless

exteriority of a distant godhead or the nihilism of a meaningless, an inessential, God of an unstructured multiplicity of interpretations (Derrida & Vattimo 1998; Caputo 1997).

c) Given these developments, the emergence of theologically and religiously interested post-secular discussions during the 1990s was less than surprising. We must take into consideration the tremendous political changes around that time, and especially the renewed presence of Central- and Eastern-European thinkers in the changing culture of the West. Thinkers such as Leszek Kolakowski, Slavoj Žižek or John Paul II supported the new development of a more complex and more critical view of the notion of the Death of God. A “return of religion” became apparent; and thinkers like Derrida, Vattimo or Caputo joined the trend. The effect of their work has been labelled as “the death of the death of God”, expressing thereby the unexpected turn in postmodern deconstruction, a turn echoed by various post-secular tendencies in the ex-Soviet countries as well (Tischner 1984; Žižek 2000; Mezei 2004). Postmodern became post-secular, and deconstruction proved to be the right means of deconstructing deconstruction and abolishing any organizing pattern in contemporary philosophy. As a result, the traditional patterns of thought, such as religious thinking, philosophy of religion, theology and God-talk have emerged again as focuses of legitimate interest. The two most influential contemporary figures instrumental to this change are Vattimo and Caputo. For both thinkers, our age displays what can be termed “desecularization”. For Vattimo “desecularization” is merely a partial reaction to overambitious theories of secularization. For Caputo, however, there is a real process of a “theological turn”, a return to and of God (Caputo & Vattimo 2007: 66). As Caputo writes,

*To propose a postmodern theology of the Cross, to meditate the event that transpires in the death of Jesus, is to try to think a certain death of God, the death of the ens supremum et deus omnipotens, the death of the God of power, in order to release the event of the unconditional claim lacking worldly sovereignty that issues from the Cross” (ibid.: 66).*

Thereby the notion of the Death of God re-emerges as an aspect of the fullness of the divine, a fullness imbued by the fragmentation of the post-secular age. Vattimo too attempts to reconcile his affection for secularization with his modest conjecture of the importance of such authors as Heidegger and Nietzsche; he describes the postmodern age as the inevitable fate of a wasted West, an age of a “weak thought” thinking a “weak God” under the climate of “the weakening of Being” (Vattimo 2002).

d) We need briefly to mention other reactions to the Death of God in contemporary philosophy. As William Lane Craig declared in 2008, “God is not yet



Dead.” The related article explains the various developments in Anglo-American philosophical theology, developments which expounded sophisticated and, too many, convincing logical arguments – both ontological and cosmological – for the existence of God. As a result of the thought of Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne, various schools emerged that now pursue the serious work of a scientifically and logically minded philosophical theology, a theology (Craig 2008 a; Craig 2008 b; Swinburne 2008; Meister 2009; Plantinga 2011). As an important development, Taliaferro’s “integrative theism” defends classical theism and emphasizes God’s active presence in the world (Taliaferro 2005: 297ff.). In the European context, the “theological turn of phenomenology” must be mentioned, which appeared partly as a reaction to death-of-god theologies, and partly as the result of the influence of the thought of Lévinas. Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion and Miklos Vetö are excellent representatives of serious post-death-of-god philosophy, which continues the valuable traditions of phenomenology and enlarges them into a new metaphysics (Vetö 2012) or a negative theology of the supersensational divine (Marion *et al.*, 2000). In Central and Eastern Europe, a new theological-philosophical thinking is being born out of the rich sources of cultural traditions and the direct experience of the Holocaust as historic evil (Mezei 2013: 6).

## EVIL

The notion of the Death of God has been intrinsically combined with the notion of evil. Evil is indeed the force that brings about the death of gods, Osiris, Christ, or God himself. Evil as an ultimate destructive power is still constitutive in all the documents we find about the history of the Death of God. Again, the meaning of “evil” has radically changed throughout the centuries. The general tendency points to an ever more articulate, isolated and categorical conception of evil as opposed to an inarticulate, naturally conceived power, which is called to be reconciled with its victim in a final unity. A natural notion of evil has gradually been superseded by the abstract, well-defined notion of evil, radical evil and diabolical evil (Kant 2009:17ff; 47), and even by historic evil (Mezei 2013: 6), which cannot be domesticated metaphysically, politically, or morally. The notion of the Death of God in Hegel and Nietzsche still bears the feature of the openness to a kind of reconciliation – the final synthesis of the Spirit or the will to power of the overman. It is only in Heidegger’s thought that we meet for the first time a different conception of the general context of the Death of God, nihilism: Nihilism is the default of Being, Being’s self-withdrawal, which displays an inner tragedy of Being, a tragedy we cannot fathom. The ultimate form of evil, in this approach, is irreconcilable; and it is exactly this irreconcilable feature of evil which is understood by Heidegger as

presenting to us the genuine possibility of newness we are not yet properly aware of (Heidegger 1961 and 1999).

Heidegger's insight must be understood in its historical context; while his understanding clearly refers to the catastrophes of the twentieth century, especially the German tragedy, the Holocaust is still to be seen as the most important expression, even the central metaphor, of contemporary evil. This centrality of tragedy, as represented by the great occurrences of history, points beyond itself and opens the possibility of a radical newness. The ultimate conceivability of evil is given in this openness; for an absolutely closed, apocalyptic evil would not even be conceivable in any sense. Evil's positivity, however, is not fully grasped in a number of philosophical and theological reflections on the notion of the Death of God. For understanding this notion as analogous to the physical death of an individual presupposes a narrowly empiricist epistemology, which does not properly belong to the notion itself. Theories emphasizing the simple "end" of all God-narratives fall into the trap of presupposing the validity of a non-necessary, even peripheral epistemology. Other theories, which offer a version of a traditional theological pattern, are in a better position; however, one must be cautious not to revive pre-death-of-god theologies without an appropriate revision of their metaphysical basis. It is possible to answer the challenge of the notion of the Death of God in more or less traditional ways, however such answers may prove to be implausible in our present historical situation. Similarly, radical theories of the Death of God may be misled by the expression's metaphorical nature and propose outlandish conclusions, which weaken the explosive power of the notion. In theology properly so called, the notion of the Death of God cannot be avoided: it must be central. Not only because theology is in need of a purification of some of its unexamined presuppositions, traditions, methodologies and vocabularies, but rather because serious theological work on this notion leads to fruitful insights and new possibilities. This notion is not just a secondary idea of a mentally ill philosopher living at the end of the nineteenth century; rather, the notion of the Death of God displays a fundamental process in the core of reality, a process urging individual human persons as well as contemporary humanity itself to redefine their understanding of themselves and the world.

In this perspective, the evolution of the notion of evil in Western history parallels the evolution of the notion of the Death of God and, ultimately, the divine itself. The more elaborate the notion of evil we possess in a philosophical and theological context, the more distinctive our notion of God becomes; and the more non-synthesizable is the experience of evil, the more chance we are given to reach a new conception of the divine. It is a lesson of history that the experience of great catastrophes, such as the Holocaust in recent times, instigated processes which led to historic changes in our notion of the divine. Drawing an ever changing pattern

of mystery, the experience of evil points indeed to a power, “which always wills the Bad, and always works the Good” (Goethe 2005: 47). Here we find the importance of the history of the notion of the Death of God, a history with no end in sight.

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# SACRIFICING HIS ONLY SON

Śunaḥśeṣa, Isaac and Snow White<sup>1</sup>

FERENC RUZSA<sup>2</sup>

*Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses.*<sup>3</sup>

Clifford Geertz

The earliest still extant texts of ancient Indian prose are the *Brāhmaṇas*, books ‘related to spell’. They contain priestly analyses about the correct performance, the expected effects and the proper remuneration of the ritual that descended from the Vedic sacrifice but by this time it was largely reinterpreted as magic. Occasionally some myths are also told as explanatory material to a feature of the sacrifice; these are the earliest examples of Indian narrative literature. The legend of Śunaḥśeṣa is one of the oldest<sup>4</sup> and most important. It is noteworthy not only for its literary merit, it is also relevant to some fundamental questions of the history of religions. It occurs in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* at 7.13–18. The *Aitareya* is the longer and generally earlier of the two *Brāhmaṇas* of the *hotṛ*-priests whose responsibility was to recite the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*.

The legend of Śunaḥśeṣa aroused considerable interest in Europe as soon as it came to be known. Although the much later version of the story in the *Rāmāyaṇa*

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, in C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected essays*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Keith suggested a date before 600 BCE for the older part of the *Brāhmaṇa*, not giving a guess for the later part where the Śunaḥśeṣa story belongs. Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇas of the Rigveda*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1920, 42–50. According to Bronkhorst the *Brāhmaṇa* is approximately contemporaneous with the grammarian Pāṇini (ca. 350 BCE) and the final redaction might be even somewhat later. Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha: Studies in the culture of early India*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, 182 and 197–198.

epic (1.61.5–62.27) was noticed earlier, it was in 1850 that Horace Hayman Wilson read a paper to the Royal Asiatic Society in which he gave an English rendering and an analysis of the original myth.<sup>5</sup> In the same year appeared Rudolf Roth's German translation.<sup>6</sup> Then the text was edited comparing it to the almost identical parallel in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* by Max Müller, also giving a translation.<sup>7</sup> Otto Böhtlingk included it in his *Chrestomathy* suggesting numerous emendations.<sup>8</sup> The complete *Brāhmaṇa* was edited first by Haug (accompanied by a translation),<sup>9</sup> then by Aufrecht;<sup>10</sup> and we have Keith's standard translation with copious philological notes.<sup>11</sup> The probably most recent English rendering of the story was prepared by Wendy Doniger,<sup>12</sup> while my Hungarian translation appeared last year.<sup>13</sup> The legend was analysed in many papers, some of which will be referred to below.<sup>14</sup> Since all the translations mentioned above are readily available (also on-line, excepting Doniger's) it seems sufficient to present only an outline of the myth as it occurs in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.

## THE LEGEND OF ŚUNAḤṢEPA

King Hariścandra of the Ikṣvāku clan had a hundred wives but no son. He asked (in verse) Nārada living in his house, what the use of a son is. The sage replied in ten stanzas: it is a duty and a joy to have a son, and it sends the father to heaven –

<sup>5</sup> Horace Hayman Wilson, On the Sacrifice of Human Beings as an Element of the Ancient Religion of India, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 13 (1852), 96–107.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Roth, Die Sage von Çunahçepa, *Indische Studien* 1 (1850), 457–464.

<sup>7</sup> Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, So Far as it Illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans*, London, Williams and Norgate, 1860<sup>2</sup>, 573–588 and 408–421.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Böhtlingk, *Sanskrit-Chrestomathie*, St. Petersburg, Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1877<sup>2</sup>, 22–26.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Haug, *The Aitareya Brahmanam of the Rigveda, Containing the Earliest Speculations of the Brahmans on the Meaning of the Sacrificial Prayers, and on the Origin, Performance and Sense of the Rites of the Vedic Religion*, Bombay, Government Central Book Depôt, 1863, I., 178–184 and II., 460–471.

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Aufrecht, *Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Mit Auszügen aus dem Commentare von Sāyaṅcārya und anderen Beilagen*, Bonn, Adolph Marcus, 1879, 195–202.

<sup>11</sup> Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas*, 299–309.

<sup>12</sup> Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988, 19–24.

<sup>13</sup> In Ruzsa, *Egyfiát áldozza*, 46–56.

<sup>14</sup> For further bibliography see Asko Parpola, Human sacrifice in India in Vedic times and before, in Jan N. Bremmer (ed.), *The strange world of human sacrifice*, Leuven and Dudley, MA, Peeters, 2007, 165.

asceticism is useless. In the son the father is reborn, his wife becoming his mother. Even birds and animals know how important it is; that's why a son mounts even his mother and sister. "Seek king Varuṇa's help, saying: Let a son be born to me so that I may sacrifice him to you."<sup>15</sup>

Hariścandra did so, and the god agreed; so Rohita was born. Varuṇa demanded the sacrifice, but Hariścandra said that a too young victim is unfit for sacrifice and the god accepted the delay. This happened five times, and they always agreed on a new terminus: the boy will be sacrificed when he is ten days old; when his teeth appear; when they fall out; when they appear again; when he bears arms.

When at last Hariścandra told his son that he would be sacrificed, "he said no, took his bow and went to the wilderness and wandered there a year. Then Varuṇa seized Hariścandra and he grew a belly." On hearing this, Rohita returned to the village, but Indra went to him in human form as a Brahmin and dissuaded him with a verse, praising the wandering life and its fruits. This happened five times and Rohita always roamed for another year.

In the sixth year he found the hungry ṛṣi Ajīgarta in the wilderness with his three sons, Śunaḥpuccha, Śunaḥśepa and Śunolāṅgūla; Rohita bought one of them as a ransom for himself for a hundred cows. Since the father would not give his eldest and the mother the youngest, he took with him the middle one, Śunaḥśepa, and went back to his father. Hariścandra asked for the god's consent and Varuṇa accepted the substitution "saying, a Brahmin is more than a warrior, and told him this royal consecration ritual. At the anointment ceremony he sacrificed with this human victim."

At the ceremony four famous ṛṣis officiated, the *hotṛ*-priest being Viśvāmitra, but there was no-one to bind the boy: so his father did it for another hundred cows, and for the same price volunteered to kill his son. Whetting his knife he approached, but Śunaḥśepa started to praise several gods with hymns and with the last three verses to the goddess Dawn his three bonds fell off and at the same time Hariścandra's belly returned to normal. At the other priests' request Śunaḥśepa finished the interrupted ritual with the new "instant soma-pressing."

Then the boy sat on Viśvāmitra's lap. Ajīgarta wanted him back, but "Viśvāmitra said no, the gods have given him to me. He became Deva-rāta (God-given), Viśvāmitra's son, and the Kāpileyas and the Bābhavas are his descendants."

The rest of the story is basically a ballad in *śloka* verses. Ajīgarta called his son back but Śunaḥśepa refused: "They saw you with a knife in hand – this has never happened even among *śūdras* (non-Aryans). You chose three hundred cows over me." The father admitted his sin and offered him in compensation "the hundreds of

<sup>15</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all translations in this paper are mine. The originals are given in the footnotes only when a text is either philologically difficult or not easily accessible.



cows”, but in vain. Then Viśvāmitra adopted him as his oldest son inheriting both kingship over the Jahnu tribe and the sacred knowledge of the Gāthins (Singers). As his sons agreed to this, Viśvāmitra blessed them all.

There is an inserted prose passage stating that fifty of the hundred sons of Viśvāmitra disagreed and their father cursed them to live in the bordering lands; they became the ancestors of various non-Aryan peoples.

After the story a short instruction follows about the performance of it. “The *hotṛ* priest tells this to the anointed king”, but “a king may have it told to him even without the sacrifice. ... Also those who want a son should have it told – they get sons.”

### PERPLEXING DETAILS

At first reading the baffling and revolting elements in the story are most apparent. The great saint Nārada refers to the crudest incest without the slightest reservation: “the son mounts his mother and sister”, adding that birds and cattle do the same. (This caused such an embarrassment to some early translators of the legend, Wilson and Müller, that they simply omitted any hint at incest from their version.<sup>16</sup>) To the king’s question, what people get from sons, Nārada fails to mention the common-sense answer, i.e. support in old age; neither does he refer to the important Brahmanical concept that after death you need nourishment and only your own sons’ and grandsons’ *śrāddha* offerings can give you that. Of course there is a reason for these omissions: if the king follows Nārada’s advice and sacrifices the son to be born, his offspring will not be there in his old age to help or to offer *śrāddha* later. For the suggestion of incest, however, there seems to be no motivation. Hariścandra already has a hundred wives, no need to involve his mother or sister. It is as unnatural as the recurrent topic of the story, fathers trying to destroy their sons.

And clearly this is the focus of the whole narrative. Viśvāmitra disinherits his fifty sons and curses them to live among the barbarian tribes. Hariścandra is ready to have his only son killed, although only following the divine command and delaying it as much as possible. And Ajīgarta simply sells Śunaḥśepa as a sacrificial animal and for some extra fees he is willing to cut his son’s throat himself.

The very starting point of the whole complication is blatantly absurd. The god does not demand the human sacrifice out of an unexpected whim: it was Nārada’s original suggestion to the childless Hariścandra that he should ask Varuṇa to give him a son *so that he can sacrifice the boy to him!* Quite incomprehensibly,

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, *Sacrifice of Human Beings*, 97–98; Müller, *History*, 410.

Hariścandra thought that this was a good idea and followed it, and the god again accepted it without hesitation.

Śunaḥśepa's mother, who is the only female character in the legend, also behaves in a way difficult to visualize. When Rohita is about to buy one of her sons from her husband in order to sacrifice him, her only remark is that she will not give the youngest. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* she elaborates somewhat: "Usually the oldest one is dear to the father, the youngest to the mother – that's why I protect the youngest."<sup>17</sup>

Some of the names seem utterly out of context. The main hero is called Śunaḥśepa, his brothers Śunaḥ-puccha and Śuno-lāṅgūla; these names according to Doniger's literal translation mean Dog-prick, Dog-arse and Dog-tail.<sup>18</sup> These are as unusual and inappropriate in the Indian tradition as they appear to us, especially considering that they are Brahmins and Śunaḥśepa is a seer of Vedic hymns.

Many more aspects of the text demand an explanation. Why did Śunaḥśepa praise eight different gods instead of praying to Varuṇa only? Why did he sit on Viśvāmitra's lap, quite an impossible behaviour for adult males? Why did Viśvāmitra, having already a hundred sons, adopt him? Why did Śunaḥśepa accept the adoption? After all, Viśvāmitra was an officiating priest at the intended human sacrifice! How did the promised sacrifice of the king's son turn into a royal consecration? What makes the telling of this legend an appropriate magic to cure the lack of a male offspring?

Some of these questions have been asked in previous scholarship, but for most of them an entirely new answer is attempted in the following.

Although the narrative is strictly linear, the text is quite complex. Its three parts seem relatively independent of each other: first, the story of Hariścandra and Rohita, which is absent in the *Rāmāyaṇa* version; then the sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa; lastly, Śunaḥśepa's adoption. In all of them we find inserted verses. In the first story the wisdom verses of Nārada laud the begetting of sons instead of asceticism and withdrawal from society, while Indra's advice to Rohita praises the life of the lonely wanderer. Inserted into the second story we find the extremely long quotation (a hundred verses) from the *Rgveda*. Although in the written text the hymns are only named, at an oral performance they were probably duly recited; Sāyaṇa, the great commentator of the Vedic corpus explicitly says so in his introduction to the seven hymns of Śunaḥśepa. "At the royal consecration, on the day of the anointment, when the Marutvatīya libation has been completed, the seven hymns starting with this should be told by the *hotṛ*-priest in front of the anointed king

<sup>17</sup> I.61.18, translated from T. R. Krishnacharya, *The Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, According to the Southern recension* (Sri Garib Das Oriental Series 2), Kumbakonam, 1905.

<sup>18</sup> Doniger O'Flaherty, *Textual Sources*, 22.

surrounded by his sons.”<sup>19</sup> The balladic part of the third story is again coming from some previous sources since it does not match perfectly with the prose text. It knows nothing of Viśvāmitra’s hundred sons, only four are named; and they all accept the adoption and their father blesses them. These three stories and the related verses are all fitted into the external frame of the royal consecration rite.

The verses are all earlier than the prose text, in the case of the *ṛgveda* the distance is more than a half millennium. Therefore it is fairly natural that the different layers do not fit flawlessly, one author does not grasp fully the other’s intention. This is nothing unusual, we find a similar situation with all traditional tales and myths. The narrator has no knowledge of the origin of the story or of the process of its formation. At times he does not understand the motifs and symbolism or misunderstands them. This may lead to entirely new interpretations and more modern significance for the old story. Due to these factors it is always a serious challenge to look for the “original” meaning and we cannot expect absolute and final results here.

## EARLIER REFERENCES TO THE LEGEND

The first detailed account of the Śunaḥśepa legend is the version in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, but it is clear that at least some parts of the story are immensely older. According to tradition, Śunaḥśepa is the poet of seven hymns in the first book of the *ṛgveda*, I.24–I.30, comprising 97 verses. (He is also the author of IX.3, but the *Brāhmaṇa* seems to be unaware of this.)<sup>20</sup> Although this attribution is not necessarily reliable, for the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa* it was taken for granted. In their story Śunaḥśepa saw these hymns when he was bound to the sacrificial post – for the Vedic seers, *ṛṣis*, do not compose the hymns but see them. The hymns are parts of the magical texture of the universe and therefore they exist from eternity, like natural laws; but before they are seen by a *ṛṣi*, they are unknown to mankind.

Accidentally his supposed authorship explains why Śunaḥśepa praised eight gods instead of Varuṇa only: in the Śunaḥśepa hymns of the *Ṛgveda* these gods are praised, exactly in the order shown in the *Brāhmaṇa*, except for the short and frivolous hymn I.28. This latter text with its not-too-subtle hints about the movement of the pestle in the mortar is used in the “instant soma-pressing” (*anjaḥ-sava*)

<sup>19</sup> Translated from Max Müller, *Rig-Veda-Samhitā, The Hymns of the Brāhmins together with the Commentary of Sāyanākārya*, London, Henry Frowde, 1890<sup>2</sup>, 128.

<sup>20</sup> The authors of Vedic texts were given in separate lists, *anukramaṇīs*. All related material (including the authors’ patronymics, giving either the father’s name or that of the clan or both) in this paper is based on the data of the *Sarvānukramaṇī* as conveniently presented by Theodor Aufrecht, *Die Hymnen des Ṛigveda*, Bonn, Adolph Marcus, 1877, II., 463–513.

ritual that Śunaḥśepa “saw” and performed after his release. The authors succeeded in making a credible structure of these invocations, with Varuṇa standing out prominently in the middle, promising that in the end the gods would set the boy free. Since the last three verses (I.30.20–22) are addressed to Uṣas, the goddess of Dawn, with these the three fetters of the boy fall off. Fittingly, it is the beautiful maiden of Dawn that ends the nightmare of human sacrifice.

Śunaḥśepa appears twice in the *Ṛgveda* itself, and both are quoted in the *Aitareya*. First the part at I.24.12–13, close to the end of the first hymn is attributed to him:

*May king Varuṇa release us,  
whom Śunaḥśepa called when he was seized.  
For Śunaḥśepa called the Son of Untying  
when he was seized, bound in three shackles.  
May king Varuṇa, who knows and cannot be deceived,  
set him free and release his fetters.*<sup>21</sup>

The second reference to his release is at V.2.7. Since in the Śunaḥśepa hymns there are but 97 verses, the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa* made up the number to a hundred by making the boy use at the end of the “instant soma-pressing” three other stanzas, this being the very last:

*When Śunaś Śepa was tied down on account of a thousand,  
from the sacrificial post you released him, because he laboured –  
so release the fetters from us, o Fire,  
knowledgeable priest, sitting down here.*<sup>22</sup>

The word ‘laboured’ (*āśamiṣṭa*, from the root *śam*) in the *Ṛgveda* always refers to hard work in the ritual; when someone is bound to a sacrificial post, this ritual labour can be nothing else but inventing or reciting a sacred hymn or formula.

Analysing these references, Keith says that “neither of these passages seems in any way to accord with the account of the *Aitareya*” and “we can only dismiss the whole narrative as a later invention than the *Ṛgveda*”.<sup>23</sup> We should carefully consider his reasons.

<sup>21</sup> *śunaḥśépo yám áhavad gr̥bhītáḥ / só asmān rājā váruṇo mumoktu ||  
śunaḥśépo hy áhavad gr̥bhítás / triṣv àdityáṃdrupadéṣu baddháḥ |  
ávainam rājā váruṇaḥ sasrjyād / vidváñ ádabdho ví mumoktu páśān ||* RV I.24.12cd–13.  
All *Ṛgveda* translations are based on the text in Aufrecht, *Ṛigveda*.

<sup>22</sup> *śunaś cic chépaṃ níḍitaṃ sahásrād / yúpād amuñco áśamiṣṭa hí śáḥ |  
evásmád agne ví mumugdhi páśān / hótas cikitva ihá tú niśádya ||* RV V.2.7

<sup>23</sup> Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas*, 63–64.

Like all the translators of the *Ṛgveda*, he understands *triṣú drupadéṣu baddhāḥ* in I.24.13b as “bound to three pieces of wood”, so the picture is that of an exposed criminal, not a sacrificial victim bound to the solitary sacrificial post. But this is not necessary – the extremely rare word *dru-pada* (literally ‘tree-foot’) has been very plausibly interpreted by Sāyaṇa as three parts of the wooden sacrificial post.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear why none of the translators noticed this.<sup>25</sup> However the true meaning of the expression is “bound in three shackles”. Surprisingly even Geldner who had already known the required meaning of *drupada*<sup>26</sup> still rendered it as “an drei Blöcke gebunden”. That *drupada* means shackle is shown by two nearly identical passages in the *Atharvaveda*, 6.63.2–3 and 6.84.3–4; the latter, significantly, “is found used in a healing rite in the *puruṣamedha*,”<sup>27</sup> i.e. human sacrifice. The relevant parts are: “open the iron bond-fetters... you have been bound here in an iron *drupada*.”<sup>28</sup> It is clear that the same object is meant; further the meaning of ‘fetter, shackle, manacle’ fits perfectly in both the Rigvedic context and the *Aitareya*. In the *Brāhmaṇa* it was clearly emphasized that Śunaḥśepa was bound with three fetters. But the Vedic hymn itself is clear enough: after the verse quoted (with the three *drupadas*) Varuṇa is requested to loosen our sins, and in the next, closing verse the three bonds are actually named:

*Loosen the fetters from us, Varuṇa, the topmost upwards,  
the bottom one downwards, the middle one away.*<sup>29</sup>

We can visualize a man bound to the post at his neck, at his ankles and with his wrists behind him and the post.

<sup>24</sup> *drupadeṣu: droḥ = kāṣṭhasya = yūpasya padeṣu = pradeśa-viśeṣeṣu*, Müller, *Rig-Veda*, I.133.

<sup>25</sup> Actually Ludwig did but thought this interpretation arbitrary: “drupadeṣu: S.[āyaṇa] an drei stellen des yūpa; willkürlich”. Alfred Ludwig, *Der Rigveda oder die heiligen Hymnen der Brāhmaṇa zum ersten Male vollständig ins Deutsche übersetzt mit Commentar und Einleitung*, Prag, F. Tempsky, 1876–1888, IV.84.

<sup>26</sup> His note to the expression: “*drupadā* (eigentlich wohl Fußgestell) ist der Block, in der Gefangene gelegt wurde (AV. 19.47,9; 50,1), in AV. 6,63,3 das Fußbeisen.” Karl Friedrich Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda, Aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1951–1957, I.26.

<sup>27</sup> William Dwight Whitney – Charles Rockwell Lanman, *Atharva-Veda-Samhitā, Translated into English with Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, 1905, I.343.

<sup>28</sup> *ayasmāyān ví cṛtā bandha-pāśān... ayasmāye drupadē bedhiṣa ihā*, AV 6.63.2b,3a = 6.84.3b,4a. Rudolf Roth – William Dwight Whitney, *Atharva Veda Sanhita*, Berlin, Ferd. Dümmler, 1856. Whitney, however, did not draw the conclusion like Geldner quoted in fn. 26, and translated as “Thou wast bound here to an iron post (*drupadā*),” Whitney–Lanman, *Atharva-Veda*, I.344.

<sup>29</sup> *ūd uttamāṃ varuṇa pāśam asmād / āvādhamāṃ ví madhyamāṃ śrathāya*, RV I.24.15ab

Exactly the same idea with slightly different wording is repeated in the last stanza of the second hymn to Varuṇa.<sup>30</sup> What is even more significant, here we can be relatively confident that these are the words of Śunaḥśepa himself, for two branches of the *Yajurveda* testify to this, as Lommel already pointed out in his careful analysis.<sup>31</sup> In the *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* we read:

“Loosen the fetters from us, Varuṇa, the topmost upwards” etc.: Śunaśśepa, Ajīgarta’s son saw this verse when he was seized by Varuṇa. And with it he was released from the fetter of Varuṇa. One releases the very fetters of Varuṇa with it.<sup>32</sup>

The similar text of the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* differs only in saying that a person releases *himself* with this magic spell.<sup>33</sup>

Keith’s other argument for his position that in the Rigvedic verses Śunaḥśepa is not a sacrificial victim and the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) in V.2.7b must be a metaphor only, since *sahásrād yūpād amuñco* means “you released him from a thousand sacrificial posts”, perhaps suggesting a thousand dangers. This seems to be the interpretation of Sāyaṇa as well: “from a thousand, i.e. several kinds of, posts.”<sup>34</sup> However, since *sahasrāt* is the last word of a line, it cannot be easily combined with *yūpāt* in the next line. This is avoided in the most recent translation, interpreting it as “from his thousand (bonds),”<sup>35</sup> which corresponds to the *Ṛgarthadīpikā*’s comment “from a thousand fetters.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *ūd uttamām mumugdhi no / ví pāsam madhyamām cṛta / āvādhamāni jivāse*, RV I.25.21

<sup>31</sup> Herman Lommel, *Die Śunaḥśepa-Legende*, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 114/1 (1964), 138–141.

<sup>32</sup> “*ūd uttamam Varuṇa pāsam asmad*” *iti. Śunaśśepo vā etām Ājīgartir Varuṇa-grhīto ,paśyat; tayā vai sa Varuṇa-pāsād amucyata. Varuṇa-pāsam evāitayā pramuñcate*. KS 19.11, Leopold von Schroeder, *Kāṭhaka, Die Saṃhitā der Kaṭha-Sākhā*, Leipzig, Verlag der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1900–1910.

<sup>33</sup> *Śunaḥśepam Ājīgartim Varuṇo ,grhñāt. Sa etām vāruṇim apaśyat; tayā vai sa ātmānam Varuṇa-pāsād amuñcad. Varuṇo vā etām grhñāti ya ukhām pratimuñcata. “ūd uttamam Varuṇa pāsam asmad” ity āhātmanam evāitayā Varuṇa-pāsān muñcaty*. TS 5.2.1.3–4, Kāśinātha-Sāstrī Āgāṣe, *Śrīmat-Sāyaṇacārya-viracita-bhāṣya-sametā Kṛṣṇa-Yajurvediya-Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*, Puṇyākhyā-Pattana, Ānandāśrama-Mudrālaya, 1940–1951, VII.2154. For a translation see Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School entitled Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Harvard University Press 1914, II.404.

<sup>34</sup> *sahasrād = aneka-rūpād yūpād*, Müller, *Rig-Veda*, II.501.

<sup>35</sup> Stephanie W. Jamison – Joel P. Brereton, *The Rigveda, The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, Oxford etc., Oxford University Press, 2014, II.663.

<sup>36</sup> *pāśa-sahasrāt*. Lakshman Sarup, *Ṛgarthadīpikā, A pre-Sāyaṇa and hitherto unpublished commentary on Rgvedasaṃhitā by Mādharma, son of Śrīveṅkaṭārya*, Lahore–Banaras, Motilal Banarsidass, 1939–1955, IV.12.

But Griffith's solution, taking *sahasrāt* as a price, "for a thousand"<sup>37</sup> is more convincing even though prices are normally expressed with the Instrumental case, not the Ablative we find here. Geldner agrees ("Śunaḥśepa, der um ein Tausend angebunden war") adding in a note with a not easily traceable reference that one bought a person to be sacrificed for a thousand cows.<sup>38</sup>

Keith's further objection that the price is inaccurate has no weight, since in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.61.22) we have "for a hundred thousand cows", so the exact price is clearly not an essential part of the legend – as could be expected.

The verb used of Śunaḥśepa in V.2.7a, *nī-dita*, 'tied down' is among the rarest in the *Ṛgveda*, all forms of the root *dā* 'to tie' occurring eleven times, the participial form *dita* 'tied' only four times. Therefore the term immediately recalls its ubiquitous derivative *a-diti*, 'untying, boundlessness, infinity, freedom'. Most often this is a goddess with no clear personality, the mother of the Āditya gods of whom the chief is Varuṇa. It is therefore significant that in the most authentic Śunaḥśepa verse, which finishes the first Varuṇa-hymn, this is the last word:

*Then in your order, oh Son of Untying,  
we would be blameless for Untying.*<sup>39</sup>

Or, in a less literal translation: "Then, according to your law, oh Varuṇa, we should be sinless and set free."

The whole hymn shows a very clear structure: it not only ends with gaining Freedom, it also starts with seeking it.

*Now who is it, which god among the immortals,  
whose charming name we should think of?  
Who would give us back for great Untying?  
I would see both my father and my mother.*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ralph T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda Translated with a Popular Commentary*, Benares, E. J. Lazarus & Co., 1889–1891, II.188. – In spite of giving in a footnote several references to differing opinions, Griffith fails to mention that he follows here Ludwig, *Rigveda*, I.368: "Çunaḥçepa, der für ein tausend angebunden war."

<sup>38</sup> "sahasrāt mit Ludwig ist auf Ind.St. 10, 68 zu verweisen. Man kaufte einen zu opfernden Menschen für tausend Kühe." Geldner, *Rig-Veda*, II.4. The reference is (through Ludwig, *Rigveda*, IV.328) to Albrecht Weber, *Collectanea über die Kastenverhältnisse in den Brāhmaṇa und Sūtra*, *Indische Studien* 10 (1868), 68, where we read: "Behufs des purushamedha kauft sich der Opfernde für 1000 Kühe nebst 100 Rossen einen brāhmaṇa oder kshatriya Çāñkh. [=Śāṅkhāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra] 16,10,10."

<sup>39</sup> *āthā vayam āditya vraté tāvā/nāgaso āditaye syāma*, RV I.24.15cd

<sup>40</sup> *kāsya nūnāṃ katamāsyāmṛtānām / mānāmahe cāru devāsya nāma |  
kó no mahyā āditaye pūnar dāt / pitāraṃ ca dṛśéyam mātāraṃ ca ||* RV I.24.1

The unity of composition is definitely suggestive of one author, and quite a good poet for that. If he was called Śunaḥśepa or only recalled his image, we cannot tell; but the whole hymn is a coherent expression of the prayer and desire for freedom of a young person far away from parents and home, tied with three fetters.

We may conclude that from the scant references in the *Rgveda* and the *Yajurveda* the following elements of the legend are clearly recognizable: Śunaḥśepa the son of Ajīgarta as a young man was sold for a large herd of cows and taken away from home. He was intended as a human offering and bound to the sacrificial pillar with three fetters; however, he prayed to the gods Varuṇa and Fire with a powerful new hymn and they released him.

So this is only the central story of the *Aitareya* legend, and with an important difference: it is not his father who is about to kill the boy, although possibly it was the father who sold him.

### THE NAMES IN THE STORY

In a fairy tale there are no names; at most the main hero has a name which is often descriptive like Little Red Riding Hood. Places are practically never named; this lends these stories an atmosphere of timelessness and general validity. In fact the tale is always about you, *de te fabula narratur*, the little child, who is now listening to it.

In contrast legends, which are stories for grown-ups, are normally very specific about the places and often give the names even of by-standers. This gives them the semblance of reliability, of real history and factual truth. Interestingly in the oldest Indian legends there are not many toponyms, in our story not even a single one. This may reflect the fact that the early Aryans in India were nomadic cattle-herders, slowly but constantly on the move from the West to the East.

This lack of any geographical reference in the *Aitareya* version is more than compensated for by the abundance of personal names. In addition to the real actors, four other ṛṣis, four sons of Viśvāmitra, the two brothers of Śunaḥśepa and eight divinities are named, and altogether twelve clan or tribe names occur. In case of the three fathers, Hariścandra, Ajīgarta and Viśvāmitra, even their patronymic is given.

There is nothing remarkable about these superfluous names. The gods are the most important Vedic deities, and all the ṛṣis as also Viśvāmitra's sons are well-known authors of hymns in the *Rgveda*. The sage Parvata who does nothing at all is still mentioned as living in Hariścandra's house besides Nārada; the reason for this is simply that these two ṛṣis of Kaṇva's clan are the joint authors of two hymns, IX.104–105.<sup>41</sup> So all

<sup>41</sup> Another association may be with the first part of the name Parucchepa (*parut+śepa*) – suggesting virility, as shown below. Grassmann suggested an etymological connexion: “pārus...



these marginal characters are consonant with our story being a part of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, a book of the ritual speculations of the *hotṛ*-priests reciting the Rigvedic hymns and preserving their traditions.

On the other hand, the names of the main actors are suggestive. King Hariścandra, ‘Flickering Yellow’ and his son Rohita, ‘Ruddy’ recall the image of the midday sun when it is the strongest and the red sky at dawn when the new sun is about to be born. Nārada, who gives him advice on how to get a son, bears a name that can be understood as ‘Offspring-Giver’. The name of Viśvāmītra, who curses his fifty sons, means in plain Sanskrit ‘Enemy of the Whole World’.

The names of the main hero and of his family are most interesting. The father, Ajīgarta bears the patronymic Sauryavasi, so his father was Sū-yavasa, ‘Having Good Pasture’, probably the owner of a sizeable herd of cattle. Unfortunately Ajīgarta ‘Ate It Up’. For this is the proper significance of the name, not ‘without anything to swallow’ as so far understood by everyone. There is no noun *jīgarta* in Sanskrit and there is no easy way to derive it from the root *gṛ*, ‘to devour, swallow’. But *ajīgar(t)* is a perfectly regular past tense of the verb (reduplicated aorist third person singular) and it actually occurs in the *Ṛgveda* I.163.7. *Ajīgarta* could be the admittedly rarer middle (reflexive) form, or perhaps it was built with the normal suffix *-a*. Using a finite verbal form as a name is not a regular practice in Sanskrit, but we have a significant parallel. There is only one other story in the *Brāhmaṇas* where a father sacrifices his son, and that is the story of Naciketa(s).<sup>42</sup> This name means ‘I Don’t Know’, as DeVries convincingly showed in his important and pioneering paper.<sup>43</sup> He also notices that a “very close comparison is found in Russian *Neznajko* from *ne znaju* ‘I don’t know’ (Afaṇašev 1984, no. 295).<sup>44</sup>

Now Ajīgarta’s name also has an exact parallel in Russian *Ob"edalo*, ‘Ate It Up’, occurring e.g. in Afaṇašev no. 144, the tale of *The flying ship*.<sup>45</sup> He is the well-known figure of folk tales: *Vielfraß, der Dicke*, Eater, All-Eater, Gobbler, Hungry Man or Fat Man; he can eat enormous quantities, twelve or even three hundred

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der unzweifelhafte Zusammenhang mit párvan, párvata macht es wahrscheinlich, dass der Grundbegriff der der Anschwellung ist.” Hermann Günther Grassman, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-veda*, Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1873, 789.

<sup>42</sup> *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* 3.11.8; a much more famous elaboration of the story is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. In both versions in the end the boy returns alive from the house of Death equipped with profound knowledge.

<sup>43</sup> Larry DeVries, The Father, the Son and the Ghoulish Host, A Fairy Tale in Early Sanskrit?, *Asian Folklore Studies* 46 (1987), 241–243. He properly references Whitney, who – hesitatingly – first suggested this analysis. William Dwight Whitney, Translation of the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 21 (1890), 91.

<sup>44</sup> DeVries, The Father, the Son, 251, fn. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Aleksandr Nikolaevič Afaṇas’ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, Moskva, Izdatel’stvo Nauka, 1984–1985.

oxen, has a huge belly and is always hungry. He is a “magical helper” of the hero who at one point in the story receives the “impossible task” of eating and drinking some gigantic quantity. This does change the picture not a little bit: perhaps Ajīgarta is not a poor emaciated Brahmin, but a huge, extremely fat person, who always thinks only of eating. (Interestingly his Greek counterpart Tantalus, who offered up his son Pelops as a sacrifice, now also suffers from eternal hunger in the underworld.) According to the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, when Rohita met him, he was not only hungry, but he was about to eat his son (*putraṁ bhakṣyamāṇaḥ*). We will see later that this may have interesting connotations.

The most tantalizing question is about the names of the three brothers, Śunaḥpuccha, Śunaḥśepa and Śuno-lāṅgūla, Dog’s Arse, Dog’s Prick, and Dog’s Tail. Most unusual and less than flattering appellations, even if we don’t consider that in India dogs are generally detested and considered unclean. In fact Śunaḥpuccha and Śunolāṅgūla appear only in those versions of the legend that follow the *Aitareya* very closely. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, only the younger brother is named, and he is called by her mother Śunaka, Puppy (I.61.17d). And no other person in Sanskrit literature was ever called ...-puccha or ...-lāṅgūla.

But the rudest of the three, the name of the hero and also of the story (*Śaunaḥśepam ākhyānam*, the story about Śunaḥśepa) is present everywhere, and, as we saw, it is well-established already in the *R̥gveda*. The names given to his brothers clearly show that the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa* understood it exactly as we do. Still, can it be the original meaning?

In the dictionaries we find only one other person called a part of a dog: Śunas-karṇa, Dog’s Ear – and his story is also about his ritual death. He was a *ṛṣi* of the *Sāmaveda*, the chanting priests’ tradition; and he “saw” and performed the *Sarva-svāra* sacrifice during which the sacrificer himself dies and goes directly to heaven.<sup>46</sup> This ritual where the voluntary death is caused by stopping the breath after a period of starving is curiously reminiscent of the *sallekhanā* vow of the Jains still practiced today by saintly monks and even lay followers for giving up the body. Since ritual death is quite unusual in the Vedic tradition, it seems probable that the supposed seer of the *Sarva-svāra* was named on the model of Śunaḥśepa, just choosing a less offensive part; after all, dogs hear quite well.

In an epic tale one more person’s name starts with *śunaḥ*: Śunaḥsakha, Dog’s

<sup>46</sup> *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* II.167; *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa* XVII.12.6. See Caland’s comments to his translation. Willem Caland, *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa, The Brāhmaṇa of Twenty Five Chapters*, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931, 467–468. A more detailed presentation of the ritual is found in the *Lātyāyana Śrauta-Sūtra* VIII.8.1–43, see (with translation) H. G. Ranade, *Lātyāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra*, Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts – Motilal Banarsidass, 1998, II.838–853.

friend, a fat wandering mendicant later revealed to be Indra.<sup>47</sup> This tale is actually a comic travesty of our story as we will show later. That it is in some way related to Śunaḥśepa was already suggested by David White, who also remarked that “the late and often corrupt *Skanda Purāna* (6.32.1–100) also relates the same story, but in this version, Indra... is disguised as Śunomukha (Dog-Face).<sup>38</sup>”

On the other hand, surprising as it may seem, Śunaka (Puppy) is the name of the ancestor of a very important clan of ṛṣis, the *Śaunakas*. The first of them is Ṛtsamada, the author of almost the whole of the second book of the *Ṛgveda*. His legend will give us the clue to these strange names. For he is said to be only the adopted son of Śunaka of the Bhṛgu clan; he was born to Śunahotra of the Aṅgiras clan (which also Śunaḥśepa belonged to by birth). But in fact Śunahotra, himself the author of two hymns, VI.33–34, belongs to the Bharadvāja clan according to the *Sarvānukramaṇī*. So there may be some confusion about clans here, and most probably Śunaka and Śunahotra, the “fathers” of Ṛtsamada, are the same person. Quite possibly it was he who changed his clan – then we would have another Śuna- person adopted; and his two names are but variants. Now Śuna-hotra means ‘Plenty-Sacrifice’, i.e. performing sacrifices producing prosperity. And therefore Śunaka is not ‘Puppy’, but ‘Bounteous’, as it was already suggested as a possibility by Mayrhofer.<sup>49</sup> The archaic word śuna is etymologically unrelated to śvan, ‘dog’ (of which the Genitive is śunaḥ); it can be derived from the verb śvi/śū, ‘to swell, grow’.

Beyond the name Śunahotra there are only two compounds in the *Ṛgveda* built upon śuna: śuna-*prṣṭha* and śunā-*sīra*. The first, ‘having wealth on his back’ is said of a horse. For an Indian of the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*, it must have appeared obvious that the Prakrit word *piccha*, *puccha* ‘hind part, tail’ comes from the Sanskrit *prṣṭha*, ‘back’ – as e. g. Pāli *pucchita* corresponds to Sanskrit *prṣṭa* ‘asked’. And with this we would arrive at Śunapuccha as a folkish variant of the Rigvedic śuna-*prṣṭha*.

The second compound, śunā-*sīra* means ‘Prosperity and the Plough’, later sometimes identified with Indra. The related agricultural ritual, the śunā-*sīriya* is part of the royal consecration, taking place exactly after a year of the preliminary rituals and one month before the anointment day<sup>50</sup> (when Śunaḥśepa was to be

<sup>47</sup> *Mahābhārata* 13.94–95. The *Mahābhārata* is quoted from R. N. Dandekar, *The Mahābhārata, Text as Constituted in the Critical Edition*, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1971–1976.

<sup>48</sup> David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-man*, Chicago – London, The University of Chicago Press, 1991, 94 and 95. So we have another dog-part name here, not listed in the dictionaries.

<sup>49</sup> Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1992–1996, II.646 (under śuna-).

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1925, II.341. For a description of the ritual see II.323.

sacrificed). “Keeping in mind the interrelation of ploughing and the sexual act it is easily seen that the *śunāsīriya* intended to secure the efficient action of the powers of fertility.”<sup>51</sup> A more frequent synonym of *sīra* is *lāṅgala*; the latter word also appears together with *śuna* but three lines before *śunāsīrau* (IV.57.5a) in the *Rgveda*: *śunām̐ kṛṣatu lāṅgalam* (IV.57.4b), “let the plough plough prosperity”, i.e. may our ploughing bring prosperity (IV.57.4b). Therefore *śunā-lāṅgala* would be equivalent to *śunā-sīra*, and since both *lāṅgala* (plough) and *lāṅgūla* (tail) can mean ‘penis’, we could easily get a variant *Śunālāṅgūla*.

So it seems that the names of our hero’s brothers are priestly puns on the two Rigvedic *śuna*- compounds. This was easily done since all *hotṛ* priests to this day know all of the *Rgveda* by heart, and also as a text separated into isolated words. The inspiration for the reinterpretation from *śuna*, ‘prosperity’ to *śunaḥ*, ‘dog’s’ comes of course from the name *Śunaḥśepa* where it is already present in the *Rgveda* itself. Now we turn to this name.

According to the dictionaries there are only three names ending in *śepa*: *Śunaḥśepa*, *Paruc-chepa* and *Eka-śepa*. The last one we can safely disregard: beyond the improbable meaning (‘One-penis’), its source is also extremely unreliable and unimportant. It is the *Pravarādhyāya*, the eleventh appendix to the *White Yajurveda*, a lengthy genealogical listing of several hundred Brahmins’ names.<sup>52</sup> As Weber, who edited a single transcript of a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, remarked, the manuscript is in horrible (*gräulich*) state with many mistakes and missing words. The string of letters *jñānahastikaikaśepaprātipēyapraṭiścavasā[h]* is anything but clearly analysable; an emendation<sup>53</sup> into *Jñāna-hastikāika-śeṣa*<sup>o</sup> (‘the sole remainder of the clan of Elephant of Knowledge’) seems tempting, and then we have *eka-śeṣa* (a well-attested word) instead of the absurd *eka-śepa*.

So we are left with only one other person in Sanskrit literature having such a strange name, *Paruc-chepa*. And he is also a *ṛṣi* of the first book of the *Rgveda*! He was the son of *Divodāsa* and the author of the thirteen hymns I.127–139. The first part of the name, *parut* is unattested in the early language; later it means ‘last year’, and *Mayrhofer* accordingly understands *Parucchepa* as ‘having a penis of

<sup>51</sup> Johannes Cornelis Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration, The Rājasūya Described according to the Yajus Texts and Annotated*, ’s-Gravenhage, Mouton & Co, 1957, 33.

<sup>52</sup> Albrecht Weber, *Verzeichniss der sanskrit-Handschriften* (Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek vol. 1), Berlin, Verlag der Nicolai’schen Buchhandlung, 1853, 54–62. The name is found on p. 58, line 23.

<sup>53</sup> The emendation involves only the change of a single character, *pa* to *ṣa*, which are almost identical in the Devanāgarī script: प and ष.

last year (i.e. shrunken)<sup>54</sup> But the idea of ‘Withered Penis’, i.e. Impotent, does not really fit his myth as found in the shorter *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Rgveda*, the *Kauṣītaki*:

*A demoness approached Indra, making vulvas at every joint. Indra, desirous of subduing her, made penises (śepa) at every joint (parus) – Indra indeed is Parucchepa. All does Indra seek to conquer. With her he had union. With her demonic magic, she was furious at him. He saw these verses with repeated lines; with them he was set free from all evil from every limb, from every joint.*<sup>55</sup>

Following this etymology, Böhtlingk and Roth suggested that the name is irregularly formed of *parus* (joint or knot, esp. of reed) and *śepa*.<sup>56</sup> Although it is not strictly impossible to call someone Knotted-Penis, there is another possibility. The Dravidian verb *paru-*, *parutt-* means ‘to become large, swell’.<sup>57</sup> If we recall that *śuna-* is derived from *śvi* ‘to swell’, we see that the only two persons in India ever to have a name *-śepa* were both called ‘Swelling Penis’, i.e. ‘Virile’. How appropriate this name is to the hero of our story, we will see below. Probably the Dravidian form<sup>58</sup> is earlier, translated into Vedic as *Śuna-Śepa*, but with a compulsory Dravidian doubling modified to *Śunaśśepa*. This form of the name does occur frequently, and according to Sanskrit phonetic rules it is equivalent to *Śunaḥśepa*. Although this latter form is thus secondary and less appropriate to the story, since the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa* clearly took this as the basis for the names of the two brothers, *Śunaḥ-puccha* and *Śuno-lāṅgūla*, we continue to use *Śunaḥśepa*.

<sup>54</sup> “einen vorjähigen [d.h. eingeschrumpften] Penis habend”, Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, II.95.

<sup>55</sup> *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa* 23.4; Keith’s translation (*Rigveda Brahmanas*, 477), modified. *asurĪndraṅ pratyakramata (v.l. pratyutkramata) parvan-parvan muṣkān kṛtvā. tāṃ Indraḥ pratijigīṣan parvan-parvaṇ chepāṃsy akurutĒndra u vai Parucchepaḥ. sarvaṇ vā Indreṇa jigīṣitam. tāṅ samabhavat. tam aḥṇād asura-māyayā. sa etāḥ punaḥ-padā apaśyat. tābhir aṅgād-aṅgāt parvaṇaḥ-parvaṇaḥ sarvasmāt pāpmanaḥ prāmucyata.* Bruno Lindner, *Das Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa*, Jena, Hermann Costenoble, 1887, 104–105.

<sup>56</sup> Otto Böhtlingk – Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*, St-Petersburg, Eggers, 1855–1875.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Burrow – Murray Barnson Emeneau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984<sup>2</sup>, 354 (No. 3972). Interestingly Grassmann without knowing about the Dravidian word also arrived at the basic meaning ‘to swell’ for the root behind *parus*, see fn. 41.

<sup>58</sup> The second part of the name is not an Indo-European word, as its variants in Sanskrit (*śepa*, *śepa*, *śepas*, *śepas*, *śeva*) and Pali (*cheppā*) show; it does not seem to be Dravidian either, although Tamil *ceppam* ‘straightness’ sounds similar.

## “HE SAT DOWN ON VIŚVĀMITRA’S LAP”

This little detail of abnormal behaviour, a man sitting on another’s lap in public, confused many translators so much that they altered it, saying that Śunaḥṣepa sat down by the side of the priest.<sup>59</sup> However, it is a stable element of the story, clearly present in all the three ancient versions.<sup>60</sup> Virpi Hämeen-Anttila in her very perceptive analysis seems to recognize here a regression under extreme stress: “Then follows the most human gesture so far: Śunaḥṣepa sits on Viśvāmitra’s lap, and the listener is reminded of the fact that this Vedic seer is a child.”<sup>61</sup> It is an attractive idea, yet it seems untenable – Śunaḥṣepa, although a young person still living with his parents, is clearly an adult both legally and mentally. He is a seer of hymns, entitled to conduct a ritual, fit to lead the clan of Viśvāmitra and decides freely about his fate: he rejects his father and negotiates the conditions of his adoption.

The meaning of this episode can be convincingly clarified. When Trisong Detsen, the future great king of Tibet, selected his new (maternal) family by sitting on the lap of his new uncle,<sup>62</sup> he was a toddler and therefore it seems quite natural to us. But the age is in fact irrelevant here, for this is the traditional rite of taking someone into a new family.

As Frazer already observed, many peoples “employ a simulation of birth as a form of adoption, and even as a mode of restoring a supposed dead person to life. If you pretend to give birth to a boy, or even a great bearded man who has not a drop of your blood in his veins, then, in the eyes of primitive law and philosophy, that boy or man is really your son to all intents and purposes.”<sup>63</sup> Frazer brought up astonishingly similar rites from Greece and India for the enacted birth after assumed death. On the Indian side, the procedure is concisely described by the

<sup>59</sup> “Çunahçepa sich an Viçvāmitra’s Seite setzte” Roth, *Die Sage von Çunahçepa*, 463. “Śunaḥṣepa placed himself by the side of Viśvāmitra”, Wilson, *Sacrifice of Human Beings*, 101. “Śunaḥṣepa then approached the side of Viśvāmitra (and sat by him),” Haug, *Aitareya Brahmanam* II. 468.

<sup>60</sup> In the *Brāhmaṇa*, *aṅkam ā sasāda*; in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, *upastham ā sasāda*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *papātāṅke muneh*, ‘fell into the sage’s lap’; in translation, it was again smoothed away into “fell at the feet of the sage.” Hari Prasad Shastri, *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, London, Shanti Sadan, 1952, I.118.

<sup>61</sup> Virpi Hämeen-Anttila, *Back to Śunaḥṣepa: Remarks on the gestation of the Indian literary narrative*, *Studia Orientalia* 94 (2001), 198.

<sup>62</sup> McComas Taylor – Lama Choedak Yuthok, *The Clear Mirror: A Traditional Account of Tibet’s Golden Age*, *Sakyapa Sonam Gyaltzen’s Clear Mirror on Royal Genealogy*, Ithaca, New York, Snow Lion Publications, 1996, 227–228. I thank Mónika Szegedi for the reference.

<sup>63</sup> James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, New York etc., The Macmillan Company, 1911–1922, I/1.74.

Old Manu (*Vṛddha-Manu*), quoted by the early seventeenth-century scholar of law, Mitra Miśra:

*If somebody was away from home for twelve years, in the thirteenth year the funeral rites should be performed for him. If he returns alive, he should be put in a pot filled with ghee; then, taking him out and bathing him, the birth rituals should be performed. ... Taking the bath [normally finishing the years of study] he should marry his wife, or, in her absence, another woman.*<sup>64</sup>

Accidentally this substitution of a jar for the womb in ritual birth explains the “miraculous” birth from a pot of Agastya ṛṣi and many other legendary persons.

The logic of the adoption ritual, as presented by Frazer, is analogous, although typically simpler. The adopted person may be pushed through the robes of the new mother, or he may crawl through between her legs, or the new father puts the child on his wife’s lap. “In the Middle Ages [in Europe] a similar form of adoption appears to have prevailed, with the curious variation that the adopting parent who simulated the act of birth was the father, not the mother.”<sup>65</sup>

We have clear traces of the custom with the Jewish patriarchs. Rachel after many years without giving birth said to her husband, Jacob, Isaac’s son: “Here is my slave girl, Bilhah. Sleep with her so that she may give birth *on my knees*; through her, then, I too shall have children!”<sup>66</sup> When Joseph gave his two sons to his father, Jacob for adoption, he “took them from his lap.” Therefore he had to re-adopt his own grandsons: they “were born on Joseph’s lap.”<sup>67</sup>

In India the widespread form of the ritual, surviving up to the present, is putting the child on the adoptive mother’s lap. In Hindi, ‘to adopt’ is *kisī ko god baiṭhānā/ lenā*, literally ‘to seat/take on the lap’.<sup>68</sup> Analogously, according to Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma-Kośa*, most gods don’t have sex like humans, and their offspring sud-

<sup>64</sup> *proṣitasya yadā kālo / gataś ced dvādaśābdikah |  
prāpte trayodaśe varṣe / preta-kāryāṇi kārayet ||  
jīvan yadi sa āgacchet / ghṛta-kumbhe niyojayet |  
uddhṛtya snāpayitvā tu / jāta-karmādi kārayet ||*

...snātvōdvaheta tām bhāryām / anyām vā tad-abhāvataḥ | ... iti Vṛddha-Manu-vacanāḥ.  
Viṣṇu Prasāda Bhaṇḍāri, *Vīramitrōdaya-Samaya-prakāśa, mahā-mahōpādhyāya-śrī-Mitra-Miśra-viracitaḥ*, Benares, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1935, 192.

<sup>65</sup> Frazer, *Golden Bough*, I/1. 74. fn. 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Genesis* 30:3. The Old Testament is quoted from Alexander Jones (ed.), *The Jerusalem Bible, Reader’s Edition*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, 1968.

<sup>67</sup> *Genesis* 48:12 and 50:23.

<sup>68</sup> Hardev Bahri, *Learners Hindi-English Dictionary*, Delhi, Rajapala, 1989.

denly appears as a five- or ten-year-old child. “The divine youth or maiden will be the son or daughter of the god or goddess on whose lap he or she appears.”<sup>69</sup>

A grown-up male has to sit on the lap of his father, not of his mother. The ceremony is performed in the presence of all relatives.<sup>70</sup> In perfect conformity to this, the adoption of Śunaḥśepa also happened in the presence of the king, summoning the whole clan of Viśvāmitra.

The only unusual feature of Śunaḥśepa’s adoption is that the father, Ajīgarta objects to it – this would normally make it legally impossible. However it could still take place for three reasons. First, Śunaḥśepa comes of age. That’s why he himself sits down on Viśvāmitra’s lap instead of being taken on his lap and Ajīgarta can only try to persuade him to return to his old family. Second, as Viśvāmitra points out, Śunaḥśepa has been already given to the gods, and he received the boy from them. That’s why his new name will be Deva-rāta, Divine Present. Lastly, elaborating somewhat the argument in Vasiṣṭha’s Law Code,<sup>71</sup> king Hariścandra had purchased Śunaḥśepa as a substitute for his son, therefore as a son – so Ajīgarta’s parental rights have terminated. After all, only this could explain why god Varuṇa accepted the substitution: he was not demanding a human sacrifice in general but specifically Hariścandra’s son.

For the modern reader it is also curious that after his adoption Śunaḥśepa-Devarāta will be the heir of Viśvāmitra. In fact this seems to have been the most frequent motive for adoption, and in particular the position of a king or a chief in India from the epic to the modern age was fairly often not inherited by the biological son. “Some of the best-known Kṣatriya chiefs at the present day were adopted with the rites we have described.”<sup>72</sup> Still, this happens normally when the chief has no son, and Viśvāmitra had a hundred and one. Even if most of them were actually only junior members of his clan (great-grandsons of his grandfather), as the balladic part of the text suggests, at least the four named sons were really his – in the *Sarvānukramaṇī*, the Rigvedic author-index, they all have the patronymic Vaiśvāmitra. This may have been decisive for the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa*, but

<sup>69</sup> *yasya devasya devyā vā utsaṅge deva-kumāro deva-kanyā vā jāyate, sa tayoh putro bhavati, sā ca duhitā. Abhidharma-Kośa-Bhāṣya* on 3.70a-c, see P. Pradhan, *Abhidharm-Koshabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*, Patna, K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967, 169. I thank Mónika Szege di for the reference.

<sup>70</sup> For examples from the Punjab and Gujarat, and from the Jaina tradition, see Śāstrī Golāpchandra Sarkār, *The Hindu Law of Adoption*, Calcutta, Thacker, Spink & Co., 1891, 454; and Sinclair Stevenson, *The Rites of the Twice-Born*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1920, 132–134.

<sup>71</sup> *Vāsiṣṭha-Dharma-Śāstra* 17.30–35. Text and translation in Patrick Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras, The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 2000, 418–419.

<sup>72</sup> Stevenson, *Rites*, 134.



these patronymics could always be simply clan names. So it is not impossible that “originally” Śunaḥśepa was adopted by a sonless man into the Viśvāmītra clan: either by Viśvāmītra (and then his “sons” were nephews or daughters’ sons etc.) or by a descendant of Viśvāmītra.

The royal consecration, *rāja-sūya* is both the core and the frame of our legend. Hariścandra learns it from Varuṇa, and then he performs it, although in the end it gets significantly modified; this is the climax of the story. From the last paragraph it also appears that it is in the course of this ritual that the *hotṛ* priest recites the myth. So it is of some importance to understand what the purpose of this ritual was. At the time of its performance Hariścandra had already been a king for several decades, so it could not have been the equivalent of a coronation.

*Rāja-sūya*, if the second part of the term is derived from the verb *sū*, *suvati*, would mean ‘vivifying the king’; if from *sū*, *sūte*, then it is ‘royal procreation’. Heesterman suggested that originally it was a yearly agricultural fertility rite performed by the king.<sup>73</sup> However, in his seminal paper Harry Falk convincingly established that while the later form of the ritual served the purpose of designating the heir of the king from among his sons, “the older *rājasūya* as appears in Baudhāyana’s presentation assumes that the childless king adopts a son.”<sup>74</sup> In spite of their different interpretations, many of Heesterman’s subtle observations support Falk’s thesis.

“Hariścandra’s belly inflated by Varuṇa may be considered as an image of Hariścandra’s being pregnant... His belly diminishes to normal proportions at the moment of the sacrificial rebirth, when Śunaḥśepa’s fetters fall off.”<sup>75</sup> The three special garments worn at the anointment ceremony is said by the ritual texts to represent the womb, the umbilical cord and the amnion;<sup>76</sup> and the anointment itself (pouring on of water) “can perhaps best be compared with the bathing of the newly-born child.” That the ritual “represents the new birth is already suggested by the word *rājasūya* (‘bringing forth the king’).”<sup>77</sup>

If we add that on our analysis, Ajīgarta as All-Eater also has a big belly, it seems that both the killer fathers are at the same time also pregnant with their son! With these symbolic elements we came back to Frazer’s observation made more than a century ago: adoption is performed through a simulation of birth. By now it is clear that contrary to most analyses, the adoption of Śunaḥśepa is not an unrelated

<sup>73</sup> Heesterman, *Rājasūya*, especially 222–224.

<sup>74</sup> “Das ältere, aus Baudhāyanas Darstellung zu erschließende *Rājasūya* geht davon aus, daß der kinderlose König sich einen Sohn adoptiert.” Harry Falk, Die Legende von Śunaḥśepa vor ihrem rituellen Hintergrund, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 134/1 (1984), 124.

<sup>75</sup> Heesterman, *Rājasūya*, 161.

<sup>76</sup> Heesterman, *Rājasūya*, 91–92.

<sup>77</sup> Heesterman, *Rājasūya*, 117–118.

story, not an unnecessary appendix included with some external purpose but an essential and integral part of the legend. Somehow the whole myth is about royal succession and the adoption of an heir. That was the original function of the ritual as well. This is the normal relation of myth and ritual: as Malinowski observed, “myth... draws its power from magic. Magic is also dependent upon myth. Almost every type of spell and rite has its mythological foundation. The natives tell a story of the past which explains how this magic came into man’s possession, and which serves as a warrant of its efficiency.”<sup>78</sup> In this case where the *rājasūya* is both the centrepiece and the external framework of the legend, this interrelationship is especially apparent.

Having clarified so much, the confusion seems not to lessen but to increase. Why is Ajigarta “pregnant” with his own son, whom he does not have to adopt, and why does he want to kill him? Surely a serious psychopath murdering his offspring for money is not a fitting subject for a myth. How does human sacrifice and filicide enter the picture?

## HUMAN SACRIFICE

Many scholars saw in the Śunaḥśepa-legend a testimony of ancient human sacrifice. This would not be too surprising in India. One form of ritual death, suttee (*satī*), the supposedly voluntary burning of widows on their husbands’ funeral pyre was quite widespread and survives to the present day, although it is banned. Sacrificing a person to a divinity was also a more or less regular practice in some sects, most often to the goddess Kālī or Durgā. There are many examples of it in the literature; frequently the hero is about to cut off his own head with a sword in front of the idol when the goddess stops him in the last second.<sup>79</sup> The tale of Vīravara is quite close to that of Śunaḥśepa, for here the father cuts off the head of his son as the goddess demands, and the boy is later resurrected by her.<sup>80</sup> All these gods and rites, however, belong to the later Hinduism and seem to be absent from the older Vedic tradition.

The ritual books do describe a magnificent *puruṣa-medha*, human sacrifice, but the scholarly consensus<sup>81</sup> considers it symbolic only or even plainly a Brahmanic

<sup>78</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, London–New York, Routledge Classics, 2001, 95.

<sup>79</sup> Csaba Dezső, The Story of the Irascible Yakṣa and the King Who Nearly Beheaded Himself in Dhanapāla’s Tilakamañjarī, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 22/1 (2012), 73–91.

<sup>80</sup> *Hitopadeśa* 3.8. M. R. Kale, *Hitopadeśa of Nārāyaṇa*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1967<sup>6</sup>, 78–79.

<sup>81</sup> With the sole exception of Albrecht Weber, Ueber Menschenopfer bei den Inder der vedischen Zeit, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 18 (1864), 269–270.

fiction to complete the system of rituals. On the other hand, the building sacrifice at the construction of the huge bird-formed fire altar (*agnicayana*) involving a human victim is believed to reflect actual practice, although the *Brāhmaṇas* say that it is no longer performed in this way – typically only a goat is killed. Although Parpola in his excellent summary thinks that it is “beyond reasonable doubt that Vedic texts do indeed attest to real human sacrifices performed within the memory preserved by the authors,”<sup>82</sup> the evidence is scanty and archaeological proof is lacking entirely. “The remains of the three Agnicayana altars, found in Jagatgram apparently do have the shape of a hawk, but whether they include human and animal bones remains as yet unknown.”<sup>83</sup> Even with the cursory reference in the *Yajurveda* noticed by Falk (“If he would do black magic, he should take a human victim”),<sup>84</sup> there is precious little to suggest an actual practice.

Therefore it is understandable why an analysis of our legend takes up such a large part of the discussion in the scholarly literature on human sacrifice in Vedic times. However, the legend is not a record of actual history and does not even pretend to be. It belongs to the mythical past when the hymns were “seen,” the gods walked on earth and bargained with men. Further, the ritual as described is not realistic as a Vedic sacrifice. At the animal sacrifice the actual killing is done not by a Brahmin but by a specialist, the *śamītr*, ‘pacifier’. First the victim is asked to agree, then it is released from the sacrificial post and led away. At the time of the slaughter all the priests turn away. And it is not done with a knife or sword but normally the animal is strangled. It is considered important that it should not cry out and that its blood should not be spilt.<sup>85</sup>

At a Vedic animal sacrifice a little portion of the victim is actually burned; most of the meat is roasted on the fire and eaten by the priests and the sacrificer. Had everything happened as originally planned, the great *ṛṣis* and Hariścandra should have partaken of the cannibalistic feast, the father actually eating the flesh of his son! This objection is not modern speculation: the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* directly mentions the taboo on eating human flesh as a reason for the impossibility of a real human sacrifice. At the primordial performance of the *puruṣa-medha*, right

<sup>82</sup> Parpola, *Human sacrifice*, 161.

<sup>83</sup> Hans Bakker, *Puruṣamedha, Manasarapuraṣa, Vāstupuruṣa, The Image of Man in the Sacrificial Context*, *Journal of Indological Studies*, 20–21 (2008–2009), 10.

<sup>84</sup> *yady abhicaret, puruṣa-paśum kuryāt*. KS 29.8, Schroeder, *Kāṭhaka*, 178. See Falk, *Śunaḥṣepa*, 134, fn. 53.

<sup>85</sup> Hermann Oldenberg, *The Religion of the Veda* (Tr. Shridhar B. Shrotri), Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, 202. Christopher Z. Minkowski, *Priesthood in Ancient India, A Study of the Maitrāvaruṇa Priest*, Vienna, Sammlung De Nobili, 1991, 165. Frits Staal, *Agni, The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, Berkeley, Asian Humanities Press, 1983, I.49.

before the killing, a voice spoke to Puruṣa, 'Man': "Puruṣa! Do not finish! If you finish it, man will eat man." So he set free all the victims.<sup>86</sup>

It is apparent that in our legend human sacrifice is viewed with utmost horror and disgust. Beyond the general tenor of the story it is explicitly stated. The officiating priests refuse to do it, Viśvāmitra and Śunaḥśepa call it a barbarous crime, and even Ajīgarta himself admits that it is a sin and says that he repents it.

Since the sacrifice is not completed but modified into a harmless soma-pressing, quite logically several scholars considered this legend as documenting the abolishment of the previously accepted heinous practice.<sup>87</sup> Such stories do exist, also in India. In the *Vikrama-carita*, king Vikramāditya offers himself as a substitute for a poor man as a sacrifice to the fearful goddess Śonita-priyā (Fond of Blood). Seeing his valour the goddess stays his sword and gives him a boon. The king asks her to stop the murderous custom and she agrees.<sup>88</sup> The 'abolition' interpretation would fit especially well into Frazer's theory according to which the original ritual murder of the king was first modified into killing the king's son; later a stranger was substituted for the royal offspring; and the last step is the giving up of the custom entirely.<sup>89</sup> Here also first the king is seized by Varuṇa; then his son is to be sacrificed; then Śunaḥśepa, an outsider replaces Rohita; and in the end nobody is killed.

Even if Frazer's theory had general validity, it seems extremely improbable that a single legend would incorporate the whole historical process. The *Brāhmaṇa* does not hint at giving up an old custom: according to it this was the very first *rāja-sūya* ritual and nobody was killed. Still, there is the divine demand in the story to sacrifice the king's child – surely this must have some ground in reality?

Not necessarily. Van Baal's example from South New Guinea nicely illustrates the point:

*One section of the tribe periodically celebrated an initiation ritual called ezamuzum, husband-wife. Before the beginning of the rites a contraption was constructed consisting of a long tree-trunk, resting on the ground with one end, and with the other at man's height on a simple scaffolding. Toward the end of the rites all the neophytes had to copulate one after another with a certain girl lying on a mat under the elevated end of the trunk. While the last of the neophytes was*

<sup>86</sup> *puruṣa, mā saṁtiṣṭhipo! yadi saṁsthāpayiṣyasi, puruṣa eva puruṣam atsyati... tām pary-agnikṛtān evōdasrjat.* – ŚBr 13.6.2.13. *Shrimad-Vajsaneyi-Madhyandin-Shatpath-Brāhmaṇam*, Bombay, Laksmivenkatesvara Press. Repr. Delhi, Nag Publishers, 1990.

<sup>87</sup> See Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas*, 62–63.

<sup>88</sup> *Vikrama-carita* 28. Franklin Edgerton, *Vikrama's Adventures or The Thirty-two Tales of the Throne* (Harvard Oriental Series 26–27), Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1926, I.219–224 and II.201–206.

<sup>89</sup> Frazer, *Golden Bough*, especially III. 9–195.

*doing his duty the scaffolding was suddenly torn down, and the trunk crushed the copulating pair who were roasted and eaten. ...*

*Later research confirmed the truth of the construction of the elevated tree trunk and also that at a certain moment the scaffolding was torn down, but not of the story of the copulating pair. All that was crushed were two coconuts, roughly decorated as a man's and a woman's head, and this did not even happen under the tree but a little way off. The story of the pair killed under the tree is the story told to the non-initiated. ... These stories were veritable myths giving significant information on the cosmological meaning of the rites. The non-initiated were allowed to know them, but not how the death of the deities concerned was operationalized by means of a perfectly innocent symbolism. ...*

*There is ample reason to keep this in mind when studying ancient records of human sacrifice. These sacrifices might have occurred less frequently than these records suggest.<sup>90</sup>*

## ISAAC

Practically everyone writing on the Śunaḥśepa legend remarks that it is similar to the story of Isaac's sacrifice in the Bible at Genesis 22. Not surprisingly, Biblical scholars are generally unaware of the Indian parallel.<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately beyond a short remark of one or two sentences no analysis has been attempted, with the sole exception of David Shulman who wrote a complete book on the Indian analogues of the Aquedah (Isaac's 'binding'). Although a full chapter is devoted to Śunaḥśepa, Shulman's main interest lies in the theological and religious questions and therefore he gives no comparison at all of the surprisingly many matching details.<sup>92</sup> For not only the general subject of the stories is similar but many minor details are identical and even the apparent differences disappear on closer inspection.

Hariścandra was a king while Abraham was a patriarch, but these traditional appellations refer to the same thing: head of a clan. Hariścandra seems to have been ruler of a single *grāma*, village, while Abraham could gather 318 warriors and with them he defeated the joint invading army of four kings.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Jan van Baal, *Offering, Sacrifice and Gift*, in Jeffrey Carter, *Understanding Religious Sacrifice, A Reader*, London–New York, Continuum, 2003, 290.

<sup>91</sup> Although Wellisch does mention it in a strikingly inexact footnote of three lines. E. Wellisch, *Isaac and Oedipus, A Study in Biblical Psychology of the Sacrifice of Isaac, The Akedah*, Oxon, Routledge, 2007, 63, fn. 1.

<sup>92</sup> David Shulman, *The Hungry God, Hindu Tales of filicide and Devotion*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993, 87–107.

<sup>93</sup> Genesis 14:14–15.

Let us first survey the common script of the two stories. The elderly chief has no children; he asks a divinity for a son and the god promises it.<sup>94</sup> When the child reaches the age of adolescence, the god demands that the father sacrifice the boy to him, and the father complies. The ritual is new, and the god gives precise instructions on how to perform it. When the father has already bound the boy and approaches him with a knife to cut his throat, another divinity stops the sacrifice.<sup>95</sup> The ritual is completed in a modified form with a substitute offering. The boy will be an important leader of a clan, ancestor to a great people.

Of course in the *Brāhmaṇa* we have two fathers and two sons, but this is secondary and in many respects inessential. Doubling of motifs is quite frequent in the world of authorless literature. Actually in the Bible we also have a doubling: for upon God's word Abraham drove out into the wilderness his first son Ishmael together with his mother Hagar, the maidservant of Sarah. There they would have died of thirst but for the intervention of God's angel.<sup>96</sup> There are many other motifs repeated in the stories of the patriarchs, sometimes even thrice. Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel (the wives of Abraham, Isaac and his son Jacob) are all barren for several decades, two of them sending in their maidservants, Hagar and Bilhah to their husbands to get children through them. The story of the patriarch lying about his wife to a king that she is but a sister also appears three times.<sup>97</sup> In the *Aitareya* it is clearly visible that we have a secondary duplication, not an original complexity: in the first story there is only Hariścandra and Rohita, while after the substitution they are no more mentioned, only Śunaḥśepa and Ajīgarta are seen. Also in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and similarly in the most ancient version, that of the *Ṛgveda*, Hariścandra is absent, whereas in the later Hariścandra legend popular in Hinduism, there is no Śunaḥśepa.

Abraham obeys God's command without argument, whereas Hariścandra is reluctant and bargains for a long time with Varuṇa for the life of his son. In fact, we have exactly the same thing in the Bible, although a little displaced. The same day Abraham is told that in a year the ninety-years-old Sarah will give birth to Isaac, Yahweh announces that he is going to destroy the sinful city of Sodom – and Abraham argues with him. “Perhaps there are fifty just men in the town. Will you really overwhelm them, will you not spare the place for the fifty just men in it?” When Yahweh yields, Abraham starts to bargain, and in the end they go down to

<sup>94</sup> Genesis 15:2–4.

<sup>95</sup> In Genesis 22:1–2 it is God (Elohim) who demands the sacrifice and “the angel of Yahweh” stops it (22:11–12). In the Indian story Varuṇa demands the sacrifice and Śunaḥśepa is liberated by Uṣas. Also in the first part it is Indra who prevents Rohita from returning, directing him to find the substitute, Śunaḥśepa.

<sup>96</sup> Genesis 21:9–19.

<sup>97</sup> Genesis 12:11–19, 20:1–18, 26:6–11.

only ten just men, and the god agrees. “I will not destroy it,” he replied, “for the sake of the ten.”<sup>98</sup>

In truth Abraham was not fighting for the sinful city, but for his nephew, Lot, who lived at its gates. Lot was his only relative in the land of Canaan. Since his father, Haran, Abraham’s brother died early, he joined Abraham’s family and together they wandered from Mesopotamia to Canaan; for many decades they herded their flocks together. Since Abraham had no son, all this time Lot was his heir. So for the life of their successor both the Indian and the Jewish chief bargained with a high god successfully, telling him what is proper to do in religious matters...

The oedipal relation of son to mother mentioned by Nārada in two of his gnomic verses also appears as an unusual hint in the Bible. At the age of forty, three years after his mother’s death Isaac married her niece, “and Isaac led Rebekah into his tent and made her his wife; and he loved her. And so Isaac was consoled for the loss of his mother.”<sup>99</sup>

The abusive behaviour of Śunaḥśepa’s mother, sending his older son to die in order to protect her youngest is like Sarah driving away Ishmael, who, although not a biological son, was still her child.<sup>100</sup> Rebekah conspired with Jacob to disinherit her older son, Esau.

Śunaḥśepa opposes god Varuṇa’s command and gets a new name God-Given. He moves to Viśvāmitra’s family (according to the Rāmāyaṇa 62.2f, Viśvāmitra is his maternal uncle, *mātula*) and inherits both his this-worldly and sacred possessions. Jacob wrestles with God and he is renamed Strong-Against-God (Israel). He goes to his maternal uncle Laban, lives there twenty years marrying his two daughters and then takes his inheritance, a large herd and Laban’s gods (the household idols).<sup>101</sup>

Isaac’s sacrifice takes place in an uninhabited place far away, in the land of Moriah, whereas with Śunaḥśepa it happens in or near the village. But the motif is there, although split into two: Rohita flees to the wilderness from his intended fate, while Śunaḥśepa is far away from home when his father tries to kill him. In both legends the mothers are distant, with no chance even to wail for their sons.

Unsurprisingly the children are never cooperative: Rohita runs away, Śunaḥśepa successfully prays for the gods’ help. Isaac is only suspicious and asks his father, “here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Since Abraham does not tell him his fate and cheats him (“God himself will provide the lamb”), he has no chance to refuse, while at the sacrifice Abraham binds him.

<sup>98</sup> Genesis 18:20–32.

<sup>99</sup> Genesis 24:67.

<sup>100</sup> So Sarai said to Abram, “...go to my slave girl. Perhaps *I shall get children* through her.” Genesis 16:2

<sup>101</sup> Genesis 29–31 and 32:26–30.

The most conspicuous from among all the parallelisms is the essential similarity of the gross absurdity of the whole situation. God gave Isaac to Abraham in order to make him the father of a multitude of nations – and then commands him to kill him! And Varuṇa is willing to give an offspring to Hariścandra – on condition that he kills him!

Actually there is an exact and perhaps historical parallel to Hariścandra's strange compact with Varuṇa in the Old Testament in a non-murderous form. So the sonless Hannah prayed: "Yahweh Sabaoth! If you will take notice of the distress of your servant... and give her a man-child, I will give him to Yahweh." And a son was born to her, dedicated for his life to the service of god: the prophet Samuel, the last judge of Israel, who anointed king David.<sup>102</sup>

Probably no more proof is needed to show that the two legends cannot be independent of each other. Although Israel is far away from India, the story of the deluge is found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as well. As is well known, myths and tales can travel very far both in space and time.<sup>103</sup>

We don't have to investigate who borrowed from whom, Aryans from Jews or the other way round; both would have been possible. In any case, the interesting question is not where a story was picked up, but rather why it was taken over. Why was it remembered and passed on? Now in the present case the central motifs are very well known all over the world, they are almost universal; and we will soon see why it is so.

## SNOW WHITE

In Europe perhaps the best known example of a father sacrificing his son is king Tantalus. In this archaic version he cut up his son Pelops, cooked his flesh and served it to the gods. They refused the gruesome meal and revived the boy by boiling his flesh in a magical cauldron. Agamemnon, his grandson also sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia to Artemis, although in many variants of the legend the goddess substituted a deer for the girl in the last moment. There are many more examples in mythology; in the Bible we also have another story where the judge Jephthah sacrifices his only child, his daughter to Yahweh.<sup>104</sup> But the motif appears most often in folktales, and in fact the two most marked features of our story

<sup>102</sup> I. Samuel 1.

<sup>103</sup> For a fascinating analysis of the wanderings of a single tale, see Jamshid J. Tehrani, The Phylogeny of Little Red Riding Hood, *PLoS ONE* 8/11 (2013), e78871.

<sup>104</sup> Judges 11:29–40.



– total absurdity and incredible cruelty portrayed as normal – should have recalled at once the Grimms’ fairy tales.

In many of these tales the parent tries to kill the child or sends it to almost sure death. In the well-known standard version<sup>105</sup> the evil mother always appears as a stepmother, but this is the result of editorial modifications according to the tastes of the age and the supposed needs of children.<sup>106</sup> For the tale of Snow White<sup>107</sup> “the earliest known text is in a manuscript of 1810... Here the handsome queen is the girl’s natural mother, who first wishes for her and is then dismayed by her ever-increasing beauty. It is the mother herself who takes Snow White to the forest.”<sup>108</sup> In the first edition of 1812–15 she is still the biological mother, who cannot bear her daughter’s superior beauty.

*She summoned the huntsman and said: “Take the child out into the forest to a spot far from here. Then stab her to death and bring me back her lungs and liver as proof of your deed. After that I’ll cook them with salt and eat them.”*

*The huntsman took Little Snow White and led her out into the forest, but when he drew his hunting knife and was about to stab her, she began to weep and pleaded so much to let her live and promised never to return...*

*Just then a young boar came dashing by, and the huntsman stabbed it to death. He took out the lungs and liver and brought them to the queen as proof that the child was dead. Then she boiled them in salt, ate them, and thought that she had eaten Little Snow White’s lungs and liver.<sup>109</sup>*

Beyond filicide we see here the wilderness, the knife ready to kill, the long prayer for life, the substitute victim and leaving the family for ever. The cannibalistic motif so dominant in the Tantalus myth is also emphasized. In the *Brāhmaṇa* it is suppressed, although the huge bellies of Hariścandra and Ajīgarta that we first interpreted as signs of pregnancy could also suggest that the fathers have devoured their sons. It also appears in the curious travesty of the legend in the *Mahābhārata* (13.94–95) where most elements of the story are present (underlined below) but all are mixed up unrecognisably.

<sup>105</sup> Jakob & Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, Berlin, Wilhelm Hertz, 1888.

<sup>106</sup> Maria M. Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987, 3–38.

<sup>107</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 53.

<sup>108</sup> Kay Stone, Three Transformations of Snow White, in James M. McGlathery (ed.), *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1991, 57.

<sup>109</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: the Complete First Edition*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2014, 171–172.

*The king gives his son to the seven Ṛṣis as sacrificial fee. In a famine, the boy dies and the sages put him in a cauldron to cook. The king passes by and offers to the sages cattle and gold, but they refuse. As the corpse is still not cooked they go digging roots. The king invokes a demoness to kill the Ṛṣis, but Sunaḥsakha, a fat wandering hermit they have accidentally met in the wilderness saves them by killing her in a ritual contest and then hides the poisonous vegetable dish she prepared. The sages curse the vegetable thief who introduces himself as Indra and they all go to heaven.*

Notice also the magical cauldron in which the dead boy although he is not revived at least cannot be cooked.

*The demoniac being(s) to whom the child is given over is also present in a variant of Snow White:*

*In the forest seven dwarfs live in a cave and kill any maiden who comes near them. The queen knows this, and since she herself doesn't exactly want to kill the maiden, she hopes to get rid of her by driving her out to the cave, where she tells her: "Go inside and wait there for me until I return."<sup>110</sup>*

Surprising as it may seem, it is not an important difference that the tale is about a girl, not a boy. "German female Cinderellas did not outnumber male Cinderellas until the eighteenth century... [there are] male Cinderellas and Snow Whites in modern Turkish folklore... Russian folklore has a male Sleeping Beauty."<sup>111</sup> And in many tales we find the motif with a son, just these are not so well-known today, perhaps on account of patrilocal marriages and a stronger prohibition on male Oedipal rivalry.

*In the European folktales the heathen gods are no longer present so a sacrifice is not possible, still, in some cases the idea is still recognisable.*

*Faithful Johannes as a "magical helper" gets the king his dream wife and protects them both from sure death, but in consequence of the king's mistrust turns into stone. The stone statue asks the king to cut off his twin sons' heads and to smear it with their blood. Then the statue comes to life and resurrects the boys.<sup>112</sup>*

<sup>110</sup> Zipes, *Grimm First Edition*, 494.

<sup>111</sup> Tatar, *Hard Facts*, 47.

<sup>112</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 6. It has a close and a more distant Indian variant, *The Eighth Key and Untold Stories*. A. K. Ramanujan, *Folktales from India, A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1991, 312–318 and 4–5.

Usually the motif is distorted in one way or the other. Often the supernatural being is absent and the parent kills or sends the child to die out of jealousy or anger, or perhaps on account of their unbearable poverty as with *Hansel and Gretel*.<sup>113</sup> The other possibility is that the parent merely gives the child to some ominous creature: a lion, the devil, the Bear Tsar, the nixie of the pond or Death itself, but it is assumed that it means the end for the kid. Interestingly this wondrous being is usually connected to water, as Varuṇa is the god of waters. The Bear Tsar lives in a well, the nixie of the pond and the Sea Tsar are underwater beings, and the devil in the tale of *The girl without Hands* has power near a brook.<sup>114</sup>

The essential absurdity of our story is also felt in the fairy tale. The question why the wondrous being wants the child is seldom answered, but in a tale it cannot be expected. Sometimes it can free him from some evil magic, as with Faithful Johannes or the lion in the tale of *The Lifting, Leaping Lark*.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand it is always explained why the father gives the child. Untypically simply for wealth as Ajīgarta did.<sup>116</sup> More often the being seizes the father, as Varuṇa did to Hariścandra, and sets him free only for the promise of the child.<sup>117</sup> But most frequent is the Jephthah motif: the father does not know what in fact the promise refers to. He will give what first greets him on return, or what he does not know of in his house.

As it is becoming increasingly clear, all the elements of the legend of Śunaḥṣepa can be found in the tales built around the filicide motif. Often the father tries to avoid fulfilling the promise as Hariścandra did.<sup>118</sup> Sometimes the boy's recital of some magic text turns his fate.<sup>119</sup> There is an example even for rejecting the father.<sup>120</sup> And in a fairy tale it is almost automatic for the hero to get into a new clan as the heir, for with the hand of the princess he receives also the land of the old king.

Lommel already called attention to the important parallelisms of our legend and the folktale.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately he failed to mention that all his material was taken from Charmet's very informative 1935 paper.<sup>122</sup> Charmet could quote more distant versions even from Africa; however the closest parallels were all taken from

<sup>113</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 15.

<sup>114</sup> Afanašev no. 201; Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 181; Afanašev no. 219; Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 31.

<sup>115</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 88, a variant of *The Beauty and the Beast*.

<sup>116</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 29 (*The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs*).

<sup>117</sup> As the Bear Tsar, or the fairy in *Rapunzel*, see Zipes, *Grimm First Edition*, 37 (= Grimm, *Märchen*, no. 12).

<sup>118</sup> E.g. in *The Bear Tsar* or *The Nixie of the Pond*.

<sup>119</sup> Grimm, *Märchen*, nos. 33 and 47 (*The Three Languages* and *The Juniper Tree*).

<sup>120</sup> *The girl without Hands*.

<sup>121</sup> Lommel, Śunaḥṣepa, 157–160. He also referred to the legends of Jephthah, Idomeneus and Agamemnon.

<sup>122</sup> Raymond Charmet, *La Légende de Çunaḥçepa et les contes populaires*, in Georges Dumézil, *Flamen-Brahman*, Paris, Guethner, 1935, 97–112.

a collection of Greek and Albanian tales by J. G. von Hahn.<sup>123</sup> It was him who in his scholarly introduction clearly identified the relevant motif (*Gelobungsformel*, 'Pledge-formula') that both Lommel and Charmet used with slight modifications (without referencing Hahn), and he gave a list of the relevant tales both in his collection and others, including the Grimms'.<sup>124</sup> (Writing in 1864, he was as yet unaware of the Indian legend.) In one of his examples we have an exact version of the pointless Hariścandra–Varuṇa contract: "Once there was a king that got no children and he was so sad about it that once he called out: I wish I had a child, even if the devil would devour it!"<sup>125</sup> The son when he learns of his intended destiny, simply says "No!" like Rohita and runs away from home.<sup>126</sup>

## RITUALS AND ANXIETIES OF MATURATION

All the elements could be found only scattered through several tales, but this is not a weighty objection for two reasons. First, all the elements were organically related to the basic motif, and all our examples were taken from tales of the type 'the parent kills the child or gives it over to a supernatural being'. Second, in his deservedly world-famous 1928 study *Morphology of the Tale* Vladimir Propp convincingly showed that there is but one fairy tale.<sup>127</sup> To be more exact, the underlying plot of all 'wonder tales', as he preferred to call them, is identical. It consists of blocks with clearly identifiable functions (he gave a list of 31, from *absentation* through *difficult task* to *wedding*), and they are organized in a predictable order. In the actual tales, some of the functions may be absent and some may be repeated, but their structural relations and order remains fixed. By now it can come as no surprise that the legend of Śunaḥṣepa also belongs here, although it is not a folktale but a myth. But this difference is not about the contents of the story but about its social status. A myth is taken seriously, more or less believed in. It is part of the religious tradition of the community and it is connected to the rituals.

<sup>123</sup> Johann Georg von Hahn, *Griechische und albanesische Märchen*, Leipzig, Wilhelm Engelmann, 1864.

<sup>124</sup> Hahn, *Griechische Märchen*, I.47–48.

<sup>125</sup> "Es war einmal ein König, der bekam keine Kinder, und war darüber so betrübt, daß er einstmals ausrief: »ich wollte, ich hätte ein Kind, und möchte es auch der Drakos fressen.«" Hahn, *Griechische Märchen*, No.5 (*Vom Prinzen, der dem Drakos gelobt wurde*). Similarly in No. 41 (*Vom Sonnenkinde*).

<sup>126</sup> Also in his (Hahn, *Griechische Märchen*) No. 4, *Vom eisernen Derwisch und dem Prinzen mit den drei Zwiebäcken* and No. 54, *Der Jüngling, der Teufel und seine Tochter*.

<sup>127</sup> Vladimir Ākovlevič Propp, *Morfologiâ skazki*, Leningrad, Academia 1928, translated by Laurence Scott (revised by Louis A. Wagner) as *Morphology of the Folktale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1968<sup>2</sup>.

We now have the key to the interpretation, it only needs to be used. For Propp continued his analysis of the folktale in his brilliant and quite entertaining book, *The Historical Roots of the Wondertale*.<sup>128</sup> Although translated to all major languages from German to Japanese, inexcusably it has no English translation.<sup>129</sup> Looking at an impressive number of (mostly Russian) tales he conclusively demonstrates that the single plot underlying them does not preserve the memory of some murder, human sacrifice or ritual cannibalism: it is the inheritor of the rituals and related origin myths for the initiation of adolescents into adulthood.<sup>130</sup> Initiation rituals have many variants and a complex symbolism; it was first considered in an adequate theoretical framework by van Gennep.<sup>131</sup>

With hunter-gatherer tribes the central element of these puberty rites is the ritual death of the child: the spirits of the ancestors or an animal, the totem of the tribe, kills the adolescent and often devours it. Then the child is revived and reborn as an adult, having been initiated into the secret myths, songs and dances of the tribe. (In India, the Aryan after initiation is 'twice-born', *dvi-ja*, although the death logically preceding rebirth is no longer portrayed.<sup>132</sup>) After initiation a man can marry, which, due to the rules of exogamy leads him into a new clan within the tribe. Since this is the unavoidable fate of every child, ever since its birth it has been promised to the divinity, as Baptism still reminds us. But the actual handing over and being devoured is delayed till the child becomes fit for it, till puberty (cf. Confirmation). For the start of the rites the children are taken away from their family and village, often robbed by the spirits, the masked fathers. They go to the wilderness where they stay for long schooling and painful tests. Often circumcision takes place at this time.

In contrast to folktales, the relation of myth to ritual is still clear. All the examples mentioned above contained a sacrifice, and the Śunaḥṣepa legend is explicitly connected to the *rāja-sūya* – the consecration, i.e. coming of age of the young king. In the Biblical *aqedah* we also see the clear signs that it is about the ritual stages

<sup>128</sup> Vladimir Âkovlevič Propp, *Istoričeskie korni volšebnoj skazki*, Leningrad, Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta 1946.

<sup>129</sup> Only the first and last chapter is included in a compendium of his papers: Vladimir Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, 100–123.

<sup>130</sup> That some folktales reflect initiation was first suggested by Pierre Saintyves, *Les Contes de Perrault et les récits parallèles. Leurs origines (Coutumes primitives et liturgies populaires)*, Paris, Librairie Critique, 1923.

<sup>131</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage: Étude systématique des rites*, Paris, Émile Nourry, 1909.

<sup>132</sup> Perhaps significantly in the simple initiation ceremony described by Prasad, from among the eight Rīgvedic mantras to be recited, three were used by Śunaḥṣepa in the legend (IV.1.4–5 and I.24.15). R. C. Prasad, *The Upanayana, The Hindu Ceremonies of the Sacred Thread*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1997.

of growing up. Isaac was the first newborn to be circumcised at the proper age of eight days; and he is the only person in the Bible where we hear of the banquet celebrating his weaning. He remains for the rest of his life the paradigmatic case of all rites of passage, since we hear of his marriage, prayer for offspring, divining the fate of the foetus, giving his paternal blessing before dying, then his death and burial.

The legends we discussed are clearly not simply somewhat vague memories of some earlier initiation. They speak about the initiation of great heads of clans and men of god with rites previously unheard of. So they must be survivals of the origin myths of initiation, and quite possibly of the special initiation for future shamans or kings.

Although we are still in the age of myths, the key elements of the legend are obviously no longer understood by the tradition. What can be the explanation for this? Clearly it is the same reason that later in the folktales leads to a complete change of function: fundamental changes in the way of living, and following upon that, in beliefs, customs and rituals. Both the legends of Śunaḥṣepa and Isaac come from pastoral cultures, not from hunter-gatherers. So the natural context of the totemic animal ancestor, the hard trials of the future hunter, the forest school, all are lost and forgotten. Instead of the old initiation, we have a sacrifice.

*Sacrifice and initiation stand in an inverse ratio to each other: where there are elaborate initiatory rituals, sacrifice seems relatively undeveloped; where there are complex sacrificial cycles and ideologies, initiation seems relatively undeveloped. Indeed, I am tempted to suggest that initiation is for the hunter and gatherer and primitive agriculturalist what sacrifice is for the agrarian and pastoralist.*<sup>133</sup>

Interestingly our legends still recall the hunting past. Abraham's first son, Ishmael "made his home in the wilderness, and he became a bowman", and Isaac's first son, "Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the open country. ... Isaac preferred Esau, for he had a taste for wild game."<sup>134</sup> And Rohita "took his bow and went to the wilderness", while Śunaḥṣepa lived there.

This is not the first time filicidal sacrifices are explained as survivals of initiation legends. It was Cornford who first observed that "this rite with the death and resurrection of Pelops can hardly leave a doubt that the Feast of Tantalus was in essence a ceremony of New Birth, of mock death and resurrection, and also, in some

<sup>133</sup> Jonathan Zittell Smith, *The Domestication of Sacrifice*, in Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, (ed.), *Violent origins, Walter Burkert, Rene Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1987, 198.

<sup>134</sup> Genesis 21:20 and 25:27–28.

sense, of Initiation.”<sup>135</sup> Bunker reached the same conclusion.<sup>136</sup> Burkert showed a similar connection to initiation ritual of the festival Lykaia and its foundational myth about king Lycaon of Arcadia serving his son’s flesh to Zeus.<sup>137</sup> And Bloch associated also Abraham’s sacrifice with initiation:

*The similarities between the story of Iphigenia and that of Isaac are very striking and have often been pointed out. Furthermore, the connection between these two stories of sacrifice and the Orokaiva practice of initiation is clear. In all three cases we find the same elements.*<sup>138</sup>

For the interpretation of myths and fairy tales, however, there is a completely different approach. Ever since Freud offered his famous psychoanalytic understanding of the Oedipus myth, this tradition successfully explains many stories as representing symbolically the different phases of the psychosexual maturation of the growing child. Bettelheim’s justly famous *The Uses of Enchantment* quite convincingly shows this on several well-known tales of the Grimms’.<sup>139</sup> Who is right, Propp or Bettelheim? Is the fairy tale (and the myths belonging to this pattern) a survival of forgotten initiation ritual, or is it a projection of infantile psychic conflicts?

Once the question has been asked, it is easily seen that we do not have to choose, “the contrast is more one of perspective than of substance.”<sup>140</sup> The initiation ritual is found around the globe because at a former age hunter-gatherers were everywhere. Their ritual had very important practical functions, such as making the boys leave the paternal home, teaching them the traditions of the tribe and preparing them for the hardships a hunter may have to survive. On the other hand, the symbolic elements of the ritual could become so stable and universal only because they expressed both the adolescents’ psychic experiences and the grown-ups perceptions of them. This emotional adequacy resulted in the associated stories long surviving the tribal past and its initiation ceremonies and, indeed, being enjoyable and important to the present day.

<sup>135</sup> Francis Macdonald Cornford, *The Origin of the Olympic Games*, in Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis, A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, University Press, 1912, 248.

<sup>136</sup> H. A. Bunker, *The Feast of Tantalus*, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 21 (1952), 355–372.

<sup>137</sup> Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans, The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (tr. Peter Bing), Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, University of California Press, 1983, 84–93.

<sup>138</sup> Maurice Bloch, *Prey into Hunter, The Politics of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 27.

<sup>139</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York, Knopf, 1976.

<sup>140</sup> Burkert, *Homo necans*, 25.

An element of these stories is the change of generations, the conflict between fathers and sons. Where the aspect of sexual rivalry is dominant, we get a parricidal Oedipus story;<sup>141</sup> these also start with an attempted filicide, usually the exposure of the infant son, because of a prophecy foretelling that he will replace his father. In our stories sexuality is downplayed, but not absent. We saw Isaac's adoration for his mother, and the rivalry between Hagar and Sarah is clearly expressed. Jacob's eldest son actually committed incest: "Reuben went and slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel learned of it."<sup>142</sup> In the *Brāhmaṇa*, beyond Nārada's explicit Oedipal law, we have Śunaśśepa's telling name – Swelling Penis. (Oedipus' name, 'Swollen Feet', may be a variant on the same idea.) It is not difficult to see in the fathers' approaching hand with the knife a castration move, or, ritually transformed, circumcision. On another reading, the knife could be a phallic symbol.

In a sense this is the most archaic aspect of these legends: the drama of the father attacking and driving away his already virile sons is enacted by gorillas and lions as well. With humans the problem arose probably with relatively closed households, presumably in the neolithic. Its traumatized unfolding is the Oedipus myth, while the healthy solution is the Śunaśśepa legend: at the right time, the son is sent away (forcefully, to be sure) to another family to live and marry without incest.

But probably this is not enough to explain the attempted filicide; and in the tribal rituals, it is not the father but the tribal ancestor or the spirits of the dead who kill the neophyte. The folktales show more clearly that it is in the far-away land of the dead that the hero acquires his magical skills. At initiation the boy is given over not to another family but rather to the tribe. Men are temporal, the tribe is eternal, in its existence, in its culture and language. It is God. The myths belong to the past, to the spirits of the forefathers, to the deathless realm. To get there, you have to die, to become one of the spirits (whom you will often embody as a masked dancer), and learn their ways. Only this way you could become a true part of the immortal whole, a true inheritor of the sacred traditions; and, if need comes, be prepared to die for it again. Of course now this is only a temporal death: the monster that swallowed you will vomit you up or give birth to you, or the spirits boil you again in the cauldron and you rise again whole.

It seems therefore that our legends are compressed and split forms of an earlier myth, all the forefathers appearing partly condensed into the solitary figure of the father, partly as the more distant god demanding the sacrifice. Still we feel

<sup>141</sup> There are many such stories, also in India and even in Oceania. See Lowell Edmunds – Alan Dundes (ed.), *Oedipus, A Folklore Casebook*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>142</sup> Genesis 35:22.



that the little boy dies to resurrect as a responsible representative of the tribe, as a father of nations.

The last question to clarify relates only to the Śunaḥṣepa story of the *Aitareya*. Harry Falk persuasively reconstructed an original legend for the *rājasūya*, quite different from what we found here. According to this, Hariścandra was seized by Varuṇa and therefore became impotent. As he had no son, he prayed to the god to remedy the situation, and Varuna then taught him the *rājasūya*, the ritual to adopt an heir.<sup>143</sup>

Although Falk did not address the question, we can now clearly see how the sacrifice of the new son, Rohita, came into the picture: as a new member of the clan, he had to undergo initiation, ritual death – he had to be given to god. With this the Rohita- and the Śunaḥṣepa-story became quite close, so they could be harmoniously joined. The motive for this joining was probably what Falk suggested: the Rigvedic Brahmins wanted to appropriate the kingly ritual thereby strengthening their political and ritual prerogatives.<sup>144</sup>

The doubling of the motif in the legend can be explained sufficiently this way. But we may add that here this duplication is suggestive of a more original logic. The father drives away the son to a new family, a new father – who also has to drive away his son. And exactly this is what we find in the *Rāmāyaṇa*-version: there Viśvāmitra not only adopts Śunaḥṣepa but also commands his sons to take his place in the sacrifice. And when they refuse, he curses and disinherits them.

As so often seen, a later form can preserve more original elements.

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<sup>143</sup> Falk, Śunaḥṣepa, 128.

<sup>144</sup> Falk, Śunaḥṣepa, 131–134.

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# THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF REVITALIZING THE HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATION OF IAHR AND FOUNDATION OF THE HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGIONS

Facts, Documents and Memories of a Secretary

IRÉN LOVÁSZ

This paper was presented as a lecture at the 10th Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions, in Budapest, 2011, in the section: “History of the history of religions. Theoretical and/versus historical approaches”. It has not been published since that time. The 25th anniversary gives special topicality to publishing it in 2016.

The timing of the Budapest Conference in September, 2011 whether planned or not, definitely met the very historical moment: the 20th anniversary of revitalizing, re-forming, renaming and re-establishing the Hungarian Association of IAHR and founding the Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religions. I appreciated the possibility of Hungary being the host of the international conference of EASR. We did not even dare to dream about it 20–25 years ago. It has been a long way...

The story began in Helsinki, on 19th May, 1990, the last day of a regional conference of IAHR, when Prof. Dr. Michael Pye, the then Secretary General of IAHR asked Mihály Hoppál and me, as he said, to revitalize the Hungarian association, which had been in long-time “agony” by that time.

The Hungarian Association for the History of Religions (Magyar Vallástörténeti Társaság) was founded and run by Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel (1908–1970) and Károly Marót (1885–1963), scholars of Greek mythology, antiquity and classical philology. It was registered at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Committee: Prof. István Borzsák and Prof. János Harmata (classical philologists). Members: Tibor Bodrogi (ethnologist), Tekla Dömötör (folklorist), Géza Komoróczy (Hebrew and Assyrian philologist), Ferenc Tőkei, József Lukács (Marxist philosophers), Károly Czeglédy, János György Szilágyi. László Kákosy (Egyptologist) joined them in the 60s. They attended the IAHR congresses in 1966, 1970, 1975. The Hungarian Academy paid the annual fee of 120–150 Holland Forints for IAHR.

Since the congresses were organized in distant locations, e.g. in Australia or Canada, the journey there was impossible to afford and to get support for, so the last activity of the Hungarian Association was shown in 1975. Thus the Hungarian Association was considered as dead-and-alive, or a body in a state of suspended animation. No sign of scientific activity has been shown by the Hungarian Association for 25 years.

So Mihály Hoppál and I were practically asked to revitalize the Hungarian Association in 1990. Within a few weeks we started to work. At that time I did not know how difficult it would be. Now I know, what it meant, and what we did.

On 22nd August, 1990 we wrote a letter to the Hungarian colleagues who might be interested: it was an invitation or call for a re-forming meeting to be held on 25th September, 1990. The name of the passively existing Hungarian Association was: Magyar Vallástörténeti Társaság (Hungarian Association for the History of Religions). We informed and invited colleagues of several academic disciplines like: philosophy, sociology, classical philology, studies in antiquity, oriental studies, ethnography, ethnology, theology, linguistics, history of literature, art and music.

At the first assembly we elected the new board demonstrating continuity and having respect for the elder scholars too:

President: László Kákosy

Vice-presidents: Mihály Hoppál, Miklós Tomka, Lajos Boglár, Pál Horváth

Treasurer: Éva Pócs

Secretary: Irén Lovász

The board represented a wide range of academic fields: Egyptology, sociology, philosophy, ethnography, cultural anthropology. Some of the members have already passed away during these years. There was a demand for giving a representative as a vice-president from each discipline. That is why we had 4–5 vice-presidents, which might seem unusual in such a small association.

Then we witnessed a vivid interdisciplinary discussion among ethnologists, anthropologists, philosophers and sociologists on defining our frames and methods of the study of religions. It caused scientific discussions and also personal, disciplinary tensions, and jealousy.

The main points I must underline, were the following:

There were no academic institutions for the Study of Religions (Vallástudomány) in Hungary at that time. Researches and studies were conducted by individuals in different disciplinary fields independently, and often at a high level of excellence. Though it was obvious that great individual researches had been done by outstanding and highly respected Hungarian scholars during the past decades, there was not sufficient interdisciplinary communication among the scholars of religion. There were no university departments and no independent academic discipline for the study of religions at that time in our country.

Some of the different disciplinary experts (sociologists, philosophers) were rather sceptical and jealous of building up a new umbrella organization. They were reluctant to share the field with others, or collaborate with them, especially with ethnographers or anthropologists.

For instance Miklós Tomka, the sociologist of religion announced our intention to establish a department or an association of Scientific Study of Religion. He got rather a mixed reaction: "The theologians would not accept it. They would not like anybody else to speak about religion. They have about enough of the Marxist criticism."

Let me note that sociological studies of religion was basically theologically motivated and controlled at that time. The Center for the Sociological Study of Religion could be found within the National Pastoral Institute, in the same building as the Catholic Publishing House and the editorial office of Catholic Journals and ecclesiastical stores. It was a rather chaotic period of political changes of the late communism, with changes of all the systems. The study of religion in Hungary in that special political period seemed to turn from the control of Marxist criticism to the control of theology.

It caused a very difficult situation for the independent and scientific studies of religion. Later the Bologna system brought new chance of establishing university departments and academic units. Fortunately several Departments of Study of Religion (Vallástudomány) were founded in different cities in the following years, thanks to that.

There were some changes in the board during the years, but Mihály Hoppál and I held our position from 1990. As far as I am concerned, in spite of all the (political, academic and personal) difficulties, I did not give up for six years, since I was convinced that there was a historical challenge and we had to develop step by step, we had to fill the academic gap caused by the historical, political facts. I did not know for sure but I hoped that there probably would be institutions for the academic, scientific study of religions in Hungary in the near future. I did not know when and how it would happen, and influenced by international tendencies, towards what kind of disciplinary and methodological directions the Hungarian way might turn, or whether there would be a special Hungarian way at all.

I was privileged to have a strong scholarly and friendly support from the highly respected scholars working in the executive committee and some national committees of IAHR. I took part in several congresses and conferences of IAHR in Rome, Burlington, Vermont, Mexico City. And I also attended the first conferences and assemblies of the European Association for the Study of Religions. In those days during those occasions I had long discussions on the international policy of helping the local, national associations (especially in Eastern Europe, Latin-America and Africa) on a wide, independent academic ground with the highly respected



scholars of the field, like Michael Pye, Armin Geertz, Thomas Lawson, Donald Wiebe, Luther Martin, Rosalind Hackett, who were members of the executive committee of the IAHR, EASR or several national boards. I am very grateful to all of them for their great emotional and scholarly support. My deep scholarly and personal friendship with the Finnish scholars e.g. Prof. Terhi Utriainen and Prof. Veikko Anttonen also dates back those days, and those international conferences.

It became clear for me from time to time that my calling was to help the Hungarian Studies of Religion to be revitalized in official frames and help to put it again into the main academic stream by demonstrating the international standard of studies and achieving the international recognition and acceptance.

My first great task was to organize our first conference on 5th–6th October, 1992 with the title *Alternative Religiosity: Past and Present*. The aim was to understand the historical roots and the theoretical rules of an actual socio-cultural phenomenon from the approaches of different academic disciplines.

We invited scholars to study the dynamics of the official and the alternative, the main and the marginal, the supported and the illegal, the great and the small, the new religious movements versus the old ones in the history of religions. We tried to approach religious ideas, movements, mystical tendencies, ideologies, philosophies, organizations, rituals and genres, appearing, existing either within the frames of the main world religions, or independently of them. We were also interested in the socio-cultural effect, the consequences of these phenomena. We called scholars for interdisciplinary approach of each topic, regarding as many religions as it was possible.

There were 45 papers from philosophers, psychologists, historians, theologians, ethnographers, sociologists, scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Shamanism, New Age, new religious movements, phenomena of folk religions of different kind, and also scholars of history of art and literature.

Our suggested topics were:

1. Contemporary new/ alternative religious movements of different Christian, Oriental origin, secret, mystical and other groups,
2. Socio-political features of religious protest movements,
3. State religion and heresy, “great tradition, small tradition,”
4. Conflict between missionaries and locals,
5. Features of folk religious rites, genres, specialists, groups,
6. Alternative religiosity in literature and art history,
7. Philosophical and theoretical considerations.

It turned to be a great conference which was a real breakthrough in the academic circles. Since we did not get any support, the papers were not published. So I still have some of the papers in the archive as documents of history of the study of religions in Hungary.

In 1993 we organized another interesting conference on the “Notions of the Otherworld.” The approach was again crosscultural and interdisciplinary. In the meantime we organized smaller lectures, meetings with presentation of single papers of Hungarian or foreign scholars, and joint conferences with other academic societies.

Our further important steps were:

In the meantime we accepted the new constitution. After long methodological and theoretical consideration I suggested the new name which would offer a clear, wide and independent academic ground and frame. The General Assembly accepted my suggestion and the new official name is Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religions in English and Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság in Hungarian.

We could also achieve that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences paid our annual fee for IAHR. The first official letter acknowledging the receipt of 10000 US Dollars from the MVT as payment for the 1991 annual subscription to the IAHR was signed by Prof. Armin Geertz, the then Honorary Treasurer of IAHR on 29 August, 1991. After years of silence we were officially accepted again as affiliated members of IAHR!

We also received an official registration by the Hungarian Court (08 Aug, 1991) with the new name: Magyar Vallástudományi Társaság, with the address: 1 Pesti Barnabás Street. Thanks to Prof. Donald Wiebe’s kind offer I also could arrange that the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences would get regular free copies of the *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* published in the USA. He as editor-in-chief wanted to be sure that the journal would be available for any Hungarian scholars, that is why I suggested a main library for that.

In Burlington, Vermont, USA I also made an exclusive interview with Thomas Lawson, the president of the American Association for the Study of Religions, the editor-in-chief of *NUMEN*. Professor Lawson by that time was widely considered to be the founder of the cognitive science of religion field. He published his world famous book titled *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*, with Robert N. McCauley in 1990. The text of my interview with him unfortunately could not be published in Hungary at that time.

My short summary of those days at the beginning of the 1990s would focus on the moments of revitalizing the Hungarian Association for the Study of Religions after years of agony and silence during the difficult period of late communism.

Now I know, we wrote the history of science. Since I still have documents, papers, letters, moments of general assemblies of those historical days, I can make a precise historical survey of that period. Let me note that there were no websites, no computers, no files to preserve all the documents – it is already the part of the history of the History of Religions.

It is a great privilege to me to have been able to do this service. It was an important period both of my personal and scholarly life. I did it for 6 years, until my personal and academic life allowed me to do it. The reason why I could not continue any longer, and did not accept new nominations for being a member of the national committee and doing this voluntary work as a secretary was that between 1994 and 1996 I had three children and parallelly I lost both of my academic jobs. So I had no institutional background and no time for doing it any longer. And losing mental support I also lost my courage to do it.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of the facts, documents and my memories with my old colleagues from all over the world and also with the new generation of Hungarian scholars at the 25th anniversary. I hope scholarly activities and communication will be much easier now and in the future, under new political and academic circumstances, applying new tools of communication and technology, providing new perspectives for scholars of the international study of religions.

Budapest, September 2011–2016

Simon-Székely, Attila (ed.),  
*Lélekenciklopédia [Encyclopedia Of The Soul]*

BUDAPEST, L'HARMATTAN-KÁROLI GÁSPÁR UNIVERSITY  
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY, 2015

L'Harmattan Publisher's and Károli Gáspár University's joint edition of *Lélekenciklopédia* ("Encyclopedia of the Soul") allows insight into the great religions, myths and philosophies of the world, as well as into (natural) scientific conceptions of the soul. Because of its very special content the volume is to an extent unique in the Hungarian and international academic and encyclopaedic literature. This means that all the notions of the soul, and also the concepts closely related to that of the soul (such as spirit, breath, psyche, self-awareness, consciousness, unconsciousness, subconscious mind, body, heart, life, death, rebirth, immortality, ghost, demon, devil, afterlife, heavenly world, underworld etc.) are described from an interdisciplinary, or, in fact, multidisciplinary perspective including ethnography, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, theology, anthropology and other disciplines. The encyclopaedia is a happy combination of a collection of studies and of a reference book, which is designed not only for experts, but also for lay people.

The first volume discusses the ideas about soul and spirit in the five world religions. The authors and reviewers are, without exception, excellent experts, who, on the one hand, faithfully represent the vision of their respective churches, and, on the other hand, do not refrain from presenting alternative viewpoints as well, as they draw on the latest research. In this sense the studies reflect not only the mainstream views but they also manage to present the theoretical difficulties of the several different concepts of soul and spirit.

## CHRISTIANITY

After the editor-in-chief's preface and Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy's foreword, Prof. Dr. István Perczel (CEU) introduces the early Christian theories on the soul from the time of gospels up to the heyday of Byzantine mysticism. He emphasizes that the Christian theory of the soul is essentially related to the Greek New Testament and to the Jewish tradition. As most authors, Perczel draws attention to the philological

and semantic problems of term *soul*. The source of the problem is the fact that both *pneuma* and *psyche* have several meanings in Ancient Greek, while the authors of New Testament used these words mainly according to their respective Aramaic meanings. *Pneuma* in the Gospels is simply the soul of man, while *psyche*, in its Aramaic sense, means *life*. The Acts of the Apostles most often refers to the Holy Spirit with the word *pneuma*. In the beginning, expressions were closely connected to the Aramaic cultural environment, but in the 2nd and 3rd century Platonism influenced Christianity. On this new route a milestone was Origen's Platonism and the Cappadocian Fathers' concept of the soul that they formulated in the context of the resurrection. Finally, after Christological disputes and schisms, a positive development was the appearance of the notion of *person*, which has become an elementary part of our culture.

In the next chapter Prof. Dr. Liviu Jitianu expounds the Roman Catholic interpretation of the soul. (Unfortunately, the book does not say anything specific about the author.) In accordance with the general structure of the chapters, the author begins with an introduction into the history of the church. Especially in the context of pneumatology, the terms *soul* and *spirit* occur with reference to the third divine person of the Trinity. Although the Trinity is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and though, according to the author, the Spirit of God cannot be identified with the Holy Spirit, a lot of people believe that the theophany, the *pluralis maiestatis* and the *trisagion* refer to the Trinity. In the New Testament, the Trinity and the Holy Spirit are displayed in Jesus's life. This special orientation towards Christology and pneumatology is the dividing line between the Old and the New Testament. However, the Catholic Church has a teaching concerning the ecclesiological dimension of pneumatology as well. The Church is the workhouse of the Spirit and the source of Christian life is the Spirit. This Spirit teaches in the church and works in the councils of bishops and also manifests itself in Pope's *ex cathedra* utterances. Finally, besides the anthropological aspects of the human soul the author discusses the question of afterlife. Concerning conceptions of life after death the author surprisingly turns to the Protestant Rudolf Bultmann's concept of "existential provocation," with reference to the resurrection.

Dr. Gergely András Nacsinák, an orthodox priest, investigates the question from the viewpoint of Orthodox Christianity, which, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, is not unanimous in the interpretation of this concept. Orthodox theology seeks after a balance in its Christology and Trinitology, accepting the Nicene Creed on the co-essential divinity of the Son, applying to Him the term "consubstantial." Therefore its theology is often labelled mystical or antinomic. Respect for tradition is not pure formalism, but a necessary part of spiritual practice. Thus, the Orthodox Church also acknowledges that by the Fall of Adam and Eve, the "divine icon" was impaired in man, but it has been restored by the salvation of Jesus. In fact,

man can be divinized, according to Orthodox Christian theology. This is called *theosis*. For this church, the important part of religion is ascetic, mystical practice, whereas according to the Fathers, purely speculative philosophy is the demons' theology. The demons offer images and thoughts (*logismoi*) to ascetics, that is why such images and thoughts should be banished, and the *nous* should be withdrawn to protect the heart from external influences.

In the next chapter, Tamás Juhász deals with the interpretation of the soul within the Reformed Churches. "Reformed" is a general term and in the colloquial sense, it refers to the Protestant Churches that are members of the World Community of Reformed Churches, like the Reformed, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches are, respectively. The Protestant teaching lays stress on the four *solas*, namely *sola Scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. In respect of the Scripture, grace and faith, the respective Protestant and Catholic positions are much closer to each other, so today *solus Christus* is the only true distinguishing mark between them. According to the author, the Reformed Churches disclaim all religious hierarchies, stand up for the idea of universal priesthood, they are champions of human rights, and call for solidarity with the poor. While they emphasize the relative autonomy of the Holy Spirit, they refuse the possibility of a direct experience of God. There is no doubt that in many respects Tamás Juhász's original approach does not reveal the established Protestant ideas but introduces alternative ones. For the author, God can only be defined in terms of a personal relationship with humans. Further, quoting Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism, he demythologizes hell, which he no longer considers to be a real place, but as suffering itself. Similarly, Juhász states that the concept of Satan as a real person is a residue of the medieval world view, which most Protestants do not believe in.

Next, Prof. Dr. Tamás Béres as a Lutheran professor of theology explains the Evangelical Lutheran theology of the soul. The autonomous regional churches are members of the Lutheran World Federation. This organization includes 68 million people from 80 countries and 140 member churches. Their faith is based on the idea that salvation is reached by grace alone and that salvation saves people in the form of the Word and the sacraments. Therefore it can be stated that the centre of the Evangelical Lutheran preaching is the Gospel. The Holy Spirit is present in the preaching and the sacraments. God cannot be merely known in theoretical and rational way. Thus, instead of theoretical understanding we should talk about soteriological knowledge. The Devil who wants to steal man's faith, hope and love, is the cause of sin. Against evil, prayer and the Word of God can take up the fight successfully. Jesus Christ has overcome hell and all the negative spiritual powers. Due to the incomprehensibility of the soul, it is almost impossible to reach a clear delineation of concepts. In any event, apart from the Spirit of God and the human soul, there are other souls too. The special gifts of the Holy Spirit are the "theological

charismas” such as wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, teaching, *glossolalia*. However, the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit is faith, hope and love.

After this chapter Csilla Lakatos, an unitarian minister and psychologist, opens her essay with the description of the position of the Unitarian Church. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century saw a more or less serious spreading of anti-Trinitarian opinions in many European countries. Doubts were raised about the Reformers’ commitment to previous beliefs, including previous Christology. Thus the Unitarian Church of Transylvania was founded as a branch of the radical Reformation movement. Then the author focuses on the history and theology of the Transylvanian Church. She describes its foundation and explains the importance of the Diet of Torda (1568) from an Unitarian perspective. For Unitarians, the essence of religion is the agapeic relationship between God and man, and the moral life that is based on this connection. Thus the life and teachings of Jesus Christ constitute the exemplary model for living one’s own life. Unitarians maintain that Jesus of Nazareth is in some sense the “son” of God (as all humans are the children of the Creator), but he is not the one God himself. They believe that mainline Christianity does not adhere to strict monotheism while they, i.e., the Unitarians, do, by maintaining that Jesus was a great man and a prophet of God, perhaps even a supernatural being, but not God himself. The Unitarian Church does not only have a specific Christology, but it also has a specific pneumatology. For them, the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the power of God. Reason, rational thought, science, and philosophy coexist with the faith in God.

In the next chapter, a leading Hungarian theologian of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jenő Szigeti wrote about the faith of his Church. This denomination emphasizes the imminent Second Coming (advent) of Jesus Christ. The denomination grew out of the Millerite movement during the mid-19th century and was formally established in 1863. Miller predicted on the basis of Daniel 8:14–16, that Jesus Christ would return to the Earth in the autumn of 1844. When it did not happen, most of his followers disbanded. The official teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination are expressed in its 28 Fundamental Articles of Faith, of which 25 were developed by Uriah Smith in the journal *Review and Herald*. These theses deal with the problem of body and soul too. According to Smith, humans do not possess an immortal soul and there is no consciousness after death. Immortality can be obtained only through Christ in the resurrection. Adventists think that talking about the immortality of the soul and about resurrection at the same time is a contradiction. Adventists believe in a double resurrection and a renewed Earth, where the spiritual dimension completely penetrates the material world.

Next Dr. Kornél Győri, a baptist theologian and professor begins his chapter by presenting the history of the Baptist Church. The early seventeenth-century

Baptists were influenced by continental Anabaptists. The Anabaptists appeared in our country in 1546, but during the reign of Maria Theresia their communities were under great pressure and then dissolved. Baptism in its current form was born as a part of modern history. In Hungary Mihály Kornya and Mihály Tóth played a major role in spreading Baptist teachings. Baptists were often persecuted, but today they can peacefully cooperate with the state within the *Baptist World Alliance*. The tenets of Baptist churches include the freedom of will, salvation through faith alone, Scripture alone as the rule of faith and practice, and the autonomy of the local congregation. Baptists do not practise infant baptism and generally believe in the literal Second Coming of Christ. Because of the congregation's individual freedom, the individual opinions of members may differ in many details. Faith is a matter between God and the individual. To them, faith means the advocacy of an absolute liberty of conscience. As far as anthropology is concerned, they think that the structure of the human soul is a secret. The important question, for them, is whether man moves toward God or away from Him.

Methodist pastor Gábor T. Szuhánszky clarifies, in the following chapter, that the movement which led to the foundation of the United Methodist Church had begun in the mid-18th century within the Church of England. Methodists trace their roots back to the revival movement of John and Charles Wesley, which changed the moral image of England. Apart from them, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the pietist Ludwig Zinzendorf influenced the movement to a considerable extent. Based on Wesley's teaching, they focused on the study of the Bible, the methodical study of the Scripture and also on leading a holy life. Their goal was to spread the Biblical holiness in the world. In terms of Wesley's critique of the Anglican Church, justification is not the same as sanctification. According to their faith, all humans are sinners. Sin estranges people from God and corrupts human nature in a way that we cannot heal or save ourselves. Salvation can only be reached through Jesus Christ. The Methodists are waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus and believe that heaven and hell are real, therefore there is real evil and real resurrection.

Next Lajos Simonfalvi and Mátyás Komesz introduce the Pentecostal and the Charismatic movements. Pentecostalism is a Christian renewal movement which places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God and baptism in the Holy Spirit. By a baptism in the Holy Spirit a Christian believer is enabled to live a Holy Spirit-filled and -empowered life. This belief system includes the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing – two other defining characteristics of Pentecostalism. In addition, for Pentecostals, “every moment is eschatological,” since Christ may return at any time. The Second Coming for Pentecostals is the motivation for practical Christian lifestyle. Spontaneity is a characteristic element of Pentecostal worship, with singing and loud shouts of



praise, jubilation, dancing and also glossolalic praying. Pentecostals believe that all of the spiritual gifts, including miraculous gifts continue to operate within the Church even in our present time. The faith in divine healing reflects the Pentecostals' holistic approach, insofar as they say that the whole Gospel is for the whole person – for the spirit, the soul, and the body. Sickness is a consequence of the Fall of Man and salvation will ultimately bring about the restoration of the fallen world.

## JUDAISM

Dr. Tamás Visi undertook the presentation of the Jewish religion. Visi depicts in detail the history of the Jewish religion from Abraham until the 19th century. He only briefly mentions the new reform movements, stating that these, as yet, cannot be evaluated in terms of religious history. The ambitious study shows that Judaism is a malleable and flexible religious tradition, while it certainly keeps some fundamental characteristics. The Jewish community is the representative of a religious truth and of an ethnic identity at the same time. Judaism is not an explicitly dogmatic religion. The numerous different theories about the soul also reflect this fact. Although the phrase “the Spirit of God was moving on the face of the waters” has been identified, by most Christian authors, as a reference to the Holy Spirit, Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Spinoza and others still clearly understood the text in a very different sense in which the expression *ruach elohim* simply refers to a *strong wind*. Since then, extensive philosophical, theological and mystical literature has discussed the issue. A Hellenistic influence is felt when the soul becomes the antithesis of the body as early as the time of Philon. Otherwise, Philon attributes physical substance to the soul. Further discussions treat the question of the preexistence of the soul, its place of residence, and the question of resurrection and demonology. In conclusion, the author states that the ever-changing Jewish religion has remained faithful to its intellectual roots.

## ISLAM

The chapter on Islam is an essay written by Klára Kondi Anwar and Mohamed Eisa Subail. At the beginning of the text, the authors present a detailed description of the history of Islam from its beginnings. In the first chapter, the great civilizations of the 6th and 7th centuries and the Arabian clans before Islam are described. This introduction helps us to understand the importance of Mohamed's life and his work. The Prophet's biography is followed by a short description of the Sunnite–

Shiite sects and their arguments concerning the election of caliphs. The second chapter is dedicated to the explanation of the word *islam*, which interprets Islam as a general law that rules the whole world. According to the Quran, all people are born, in a bodily sense, to be Muslims, but all have free will too. Thus there are two types of humans: one of them does not accept Allah as a Lord and Maker, whilst the other does. The acceptance of the true faith is the first step towards the growth of the soul. In the next part, we can read about two types of the soul. In the Quran and the Arabic languages two words can be found with the meaning of *soul*: *ruh* and *Nafs*. The difference between the two terms can be understood with the help of quotes from the Quran. The authors describe how Allah created the first human, what the purpose of human life is. Then the Arabic word *Fitrah* is explained. *Fitrah* is an innate belief in God. Allah gives humanity an ability to recognize good and bad, but it is up to our free will what our choice will be. It is believed to be the origin of evil when body and desires take control of the soul. This is the reason why Allah gives instructions to mankind to find the right way. The next chapter is about the several conditions of the human soul. These conditions are: the soul which gives bad orders, the soul which reproaches itself, and the calm soul. In the next parts of the text, the authors specify the five types of connection between the body and the soul. The first is when the human is just an embryo. In this condition, Allah sends an angel to breathe the soul into the embryo, and then the angel implants four words into the human being. These words anticipate the person's life, which implies divine predestination, and we humans need to believe in this. Yet our predestination can change because Allah also gives us free will.

When a human dies, Allah sends the Angels of Death to get her or his soul. If the deceased was a believer and lived an honest life, the angels take the soul to the seventh heaven. If the person was faithless or a sinner, the angels do not let him or her go to the first heaven.

The fourth type of connection between the soul and the body is the one that obtains in the grave, where the souls dwell till Judgement Day comes. This condition of the soul is called the *Barzakh*, which can be similar to a temporary paradise or hell. When Judgement Day comes, people will be resuscitated and Allah will judge them. The authors provide us with an exhaustive description of what will happen to the good and bad. Finally they conclude that Islam is fundamentally different from the other religions, insofar as it does not expect detachment from the world and it does not prefer the ascetic way of life. In Islam the soul can grow in a non-monastic environment.

## HINDUISM

The chapter on Hinduism consists of the essay entitled “The spiritual universe of Hinduism, Brahmanism and the Vedas,” written by László Tóth-Soma, a philosopher and theologian, and Krisztina Danka, a theologian. The text starts with the terminology and the history of Hinduism, including an account of the origin of the word *Hindu* and the history of Hinduism according to the tradition and to scientific research. Then the fundamental Hindu scriptures are described, of which the most important are the Vedas. These texts are classified into two types, *Shruti* and *Smriti*. *Shruti* is the knowledge which is heard and this refers to the Vedas. According to tradition the Vedas are revelations which then were memorized and transmitted verbatim. They were put down in writing at a relatively late point of time. *Smriti* is memorized knowledge. It contains comments from great teachers, explaining the revelations. After explaining this, the authors describe the common characteristics of the schools of Hinduism. These are *Vaishnavism*, *Shaivism*, *Shaktism*. The following text part deals with the scholastic philosophical schools of Hinduism. In the last part the Hindu spiritual terminology is detailed. In this terminology, there is, first, the personal soul called the *Atman*. All schools accept that every person needs to find and define itself in order to live a complete life. The Hindu scriptures give instructions about the nature of the *self*. The self is an indestructible, divine, eternal soul, which wears the body like a cloth. The *Atman* keeps the body live, and it causes personal conscience. The body can change, but the soul remains the same. So long as the soul does not quit the illusion of the fake, bodily world, it is always reborn in a new body. Second, there is the supreme soul, *Brahman*. It is the infinite, eternal, blissful truth which does not change. The world is full of it, it is the origin of everything and everything will return into it. The schools have different opinions about the relationship of *Atman* and *Brahman*. The reason for this may be in the scriptures, which do not develop a clear position concerning this point. Humans have to understand the *Atman* and to get experience about *Brahman*, this is the way to get out of the bodily world and the *samsara*, the cycle of rebirths. If released from *samsara*, the soul achieves the state of *moksha*. There are four ways to attain *moksha*: Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga, Ashtanga-yoga and Bhakti-yoga.

## BUDDHISM

The part on Buddhism contains five essays. The first, entitled “The soul, the conscience and the person in Buddhism” has been written by Tibor Porosz, a philosopher. He begins his essay with the problem of identifying the meaning of

the Sanscrit word *Atman*. Numerous meanings are close to it: soul, self, person, mind, spirit. This is the reason why it is difficult to understand the *non-Self* view and Buddha's teaching. In the first part of Porosz's essay the Buddha's life, and his ideas about *non-Self* are described. Buddha does not mention *being* in his speeches because reality only consists of a cycle of coming-into-being and passing away. As you can learn from the third section, the Buddha's logic is not about being but dynamic coming-into-being. Porosz proceeds with the description of the link between the body and the soul, the body and the mind, the different levels of the mind and being. The next section concerns the psychology of personality. Most people think that man consists of the body and the soul, but according to Buddha, the good student sees the five *Khandha*, the five sets of the things. If one recognizes and experiences these, it will liberate his or her personality. The sixth section is on the personality in Nirvana and on the personality of the enlightened ones. The fake idea of personality leads to the suffering that we experience in our life. The second part of Porosz's essay analyses the early schools of Buddhism: *Theravada*, *Sthaviravada*, *Sautrantika* and *Pudgalavada*, and their respective teachings about selflessness.

The second essay in this part is "The belief in the soul in Tibetan Buddhism" written by Dr. Tamás Agócs, a tibetologist and buddhologist. This paper summarizes the peculiarities of Tibetan Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism arrived in Tibet from North-India and its teaching was highly influenced by the general sentiment against Theravada Buddhism, which prefers the idea of personal release. The followers of Mahayana believe in the existence of *Bodhisattvas*, who have already attained enlightenment, but have not entered Nirvana yet. Instead, they stay in this world to help others. The *Bodhisattva* became an ideal for the believers. In this article we can also read about the fascinating *Bardo Thodol*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead. The book describes the path of the soul from death to rebirth. When someone has died, the Tibetan religious master, the *Lama* reads him or her the book to help his or her soul get free from *Samsara*.

The next essay entitled "Chinese Buddhist conceptions of the soul" has been written by sinologist Gabriella Gergely. Buddhism arrived in China through Central Asia. It had to adapt to the extant religious and philosophical systems, and hence Chinese Buddhism has put on specifically Chinese character traits. The Buddhist masters found connections with Taoism, so early Buddhism applied Taoist terminology. When Buddhism became popular, they needed to translate the original Buddhist texts into Chinese. It reformed Chinese Buddhism and led to the foundation of new schools. Chinese Buddhists studied the *Buddha-nature*, this indestructible substance which is reborn time after time.

The fourth essay in this part carries the title "Conceptions of the soul in conventional Korean civilization" and is the work of Attila Földi. The author opens

his paper with a short description of Korean religions. Shamanism, for instance, had a huge pantheon. Földi then describes the most important texts of Korean mythology: the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa*. In this historical presentation the description of Korean religions continues with Taoism and Buddhism. Földi also lists and introduces some famous monks. At the end of the essay you can find an interesting Korean vocabulary.

The last essay entitled “Zen Buddhism,” has been written by theologian James L. Fredericks and translated into Hungarian by Júlia Lázár. The text begins with a historical summary. Chan Buddhism arrived from India into China by virtue of a monk named Bodhidharma. He was the main character of Chan Buddhism and his legend grew with the Chan school in the 7–8th century. His followers left the itinerant way of life and became members of a monastery located in Central China. Then the Chinese Chan spread to Japan, where it was called Zen. After the history of Zen we can read about the meaning of *Atman*. In the next section, it is asserted that Chan Buddhism does not wish for a saviour *ab extra*, and does not follow ideals. Chan Buddhism does not need a mediator, it speaks directly to the human heart. The next section describes Dogen Zenji, who created a Zen school in Japan. His best-known text is the *Shobogenzo*, which had considerable effect on the Zen movement. In the *Shobogenzo* Zenji wrote that everything has a Buddha-nature, including the grass and the trees because everything is non-constant, even the enlightenment of the mind itself. Every phenomenon is empty, there is no constant substance. According to Dogen, the original personality is not the subject without body and mind, it is not the ego, it is the pure action of the Buddha-nature in concrete time and space. In the last part of the essay the author presents a dialogue between Zen Buddhism and Christianity.

In sum, the volume explains the conceptions of the soul in the different religious traditions. Still, it is unfortunate that some authors put more emphasis on the historic background and do not expound the concepts of the soul in more detail. Apparently, not all churches have developed the concept of the soul, so the question is often discussed in the context of pneumatology, soteriology and eschatology, instead of anthropology. The studies are true representation of the diversity of the several different perceptions of soul. However, editorial work still needs to be better, insofar as the authors’ bio-notes are often left out, and the page header occasionally does not correspond to the content of the page.

