

University of Tartu  
Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics  
Department of Semiotics

Anastasiia Bondarenko

A THEOSEMIOTIC READING OF HRYHORII SKOVORODA

Master's Thesis

Supervisors: Dr. Silvi Salupere, Dr. theol. Thomas-Andreas Põder

Tartu 2023

## **Abstract**

This master's thesis "A Theosemiotic Reading of Hryhorii Skovoroda" seeks to provide an overview of the Ukrainian thinker's ideas relevant to theosemiotics by carefully setting philosophical foundations in dialogue with semiotic ideas of Skovoroda. It is accomplished by the use of historical, cultural and literary parallels, as well as literary criticism and illustrations of possible semiotic interpretations. The thesis captures a fairly significant range of possible points of interest for English-speaking academics interested in theosemiotics. The reader is made familiar with Skovoroda's interpretation and use of semiotic concepts such as the sign, the symbol, the image, the emblem, the figure, the archetype. From Plato to Umberto Eco – some bridges are built that can help place Skovoroda on the map of the English-speaking academy. The first chapter, from a philosophical point of view, discusses Skovoroda in relation to Plato, Epicurus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, mystics (Angelus Silesius and Jacob Böhme), Stefan Yavorskiy, emblemata books (especially "Symbola et emblemata selecta") and Johann Arndt. The semiotic analysis of Skovoroda is based mainly on Ukrainian scholars, in order to introduce their extensive research to the English-speaking academic community. Although many non-English-speaking scholars appear in the work, the thesis is largely based on the interpretations and commentaries of Dmytro Chizhevskiy and Leonid Ushkalov. As an encouragement to spark up interest in Skovoroda's ideas in terms of theosemiotics, some of Skovoroda's concepts are placed in the context of modern semiotics. Charles Sanders Peirce's object, interpretant and representamen are used in the second chapter to analyze the meaning-generating aspect of the emblem, which also has a trifold structure, Kobus Marais's ideas relevant to translation processes within the emblem are also discussed. Finally, in the third chapter, Skovoroda's concept of the Bible as a book (a book-world), the smaller world, the plane of being (medium) and the collection of divine knowledge is interpreted in the light of Umberto Eco's concept of an encyclopedia. Eco's concept proves to be very relevant not only to Skovoroda's notion of the Bible, but also to his notion of the Abecedary containing the alphabet of the world.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Materials</b> .....	3
<b>The aim of the thesis and research questions</b> .....	5
<b>What does “theosemiotic” mean?</b> .....	5
<b>Method: What does “Reading” mean?</b> .....	7
<b>I. Outlines of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s Philosophy</b> .....	12
<b>1.1. Skovoroda and Plato. Two Natures</b> .....	12
<b>1.2. The Kindred and Happiness. Skovoroda and Epicurus</b> .....	15
<b>1.3. The Inner Man. Skovoroda, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine</b> .....	18
<b>1.4. Mysticism and Skovoroda</b> .....	21
<b>II. Outlines of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s Semiotic Ideas</b> .....	25
<b>2.1. Skovoroda’s language: Baroque. Codes</b> .....	25
<b>2.2. Word</b> .....	31
<b>2.3. Name (of God)</b> .....	32
<b>2.4. Sign and image</b> .....	35
<b>2.5. Symbol, image, figure, archetype</b> .....	38
<b>2.6. The Emblem</b> .....	43
<b>2.6.1. A note on history and literature</b> .....	43
<b>2.6.2. In search of the proper definition</b> .....	46
<b>2.6.3. Focal points in terms of Augustine and Skovoroda</b> .....	50
<b>2.6.4. An exercise in translation. Kobus Marais</b> .....	52
<b>III. Hryhorii Skovoroda’s Worlds of Meaning</b> .....	56
<b>3.1. Skovoroda’s worlds</b> .....	56
<b>3.2. The Bible as a mirror</b> .....	63
<b>3.3. Observatorium</b> .....	67
<b>3.4. The Abecedary and the Alphabet of the World</b> .....	70
<b>3.5. Are the Bible and the Abecedary synonymous?</b> .....	73
<b>3.6. Is the Bible an encyclopedia?</b> .....	73
<b>Conclusions. Is Hryhorii Skovoroda of Interest to the Theosemiotic Reader?</b> .....	79
<b>References</b> .....	82
<b>Kokkuvõte. Grigori Skovoroda teoloogilis-semiootiline lugemine</b> .....	86

## Introduction

In times of war, I see it as my duty to say “thank you” to the ones who raised me. Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722–1794), a Ukrainian philosopher, poet, composer, artist, and a core thinker of my culture, had raised my ideas. These ideas I address back to him in gratefulness.

I would first like to address Hryhorii Skovoroda as a Ukrainian thinker. While his identity as a Ukrainian should invoke no objections, it can still be a matter of active discussion<sup>1</sup>. For instance, Halina Usatenko writes that thinker’s national identity raises questions, since the thinker “never articulated his national or ethnic identity”<sup>2</sup>, “never cultivated the Ukrainian intellectual context”, or even “addressed the social and political realities”<sup>3</sup> of his times (Usatenko 2013: 48). In Ukraine, there was, nevertheless a tendency, as Vyacheslav Artiuch calls it, of the “extraction”<sup>4</sup> of Skovoroda into the Ukrainian context from the “general Russian one” (Artiuch 2022: 65). This tendency was cultivated based on three cornerstones of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s Ukrainian identity: first, his “terrestrial identity”<sup>5</sup> (his homeland, Slobidska-Ukrainian gubernia<sup>6</sup>), second, his image as a representative of the “common”<sup>7</sup> (or, in this connotation, Ukrainian<sup>8</sup>) folk rooted in the academic circles, and finally, the third, his Ukrainian ethnicity and belonging to “Ukrainian philosophical culture”<sup>9</sup> (*Ibid.*, 65). All of these cornerstones should, no doubt, be taken into account, when addressing a thinker of such national-consciousness-forming capacity as Skovoroda possesses. In this thesis, I found my way to celebrate Hryhorii Skovoroda’s national identity. To my best capacities, I presented Hryhorii Skovoroda in the light of Ukrainian research,

---

<sup>1</sup> Other researchers directly addressing the matter in their articles are Daria Lukyanenko and Valeriy Shevchuk.

<sup>2</sup> “Загальновідомо, що Г.Сковорода ніколи не артикулював своєї не лише національної, а й етнічної належності [...]” (Here and further translation mine).

<sup>3</sup> Однак не культивував український інтелектуальний контекст, [...] ніколи не вдавався до оцінки чи осмислення суспільнополітичних реалій України XVIII ст.

<sup>4</sup> Вилущування.

<sup>5</sup> The quotations are taken from this sentence in Artiuch (2022: 65): “[...] на початку XIX ст. він «український» тому, що має українську територіальну ідентичність, тобто пов’язаний із Слобідсько-Українською губернією”.

<sup>6</sup> Gubernia was an administrative subdivision in XIX century Ukraine.

<sup>7</sup> Artiuch calls it, in original, «простий» український народ.

<sup>8</sup> Chlopomania (peasant-mania) was a movement that existed among the intelligentsia in XIX century Ukraine that re-enforced the image of the common folk as Ukrainian villagers. The echoes of that image of the “common folk” can still be felt in Hryhorii Skovoroda’s contemporary image.

<sup>9</sup> [...] його філософія належить до української філософської культури.

such as Leonid Ushkalov (1956–2019), Dmytro Chizhevskiy (1894–1977), Oleksandr Soletsky (1977–). It is their unprecedented academic input that serves as the point of reference in my thesis, especially Leonid Ushkalov’s commentaries.

What of Hryhorii Skovoroda from a broader perspective? Hryhorii Skovoroda is called the Ukrainian Socrates and the Ukrainian Epicurus. In his works, influences of Plato and the Alexandrian School (Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Clement of Alexandria), Augustine, Jacob Böhme and other mystics are sharply present. Hryhorii Skovoroda also rightfully claims his place in the late literary baroque, and the worldwide and Ukrainian emblematic traditions.

Skovoroda’s ideas extend far beyond his time and provide exciting research opportunities, when studied in context of modern semiotics. In this thesis I have mainly referred to the ideas of Umberto Eco (with special attention dedicated to the encyclopedia-dictionary distinction) and Charles Sanders Peirce (in relation to an emblem as a meaning-generating unit), but I readily acknowledge that Skovoroda could, without a doubt, be studied from many more modern semiotic perspectives. Needless to say, the possibilities for studying Hryhorii Skovoroda extends the humble capacity of this master’s thesis.

Skovoroda has no shortage of those researching his work. At least two collections of bibliographical references give a good scope of the extent of what has been researched until the present day. The first, “Hryhorii Skovoroda: The Philosophy of Life and Works of the “Ukrainian Socrates”” (2019), features a collection of references topic-wise distributed into Skovoroda’s works in the context of the philosophy of freedom, pedagogical ideas, intercultural communication, and even the axis of the current bibliographical research. The second bibliography, “Hryhorii Skovoroda: Seminarium” (2004) by Leonid Ushkalov, the prominent figure in Skovorodian studies, gives an even broader scope. It is a good place to look for the collection of references divided into biographical, theological, emblematic, philosophical, literature studies, mystical, mythological, pedagogical, art, and translation sections. To retell these bibliographies would be, of course, a waste in this thesis, so I will delimit this note only to those parts that are of immediate importance to the scope of this work. Leonid Ushkalov, the author of the second bibliography, is one of the biggest authorities in Skovorodiana (the bibliography of Skovoroda), and he retains this place in this thesis. His insightful historiographic comments on the collection of Skovoroda’s works (2010) set the tone for my theosemiotic reading here. Ushkalov, in his turn, uses, as the foundation for his insights, Dmytro Chizhevskiy’s “Philosophy...” (1934) and “Introduction to Skovoroda’s Symbolism” (1934). These two works give a grounded interpretation of the philosopher’s legacy. Dmytro Bahaliy (1858–1932) and Myroslav Popovych (1930–2018) are two more authoritative names in Skovorodian studies. Notably, Oleksandr

Soletsky (1977–) explores the role of Skovoroda in the emblematic tradition. Considering the extent and depth of these studies, many of which explicitly address Skovoroda’s symbolism (and even emblematics as its particular form), what vast gaps could I see in the body of research that need to be filled? The first and most obvious answer is that there is an evident shortage of studies written in English, which the bibliographies mentioned earlier also demonstrate. Secondly, no presently existing work is aimed at the “theosemiotic reader” (in a broader sense). By Tartu standards, Skovoroda is not present in the current semiotic discourse. To bring him forward as an interesting subject of discussion is also a powerful argument to make this overview. Even though Skovoroda is not precisely a semiotician per se, his perspective can prove valuable as one of the forms of symbolic religious expressions.

Finally, what about Hryhorii Skovoroda himself, Skovoroda the artist? I always refer to Skovoroda’s ideas as creative, regardless of how much the influence of other authors may have been on him. Hryhorii Skovoroda surely gives creative answers to many relevant theological and semiotic questions. My hope is to give a flavour of this creativity to English-speaking academics in my beloved Tartu and beyond, so it could be an inspiration for further research into his ideas. To put it simply, the purpose of this work is to stimulate further work!

## Materials

Hryhorii Skovoroda’s works in their original language from the academic anthology issued for scientific use will be used as a primary source. As mentioned in the Introduction, Hryhorii Skovoroda produced many types of creative work. However, even though this thesis aims to present a comprehensive perspective on Skovoroda and even serve as an overview, it would require a more extensive scope to encompass all of this prolific thinker’s multifaceted body of works. That is why, besides two fables “The Dog and the Mare”<sup>10</sup>, and “Bee and the Hornet”<sup>11</sup> used to illustrate the philosopher’s understanding of the kindred work,<sup>12</sup> a letter to his friend with

---

<sup>10</sup> Собака и Кобыла. (All of the translations of the names of Skovoroda’s works are borrowed from Skovoroda Online Concordance. Accessible at: <https://skovoroda.ucu.edu.ua/ua/texts.php?glang=>. The only name that is translated by me manually is “A Colloquy, called “Alphabet” or the Abecedary of the World” instead of the commonly used “A Colloquy, called “Alphabet,” or “Primer of Peace”.

<sup>11</sup> Пчела и Шершень.

<sup>12</sup> Сродна праця, a term widely used by Skovoroda and explained in more depth in chapter 1.4.

a usage of the “sign” concept, and a poem “The Garden of Divine Songs”<sup>13</sup> related to Epicurus, most of Skovoroda’s works I cite are dialogues and tractates.

The exact period when Skovoroda created his works is often a matter of debate. According to Leonid Ushkalov, the dialogues “The Narcissus. A Deliberation on the Topic: “Know Thyself””<sup>14</sup> and “A Symphony, called “The Book of Achsah” [Caleb’s daughter] on Self-Knowledge”<sup>15</sup> were written around 1769 (Ushkalov 2011: 12). The dialogues “First Conversation, Called “The Observatory. (Zion)”<sup>16</sup>, “A Colloquy among Five Travelers on True Happiness in Life (An Amicable Colloquy on Tranquility of Mind)”<sup>17</sup>, “The Circle. An Amicable Colloquy on Tranquility of Mind”<sup>18</sup>, “A Colloquy, called “Alphabet” or the Abecedary of the World”<sup>19</sup> were all written between 1771-1772 in Tavolska sloboda, and depict Skovoroda’s actual friends as characters (Panas Pankov and Yakiv Dolhansky) (Ushkalov 2011: 12). Considering that these dialogues were written in the same timeframe, they could be regarded as a rather uniform legacy of Skovoroda’s body of ideas, with no significant chronological gaps. In these dialogues, Skovoroda’s thought is already developed and mature. The dialogues provide a good perspective on his ideas, since they compose a significant part of his overall body of works.

However, the other works, wherefrom the ideas come from, fall out of the timeframe. The tractat “The Primary Door to Christian Ethics”<sup>20</sup> stands out of the timeframe, being the notes from the catechesis classes that Skovoroda taught around 1760 (Ushkalov 2011: 20), preceding the dialogues. “A Little Book, named “Silenus Alcibiadis,” that is the Icon of Alcibiades”<sup>21</sup>, “A little book on reading the Holy Scripture, called Lot’s wife” were written in the span 1776–1788 and constitute the latter part of Skovoroda’s legacy and the further development of his ideas. The “Dialogue. Its Name is “The Serpent’s Flood”<sup>22</sup> was written considerably further ahead, 1791. Nevertheless, all of the aforementioned dialogues echo, repeat, pick up and develop similar motives, and represent ideas of theosemiotic relevance.

---

<sup>13</sup> Сад божественных пѣсней.

<sup>14</sup> Наркісс. Разглагол о Том: Узнай себе.

<sup>15</sup> Сумфонія, нареченная Книга Асхань.

<sup>16</sup> «Бесѣда 1-я, нареченная Observatorium (Сіон).

<sup>17</sup> «Разговор пяти путников о истинном щастіи в жизни».

<sup>18</sup> Кольцо. Дружескій разговор о душевном мирѣ.

<sup>19</sup> «Разговор, называемый Алфавит, или Букварь мира».

<sup>20</sup> Начальная Дверь ко Христіянскому Добронравію.

<sup>21</sup> КНИЖЕЧКА, называемая SILENUS ALCIBIADIS, сирѣч ИКОНА АЛКІВІАДСКАЯ.

<sup>22</sup> Діалог. Имя ему: Потоп Змінн.

## **The aim of the thesis and research questions**

A broad objective of this thesis is to spread Hryhorii Skovoroda's ideas from a semiotic perspective to the English-speaking academic world. This thesis aims to present an overview of Hryhorii Skovoroda's ideas that are or could be relevant to readers from theosemiotics. The overview consists of three thematic chapters. The first chapter is meant to give an introduction to the philosophical outlines of Hryhorii Skovoroda (relevant to the semiotic ideas presented), namely his nature as a "fleeing philosopher", two Natures, the Inner Man (and vision), and the affinity. The second chapter intends to provide insights into the semiotic concepts present in Hryhorii Skovoroda's works (name and word, sign, symbol, archetypes, vice figures, and emblems in relation to Ukrainian and worldwide emblematic tradition, as well as to Peircean ideas). The third chapter puts the ideas introduced prior into broader perspective by introducing Hryhorii Skovoroda's symbolic worlds: the three worlds, one of which is the Bible, and the Abecedary of the World, containing the Alphabet. In summary, this overview demonstrates the breadth of topics that answer the question: What could be of interest to the theology- and semiotics-affiliated reader and researcher? In summary, an overview of the ideas put forth by H. Skovoroda will help encourage further studies and discussion about this outstanding thinker within theosemiotic discourse. Even though this thesis does not detail every proposed idea and definition, it is meant to introduce the relevant ideas to a sufficient extent to capture the scope of potential that H. Skovoroda's works present for theosemiotics.

## **What does "theosemiotic" mean?**

To avoid confusion, I must clarify what theosemiotics means, as in the thesis title "theosemiotic reading". I would not be as brave as to call myself a theosemiotician, so it is not a reading by a theosemiotician. It is, however, a reading from a theosemiotic perspective addressed to theosemioticians. That perspective is broad but not exhaustive. Studying all of the extents of related topics, even with the work already done by researchers in the Skovorodian studies field, would require decades.

Back to the definition of "theosemiotics". Thomas-Andres Pöder, a representative of the field in Tartu University, overall, distinguishes three separate theology-, religion, and semiotic-related fields:



1. Semiotics of religion. This field originated in the 1960-the 1970s, based on narrativity, ethnological and mythographic research, structuralism, and literary analysis (Pöder 2021b: 3). Notably, semiotics of religion can study religious semiotics, however “implies an awareness of its difference from the religious process” (*Ibid.*, 9). To this field, we can also add Massimo Leone’s definition, namely of “semiotic studies on religion”: “theories of religion that implicitly use a semiotic theory; those that use one explicitly; analyses of religious texts that employ semiotic methodologies” (Leone 2023: 72).
2. Religious semiotics. This branch is focused on “sign conceptions in religion” or “religious perception or production of meaning” (Pöder 2021b: 9).
3. Theosemiotics. This is “a metaphysical semiotics or philosophical theology” (*Ibid.*, 13), “an umbrella for different versions of metaphysics, philosophy of religion or philosophical theology inspired by Peirce” (Pöder 2021a: 31). Alternatively, Pöder suggests a perspective on theosemiotics “as (a version of) cultural semiotics of religion” (*Ibid.*). Theosemiotics, as Pöder suggests, is more connected with Charles Sanders Peirce. Michael L. Raposa, in his “Theosemiotic: Religion, Reading, and the Gift of Meaning”, places Peirce, too, notably, at the focus of his work on the history of the theosemiotic (Raposa 2020: 15).

Here, some clarification is in order, since the thesis is not uniformly following one approach, although motivated by one idea. The first part of the thesis reconstructs the sign as Skovoroda himself regarded it, placed on the Plato-Augustine axis of thought. If we are true to the classification above, that places the focus on religious semiotics.

In section 2.6 (Emblem) of the thesis, however, a short detour is made, and the emblem is discussed in terms of Peircean ideas. This detour is an instance, where, according to the classification, we can agree it was theosemiotic. The detour of course, is justified – in Raposa’s words, “ while Peirce is often considered to be a foundational figure in the development of modern semiotic theory, there is considerable evidence to suggest that he may have been indebted to medieval predecessors for some of his ideas” (Raposa 2020: 24).

Much more than Peirce, Umberto Eco participates in the culmination of the thesis: the whole of chapter three. Umberto Eco, in Leone’s words, “was able to weave the US and the French-speaking semiotic traditions” (Leone 2023: 71). He will be the reconciling force for me in this thesis as well, allowing for the reconciliation of Skovoroda’s diverse ideas within the philosophy of language.

So, why say “theosemiotic”? When I said “theosemiotic reading”, I meant it, as I had just noted, not in the sense of Peirce, but rather in the sense of “a metaphysical semiotics or

philosophical theology" (Põder 2021b: 13)", and also, in the sense of religious semiotics, on Skovoroda's "religious perception or production of meaning" (*Ibid.*, 9). In short, in the title of the thesis, theosemiotics means theology-related semiotics.

So, the definition of Skovoroda's reconstructed understanding of a "sign" on the Latin-Age, Neoplatonist axis, moves from its origins onto the modern semiotics (represented by Peirce in one instance, but mostly Umberto Eco). This is done to demonstrate how Skovoroda's theories are at all relevant to the axis of theosemiotics.

### **Method: What does "Reading" mean?**

Skovoroda is an extremely multifaceted author and can be challenging to read. Dmytro Chizhevskiy writes about Skovoroda:

Skovoroda was praised as an author of original thoughts and made into a completely dependent thinker, repeating ideas and words of others. According to one view, he is a completely unsystematic, even chaotic writer, while, on the other hand, he is regarded as a theorist and "researcher" solving scientific questions [...] others suppose, he mostly worked in the field of ethics, or was a "sage", whose wisdom is rooted in his biography<sup>23</sup> (Chizhevskiy 1934: 5).

"The world was trying to catch me, but it never got me" is more than just the famous last words in Hryhorii Skovoroda's case, now engraved on his tomb. He did live up to what he died with, being one of, if not the most enigmatic Ukrainian thinkers of all time. Besides all the characteristics listed by Chizhevskiy, according to Prokopov, Skovoroda also belongs to the "fleeing" philosophers, whose "fleeing" status needs to be respected as self-proclaimed by him and taken very seriously (Prokopov 2003: 81). In my approach, I find Prokopov's idea to be very helpful. After all, in order to give Skovoroda an overview of the scope as broad as I intended, I have to allow him to "flee" to some extent (I cannot afford to go into every detail of every idea in the thesis).

Skovoroda's dialogues constitute, in terms of our semiotic journey, the core part, as I said before. They are also a core part of Skovoroda's overall body of works, constituting the more significant part of it. Leonid Ushkalov refers to them as "Socratic dialogues" (Ushkalov 2011: 21). Together with Prokopov, let us take this as our first point, where we meet Skovoroda, the

---

<sup>23</sup> Сковороду вихваляли, як творця оригінальних думок та робили цілком несамоостійним мисленником, що лише повторює чужі ідеї та слова. На думку одних, він є цілком несистематичний, та навіть хаотичний письменник, інші вважають його за теоретика та «вченого», що «розв'язував» наукові питання [...] гадають, що він переважно етичний мисленник або навіть «мудрець», що свою мудрість здійснив у своєму житті.

philosopher. Prokopov, in his article, compares the self-references of Plato and Skovoroda in their dialogues. From his perspective, there is a difference between the two. Plato uses self-references, sometimes posing as Socrates, to highlight different perspectives on a matter of philosophical importance (Prokopov 2003: 82). At the same time, at least according to Prokopov, Skovoroda does so due to his existence at the border of a philosopher (a “namesake-philosopher”<sup>24</sup>) and a non-philosopher (the agent of common sense) in his relationship to wisdom (Prokopov 2003: 84). Skovoroda, according to Prokopov, is ever-fleeing, and should not be caught in a fishing categorization net within the philosophical tradition. However, I do not think that Prokopov implies that Skovoroda transcends the boundaries of philosophy itself. Skovoroda is often, though not always, faithful to many of the influences of different traditions of thought.

The case here is rather that Skovoroda *himself* expresses the will to be perceived this way, the way of the “fleeing philosopher”. In order to prove this point, Prokopov uses Skovoroda’s dialogue “Pry” as an example. This dialogue is devoted to finding answers to the question: Is it hard or easy to do good? Prokopov describes the special nature of the existence of three versions (inner moral voices) of Skovoroda.

The first Hryhorii is the former and “mistaken” mode of himself, Hryhorii-Daimon (coming from the past) (Prokopov 2003: 84). The second is the current Hryhorii, the carrier of the truth, Hryhorii-Warsawa (coming from the present) (*Ibid.*). Unlike in Plato’s case, there is also a different third, Skovoroda, whose standing on the dilemma is the same as Warsawa’s (*Ibid.*). He could be Hryhorii coming from the future if we continue putting it into temporal terms.

According to Prokopov, this dialogue is an excellent example of the deliberate “fleeing” of Skovoroda as an author (Prokopov 2003). A third, meta-Hryhorii, accepts what Warsawa, the voice of truth, thinks about the moral dilemma. Remarkably, Skovoroda even refers to himself as the author of the Kharkiv Fables, identified by his own moral voices (Prokopov 2003: 84), as stands in the dialogue:

DAE [MON]. Was it not you who wrote the Fables and gifted them to Athanasios Pankov?  
WAR [SAVA]. Truly, it is so. This is the Friend of Warsawa<sup>25</sup>

(Skovoroda 2011:872).

Self-referencing his works adds yet another level to how Skovoroda perceives his works and what it means for us, as readers, as well. Unfortunately, this exciting idea of Skovoroda’s authorship is

---

<sup>24</sup> Філософ-ім’я.

<sup>25</sup> ДАЙ[МОН]. Ты ли написал Притчей и дарил Онья Аѡана ‘сію Панкову?  
ВАР[САВА]. Во Истину тако есть. Сей есть Друг Варсавѣ.

extended by Prokopov only as far as the “Pry” dialogue goes. To take this road, I should go further. Another question that Prokopov implies, but does not answer directly, is about Skovoroda’s motivation to flee (and whether, as readers, we should respect it).

Ushkalov gives us hints, referring to the thinker’s aversion to “*stulta philosophia*”, or *μωροσόφια* (the foolish wisdom) (Ushkalov 2011: 1196, n.134). According to the researcher, the flight from foolish wisdom happens in two directions: 1) Towards the philosophy of Christ, rather than just any philosophy<sup>26</sup> (2011: 24). 2) Towards the folk.

To support the second claim, let me feature another reference by Ushkalov. To Skovoroda, as Ushkalov writes, “The very words “philosophy”, “theology”, “religious study”, “knowing of God”, and “thinking of God” stand for all and the same “general study” of human happiness...”<sup>27</sup> (2011: 24).

More often than not, Skovoroda is also referred to as a cordocentric philosopher, focusing on the inner world and happiness, concerned with the well-being of the Inner Man. Given that Skovoroda’s philosophy is so inward-focused and personal, would his life be one of his works? Are the two inseparable? The answer I would give is: Yes, to an extent. To the extent that Skovoroda is cordocentric, he is self-oriented, and writes to fulfil and express his own convictions, rather than to continue any line of thought of any other philosopher of the time, let alone to follow any particular tradition, even if he can be fitted into it. As an author, Skovoroda expresses himself in an eccentric way that makes it impossible to ignore his strong presence in texts. This amalgamation of Skovoroda the author with his text gives us a certain degree of freedom in how we try to conduct a deep reading of his works. Essentially, I could say, Prokopov is, just like me, attempting to reconstruct Eco’s model reader for Skovoroda: the perfect reader corresponding to the fleeing author (philosopher). Eco writes so about model readers:

Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text (Eco 1990: 180).

Skovoroda makes it easy for his supposed model reader to find him as a “model author”, not only by means of the aforementioned “Pry” dialogue, but also, and above all, by means of his unique form of expression (language), which will be discussed in detail in sub-section 2.1 of the thesis.

---

<sup>26</sup> Paraphrase of the original: Оцій справжній філософії Сковорода протипокладав “дурну філософію” (*stulta philosophia*), або “дурномудріє” (*μωροσόφια*), що його св. ап. Павло назвав колись “пустою філософією, которая бражничит по бурдѣ стихійной, препятствующей философствовать по Христъ...”.

<sup>27</sup> Отже, філософія Сковорода має виразний релігійний характер. Самі слова “філософія”, “богословіє”, “боговѣдніє”, “богознаніє”, “богомисліє” означають для нього одну й ту саму “всезагальну науку” про людське щастя.

As a model reader for Skovoroda, I can be tasked with coming close to the trials or challenges in which Skovoroda invites me to participate. That is, Skovoroda's theological questions become my questions.

However, I have to confess that I have a model reader of my own, the one who comes from theosemiotics. Thus, I try to position myself in such a way that my reader's questions, like my author's questions, become my own as well. Although, as this is a thesis, the questions of my model reader are of greater relevance to me. In the intersection of these two forms of enquiry, my analysis, which can be described as literary, semiotic, cultural-historical and hermeneutic functions to respond to the potential requests of the theosemiotic reader.

If, as Leroy Huizenga summarizes it neatly, "at every step the Model Reader leaves the text and travels into and through the encyclopedia, searching for the pieces of cultural knowledge that are required for the making of coherent sense" (Huizenga 2009: 33), I become the model reader by consulting the encyclopedia of cultural context Skovoroda belongs to and the tradition of thought he was influenced by. I cannot turn Skovoroda into a semiotician. Unlike Augustine, Skovoroda never gave an account of the specific ontological classification of signs. However, I see theosemiotics in its broadest sense (not just in relation to Peirce, as I had previously elaborated) as a perfect encyclopaedia to consult when interpreting Skovoroda's works. Not only is it important to consult this encyclopaedia, but also, in my case, to try to see how Skovoroda's ideas fit into it. In a way, this thesis presents Hryhorii Skovoroda as a suggested entry for this encyclopaedia of theosemiotics.

I also feel the need to explain why I devoted such a large part of the thesis to Umberto Eco, rather than Peirce, and used his ideas for my overall approach to Skovoroda's texts. Not only did I consult Eco for his semiotic ideas, but I also adopted his approach in my overview. The point was to set the limits of my interpretation. Giampaolo Proni puts the differences between Umberto Eco and Charles Sanders Peirce very relevantly for my point addressing "Peirce's pragmatic limit":

Eco poses the problem, which never troubled Peirce, about which habit a literary text might bring about, considering that it is bound to be different to that which the interpretation of a chemical definition, consisting of a series of operative instructions, requires. [...] The final interpretant of an aesthetic text can be the request for further reading moved by the mere pleasure of fruition, a change in introspective attitude, the choice of correcting one's behavior in a sometimes radical manner, and so on. Certainly here individual competences and local encyclopedias also come into play (Proni 2015: 20-21).

Since Hryhorii Skovoroda is a fleeing philosopher, and remembering Dmytro Chizhevskiy's characteristic given to the diverse interpretations that are used to interpret his works (Chizhevskiy

1934: 5), I cannot help but turn to Eco for his ideas on interpretation that presupposes meaning as something central to the interpretation process.

Another idea of Peirce that was taken up by Eco is that a term (or rheme) is a potential proposition, and a proposition (or dicisign) a potential argument. This allows him to say that “the meaning of a sign inchoatively contains all the texts within which that sign can be inserted” (1979b: 184). From this point he develops one of the central theses of the book, “a sememe is in itself an inchoative text, whereas a text is an expanded sememe” (1979b: 175) (Próni 2015: 20).

It makes a lot of sense to use this technique to interpret Skovoroda’s text with a certain degree of freedom, not limiting “the expandability of term and proposition to their logical consequences” (Próni 2020: 20), but instead, enjoying the “possibility of expansion on the basis of discursive implications, produced by interpretations sedimented in the Encyclopedia” (*Ibid.*, 20), in hopes to add Skovoroda’s name to this Encyclopedia.

## **I. Outlines of Hryhorii Skovoroda's Philosophy**

In this chapter, important fundamentals of Hryhorii Skovoroda's philosophy are discussed. As Hryhorii Skovoroda could well be called a Neoplatonist, or actually, a Platonist, in a lot of regards, as we will find out, first the distinction between the two natures, and his relation to Plato is discussed. Then, as Hryhorii Skovoroda is not only regarded as a Ukrainian Socrates, but also the Ukrainian Epicurus, his concept of "kindred work" is discussed as related to Epicurus' philosophy. Next, Skovoroda's ideas are discussed in the light of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, as related to how his idea of the "Inner Man" fits into the context of similar ideas. Finally, an overview of how Skovoroda can be regarded as a "mystic" is given.

### **1.1. Skovoroda and Plato. Two Natures**

Leonid Ushkalov names a wide row of researchers; himself included, that refer to Skovoroda as a "Christian Neoplatonist" (Fedir Zelenogorsky, Volodymyr Ern, Oleksii Losev, Dmytro Chizhevskiy, Vasyl Zenkovsky) (Ushkalov 2011: 39, n. 84). This is true, despite Skovoroda's vivid language and sometimes far-reaching overinterpretation of otherwise rather standard Platonic philosophical terms. Unlike Augustine, who lived unaware of some Greek influences (Biemiller 2019: 35), Skovoroda, an academy man, undoubtedly had Plato, among other giants of philosophical thought, at his fingertips.

At the foundation, the dualism of natures is essential to Skovoroda. However, before we proceed to look at two natures, let us try to determine what "nature" is by itself. Ushkalov conveniently summarises, based on Feofan Prokopovych, all the critical nuances of Skovoroda's perspective. He advises taking into consideration such outlooks on nature as:

1. Nature as God himself
2. Nature is in opposition to "natura naturans" (the creative nature) or God versus "nature naturata" (the nature created) or created things.
3. Nature as the "entirety" and unity of things.
4. Nature as in "natural primordial reason".

5. Nature as the “source and birthing of all that is born” (“alive”)<sup>28</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 535).

Let’s search for a general definition of nature in Skovoroda. In my mind, it is rather clearly defined in his self-referencing (with all qualities of fleeing, discussed earlier) dialogue *The Conversation of Five Travelers on the matters of true life’s happiness or The Talk between Friends about the World within the Soul*<sup>29</sup>). In the words of the dialogue’s character Yermolai:

YERMOLAI. In the Bible, God bears the name of a Fire, and water, and wind, and iron, and stone. "Why not call Him (God) "Natura" – Nature? "Natura" is a Roman word, in our language, translated as Nature or Being. This is the word that Signifies everything that is born within the World’s Machine, and what is unborn is like Fire, and all that is unborn is called the World [...]”<sup>30</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 506).

To that, Yermolai’s opponent Athanasios objects that even matter is born (2011: 506). Yermolai, in turn, is not fighting against the objection. Instead, he accepts that the things of perishable matter also are born but adds that in Nature, there is an economy of “Everlasting strength”, and that Nature is “so called because everything that comes into being and is born from the secret unlimited depths, from the All-Mother’s Womb, stems from a temporal Beginning” (*Ibid.*). Nature is then, the Mother, but also the Father (since it self-reproduces), the Beginning because it is the source, but also No-beginning because it has no end, otherwise, evidently like a “Circle”, “Ring”, or “Snake” (*Ibid.*).

So, what we understand by Nature is, then, the whole array of things, although Skovoroda refers, at all times, to all the same nature, “натура”. Being the Mother and Father, Nature does resemble divinity. However, it is not synonymous with it. If Nature is an umbrella term for all that comes to life, then it cannot be God by itself because it would mean the amalgamation of immortal and mortal, which Skovoroda, a devout Christian of his times, would never allow. God is not just any Nature; He is the invisible one.

---

<sup>28</sup> Звідси філософи виводять відмінність природи, говорячи латинському, що однією є ‘природа творча’ (natura naturans), а другою – ‘природа створена’ (natura naturata). Під першою вони розуміють самого Бога, а під цією – створені речі. По-друге, під назвою ‘природа’ розуміється сутність будь-якої речі [...] По-третє, природою називається всезагальність речей... По-четверте, її визнають природною причиною [...] Нарешті, назвою ‘природа’ послуговуються для визначення народження живого” [Прокопович Ф. *Натурфілософія, або Фізика* // Прокопович Ф. *Філософські твори: У 3 т. – Київ, 1980. – Т. 2. – С. 147*].

<sup>29</sup> *Разговор Пяти путников о истинном щастиі в жизни (Разговор Дружескій О Душе вном Мирѣ)*.

<sup>30</sup> ЕРМОЛАЙ. В Библии Бог именуется Огнем, водою, вѣтром, желѣзом, каменем и прочими безчисленными именами; длячего ж Его не назвать “Natura” – Нату́рою? Что ж до моего мнѣнія надлежит, нельзя сыскать важнѣе и Богу приличнѣе имени, как сіе. “Natura” есть римское слово, по нашему Природа, или Естество°. Сим словом Означается все-на-все, что только родится во всей Мира сего Машины<sup>93</sup>; а что находится нерожденное, как Огонь, и все родящееся вообще называется Мир [...].



This idea, as Ushkalov notes in his index, is attributed to the influences of the stoic ideas in Cicero's "On the nature of gods" and Augustine's "On the Trinity"<sup>31</sup> on Skovoroda (Ushkalov 2011: 535 n. 84). Skovoroda gives an affirmation in his "First Door to Christian Virtue" Tractatus, in the "On God"<sup>32</sup> chapter:

All the World consists of two Natures: the one visible, the other invisible. The visible Nature is called Creation, and the invisible – is God. This invisible Nature, or God, holds and permeates all the Creation; this is how it is and always will be. For instance, the human body is seen, but the permeating and upholding Mind is invisible. This is why the ancients called God the World's Mind. He went by different names. For instance: Nature, Being, Eternity, Time, Destiny, Necessity, Fortuna, etc.<sup>32</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 214).

So, if invisible nature is synonymous with God, what does it make the visible one? In Skovoroda we find that it, also, goes by many names such as The Substance, the Matter, the Ground, the Flesh, the Shadow, etc.<sup>33</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 215).

John Deely, in his "Four Ages of Understanding", refers to the Platonic Ideas as a "supra- or trans-sensible reality", in which everything perceivable by our senses is just "shadows of participation" (Deely 2001: 58). The shadows "give us nothing of reality" and need to be inferred by "purely intellectual means" to get the gift of "awareness" of the divine (*Ibid.*). Skovoroda fits perfectly within this framework, and the quote to illustrate would be:

One thing is to see the stone with the letters on it and the paper with ink with your outer eye, and the other is to look with a different kind of vision: "Raise your eyes" [...] "Written not with the ink, but with the God's Spirit it is alive in the canvas of the soul".<sup>34</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 567).

In the dialogue, we encounter the mention of this "awareness" or "vision". Skovoroda, in a rather Augustinian sense, differs between the "inner" and the "outer" eye. The invisible and eternal things are only invisible up to a point, since we can "Raise our eyes" and see things written not in

---

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the nature that has not been made, and that has made all natures both great and small, is undoubtedly more excellent than those which it has made, and, therefore, than this, too, of which we are speaking, namely, the rational and intellectual nature which is the mind of man, and which has been made according to the image of Him who made it. But the nature more excellent than all the others is God. And indeed "He is not far from anyone of us," as the Apostle says, and then adds: "In him we live and move and have our being" [Acts :-]. If this were said with regard to the body, it could also be understood of this corporeal world, for we also live and move and have our being in Him according to the body. Therefore, it must be understood in a more excellent and, at the same time, invisible and intelligible way, namely, with respect to the mind that has been made to His image (Augustine 2002: 15).

<sup>32</sup> Весь Мір состоит из двух Натур: одна видимая, другая невидимая. Видимая натура называется Тварь, а невидимая – Бог. Сія невидимая натура, или Бог, всю Тварь пронизает и содержит, вездѣ всегда был, есть и будет. Напримѣр, тѣло человѣческое видно, но пронизающій и содержащій оно ум не виден. По сей причинѣ у древних Бог назывался УМ ВСЕМІРНЫЙ. Ему ж у них были разные имена. Напримѣр: натура, Бытїе вещей, Вѣчность, Время, Судьба, Необходимость, Фортуна и проч[ая].

<sup>33</sup> Что касается до видимой Натуры, то ей также не одно имя. Напримѣр: Вещество, или Матерія, Земля, Плоть, Тѣнь и проч[ая].

<sup>34</sup> Иное дѣло видѣть камень с буквами и бумагу с чернилами внѣшним оком, а другое взирать тѣм взором: "Возведите очи ваши", и слышать тѣми ушами: "Имѣяй уши слышати, да слышит", и могти сказать с Павлом: "Написано не чернилом, но Духом Бога жива на скрижалех сердца плотяных".

ink, but in God's Spirit itself on the canvas of the soul. For comparison, Augustine suggests, in "The Trinity" we do it with our gaze fixed on the eternal things which we are to obtain, passing quickly by the former, but clinging to the latter" (Augustine 2002: 98). Augustine asks: "And who does see his own thought, not I say with the eyes of flesh, but with the interior gaze itself?" (2002: 184).

The next question would be, is this visible world vile, while the invisible good? For Skovoroda, it seems to be the case. However, these two opposing natures surely have some tension, however, they are united under God's watch. To illustrate, Skovoroda writes:

For the different Beings not to be in conflict and tear apart, the Day unites the darkness and the light, the morning and the night. The Day is made from contradicting Natures: one Vile and the other Kind.<sup>35</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 741).

## 1.2. The Kindred and Happiness. Skovoroda and Epicurus

Skovoroda was well-known for his fables. A few of his fables happen to be a good way to demonstrate what affinity, for him, means. Although Ushkalov suggested another example (the fable about the Bee), I will broaden the perspective and use another one of my choice.

In short, the fable in question describes a debate between an old dog with no master and a well-trained proud horse, a debate between upbringings, if we may. To the ridiculed horse, the dog says cunningly, "My lady, I am sorry, but I have no shame of my natural trait to laugh even at a good deed that goes against nature"<sup>36</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 164). The moral, or "strength" (Сила) of the fable, as Skovoroda himself would call it, is that the horse, although trained in an "academy" (by human hand), cannot compare to the dog, who, through Creator himself, received his ability to hunt. More precisely, as Skovoroda describes the process, "through affinity, an ability to hunt, and through hunt, the knowledge and the habit" (*Ibid.*).

Such, for Skovoroda, is the source of all, not only dog's, but human wisdom. "To be without nature means to have no path: the further one wanders, the more lost one gets" (2011: 164). Only through Affinity and Habit (which stems from Experience) can something be brought to perfection, reach its finality, "resolve itself": the end in a circle is always where the beginning is (*Ibid.*). It might be, here, perhaps, a good place to extent the ideas into Peircean thought that

---

<sup>35</sup> Но дабы опя'ть не послѣдовал раздор, разрывающій двои'цу сопряженных во едино Естеств, здѣлан из тмы и свѣта, из дня и ночи, из ве'чера и Утра День ЕДИН.

<sup>36</sup> Простите, Сударыня, меня, не таюся в сем моем Природном Порокѣ, что для мене смѣшным кажется и Доброе Дѣло, дѣмое без Природы.

amuses itself a lot on these matters, although, definitely not in the confines of this page-limited thesis.

To finally give a generalized definition, affinity is, to Skovoroda, “God’s Grace and a Secret Law of His, which guides all creation”<sup>37</sup>(Skovoroda 2011: 667). Skovoroda writes:

To know something that the Soul bears likeness to, and what it aims for, what is the equality between a Friend to a Friend, and what is the likeness between the food and the digestive tract [...]. The two things that bear likeness to each other, are attracted to each other, one to one, another to another...<sup>38</sup>(Skovoroda 2011: 667).

Going into Peirce would be uncalled for, but, at least, the issue of likeness here, as it is specific to Slavic Christianity due to its Old-Slavonic connotation, and, thus, immediate to Skovoroda. As Uspensky writes:

This is the connection of the word *prepodobnyj* ‘saint’ corresponding to the Greek *όσιος* with the word *podobie* ‘likeness’; cf. the word *nepodobnyj*, lit.: ‘unlike’, which is contrasted to it as an antonym (see Uspensky and Lossky, 1952: 35, note 5) and, on the other hand, words of the type *spodobifsja* ‘to be considered worthy’, derived from the same root. Also characteristic is the meaning of the word *podobat* (lit.: ‘to be alike’) in the sense of ‘to conform’, ‘to agree with’, ‘to comply’ (it is revealing in this connection that, in the pre-Nikon editions of Matthew III: 15, we find *Podobno esf* – ‘it is becoming’, literally ‘it is alike’, which was later corrected to *podobaet* – ‘it becometh’. Compare, in this connection, the well-known expression *po obrazu i podobiju Boziju* ‘in the image and likeness of God’ as uniting in its thought this whole sphere of meanings. (Uspensky 2009: 181)

So, what does it mean, to find this likeness? First, in the sense of our formerly discussed two Natures, it can refer to finding the link, balance, and correspondence between the two, a task of the true human, and be, as Uspensky gives us a hint, in some likeness of God. Second, it means, in Skovoroda’s specific sense, his signature expression “work of affinity” (*сродна праця*). By “work”, Skovoroda does not imply a rigid craft (although it often is the case). He means, rather, something related to Nature (in the general sense, the Father-Mother version of it). More specifically, he writes:

Nature is the primary Cause for everything, and a self-moving Spring. She is the Mother of the Will. And the Will is the burning, the affinity, the movement. The Will is stronger than the Non-Will, as according to the Saying. She strives towards the Work and finds joy in it, as she would in her own son. The Work is the living and unsleeping movement of the Machine, until it produces the perfect deed that is like a Crown of joy meant for its Creator. [...] What is this NATURE but the Blissful Spirit within a man. <sup>39</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 651).

---

<sup>37</sup> Природа и сродность значит врожденное Божіе Благоволеніе и Тайный Его ЗАКОН, всю тварь управляющій.

<sup>38</sup> Знать-то, что есть подобіе в Душѣ и в том дѣлѣ, к которому она стремится, каковое равенство между Другом и Другом, а сходство между пищею и желудком. “Подобное течет к подобному”.

<sup>39</sup> Приро́да есть первоначальная всему Причина и самодвижущаяся Пружи́на. Она есть Ма́ть Охо́ты. Охота есть ражженіе, склонность и движеніе. Охо́та силня́е Нево́ли, по Пословицѣ. Она стремится к Труду и радуется им, как сы́ном своим. Труд есть живой и неусыпный всей Маши́ны ход потоло́в, поко́ль породит

It is the likeness to this Nature, not only God, that is implied by the “work of affinity” here. But what is divine can be natural. Even though mortal matter is flawed, it still can be separated into vain and non-vain. This idea of Skovoroda resonates with Epicurus and his views on happiness. Skovoroda writes in his poem:

Do you want to live in sweetness? Do not be envious anywhere.  
Be sated with a small portion, do not fear everywhere. Put out of your mind the dust of the grave and childhood fears;  
Death is peace, not harm [that is near].  
Thus lived the Athenian, thus lived the Hebrew Epicure – Christ (Skovoroda 2016: 101).

The visible, grounded in mortal flesh, is not necessarily bad by design, although it is negative, for Skovoroda. It is negative because it contains deception, and masks the truth, as in the quote from before (Skovoroda 2011: 220). So, the pleasure, as Epicurus defines it, that we would think comes, for humans, first-hand, from the visible, is also not “bad in itself”, but “the things that make for pleasure in certain cases entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves” (Epicurus 2013: 174), so they are also, in a way, bad just for the sake of them being deceptive. One could well interpret it like Skovoroda, being Christian, and see Christ, indeed. Living simple is considered a divine quality, simplicity in this case is not precisely a norm that denies overall all of the visible, and Skovoroda is not a monk. It can be seen as a precaution taken not to be deceived.

Let us stick to an example. In his fable, “The Bee and the Hornet”, Skovoroda depicts a story of a Hornet mocking the Bee for making honey instead of enjoying it, sometimes even leading to her death (Skovoroda 2011: 172). But the Bee explains that to do something she was born to, is much better than stealing someone else’s (*Ibid.*). “The Bee is the Insignia of the wise Man that does kindred work”<sup>40</sup> (*Ibid.*).

Skovoroda writes, in this fable, the moral of the story:

We need to discover what it means, to live by Nature. For not the Law of our animalistic Drives and Passions determines what is kindred to every creature, but the Divine Being that is, among theologians, called the Three-Sun, which prescribes it, giving every creature a Place and purpose. It is about this Being that Epicurus had said: “I thank the Divine Nature for making the necessary easy, and the difficult unnecessary”<sup>41</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 173).

Thus, the pleasure is defined by something that one is born to do, and it is easy. This kind of pleasure does not deceive, it does not betray. To be without what one was born to do is a suffering

---

совершенное дѣло, соплѣтающее Творцу своему Вѣнец радости [...] А что ж есть сѣя ПРИРОДА, если не тот Блаженный в челоуѣкъ Дух.

<sup>40</sup> А Пчела есть Герб му’драго Челоуѣка, в сродном дѣлѣ трудящагося.

<sup>41</sup> Но раскусить же должно, что значит жить по Натурѣ. Не Закон скотских Удов и Похотей наших, но значит Блаженное оно ЕСТЕСТВО, называемое у Богословов ТРИСОЛНЕЧНОЕ, всякой Твари свою для нея Часть и сродность вѣчно предписующее. О сем-то Естествомъ сказал древній Епи·кур слѣдующее: БЛАГОДАРЕНІЕ БЛАЖЕННОЙ НАТУРѢ ЗА ТО, ЧТО НУЖНОЕ ЗДѢЛАЛА НЕТРУДНЫМЪ, А ТРУДНОЕ НЕНУЖНЫМЪ.

to Skovoroda (2011: 172). That is also, as it is for Epicurus, to exist in excess: “What can be more of a suffering, than to swim in Excess, and live through grave suffering without the kindred Work?”<sup>42</sup> (*Ibid.*, 173).

The kindred work is referred to as “a sweet” and “bodily” delight (*Ibid.*). This ultimately proves the point that, to Skovoroda, bodily is not inherently evil, unless it is deceptive. Even Death herself is, to Skovoroda, as it is for Epicurus, a delight, if a person lives according to their Nature (*Ibid.*). If Epicurus writes that “death means nothing to us, since every good and every evil lies in sensation” (Epicurus 2013: 156), it is easy to see how a Christian reading, like the one of Skovoroda, would recognize sensation as belonging to the fleshly plain, where vain pleasures are those of non-affinity, those that deceive and lead away from God. Epicurus and Skovoroda’s Bee are not frightened by Death. The Bee and the Epicurean man “do what they are born to do, without stopping, until they Die”<sup>43</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 173). For Epicurus, “a correct comprehension of the fact that death means nothing to us makes the mortal aspect of life pleasurable” (Epicurus 2013: 156), so for Skovoroda. Death “gives a lot to the insatiable” (Skovoroda 2011: 173), and to the one, that “prefers the most savory dish to merely the larger portion” (Epicurus 2013: 156) alike.

### 1.3. The Inner Man. Skovoroda, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine

There is a tradition of Ukrainian writers, who speak of seeing the world through the inner or mind’s eye (Stefan Yavorskiy, Innokentiy Vinnitskiy, Iosaf Krovovskiyy) (Ushkalov 2011: 977, n.30). However, it is of utmost importance that Skovoroda’s inner man is not only a tool of a certain vision, he is a microcosm.

Ushkalov writes that the perception of a human as a microcosm (“μικροκόσμος”, “малый мир”, “parvus mundus”, “świat mniejszy”, “4-edged-world), goes all the way back to Anaximander (Ushkalov 2011: 977, n.29). Through the thought of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, this concept has travelled also to Ukrainian writers in the 17–18 century (*Ibid.*). This microcosmic world, according to Ushkalov, could be seen as either Democritian, “humoral”<sup>44</sup>, or grounded in God’s Wisdom (*Ibid.*).

---

<sup>42</sup> Что горестнѣе, как плавать в Изобилии и смертно мучиться без сроднаго Дѣла?

<sup>43</sup> К сему мы рожденны и не престанем, поко’ль Умрем.

<sup>44</sup> При тому вони могли покликатися, скажімо, на Демокріта (“Димократ же убо чювственному миру изравняя челоуѣка, мал мир того именована, яко от мирских стихій состоящая...” [Алфа і Омега. – Супрасль, 1788. – Арк. 38 (зв.)]) або користатися з понять гуморальної теорії [...].

Viktor Chernyshov finds parallels between Skovoroda's overall cosmology (two natures and three worlds, which will be discussed later in the thesis), and the microcosm of the inner man. He suggests, the microcosm is a "smaller model of the bigger cosmos" (Chernyshov 2013: 73). The only difference here is that the inner world's particular affinity with the Logos. Overall, according to Chernyshov, Skovoroda's inner man comes in four versions:

1. The "Heavenly (of the sky) man" – "Christ-Logos", the archetypos of the human, and the human being.
2. The "Earthly human" – the immediate representative of humans, the "empiric" man, two dimensions: bodily and spiritual.
3. The "The outer human" – the bodily dimension of a human, biological, the one who lives (has «житє») but not lives-lives (doesn't have «життя»).
4. The "Inner man" – the spiritual dimension, the heart, the centre of human existence<sup>45</sup> (Chernyshov 2013: 75).

Taking this into account, Chernyshov indirectly states that Skovoroda's good person lives, by deification, by nearing their being to the archetype<sup>46</sup> of the Heavenly person, and not according to the outer one, using the things of the world in inappropriate ways (Chernyshov 2013: 75). These inappropriate ways will be discussed in the following section as the ones not bearing a special quality: Affinity, kindred discussed previously.

How much this idea of an encapsulated inner human, can be seen as Augustinian (I mean here, primarily, Magistro, the Teacher, or Christ, within). As for Skovoroda, so for Augustine, Magistro, the Teacher, Jesus Christ, is the inner force that gives a man a center, a focus. For Skovoroda, with his cordocentric philosophy, the centre would be called the "heart". Of cordocentrism I will speak more in the next subchapter.

In the relation between the body and soul, with a human as a microcosm, we also see the similarities of Skovoroda's ideas with the one of Nemesius of Emesa. To him, a man is an "apex

---

<sup>45</sup> Paraphrase of: По-справжньому людське життя можливе тільки у Христі, з Христом і для Христа, – власне, таке життя і є ідеалом українського мислителя. Цей христологічний мотив зливається з попереднім, теологічним тільки частково. Говорячи про Христа, Сковорода постійно тримає у пам'яті те, що він не тільки Бог, а й істинна людина. Таким чином, «істинна людина» Сковороди – не хто інший, як Боголюдина Ісус Христос, який і є, так би мовити, «гуманістичним ідеалом» мислителя. Саме ідея боголюдськості, яку В.Ерн помилково ідентифікував як «глибокий й безстрашний антропологізм», є однією з кількох рис, «що фундаментально характеризує всю думку Сковороди» [10,492]. Отже, не людина, як вважав Ерн, а Боголюдина–Христос є для Сковороди «ключ до всіх розгадок життя, як космічної так і божественної» [10, 492–493], тому що всі питання й усі таємниці світу зосереджені для нього саме у Христі. Дійсно, «людина – це мікрокосм. Всесвіт увесь сповна присутній у ній, метафізично у ній реальний» [10, 493], втім, тільки тоді, коли емпірична людина вірним чином відбиває у собі образ Божественного Логосу, – вона стає боголюдиною. Цей «антропологізм» не з'являється сам-собою, він бере свій початок, виростає з глибинної християнської віри у гідність людини, що базується на ідеї боголюдськості єдності в особі Боголюдини–Христа.

<sup>46</sup> The archetypes discussed later in the thesis (Chapter 2.5).

of sensible reality” that “summarizes the whole sensible universe”, and can be a “sundesmos (bond) of creation” (Motta 2000: 511). That makes the role of the man as a microcosm, a mediator, we can even dare to say, an interpreter between the sensible and intelligible realities, a notion Skovoroda would be very happy with in his anthropocentrism. Nemesius writes:

Who, then, could rightly be surprised at the nobility of such an animal that binds together in himself mortal and immortal elements, and of the whole creation, for which reason he was also called a microcosm; who was thought worthy of so great divine providence; for whom is every thing that is now and is to be, and for whom indeed God became man; who ends in incorruption and escapes mortality? He is king over the heavens; being born in the image and likeness of God, he communes with Christ, is a child of God, and surpasses all principalities and powers (Nemesius 2008: 50).

Through man’s eyes, thus, and the power of his interpretation, we can say, the invisible and the visible are tied together. This is important, since it means that we can reaffirm, as we established before, for Skovoroda, as for Nemesius, there exists not only tension between the planes ((Skovoroda 2011: 741), but also reconciliation, and the consoling force is man. We should be careful here, of course, not to imply that the Skovorodian man fulfils here the function of God, who, with the power of the Day, unites the two Natures. However, we can assume that, to an extent, the Skovorodian man, like the one of Nemesius, is positioned as a link that can, with two different visions, look beyond both existing borders of reality. A man can be that link because he is focused in himself, he is cordocentric (and so is Skovoroda, in his understanding of him).

To know yourself means, in this case, also to recognize likeness to God within oneself. The center and focus is where the likeness is placed within a human being. Another connecting point, for both Skovoroda and Augustine, in this sense, would be Origen, who, according to Kayikci, ties internality very closely to being Christian itself (Kayikci 2015: 140).

Relating to the invisible and divine which is possible by deification, and that unites Skovoroda and Origen. Notably, Origen, in his “First Principle”, states, that even if the mind fails to recognize God, it can ground itself in a likeness and grow again, from the source:

This is the more likely since, even if the mind through carelessness should fall away from the pure and perfect reception of God into itself, it nevertheless always possesses within some seeds as it were of restoration and recall to a better state, which become operative whenever -- the inner man, who is also termed the rational man, is recalled into the image and likeness of God who created him. This is why the prophet says: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and be turned unto the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before him" (cf Ps 22:27). (Origen 2013: 430).

This idea of deification, or  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , is at the core of Skovoroda’s “The Narcissus. A Deliberation on the Topic: “Know Thyself””<sup>47</sup> dialogue. Narcissus is not a tale of woe for Skovoroda, on the

---

<sup>47</sup> Наркісс. Разглагол о Том: Узнай себе.

contrary, he represents finding the source, and finding the focus within oneself: That one, who saw in the Waters their fleshly Beauty, falls in love not with their Appearance, or the Waters of their decay, but with themselves and their source Point”<sup>48</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 231).

Another important aspect is Skovoroda’s definition of Moses. If Origen writes, on the very first page of the “First Principles”:

By the words of Christ we do not mean only those which formed his teaching when he was made man and dwelt in the flesh, since even before that Christ the Word of God was in Moses and the prophets (Origen 2013: 1).

Skovoroda goes further, in his dialogue “A Symphony, called “The Book of Achsah” [Caleb’s daughter] on Self-Knowledge<sup>49</sup>, directly comparing Christ to Moses, even making an equalising link between the two (Skovoroda 2011: 295–296). While, considering Hryhorii Skovoroda comes from the Orthodox Church, it might resemble heresy, it is only on the surface that it appears so. Viktor Malachov writes:

In any case, the reflex to deify Christ – and I repeat, it is just a reflex, that never assumes a form of heresy, in my opinion, is inherent to religious and philosophical inquiries of Hryhorii Skovoroda. This reflex is, by itself, naturally returning the image of Christ to the thickets of plots, figures and events of the Old Testament, the “rampage”, as Skovoroda himself would call it<sup>50</sup> (Malachov 2001: 105).

I, too, considering the parallel with Origen, do not see any sign of heresy, on the contrary, I see the task Origen had: to tie together the Old and the New Testament, “that the God of the Law and the Prophets, and the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is One” (Origen 2013: 117), and “refute those who think that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a different God from him who gave Moses the sayings of the law and sent the prophets” (*Ibid.*, 117).

## 1.4 Mysticism and Skovoroda

Dmytro Chizhevskiy summarizes seven traits of Skovoroda’s mysticism thinking:

1. “Visio Dei” (seeing God or referring to an “inner vision”).
2. The union with God (God as an encompassing force).

---

<sup>48</sup> Кто, де, прозрѣл во Водах своя Тлѣни Красоту свою, тот не во Внѣшность ку’ю-либо, ни во Тлѣ’нія своего Во’ду, но в са’маго себе и в са’мую свою То’чку влю’бится.

<sup>49</sup> Сѣмфонія, нареченная Книга Асхань.

<sup>50</sup> Так чи інакше, певний рефлекс дегізації Христа — повторюю, саме рефлекс, що ніколи не сягає визначеності еретичного сповідання [5],— на мою думку, є притаманним релігійно-філософським пошукам Григорія Сковорода [6]. І цей рефлекс уже самий по собі природним чином повертає образ Христа до гушавини — “буйства”, як сказав би Сковорода,— сюжетів, постатей і подій Старого Заповіту.



3. The likeness and beautification (theosis, deification).
4. The soul is the bride of God.
5. The second birth of the soul happens through ecstatic states.
6. The birth of God happens within the human soul.
7. The joy of ecstasy is characterized as drunkenness (“ebreitas”)<sup>51</sup> (Chizhevskiy 2004).

However, if Hryhorii Skovoroda as a mystic does not cause much debate, his relations to particular authors do, case in point Jacob Böhme. Leonid Ushkalov writes that many writers such as Domet Olyanchin, Nikolai Berdyaev, Georgiy Florovsky noted that Böhme, a representative of mysticism, was a big influence on Hryhorii Skovoroda (Ushkalov 2016: 159). Also, Dmytro Chizhevskiy seems to connect Skovoroda to Böhme (Chizhevskiy 1934: 31–32). In another work,

Ushkalov himself is very sceptical on the matter, and writes that he does not have “a single evidence of this influence”<sup>52</sup> (*Ibid.*, 159). Another authority on Skovorodian studies, Elizabeth von Erdmann notes that, since, Böhme was only published in Russia in 1815, which is long after Skovoroda’s time (Erdmann 2022: 153). Furthermore, the translation that he supposedly made a translation of Böhme, does not convince Erdmann as good evidence (*Ibid.*, 153).

No matter if we trust Hryhorii Skovoroda’s direct relationship with Böhme, the interconnection of ideas is rather strong in some instances, and I will highlight them further in the thesis in a few instances: the idea of the Abecedary and Alphabet of the world and the mirror. As of now, I would like to note that Böhme fits within Skovoroda’s anthropocentric framework (man-as-microcosm). Böhme writes, in *Aurora*, that man contains Father’s powers, although is not equivalent to him:

And as all the powers in God the Father  
rise up from eternity to eternity, so all the powers

---

<sup>51</sup> Paraphrase of Пригадаймо знову, що Сковорода знає — та вживає їх — усі поняття християнської містики, які символічно характеризують містичну екстазу:

1) містик бачить Бога (visio Dei): «Серце, пан очей, бачить саме всевітнє світило світу» (411: самое міра свѣтило вселенское)

2) містик зєднується з Богом: «О серце чисте!., ти є Боже, а Бог є тобі твій... Ви є двоє та є єдине» (486: ви двое есте и есте єдино);

3) містик обожується: «ишезаю в тебе и преображаюся» (76), «він переображується в пана всіх створінь, у сонце» (77, пор. 78-79,131,205)23

4) душа містика є наречена та дружина Божа: «Ти народжений, щоби взаємно любитися з Богом» (303), «він є твій чоловік, ... твій Бог» (104: Он муж твой)

5) душа людська народжується в містичній екстазі вдруге: — «второе рождение»

6) але водночас у душі людській зроджується Бог: із кожної «особи Ізраїлевого роду... виходить первородний єдиний початок» (274: каждое сего рода лицо, будто ложесна разверзает, когда исходит из него первородное оноє Единоначало)

7) «радість», екстазу характеризує Сковорода традиційними образами «спянілість» (Trunkenheit, ebreitas): «bot род піанства или вид его», «отсюду кураж, новыя мысли, странныя рѣчи, чудная сила, ясен язык» (517, пор. 516 та инде).

<sup>52</sup>Принаймні я не можу навести жодного прямого доказу такого впливу.

rise up also in an angel, and in a man, into the head; for higher they cannot rise; for they are but creatures that have a beginning and end (Böhme 2009: 129).

Moreover, as Hryhorii Skovoroda writes that “Nature is the primary cause for everything, and a self-moving Spring<sup>53</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 651), so does Böhme allude to similar ideas:

Now this twofold source, good and evil, in everything, is caused by the stars; for as the creatures in the earth are, in their qualities, so also are the stars.  
For from its twofold source, everything hath its great mobility, running, springing, driving and growing + For meekness in nature is a still rest, but the fierceness in every power make the all things moveable, running and generative (Böhme 2009: 66).

As discussed prior, the interior world of man is of great importance to Hryhorii Skovoroda’s understanding, grounded in the “inner man”. The mystics, such as Valentin Weigel, and Angelus Silesius also keep their focus on the Inner. That interiority does not only happen to be focused in the other side of man, his inner counterpart. It is focused in one organ: the heart. Hryhorii Skovoroda refers to the heart so much in his works, that he is often called “a cordocentric philosopher”. He writes, in the “Primary door to Christian virtue” that the soul itself is “the Most Divine Face of God written upon the Heart<sup>54</sup>” (Skovoroda 2011: 216). Skovoroda elaborates,

At the same time, the Heart is the pure source of our good deeds that make the Soul joyful, so to be truly human in our soul and body, we need to be joyful, and then, we liken ourselves to the Cornerstones, from which the God’s House of Life is built, in which he Reigns in all his Grace (Skovoroda 2011: 216)<sup>55</sup>.

The Heart seems to represent a direct medium with the divine that receives God’s grace for Skovoroda, a canvas. The Heart is “blindly and forcefully held in place”<sup>56</sup> by Hope (Skovoroda 2011: 220). The Heart can be of the slaving kind and of the graceful kind. It becomes graceful if the Hope holds it in place, and the “Trifold fire”<sup>57</sup> burns it (Skovoroda 2011: 220). Otherwise, it can be a source of sin. From these statements, one can conclude that Skovoroda sees the heart as an inherently human organ of perception and focus, that takes on and reproduces the qualities it

---

<sup>53</sup> Приро́да есть первоначальная всему Причина и самодвижущаяся Пружи́на.

<sup>54</sup> [...], и не иное что есть, как Блаженнѣйшее Лицо Божіе, тайно на Сердцѣ написанное.

<sup>55</sup> В то время Сердце наше дѣлается чистым источником благодѣяній, несказанно Душу веселящих, и тогда-то мы бываем истинными по душѣ и по тѣлу чело́вѣками, подобны годным для строенія Четырехугольным Камням, с каковых Живой Божій Дом составляется, в котором он особливою Царствует Милостію.

<sup>56</sup> [...] слѣпо и насильно удерживает.

<sup>57</sup> Сим троеличным огнем Ражженное Сердце.

gets exposed to, whether Grace or sin. It is, hence, by right, a center of the human being, a human component of the divine Soul.

This special relationship of the human with their heart is also present in Angelus Silesius' ("The Cherubic Wanderer"), such as in the verse, "The external helpeth thee not",

In vain the Cross on Golgotha  
Was raised—thou hast not any part  
In its deliverance unless  
It be raised up within thy heart (Silesius)<sup>58</sup>.

And in "Heaven is within us",

My Christian, whither runnest thou?  
All Heaven within thy heart doth wait.  
Why dost thou seek to find it then  
By knocking at another's gate? (Silesius)<sup>59</sup>.

Just as Skovoroda, Silesius places importance on the heart. It is an exclusive place, where the divine qualities can be cultivated, from Christ's sacrifice to Heaven itself.

---

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/sil/scw/scw05.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/sil/scw/scw05.htm>.

## II. Outlines of Hryhorii Skovoroda's Semiotic Ideas

This chapter presents an overview of Hryhorii Skovoroda's language- and meaning-related concepts: word, name, sign, symbol, figures, archetypes, and emblems. All of these concepts can be studied individually in great length, but since this thesis is written as an overview, so this chapter, as the previous one, mainly introduces them, and their possible interpretation, to the reader.

### 2.1. Skovoroda's language: Baroque. Codes

Hryhorii Skovoroda's thought is often attributed to late Ukrainian baroque. His writing style is exactly what comes to mind when thinking of baroque, labyrinths and layers, sophisticated and sometimes strange forms. Ukrainian baroque had, in contrast to other cultures, very distinct features. It also has a special name, Mazepian baroque (or cossack baroque), often referring to church architecture. An example of such architecture would be the Uspensky Cathedral in Kyiv. However, Ukrainian baroque encompasses much more than just decorative art.

Dmytro Chizhevskiy attributes the literary baroque tradition to the whole extent of the 17-18 century, although he denies the necessity to call it "cossack baroque", whether in terms of architecture or literature (Chizhevskiy 2003). "Most Ukrainian writers of that time were not cossacks, but priests"<sup>60</sup>, he writes, accentuating the "prevalence of spiritual themes over secular ones"<sup>61</sup> (*Ibid.*). This, according to Chizhevskiy, makes the Ukrainian tradition very different from the other European counterparts. Hryhorii Skovoroda, for Chizhevskiy, is "the last great Ukrainian baroque writer... the one to bring the end to baroque not with a whimper, but with a full flame. Together with the literary language inherent to Ukrainian baroque: the language to replace it was the language of the folk"<sup>62</sup> (*Ibid.*).

---

<sup>60</sup> українські письменники тих часів були головне не козаки, а ченці.

<sup>61</sup> Перевагу елементів духовних над світськими.

<sup>62</sup> останній великий український письменник епохи барока Гр. Сковорода. Але з ним літературний барок не доживів, а догорів повним полум'ям до кінця та враз згас. Згас разом з власною українському бароку літературною мовою: на зміну прийшла мова народна.

Another great source to consult on all related to Ukrainian baroque, especially in relation to Hryhorii Skovoroda's works, is Archbishop's Ihor Isichenko's "History of Ukrainian Literature: The Baroque Era of the XVII-XVIII century". He dedicates a chapter to Dmytro Chizhevskiy. Isichenko notes that Chizhevskiy "was the first one to apply the methodological foundations of the Prague structuralists to the literature process periodization", finding only a negative reaction in the Soviet Union (Isichenko 2011: 22).

Isichenko also mentions something particularly important to us now, the Ukrainian baroque era as the one, to which codes are central. Isichenko defines the code as "a semiotic system that makes possible the reception of information, or doses, schematizes, or formalises the interpretation"<sup>63</sup> (Isichenko 2011: 31). The "style-forming codes reveal the hidden, oftentimes mysterious and enigmatic, layer of meaning of the baroque text"<sup>64</sup> (*Ibid.*, 31), Isichenko writes. Ludmila Sofronova refers to various kinds of codes to analyse Hryhorii Skovoroda's legacy, in her "Three Worlds of Hryhorii Skovoroda", from the codes of smell to the codes of vision. The researcher also uses oppositions to thematize Skovoroda's works, naming "visible/invisible, inner/external, secret/revealed, flesh/spirit, life/death, light/darkness, truth/lies, new/old, time/eternity, bitter/sweet, clean/dirty, high/low, right/left, difficult/easy, necessary/unnecessary, pagan/Christian"<sup>65</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 109). The oppositions resonate, according to Sofronova, with the concept of the antithese by Dmytro Chizhevskiy, that also highlighted Skovoroda's use of this stylistic device, characterizing Skovoroda's view on human existence as "movement between antitheses" (*Ibid.*, 108). Neither Isichenko, nor Sofronova, do not specifically refer to modern semiotics for their analysis, so they do not refer to Umberto Eco. However, I definitely see a possibility to do so here. For instance, Sofronova could, if there was a need, connect Umberto Eco's semantic codes (s-codes) to her analysis of Skovoroda's codes and oppositions. Umberto Eco, precisely, defines the s-codes as based on oppositions, such as in cultural anthropology (Eco 1984: 174).

Let me demonstrate. Baroque language, or baroque code, as defined by Isichenko (it might not be true to all baroque writers but it is true to Skovoroda in our case) has a stylistic purpose to surveil and unveil the mystical layer underneath. Let us take it to be constructed by the historical, cultural, and social contexts, the baroque era discussed prior. We also have

---

<sup>63</sup> Код – семіотична система, котра уможливилоє рецепцію інформації або дозує, схематизує й формалізує інтерпретацію.

<sup>64</sup> Бароковому тексту неодмінно належить прихований зміст, часто таємничий і загадковий, що виявляється шляхом аналізу стилетворчих кодів.

<sup>65</sup> видимое/невидимое, внутреннее/внешнее, тайное/явное, плоть/дух, жизнь/смерть, свет/тьма, истина/ложь, новое/старое, время/вечность, горькое/сладкое, чистое/грязное, высокое/низкое, правое/левое, трудное/легкое, нужное/ненужное, язычество /христианство.

Skovoroda's actual writing, a layer underneath the baroque influence, which reflects his *intentio auctoris*, the intention of the author. It so happens that this intention repeats, in some way, the overall baroque tendency, veiling and unveiling, but is not equivalent to it. It is on the basis, and in synchronicity with this *intentio*, that Skovoroda encodes his texts additionally, with multiple various layers. His use of the Scriptures and the emblems, for instance, would be examples of these codes. Talking in riddles, Skovoroda expects the reader to possess the encyclopedic knowledge needed to give an answer to them, as he does it intentionally. The relation between these codes could be a separate object of a full-bodied study, and it could use Umberto Eco's approach as a basis. It is especially relevant, because Skovoroda's language can be, justifiably, described as deceiving. This is where the game of veiling-unveiling can be found. Skovoroda talks in riddles. However, a riddle is not a question, especially not the baroque kind. A riddle is a challenge that unlike a simply directed question, is not demanding, and focused on acquiring an answer, but rather accentuates the process of the veiling-unveiling game. In other words, the riddle is a challenge. It can also, as a challenge it presents, represent an attempt of deceit, or, a lie (and I mean it, semiotically as well, in Eco's terms).

Before we return to Umberto Eco, let us take an excursion into the labyrinths of Skovoroda's language. One of the things a reader will definitely note when reading Skovoroda is that an angel can be found in the same place of the text as the sphinx, and a Gnostic image with the quote from the Scripture. This religious syncretism is only further enhanced by Skovorodian *lingua mixta*, a true language mixture in a lot of senses of the word. The *lingua mixta* of Skovoroda has borrowed words from Polish, Old Slavonic, Russian, Ukrainian Latin, Jewish, Greek. According to Lidia Gnatyuk (reviewed by Hryhorii Pivtorak), this *mixta* has a firm root, namely, the Ukrainian orthographic and Old-Slavonic Church literary tradition that serves as the basis for Skovoroda's works (Hnatyuk 2011: 81–82). The Ukrainian stressing system is also named the foundation of all of the philosopher's writings, reflecting the Ukrainian "living language", or, more specifically, its east-western dialects (Hnatyuk 2011: 82).

The mixed language of Skovoroda was criticised, as Ushkalov mentions, by many Ukrainian writers (Ushkalov 2011: 30), with Ivan Nechui-Levitsky, one of the literary tradition fathers, as the mighty herald. Even though some of the words Skovoroda uses can seem Russian to the contemporary speakers, they are "functionally Ukrainian" in terms of the literary-written tradition of his times, especially in terms of the Ukrainian proverbs (Hnatyuk 2011: 82). Ukrainian idioms and proverbs, thus, play a big part in the symbolic landscape of Skovoroda's thought. Furthermore, the idioms are one of the ways that Skovoroda uses to "send us back to

the folk” (we had discussed him, previously, as a folk philosopher). The proverbs are an interesting subject, especially in context of Skovoroda as a representative of a rather intellectualized emblematic tradition discussed further in the thesis. In an emblem, the proverb (although in a different form), turns into a coded mysterious message. The wisdom of the folk, especially in its Slavonic translation in the “*Symbola et Emblemata Selecta*”<sup>66</sup>, becomes the encoded Wisdom of God. It happens because, by a large part, the folk represents common knowledge, naive truth, and the closeness to Nature, as well as, quite pragmatically, demonstrates the capacity to do the work of affinity (literally working with what one was born, such as a field).

Here we are, already, making a transition to philosophy of language proper. Bova and Levchenko kindly rule out a few theses for us to be guided by in these matters:

1. Skovoroda relates himself (and possibly wants us to, as we had discussed in terms of his purposefully “fleeing” role), to the body of his works linguagenetically (See also S. Megentesov) (Bova, Levchenko 2022: 18).
2. Skovoroda’s linguaphilosophy is a philosophy “of the name” (not philosophy of the statement) in the context of the Platonic and Christian (neoplatonic) tradition. The focus of Skovoroda’s “linguaphilosophy” is the word<sup>67</sup> (*Ibid.*).

Let us add here, for the complete picture, another thesis, suggested by Svitlana Demyaenko:

3. “The language in the linguaphilosophical conception of Skovoroda is tightly connected with thinking. The thought triggers the speaking”, and the soul (heart, inner man), accordingly, triggers the thought (Demyanenko 2009: 31).

The last two theses are discussed in the following chapters, so let us now focus on the last one, which will be, consequently, our last elaborate link to cordocentrism in the former sense we discussed it in (chapter 1.4). Demyanenko means here, that it is the heart that sets the thought in motion, and then the thought that gives a beginning to the speaking (*Ibid.*). So, before the speech reaches us, it has to go through a few stairways first. It has to get hold of the will of the inner man first, then resolve itself into thought, and only then can it be expressed.

To elaborate more on the foundations of Skovoroda’s language, let me demonstrate how Skovoroda himself justifies his *lingua mixta*:

---

<sup>66</sup>*Symbola et emblemata selecta*. Accessible at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/rbc0001/2020/2020yudin50625/2020yudin50625.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Підкреслюється, що лінгвофілософія Сковороди – це філософія імені (а не висловлювання). У цьому проявляє себе антична (платонівська насамперед), а також християнська традиція філософського вивчення мови. Саме феномен слова привертав головну увагу Сковороди.

The most Ancient Word is this: Γνωθι σεαυτόν. NOSCE TE IPSUM. KNOW THYSELF. And now it is in everyone's mouth, but not to everyone's tastes. The sweetest Berry, or Kernel, even though it is in the lips, cannot give out any taste, unless it is chewed upon. A small word, like a Kernel, hides within it, a great taste. Some think, the Herald of this word was the ancient sage Phales. I believe it. Whoever finds their own and loves it, that one has a right to claim it, and the TRUTH is Beginningless.<sup>68</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 646).

This idea of Skovoroda Ushkalov refers to as a part of “philosophia perennis” (Ushkalov 2011: 698, n. 14), a truly fascinating tradition of theological thought, which provides a necessary answer to many questions we may have about Skovoroda's manner of writing. Ushkalov traces the concept of “philosophia perennis” back to Agostino Steuco's namesake tractatus (1540) (*Ibid.*, 698). The researcher notes:

This concept of “eternal God's wisdom” is traceable in the works of the Church fathers, as well as Jacob Böhme, Renaissance neoplatonics, such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, and, also, the popular Jesuit writer Athanasios Kircher, along with many others.<sup>69</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 698, n.14).

To this idea I will return again in the concluding chapter of the thesis. For now it provides us with no less than a very plausible explanation. If it seems like a tiresome process, it truly is. Skovoroda doesn't only challenge himself with it, but also us, his readers. Not a wonder that one of the articles on the matters of Skovorodian language is called “A trial by language”<sup>70</sup>. Ushkalov describes how saturated Skovoroda's writing style is, with “brutalistic imagery (folk-words)”<sup>71</sup> and neologisms, as well as metaphors<sup>72</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 29). I would say that, here, “aggressive” is the key.

Such figurative literary aggression is explained, by Bohdana Krysa, in her “Trial by Language”, through a few factors. First, she attributes his style to a traditional Ukrainian bilingual baroque one, which fluctuated between the folk's common speech and the Old Slavonic Church greatness (Krysa 2020: 145).

---

<sup>68</sup> Предревнѣйшее Слово есть сіе: Γνωθι σεαυτόν. NOSCE TE IPSUM. УЗНАЙ СЕБЕ САМАГО. И теперь оно всѣм во устах, но не многим во вку'сѣ. Са'мая сла'стная Ягода, или Зе'рно, хотя во уста'х, не дае'т вку'са, поко'ль не ражжева'тъ. Кро'шечное, как Зе'рно, сло'во сіе высо'кій вкус угаи'ло. Ду'мают, что Нача'льник сло'ва сего был древнѣйшій Мудрец Фали'с. Вѣрю. Кто что нашел и лю'бит, тое свои'м ему быть может, а ИСТИНА Безначальна.

<sup>69</sup> Тим часом концепт “вічної Божої мудрості” можна знайти і у святих отців, і в Якоба Беме та німецьких пієтистів, і в неоплатоніків доби Відродження, зокрема в Марсіліо Фічіно та Піко делла Мірандоли, і в популярного письменника-єзуїта Атанасія Кірхера, і в багатьох інших.

<sup>70</sup> Випробування мовою.

<sup>71</sup> Справді-бо, Сковорода досить часто послуговується суто «плотяними» образами, не раз доволі грубими, задля окреслення щонайтонших духовних питань.

<sup>72</sup> Окрім того, для стилю Сковороди характерні яскраві неологізми (амуритяся, завертасы, ласкосердствуєт, любопрахи, окрылатѣл, пустослава, субботствуєт, шелуханы, язиковредіє) та напрочуд багата метафорика, нерозривно пов'язана з його символічною манерою тлумачення буття.



The second factor is Skovoroda's "spirituality of style", the "expression in the word as the focus of the eternal intensity of being"<sup>73</sup>, which is directly related to Skovoroda's affection towards the Scripture (Krysa 2020: 146). The way that Skovoroda uses quotes from the Scriptures, in long sequences, or, as Krysa calls it, "processions" is the indication of his signature search for analogies, and untying the links between the worlds (2020: 147). That search is so intense because it is, in some sense, futile, since God and his secrets can never be uncovered to the fullest. Rather than to speak on these matters, it's best to look with the "inner vision" discussed earlier, I presume. This is how the Trial by Language happens -- it is a trial of the search for the right expression. For Skovoroda to find the right words, sometimes, not only lists of synonyms, but also repetitions are needed:

H. Skovoroda, as we would say now, has a huge vocabulary. The compilation of his vocabulary is one of the possible and even necessary aspects of the study of his works. However, in his works, the insistent repetition of certain words, such as wheel, ashes, apple-tree, for example, is immediately striking. It is unlikely that a philosopher, like a poet, would return to these words again and again, giving them a particular mytho-poetic significance, although it is possible. But this is not the point. On the one hand, the repetition of single words, as well as the repeated use of meaningful oppositions in different guises, give a text a particular rigidity. Repetition is one of the known ways of organizing it. On the other hand, the repetition of words, especially at first sight, seems a little too intentional at times<sup>74</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 79).

In this paragraph, I would like to address Sofronova's suspicion about the intentionality of Skovoroda's style. This is where we can return to the topic of deceit. Umberto Eco writes:

One can also lie by using improperly the modalities of a literary genre (which is an institutional system): one can begin a poem in an epic style and then betray the reader's expectation by a sudden anticlimax, shifting thus from heroic to grotesque (Eco 1984: 181).

This, for Eco, would be a combination of "lying about the rules" and "lying with the rules" (Eco 1984: 181). Skovoroda switches between the folk speech and heightened speech, between different kinds of mythology, such as making a character of a Greek myth (Narcissus) into a Christian figure. We know that Skovoroda, a semiotically interesting figure, definitely lies, in Eco's sense of the word. We are left to wonder if he does so intentionally, playing with the

---

<sup>73</sup> Розгортання у слові як на «фокус безкінечної інтенсивності буття».

<sup>74</sup> Г. Сковорода, как бы сейчас сказали, обладает огромным словарным запасом. Составление его словаря один из возможных и даже необходимых аспектов исследования его творчества. При этом в его сочинениях сразу бросается в глаза настойчивая повторяемость отдельных слов, таких, как колесо, прах, яблоня, например. Вряд ли философ, подобно поэту, возвращался к ним снова и снова, придавая им особую мифопоэтическую значимость, хотя и это возможно. Но все же дело здесь в другом. С одной стороны, повторяемые отдельные слова, как и постоянно встречающиеся смысловые оппозиции в разных обличьях, придают тексту особую устойчивость. Повтор – один из известных способов его организации. С другой стороны, повторяемость слов, особенно на первый взгляд, кажется порой уж слишком преднамеренной.

correlational and institutional codes, and if he blatantly breaks the rules, or as Eco writes, lies about or by them. In short, what kind of lie can we see in Skovoroda?

I prefer, in Skovoroda's case, to explain it through imitation of unintentionality. More precisely, to the imitation of the lack of words, which "stops being just a rhetoric figure and becomes borderline in character"<sup>75</sup> (Krysa 2020: 147). She relates it to language collapse:

It is because "everything that is capable of escaping speech is unexpressible, unthinkable, and nonbeing, nothing, and even less than nothing", his language is balancing at the border of the expressibility and unexpressibility, the process of catching and the inability to be grasped, and borders on the feeling of the "language collapse", when the thought, "the everlasting movement", is leaving the "withered clothing"<sup>76</sup> (Krysa 2011: 148).

Even when Skovoroda quotes, he tries to integrate, and not to refer to something (2020: 147), which probably also goes for forceful integration of characters from other mythology, such as Narcissus. Krysa quotes Skovoroda, the force of writing is a kind of destruction, while the force of spirit is a renovating, animating one (Krysa 2011: 15). But it is not only aggression and destruction that we see in such baroque enigmatic texts as Skovoroda, but also the tendency, as Isichenko notes, of a baroque text to address itself, "direct itself onto its own "second layer", the deep layer of meaning, that is only accessible to those who are aware of the riddles that the symbolic code of the text entails"<sup>77</sup> (Isichenko 2011: 22). So, the perfect reader for Skovoroda, would be the one aware of the riddle, or, in other words, aware of the lie.

## 2.2. Word

The first Word was God, according to the Bible, and Skovoroda, a devout follower of the Scripture, treats this fact with utmost seriousness. In Skovoroda's texts, a word can just be a common linguistic word that has an etymology that he gladly delves into. It can, however, also be Logos. The word also can mean, the Word of God, such as the Bible. Skovoroda writes:

---

<sup>75</sup> Порівняно з ранішими українськими поетами, з тією «неосягненністю осягань неосягненого Бога», яку декларував, зокрема, К. Ставровецький, почуття недостатності слів перстає бути риторичною фігурою, а набуває граничного характеру.

<sup>76</sup> І тому, що «усе, здатне втекти від мови, є невимовне, немислиме, несуще, ніщо і менш, ніж ніщо», мова його творів балансує на межі вимовності й невимовності, ловитви та невловності аж до передчуття «мовного колапсу», коли здається, що думка, «движимость непрерывная», покидає «обетшающую ризу».

<sup>77</sup> Твір відсилає сам себе до «другого дна», глибинного шару, доступного для втаємничених у загадки символічного коду тексту.

If the tongue wounds, why not call it an “arrow”? The Bible is the word of God and the fiery tongue [...] This arrow is sent to us by the Almighty to wound our enemies. The words of the prophets are arrows.<sup>78</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 569).

Yet again, we encounter Skovoroda’s language as very aggressive and intense, now a weapon, arrow. It is enticing now, to go back to our “Trial by Language” for help. Krysa explains, the key is an attempt to establish a link between the Scriptures and the interpretation, God and man, the Embodied Word and the Word-combination<sup>79</sup> (collocation) (Krysa 2020: 152). The establishing of that link is hard work, and one of affinity. This link need “work” to “retain and express the divine hypostasis of God’s image” (Krysa 2020: 152). The words around God’s Word are, then, just productions, crafts, of a rather material sort. Krysa gives the first part of the quote by Skovoroda describing these adornments as “Gold of God” and “Small Satchels of Gold and Husk of the God’s grain”, or “the adorning jewellery” (2020: 152). To access the word, a challenge, or trial, or a deceiving riddle needs to be overcome. As Sofronova writes, “H. Skovoroda does not think a word something given, always open to any human. It is, according to his opinion, a holder of secrets, and that is why it needs to be challenged.”<sup>80</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 86). To conclude, for Skovoroda, the Word of God and the word of man are ontologically different. Skovoroda writes, “Truth speaks simple”<sup>81</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 393), implying the divine word. We could suggest that, by the logic that Skovoroda himself uses to access the divine truth by his highly symbolic, multilayered texts, that the simplicity can be earned by challenge and the truth can be acquired by lie (riddle).

### 2.3. Name (of God)

Name, in Skovoroda, goes hand-in-hand with the word. Skovoroda writes, from the perspective of God, “And my Word, and Truth, and Destiny and Grace, and my Name – all is One.”<sup>82</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 315). As God’s name has power, so does God’s power of giving a name. As Skovoroda writes, “Mortals often name things with no being. It’s not the case for God. For

---

<sup>78</sup> Если язык разит, для чего не назвать его стрѣлою? Библия есть слово Божіе и язык огненный. [...] Сія стрѣла от вышняго нам послана для врагов. Слова Богопроповѣдников суть стрѣлы.

<sup>79</sup> Мовленневість його текстів, попри «реалізацію зв’язку одиниць мови» та мислення, спрямовано на особливу духовну сполучуваність між Святим Письмом і його сприйняттям – за аналогією до Втіленого Слова як Слово-сполучення (архимандрит Мануссакіс) між Богом і людиною.

<sup>80</sup> Г. Сковорода не полагает слово некоей данностью, всегда открытой для человека. Оно, по его мнению, скрывает в себе тайны, и поэтому его следует испытывать.

<sup>81</sup> У Истины простая рѣчь.

<sup>82</sup> А Слово мое и Истина, Судьба и Милость, и Имя мое – все то Одно.

God, the name and being are the same. He names, and immediately gives being.”<sup>83</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 678). However, there is a way to inquire about God, which is not a direct road, but a roundabout. Paradoxically, for Skovoroda, one has to give up looking for the Name of God to really find it (Skovoroda 2011: 507). God’s existence has to be accepted as a given.

Augustine, among other Medieval thinkers, also was the one seeing the “possibility of knowing the essence of a thing by etymologizing its name, which means that the way to understanding of the nature of things would be the way from verba to res”<sup>84</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 718, n. 350). Chizhevskiy also addresses the multitude of names, as seen by Skovoroda, in reference to names of philosophers that already made an appearance in the first part of the thesis:

The idea of “negative theology” is closely related to Platonism, [...] and soon became domesticated in Christian theology. Already according to Clement of Alexandria, God cannot be known in concepts and defined by individual names. According to Origen, God has no “appropriate” name. For Gregory of Nyssa, every name of God is “darkness and silence” and no word in its own sense [...] The same is true in German mysticism. And for Böhme: “God the Father is in Himself, but without names, for He is in Himself light, clear and transparent eternity, without substance...”. But God has the right to all names [...] and the Angel Silesius said: “I do not know what God is”, “God has all names and none. You can call the highest God by all names, but, on the other hand, you cannot recognise him by any of them.”<sup>85</sup> (Chizhevskiy 1934: 88).

Talking about negative theology, we have to mention Thomas Aquinas. As Deely writes, summarizing Aquinas’ point: “We can know of God, by demonstration, that he exists, but, beyond that, insofar as our concepts are multiple and his being is simple, we know more what he is not than we do what he is” (Deely 2001: 273).

As for Aquinas, so for Skovoroda, God is not accessible directly, but around. As Deely’s summary of Aquinas’ idea goes:

That being so, since we can know him “in this life” only by a variety of concepts, we cannot know what he is. But we can indeed know a great deal and a great many things about him – that he is real, not a figment of human construction within the understanding without counterpart in the physical order; that he is good, not in any way lacking or deprived of existence; that he is one, not in any way specified and

---

<sup>83</sup> У смертних часто именем величаются не имущіе существа его. У Бога не так. У Его имя и существо есть тождеством. Как только назвал, так вдруг и естество дал.

<sup>84</sup> Зрештою, і антична риторика (Арістотель, Квінтіліан, Цицерон), і середньовічна християнська традиція (Єронім, Августин, Ісидор Севільський) вважали за можливе пізнавати єство речі шляхом тлумачення її імені, тобто шлях пізнання природи речей поставав тут як шлях від verba до res.

<sup>85</sup> Ідея «негативної теології» тісно звязана з плятонізмом, [...] скоро здомашніла в християнській теології. Вже за Климентом Олександрійським – Бога не можна пізнати в поняттях та визначити окремими іменами. За Орігеном – Бог не має «відповідного» імені. Для Григорія Ниського всяке імя Боже є «тьма та мовчання» та ніяке слово у власному сенсі [...] Те саме в німецькій містиці. Та й для Беме: «Бог-Отець є в собі самим, але без імен, бо він є в собі самому світла, ясна та прозора вічність, без єства...». Але Бог має право на всі імена [...] а Ангел Сілезій каже: «не знаю, що таке Бог», «Бог має всі ймення та ніякого. Можна йменувати найвищого Бога всіма іменами, але, з другого боку, не можна визнати за ним ні одного».

limited from within; that he is true, not in any way capable of being deceived; that he is [...] and so on, in a semiosis as unlimited as God is infinite. (Deely 2001: 274).

Let us stop on unlimited semiosis here. The notion was developed by Peirce, and nuanced by Eco. Since Eco is the herald of this thesis, it is to his nuanced version that I will cling to. As Eco himself summarizes his approach to Peirce:

In my presentation at the Peirce's International Congress at Harvard University (September 1989) I tried to show that the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria. To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it "riverruns" merely for its own sake. To say that a text has potentially no end does not mean that every act of interpretation can have a happy end (Eco 2004 23-24).

This is the approach I took with this thesis (delimited myself to the "happy end" for a theosemiotic discourse), and this is the approach that I believe, Skovoroda as a writer, also suggests his readers to take (when talking about, or around, God). That is why we have to read carefully, when Skovoroda writes, for instance, that "That one, who knows God, no matter what his praising Heart calls Him, truly gives Him a good name"<sup>86</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 507). Just because one can talk of God forever, in unlimited semiosis, does not, in any way, imply that every name that a man chooses for God's being is a correct one. In other words, we are dealing with an infinitude of correct names, but also a potential infinitude of incorrect ones. Apostle Paul, Moses, Isaiah, and, a devout theologian are all correct, in naming God different things, as long as they understand him similarly (*Ibid.*, 507).

That understanding is achievable, if one's inner vision is used. To see, and to understand, when one is seeing with the inner eye, is equivalent, in this case. As Skovoroda writes, "that who sees me with the eye of their faith, that one Knows my Name"<sup>87</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 507).

There is not much material about Kabbalah and Skovoroda, although we can see the connection to Pico della Mirandola, whose reader the wandering philosopher, by consensus, could have been. However, the parallel is strong here. To quote Eco, "The Kabbalah of names [...] rearranges, dismantles, and recombines the surface of the text and its syntagmatic structures, all the way down to the linguistic atoms constituted by the individual letters, in a process of continuous linguistic re-creation" (Eco 2014: 301). This sounds very akin of the impulsive language of Skovoroda. If the problem with the language in general was that it is

---

<sup>86</sup> Если́ кто зна́ет Бо́га, чем ни е́сть имену́ет Его се́рдце почита́ телево, все то дѣйстви́тельно и до́брое и́мя.

<sup>87</sup> Кто вѣ́ры о́ком чрез мрак мене ви́дит, тот и Имя мое Зна́ет.

difficult to express the invisible, the problem with the Name of God is in the impossibility of comprehending the complete oneness and unity in the world that, from a human perspective, seems to be so divided (invisible/visible, sacred/profane).

## 2.4. Sign and image

The concept of sign is, no doubt, central to theosemiotics. Skovoroda's understanding of the sign, however, is a rather vague subject. The only instance of Skovoroda extensively and academically interpreting the "sign", as it is linguistically equivalent to the word Знак (not symbol, or any other bordering semiotic concept, that may be interchanged with a modern semiotic understanding of the sign), is found in his letter to Mykhailo Ivanovych Kovalynsky (1745–1807). Little is known about Kovalynsky, Skovoroda's pupil and his closest friend, other than his pioneering biography of the wandering philosopher (Шевчук 2013: 29); however, what any reader can tell from the letters, the young man seemed an engaged mind interested in unravelling academic mysteries, some very semiotic in essence. In response to his student's interest in the Ukrainian idiom "абы ся ку'рило" (let the smoke be), Skovoroda offers a few analogical Latin interpretations. He refers to "the Greek saying, "like a sign"". The interpretations are:

1. *mihi umbra sufficit, sive titulis, sive imago* (a shadow, a name, or an image will suffice).
2. *dicationis gratia* (for show).
3. *crasso filo / tenui filo* (with a thick/ with a thin thread).<sup>88</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 1134).

In this case, the signs are "shadows", alluding us to the distinction between Skovoroda's two natures, where the visible one is just a shadow cast by the divine invisible, a Platonic distinction. Soletsky calls Skovoroda's signs "visual-signifying points of intensity that hide the deep transforming semantics that falls into God's Absolute"<sup>89</sup> (Soletsky 2018: 216).

---

<sup>88</sup> Тому не прислів'ям, я думаю, ти досить задовільно можеш сказати латинською мовою так: *mihi umbra sufficit, sive titulis, sive imago* – мені досить тіні, назви чи образу. Греки в прислів'ях кажуть – ніби знаком. Наше прислів'я в цьому разі твердить, що досить диму, хоч би до вогню справа й не дійшла. Таким чином, і тут тень замість тіла, знак замість речі. Але ось тобі прислів'я *dicis gratia*, як кажуть – для виду, ти б сказав: *dicationis gratia* – для показу, – коли що-небудь робиться нашвидкуруч, – спосіб висловлення в нещирих виконавців релігійних обрядів, які часто в храмі жертвують Богові не те, що гідне його, а тільки щоб мати знак, що вони принесли жертву. Перекладай так: [абы то для славы] та ін. Латинською мовою можна сказати *crasso filo* – грубою ниткою.

<sup>89</sup> Знак – лише тень, візуально-смысловий концентрат, що ховає у собі глибоку перехідну семантику, яка спинається у всеосяжний Божественний Абсолют.

So, the signs are the tapestry of this dual world. However, are such signs merely likenesses, reminders? Or, to put the question differently, does Skovoroda live up to Augustine's legacy, as formulated by Phillip Cary, to go beyond resemblance into signification? (Cary 2008: 5). The answer, I think, can be found in this quote:

This Divine Love has outer appearances, or signs: the ceremony, sacrament, or images of grace. And the sacrament around the grace is like a leaf next to the fruit, or the hull atop of a grain, or a complement given out of affection. If you remove the strength from under the mask, the mask just signifies deception, and the human becomes an adorned Coffin. It is the same ceremony that any poor little fool can conduct.<sup>90</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 220).

In the quote, we see that he goes as far as to call a sacrament something that can be performed by a common fool, – something that Augustine could have never said. Both of them agree that the signs are not the source of Grace, but would Skovoroda really refer to a sacrament as a “sacred sign”, *sacrum signum*? Probably not. Skovoroda even uses the word “значки”, a diminutive, “little signs”, to describe a sacrament in the quote above.

Skovoroda's syncretic manner of combining Christian and pagan imagery and folk-inspired, brutal expressions in regard to theological matters, demonstrate he can go great lengths, even diminishing the signs of Grace, placing them into the vile and visible. Thus, signs are not only “likenesses”, they are not just brute depictions of the inner processes, they can also be tools of deception, and this is the role that Skovoroda assigns to them very radically. If the source of the sign is removed, a sign will make whatever it was attached to, into a vile object, in other words, defile it.

As opposed to the vile sign; there is also the Sign of God that does not deceive; it refers to itself. The unbreakability between the sign and the signified in the case of the God-sign and the sign of God is the divine quality and the mark of the invisible nature. God seems to be the only sign (being and having a sign) bearing this divine quality. As I already quoted Skovoroda in the previous chapter, “For God, the name and being are the same”<sup>91</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 678). Bova and Levchenko take a step further, and comment on the same quote, that, for Skovoroda, “the main characteristic of the language of God is the unity of the sign and the signified”<sup>92</sup> (Bova, Levchenko 2022: 20).

---

<sup>90</sup> Сія Божественная Любовь имѣет на себѣ внѣшніе виды, или значки; они то называются: церемонія, обряд, или образ благочестія. И так церемонія возлѣ благочестія есть то, что возлѣ плодов лист, что на зернах шелуха, что при доброжелательствѣ комплементы. Естли ж сія маска лишена своей силы, в то время остается одна лицемѣрная обманчивость, а человек – Гробом разкрашенным. Все же то церемонія, что может исправлять самый несчастный бездѣльник.

<sup>91</sup> У смертных часто именем величаются не имущіе существа его. У Бога не так. У Его имя и существо есть тождеством. Как только назвал, так вдруг и естество дал.

<sup>92</sup> Основна ознака мови Бога – тотожність знаку й означуваного.

Even though Skovoroda's sign is by no means a universal concept, and is only occasionally used in its direct translation as "знак", we can, nevertheless still find a universal enough counterpart, which is "the image", "образ", which Skovoroda uses in his texts. Before I discuss the nuances of images, I would like to conclude this subchapter with a classification that could, due to its universality, encompass all of the units of meaning Skovoroda uses in his texts. This classification belongs to Stefan Yavorskiy. His work, "Stone of faith",<sup>93</sup> which was likely accessible to Skovoroda through their common alma mater, the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and through Charkiv collegium's libraries. Yavorskiy gives a classification of images that is broad enough and related enough to almost all of Skovoroda's philosophical ideas discussed in the previous chapter.

Now, to the classification itself. As Yavorskiy himself notes, he took after John of Damascus' interpretation of icons (Yavorskiy 2010: 63). He gives the images five distinct characteristics:

- 1) "Icon, or image, is a likeness, that reveals someone, whom it belongs to"<sup>94</sup> (Yavorskiy 2010: 34).
- 2) "Any icon, or image, is not, in every regard, equivalent to someone, who it reveals. One thing is an image, the other, the formed in the image. For instance, the image of man only reveals a human body, and even that it does only in part, while the powers of the soul cannot be revealed in such a manner"<sup>95</sup> (*Ibid.*, 34).
- 3) "Icon, or image, if it reveals a sacred object, can also be referred to as "sacred", however, not in its essence, but only in a figurative sense. In such a way, also the Bible, and the Gospel are referred to as Holy Scriptures not because they are holy in essence, but because they are related to sacred objects"<sup>96</sup> (*Ibid.*, 34–35).
- 4) "Icons, or images, have a purpose to reveal and understand hidden, inevident, distant and secret things, and to remember about them"<sup>97</sup> (*Ibid.*, 35).
- 5) "Icons, or images, differ from each other, some in essence, some in expression"<sup>98</sup> (*Ibid.*, 35).

---

<sup>93</sup> Камень веры.

<sup>94</sup> Икона, или образ, есть некое подобие, являющее в себе того, чей это образ.

<sup>95</sup> Всякая икона, или образ, не во всем подобна тому, кого являет. Потому что одно дело образ, а совсем другое образуемое. Например: образ человека являет только человеческое тело, и то отчасти, но душевные же силы явить не может.

<sup>96</sup> Положение третье Икона, или образ, если являет святой предмет, и сама называется святой, но не по своему веществу, а образно. Так, и интернет-портал «Азбука веры» 35 Библия, и Евангелие называются Священным Писанием не по своему веществу, но по явлению священных предметов.

<sup>97</sup> Иконы, или образы, нужны для того, чтобы явить, познать далекие, неприсущие, отстоящие и тайные вещи, и помнить о них.

<sup>98</sup> Иконы, или образы, различаются между собой, одни по естеству, иные же по способу изображения.



This classification is convenient enough to locate an image somewhere on the Augustinian axis, which Skovoroda takes (a sign as something that stands for something else). It is convenient enough, also, to correspond, and even warn, of the capacity of the visible to deceive. In point number 3, Yavorskiy's idea also resonates with a fact that the signs, also for Skovoroda, cannot be holy by themselves, and can even harm the gullible. Finally, Skovoroda's definition of a symbol as "a rightful arrow, shot at the distant Secret"<sup>99</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 440–441), corresponds to Yavorskiy's point number 4. To Yavorskiy's classification I will return a few more times later.

## 2.5. Symbol, image, figure, archetype

The concepts of symbol, image, figure, and archetype are used in close interconnection in Skovoroda's texts, so this is how I will overview them in this chapter. I will begin with symbol. Symbol has, by far, the most transient meaning in the body of Skovoroda's works.

In a chapter of his dialogue, "A Little Book, named "Silenus Alcibiadis", that is the Icon of Alcibiades", he poses a question of the meaning of the symbol, which he, already in the question, immediately links to the "image" (Образ) (Skovoroda 2011: 742). The definition of a symbol is a peculiar one,

The names of the Figures, that contain within themselves the hidden force, were given by Ellinistic Sages: EMBLEMATA, HIEROGLYPHICA. And in the Bible they are called: Miracles, Signs, Roads, traces, a wall, a Door, a Window, an Image, a Border, a Seal, a vessel, a place, a house, a City, a throne, a Horse, a Cherub, or a chariot, and others... They are, in truth, Cattle, Beasts, Birds, pure and impure, and the Bible is the Ark and the Godly Heavens, or in other words, a Bestiary<sup>100</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 742).

Here, we see an example of Skovoroda's unlimited semiosis, or challenging speech. A long array of enlisted words, assumed by a finalising touch, the comparison of the Bible to a Bestiary, which makes the closest synonym to the "symbol", then, "the beast". It is in this dialogue that we encounter two more concepts that will be discussed further in the thesis: the Bible as the World, and the Book (here, in the form of the Bestiary), the emblem, and the

---

<sup>99</sup> Сіе-то есть хранить, наблюдать, примѣчать, сирѣчь при извѣстном поняты безвѣстное, а с предстоящаго, будьто с высокой Горы, Умный Луч, как праволучную стрѣлу в мѣть, метать в отдаленную Тайность... Отсюду родилось слово символ.

<sup>100</sup> Такія Фигуры, заключающія в себѣ тайную силу, на'званы от Еллинских Любому'дрцов: EMBLEMATA, HIEROGLYPHICA. А в Библии называются: Чудеса, Зна'менія, Путіе, слѣды, сѣнь, стѣна, Дверь, Око'нце, Образ, Предѣл, Печа'ть, сосу'д, мѣсто, дом, Град, престо'л, Конь, Херуви'м, си'рѣчь колесни'ца, и протч[ая]... Они-то суть Скоты, Звѣри, Пти'цы, чистыя и нечистыя, а Би'бліа есть Ковче'г и Рай Божій, простѣ сказать – Звѣри'нец.

“Figure”. Even though from this passage, it might seem that the Figure, the emblem, and the symbol might be synonymous, I have to note: It is not the case. Symbols are distinct concepts. Skovoroda writes that the symbol comes from “preserving, observing, noticing, seeing the hidden in the visible, and seeing the future descending from the top of the Mountain. It is a Ray of Wisdom, a rightful arrow, shot at the distant Secret”<sup>101</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 440–441).

As for the figures, they seem to be placed within a particular symbol to generate its sense. Such combinations are demonstrated, for instance, within the emblem (that, in its turn, can be composed of symbols):

I am sending you another gift: the first one is an elephant, the other one is the sun. If you put them together, they will make a “symbol”, or the fold, encounter, the union, that, together, will radiate graceful strength”<sup>102</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 1317).

If the emblem seems to be placed higher in the hierarchy, than symbols, images, and figures, we should not that symbols can be, in their turn, composed both of images and figures simultaneously (or originate from them):

In the first day, came to being the figures of the darkness, the night, the day, the evening, the Morning. From these figures, came to be the Symbols. The Symbol is composed of two or three figures that stand for the mortal and the Immortal planes of being.<sup>103</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 742).

Here is another passage from Skovoroda that confirms the relations between the emblem, symbol, and figure, established prior:

The image that contains the secret, is, in Greek, called “ΕΜΒΛΗΜΑ, EMBLEMA”, or, something embedded, implanted, like a diamond into the ring. [...] If you put together two or three of (such) figures, like in an aforementioned emblem, then they would call it ΣΥΜΒΟΛΟΝ, CONJECTURA, such as they say in Rome.<sup>104</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 576).

A concept of an “image” is a very peculiar one. It seems to be a constitutional part of the emblem, and can also be a part of the symbol, along with a figure. However, we also encounter an interesting use of the “image” by Skovoroda, as here:

---

<sup>101</sup> Сіе-то есть хранить, наблюдать, примѣчать, сирѣчь при извѣстном понять безвѣстное, а с предстоящаго, будто с высокой Горы, Умный Луч, как праволучную стрѣлу в мѣть, метать в отдаленную Тайность... Отсюду родилось слово символ.

<sup>102</sup> Посылаю вам один и другой гостинець: 1-й слон, 2-й солнце; естли их сложить, то здѣлают СИМВОЛ, т. е. складку и исключать прекрасную силу.

<sup>103</sup> В сем первом днѣ явилось фигу́р 6. Тма, свѣт, ночь, день, вечер, Утро. Из тѣх фигу́р Си́мволы. Тма и свѣт, ночь и день, вечер и Утро. Си́мвол составляется из фигур двоих или троих, означающих тлѣнь и Вѣчность.

<sup>104</sup> Образ, заключающій в себѣ тайну, именовался по-еллински ἔμβλημα, EMBLEMA, т. е. вкидка, вправка, будто в перстень алмаза [...] А естли таких фигур сложить вмѣстѣ двѣ или три, как в помянутой печати, тогда называлось ΣΥΜΒΟΛΟΝ, CONJECTURA по-римск.

If you think about it, every image is trifold, the simple one, the forming one, and the formed one. For instance, there is the simple bread, the forming bread, and the angelic bread. “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Skovoroda 2011: 604).

This trifold structure seems to imply that this “image” is not the same one that we find as a smaller, integral part of the symbol. If anything, it is placed higher than the symbol, or even the emblem. It could be something that, if it was called “знак” (sign), by Skovoroda, could serve as a universal definition of the sign as a generalised unit of meaning. It is possible, however, in Old Slavonic, to use “sign” and “image” interchangeably.

Jakovleva, in her analysis, calls the first layer of a Skovorodia image a “shell of sound”, or the “matter that gains symbolic meaning”, “action”, while the second is “a symbol itself, the being that is depicted”, and the third – the “hidden sense”<sup>105</sup> (Jakovleva 2020: 77). To understand the symbol, Jakovleva writes, the planes of the symbol’s being need to be “untied” (*Ibid.*).

Let us take one of Skovoroda’s image of the bread, and attempt to “untie” its planes, following Jakovleva’s guidance. The first bread, in its simple form, would be the bread of the visible, material kind, the one that can be physically consumed in the physical world. The second bread would be the one that the material bread refers to, the invisible, perfect Platonist version of the first simple bread, charged with a meaning of all the vain, fleshly, and mortal in the world. The third, “formed” bread, however, is a peculiar one. Formed resonates with “created”, and, if we take it to bear a special “hidden sense”, we could suggest that this bread would resonate with an image of the original bread. “Original”, in the sense, would mean bread as originally created and intended by God, the prototype of bread. To access this formed bread, simply using symbols would not be enough. A keyword, or an archetype, is needed.

Hryhorii Skovoroda, besides symbols and signs, also distinguishes a particular system of keywords, to which archetypes belong. As Sofronova writes:

The hidden essence of the word is expressed through the context, in which the words take unequal positions. So, there exist particular word-keys, or keywords, that are placed higher than others. This term is not borrowed from contemporary content analysis, but belongs to the philosopher himself. He writes, there are words that unlock the sense of the text<sup>106</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 85).

---

<sup>105</sup> Другий шар буття, що репрезентує символ, то є буття, яке зображується, і третій – це захований у символі смисл. Основну увагу Г. Сковорода приділяв процесу, завдяки якому можна подолати зовнішню матеріальну форму символу, що означало у розумінні Г. Сковороди «розділити», «відрізнити», «розв’язати» різні шари буття, інакше кажучи, «розгадати» завдання, проблему.

<sup>106</sup> Скрытая сущность слова в полной мере проявляется в контексте, где слова занимают неравное положение. Так, существуют особые слова-ключи, или ключевые слова, имеющие высшую позицию. Этот термин заимствован нами не из современного контент-анализа, а принадлежит самому философу. Он пишет о том, что существуют слова, служащие ключом к смыслу текста.

Let us now backup Sofronova's overview with an example from Skovoroda's text:

The Sun is the archetype, the First and the Main Figure. The Copies and Vice Figures are Many, abundant in the Bible. This Figure is called "antitype" (Foundational Image, Vice-Image), something that is, instead of the Main Image, put forward to replace it. All of them are tending back to the Source, to the Sun. Such vice figures can be, for instance, the Jail and Josef, the Chest (ark) and Moses [...] Ark and Noah [...], the Cave and the Lion [...] The same is with the Sun and the Little Sun, the Snake and the God.<sup>107</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 946).

From this passage, it is evident that archetypes are, then, a very special niche within Skovoroda's symbolic world, different from all the sign, symbol, image, and figure. Knowing the traditional meaning of the word "archetype", we can be very puzzled by Skovoroda's definition. There is, for sure, not a Jungian archetype in play here. The Skovorodian archetype means something primary, principal, or leading rather than ordinary or generalised.

In Roman Dodonov's example, the ill "Kefa", the Jewish word for "stone" serves as the archetype for its Polish and Greek translations, which serve as supporting interpretations (Dodonov 2022: 202). That means that etymologising, which Skovoroda indulges in in his everlasting language challenge, is also an archetype interplay.

Dodonov refers to Bartolini to fish out the example of the parallel Skovoroda makes between the Sphinx's riddle and Jephthah (Dodonov 2022: 202). Not only is the Sphinx, for Skovoroda, a tool of a Christian God, but also, the right way to answer his riddle is to say "wheat", or "ear of wheat" (*Ibid.*) Wheat is the archetype that unlocks the hidden sense, Christ:

Christ, upon becoming human, has become a mediator between the temporal and the atemporal being, and solved the problem of the gap between the spiritual and material meaning of the sign. This way, the "archetypes" in Hryhorii Skovoroda's works should be considered as the proto-images, which allow us to open the doors to another world – the symbolic world, the Bible, and through those – to the God's wisdom itself<sup>108</sup> (Dodonov 2022: 203).

I readily agree with Dodonov's interpretation here. I could take a little step forward, and say that, we can conclude Christ to be an archetype himself, unlocking the deeper divine meaning, much like the "wheat" serves as an archetype to unlock Christ's image. If we accept the

---

<sup>107</sup> Со́нце есть архи́твпоса, сирѣчь Первонача́лна и Гла́вна Фігу́ра. А Ко́пії єя и Віцефігу́ры суть Безчи́сленныя, всю Би́блію испо́лнившія. Така́я ФІГУРА называ́лась Анти́твпос (Про́образ, Віцео́браз), сирѣчь вмѣсто Гла́вныя ФІГУРЫ поста́вленна ина́я. Но всѣ они, как к своему Исто́чнику, стека́ются к Со́нцу. Такія ВІЦЕФІГУРЫ суть, напри́мѣр: Темни́ца и Ио́сиф, Коро́бочка и Мойсе́й, [...] Ковче́г и Ной, [...] Пеще́ра и Лев [...] Все Сіе То́ же есть, что Со́нце и Со́нушко, Змі́й и Бог.

<sup>108</sup> Ставши людиною, Христос виступає посередником між часом та позачасовим буттям і таким чином розв'язує проблему відмінності між духовним значенням і матеріальними знаками [1, с.92]. Таким чином, «архетипоси» в творчості Григорія Сковорода слід розглядати як прообрази, які дозволяють відкрити двері до іншого світу – світу символів, Біблії [5], а через них – до Божої мудрості.

mediating role of archetypes, and the mediating role of Christ as belonging to the same category, we can say that the archetype could be the key to Jakovleva's "untying" of planes.

To assist in this untying, Yavorskiy's classification of iconic images, once again, could be useful. He distinguishes six whole genres of these images, some of which resemble something akin of a sign, some of which a symbol, a figure, or an archetype. The classification goes as follows:

- 1) The "natural image"<sup>109</sup> (Yavorskiy 2010: 35)
- 2) The "likeness to God"<sup>110</sup> (*Ibid.*)
- 3) The "Holy Scripture"<sup>111</sup> (*Ibid.*)
- 4) The "creation"<sup>112</sup> (*Ibid.*)
- 5) The "protoimages of future events"<sup>113</sup> (*Ibid.*)
- 6) The "miraculous, glorious, courageous deeds"<sup>114</sup> (*Ibid.*, 36)

The first kind of images, the natural images, are synonymous with what we previously defined as the evidence that for Skovoroda, a sign of God is equivalent to itself. This way, it represents the invisible in a pure form, or "natural" form, as Yavorskiy calls it in this classification. Yavorskiy confirms the parallel, "this Image in everything is equal to whom it belongs to, unless it is related to matters of Fatherhood and Sonhood, birth or unbirth"<sup>115</sup> (Yavorskiy 2010: 35).

The second image represents the human being, bearing the likeness as Skovoroda's inner man as a microcosm does, but not equivalent to the Creator.

The third image I will look into in more depth in the final chapter of the thesis. We will discover that it perfectly coincides with Skovoroda's understanding of the Bible and its function in the symbolic world.

The fourth image is the visible plane, where, I would suggest, for Skovoroda, overall symbols belong. The fifth kind, however, containing protoimages, does not only refer to symbols, or even just predictions about the coming of Christ, but could also resonate with Skovoroda's figures and archetypes, the keywords unlocking the hidden sense. After all, the stalks Skovoroda uses for the Sphinx's riddle, appear in the pharaoh's dream in the Old Testament, but signal the event of the New Testament, the coming of Christ.

---

<sup>109</sup> образ естественный

<sup>110</sup> подобие Бога

<sup>111</sup> Священное Писание

<sup>112</sup> тварь

<sup>113</sup> прообразы будущих явлений

<sup>114</sup> чудесные, преславные и мужественные дела

<sup>115</sup> Этот Образ во всем равен Тому, чей это Образ, кроме Отечества и Сыновства, рождения и нерождения.

The sixth kind of images, images that perform a mnemonic function of reminding humans of glorious deeds, will also, along with the Scripture as an image, be discussed in the last chapter.

Skovoroda writes:

According to Plutarch, the Delphy's temple dedicated to Apollo, was decorated with a saying: "KNOW THYSELF". Also the Ancient Egyptians praised this word highly. What the meaning of Sphynx is, I has already explained in the previous colloquy. The name of the Sphynx means "link" or "knot". Also, his Riddle had the same imperative: "Know thyself". If the knot would not be untied, a painful death was waiting ahead, a murder of the soul itself, a deprivation of the WORLD. That is the reason why the Ancient Egyptians set up the statues of the Unsightly across the streets, so that like endless Mirrors appearing to the folk's eyes, these statues would remind them of the Knot that conceals Knowledge within. But their successors were different. They lost the Wisdom, and gave up on the pure Worship. What was left were merely Artistries, with Physical magic, and Superstitions. The MONUMENT, once filled with an advice for Everyone, turned into an Idol, with a mouth that could not, anymore, speak, merely decorating the street, like a Spring of water turned to a Puddle.<sup>116</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 646).

Evidently, for Skovoroda, the mnemonic function of the image is of great importance. Although here not great deeds, but punishment is in question.

## 2.6. The Emblem

Now I suggest we look at the semiotic diorama composed of symbols and figures discussed before, the complex phenomenon of an emblem. Being such a special part of Skovoroda's legacy, since he was a member of a very particular Ukrainian baroque emblematics, the section of the emblem features a proper historical introduction.

### 2.6.1. A note on history and literature

Mara R. Wade refers to the period from 1500 to 1750 as the emblematic era (Wade 2010), which makes Hryhorii Skovoroda one of the last representatives of this tradition. Although there are multiple theories about the roots of the emblematic style, I offer here a short and common explanation given by the Ukrainian researchers Nataliia Levchenko, Oksana

---

<sup>116</sup> Пишет Плу́та'рх, что на Аполло'новом, Делфи́йском Храме́ было написано: "УЗНАЙ СЕБЕ". Дре'внiе Еги'птяне слово сiе высоко почитали. Что значи'т Сфинкс, изьяснено в первом разговорѣ. Имя его значит связь, или у'зол. Гада'нiе сего Уро'да утаева'ло ту ж силу: "Узнай себе". Не развязать сего Узла была смерть мучи'тельная, убiйство душѣ, лишенiе МИРА. Длясего Египтяне онаго Уро'да ста'туи поставля'ли по у'лицам, дабы, как многочисленныя Зе'ркала, вездѣ в Очи попада'я, сей самонужнѣйшее Знанiе утаевающiй Узол на па'мять приводили. Пото'мки их были не таковы. Отнялась от них Глава Мудрости, долой па'ла чи'стая часть Богочте'нiя. Оста'лись одни Художества, с Физы'ческими волшеб'ствами и Суевѣрiем. МОНУМЕНТ, напое'нный всеполезнѣйшим для Каждаго совѣтом, обрати'лся в Куми'р, уста имущiй, и не глаголющiй, а только у'лицы украшающiй, и будьто Исто'чник в Лу'жу отроди'лся.

Zosimova, Olena Liamprekht, Olena Varenikoba, and Svitlana Boiko in their article “The emblematic literature as a form of biblical hermeneutics”. According to this research, the emblematic tradition stems from the Mediaeval interest in symbols and allegories and the keen and somewhat credulous interest in hieroglyphs (idiographic writing) that took over Renaissance Europe (Levchenko et al. 2020: 64). The first example of emblematic literature is believed to be Andrea Alciato’s “Emblemata”, published in 1531. Inspired by Alciato, many other collections of emblems emerged over time. One such book, “Symbola symbola et emblemata selecta” (1705), reached Skovoroda about two hundred years after Alciato’s pioneering work. The emblematic tradition, according to Leonid Ushkalov, encompasses a wide range of authors, Nicholas of Cusa (“Electorum symbolorum et paraboliarum historicarum syntagmata”), Hildegard von Bingen, Jacob Böhme, Abraham von Frankenberg, Daniel Czepko von Reigersfeld, Angelus Silesius, and many others (Ushkalov 2011: 36).

Emblematic literature produced ample interpretation. In particular, the foremost commentary under the name “Treatise on Symbols” (1577) written by Mignaut of Dijon in response to Alciato’s “Emblemata” (1531) proves to be very useful from the semiotic standpoint and, thus, relevant to this research. Research on emblems is on the rise in modern times, with names like Mario Praz (1897–1982) and Peter Daly (1936 –) bearing considerable academic authority. Moreover, scholarly conferences<sup>117</sup> attract new minds from all across the world. Notably, Daly writes: “We moderns live in a brave new digital world. In fact, I believe that the future of emblem studies lies in digitization” (Daly 2014: 79). I had discovered, to my delight, that the platforms like Emblematica Online<sup>118</sup> demonstrate that Daly’s project is, to an extent, already set in motion, with support coming from many universities worldwide. Leonid Ushkalov is a name of significance in Ukrainian Skovorodian studies, and questions of emblematics are no exception. Another reference work for me is Olexander Soletsky’s “The emblematic types of discourse: from myth to postmodern: a monograph”. This study provides a theoretical and methodological overview of the emblematic forms, models, codes, and conventional iconic schemes, proving most helpful in my attempts to universalize the concept of an emblem to a certain extent in this (and the following) subchapter.

It is crucial to note that emblematics concerns not only emblemata books (collections

---

<sup>117</sup> An example could be the SES XII International Conference of the Society of Emblem Studies under the name “Muta poesis, pictura loquens” (2022).

<sup>118</sup> <http://emblematica.grainger.illinois.edu/>.

of images with inscriptions) but other art genres. Such artistic forms are found in “stained glass windows and carving, in jewelry and glass, needlework and tapestry, painting and portraiture, wall and ceiling decoration, and architecture” (Drysdall, Daly 2017: 96).

However, the Ukrainian emblematic tradition that developed, in its curious form, on par with the world emblematics mainly involves poetry. According to Volodymyr Krekoten (1929–1995), the Ukrainian emblematic poems can be classified as heraldic epigrams (Ioanykii Haliatovsky, Ihnatii Oxenovitch-Starushych), inscription poems (Dmitry Tuptalo, Ivan Velychkovsky), and emblematic poetry (Lazarus Baranovich, Bartholomeus Yasynsky, Ioann Armashenko) (Krekoten 1992: 6). Hryhorii Skovoroda, in fact, is himself considered an emblematic Ukrainian poet (to be explored with more precision in the following subchapter). Leonid Ushkalov (1956–2019) names “Carmen” and “De libertate” as examples of Skovoroda’s emblematic poetry (Ushkalov 2011: 14). Last, besides the art genre, emblematics can also be regarded as a way of “thinking and seeing”, the namesake of György E. Szönyi’s (1952– ) article on the emblematic tradition of the Renaissance (2018).

This approach to an emblem serves as an example of the culturally saturated perspective of an emblem as a cultural and historical mnemonic device. Emblems are historically determined knowledge-sharing devices preserving the cultural context (tradition) they emerged in. The emblematic phenomenon marks a particular point of cultural (Baroque) history. This is why, naturally, the question arises, how historical exactly should this thesis be? Daly, a passionate advocate for historicity, concerned with a related issue, conveniently presented us with a to-be-or-not-to-be question: “Is knowledge the basis of the emblem, or the sense intended by the emblem and its creator?” (Daly 2014: 238). Allow me to paraphrase once more. Is an emblem a mnemonic device that demands de-coding on the historical and cultural level, a carrier of knowledge? Or is an emblem like a riddle, an act of knowing manifested by the author rather than a carrier of knowledge?

In the particular case of this thesis (and in coordination with its goals), the answer is:

The emblem is relatively both, but literally neither because the emblem in the focus of this thesis is mainly regarded as a meaning-making theosemiotic device. This understanding of an emblem, even though it still situates Skovoroda within the world- (and even more so!) Ukrainian emblematic tradition requires a particular and, at the same time, somewhat generalized perspective on the emblem.



### 2.6.2. In search of the proper definition

As we had established before, a fascination with hieroglyphs was to thank for the emergence of the emblematic style in Europe. Sofronova places the importance on graphic representation:

Skovoroda also touches on issues of graphics. He repeatedly writes that a word is expressed by “figures of letters”, that people use letters to represent their thoughts. Attaching great importance to the opposition – visible/invisible, he remarks that letters, as well as any signs, represent invisible, i.e. thoughts; they are visible. [...] The importance of graphic representation for Skovoroda is so great that he often urges a man to write with eternal colours on his heart, frightening him that his name will not be written in heaven<sup>119</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 83).

Hieroglyphs can be regarded as perfect graphic representations. Thus, the mystery of the emblem’s birth may lie in the distinction between an emblem and a hieroglyph. On the historical level, the heightened interest in hieroglyphs of Alciato’s time led to their (mis)interpretation as symbols rather than to the perception of them as signs within a natural language system<sup>120</sup> (Levchenko et al. 2020: 60). Here, the symbols are not meant in a Peircean way. Thus, in a way, the emblems are re-interpreted hieroglyphs that exhibit, in Peircean terms, less relationality between the likeness between the sign and the object (iconic quality) and more of a symbolic quality. Let us talk now more about this symbolic quality. Mythrophan Dovgalevskiy, a Ukrainian scholar and Skovoroda’s contemporary, defines the difference between hieroglyphs and emblems as such: “A hieroglyph is like a symbol or an emblem because it is a figurative image; however, it is different from them because hieroglyphs do not have titles that can be present in symbols and emblems.”<sup>121</sup> (Dovgalevskiy 2005).

So, why is the absence of a title such a striking difference between a hieroglyph and an emblem? Dovgalevsky’s definition is extremely interesting for us here because it not only mentions the titles (commonly called *inscriptio* in the emblemata books) of the emblems but also the titles of the symbols. What could it all mean? I would explain it so: A title, taken figuratively, is a layer of meaning that opens the symbolic dimension of the emblem. I understand the “title” as “proper name” here, which provides a certain degree of exclusivity and serves as a clip, holding together the lesser elements of the emblem’s senses. This way, the

---

<sup>119</sup> Также Г. Сковорода затрагивает вопросы графики. Он не раз пишет о том, что слово выражается «фигурами букв», что буквами люди изображают свои мысли. Придавая огромное значение оппозиции видимое/невидимое, он отмечает, что буквы, как и всякие знаки, изображают невидимое, т. е. мысли; сами же они видимые. [...] Значимость графического изображения для Г. Сковороды столь велика, что он часто призывает человека писать вечными красками на сердце.

<sup>120</sup> This is a perspective also accepted by Chizhevskiy, D. and Soletsky, O. See Solenickiy 2018: 18) for the reference.

<sup>121</sup> Ієрогліф збігається з символом та емблемою в тому, що всі вони є фігурними зображеннями, а різняться між собою тим, що ієрогліфи не мають заголовків, які можуть бути в символах та емблемах.

emblem can contain both a summary and a sum of senses. The sum is the senses collected individually from each structural part of the emblem, while the summary is the message the emblem expresses as a whole (indicated by the title).

A comprehensive definition of an emblem is also given by Elena Grigorieva in her dissertation on the structure and pragmatics of emblems, as follows: “Classical emblematic is to a large extent the art of free combination of a certain fixed selection of elements, both figurative and verbal”<sup>122</sup> (Grigorieva 2000: 21).

Grigorieva’s analysis is interesting on a lot of accounts, but, in regard to Skovoroda in particular, I was most delighted to discover she draws a parallel between an emblem and a fable: “Typologically, the relationship between the extended narrative, the object picture and a short synopsis, apart from the emblem, can be compared with the classic fable”<sup>123</sup> (*Ibid.*, 29).

As I mentioned before, Skovoroda was a famous author of fables. The philosopher valued their importance as irreplaceable tools of expression, especially in relation to the Gospel:

Hryhorii: Does not the Gospel teach with Fables? Have you forgotten that only a fool builds their house on the sand? Let those teach without Fables, who paint without the paints.<sup>124</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 428).

Each of Skovoroda’s fable follows the same structure. A title is given, which matches, conceptually, the title of the emblem. Then, a description of a vivid scene between two animals, usually conversing, is introduced. This corresponds to the image, *pictura*. And finally, a “Strength”<sup>125</sup> is given, which serves as a moral resume of the described event.

We could, of course, regard emblems as symbols in a general semiotic sense (Nöth 1990: 115). However, I should be careful with where I place my focus. My Ariadna’s thread running in-between different approaches to the emblem is generality. According to Mignault’s treatise, the main differences between emblems and symbols lie in the distinction between precision and generality, with the emblem being the more general of the two (Mignault 2003). Soletsky, in his work, seems to agree with Mignault’s interpretation, noting that the symbol is “potentially polysemantic” (“meanings are contextually regulated”) (Soletsky 2018: 18), while the emblem is “a meaning-maker, with the elements that have a differentiating function” (*Ibid.*).

---

<sup>122</sup> Классическая эмблематика в значительной степени является искусством свободного сочетания некоторого стандартного набора элементов, как изобразительных, так и вербальных.

<sup>123</sup> Типологически соотношение развернутого повествования, предметной картины и краткого обобщающего резюме, помимо эмблемы, может быть соположено с классической басней.

<sup>124</sup> ГРИГ[ОРИЙ]. Евангеліе развѣ не Притчами учит? Забыл ты храмину, дураком основанную на пѣскѣ? Пусть учит без Притчей тот, кто пишет без кра’сок!

<sup>125</sup> Сила.

Notably, Soletsky also writes that in hieroglyphs, “the particular is generalized, and in the emblem, on the contrary, the general is individualized” (Soletsky 2017: 17).

A Peircean concept of the symbol exhibits a certain generality as such (Deledalle 2000: 123), so Mignault and Soletsky’s interpretations are not very illustrative of a Peircean approach. However, what could be a pattern is that the emblem seems to possess a quality of symbolic generality (and generalization as a function, possibly).

In my search for the definition of an emblem and the deeper semiotic understanding thereof, we need to also look into its triadic structure. Chizhevskiy and Soletsky also addressed this problem to some extent. Daly, however, has a whole chapter dedicated to the inquiry about this particular aspect of the emblem.

Let us begin now with the traditional definition of the emblem through its three-fold structure, as demonstrated in the emblemata collections: “In a classical interpretation, an “emblem” is a popularized form of baroque “signifying speech”, a triadic unit that consists of a title (*inscriptio*), an image (*pictura*), and an epigram (*subscriptio*)”<sup>126</sup> (Soletsky 2018: 10).

Right after giving the definition, Soletsky argues that the triadic form was never a “dominant determinant of the emblematic” (*Ibid.*). According to Daly’s explanation, this is, at least to some extent, grounded in the historical fact that the titles and inscriptions for the emblems were created apart (the images were often produced by the masters afterwards) (Daly 2014: 247). That is why Daly, an advocate for historicity, offers to interpret the emblem with regard to these separate layers of historical meaning, taking into account as many parts of the emblem as the motif, the historical context, the author’s background, and the body of knowledge demands it (Daly 2014: 242). Of course, we can spot a historically imposed hierarchy between the three parts of the emblems. In this hierarchy, the text in the emblem plays a primary role. The text, as we established before, consists of *inscriptio* and *subscriptio*.

Between the two, a rivalry for the primary function within the emblem can also be discovered. The *inscriptio*, as a motto, can be seen as a specific unit of wisdom, imperative for understanding the meaning of the emblem. On the other hand, we have *subscriptio*, the text, which is a more direct reflection of the emblem’s content. Daly quotes Mario Pratz’s definition, “emblems are simple allegorical designs accompanied by an explanatory motto and destined to teach in an intuitive form a moral truth” (Daly 2014: 28). The researcher is sceptical about the motto’s primary function (*Ibid.*, 182), as well as the descriptive capacity of the

---

<sup>126</sup> У класичному трактуванні «емблема» – це спопуляризований витвір барокового «сигніфікативного мовлення», трьохкомпонентне утворення, що складається з надпису-заголовка (*inscriptio*), зображення-малюнка (*pictura*) та епіграми-підпису (*subscriptio*).

emblem's textual component in general, as it does not always directly correspond to the picture part (*Ibid.*, 201).

In the case of “*Symbola et emblemata selecta*”, which served as a reference collection of emblems for Skovoroda, the depictions of emblems roughly match their text, and the inscriptions are written in a form that can be classified as a motto because of its aphoristic appearance. The title is situated above the overall text, which usually describes the emblem in German, with the text with a motto-like description situated below. The emblem number corresponds to the *pictura* on the following page. For example, the emblem number 12 has the title “*Twee handen houdende een kroon van Doornen*” (German, translated as “two hands holding a crown of thorns”) and, indeed, shows two hands gripping the flower crown. At the same time, the motto-like subscriptio says, “*Rather dye, than to break his trust*” (in the meaning of infidelity) (*Symbola et emblemata selecta* 2018: 4). So, the classic trifold interpretation of the emblem is fitting, at least in our case with Skovoroda. Soletsky mentions that it's akin to Barthes' three-component system (Soletsky 2018: 60).

Due to its triadic structure, the emblem also allows itself to be “dissected” in a Peircean manner. I mean that it can be understood through the three-part relation between the representamen, the object, and the interpretant, although with some nuances. Suppose we accept the role of the text as a primary description (or transcription or instruction) that allows for the manufacturing of the *pictura* after the text has been written. In that case, the title becomes a representamen, a sign vehicle, a scripted form that the sign takes. The vision itself, the *pictura*, can be seen as an object, hidden and revealed on request (via instructional text). The object, *pictura*, is, thus, re-created in the likeness of the instruction given in the textual component. The text, which exists as a sense-making particle of the structure, can, thus, become the interpretant. If the tenfold Peircean classification is used, the emblem can be regarded as a delome-symbolic-legisign, primarily because of its motto-like appearance and the imperative that directs our eyes towards a particular image, gives us vision, and extracts a moral argument (in other words, extracts sense) in the process of doing so.

The *pictura* is not only a physical image in the emblemata book but also a reconstruction of the mental image. However, what interests me here is not an opportunity to use specifically Peircean terms as applied to emblems but rather the demonstration of basic semiotic schemes, in which the specifics of emblems as meaning-generating units are revealed. In particular, I am talking here of the way that the mental image, the object, which serves as the aim of the textual instruction, is produced in a recreated act of speech, which we will talk about in the next section (emblems as a form of sacral speech). This meaning-generating aspect

of the emblem is studied by Alexander Mikhailov (1938–1995), who defines the emblem as a “specific means of generalization that delivers the very core sense in the form of a scheme”, “force of an intense clearness (visibility) as a form of directed thought” (Mikhailov 2007). This approach combines the generalization function and the function of a specific called-up imagery (object) within the emblem.

### 2.6.3. Focal points in terms of Augustine and Skovoroda

In this section, we can more closely discuss the emblem as an efficient theosemiotic device for Christianity<sup>127</sup>, although this topic will be fully covered in the following subchapter.

Saint Augustine’s semiotic theory gives the last and most helpful insight into how the emblem can be related to a specific divine way of speaking, the emblematic speech of Skovoroda explored in the following subchapter. Augustine is directly related to Andrea Alciato, the creator of the classic emblem. In the words of Drysdall and Daly, Alciato was “basing himself on account of meaning which would be familiar to many contemporaries as that of St. Augustine” (Drysdall, Daly 2017: 89). In particular, Alciato, even though his definition was, according to the researchers, rather “hasty” (*Ibid.*, 89), still connects the concept of Augustine’s *res* to the forming of the word (*dictio*) (*Ibid.*).

Let us begin with the basics, the generalizing quality of the emblem explored concerning the symbol and hieroglyph; I offer here to draw a simple parallel, at least in the Christian sense, between generalization as sacralization. In other words, I talk of the general (a broader, more symbolic perspective on the world, an aspect of “higher power”), and the particular (the material likeness, the physical resemblance). I will speak figuratively here: When the emblem creates meaning by presenting to us a collection of particular physical objects, it is by no means a still life (*natur morte*) but an exposition of highly (divinely) animated things. A case in point here would be something as simple as the act of creation of humans in the likeness of God. The likeness here is of the lesser to the greater, the creation to the creator. The general can be, then, implied as something of greater extension, as God, to Augustine, who is “everywhere a whole and never limited in space” (Augustine 2021: 119), which is to be discussed more broadly in the following subchapter.

Secondly, I take into account the triadic relation within the emblem, with the process of the generation of a mental image via its physical representation (*pictura*). In other words, we

---

<sup>127</sup> By “Christianity” I mean, as the case for all of my thesis, mainly an understanding of the Christian dogma by Saint Augustine.

can interpret the image (and the process of retrieving the image as a semiotic object) also as a vision. As we discovered in the previous chapter on the symbols, Skovoroda and Augustine's understanding of the sign is similar specifically in terms of a conceptual framework of a certain vision that humans require to recognize and read the signs.

For Augustine, signs are learned from things (the thing signified must be known before the significance of the sign is revealed)<sup>128</sup> (Cary 2008: 42). For a signification process to begin with an object playing its role, a thing should enter our awareness. However, what would not stir up any conflict is that the mind should be primarily informed; in this sense, the significance of the sign comes second. This is where the capacity of the signs to negate themselves comes from (Cary 2008: 4). Signs are incapable, as well as words, of revealing or expressing things by themselves. For that, a human needs to see the Truth or God. This vision will be gained at redemption, and the "mind's eye will be purified as to see God" (*Ibid.*, 14). This vision in question, in fact, can be related to this understanding of an awareness (the purified vision is the undistracted vision, the one that represents pure awareness). This view corresponds to Skovoroda's definition of the symbol as fitting within the theological maxim of the promise of the revelation, as discussed previously (to understand means to see the promise of something secret in the visible object, as related to the Inner Man)<sup>129</sup>.

By that I mean the understanding of an emblematic image (form) as something that enclosed a hidden truth. It demonstrates also how vision plays a large role in emblems, as they embody a (mental-, hidden-, object-) image. For Skovoroda, emblems can be a language of visions, a visionary type of speech (the emblematic speech), or, in Mikhailov's words from before, an expression of "directed thought". An emblem is a space where the interplay of the visible and invisible takes place, where the promise of the hidden Truth is made. The emblem is, in a sense, a stamp of this promise, a signature. In Skovoroda's words: "A signature is not powerful because of its ink, but because it binds. [...] Everything invisible is stronger than its visible counterpart, it is hidden that the visible relies upon..."<sup>130</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 665).

Thus, I would say that the emblem is like a seal. I can take a seal of Caesar Augustus' from Skovoroda's Dialogue "The Ring or A Talk of the Soul's Serenity" (Skovoroda 2011:

---

<sup>128</sup> Here and further, Philip Cary's *Outward signs: The powerlessness of external things in Augustine's thought* (2008) is used for reference. This influential work was a milestone in the semiotic research of Augustine's expressiveness and outwardness of signs.

<sup>129</sup> The definition of the symbol by Skovoroda that illustrates these concepts: As the "rightful arrow shot at the distant secret" (Skovoroda 2011: 440-441).

<sup>130</sup> Вексель не бумагою и чернилами страшен, но утаенною там обязательностью. [...] Все невидное сильнее есть своего виднаго, и от невиднаго зависит видное.



576) as an example. This seal we can interpret as both a stamp of authority and a binding medium (sealing the hidden Secret).

The emblematic language can be a pure language, the one not profanely polluted with earthly things, in Skovorodian terms (Skovoroda 2011: 576). Natural language, in itself, is not inherently conventional. According to Augustine, and in the beautiful interpretation of Philip Cary, language became this way as a result of corruption and “failure to fulfill its original function as the outward sign of inner unity” (Cary 2008: 79). So, the emblematic language could, perhaps, be regarded as a form of this uncorrupted (pure) language.

#### **2.6.4. An exercise in translation. Kobus Marais**

Between these three components of the emblem, a constant process of translation is taking place: there is usually a moral maxim in the form of a motto present (in the case of *Symbola et emblemata selecta* used here, it belongs to *subscriptio*), which is transcribed through a short description of the visual narrative of the *pictura*, that, with an assigned number, is situated on the neighbouring page. I hereby attach a table that features different variants of translation of a particular emblem by criteria:

- a) The corresponding structural elements of the emblem (*inscriptio*, *pictura*, *subscriptio*)
- b) The interpretation of the same emblem by Hryhorii Skovoroda, a Ukrainian philosopher influenced by the emblematic tradition.
- c) The interpretation of Skovoroda’s translation of the emblem by the Ukrainian researchers Tetyana Shevchuk and Olexandr Soletsky.
- d) My uninformed, primary translation.
- e) A possible example of the abstract reader’s uninformed translation.

Translation within the emblem	Image (Pictura)	Title (Inscriptio)	Subscriptio (motto)
Translation within the emblem (Symbola et emblemata)	 <p>(Symbola et emblemata, 142)</p>	Een Elefant na de Son ziende (Symbola et emblemata, 143).	Совѣсть чистая богу угодна.  Purified piety pleases God ( <i>Ibid.</i> ).
Skovoroda's painting			
Skovoroda's interpretation	<p>Look! The rays of the sun are emerging from beyond the Mountains!</p> <p>Those wise men who describe Beasts write that Elephants, in a Commune, gather before dawn daily and look in the direction of the East.<sup>131</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 686).</p>	<p>A vivid image of a Devout man.<sup>132</sup> (<i>Ibid.</i>)</p> <p>An elephant's Greeting to the Sun (<i>Ibid.</i>).</p>	<p>But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.<sup>133</sup> (<i>Ibid.</i>).</p>
Shevchuk's interpretation	<p>Plant-motives, a synthesis of natural elements (Shevchuk 2010: 78).</p>	<p>An elephant in the original (Symbola et emblemata selecta) is in the dead land, Skovoroda's elephant is in flourishing land (<i>Ibid.</i>). A peaceful animal charmed by the sun (<i>Ibid.</i>, 78). A tree stretching towards eternity (sky).<sup>134</sup> (<i>Ibid.</i>, 78).</p>	<p>Peace comes in harmony with nature, nature symbolizes synthesis (<i>Ibid.</i>).</p>


<sup>131</sup> Описатели Звѣрей пишут, что Сло ны каждый день Громадою собираются пред восходом солнца и смотрят на восток.

<sup>132</sup> Не живой ли сей образ челоѡка Благочестиваго?

<sup>133</sup> Вон смотри! Лучи из-за Гор вынікают! Возсіяет вам, Боящимся Имене моего, Солнце Правды и исцѣленіе в Крилѣх Его. И изыдете, и възграете, якоже Телцы, от Уз разрѣшенны (Translation from <https://biblehub.com/malachi/4-2.htm>)

<sup>134</sup> Своєю кроною дерево тягнется до неба, а в переносному значенні – до вічності.



<b>Soletsky's interpretation</b>	An elephant with a raised trunk (Soletsky 2018: 168)	A strong Man ( <i>Ibid.</i> , 158).	
<b>My uninformed interpretation</b>	Elephant in the desert bathing in sun rays with his trunk happily raised.	An elephant rising his head at the Sun.	The Sun rewards the elephant with light, because He is innocent (An elephant means kindness (former knowledge of elephants taking care of their dead), Sun means God (Sun as life-giving power)).
<b>A possible uninformed interpretation</b>			République de Côte d'Ivoire  "Republic of Cote d'Ivoire"

**Table 1.** Translations of the “Symbola et emblemata selecta” emblem 422.

So, what exactly is going on here? On the one hand, intersemiotic translation processes are taking place here. Echoing Henrik Gottlieb, we could recognize signs of deverbalizing conventionalized translation (Gottlieb 2008: 43). As we had established before, the representamen in an emblem is a descriptive element, in our case, the inscriptio. It serves as a formal title for the emblem. According to Marais, the representamen translation is interlingual, with changes happening on the material level (Marais 2019: 145). If Marais suggests five senses in terms of animals, we can suggest, very figuratively, our emblematic four:

4. The mythological (narrating about past events)
5. The physical (revealing natural qualities or causes of events)
6. The moral (focused on the human behaviour as content)
7. The theological (related to the knowledge of God) (Krekoten 1992).

These categories can be our four “senses” when talking about emblems. This way, when we successfully categorize our sign-vehicle as an elephant, it is essential to categorize him according to one of the four categories-senses. In our case, the compromise in Table 1 is that the elephant belongs to the moral category, proven by the interpretant (a short motto or subscriptio), which it translates into.

The object, the image that is extracted from the textual instruction and represents the vision (or imagery), is multilayered. In other words, our beloved emblematic elephant may or may not translate immediately. I have made this comparison for better illustration:

<p>Thus, as the platypus has a beak (dynamic object), led it to being categorized (interpretant) as a bird (immediate object). When it was found that it suckled its young (a change in the dynamic object), scientists were forced to recategorize (interpretant) it as a mammal (immediate object).</p> <p>(Marais 2019: 149)</p>	<p>The creature looks like an elephant, categorising it as an animal (immediate object, category 2 (physical). When it is established, with the help of the inscriptio (title), that the elephant is looking at the sun, the motto (subscriptio) below the inscriptio can be inspected for clues. Then, the elephant is recategorized as a moral object (a devout man).</p>
---	---

Thus, the “curating” role of the emblem’s title is very evident in the translation here, which, in a translation process, sends the reader from the object to the interpretant (motto) and urges him to evaluate the need for recategorization.

The interpretant of the emblem, the moral maxim (or motto), is lingual, so, by Marais (and Peircean) logic, it could be categorized as final, the one that expresses all that there is to learn from the sign (Marais 2019: 154). However, there is more to it than meets the eye. As Marais writes, “because semiosis is a process, interpretants, being determined by the representamen and related to the object mediately, become the representamens for further semiosis” (*Ibid.*). In terms of our elephant emblem, we could conclude that our aphorism can become a title for the emblem. This could happen if the motto is accepted as the final truth of the emblem in the course of the categorizing and recategorizing of the elephant as an object demonstrated previously. I would readily agree that inscriptio and subscriptio can be, in some sense, interchangeable. The dynamic interpretant, in this case, would be the motion (movement) of thought. At the same time, the immediate interpretant could be the uninformed idea (See Table 1) being compared to the formalized, finalized interpretant (the motto).

### III. Hryhorii Skovoroda's Worlds of Meaning

The focus now is on Skovoroda's concept of the "Bible". This chapter heavily focuses the discussion of the Bible and the Abecedary as the answer to the suggestion by Svitlana Povtoreva to attribute the Skovorodian concept of the abecedary to Eco's "encyclopedia".

#### 3.1. Skovoroda's worlds

After discussing what the keys are (the name, the word, the sign, the symbol, the figure, the archetype, and the emblem), the next step is to discuss the Skovorodian worlds opened by these keys: The Bible and the Alphabet (Abecedary) of the World.

The two Natures discussed prior are characteristic, for Skovoroda, of three worlds. We find their descriptions in the Dialogue "The Flood of the Snake". Skovoroda writes, the first world is "the World of All, the Dwelling World inhabited by All that is born" (Skovoroda 2011: 943). That world is, in its turn, composed of Inner-Worlds. They are two secondary (and smaller worlds). These Inner-Worlds are:

The First one is the Microcosm, or the Little World, or Man, The second World is the Bible, the Symbolic World ... The Bible is called the Symbolic world for it contains all the Heavenly, Earthly, and Hellish Creations and Figures, for them to serve as Monuments that guide our Thought towards the Understanding of the eternal Nature, which is concealed in the mortal matter the same way the Image is concealed in its Paints."<sup>135</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 943)

---

<sup>135</sup> Всяк рожде'нный есть в Мы'рѣ сем Прише'лец, Слѣпый или Просвѣще'нный. Не Прекра'сный ли Храм Прему'драго Бога Мыр сей? Суть же три Мы'ры. Пе'рвый есть Всео'бщій и Мыр Оби'тельный, гдѣ Все рожде'нное обита'ет. Сей соста'влен из безчи'сленных Мыр Мы'ров и есть вели'кій Мыр. Другі и Два суть Ча'стныи и Ма'лыи Мы'ры. Пе'рвый Мікро'- Козм, сирѣчь Мы'рик, Миро'к, или Человѣк. Вторый Мыр Символи'чный, сирѣчь Би'бліа. Во Оби'тельном Ко'ем-либо Мы'рѣ Со'лнце есть Оком его, и Око у'бо ест Со'лнцем. А как Со'лнце есть Глава Мы'ра, тогда не ди'вно, что Человѣк назва'н Мікро'космос, сирѣчь ма'ленькій Мыр. А Би'бліа есть Символи'чный Мыр, затѣм что в ней собра'нныя Небе'сных, Земны'х и Преиспо'дних Тваре'й Фігу'ры, дабы они бы'ли Монуме'нтами, веду'щими Мысль нашу в Поня'тіе вѣчныя Нату'ры, утае'нныя в тлѣннѣи так, как Ри'сунок в Кра'сках своих.

The first world is, thus, the all-uniting world of God, closest to the “abecedary”, the concept we will discuss last. This is the world, of which the dichotomy visible/invisible (discussed prior), should be characteristic. The other two smaller worlds are parts of the big lifeworld.

The second, smaller, world is the microcosm, or a world of the Inner Man. In a way, it replicates the bigger picture, so it can also be called a model of the First world, if we take a man to have a dichotomy of Soul (or heart, since Skovoroda, after all, is a cordocentric philosopher) and flesh.

Finally, the third, smaller world is the Bible. Here, I would like to specifically address the idea of the world as a Book, first. The idea is not Skovoroda’s, and has existed for the whole of the baroque era around Europe. Taras Lytvyn gives a good overview on the subject in his “Baroque symbolism. An attempt of philosophical analysis”<sup>136</sup>. Lytvyn also relies on Umberto Eco for an interesting interpretation, for instance, Eco’s character, Father Caspar. Father Caspar accentuates that both the book of nature and the Scripture need to be read equally, since “they were made by the same hand”<sup>137</sup> (Lytvyn 2007: 3). Lytvyn names kabbalah (*Ibid.*, 9), Francis Bacon’s “Advancement of Learning” (*Ibid.*, 3), and John of Damascus in the interpretation of Stefan Yavorskiy (*Ibid.*, 7), Dante’s and Erigena’s allegorical interpretation of the Bible (*Ibid.*, 10) as possible sources of inspiration of baroque symbolism. To me, the parallel with Stefan Yavorskiy is the one that needs some attention in the thesis. Yavorskiy, indeed, names the Bible as a special kind of “image” or “icon” (icons all differ according to content or expression) (Yavorskiy 2010: 35). I had already mentioned Yavorskiy’s classification in the subchapter 2.5. of the thesis. Yavorskiy directly links the image of Christ to the Bible: “God Himself in an image of a human being, in possession of eyes and ears, arms and legs”<sup>138</sup> (Yavorskiy 2010: 35). This role of the medium is shared by the man, Christ, and the Bible. In a way, they can perform the same function. However, the difference between the Scripture (and Christ) as this medium and a human being, is that a human being is situated somewhere between the second (hereditary) image and the fourth (the visible) kind. The Scripture stands alone as its own kind of medium due to its purity. As we will discover a little later, it is due to it being a kind of a perfect, non-lying mirror.

Last, I would pay some attention to Johann Arndt in the light of the biblical interpretation (world as a book) influences, mainly because of the lack of representation of his

---

<sup>136</sup> Символіка бароко. Спроба філософського аналізу.

<sup>137</sup> Одна і друга творені однією рукою, і якщо треба вміти читати та намагатися зрозуміти першу, то так само треба навчитися читати і розуміти другу.

<sup>138</sup> Самого Бога в образе человека, имеющего глаза и уши, руки и ноги.

ideas in connection to Skovoroda's in great detail. Ushkalov and Chizhevskiy both seem to agree that Arndt had influence on Skovoroda historically (Ushkalov 2015)<sup>139</sup>. Upon reading "True Christianity", one cannot help but note the frequency of usage of the expression "the book of life". Such instances are related to studying with an intermediacy of Christ, such as here: "Such a teacher was our Lord Jesus; and his conduct is the pattern of teaching, and the book of life which we ought to study" (Arndt 2010: 97), or here "the life of Christ is their exemplar; he himself is their book, whence they derive all solid and substantial learning, as it respects both life and doctrine" (*Ibid.*, 138). But the most interesting instance to me is this one:

All who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are written "in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3), or as the Lord expresses it, "in heaven." Luke 10:20. This shall be made manifest in that great day, when the Lord will "confess their names before his Father, and before his angels." Rev. 3:5. But besides this, the Lord Jesus himself is a most complete Book of a truly Christian life: he being, as the word and wisdom of the Father, made man, and come into the world to teach us by his life and death; and by his conduct and conversation, to set a pattern before us for our imitation (Arndt 2010: 399).

Another "books" that Arndt refers to is also the "Book of nature", such as here,

That which, in nature, we call the goodness of God, is, by the Scriptures, called the grace of God; this bearing relation to the soul, and that to the body. And as God has, by a thousand ways, discovered his goodness in the great Book of nature, so he has, in innumerable instances, discovered his grace and mercy in the Book of his word, all which are completed in Christ, who is the great centre of all the treasures of divine goodness and love that are distributed in heaven and earth.

Finally, Arndt refers to "the universe" (equivalent, in some sense, to Skovoroda's First World) and "the inferior world", "Man" (equivalent to Skovoroda's smaller world, which is also man) as "two powerful witnesses of God, in the book of Creation" (Arndt 2010: 754). The Scripture is prescribed, also, much in tune with Skovoroda, a revealing capacity, simultaneously forming in the heart, which, in its turn, resonates with Skovoroda's cordocentric philosophy (*Ibid.*).

Besides Arndt's influence, we could trace many others in the European thought of that time. Taras Lytvyn gives a good overview on the subject in his article "Baroque symbolism. An attempt of philosophical analysis"<sup>140</sup>. Needless to say, he conveniently for the direction of this thesis, relies on Umberto Eco for an interesting interpretation. The example he uses is not Eco's semiotic theory per se, but Eco's character, Father Caspar. Father Caspar accentuates that both the book of nature and the Scripture need to be read equally, since "they were made by the same hand"<sup>141</sup> (Lytvyn 2007: 3).

---

<sup>139</sup> [https://kharkiv-nspu.org.ua/archives/3839#\\_ftn30](https://kharkiv-nspu.org.ua/archives/3839#_ftn30)

<sup>140</sup> Символіка бароко. Спроба філософського аналізу

<sup>141</sup> Одна і друга творені однією рукою, і якщо треба вміти читати та намагатися зрозуміти першу, то так само треба навчитися читати і розуміти другу.

Father Caspar, representing baroque thinking, of course, has historical parallels too. Among the influences, Lytvyn names kabbalah (*Ibid.*, 9), Francis Bacon's "Advancement of Learning" (*Ibid.*, 3), and John of Damascus in the interpretation of Stefan Yavorskiy (*Ibid.*, 7), Dante's and Erigena's allegorical interpretation of the Bible (*Ibid.*, 10). To me, the parallel with Stefan Yavorskiy is the one that needs some attention in the thesis, since it had been already discussed a few times before.

As I already mentioned prior, in the different genus of icons, a Scripture is presented as a separate type of iconic image. Yavorskiy writes: "The third kind of image is the Holy Scripture, because it tells of both visible and invisible things, and indulges us by revealing God Himself in an image of a man with eyes and ears, arms and legs, to us" (Yavorskiy 2010: 35).

By this classification, the Bible is an iconic image as a whole, that can be, in its turn, filled with other images on the inside. This integrity of the bible as a single unit of meaning, a separate plane of being, even, is akin to Skovoroda's understanding of it as a World-Book, a smaller world of its own. Yavorskiy's Bible is a single image the same way his concept of a Man is an image of God, although a distant one. Skovoroda also takes a man as a singular unit of meaning, in his case, however, a microcosm as opposed to the bigger cosmos. The Bible, however, is a separate kind of image that seems to possess a power of pure representation.

Yavorskiy directly links the image of Christ to the Bible (Yavorskiy 2010: 35). This role of the medium is shared by the man, Christ, and the Bible. In a way, they can perform the same function. However, the difference between the Scripture (and Christ) as this medium and a human being, is that a human being is situated somewhere between the second (hereditary) image and the fourth (the visible) kind. The Scripture stands alone as its own kind of medium due to its purity. As we will discover a little later, it is due to it being a kind of a perfect, non-lying mirror.

Before I go any further on my way to Bible as the mirror let me enlist all the approaches I can distinguish in Skovoroda's interpretation of the Scripture:

- 1) *A book (and a World-Book)*. This Book was, according to Skovoroda, made by "Moses, after the example of Egyptian priests, put into one Whole the heavenly and earthly Creatures, and made the Book of the Being, or Universe..."<sup>142</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 739). Skovoroda writes:

[...] this Symbolic World of Moses is a Book. It does not relate to the mortal World directly, but only, in the footsteps of creations collected within, guides us to the essential BEGINNING, like

---

<sup>142</sup> Мойсей, ревну'я Свяще'никам Еги'петским, собра'л в одну Грома'ду небесныя и земныя Тва'ри и, придав род Благочести'вых Предков своих, слѣпи'л Кни'гу Бытїя, сирѣчь Мірозда'нїя...

a Magnetic Arrow, that overlooks the everlasting firmament of His.<sup>143</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 739–740).

- 2) *A world.* Second, the Bible is a world, an Inner-world, or Smallworld. It is bearing the touch of the divine as an innocent plane of being, touched by the Universe directly (God), unlike the rest of the World inhabited by mortal Creatures (*Ibid.*).
- 3) *A dual plane (meeting point, border)* between visible and invisible. In this sense, it also functions as a meaning-unit (meeting point between the translation of the visible and the invisible), so, in other words, Yavorskiy's image. Sofronova could also imply something similar here:

Skovoroda notes repeatedly that, in spite of the multiplicity of events, persons, the Bible always says the same thing. Although it is full of different tales and speeches, they all concern the same “point”, and its vast structure revolves around it, like a wheel. The philosopher assumes that the infinite number of images, or figures scattered throughout the Bible, are reduced to a single meaning, that there is a central figure, and vice-figures defined by it<sup>144</sup> (Sofronova 2002: 162–163).

Interestingly, in the Bible, “the figures are present that are placed around the God's illuminating grace”<sup>145</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 580). The figures, or as we call them, vice-figures are at the borderline of creation, where the mortal turns into immortal. They symbolize this borderline. We can assume that the archetypes, providing accurate translation, also belong to this border.

- 4) *A mirror.* Skovoroda compares the Bible to the pure mirror, such as here: “You [...] gaze fondly into the translucent ashes to see your mortal Idol but cannot stand the sight into the sacred waters of the Bible [...]”<sup>146</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 431).

The reflecting capacity is the same, in a way, as Yavorskiy's revealing function of the holy image.

- 5) *A collection.* Third, the Bible is a collection, in this case, a collection of signs, names, words, symbols, vice figures and archetypes, as well as “enigmatic

---

<sup>143</sup> Мойсе́йскій же, Символи́ческій (тайнообразный), Мір есть Книга. Она ни в чем не тро́гает оби́тельного Міра, а только слѣда́ми собранных от него тваре́й путево́дствует нас к присносущному НАЧАЛУ единственно, как Магни́тная Стрѣла, взирая на вѣчную твердь Его.

<sup>144</sup> Он постоянно указывает на то, что, несмотря на обилие событий, персонажей, в Библии всегда говорится об одном и том же. Хотя она и полна разнообразных повестей и речений, но все они касаются одного «пункта», и все ее огромное строение, подобно колесу, обращается вокруг него. Философ предполагает, что бесчисленное количество образов, или фигур, разбросанных по Библии, сводимы к одному единственному значению, что есть главная фигура и вице-фигуры, ею определяемые.

<sup>145</sup> не живой ли сей образ Библии, фигурами осѣняющей сіяніе славы Божія, на горѣ преобразуемая?

<sup>146</sup> Мило тебѣ в источник и в прозрачный пепел зѣвать на гибельный твой Кумир, а не сносно смотре́ть во священныя Библе́йныя Во́ды.

figures, fables, and images”<sup>147</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 767, n.154). Ushkalov also notes that the Bible even has emblems, within the “soul-saving net that catches the image of the Absolute”, in which “even the invisible God himself, when he turns into the senses-images from the Scriptures, can grant the human, burdened with their mortal flesh, to understand the essence of the Absolute...so the biblical images-figures are, first of all, the emblems of God’s truth”<sup>148</sup> (*Ibid.*). This collection, as I quoted prior, even has a name, a Bestiary: “They are, in truth, Cattle, Beasts, Birds, pure and impure, and the Bible is the Ark and the Godly Heavens, or in other words, a Bestiary”<sup>149</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 742).

One of my tasks in this thesis is to discuss this collection as Eco’s encyclopedia.

The definition that would tie all of these six together would be, for Skovoroda, in my opinion, the Bible as the source of truth. The Skovorodian God is similar to Augustinian: He does not lie: “To be and to be called is divided by our lie and not by the undivided TRUTH”<sup>150</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 678).

For Skovoroda, there is even a test if something is true. To find something a lie, one has to discover it has empty essence. Skovoroda writes, “the empty name with no essence is like grapes painted on the wall cunningly”<sup>141</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 679). Let us remember, again, how Skovoroda describes the Sphinx:

The MONUMENT, once filled with an advice for Everyone, turned into an Idol, with a mouth that could not, anymore, speak, merely decorating the street, like a Spring of water turned to a Puddle.<sup>151</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 646).

We could say, for Skovoroda, without the essence, would directly mean “without God”, since God is the one in possession of all essence.

This is also why, for Skovoroda, all evil stems from non-affinity: from one doing what he was not meant to do, falsing the essence in favor of empty essence (the one that does not derive from God). The essence of the Bible is indivisible:

---

<sup>147</sup> На думку Сковороди, вчинена “из тайнообразных фігур, притчей и подобій”.

<sup>148</sup> Біблія є рятівним плетивом образів Абсолютного. Сам невидимий Бог, перетворюючись на чуттєві образи книг Святого Письма, дозволяє обтяженій плоттю людині збагнути єство Абсолютного. При тому Сковорода розглядає біблійні образи-“фігури” передовсім як емблеми Божої правди.

<sup>149</sup> Они-то суть Скоты, Звѣри, Пти́цы, чистыя и нечистыя, а Би́блія есть Ковче́г и Рай Божій, простѣме сказать – Звѣри́нец.

<sup>150</sup> Быть и называться раздѣляет наша ложь, а не Божія нераздѣльная ИСТИНА.

<sup>151</sup> МОНУМЕНТ, напоє́нный всеполезнѣйшим для Каждаго свѣтом, обрати́лся в Куми́р, уста имущій, и не глаголющій, а только у́лицы украшающій, и будьто Исто́чник в Лу́жу отроди́лся.



The only subject of the Bible that it refers to is God Himself. It is the beginning and the end, the indivisible essence of it. Without Him, the Bible would be a source of lies, foolishness and harm. And with Him – more wonderful than anything. He is the Light in its filth, like a diamond with its shine. (Skovoroda 2011: 690).

This idea is represented beautifully, in Skovoroda’s famous emblem, the Fountain of Equality. It depicts the water flowing into different vessels from the single source, with the inscription “The equality is for everyone unequal”<sup>152</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 669). For the everlasting flow of water, there will be an everlasting supply of vessels. Each of the vessels, no matter the form, and the size, is the fullest at his own capacity. Ushkalov suggests Skovoroda’s fountain is an answer to Augustine’s question in the “Confessions”, if God is everywhere as a whole, and as He is filling the world, He never runs empty, never runs dry (Augustine 2021: 713). However, He is also the God that does not lie, and, as long that man is full to the fullest extent with his Glory, no matter the form of the “vessel”, it will always fill him completely, leaving no empty spaces for lies to exist.

Then, a question arises: What of Skovoroda silver-tongued Dialogue characters playing endless bead-games with their sophisms? Are they not surveilling the truth and speaking with no essence? Do they not divide the indivisible essence? The answer is “no”. From all the units of meaning I had introduced in the previous chapter, it can be implied that they rather represent order than chaos. As long as everything has a perfect invisible form it represents, that form ensures the truth is reflected. For Skovoroda, this form can be unlocked by certain symbols, figures, archetypes, and emblems. I remind here, Skovoroda is cordocentric, believing in the focus of the Inner Man, and in the capacity to find one’s kindred work (affinity). This is why, it rather matters who speaks, and not what is spoken.

Like Skovoroda, we may use, syncretically, any token, any emblem, – mix the Pagan with the Christian like he would do, the angel with the sphinx, – there is no lie, if our subject is directly God. So, the exact instruction of how to check if the essence is not present, for Skovoroda would be to assure that one bears the likeness that addresses one to God directly, in all of their motions, and speech. This instruction is, in short: “Know Thyself”. In order to “Know Thyself”, completely, one needs to take a look at the special mirror, which the Bible is.

---

<sup>152</sup> Не равное всѣм равенство.

### 3.2. The Bible as a mirror

The mirror, being a popular baroque metaphor, especially among Ukrainian writers, as Ushkalov rightfully notes (Ushkalov 2011: 445), most straightforwardly, in the case of Skovoroda, goes back to Gregory of Nyssa. In “On mirror of the infinite”, David Hart, our research authority here on the subject, writes that, according to Gregory, the mirror is “the surface, in which light is gathered, creating depths where none previously existed, and by which it is reflected back to the source of its radiance” (Hart 2002: 547). The mirror is not only a reflection, but also, in fact, a contemplation tool. That is, “all knowledge consists in theory of the reflected, and this is in some sense so even within the life of God: the Son is the eternal image in which the Father contemplates and loves” (*Ibid.*, 567). This mirror reflection gives, thus, the key to understanding the Trinity, constituting God himself, as a part of the “eternal play of the invisible and the visible” (*Ibid.*, 548). The Creation, then, is the “answer of light to light” (*Ibid.*). We also find it in Böhme, that refers to a “mirror, looking-glass, or similitude of the eternal “world”” (Böhme 2009: 148).

Skovoroda directly compares the Bible to a mirror in “Observatorium”,

A: Why look in the Bible, if there are bare anecdotes there? Mirror is a whole different thing.  
H: How is it different, for it is the same kind of emptiness? Haven't you been to the mirror factories? Mirror is ash.  
A: Ash, but transparent ash. It amuses me. I see it myself. Everyone to oneself is the most beloved sight.  
H: Ah, the Narcissus captured by his own reflection! You [...] gaze fondly into the translucent ashes to see your mortal Idol but cannot stand the sight into the sacred waters of the Bible.<sup>153</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 431).

If the “waters of the Bible” (the mirror) are sacred, as long as the Source is present in them, and gazing back at us, from the other side, a question arises. That is, how can we trust that the Source is present, and the Bible did not turn into a Source of lies instead? As mentioned before, the Bible is that mediating plane of being, for Skovoroda, which is exclusively touched by God. From the quote we understand that a Bible, theoretically, could be the Source of lies, but then it would need to lose its exclusivity in regard to God, and its status as a World, a Word-book, a medium plane, etc. It is not specified by Skovoroda how it could happen.

---

<sup>153</sup> АҠАН[АСІЙ]. К чему ж зъвать на Библию, когда в ней голые Баля'сы? А зеркало – дѣло иное. ГРИГ[ОРІЙ]. Как иное, если оно есть та же пустошь? Развѣ тебѣ не довелось быть в хрустальных Фа'бриках? Оно есть пепел. АҠАН[АСІЙ]. Пепел, но прозрачный. Он меня веселит. Я в нем вижу самага себя. А всяк сам себѣ миляе всего. ГРИГ[ОРІЙ]. О плѣненный твоим Болваном Нарцы'ссе! Мило тебѣ в источник и в прозрачный пепел зъвать на гибельный твой Кумир, а не сносно смотрѣть во священныя Библе'йныя Во'ды.

Could there be someone, a human, for Skovoroda, with a capacity to make the Bible non-sacred or lying? I would think, no, there could not be. Skovoroda, in general, does not dwell on the subject of atheism, or engage in polemics against other confessions, as Yavorskiy did. I doubt that Skovoroda's model interpreter of the Bible could be so wrong as to make the whole Bible impure and empty it of its essence. The one in power to do so is not a human, but God.

So, let us accept that a Bible as a source of lies is an improbable scenario, at least from a human perspective, to Skovoroda, and proceed to discuss its perfect reflective capacities. In other words, I will talk of the Bible, as a mirror and, as such, a Source of truth.

What is that perfect mirror? Umberto Eco, who dedicated the whole chapter to mirrors in his "Philosophy of Language". Let me briefly summarize the points:

1. The mirror should be recognized as a mirror to be trusted, and self-identification in the mirror should be successful (we tend to "use the mirror image correctly, but speak of it wrongly, as if it did what we ourselves are doing with it (that is, reversing it). "Once we have acknowledged that what we perceive is a mirror image, we always begin from the principle that the mirror 'tells the truth'" (Eco 1984: 207).
2. "A mirror does not 'translate'; it records" (*Ibid.*), which makes it trustworthy. "Our brain interprets retinal data; a mirror does not interpret an object. But it is just this Olympian, animal, inhuman nature of mirrors that allows us to trust them".
3. We trust mirrors just as, under normal conditions, we trust our organs of perception" (Eco 1984: 208). They are prosthetics, just like binoculars, as well as channels, although "when the channel state of activity is a symptom of both the channel efficiency and the existence of a source, are connected to the symptomatic use of the channel rather than to the messages it conveys" (*Ibid.*, 209). But this is, according to Eco, a bit of a grey area. Being prosthetics, they can be trustworthy, but being "channel-prosthesis, the mirror can be a source of perceptive deception" (*Ibid.*).

Mirrors, according to Eco, are "peculiar" and "inspiring" cases of a double, "an absolute double of the stimulating field" (1984: 210), and "thresholds between perception and signification" (*Ibid.*).

If the Bible is considered a trusted source, or a source of truth, it has to be, indeed, first identified as a source of truth. In this case, the Bible has to be identified as a mirror. Skovoroda does so, calling it the "transparent ashes".

Second, there remains a question, whether the Bible as a mirror, translates or records (or rather, of course, gives the impression of doing so, to a human). The Bible is a medium and a border between the two planes, the visible and the invisible. But is it still a translation, if the message is coming from the world of pure invisible forms that have stable meanings “on the other side”? For God, the border is non-existent, since he is ever-permeating, after all. Not at all in the common, modern, semiotic sense. Rather, we can, with more certainty say, that, for Skovoroda, a man is a translator, and the translation really happens outside of the Bible (what happens in the Bible is rather a direct transfer, it seems). Translation would happen externally, in the process of a man accessing the product of the direct transfer from the invisible to the visible. The transfer itself would probably not be a translation in this sense. This “transfer” can be very similar to “recording”.

Next, we can look at the Bible as a prosthetic. Indeed, the Bible has a clear function for humans, to deliver the Grace of God. It had not been transferred by God directly onto earth without the help of Moses. Moreover, the role of Moses is, in Skovoroda, a very significant one. As I already mentioned, Moses is even compared to Christ (Skovoroda 2011: 295–296). A Bible, with such a high role of a human in its production, can definitely be seen as a response to particular human demands (to gain access to the invisible).

By these criteria, the Skovorodian Bible is a mirror. It is, however, not a simple one, but an ideal one, or at least close to what Eco defines as such. The ideal mirror feeds into the “semiotic dream of proper names being immediately linked to their referent (just like the semiotic dream of an image having all the properties of the object they refer to)”, or, as he calls it, “a sort of catoptric nostalgia” (1984: 212). The traditional, non-ideal, mirror, according to Eco, only names “a concrete object”, it names “one at a time”, and it always names “only the object standing in front of it” (Eco 1984: 211). That makes it unfit to produce signs. On the contrary, our Skovorodian, ideal mirror, which is the Bible, is capable of sign production because it refers not only to the events past, not only the events present, but also to the eternity itself. It names the objects that are, on one hand, always immediately in front of it (because in the eyes of God everything is immediately present to Him, and the Bible reflects that), but also it refers to objects, since we do not have access to God’s immediate consciousness, the objects that we, as humans, are, from the perspective of our mortal nature, unable to see.

We can also connect this purified mirror, or medium to Yavorskiy’s classification I addressed prior. To do that, particular attention should be paid, in Yavorskiy’s classification (Yavorskiy 2010: 35-36), to how the function of revealing is distributed between the holy images. The Bible, for Yavorskiy, as it is also for Skovoroda, has a special status because it is

a pure plane, where the visible and the invisible are represented equally. It can, in purity, and not by mere likeness, such as category number two (man) or four (visible creations), bring the invisible to humans and make it accessible to humans. It is precisely because the Bible is a pure mirror, a mirror that does not deceive.

However, to Skovoroda, the Bible as a mirror, is not its whole, but rather the sum of its parts, a collection of shards. Ushkalov writes, quoting Skovoroda:

When Skovoroda claims that the thousands of images in the Holy Scriptures are “taking after” the God’s Wisdom like the “shards of the broken mirror reflect the human’s face”, he means the way that the theologians tried to explain the sacrament of the Eucharist: the whole of the mirror shows the face as well as each one separate piece<sup>154</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 826, n. 540)

So, we can be dealing here with a sum of individually true, ideal mirror-shards (little mirrors of their own). What to make of this shards is up to the interpreter. I would think, they represent the archetypes, individually true meaning-carriers that provide direct access to divine truths. One could debate for a long time, however, about the true meaning of Skovoroda’s Bible-in-shards. “In shards”, however, in no way implies that the Bible is “broken”. It still is, evidently, one “Ark”, for Skovoroda, with shards probably just being the visual implication of the tension between the two natures, the visible and the invisible.

The reflection in the Bible can still be collected and assembled into a whole, and should be recognized, for Skovoroda, as such. As Eco writes:

Under these circumstances I interpret the data given back to me by the mirror, in the same way in which, with regard to refractory phenomena, even if I continue to see the stick which is broken in half by the water, I nonetheless interpret these data by continuing to accept this stick as unbroken (Eco 1984: 218).

But the curious question is: If the Bible is such a perfect mirror, what of the rest of the world, the world not blessed with the Bible’s perfect exclusive mirroring-the-Source ability? Is visible Nature itself a pure or impure mirror? After all, we can’t let it slip out of our attention that the whole world we inhabit, is, according to Skovoroda, in principle, *mirrored itself*. The most basic example being visible versus invisible Nature, where shadows, according to Skovoroda, appear,

Are you looking at the mirror? Think of your Idol. Even though it is behind you, you see its Shadow. Before your eyes is the gracefully rounded Bow of the Rainbow, but behind you is the King of the heavens, the Sun. Watch His graceful shadow that you see in the Cloud, like in a pure Source, with your outer vision, but the Life-giving and salvatory light, perceive with your wise Eye... The Pure Mind is

---

<sup>154</sup> Коли Сковорода стверджує, що тисячі образів Святого Письма “наслідують” Божу Премудрість так само, як “частини разбитого зеркала” – людське обличчя, він нав’язується до образу, за допомогою якого богослови намагалися пояснити таїнство святої євхаристії: ціле дзеркало показує ціле обличчя, так само, як і кожен шматочок дзеркала розбитого.

like the Sun. Its rightful arrows reflect directly upon the face of the Ocean, but their very stings deflect the face of the Sea<sup>155</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 432).

The shadow, then, implies that that the invisible plane illuminated by Skovoroda's archetypal Sun (God) is floating by, casting the shadow down to earth. We could say that, this perfect mirror, now represented by the invisible itself, is casting shadows, or, producing signs.

My opinion here resonates with Ushkalov's completely:

Skovoroda interprets matter as the eternal and moving shadow of the invisible nature, a certain mirror, in which ideas, upon reflecting, create their images – things. [...] On the other hand, he gives matter a whole variety of names that refer to its artificiality, lack of essence, or, to put it differently, a null level of being.<sup>156</sup> (Ushkalov 2011: 979, n. 47).

True, this mirror, of visible reality, unlike the Bible, is not, anymore, so definitively perfect, even with the Source directly cast upon it. We had more than once, after all, referred to the exclusive placement of the Bible as the plane of being capable of bearing this perfect reflection. Maybe that is why we can refer to this sort of reflection not as a mirror, like in the Bible's case, but as a lens, a lens in Skovoroda's concept of Observatorium.

### 3.3. Observatorium

If the reader of the Bible, for Skovoroda, should be capable of looking into the mirror by the "Know Thyself" instruction, the observator of the world should be equipped with a lens, as I call it, or the tool for observation.

In the first case, with the Bible, one can look in the clear waters simply by presenting themselves to the clear waters. That is, to put it pragmatically, to simply get exposed to the Bible, interact with it, read it, think of it, speak it. This way, the procedure of looking into the sacred mirror, would be complete.

In the second case, when a human is placed in the visible world, how can a human recognize what is reflected and not false in essence? That it, how can a human recognize that he is looking at the direct representation of the invisible in the visible? Unlike the Bible, the

---

<sup>155</sup> Глядиш в Зеркало? Вспомни твой Болван. Он позади тебе, а видиш его Тънь. Пред очима твоима благокруглый Радуги Лук, а за спиною у тебе – Царь небесных кругов Солнце. На прекрасную Его во Облакъ, как в чистом Источникъ тьнь, гляди внѣшним взором, а на Животворящее и спасительное Его сянїе зриай умным Оком... Чистый Ум есть то же, что Солнце. Его праволучныя стрѣлы прямо ударяют в лице Окиа'на, а самое их Жало, уклоняясь от лица Морскаго, ко'свенно бодет Мѣть иную.

<sup>156</sup> Сковорода тлумачить матерію як вічну та плинну тїнь вічної невидимої природи, своєрідне дзеркало, відбиваючись в якому, ідеї створюють власні образи – речі. [...] Із другого боку, він дає матерії цілу низку імен, покликаних підкреслити її несправжність, неістотність чи, сказати б, нульовий рівень буття.

outside world, for a human, is full of all sorts of signs, some of them deceiving, without essence.

We already know that some special kinds of images, the archetypes, allow for a direct access into the world of the divine. But it cannot be that the archetypes are only found within the Bible. In the outer, visible world, for Skovoroda, one can surely, also recognize the light, not only the shadow of the Sun (Skovoroda 2011: 432). For that, a vision is needed, of a certain special kind, the tool to observe that belongs to the Skovorodian “Observer”.

Skovoroda instructs to observe the shadow with the outer vision, but the light with the inner eye. Skovoroda explains, later in the passage:

This is what it means, to observe and to recognize. We see and perceive with our senses in the present world, but we can only recognize and observe with our Heart. That man who does it is the exact OBSERVATOR. And the field of his whole life is an OBSERVATORIUM (Skovoroda 2011: 432).

Another example of such vision, Skovoroda demonstrates here:

One thing is to see a rock with letters on it or a paper with ink on it with the outer eye, and the other, is to see with that one gaze: “Lift up your eyes”. Like Paul, we can say “It is written not in ink, but in the Spirit of God, which lives in the canvas of the hearts...The paints in the picture can be seen by anyone, but to see the liveliness of the fine art, you need another eye (Skovoroda 2011: 567).

I presume, when Skovoroda berates the chicken that lies in the shadows that the more she looks, the less she really sees (Skovoroda 2011: 432) the reason should be that the chicken cannot employ the “clever Eye”, the inner vision. At one point, he refers to an indexal link (“Do you see the trace? Think of a Hare” (*Ibid.*). The other time, he refers to a symbolic connection, such as not only seeing, but also recognizing the light as coming from God (*Ibid.*). These usual semiotic operations, from the point of view of modern semiotics, to Skovoroda are examples of the proper use of the “clever”, inner eye.

Now, I would like to explain my usage of the word “lens” prior. It is because the Observer’s vision invokes the image of a telescope, as the Observatorium invokes the image of the planets under the planetarium dome.

Like us, Benjamin Peters inquired about Eco’s mirrors twice. He is preoccupied with his passion, telescopes, and also wonders, “if there is not more to the telescopic mirror image than a nonsignifying reflection”, although not from a theological point of view (Peters 2017: 344).

Peters finds that “the processed telescopic image is also a content-laden expression that can be interpreted” since telescopes are stricken by “old” light and riddled with noise”, and the distances that the light has traveled are too big not to be taken into account (*Ibid.*, 356). Not

like Peters completely ignores theological awe. He writes, referring to Yuri Lotman, that the telescope can provide the extraordinary pleasure of feeling the “vastness of the universe” (*Ibid.*).

These cosmic, in the scientific sense, distances, can be also perceived as cosmic in the philosophical sense. Even if we successfully use the inner eye, as Skovoroda suggests, are we sure what we see? The distance between the eternal being of God and the being of a human is inconceivable. As in the Universe, where the planets we see might not exist anymore, what divides us is not only space, but time. The light of the dead stars we can observe with a telescope nowadays, no matter how poetic it may sound, is observable time.

Skovoroda is very close to Augustine in his comprehending of time as not common between man and God, and not inherent to God whatsoever. In another dialogue, on the origins of the World, he writes:

LONG (IN). The same Eye you use to observe the Time from Yesterday, you can see also as far as the Times of Abraham. Paul uses one Word, “yesterday”, to refer to all past times, the word “Today” to refer to the present, and all the future time he calls “Eternity”: Jesus is Yesterday, and Today, and also for All Eternity. <sup>157</sup>(Skovoroda 2011: 478).

From the telescope placed in Skovoroda’s Observatorium, unbeknownst to the author himself, as he never lived up to the modern times, a man can also see history, “the cosmos as it was thousands and millions (and even billions) of years in the past” (Peters 2017: 356), as far as God Himself.

I appreciate greatly, in Peters’ case, is his use of the categories of the Firstness, the Secondness, and then the Thirdness to refer to the observed through the telescope. Through the telescope, according to Peters: “We encounter the Firstness, the Secondness, and then the Thirdness”, in which the Firstness is just a very perceptual meeting with the Source (Peters 2017: 357).

If we are to be brave enough, we can also apply this process to Skovoroda’s interaction with the Sun. The Sun first presents itself as a perceptual object entering the awareness. Next, the shadows are observed, in the Secondness stage. By “shadows”, like before, I mean “signs” (images, symbols, archetypes). Finally, after the Inner Vision participates, and the proper connection is established between the light, the shadow, and the Sun, the stage of Thirdness commences.

---

<sup>157</sup> ЛОНГ[ИН]. Тѣм же Оком, коим смо’тришь на Вчера’шнее Вре’мя, мо’жно зри’ть на са’мыя Авраа’мскія Времена. Па’вел всѣ проше’дшіи Лѣта заключа’ет в сем Сло’вѣ “вчера”, ны’нѣшныи – в Сло’вѣ “Днесь”, а Все бу’дущее нарица’ет Вѣком.



### 3.4. The Abecedary and the Alphabet of the World

Having discussed the two smaller Innerworlds, the Bible and the microcosm of a human being, we can proceed, with all the lenses, equipped, onto the bigger, First World out of the three. That world, in Skovoroda, is represented by the Abecedary, and contains the Alphabet. The idea of the alphabet and a book containing it is very interestingly expressed by Jacob Böhme, in his “Dialogues on the Supersensual Life”:

This virtue which is in Love is the very life and energy of all the principles of Nature, superior and inferior. It reaches to all Worlds, and to all manner of beings in them contained, they being the workmanship of Divine Love, and is the *first mover* and *first moveable*, both in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the water under the earth. And hence there is given to it the name of the *Lucid Aleph* or *Alpha*; by which is expressed the beginning of the *Alphabet of Nature*, and of the Book of Creation and Providence or the *Divine Archetypal Book*, in which is the Light of Wisdom and the source of all lights and forms (Böhme 2010: 45).

Not only does he refer to the Alphabet here, but also to a Book containing archetypes, a very important notion for Skovoroda.

In Ukraine, the influences of the baroque ideas were mostly felt in poetry, or, so called, “alphabetic poetry”. Isichenko defines it as the one, in which “the formal composition forms, such as the placement of various parts of the text according to the alphabet or acronymic relations between the strophes or verses to the author’s name”<sup>158</sup> (Isichenko 2011: 35). One of such examples Isichenko gives is the “Alphabet” of St. John Maksymovych (*Ibid.*, 419). Lytvyn adds, also, “Alphabetum rozmaitym heretykom” by Ionikiy Galyatovskiy, and Velychkovsky to the list (Lytvyn 2007: 3). Ushkalov highlights, Dmytro Tuptalo (Rostovsky) as another prominent example (Ushkalov 2011: 698). Notably, both Tuptalo and Skovoroda also, in the introductions to how this alphabet functions, address the “Know thyself” formula (Kis 2015: 26), important to us as a connecting link to the Bible we discussed in regard of reflectivity prior.

Priorly, in this thesis, I abstained from connecting Skovoroda to the teachings of the Kaballah due to the scarcity of research on this particular matter. The metalanguage of Skovoroda, in general, however, rings many familiar bells. As Eco notes, referring to Sefer, according to this view, “Hebrew is still the Holy Mother Tongue because the names given by Adam were in accord with nature and not chosen arbitrarily” (Eco 2014: 304). Here, we cannot

---

<sup>158</sup> Неабияку роль відіграють формальні композиційні прийоми, наприклад розташування частин за алфавітом або акровіршевий зв’язок рядків чи строф з іменем автора.

go as far as to say that Skovoroda had a relationship with Hebrew like that, but we can say that he still sees the rigid conventionality of the Tongue of God and the human language.

I can rely on the possibility that Skovoroda was, at the very least, a reader of Pico della Mirandola. This might be one of the ways the Kabbalah influences got passed on to him. Mirandola also provides a link to a relevant concept, *philosophia perennis* discussed prior. As Erdmann writes:

Skovoroda, with a flexibility and matter-of-factness like Pico della Mirandola, takes the same pagan traditions as precedents and guarantors of the same one Wisdom throughout different times to validate the same concept of knowledge of God, the world, and self that recurs in his writing<sup>159</sup> (Erdmann 2022: 120).

Notably, Mirandola has a conveniently similarly-ringing notion of “*revolutio alphabetarian*”. The “*revolution*” is not an “*Abecedary*” or an “*alphabet*” in Skovoroda’s sense, so we should be cautious comparing the two. Elaborating on the expression, Eco writes:

Observe that, in the Abulafian tradition, the word *revolutio* stands for combination in general (Wirszubski 1989: 137), but the term certainly implies a rotatory connotation, which calls to mind the Kabbalistic or Lullian wheels (or, as we will see, steganographic wheels, à la Johannes Trithemius) (Eco 2014: 410).

Skovoroda also addresses the wheel symbol. Firstly, he uses, in part of the Biblical reference, Ezekiel’s metaphor about a “*wheel within a wheel*” (Skovoroda 2011: 579). Second, he finds a similarity between a wheel and an eye, a likeness and the image: both the wheel and the eye are, to him, a kind of Ring (2011: 580). Skovoroda also addresses the wheel symbol. Firstly, he uses is in part of the Biblical reference, Ezekiel’s metaphor about a “*wheel within a wheel*” (Skovoroda 2011: 579). Second, he finds a similarity between a wheel and an eye, a likeness and the image: both the wheel and the eye are, to him, a kind of Ring (2011: 580). Perhaps, neither of these instances is sufficient to tie it firmly to Piko’s “*revolution*”.

However, in a very loose sense, the wheel can bear the resonance with the usage of the term “*as a more or less visual image of the combinatory swirling typical of the Kabbalistic technique*” (Eco 2014: 410). The key is not so much the “*swirling*”, as it is the “*combinatory*” function here. I remind here, that, after all, Skovoroda, within his baroque tradition, referred to the Machine (factory) (Skovoroda 2011: 651). In this sense, which is, again, very loose, a wheel as a part of the machine might resonate with Pico’s notion. Would it be a statement far removed from reality to claim that the world, as it functions in an almost mathematical sense with the

---

<sup>159</sup> Selbstverständlichkeit wie Pico della Mirandola dieselben paganen Traditionen als Vorgänger und Garanten für die eine Weisheit in verschiedenen Zeiten in Anspruch, um das gleiche Konzept der Gottes-, Welt- und Selbsterkenntnis, das er immer wieder ausführt, zu bestätigen.

Kaballah, functions in a similar way to a baroque factory driven by the letters of the alphabet in Skovoroda? Most certainly. Nevertheless, the idea is worth exploring.

In the dialogue “The Ring”, Skovoroda introduces the concept of the “abecedary of the world” as such:

God and Wisdom are eternal. That is the real pest, what was born yesterday on a whim. [...] With God’s and his Bible’s guidance, I could, if my narcissism does not prevent me from it, show you the alphabet of the world, its abecedary.<sup>160</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 575).

Bova and Levchenko write that the Skovorodian “alphabet” is represented by a fixed collection of archetypes and their copies (Bova, Levchenko 2022:19). The “copies” in this context might refer to the sacraments. The sacraments, in their turn, are, according to Skovoroda, located as the alphabet is in the abecedary, which is, generally, “called a Law” (Skovoroda 2011: 1321).

Let the reader not be confused by Skovoroda’s quote, in which “the alphabet” and the “abecedary” are listed with a comma. Skovoroda separates the abecedary and the alphabet. He also tells the two apart, asking to “show the alphabet of the world, its abecedary” (2011: 575). These concepts are *not synonymous*. The Skovorodian alphabet is, as we have discovered, not only a collection of images, figures, copies, and other sense particles we had encountered prior, but also a set of beginnings and compounds of the Holy Law itself. This set of sense particles is, like the alphabet, irreducible. The Abecedary, on the contrary, is another Worldbook, similarly to the Bible.

Another example where the abecedary and the alphabet go hand in hand but are not synonymous, appears right in the beginning of the namesake Skovoroda’s dialogue, in comparison with another dialogue, “The Ring”. Whereas “The Ring” “trialed the Heavenly Spheres with David”<sup>161</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 646), “The Alphabet” dialogue tells of the knowing of “the Beginningless BEGINNING from the easy, smaller Beginnings, as from the Alphabet”<sup>162</sup> (*Ibid.*, 646). This alphabet “urges one to follow God, and bears the name of the “Abecedary”” (*Ibid.*). From these definitions, it can be understood that Skovoroda means the Alphabet refers to, as it logically would, to the contents of the Abecedary.

This definition of the alphabet is concluded by Skovoroda with the already familiar formula for the Bible, “NOSCE TE IPSUM. Know Thyself” (*Ibid.*). The next question would be, how similar is the Abecedary to the Bible?

---

<sup>160</sup> Я за предводительством Божиим и его Библии мог к вам, естли меня не обманет самолюбіе, показать алфавит мира, или букварь его.

<sup>161</sup> Первый испытует с Дави́дом Небесныя Кру́ги.

<sup>162</sup> А второй, узнав Безнача́льное НАЧА́ЛО, из не трудных Нача́тков, бу́дьто из Алфа́вита, Богу послѣдовать побуждает, и назван «Букваре́м».

### **3.5. Are the Bible and the Abecedary synonymous?**

If we have the Bible-book-world, and the Abecedary-book-world, the good starting question is how synonymous or alike they are. In my mind, this is not all and the same book by any means. The Bible's role, as we had previously established, is more of a mediating kind. It is a mirror, or, a border, rather than a collection, although it can also present as such (for example, as a Bestiary). In Svitlana Povtoreva's analysis of Skovoroda in terms of structuralism and semiotics, she, rightfully, compares the Bible and the Abecedary as the two "nets (systems) of signs, in which all the elements of meaning are structurally connected with each other" (Povtoreva 2008: 102). I would readily agree.

Nevertheless, even if we take the Bible and the Abecedary to both be collections (or nets, or systems of signs), they would be collections of two different kinds because they serve two different purposes. And, since we are reading theology, one has to keep in mind that a different purpose is much more than just a pragmatic array of possible uses for them. We are talking here of two ontologically different structures, structures representing two different worlds for Skovoroda, separated by the borders of being itself.

The Bible is described by Skovoroda as an Ark (Skovoroda 2011: 742) because it is inhabited by the powers of life themselves. It is, as in Arndt, a Book of Life, after all (Arndt 2010: 97). As opposed to the Bible's purpose, the purpose of the Abecedary containing the alphabet is much more enigmatic. The Abecedary seems to be related to Skovoroda's First world, rather than to any of the smaller ones (let me remind that the Bible is the Third, smaller world).

### **3.6. Is the Bible an encyclopedia?**

Continuing the discussion of the abecedary as a collection of knowledge, Povtoreva attributes the concept of the alphabet and the abecedary (as the sacred text of the world) to Umberto Eco's notion of the "encyclopedia" (in contrast to the notion of a dictionary) (Povtoreva 2008: 102). In my opinion, this extremely interesting claim deserves a discussion. But before we ask that question about the abecedary, let us apply the notion of the "encyclopedia" to the Bible first. The Bible is, as Povtoreva also writes, a medium, methodology, mediator, the Third (*Ibid.*, 99), so she does acknowledge it the same way I did before.

Skovoroda's Bible tempts me, also, greatly to call it an Eco's encyclopedia. However, I would like to exercise restraint and count the pros and cons. Let us begin with the positive points, in favor of the Bible being an encyclopedia.

First, if "the encyclopedia is dominated by the Peircean principle of interpretation and consequently of unlimited semiosis" (Eco 2014: 68), we could gladly accept the "unlimited semiosis" as related to Skovoroda's unlimited Source (God). God, as a Source (and principle, if we are to engage in some wordplay), does, indeed, dominate the generation of meaning within all the worlds for Skovoroda, the smaller and the bigger ones. God was already discussed as related to unlimited semiosis in chapter 2.3 (Name) of the thesis.

Secondly, in the encyclopedia, "every expression is interpretable by other expressions", which makes the process "self-sustaining" (Eco 2014: 69). That could also be accepted as true. Not only are the symbols, signs, archetypes, and figures, are all interpretable among each other, but the Bible itself is a border between the visible and the invisible. That means that whatever is visible can be interpreted by its invisible counterpart in the Platonic world of forms. The Bible also represents, as mentioned before, a complete essence, as opposed to form without essence. The Bible and its contents, then, can be described as curated by the purpose of filling up the gaps in essence, giving the proper knowledge to fill the otherwise existing gaps between the visible and the invisible (and knowledge thereof).

Finally, if we take Povtoreva's definition of an encyclopedia as the self-sufficient basis, the need for any discussion borders on disappearing. That is, if we simply accept that "An encyclopedia is built as a sign system from the beginning, in which all of the elements are interconnected"<sup>163</sup> (Povtoreva 2008: 102), the Bible and the Abecedary both qualify as encyclopedias. After all, there is no denying this about their teleology: They were created, for Skovoroda, as a result of divine plan. They, by logic, should be deeply organized structures of the visible and invisible maintained on the divine level. It would be a fair and simple solution, since it is precisely from this standpoint that Povtoreva attributes Skovoroda's alphabet and abecedary to the concept of an encyclopedia. But I choose to keep the discussion going. I do so for the sake of broadening horizons, and not at all, for arguing against Povtoreva's remark.

To move further, now, we have to pay attention to some nuances. One has to take into account that the revealing (mirroring) aspect of the Bible is a very important one. Even though the Bible grants access to the secret and invisible, which is also, by definition, divine and

---

<sup>163</sup> Енциклопедія ж із самого початку будується як знакова структура, у якій всі її елементи взаємопов'язані.

unlimited, it is still a “perfect mirror”, and prides itself on being rather precise. In fact, it is so perfect that it is an exclusive plane of being and symbolic world, that, in unison, combines the visible and the invisible within. An encyclopedia, unlike the dictionary, does not exactly pride itself on being correct, it rather finds purpose in presenting a full panorama of knowledge. Of course, we can debate, and mention here, that, to Eco, the dictionary can be a disguised encyclopedia (Eco 1984: 68). Also, in defense, I could note that unlimited semiosis does not mean, for Eco, an endless, borderless, and unconventionally correct interpretation. Nevertheless, it is an aspect one can stumble upon, drawing the parallel between the Bible and the encyclopedia, and expecting to see a clear connecting bridge.

Finally, we have to consider if the Bible as an encyclopedia makes sense in terms of *philosophia perennis* I already mentioned in relation to Skovoroda’s writing style (Skovoroda 2011: 646–647). As Elisabeth von Erdmann summarizes *philosophia perennis* in relation to Skovoroda’s interpretation of the Bible:

All contributors to the *philosophia perennis* who refer to the mysteries of the ancients are not concerned with the original concepts and original ways of thinking, but with incorporating such concepts into their own version of unified knowledge. Skovoroda, for this very reason, relates the hieroglyphs directly to equivalents in the Bible.<sup>164</sup> (Erdmann 2022: 111)

Thus, even if we accept the Bible as a collection of universal knowledge that even transcends confessions and beliefs themselves, it is only complete halfway. It would be, in this case, an equivalent of an uncomplete thesaurus, rather than encyclopedia proper. In other words, just because the Bible’s symbols may have equivalents outside of the Bible does not mean that the Bible is an encyclopedia (or even a collection in general) of equivalents itself.

To sum up, the Bible communicates knowledge as the encyclopedia does, but it cannot, in Eco’s words, contain “not only truths...but also what has been said about the truth, what has been believed to be true” (Eco 1984: 83). The Bible either contains all the truth, if it is used properly as an ideal mirror, or none of the truth, in which case it turns into the tool of deception (or a null). It is not an encyclopedic perfect, ideal sum of all knowledge because it might imply including a lie in it. Of course, especially for Eco, it would be a semiotic paradox (semiotics is lying). But, as we established, the Bible is quite paradoxical as a mirror that perfectly records and externalizes its own translation. This fact might get in the way of giving a definitive answer to the question “Is the Bible an encyclopedia?”, although, I am sure, it can be reached in the

---

<sup>164</sup> Allen Teilhabern an der *philosophia perennis*, die sich auf die Mysterien der Alten beziehen, geht es dabei nicht um die ursprünglichen Konzepte und originalen Denkansätze, sondern um deren Einbezug in ihre eigene Option des Einheitswissens. Skovoroda setzt aus diesem Grund die Hieroglyphen in eine unmittelbare Beziehung zu Äquivalenten in der Bibel.

course of a productive and informed debate. As I am introducing points of interest rather than definitive answers in this thesis, I will leave the conclusion open-ended.

### **3.7. Is the Abecedary an encyclopaedia (or is the Abecedary the Abecedary)?**

Now, I will address Povtoreva's claim (Povtoreva 2008: 102) directly, namely, the suggestion to define Skovoroda's Abecedary and alphabet as an encyclopaedia. First of all, it is unclear if Povtoreva implies that the concepts are synonymous. Since I am not arguing with her remark, but simply using it to fuel discussion, I will leave this aspect with no criticism. Even though I had already assumed in the former subchapter that alphabet and abecedary are not synonymous concepts, I would also insist to approach them in unison, especially in this occasion (when determining their status as an encyclopedia).

I would suggest, the starting point here must be culture. We need to understand what Skovoroda might refer to, or be influenced by, when talking of the alphabet and the abecedary.

Let us keep in mind that, historically, in Europe, and also on Ukrainian land, the abecedary was of great authority. The religiously influenced Medieval standard puts an importance on the abecedary as more than a system or a tool: it is an introduction and greeting to the whole world, the best gift for a child. As Johanna Drucker rightfully notes, the ABCs have long been the sign of literacy in the Western culture, ever since as early as the sixteenth century, with instances such as "In Adam's Fall, we sinned all" serving as mnemonics for learning the letter "A" (Drucker 2022: 302). A person learning the alphabet from such an abecedary, and a person learning Skovoroda's alphabet of the world, are both under the effect of childish wonder and discovery. The traditional Ukrainian abecedaries contained prayers among images, grammar rules and words. It is worth noting that Ivan Fedorov included in his pioneering printed abecedary "an alphabetical acropoem, the abecedary prayer, where each line began with a certain letter and conveyed the sense of a certain religious wisdom" (Kruchuk 2018). Thus, we can perceive our model abecedary, as culturally, it would make sense for Skovoroda: A collection of knowledge organized by alphabetical order built with a pedagogical or knowledge-expanding purpose. Such is the case of a certain prayer attached to a letter, or, for instance, the alphabetic ordering of poems by baroque poet Maksymovych. Interestingly, Isichenko writes that, for Maksymovych, the alphabetic ordering of poems is akin to encyclopedic one (Isichenko 2011: 419).

But the interesting part would be to try and deduce the relation between a certain letter of that alphabetic order and the content it is assigned to. This relation is not self-evident.

An encyclopedia may order its contents by alphabetical order, using them as it would use numbers. Unlike the abecedary, the ordinary encyclopedia ordered alphabetically does not restrict its contents: One letter to one thing. It is often the case for abecedaries, however. Even in an abecedary today, letter A, would usually correspond to one Apple. In the same way, letter A could be assigned to one prayer, or one poem, et cetera. There seems to be certain degree of exclusivity observed here. Let us also not forget that, in case of Skovoroda, we would have to remember that we are dealing with a theological argument. In one of his letters, Skovoroda writes:

As applications of the law, we imply certain actions, and ceremonies. They are always subject to God's truth, or to the silent outline or faint image of the Holy Spirit. To elaborate, sacraments are simply outward expressions that reflect the urge towards God and mutual affinity, sealed by the adhering to His holy law, in relation to which they are found [sic!], or, as according to the abecedary's alphabet.<sup>165</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 1321).

So the principle, by which a letter of the alphabet is connected to a prayer, or a letter of the alphabet of the world to the certain thing in that world, is not exactly for order by order's sake, but for a holy order, or holy law. To study an Abecedary of the world, then, is not only to gain overall knowledge, such as an encyclopedia would allow to, but to understand the basic (holy) order of the world. In other words, the abecedary, rather, provides preliminary knowledge to any knowledge whatsoever (the order of things). I also find it fascinating that Skovoroda presents the sacraments as related to the alphabet, and not among the general signs, here (a subject, perhaps, for another research).

That order implies great authority that is demonstrated by the means of its irreducibility. Such is the case, Skovoroda begins his namesake "Alphabet..." dialogue from the Biblical statement from the Apocalypse "Alphabet letters: I am Alpha and I am Omega"<sup>166</sup> (Skovoroda 2011: 649). In a way, we could even connect this function of the abecedary to Skovoroda's understanding of God as a self-referring, self-equivalent sign (a non-lying sign). Perhaps, a letter of an alphabet, in its great authority that it represents, is signaling of the order of things, and among the main principles of that order, of the self-equivalence of God.

---

<sup>165</sup> Конечно, под дѣлами закона разумѣтся дѣйствія, церемоніи. Они всегда находятся в Божіей истинѣ или Духа Святаго нѣмым начертаніем и слабым образом. Яснѣе сказать, дѣйствій церемоніальныхъ суть комплекты и жеманныя наружности, общающія усердіе к Богу и дружбу, которая печатлѣтся исполненіемъ священнѣйшаго закона Его, до котораго они находятся нѣкою частію или смилостиною [sic!] и, будто с алфавитомъ букваря.

<sup>166</sup> Аз есмь АЛФА и ОМЕГА.



Is it possible, even with Skovoroda's inner vision, to perceive the letter of the divine Alphabet of the world, and see the other side of its meaning? A letter of the alphabet is not an archetype (keyword), unlocking the door to the invisible counterpart of the visible. Can it be, rather, an irreducible atom in the world's structure? Is it a part of the Law to be accepted?

I can suggest a hint here, to help answer this question. Perhaps, the key is in the mnemonic, not only generally pedagogical function of the abecedary. The alphabet letters with their mnemonics went together, in Ukrainian ABCs with prayers, because they were similar to prayers and sacraments. The paradox of the prayer and a sacrament is that it is an individual human address to God, which can, however, be memorized and repeated. A prayer, and a participation in the Eucharist, neither can really be subjects to analytic learning. One has to accept the rule, rather than understand all the technicalities of the process. That is because, a prayer and a sacrament are basic, fundamental rules of addressing God. To learn these basic ways of addressing God, could then be compared to learning the alphabet, and especially the Alphabet of the World.

## **Conclusions. Is Hryhorii Skovoroda of Interest to the Theosemiotic Reader?**

The question in the title may sound like a closed one, although it is not intended as such. However, after all the Skovorodiana journey we have made, I should give the definitive answer to my overwhelmed reader. Yes, my dear theosemiotic Reader, Skovoroda is of interest to you.

This “yes” has a lot to do with a lot of material, as is evident from the range of topics under discussion. There are many directions from which Hryhorii Skovoroda came, and there are many ways for scholars to explore his rich legacy. One way is to see him as a devout Neo-Platonist, another as a follower of the Patristic school, a third as a representative of the Ukrainian Baroque, and a fourth as a representative of the emblematic tradition. Whichever way one chooses, it is certain to produce a great deal of exciting research. From Plato to Umberto Eco, Skovoroda’s interpretation can lead in many different directions. In this thesis, my exploration of the limits of possible approaches to Skovoroda has only scratched the surface of all the possibilities that exist.

Since the aim of the thesis was to find the points of interest for the theosemiotic reader, I would like to briefly outline those that I find most fundamental, valuable or creative (or all of the above).

Let me begin by examining the philosophical orientations that underlie Skovoroda’s semiotic processes. As a Christian Neo-Platonist, Skovoroda is interesting to study for his ideas on the Platonic dualism of natures (the visible and the invisible). In this sense, especially with regard to the inner man (or microcosm) and the inner (or wise) vision that allows one to see into the invisible, Skovoroda can also be fruitfully studied as a follower of Augustine.

Another theme to explore would be the tension between the two Platonic levels of being and the falsification of essence that can appear in between. As a proudly independent and very creative concept, I would like to mention Skovoroda’s idea of “kindred work”, related to Epicurus and his ideas on happiness.

I also agree with the general academic consensus that Skovoroda should also be studied as a mystic, especially in relation to Jacob Böhme and Angelus Silesius. Needless to say, he is at the very least an interesting example of a philosopher considered orthodox who was influenced to such an extent by Protestant thinkers.

While addressing Skovoroda's interpretation of the relevant semiotic notions of the image, sign, symbol, figure, archetype, and emblem in Chapter 2, I accentuated the importance of Skovoroda's language taken as a whole as a point of special interest. There are many layers in Skovoroda's language to be uncovered. For example, I demonstrated how the baroque codes with the application of Eco's theory could be used to decypher some of the stylistic layers.

Each of the terms Skovoroda uses in his works – “a sign”, “a symbol”, “an image”, “a figure”, “an archetype”, “an emblem” – can be studied individually and in relation to each other. In addition to Platonic and Augustinian influences, it has proved fruitful to use Stefan Yavorskiy's classification of sacred iconic images in relation to Skovoroda's semiotic concepts.

One of the cases that deserves special attention is Skovoroda's interesting interpretation of the “image” as a triple structure (the simple, the forming and the formed) (Skovoroda 2011: 604). As in Jakovleva's analysis, the relationships between these tree folds can be “untied” to reveal the hidden meaning in an image (Jakovleva 2020: 77).

Another concept that deserves close examination is the notion of an archetype for Skovoroda, or a keyword that unlocks this hidden meaning. An elaborate study of this enigmatic semiotic device that unlocks divine knowledge could, no doubt, be very fruitful for theosemiotics.

A theme full of potential, developed to a considerable extent by Oleksandr Soletsky, is the emblematic tradition (both in Ukraine and worldwide) in which Skovoroda proudly claims a well-deserved role. Since an emblem is a triadic unit that consists of a title (*inscriptio*), an image (*pictura*), and an epigram (*subscriptio*) (Soletsky 2018: 10), an interesting parallel can be drawn to Charles Peirce's representamen, object, and interpretant. As in the case of Skovoroda's use of emblems, the study of the meaning-generating aspect of emblems in general proves to be extremely promising in terms of pleasant discoveries. As a small detour, I have also shown how interpretation based on Peirce can be used to address the processes of translation in the emblem, with a focus on Kobus Marais.

Finally, Skovoroda's symbolic worlds of meaning, as I call them, are of considerable interest to any theosemiotic reader. Skovoroda's notion of the world as a book and the notion of writing as a smaller world would certainly be possible targets for a researcher interested in theology and semiotics. In relation to Umberto Eco's concepts, I could, poetically speaking, refresh Skovoroda's ideas and bring them into the context of modern semiotic thought. Skovoroda's Bible can be studied as a book (and a World-Book), a smaller world, a plane of

tension and a medium between two Natures, a mirror (and even Umberto Eco's perfect mirror), and a collection of knowledge (possibly, Eco's encyclopaedia).

I also took the opportunity to discuss *The Alphabet of the World* in relation to *Abecedary* as a possible candidate for an encyclopaedia, taking up Svitlana Povtoreva's suggestion (Povtoreva 2008: 102).

Although my attempt was only a sketch, I discovered that there may be a line of defense that can be built around the notion of the Bible and the *Abecedary* to protect them from being fully integrated into Eco's concept of an encyclopaedia. I find this little experiment particularly fruitful in the case of the *abecedary*, a peculiar concept that I have treated from a cultural perspective in order to gain a better understanding of its role as a collection of knowledge. The question remains: Can an *abecedary* be a collection of knowledge in its own right, between an encyclopaedia and a dictionary? A satisfactory solution is under discussion.

These conclusions have one purpose: to challenge future English-speaking theosemiotic researchers not to conclude, but to develop these and many other issues related to Skovoroda's ideas. This paper has provided only a glimpse of the complexity and variety of issues to be explored by anyone interested in technology and semiotics, and the relationship and application of the two in relation to Christian philosophy.

## References

- Angelus, Silesius. *Selections from The Cherubic Wanderer*. Accessible at <https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/sil/scw/index.htm>.
- Arndt, Johann 2010. *True Christianity*. The Project Gutenberg. Accessible at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/34736>.
- Artiuch, Vyacheslav [Артюх В.] 2022. Hryhoriï Skovoroda: the ukrainization of his image [Григорій Сковорода: українізація образу]. Accessible at <https://history.sumy.ua/research/article/9521-hryhoriï-skovoroda-ukrainizatsiia-obrazu.html>.
- Augustine of Hippo 2002. *On the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Augustine of Hippo 2021. *Confessions*. Burton: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- Biemillier, Mark 2019. Augustine and Plato: Clarifying Misconceptions. *Aporia* 29 (2): 33-43.
- Böhme, Jacob 2009. *The Aurora or Day-Spring*: Free Electronic Text. Accessible at <https://archive.org/details/JacobBoehmesAurora-ElectronicText-edition>
- Böhme, Jacob 2010. Dialogues on the Suprasensual Life. Accessible at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/33742/pg33742-images.html>.
- Bova, Vita; Levchenko, Lesya [Бова, Віта; Левченко, Леся] 2022. Try movy Hryhoriïa Skovorody [Три мови Григорія Сковороди]. *Вісник Львівського університету* 42: 17–25.
- Cary, Phillip 2008. *Outward signs: The powerlessness of external things in Augustine's thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chernyshov, Viktor [Чернишов, Віктор] 2013. Religiyni osnovy svitogliadu H. Skovorody [Релігійні основи світогляду Г. Сковороди]. *Гілея* 23: 206–215.
- Chizhevskiy, Dmytro [Чижевський, Дмитро] 2003. Барок. [Барок]. Київ: Ізборник. Accessible at <http://litopys.org.ua>.
- Chizhevskiy, Dmytro [Чижевський, Дмитро] 2004. *Filosofia H.S. Skovorody* [Філософія Г. С. Сковороди]. Харків: Ізборник. Accessible at: <http://litopys.org.ua/chysk/chysk.htm>
- Daly, Peter 2014. *The emblem in early modern Europe*. Farnham: Library of Congress.
- Deely, John 2001. *Four Ages of Understanding: The First Postmodern Survey of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press.
- Deledalle, Gérard 2000. *Charles S. Peirce's philosophy of signs: essays in comparative semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Demyanenko, Svitlana [Дем'яненко, Світлана] 2009. Linguofilosofski ta psycholingvistychni aspekty slova v spadshchyni H. S. Skovorody [Лінгвофілософські та психолінгвістичні аспекти слова в спадщині Г.С Сковороди]. *Психолінгвістика* 4: 27–33.
- Dodonov, Roman [Додонов, Роман] 2022. Poniattya archetypu v tvorchosti Hryhoriïa Skovorody [Поняття архетипу в творчості Григорія Сковороди]. In: *Duchovny kod ukraïnskoi identychnosti u vymiri mizhkulturnoi komunikatsii (do 300-richa vid dnya narodzhennya H.S. Skovorody)*. [Духовний код української ідентичності у вимірі міжкультурної комунікації (до 300-річчя від дня народження Г. С. Сковороди)]. Київ, 201-203.
- Dovgalevskiy, Mytrofan [Довгалецький, Митрофан] 2005. *Poetics (Poetic garden)* [Поетика (Сад поетичний)] <http://litopys.org.ua/dovg/dovg.htm>
- Drucker, Johanna 2022. *Inventing the alphabet: the origins of letters from antiquity to the present*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Drysdall, Denis L., Daly, Peter 2017. Andrea Alciato. In: Hourihane, Colum (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*. New York: Routledge, 11–32.
- Eco, Umberto 1984. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. London: MacMillan.
- Eco, Umberto 2004. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eco, Umberto 2014. *From The Tree To The Labyrinth*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

- Gottlieb, Henrik 2005. *Multidimensional Translation: Semantics turned Semiotics*. EU-High-Level Scientific Conference Series MuTra – Challenges of Multidimensional Translation: Conference Proceedings.
- Grigorieva, Elena [Григорьева, Елена] 2000. Emblemata: structura i pragmatika [Эмблема: структура и прагматика].
- Hart, David Bentley 2002. The mirror of the infinite: Gregory of Nyssa on the Vestiga Trinitatis. *Modern Theology* 18 (4): 541–561.
- Hnatyuk, Lidiia [Гнатюк, Лідія] 2011. Mовний феномен Нрыгоріа Сквороди v konteksty staroukrainskoi knuzhnoi traditsii [Мовний феномен Григорія Сквороди в контексті староукраїнської книжної традиції]. *Вісник Київський університет* 3: 81–82.
- Huizenga, Leroy A. 2010. *The New Isaac*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- Isichenko, Ihor [Ісиченко, Ігор] 2011. History of Ukrainian Literature: The Baroque Era of the XVII–XVIII century. [Історія Української Літератури: епоха бароко XVII–XVIII ст.] Львів: Святогорієць.
- Kayikci, Halli 2015. Saint Augustine's Invention of the Inner-Man: A Short Journey to The History of the Internality of the West. (Online) *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies* 1 (3): 138–155.
- Krekoten, Volodymyr [Крекотень, Володимир] 1992. *Ukrainian poetry*. [Українська поезія]. Середина XVII ст. Київ: Наукова думка.
- Kremen, Vasiy [Кремень, Василь] 2022. Filozofia Nryhorіа Сквороди v konteksty liudynotsentryzmu [Філософія Григорія Сквороди в контексті людиноцентризму]. *Вісник Національної академії педагогічних наук України* 4 (2): 1–8.
- Kruchuk, Natalia [Кручук, Наталія] 2018. *Lvivskiy bukvar Ivana Fedorova – unikalna pam'yatka*. [Львівський буквар Івана Федорова – унікальна пам'ятка]. Accessible at: <https://shepvisnyk.com.ua/lvivskyj-bukvar-ivana-fedorova-unikalna-pam-iatka/>
- Krysa, Bohdana [Криса, Богдана] 2020. Vyrubuvannya movoyu [Випробування мовою]. *Наукові записки УКУ* 1: 143–154.
- Leone, Massimo 2023. Semiotics in Theology and Religious Studies. In: Pelkey, J., Petrilli, S. & Ricciardone, S.M. (eds.). *Bloomsbury Semiotics Volume 3: Semiotics in the Arts and Social Sciences*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 69–80.
- Levchenko, Natalia; Liamprekht, Olena; Zosimova, Oksana; Varenikoba, Olena; Boiko, Svitlana 2020. Emblematic Literature as a Form of Biblical Hermeneutics. *Amazonia investiga* 9 (32): 61–69.
- Lytvyn, Taras [Литвин, Тарас] 2007. *Symvolika baroko. Sproba filozofskoho analizu*. [Символіка бароко. Спроба філософського аналізу]. *Схід* 2 (80): 1–13.
- Marais, Kobus. 2019. Conceptualizing a semiotic theory of translation. In: *A (Bio) Semiotics Theory of Translation: The Emergence of Social-Cultural Reality*. Routledge. New York, 120–157.
- Mignault, Claude 2003. *A Treatise on Symbols*. Accessible at [https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/Mignault\\_syntagma.html](https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/Mignault_syntagma.html).
- Mikhailov, Alexandr. [Михайлов, Александр] 2007. *Poetika baroko: zavershenye ritoricheskoy epochi* [Поэтика барокко: завершение риторической эпохи]. Accessible at: <http://17v-euro-lit.niv.ru/17v-euro-lit/articles/mihajlov-barokko-4.htm>
- Motta, Beatrice 2000. Nemesius of Emesa. In: Gerson, L. (ed), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 509–519.
- Nemesius, 2008. *On the Nature of Man*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Nöth, Winfried 1990. *Handbook of Semiotics*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Origen 2013. *On first principles*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press.
- Peters, Benjamin John 2017. Telescope+Mirror=Reflections on the cosmos: Umberto Eco and the image of religion. *Zygon* 52 (2): 343–360.
- Pöder, Thomas-Andreas 2021b. Introducing new directions in semiotic methodologies for the study of religion. In: *Sign, Method and the Sacred*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1–25.
- Pöder, Thomas-Andreas 2021a. Religion in the semiosphere: Theosemiotics in dialogue with Juri Lotman. In: *Sign, Method and the Sacred*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 29–51.
- Popovych, Myroslav [Попович М. В.] 2003. Nryhorіy Скворода na tli filozofsko-religioznyh ruhiv svoeji doby [Григорій Скворода на тлі філософсько-релігійних рухів своєї доби.] *Наукові записки НАУКМА. Серія: Гуманітарні науки*. Т. 22. Ч. 1.

- Povtoreva, Svitlana [Повторєва, Світлана] 2008. Tvorchist Hryhoriia Skovorody z pozitsiy semiotiky i poststrukturalizmu [Творчість Григорія Сковороди з Позичій Семіотики І Постструктуралізму] *Українська Філософія: Історія І Сучасність* 607: 98–103.
- Prokhorov, Denys [Прокопов, Дєніс] 2003. Hryhorii Skovoroda: mizh filosofieyu ta opoviddu pro nei [Григорій Сковорода: між філософією та оповіддю про неї]. *Наукові записки* 22 (1): 80–86.
- Proni, G. 2015. Umberto Eco and Charles Peirce: A slow and respectful convergence. *Semiotica* 206: 13–35. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2015-0021>.
- Raposa, Michael L. 2020. *Theosemiotic religion, reading, and the gift of meaning*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Roman Kis [Роман Кіс] 2015. *Antropolohichna pnevmatologia Hryhoriia Skovorody ta yevropeyski duchovny kontekst*. Інститут Народознавства НАН України. [Антропологічна пневматологія Григорія Сковороди та європейський духовний контекст]. Accessible at: <https://social-anthropology.org.ua/publication/statti/antropolohichna-pnevmatolohiya-hryhoriya-skovorody/>.
- Shevchuk, Tetyana [Шєвчук, Тєтяна] 2010. Emblematychni zbirky XVII-XVIII st u retseptsii H. Skovorody. [Емблематичні збірки XVII-XVIII ст. у рецепції Г.Сковороди]. *Слово і час* 7: 71–84.
- Sofronova, Lyudmila [Софронова, Людмила] 2002. [Tri mira Grigoriya Skovorody]. Три мира Григорія Сковороди. М.: Издательство «Индрик», 2002.
- Soletsky, Oleksandr [Солецкий, Олександр] 2018. *Emblematychni formy diskursu: vid mifu do postmodernu: monografia* [Емблематичні форми дискурсу: від міфу до постмодерну: монографія.]. Івано-Франківськ: Лілея-НВ.
- Symbola et emblemata selecta. Accessible at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/rbc0001/2020/2020yudin50625/2020yudin50625.pdf>
- Szönyi, György E. 2018. Speaking pictures: Ways of seeing and reading in English Renaissance culture. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 53: 145–176.
- Usatenko, Halina [Усатєнко, Галина] 2013. Pro Hryhoriia Skovorodu, identychnist i davniu literaturu. [Про Григорія Сковороду, ідентичність і давню літературу]. *Дивослово* 5: 47–50.
- Ushkalov, Leonid [Ушкалов, Леонід] 2011. Peredmova [Передмова]. In: Ушкалов, Л. (ed.), *Григорій Сковорода. Повна академічна збірка творів*. Харків: “Майдан”, Едмонтон-Торонто, Видавництво Канадського Інституту Українських Студій, 3–9.
- Ushkalov, Leonid [Ушкалов, Леонід] 2015. *Z istoriyi ukrainskoji mistyky: Skovoroda i Gamaliya*. [З історії української містики: Сковорода і Гамалія.] З історії української містики: Сковорода і Гамалія]. Національна спілка письменників України Харківська обласна організація ([kharkiv-nsru.org.ua](http://kharkiv-nsru.org.ua))
- Uspensky, Boris 2009. The Influence of Language on Religious Consciousness. *Semiotica* 10 (2): 177–190.
- Wade, Mara R. 2010. *What is an Emblem?* Accessible at: <http://emblematica.grainger.illinois.edu/help/what-emblem>.
- Yavorskiy, Stefan [Яворский, Стефан] 2010. *Kamen very*. Accessible at: [Камень веры Православно-Кафолической Восточной Церкви \(azbyka.ru\)](http://azbyka.ru/subjects/kamen-very-pravoslavno-kafolicheskoj-vostochnoj-cerkvi).

## Sources

- Skovoroda, Hryhorii [Сковорода, Григорій] 2011. In: Ушкалов, Л (ed.), *Hryhorii Skovoroda. Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*. [Григорій Сковорода. Повна академічна збірка творів]. Харків: “Майдан”, Едмонтон-Торонто, Видавництво Канадського Інституту Українських Студій.
- Sobaka i Kobyla. [Fable 18. The Dog and the Mare. Басня 18. Собака и Кобыла], 164.
- Bee and the Hornet. [Басня 27. Пчела и Шершень], 172–173.
- Beseda 1-ya, narechennaya Observatorium (Shion) [First Conversation, Called “The Observatory.” (Zion). Бєсѣда 1-я, нарєченная Observatorium. (Сіон)], 427–454.
- Dialog. Imya emu: Potop Zmiin [Dialogue. Its Name is “The Serpent’s Flood], 941–968.

- Do nevidomyh osib [To unknown.До невідомих осіб], 1317.
- Koltso. Druzhesky Razgovor o Dushevnom Mire. [The Circle. An Amicable Colloquy on Tranquility of Mind. Кольцо. Дружескій Разговор о Душевном Мирѣ], 559–645.
- Razgovor pyati putnikov o istinnov schastii v zhizni. [A Colloquy among Five Travelers on True Happiness in Life (An Amicable Colloquy on Tranquility of Mind). Разговор пяти путников о истинном щастіи в жизни], 502–558.
- Nachalnaya Dver k Christianskomu Dobronravіyu. [The Primary Door to Christian Ethics. Начальная Дверь ко Христіянскому Добронравію], 213-221.
- Narkiss. Razglagol o Tom: Uznai sebe. [The Narcissus. A Deliberation on the Topic: Know Thyself. Наркісс. Разглагол о Том: Узнай себе], 231–291.
- Knizhechka nazivayemaya Silenus Alcibiadis. Cirech Ikona Alkiviadsкая. [A Little Book, named “Silenus Alcibiadis” that is the Icon of Alcibiades. Книжечка, называемая Silenus Alcibiadis. Сирѣчь Икона Алквіадская], 729–754.
- Knizhechka o Chtenii Svyaschenного Pisaniya, narechennaya Zhena Lotova [A little book on reading the Holy Scripture, called Lot’s wife. Книжечка о Чтеніи Священ[наго] Писанія, нареченна Жена Лотова], 779–803.
- Razgovor nazyvaemiy Alfavit ili Bukvar Mira [A Colloquy, called “Alphabet” or the Abecedary of the World. Разговор, называемый Алфавит, или Буварь Мира], 645–694.
- Simfonia, narechennaya Kniga Ashan. transkripcija [A Symphony, called “The Book of Achsah” [Caleb’s daughter] on Self-Knowledge. Сумфонія, нареченная Книга Асхань], 292–293.
- Lyst № 47 [Letter 47. Лист № 47], 1134.

Skovoroda, H. S., Naydan, M. M., Shevchuk, V. O. 2016. *The Garden of Divine Songs and collected poetry of Hryhory Skovoroda*. London, UK: Glagoslav Publications.



## Kokkuvõte. Grigori Skovoroda teoloogilis-semiootiline lugemine

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on anda ülevaade Ukraina humanisti Grigori Skovoroda teoloogilise semiootikaga seotud ideedest. Skovoroda filosoofilisi kirjutisi kõrvutatakse ja võrreldakse semiootilise raamistikuga, kasutades ajaloolisi, kultuurilisi ja kirjanduslikke paralleele, kirjanduskriitikat ja ideede võimalikke tõlgendusi. Skovoroda mõttemaailmast antakse laiahaardeline ülevaade, mis hõlmab üsna olulist hulka võimalikke huvipunkte iga inglise keelt valdava huvilise jaoks. Väitekiri tutvustab lugejale erinevaid võimalusi asjakohaste semiootiliste mõistete, nagu märk, sümbol, kujutis, embleem, figuur, artefakt, kontekstualiseerimiseks Skovoroda mõtlemises. Platonist kuni Umberto Eco moodsa semiootilise lähenemisviisini ehitatakse sillad, mis paigutavad Skovoroda ingliskeelsele akadeemilisele kaardile, kusjuures ei puudu ka soovituslikud huvipunktid, millele uurijad võiksid edaspidi tähelepanu pöörata.

Esimeses peatükis tutvustatakse Skovoroda mõtte filosoofilisi aluseid. Filosoofilisest vaatenurgast arutletakse Skovoroda suhete üle Platoni, Epikurose, Origenese, Gregorius Nyssa, Augustinuse, müstikute (Angelus Silesius ja Jacob Böhme), Stefan Javorski (kui Damaskuse Johannese tõlgendaja), embleemata raamatute (eriti “*Symbola et emblemata selecta*”) ja Johann Arndtiga.

Skovoroda semiootiline analüüs (millele on pühendatud töö teine ja kolmas peatükk) tugineb peamiselt ukraina teadlastele, suures osas eelkõige Dmytro Tšičevski ja Leonid Uškalovi tõlgendustele ja kommentaaridele.

Äratamaks huvi Skovoroda ideede vastu just teoloogilise semiootika seisukohalt, on mõned Skovoroda kontseptsioonid asetatud kaasaegse semiootika konteksti. Näiteks kasutatakse Charles Sanders Peirce'i objekti, interpretandi ja representameni mõisteid, et analüüsida embleemi tähendust genereerivat aspekti, millel on samuti kolmekordne struktuur: pealkiri (*inscriptio*), pilt (*pictura*) ja epigramm (*subscriptio*). Samuti näidatakse, kuidas Peirce'il põhinev lähenemine võib resoneerida Kobus Marais' ideedega, käsitledes tõlkeprotsesse embleemi sees.

Lisaks arutatakse Skovoroda arusaama Piiblist kui raamatust (raamatumaailmast), väiksemast maailmast, olemise tasandist (mediumist) ja jumalike teadmiste kogumist

Umberto Eco entsüklopeedia kontseptsiooni valguses. Eco kontseptsioon osutub väga asjakohaseks mitte ainult Skovoroda mõistele Piiblist, vaid ka tema arusaamale maailma tähestikku sisaldavast Abecediast. Kõik väitekirjas tõstatatud küsimused väärivad kahtlemata edasiuurimist (ja julgustavad esile kutsuma uusi) antud valdkondadega tegelevate ingliskeelsete teadlaste poolt.

## **Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public**

I, Bondarenko Anastasiia, grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis “A Theosemiotic Reading of Hryhorii Skovoroda”, supervised by Silvi Salupere and Thomas-Andreas Pöder.

I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2.

I confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.



Anastasiia Bondarenko

22. 05. 2023