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of Hryhorii Skovoroda

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Abstract
The focus of the author's attention has been on the emblematic sense concentration in the philosophical system of Hryhorii Skovoroda. The study aims to reveal the artistic and style features of eide emblematic formation in the texts of the Ukrainian sophist, their origin, context, and conceptual classification by the author himself. The theoretical generalizations were essentially based on the philosophical treatises and dialogues by Hryhorii Skovoroda and the studies of other scholars. To analyze the issues under scrutiny, the author applied structuralist and semiotic methodology. The article highlights the emblematic sense, conveyance, and dominance in Skovoroda's works. Emblematic forms of signification play a unique role in elucidating the anthropological, metaphysical, ethical, aesthetic, and hermeneutic dimensions of the Ukrainian poet and philosopher. Skovoroda considers emblemacity a particularly effective pictorial and verbal (iconic-conventional) type of "significative" speech, functioning as metalanguage.

Key Words: emblem studies, metaphysics, sense-bearing modelling, structure, Hryhorii Skovoroda.

Introduction

In his treatises and dialogues, the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722–1794) repeatedly refers to the development of principles and historical modification of emblematics. They are generally in line with the theoretical traditions of poetics and rhetoric of the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries, including a consistent belief that "the use of emblems, symbols, and hieroglyphs in texts helps to infuse the truth more thoroughly into listeners."[1] Skovoroda treats the emblematic tradition as an old invention of the "ancient sages." Therefore, he does not identify it only with the emblem anthologies of the 16th and 18th centuries but views it as an original way of establishing a signification of universal "theology," a sacral protolanguage sprouting from mythological consciousness. He writes about this in almost every text, including the *Alfavit* (Alphabet) (approx. 1774–75), "The tales of the ancient sages are that ancient

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1   Vitalii Masliuk, *Latynomovni poetyky i rytoryky XVII – pershoi polovyny XVIII st. ta yikh rol u rozvytku literatury na Ukraini* [*Latin-Language Poetics and Rhetorics of the Seventeenth and the First Half of the Eighteenth Century and Their Contribution to the Development of Literature in Ukraine*] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1983), 177.

theology. They likewise depicted God's intangible nature in perishable characters so that the invisible could be seen, manifesting it in living beings."[2]

In the treatise *Knyzhechka, shcho nazyvaietsia "Silensus Alcibiadis," tobto icona* (1775–76; 1780; A Little Book, named "Silenus Alcibiadis," that is the Icon of Alcibiades), Skovoroda links emblematic signification to Egyptian, ancient Hebrew and Hellenic traditions, underscoring the continuity, heredity, and various nominations of the same meaning expression principle: "Such figures, harbouring secret powers, are named after the Hellenic sages: emblemata, hieroglyphica. And in the Bible, they are called miracles, apparitions, ways…"[3]

The reference to hieroglyphs, emblems, and miracles in line abreast is non-accidental; it only confirms the internal attitude to highlight the common and transitional semiosis type, which lies at the core of experience-creating and sense-arranging mechanisms activation in a deep historical projection and a broad cultural context. After all, the entire "emblematic" literature of the 16th and 18th centuries was only a modification of this type. According to Erwin Panofsky, it was in response to Horapollo's *Hierogliphica*, found in 1419, "that there came into being those countless emblem books."[4]

In the treatise *Kiltse. Druzhnia rozmova pro dushevnyi svit* (1773–1774; The Circle. An Amicable Colloquy on Tranquility of Mind), Hryhorii Skovoroda examines emblematic models relating to the Roman tradition, mentioning Cicero's treatment of symbols and emphasizing a unique efficacy of representational-verbal (iconic-conventional) signification, which functions as a kind of subtle metalanguage: "The ancient sages had their peculiar language; they conveyed their ideas through images as if it were plain words […] the image containing some mystery he terms in Greek ἔμβλημα, *emblem*."[5]

Dmytro Chyzhevskyi had every reason to claim that Skovoroda himself produced and "expounded an entire theory of emblematics"[6] whereas emblematicity became the core of his symbolic thinking, a form of figurative and logical reification of thought. "Skovoroda adapts a treasure trove of philosophical terminology to his line of thought: concepts become symbols,"[7] says Chyzhevskyi, as "he exploits and interprets objective reality, existence, God, biblical history, his biography, and the scant historical facts

2   Hryhorii Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv* [*Complete Academic Set of Works*] (Kharkiv; Edmonton; Toronto: Maidan; Vydavnytstvo Kanadskoho Instytutu Ukrainskykh Studii, 2011), 690.

3   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 742.

4   Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY, 1955), 159.

5   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 576.

6   Dmytro Čyževs'kyj, *A History of Ukrainian Literature (From the 11th to the End of the 19th Century),* trans. Dolly Ferguson, Dorine Gorsline, and Ulana Petyk (New York and Englewood, Colorado: Ukrainian academic Press, 1997), 300.

7   Dmytro Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody* [*Philosophy of Hryhorii Skovoroda*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2003), 72.

symbolically."[8] Dmytro Nalyvaiko points out that emblematicity is an intra-organizational template style type, which is why Skovoroda arranges his dialogues and numerous poems "following the principle of poetic description of an emblematic pattern. In terms of general aesthetics, he proceeded from the postulate that the artistic beauty of things lies not in their physical attractiveness, but rather in the certain symbolic idea attached to them, which is a shadow of heavenly and earthly images."[9]

Structural and Semiotic Features of Baroque Emblematicity

Emblematic mechanisms, which played a weighty part in rallying mythological experience,[10] have been "legitimated" by literature since the sixteenth century, modified into a popular form that denotes a certain type of artistic iconic-conventional modelling with a defined structure, its individual modifications, a register of themes, symbols, images, which, in general, has the hallmarks of a distinct genre while also denotes a distinctive way of metaphysical statement. Dmytro Chyzhevskyi, based on his observations of emblem studies functioning in a pan-European context, aptly noted that it was a part of "popular literature,"[11] in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, i.e., it was extensively known in its artistic form, which was relevant both for sophisticated intellectual installation and for private consumption.

The emblem formed different levels of its own semantic visibility and degree of imbrication for a specific reader, adjusting to his or her cultural, educational, and interpretative horizons. Regardless of whether the recipient of the emblematic text was familiar with the images, reminiscences, iconic and conventional allusions of the image and verbal captions, the structure and form, their complementary and mutually reinforcing predeterminancy, constructed a certain hermeneutic level of self-understanding.

Among the dominant features of Baroque culture, Aleksandr Mikhailov singles out "the continuity of allegorical interpretation of any and all matters and phenomena, as well as the tradition of "significative speech."[12] The emblem displayed how a single image could become a multipurpose medium for denoting different, sometimes

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8   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 73.

9   Dmytro Nalyvaiko, "Fenomen ukrainskoho baroko v yevropeiskomu konteksti [The
     Ukrainian Baroque Phenomenon in the European Context]," *Slovo i chas* 2 (2002): 38.

10   For more information on these issues, refer to monograph Oleksandr Soletskyi,
     Emblematychni formy dyskursu: vid mifu do postmodernu [*Discourse Emblematic
     Forms: From Myth to Postmodernism*] (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileia-NV, 2018).

11   Dmytro Chyzhevskyi, *Ukrainskyi literaturnyi barok: narysy* [*Ukrainian Literary
     Baroque: Essays*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2003), 331.

12   Aleksandr Mihailov, "Poetika barokko: zavershenie ritoricheskoi epohi [Baroque
     Poetics: the End of the Rhetoric Epoch]," in *Istoricheskaya poetika. Literaturnye epohi i
     tipy hudozhestvennogo soznaniya* [*Historical Poetics. Literary Epochs and Types of
     Artistic Consiousness*] (Moscow: Nasledie, 1994), 358.

opposing phenomena and processes, which underlines the salience of the structural-coordination relationship and the focus on a complex inter-coordinate sensibility.

Dmytro Chyzhevskyi has also observed such an absorption and stressed that the first emblem anthologies were of a purely "scholarly," scientific nature,[13] which in time transformed into "a literary variety both committed to a major objective, and to simple instruction, as well as to be a purely literary exercise or even a light persiflage."[14] The scholars associate the distinctiveness of the emblematic form with the poetic properties of the baroque style (Aleksandr Mikhailov) with the tendencies of artistic "fashion" (Dmytro Chyzhevskyi). However, in our opinion, we must first consider the epistemological and cultural aspects, and relate them to the algorithms of "popular consciousness," a distinctive type of cognitive and cultural reflection that effectively fits into the format of iconic-conventional mechanisms of perception and "analytics." Ielena Hrihorieva's statement that "the emblem in its entirety, as well as its components, can be regarded as a variety of regulating mechanisms of meaning making and sense retention in culture"[15] seems pertinent.

In the Baroque period, this "mechanism" was given a categorical nomination, focused within a definite concept of "emblem," which has not yet been employed to capture similar phenomena. There are quite a few pieces of evidence to back this up. Suffice it to recall the obligatory emphases that surface in lock-up with the works of national and international scholars on the relation of emblem with the Renaissance traditions of blazonry designing, studies on pictographic writing popular in academia, deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics, as the fantastic treatises on hieroglyphics "were the first emblem anthologies,"[16] association with classical mythology, *imprese*, commemorative medal, heraldry, symbolism, and biblical exegesis,[17] etc. John Manning aptly noted that in the early sixteenth century "a number of essentially new symbolic forms were invented or rediscovered,"[18] referring to the emblem. Therefore attempts to bridge the emblem with other types of artistic manifestations should always be interpreted as latent revelations of a distinctive universal transitivity and appropriateness of this kind of sense-bearing modelling for the workings of the human mind inventive reproduction.

The popularity of emblematics is characteristic of the pan-European context.[19] Emblem books travelled across national borders, occasionally influencing local literary

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13   Chyzhevskyi, *Ukrainskyi literaturnyi barok: narysy,* 330.

14   Ibid., 331.

15   Ielena Hrihorieva, *Emblema: Ocherki po teorii i pragmatike regulyarnyh mekhanizmov kultury* [*Emblem: Essays on Theory and Pragmatics of Regular Mechanisms in Culture*] (Moskva: Vodolei Publishers, 2005), 13.

16   Chyzhevskyi, *Ukrainskyi literaturnyi barok: narysy,* 330.

17   Peter Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: Structural Parallels Between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (University of Toronto Press, 1998), 9.

18   John Manning, *The Emblem* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 16.

19   Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 346.

and artistic traditions significantly. In particular, Feike Dietz and Els Stronks[20] have written about the influence of German religious emblems on Dutch visual culture. Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés[21] have stated the limitations of original emblematic combinations modified from their own iconic tendencies and the prominence of external loans in Hungarian literature. The influence of emblematic structures on French Renaissance literature and culture has been studied by Daniel Russell.[22]

Despite well-founded attempts to identify specific texts that served as models for Ukrainian Baroque authors, Dmytro Chyzhevskyi repeatedly acknowledges the difficulty of precise and accurate identification of all sources because in some cases we know just the titles, or only the author, excluding references to the place and time of publication, and this is crucial for the case. European emblem anthologies were often reprinted and even different editions by the same author had significant differences both in the visual presentation and in the format of the text, which, when being translated from one language to another, found new national "signifying" equivalents. The many editions of Andrea Alciato's book are a solid proof of this.[23] There were also close intertextual (interpictorial) links among the emblematic books. Suffice it to recall how the *emblemata* "Narcissus," originally appearing in a collection by Alciato through a series of compilation reproductions, resurfaces in the Amsterdam edition of *Symbola et emblemata selecta*,[24] from which it falls into Skovoroda's dialogue *Rozmova, zvana alfavit chy bukvar svitu* (A Colloquy, called "Alphabet," or "Primer of Peace"*).* Dmytro Chyzhevskyi has described similar tendencies,[25] for instance, *Symbola amoris* popularity history,[26] which combined Christian and mythological images and themes, or *Symbola politica Savedrae*, translated into Old Church Slavic by Feofan Prokopovychand many other languages.[27]

To date, it is difficult to determine the total number of emblem collections, not to mention the number of the books that popularized emblematic semiosis in "structural" and ideological terms. Peter Daly and Mary Silcox,[28] tracing the transitivity

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20   Feike Dietz and Els Stronks, "German Religious Emblems as Stimuli of Visual Culture in the Dutch Republic," *Church History and Religious Culture* 91 (3–4) (2011): 349–75.

21   Eva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés, *Emblematics in Hungary. A Study of the History of Symbolic Representation in Renaissance and Baroque Literature* (Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 2003), 246.

22   Daniel Russell, *Emblematic Structure in Renaissance French Culture* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto press, 1995).

23   For further details on this book, see Peter Daly, *Andreas Alciatus. Volume I: The Latin Emblems; Volume II: Emblems in Translation (Index Emblematicus)* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

24   Jan Tesing and Ilia Kopiievskii, *Simvoly i Emblemata* [*Symbols and Emblems*] (Amsterdam: Tipografiia Genriha Vetsteina, 1705).

25   Chyzhevskyi, *Ukrainskyi literaturnyi barok: narysy,* 334.

26   Also known as *Symbola amoris divini* and *Amorum emblemata*.

27   Chyzhevskyi, *Ukrainskyi literaturnyi barok: narysy,* 338.

28   Peter Daly and Mary Silcox, *The English Emblem: Bibliography of Secondary Literature* (Munchen; New York: K.G. Saur, 1990).

of emblematic themes, motifs, iconic and verbal reductions, argue one after another that over two thousand emblematic titles and book titles in European languages exist.

It seems appropriate to justify the popularity of emblematics in relation to cognitive processes and proceed to metaphysical generalizations. This is what Dmytro Nalyvaiko stresses, "The increased interest of Baroque literature towards emblematics stems from its inherent pursuance of visualization, and not only some pictorial rendition, but also that which was intended for inner, 'spiritual vision.'"[29] The lasting tradition of interaction among iconic-conventional representations unfolded differently in the realm of literature. Although in the 16th–17th centuries this principle of meaning conveyance was reduced to the popular genre of an "emblem," yet even before it emerged and after reaching its celebrated zenith, it had and still has a wide modified appliance. An emblem usually does no longer appear in literature, except for the European emblem collections, where its arrangement is *de facto* disclosed as a genre in its classical form (*pictura, inscriptio, subscriptio*). Already in its "baroque" prime, it has undergone various modifications, rectifications, and transformations. The German Baroque writer Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, for instance, "considers the binomial of an emblem to be a regular one, and regards an epigrammatic caption as a completely unnecessary application."[30] Eventually, the image does not necessarily have to sparkle in the form of an engraving; the visuality of the word makes it possible to replace the drawing with a brief verbal description.[31] Many scholars have concluded that for Ukrainian and world emblematics the determining factor was focus not on the classical form (format of the genre), but on the exegetical integrity of the meaning making principle where visual-verbal, iconic-conventional signification constructiveness intertwines and interacts.

The emblem arguably groups on all the rhetorical, poetic, and philosophical features of the Baroque. It represents the world from a holistic standpoint: a picture was usually arranged in a circle or square, symbolizing the completeness and self-sufficiency of the image of the world and emphasizing the weight of the detached focus. Such are precisely Skovoroda's emblem-replicas. Hence, an emblem is a form of producing a universal world picture, which, according to Valeria Shevchuk, "has got conceptual significance" and is "a key to understanding Baroque artistic structures, i. e., it is one of the main means of this stylistic movement poetics."[32]

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29   Dmytro Nalyvaiko, "Ukrainski poetyky y rytoryky epokhy baroko: typolohiia literaturno-krytychnoho myslennia ta khudozhnia praktyka [Ukrainian Poetics and Rhetorics of Baroque Epoch: Typology of Literary-Critical Thinking and Artistic Practice]," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Filolohichni nauky* 48 (2001): 11.

30   Mihailov, "Poetika barokko: zavershenie ritoricheskoj epohi," 368.

31   Ibid., 369.

32   Valerii Shevchuk, "Universalna kartyna svitu v tvorchosti pysmennykiv ukrainskoho baroko [The Global Picture in the Works of the Ukrainian Baroque Writers]," in Valerii Shevchuk, *Muza Roksolanska: Ukrainska literatura 16–18 stolit: u 2 kn. Knyha druha: Rozvynene baroko. Piznie baroko* [*Roksolana Muse: Ukrainian Literature of the 16th–17th centuries: in 2 volumes. Friend's Book: Developed Baroque. Late Baroque*] (Kyiv: Lybid, 2005), 38.

Equally, an emblem was a complex and self-contained construct within a certain iconic-conventional tradition, always come laden with a mystery, a riddle, thereby mirroring a paradigm – the world and awareness of it involve the hidden and the unknown. Metaphorism, allegorism, complex figurative parallels and structural antithetics are the components of generating the mysterious and enigmatic in an emblem. They fall within the tradition of the "mutual transitivity" of the world (visual) and writing (verbal): the principles of creation transform into the poetics of text making.

The significance of emblematic structuring in the poetics of Baroque literature asserts itself manifold. The predominance of a certain visual "stance" and susceptibility, a unique contemplative-interpretive focus that arranged dramatic ontological angles, is indeed worth pointing out here. Intricate, usually non-verbal, internal mental reactions and a reflection of the evolving nature of being around the world produce a distinctive rhetorical type. Dmytro Chyzhevskyi, when studying the philosophical style of Hryhorii Skovoroda, argued the following:

> This is a distinctive turn of philosophical thinking from thinking in concepts to some primitive thinking mode in images and through images. He moves back from the terminological use of words to their symbolic use [...] Just as in "pre-Socratic philosophers" under the imaginative expressions [...] slumber not yet fully developed concepts [...] hidden under the veil of numerous comparisons and symbols [...], so the symbolic thinking mode in Skovoroda tends to capture the whole field of thought, incorporating all conceptual, "bare" compressed, terminologically outlined.[33]

Efforts to verbalize incomplete abstract generalizations require a visual basis, making a kind of "junction node," mediated signification transfers that facilitate the proper transformation of unconscious representations into conscious ones. This mediation highlights the prominence of contemplative analogies, in general, and centres the focus of "observation," of visual and verbal convergence. Such nodes are clearly image-iconic representations, a kind of metaphysical "frame" that contributes to expressing the complex nature of the relationship between aesthetic experience and its awareness.

In his dualistic attempts to combine the interpretation of Leibniz's philosophy and the delineation of his own philosophical system employing it, Gilles Deleuze has perhaps most expressively exhibited the effect of emblematic mechanisms in metaphysical framework. The concept of the "fold" is relevant to describe his method, underscoring the function of visual effects in interpretive duplications and contemplative statements in both Baroque and postmodern times. When describing

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33   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody*, 72.

the global movement processes and the logic of their comprehension, Deleuze singles out the line of "inflexion" – "the ideal Fold (God's fold), which allows a continuous process of bending and folding to subsist."[34] To describe the ways in which the universe functions and makes sense of them, Deleuze requires distinctive renderings, such as the "Baroque House" and the folded lines' continuity, their folds and planar intersections (Figure 1).[35] There are figures enclosed in his published studies that underline all this graphically. These drawings are the centres of his systemic narrative, which he deduces his interpretative series from. Overall, the scholar consistently mixes visual statements of the tangency continuity and matter bending with mental generalizations on crushing different types of resistance that bears sense. His style and method of justification permanently focuses on transitions from the visual to the verbal. Above all in his conception of the baroque world, he has a special pronounced emblematic metaphysicality, which he brings to light through the intermediary of Leibniz's philosophy. In particular, Deleuze construes the scheme of the "Baroque House" as follows:

> Clearly the two levels are connected (this being why continuity rises up into the soul). There are souls down below, sensitive, animal; and there even exists a lower level in the souls. The pleats of matter surround and envelop them. When we learn that souls cannot be furnished with windows opening onto the outside, we must first, at the very least, include souls upstairs, reasonable ones, who have ascended to the other level ("elevation"). It is the upper floor that has no windows. It is a dark room or chamber decorated only with a stretched canvas "diversified by folds," as if it were a living dermis. Placed on the opaque canvas, these folds, cords, or springs represent an innate form of knowledge, but when solicited by matter they move into action.[36]

Like Leibniz, Deleuze outlines his philosophical transposition in the transitions of visual signifiers into sense bearing concepts; he frames his logic in parity with the imaginary logic of the universe, therefore the entire visually receptive world congruence transforms into a distinctive iconic metaphysics, which is a style feature of thinking and writing.

The reference to Gilles Deleuze provides an indication of the metaphysical, stylistic, and attitudinal relevance of emblematic forms and their semantic-coordinating functionality in interpretative constructs. One may argue for the

34   Valerii Podoroga, "Posleslovie. Zh. Delyoz i liniya Vneshnego [Afterword. Gilles Deleuze and the Outer Line]," in Zhil Deleuze, *Skladka. Leibnic i barokko* [*Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*] (Moscow: Logos, 1997), 249.

35   Gilles Deleuze, *Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), 5.
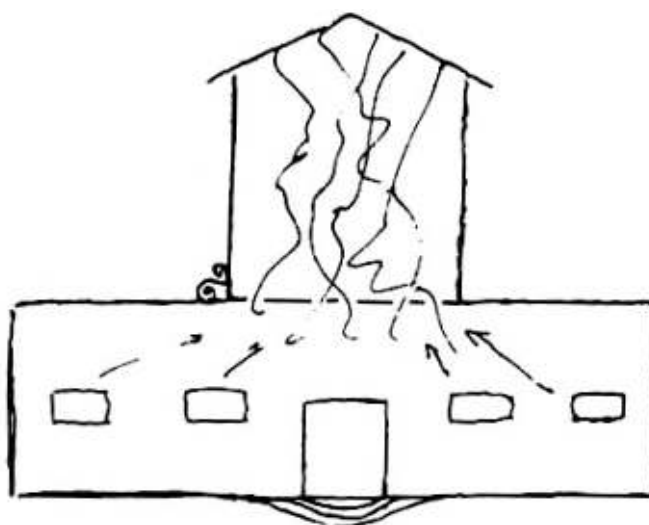
36   Ibid., 4.

Figure 1

universal permeability of emblematic amalgams, which operate effectively not only within a given genre structure, but also in the form of a reflective mechanism of a logical mode of judgement, inferred from iconic-conventional certainty and ascertainment.

Hryhorii Skovoroda's Texts
and the European Emblem Tradition

During a long period, scholars of Skovoroda's body of work did not consider the significance of emblematic signification in his philosophical and stylistic self-expression. The works edited by Dmytro Bahalei (1894)[37] and Volodymyr Bonch-Bruievich (1912)[38] and the two-volume book of 1961 are without the drawings of the Ukrainian philosopher, most of which were exact copies drawn from the Amsterdam collection *Symbola et emblemata selecta*, issued by the Dutch merchant Jan Tesing and the Belarusian Ilia Kopiievskii in 1705.

Dmytro Chyzhevskyi was the first scholar to turn his attention to the pictures in the manuscripts and to stress Skovoroda's heavy reliance on emblematic as well as symbolic ways of meaning expression:

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37   *Sochineniya Grigoriya Savvicha Skovorody, sobrannye i redaktirovannye prof.
      D. I. Bagaleem* [*The Works of Hryhorii Savych Skovoroda, Collected and Edited by Prof.
      D. I. Bahaliy. Anniversary Edition (1794–1894)*] (Harkov, 1894).

38   *Sobranie sochinenij G. S. Skovorody. S biografiej G. S. Skovorody M. I. Kovalinskogo,
      s zametkami i primechaniyami V. Bonch-Bruevicha* [*The Collected Works of
      H. Skovoroda. With the Biography of Skovoroda by M. I. Kovalynskyi, with Notes and
      Remarks by V. Bonch-Bruevich*], vol. I (Saint-Petersburg, 1912).

How scholars have eluded those parts in Skovoroda's works where he turns to images, symbols of certain notions, and provides their description in short words is simply incomprehensible. These symbols convey Skovoroda's most beloved ethical thoughts, albeit they are in somewhat random order […] there is an embarrassing oversight on the part of Skovoroda's scholars that these pictures are neither printed nor described.[39]

Skovoroda's emblematic signification was long ignored in the official academia of the mainland Ukraine. It was not until 1969 that Yurii Loshchyts's *Mudrets ta Sfinks. Maliunky-symvoly u tvorakh H. S. Skovorody* (The Sage and the Sphinx. Pictures-Symbols in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda)[40] gave the first popularized definition of the issue. The great upsurge in the study of this topic has started since 1990. Yurii Shevelov regards Skovoroda's emblematics and symbolism as a manifestation of his permanent inclination to stylistic experimentation and "a play upon words."[41] Roland Pietsch interprets Skovoroda's image of Narcissus for the purposes of German Romantic movement myths study.[42] Relying on the main points of Georg Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, Pietsch examines the main mythological visualization and its commentary in Skovoroda's treatise against the background of the West European tradition. Of particular note are the studies by Olena Mezhevikina[43] and Tetiana Shevchuk[44] who

39   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 85.

40   Yurii Loshchyts, "Mudrets ta Sfinks. Maliunky-symvoly u tvorakh H. S. Skovorody [The Sage and the Sphinx. Picture-symbols in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda]," *Nauka i suspilstvo* 6 (1969): 17–20.

41   Yurii Shevelov, "Prolegomena to Studies of Skovoroda's Language and Style," in G. Y. Shevelov, *In and around Kiev. Twenty-two Studies and Essays in Eastern Slavic and Polish Linguistics and Philology* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), 263–4.

42   Roland Pietsch, "Skovorodynivskyi mif pro Narkisa v svitli romantychnoi kontseptsii mifotvorchosti [The Skovoroda Myth of Narcissus in the Context of the Romantic Conception of Myth Making]," *Suchasnist* 10 (1995): 162–7.

43   Olena Mezhevikina, "Osoblyvosti vykorystannia emblematychnykh obraziv u tekstakh Hryhoriia Skovorody. Akteon [The Special Features of the Use of Emblematic Images in the Texts of Hryhorii Skovoroda. Acteon]," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Teoriia ta istoriia kultury* 88 (2009): 4–8; Olena Mezhevikina, "Svitlo-zorova metafora piznannia u tvorakh Hryhoriia Skovorody [The visual metaphor of light as cognition in the texts of Hryhorii Skovorody]," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Teoriia ta istoriia kultury* 75 (2008): 5–12.

44   Tetiana Shevchuk, "Emblematychni zbirky 16–18 st. v khudozhnii retseptsii H. Skovorody [Emblem Collections of the 17th–18th Centuries in the Artistic Reception of H. Skovoroda]," *Slovo i chas* 7 (2010): 71–84, Tatiana Shevchuk, "Obraz Narcissa v estetiko-filosofskom osmyslenii Novogo vremeni [The Image of Narcissus in the Early

trace Skovoroda's emblematics in the context of European emblem collections, their key patterns and symbolic representations. Olha Shikirinskaia resorts to comparison of emblematic interaction in the works of John Bunyan and Hryhorii Skovoroda.[45] Liudmila Sofronova considered some artistic aspects and semiotic models of the emblematic forms functioning in the works of Skovoroda in her study *The Three Worlds of Hryhorii Skovoroda.*[46] Some attempts to generalize studies of Skovoroda's emblematics, clarify his texts against the background of European emblem collections and theoretical treatises, ontologize the Ukrainian philosopher from the emblematic tradition were made by Leonid Ushkalov (2016) in *Symbola et emblemata selecta u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody* ("Symbola et emblemata selecta" in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda.)[47]

The above-mentioned studies convincingly affirm the weight of the European emblem tradition in the outlook and style of Skovoroda's self-expression. The literary references that he used in his works include, first and foremost, the Amsterdam collection *Symbola et emblemata selecta*, copies of pictures from which are placed in the dialogue *A Colloquy, called "Alphabet," or "Primer of Peace,"* and numerous symbols "scattered" throughout the texts, as Dmytro Chyzhevskyi and Leonid Ushkalov have justifiably proved. However, Dmytro Chyzhevskyi has emphasized that:

> We do not find a number of Skovoroda's emblems and symbols in the Amsterdam collection *Symbola et emblemata selecta*, e.g., the above-mentioned beaver with the caption "This better not lose your hearts." Yet, we encounter this emblem in Alciato's collection of emblems that was widespread back then.[48]

Comparing the notes to the emblem featuring a ship steered by cupids in Skovoroda[49] and the 654th in the Amsterdam collection, Tetiana Shevchuk points out that the Ukrainian philosopher refers to a harbour and a city on a big mountain, while in *Symbola et emblemata selecta* there is no such a mention. However, one finds these

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Modern Period Aesthetics and Philosophy]," in *Literaturovedcheskie i etnokulturnye paradigmy* [*Literary and Ethnocultural Paradigmes*] (Izmail: SMIL, 2010), 258–66.

45 Olha Shikirinskaia, "Intermedialna paradyhma filosofskoi prozy D. Beniana i H. Skovorody [Intermediate Paradigm in D. Bunyan and H. Skovoroda Philosophical Prose]" (PhD diss., Ismail State University of Humanities, 2016).

46 Liudmila Sofronova, *Tri mira Grigoriya Skovorody* [*The Three Worlds of Hryhorii Skovoroda*] (Moscow: Indrik, 2002).

47 Leonid Ushkalov, "Symbola et emblemata selecta u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody ['Symbola et Emblemata Selecta' in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda]," in *Ukraina i Yevropa: narysy z istorii literatury ta filosofii* [*Ukraine and Europe: Essays on History of Literature and Philosophy*] (Kharkiv: Maidan, 2016).

48 Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 97.

49 Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 691.

contours in a picture in Daniel de la Feuille's *Devises et emblemes anciennes et modernes.*[50] Therefore, Skovoroda, according to Shevchuk, was familiar with the book.[51]

It is common knowledge that emblem collections were extensively reprinted over several centuries in various European cities, had common sources and were often textual and pictorial modifications of their predecessors, testament to which is found in John Landwehr's[52] bibliographical review. For instance, the widely known *Symbola et emblemata selecta* with its Old Church Slavic mottoes was published three times and was a compilation copy of Daniel de la Feuille's books. In particular, the pictures and content of the captions are overwhelmingly carried over from *Devises et emblemes anciennes et modernes,* 1691 edition, and "their arrangement (six emblems per page instead of fifteen) is from the collection *Devises et Emblemes d'Amour,* 1696,"[53] which were also modifications of their predecessors.

Reprints were not always identical to the original; there were frequent textual edits as well as picture revisions, and their quality, format and style depended on the printing capacity of the particular printing house. A team of scholars from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Utrecht, the Research Institute for Culture and History at the University of Utrecht (OGC), the University Library of Utrecht, the Royal Library (KB, The Hague), the Digital Library for Dutch Language and Literature (DBNL, Leiden) and the Emblem Digitisation Research Group (Glasgow University) carried out comparisons as part of the Emblem Project Utrecht. The Dutch (1691, 1692, 1693, 1697, 1712) and German (1693, 1697, 1702, 1704) editions by Daniel de la Feuille manifest such differences in both the manuscript and the text.[54] Therefore, Hryhorii Skovoroda arguably saw and read various editions and reprints notably during his wanderings in Europe, freely inscribing certain symbolic schemes on his memory and attaching his own interpretative connotations to them. Hence, when tracing the sources of Skovoroda's emblematism (emblematicity), one should follow the extensive review of Dmytro Chyzhevskyi and Leonid Ushkalov of respective European editions, which were in Ukrainian public and private libraries of the 18th century and could fall under the spotlight of the Ukrainian poet.

Despite Skovoroda's close attention to refining texts and authors whom one should read and reread "in the first place,"[55] his works and letters do not overtly mention any names of emblem collections, much less the names of their compilers, which

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50   Daniel de la Feuille, *Devises et emblemes anciennes et moderne* (Amsterdam, 1691).

51   Shevchuk, "Emblematychni zbirky 17–18 st.," 80.

52   John Landwehr, *Emblem and Fable Books printed in the Low Countries 1542–1813* (Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1988).

53   Lidiia Sazonova, "Emblematicheskiie motivy v russkoi klassicheskoi literature [Emblematic Motifs in Russian Classical Literature]," in Lidiia Sazonova, *Pamiat kultury. Naslediie Srednevekovia i barokko v russkoi literature Novoho vremeni* [*Cultural Memory. Legacy of Middle Ages and the Baroque in the Russian Literature of New Time*] (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamyatniki Drevnei Rusi, 2012), 142.

54   For details refer to https://emblems.hum.uu.nl/project_project_info.html.

55   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 1331.

seems rather odd, as he always singles out favourite authors, just like books, as valuable informative sources. In his day, Vladimir Ern aptly noted that Skovoroda "never made references to the books he had read";[56] nevertheless, the record of the authors and books mentioned by him is quite substantial.

The commonly accepted view is that in the dialogue *A Colloquy, called "Alphabet," or "Primer of Peace"* Skovoroda interprets individual emblems from the Amsterdam collection *Symbola et emblemata selecta*, and presumably, in Tetiana Shevchuk's judgment, from the collection *Devises et emblemes anciennes et modernes* by Daniel de la Feuille. Also, worth considering is that in the collection of pictures of this dialogue we find one which stands alone and depicts a fountain that pours streams of water into the vessels of various capacities, with the caption "Equality unequal for all."[57] (Figure 2). There is no emblem with a similar portrayal in the Amsterdam collection, nor is there one in Daniel de la Feuille's book.

Figure 2

Skovoroda supplements the picture with a verbal clarification, "God is like a fountain, filling different vessels based on their capacity."[58] Leonid Ushkalov suggests that this construction "is downright inspired by emblematics, i.e., by some picture such as the emblem 18 ("Quantum volebant" – Joan 6:11) in the book by Henricus Engelgrave *Lux evangelica…*,[59] where the miracle of Christ's feeding five thousand of people is represented as a fountain and vessels arranged around it."[60] Most likely, it was "inspired" by or restored from memory, for although the emblem from *Lux evangelica…*[61]

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56   Vladimir Ern, *Hrihorii Savvich Skovoroda. Zhizn i ucheniie* [*Hryhorii Skovoroda. Life and Doctrine*] (Moscow: Put, 1912), 60.

57   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 669.

58   Ibid., 669.

59   Henricus Engelgrave, *Lux evangelica sub velum sacrorum emblematum recondita in anni dominicas, selecta historia & morali doctrina varie adumbrata* (Coloniae, Prostant apud I. à Meurs, 1655), accessed December 22, 2022, https://archive.org/details/ luxevangelicsub02enge.

60   Ushkalov, "Symbola et emblemata selecta u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody," 178.

61   Engelgrave, *Lux evangelica sub velum,* 256.

(Figure 3) is similar to the 18th, they are not identical and have distinct pictorial differences, various names and annotations.

Figure 3

The conventional title for the Engelgrave's emblem is a snippet quotation from St John's Gospel "Quantum volebant" John 6:11 meaning, "as much as they wanted". Several phrases are submitted as captions underneath the picture, among which we note "Manabit ad plenum"; "Deus dat omnibus affluenter"; and "Alia claritas solis, alia claritas lunae et alia claritas stellarum; stella enim a stella differt in claritate; sic et resurrection mortuorum" (First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians 15: 41–42). What both pieces have in common is the metaphorical basis for defining and illustrating God as a fountain.

Of note, emblematic templates had broad "wayfaring" gamut and iconic overlap, besides denoting common world-view assumptions and cognitive schemes, sometimes minor modifications, which is why it is challenging to find a primary source, as every symbolic element may be construed as derivative. Even in hieroglyphic script to describe the divine power of the Nile (River as Divine), its all-pervasive presence in the life of the ancient Egyptians, the images of an amphora from which water flows were used.[62] (Figure 4).

Figure 4

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62   Alexander Turner Cory, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous* (London: William Pickering, MDCCCXL, 1840), 41.

Thus, based on the findings of the scholars, the belief is established that Skovoroda's pictures in *A Colloquy, called "Alphabet," or "Primer of Peace"* were patterned or modified from at least three different books. However, some differences and textual comments on the pictures lead to the assumption that Skovoroda could rely on and use not only book versions of the emblems (which, as noted, he never mentions), but the selection of picture replicas, which were enlarged copies of emblematic images, adorning the halls of many cultural and educational institutions and the halls of the Ukrainian nobles' estates, where the author visited and what he highlighted in some of his works.

The popularity of the emblematic subjects, as Dmytro Chyzhevskyi notes, is testified by the fact that "folk art scholars point out, incidentally, the Amsterdam collection had an effect on Ukrainian folk art (tiles!), and the influence of this collection is also evident in Russian art. The reference by Skovoroda to the pictures he saw in Kharkiv further confirms the presence of such influence."[63]

Skovoroda also mentions emblematic pictures as intelligent decorative overlay for walls in his fable No 29 *Baba ta honchar* (1774; The Old Woman and the Potter):

> I happened to see the following on the wall of the hall in Kharkiv among the all-wise emblemata. A tortoise-like reptile with a long tail has been drawn there. A large gold star shines amid the skull, adorning it. This might be why the Romans had it called stellio and the star was stella with a caption like this below: "Sub luce lues," i.e., beneath the glow is an ulcer.[64]

This picture, according to both prof. Chyzhevskyi's[65] and prof. Ushkalov's observations,[66] is a modification of the 48th emblem from the collection *Idea de un principe politico christiano...* (1642) by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo.[67] However, in the Italian edition of 1642,[68] as in the later one of 1655[69] in Antwerp, the image referred to by Skovoroda differs explicitly. There are thirteen stars which are located throughout the lizard's torso. There is no big star near the skull, albeit the caption, however, is the same. The image of the lizard with this caption appears in the Amsterdam edition of

63   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 100.

64   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 175.

65   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 97.

66   Ushkalov, "Symbola et emblemata selecta u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody," 178.

67   *Idea de un principe politico christiano: rapresentada en cien empresas by Saavedra Fajardo, Diego de* (En Monaco, 1640, En Milan, 1642), accessed December 22, 2022, https://archive.org/details/ideadeunprincipe42saav.

68   Ibid.

69   *Idea de un principe politico christiano, representada en cien empresas: dedicada al principe de las Españas nuestro señor by Saavedra Fajardo, Diego de* (Amberes: Jeronoymo y Juan Bapt. Verdussen, 1655), accessed December 22, 2022, https://archive.org/details/ideadeunprincipe55saav.

Symbola et emblemata selecta, except for the details stressed by the Ukrainian author. Thus, Skovoroda may have borrowed certain emblematic subjects from copies of reproductions, or he may have retrieved them from memory.

Except for several minor details, all the fifteen emblematic pictures in this section of *A Colloquy, called "Alphabet," or "Primer of Peace"* are the precise replicas from the Amsterdam edition of *Symbola et emblemata selecta*. The first five are entwined in the text in the order they appear in the collection – 302, 332, 351, 422, 718, then again back to the start to make a new "circle" – 203, 310, 493, 748, and finally, we have 534, 654, 721, 744, 741, 625. The salient feature of the Amsterdam edition was that it had the two-part structure – a picture and a verbal slogan, unifying the attributes of a motto and a short epigram. The Dutch versions of the titles to the pictures were promptly duplicated in Church Slavic, German, French, Latin, English, Italian and Spanish. The text and pictures were split up and placed separately on adjacent pages. The emblematic designs were presented in the form of a catalogue collection. They had no extra explanatory details and were self-contained units, rather than propaedeutic visual-verbal presentations to lengthy textual sections, as was the case with many of Alciato's followers. Their structural-semiotic composition is arranged as a conundrum in need of decoding.

In his text, Skovoroda does not mention the names of the emblems from the Amsterdam collection, and the interpretative "processions" start instantly with an overview of the pictures (Figure 5):

Figure 5

A t h a n a s i u s. And tell me what is this, a pie or something?
L o n g i n u s. Not likely! No doubt you have not eaten much today.
It is a clam, or a tortoise, or an oyster.
Partake of it. It speaks the wisest of things:
"Seek thyself within thyself."[70]

These ideological maxims, clustered in the title of the original work, become focal points for interpretative insights and reasoned generalizations. Skovoroda also modifies the textual variants of the mottos to a bookish-Ukrainian type. However, their rendering

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70   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 685.

is not literal, but loose, and is obviously adjusted by those multilingual overlaps that were added to the emblems, above all in Latin. Olena Mezhevikina has also noted it, "unlike pictures, Skovoroda rarely if ever reproduces mottos from *Emblems and Symbols* textually; rather they convey the meaning as if written from memory or as translations from other languages used in this book."[71] Concurrently, the author of *Kharkivski Baiky* (Kharkiv Fables) supplements his reasoning with quotations from Scripture, adjusting the sense bearing emphases in the line of his "affinity" and "self-knowledge" *eide* analysis. Overall, this part of Skovoroda's dialogue is, by structure and methodology of sense presentation, close to the model that developed with Alciato's followers, in which emblems were placed at the beginning of the chapter and served as an object for lengthy commentaries and textual reasoning with a symbolically labelled issue.

We have a syncretic fusion of the book emblematics traditions of and the genre of philosophical dialogue in Skovoroda; emblematic pictures have become an integral element of sense bearing ascertaining. After all, the Greek philosophy was the ancestral source (protomediator) in which emblematic schemes of meaning-making are distinctly noticeable, for the visualization and illustrativeness of reflective maxims was quite fashionable, suffice it to recall Plato's "cave" and his reasoning about the nature of "nominations," which will be elaborated on below.

According to many scholars, Skovoroda borrowed numerous symbols and semiotic schemes from the European emblem collections. "Having looked through the Amsterdam collection," underlines Dmytro Chyzhevskyi, "we shall discover there virtually all the most important symbols that are found in Skovoroda,"[72] whilst Leonid Ushkalov is convinced that "some texts of Skovoroda are literally woven from the images in this book."[73] Olena Mezhevikina, Liudmila Sofronova and Tetiana Shevchuk reach the similar conclusions. The emblematic collections presented particularly striking and intelligently vivid multicultural signifiers, i.e., they purified and displayed iconic-conventional semiotic schemes from different contexts. Their arrival underscored the weight of the emblematic type of meaning making that had been around for a long time. To decode them, knowledge and understanding of their contexts of origin and primary meanings was mandatory.

By observing and borrowing certain symbols and emblems from emblem collections, Skovoroda contextualizes them and uses them as signs for new semantizations. He often uses imagery and textual commentary in the same scheme, for example, from Greek and biblical contexts.

Contexts of Emblematic Meaning

Skovoroda distinguishes two components in the examples of emblematic constructions – an image and a verbal commentary, "a vulture with this caption:

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71   Mezhevikina, "Osoblyvosti vykorystannia emblematychnykh obraziv," 6.

72   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 93.

73   Ushkalov, "Symbola et emblemata selecta u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody," 170.

'Brazenly begotten vanishes swiftly'; or a sheaf of grass with the caption: 'All flesh is grass.'"[74] This structure was particularly popular in the late Baroque times. It is a modified version of the classic emblem, showing the replacement of the pictorial element (pictura) with a verbal description, thereby indirectly reinforcing the image and its key parts.

Through emphasizing this very structural feature, Skovoroda reveals his ideals of effective and sophisticated artistic forms of abstract-verbal communication, extols the role of ocular (visual) symbolization in cognitive and hermeneutic processes, subtly underscores the significance of visual reception and its implication via iconic-conventional signification. Such figurative-verbal entities "hold something invaluable and significant within them, meaning: the Divine."[75] Consequently, the knowledge of God, eternity, man, and even the Bible is continually revealed through structures, focused on visual universals and visual observations and reduced to asserting the cognitive and spiritual significance of the concepts of "look" and "eye." Consider this, "The effulgence of the Wisdom of God, that out of earthly images sparkles like a precious treasure hidden in the bowels"[76] and "...outwardly, these many eyes is the figure of the one lidless, almighty eye of the God."[77]

Hryhorii Skovoroda constantly uses significative re-referencing as a means of interpretation; his hermeneutic developments form a diversity of transitions from sign to idea, from image to concept:

> A small cranny in the ship allows an awful leak inside [...] It is not the paper and the ink that make a promissory note so intimidating, but the obligation implicit therein. A bomb is perilous not because of the cast iron, rather of the gunpowder and its potential to blast. Everything that is invisible is more powerful than what is visible, and the visible depends on the invisible.[78]

Such phrasing is arranged following the emblematic principle – in a combination of verbally edited visualizations and comments to them.

Skovoroda's individual images and symbols, embodied in the word, resemble semiotic clusters, concise visual-verbal meaning-making entities, disclosed through associations, comparisons, oppositions, metaphors, etc., and coordinated by the context. They contain implicit semantics formed associatively and requiring further iconic-conventional structuring.

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74   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 576.
75   Ibid., 578.
76   Ibid., 587.
77   Ibid., 580.
78   Ibid., 665.

The Bible

Skovoroda's emblematic style is due in part to the style of the Scriptures, Its translations, the exegetical tradition and its policies, the permanent instruction of the Christian theologians to create new versions of expanded interpretations and explanations of certain fragments, phrases, images, words, and motifs of the sacred text. The interpretation of the Bible as a universal text (a distinct "symbolic world") is reflected in ideas about the structure and form of meaning making and meaning representation. Reduced to the image of a book, Skovoroda considers the text of the Scriptures only emblematically. The Bible is a "seven-headed wyvern" that, "spewing out waterfalls of bitter floods, has covered the whole planet with superstitions. They are nothing else than unwise, and as it were, divinely implemented and guarded understanding."[79]

He interprets the sacred text as a comprehensive catalogue the meanings of which unfold through implicit conveyances and analogies, "it is a symbolic world as it gathers the figures of heavenly, earthly, and subterranean creatures for them to be monuments that guide our thought into the concept of eternalness, hidden in the mortal in a way similar to a drawing in its colours."[80]

The Ukrainian theologian repeatedly stresses the significance of reading and interpreting the Bible for his existential "glee" in various texts and letters. As Leonid Ushkalov summarizes, the author of *Sad Bozhestvennykh Pisen* (The Garden of Divine Songs) "was born to interpret the Bible"[81] and did not acknowledge "any reason beyond the literal and moral meanings of the Holy Scripture, except the sign-oriented one." Skovoroda presents this sign nature in favoured and reiterated emblematic schemes, relying on the symbols of the ring, serpent, and grain, linking the cognition of the world and the sacred text in a single structural and semiotic system:

> And the serpent, with its tail in its mouth, makes known that
> the infinite beginning and the non-inchoate end, by starting it
> finishes, by finishing it starts [...] The entire Bible is premised
> on this beginning. This veritable and sole beginning is the
> kernel and the fruit, the centre and the haven, the beginning
> and the end of all Hebrew books.[82]

The philosopher was convinced that "the symbolic, discreetly figurative world of Moses, however, is a book"[83] which requires special treatment. Skovoroda contributed to the tradition of biblical noematics, heuristics by revealing the meanings of the Holy

79   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 731.

80   Ibid., 943.

81   Leonid Ushkalov, *Hryhorii Skovoroda: seminarii* [*Hryhorii Skovoroda: Seminary*] (Kharkiv: Maidan, 2004), 80.

82   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 739.

83   Ibid., 740.

Scriptures and by the emblematic "methodology" that was close to his heart, and which is the main way of "comprehensive allegorism of the Bible."[84]

Skovoroda's etymological clarifications are fairly unconventional; he constantly "wraps" his interpretation in a symbolic package, transferring the semantic "elaboration" through a range of structural-semiotic analogies and various contexts, linking visual images (figures) and corresponding verbal markers, among which a covert sense-bearing form is born. Meaning and sense for him originate in visual-verbal syncretism only; he interprets abstract categories through particular-object associations, while considering specific ones in systematic analogies of a visual, hence semantic similarity.

Comprehending and describing the multidimensional category of "beginning," which Skovoroda thinks of as the initial representation for a succession of entities – eternity, God, spirit, "primordial world," the Bible, "head of wisdom" – he cites a great deal of figures and monuments that have "rendered" it across the ages and among various nations, for instance:

> … a circle, a globe, a sun, an eye… And as a circle, so a ring, a hryvna coin, a halo, etc. are the same image. After the globe come the stars, planets, fruits, grains, tree, paradise, etc. The sun follows morning, light, day, fire, and beam, lightning, glitter, gems, gold, beautiful and fragrant flowers, etc.[85]

Alongside this, he generates distinctly emblematic schemes that complement his explanations, "Zoroaster rendered it as the sun with this song: 'Hear, O blessed one, that thou hast the eye of the Omniscience!'"[86] The category of "beginning" he expounds further increasingly "remotely," turning away from the original, delving into associative and imaginative detail, "Hence, the ancient Persians worshipped the sun; they called Sunday the day of the sun, i.e., dominical day"[87] with God being the beginning of it all. Skovoroda shifts from interpreting the meaning of the category "beginning" in terms of "figures" and "creatures," which are different elements of the same emblematic scheme, to a generalization about the true kernel of the biblical word, "the word of the entire Bible is designed to be the only monument to the beginning."[88] It is in these transitions from the visual-concrete, object-reflective to the hidden veritable spiritual beginning that Skovoroda embodies his understanding of the mutual transitivity, substantive and structural unity of the cosmos, man, and the Bible, determining the corresponding semiotic and structural syncretism of his style and language.

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84   Ushkalov, *Hryhorii Skovoroda: seminarii*, 80.

85   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, 738.

86   Ibid., 738.

87   Ibid., 738.

88   Ibid., 739.

Emblem-Bible-Hellenes

Focusing on defining the mysterious power of the biblical word, the Ukrainian thinker resorts to a terminological revision of the major modes of meaning-making and establishes their correspondence "with the Hellenes" and the Holy Scripture in the treatise *A Little Book, named "Silenus Alcibiadis," that is the Icon of Alcibiades*:

> Such figures, harbouring secret powers, are named after the Hellenic sages: emblemata and hieroglyphica. Moreover, in the Bible they are called miracles, apparitions, ways, footsteps, shadow, wall, doors, window, image, limit, seal, vessel, place, dwelling, city, throne, horse, cherub, i.e., chariot, etc. They are cattle, beasts, and the feathered tribe, both innocent and vile, and the Bible is the ark and paradise, in plain language, the menagerie.[89]

In such a fancy way of inter-lingual "terminological" transformation, Skovoroda tied the Hellenic and Biblical signification systems, focusing on the structural and semiotic kinship of the expressive forms embodied in the various word forms. Simultaneously, he observed parallels and resemblance in the definitions of the anthropocentric, ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic axiology of the ancient Greeks and the authors of the Holy Scripture. He occasionally considers Hellenic and biblical sophistry in a single world-view system, drawing analogies to biblical quotations and plots from ancient myths, ancient Greek sophists and vice versa, mixing and entwining sign-oriented and semantic vistas. They are rather evocative in the text and even in the modifications of the title *A Little Book, named "Silenus Alcibiadis," that is the Icon of Alcibiades*.

Apparently, Skovoroda often felt dissatisfaction, most likely the need for a constant expansion and elaboration, a permanent hermeneutic incompleteness of his utterance, and so had a focus on clarification and alternative designation. Consequently, it is relatively difficult to grasp and define in an established (complete) form the underlying ideas, the dominant clusters of meaning, for they surface as generalizations across the texts, they are widely covered by symbolic, allegorical, and metaphorical analogies and move smoothly from one emblematic universal to another. This is particularly evident in the titles of the texts, which, according to the notes contributors to the second volume of Skovoroda's complete works of 1973 edition, were often changed by the author, and volatility of the titles is altogether inherent in Skovoroda's works.[90]

Originally, the title of the treatise was *A Little Book, named "Silenus Alcibiadis," that is the Icon of Alcibiades.* The second version was like *The Serpent of Israel, or the*

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89   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 742.

90   Hryhorii Skovoroda, *Povne zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh, T. 2* [*Complete Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 2*] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973).

Picture named a Day, resemblings the Icon called in Hellenic – Σιληνός Ἀλκιβιάδου – Mentor of Alcibiades, and the Egyptian Lioness – Sphinx. Yet, "in his letters, Skovoroda referred to it as *Dshcher* or *Avihea.*"[91] Extensive and lavish titles were a common practice of the Baroque; the title page of a book usually presented a sophisticated and sumptuously woven syntactic structure in a delicately framed, ornate setting (allegorical engravings, moulded decoration frames, heraldry, and typographic devices). Both versions summarize Skovoroda's textual narrative in the terms "icon" (first version), "picture," and "icon" (second version), consciously or subconsciously emphasizing the importance of visual effects in his sense-bearing representations. In the first version, he chooses the ancient Greek semiotic field (Alcibiades, sileni, icon-εἰκόνα) as dominant, latently referring to Alcibiades' comparison of Socrates with the sileni, as described by Plato in *Symposium* (385–370 BC). In the second version – the Old Testament semiotic field, referring to the biblical legends of Moses' brazen serpent (one of his favourite symbols), the Creation (Day) and further extending the ancient Greek (icon, Alcibiades) and the ancient Egyptian ("lioness – sphinx"). The modifications of the title exhibit the semiotic range of the author's representation, the use of multi-context iconic-conventional concordances, the urge to enhance, extend, supplement, and clarify semantic generalizations, wavering and "transitions" between the ancient Greek and biblical semiotic systems. However, both emphasize a constant focus on syncretic signification, concentrating and expressing sense-bearing concepts in a visual-verbal interaction, an emblematic scheme where the explicit pictorial image is only an element, part of a larger structure that coordinates its semantic connotation and symbolic "reading."

The Ukrainian poet enjoyed playing with signs and texts, both "verbal acrobatics" and "quotation symphonies" (Yurii Sherekh), which often creates the illusion of over-dependence of his texts on the contexts attached to quotations. However, as some scholars pertinently point out, he arbitrarily used borrowings from definite sources (Yurii Sherekh) and even recounted the beloved Bible in his interpretation, which often contradicted the Church canons of the time and drew him closer to European Protestantism. "To him, all biblical images, including the stories of the apostles, are nothing more than 'figures,' symbols with a profound implied, figurative meaning."[92] Given Skovoroda's frequent symbolic drifting and shifting from one context to another, the sign syncretism, then, in the end, it is predictable that there is a research "conflict of interpretations" (Paul Ricoeur), which seek to capture one semantic tone, to adjust the chosen vector of study "under the wing" of a certain problem, while Skovoroda has several of them, mutually reflected in the sign transitivity.

Skovoroda is first guided by the semiotic markers of contexts, arranging his sense-bearing forms. Tentatively speaking, the course of his speculations goes from a conventional sign through re-accenting to its meaning, from the known image to its own artistic generalization, while some of his critics arrange the course of their

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91   Skovoroda, *Povne zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh,* 503.

92   Myroslav Popovych, "Skovoroda i bohoslovia [Skovoroda and Theology]," *Pereiaslavski Skovorodynivski studii: filolohiia, filosofiia, pedahohika* 3 (2015): 200.

interpretations backwards – from meaning to sign, which leads them to contexts and meanings they define, which, in fact, the author himself ignores. After all, Skovoroda often shuffles signs and contexts, introducing well-known cultural semes to semantic horizons "alien" to them. The favourite emblematism is not left out here – he transforms prominent religious images and motifs into new semantic articulations.

This trend is rather pronounced in *Narkis. Rozmova pro te: piznai sebe* (1769–71; mid-1780s; The Narcissus. A Deliberation on the Topic: "Know Thyself"), where the overlap between general and individual iconic-conventional correlates is modifiable. The dialogue text is organized as a lengthy commentary and interpretative discussion of the visualization of Narcissus gazing at his reflection in a pool of water, manifested in the title and a number of descriptions. Therefore, most discourse generalizations regarding the importance of "self-knowledge" are latently attached to it, emblematically forming a sense-bearing presentation, further visually emphasizing veritable (spiritual) and delusive (physical) self-evaluations.

Traditionally, *The Narcissus* is associated with a mythological epic literature, primarily in Ovid's Roman description: "Skovoroda was familiar with the ancient myth of Narcissus, apparently from Ovid, who translated this myth in the third book of *Metamorphoses.*"[93] However, the mythological context is what suggests that it is not the dominant sense-bearing focal point; Skovoroda borrows only the climactic figurative presentation from myth, ignoring the fabulist variants and antithetically interpreting it. Within the context of mythological tradition, Narcissus is interpreted as a symbol of self-adoration and egocentrism; the heartfelt admiration of oneself in the mirror of water induces death, which is the retribution of the Gods. The origin of this myth, in Mark Botvinnik's opinion, "is linked to the fear of a primeval man to see his portrayal (a reflection is like a double of a man, his other dyad residing outside) typical for primitive magic."[94]

Skovoroda's interpretations approximate better to the modified European literary medieval sense-forms, which, in particular, can be seen in the 718th emblem from *Symbola et emblemata selecta*, where the caption "Narcissus in the mirror of water" (which in the Old Slavic translation renderes as "Know thyself") was highlighted.[95] It is this emblematic version that Skovoroda expands and develops through the text of the Scriptures, attaching the Hellenic mythological image to the biblical context.

The ancient image, as Leonid Ushkalov puts it, "acts as rhetorical 'matter' in the amplification of a long series of themes"[96] and acquires a new meaning through the

93   Yurii Barabash, "*Znaiu cheloveka...*" *Hryhorii Skovoroda: Poezyia. Fylosofyia. Zhyzn* ["*I know a man...*" *Hryhorii Skovoroda: Poetry. Philosophy. Life*] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia lyteratura, 1989), 163.

94   Mark Botvinnik, "Narciss [Narcissus]," in *Mifologicheskii slovar* [*Mythological Dictionary*] (Moscow: Sov.enciklopediya, 1990), 382.

95   Tesing and Kopiyevskiy, *Simvoly i Emblemata*, 240.

96   Leonid Ushkalov, "Ni Yovisha, ni Marsa, ni Saturna, ni Apollina [No Jovis, No Mars, No Saturn, No Apollinus]," in *Z istorii ukrainskoi literatury 17–18 stolit* [*From the History of Literature of 17th-18th Centuries*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 1999), 174.

involvement of a new context. After all, Skovoroda makes it clear in the *Prologue* that he treats the subject of the myth as a very ancient parable of the Egyptian 'theology,' which provides background for the Jewish one. "Narcissus is a grandeval parable sourced from aged Egyptian theology, which is the mother of the Hebraic one."[97] He apparently identified this myth in his memory as a universal semiotic-structural arrangement, the edifying and allegorical allusions of which are present in the Egyptian and Jewish traditions. There were certain reasons for this, for the ancient mythological epic literature scholars treat it as "etymological," "Judging by the name of the character, the myth of N. is of pre-Greek origin; folk etymology has approximated the name N. to the Greek verb 'to freeze,' 'to petrify,' and this convergence may have served as one of the sources of the myth."[98] Undeniably, Skovoroda uses the semiotic backbone of myth, modifying it to suit his lengthy emblematic interpretation.

The "theological" context, defined by Skovoroda as the genesis of the image, offers interesting analogies, too. In the light of the Greek etymological tradition, the Ukrainian philosopher and poet not only employs the concept of "theology" to define Christian exegetical doctrines, but also applies it to articulate pre-Christian theogony and frequently stresses the heredity and coherence of both. The ancient Greek context emphasizes the visual projection, and the biblical – the textual one. Notwithstanding the fact that it is biblical quotations that serve as Skovoroda's prime vehicle for speculative enlightenment, they did not explicitly and within the context of the author's preferred semiotic "transitivity" affect, in any way, the emphatic nominative semes of Narcissus and thereafter his image, albeit there were reasons for doing so.

Major sources for the textual formatting of the dialogue are the Pauline epistles, the quotations, paraphrases, and arbitrary renditions of which are densely entwined in the work. The first part of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans has a reference to Narcissus, who ranked among the seventy of the Holy Apostles (St Paul's Epistle to the Romans 16:11). St Narcissus is also mentioned as a Christian preacher in the Athens in the menology under the account of the 31st day of October. The name "Narcissus" was used in orthodox circles when taking monastic vows; we may recall, for example, Armashenko (Harmashenko), the teacher of rhetoric at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, a hieromonk of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and the author of the course *Liber septem Oratoriae difficultatibus sigillis munitus in gratiam consiliandi legentis ac considerantis [animorum] intus et foris conscriptus, hoc est ab extra decore, laude et dignitate, qua ab intra utilitatem rhetorum adornatus magnifica Tulli Severiensis dextera sedulae menti ad legendum et [utinandum] porrectus anno 1719,* who adopted the name of Narcissus. Dionysius Furnoagrafiot's book *Yerminia or Instruction in the Art of Painting, compiled by the hieromonk and the painter Dionysius Furnoagrafiot, 1701–1755* suggests representing the Apostle Narcissus as a young lad with a barely sprouted beard.[99] Overtly or covertly,

97   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, 231.
98   Botvinnik, "Narciss [Narcissus]," 382.
99   Dionisij Furnoagrafiot, *Erminiya ili nastavlenie v zhivopisnom iskusstve, sostavlennoe iermonahom i zhivopiscem Dionisiem Furnoagrafiotom. 1701–1755 god* [*Hermynia or*

Skovoroda never refers to this nominative connotation, resorting to the "Narcissus" image as an iconic rendering from ancient Greek mythology, apparently mediated by the emblem collections. Therefore, it can be said that the Ukrainian philosopher resorted to selective modification and blending in emblematic signification, making use of signs and texts belonging to different contexts and traditions. This reflects Skovoroda's distinctive creative and philosophical "love of liberty." The impression one gets is that he is most eager to avoid subjecting his text and style to the same ideological, semiotic, and semantic cliché, adjusting the known cultural and signifying contexts to his own expressive pattern.

Plato-Emblem-Skovoroda

Dmytro Chyzhevskyi was the first Ukrainian scholar to point out the weight of emblematic and symbolic meaning expression in Plato and his followers, seeing this as a forerunner of Skovoroda's style structuring, "One of the sources which symbolic art derives its imagery from is the philosophical literature of Platonism. Already in Plato, we meet the power of symbols: incidentally, we find some of them in Skovoroda, too."[100] Recounting individual symbols of Plato, which would later resurface in the Ukrainian philosopher's oeuvres, Dmytro Chyzhevskyi nevertheless states, that "Plato's images reached Skovoroda indirectly," primarily from "symbolic works" of the 16th–18th centuries.

The Ukrainian scholar highlights a long-term symbolic transitivity, pulling a semiotic thread from Plato to the sixteenth-century texts. All this further confirms the functionality of the emblematic tradition, which transferred "symbols, emblems, images"[101] from pre-Christian to Christian semiosis. However, such foundations also point to an ancient literary-philosophical syncretism, above all in the sphere of the manifestation and image-logical representation of certain meanings, determined by epistemological and hermeneutical affinity – by similar ways of sense-bearing manifestation of reality. Serhei Averyntsev notes the integrity of the symbolic and allegorical interpretation in Plato and his followers and refers to it as "a hermeneutic method oriented towards deciphering the code of the alien message,"[102] which has had a centuries-old life.

Leonid Ushkalov and Oleh Marchenko have noted that "Plato's myth of the 'cave' models a number of oblique dimensions of Skovoroda's metaphysical universe."[103]

Instruction in the Art of Painting, Compiled by the Hieromonk and Painter Dionysius Fournoagraviot. 1701–1755] (Moscow: Izdatelsstvo Svyato-Vadim. bratstva, 1993), 153.

100   Chyzhevskyi, *Filosofiia H. S. Skovorody,* 100.

101   Ibid., 101.

102   Serhei Averyntsev, "Neoplatonyzm pered lytsom platonovoi krytyky mifopoetycheskoho myshleniia [Neoplatonism against Platonic Critique of Mythopoetic Thinking]," in *Platon i eho epokha* [*Plato and His Epoch*] (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 85.

103   Leonid Ushkalov and Marchenko Oleksandr, *Narysy z filosofii Hryhoriia Skovorody* [*Essays on Philosophy of Hryhorii Skovoroda*] (Kharkiv: Osnova, 1993), 28.

Indeed, the very definition of "models" most sharply outlines the format of the ways and principles of philosophical truths' representation, partly adopted from Plato. It is not so much the definite contemplative generalizations, "sense-bearing constants" that Skovoroda interprets and artistically modifies, but rather the style and form of iconic-verbal explications, the way of meaning expression, which relies on the ever-present interaction of visual-verbal signification to elucidate the intricate and vast existential diversity. Skovoroda is concerned and fascinated by "constructions" and structures that allow him to uncover truths inspired by inner exegesis and introspection; he seeks universal methods with a deep absorption in different traditions. He considers Plato's way of thinking and his theology to be of equal value along with the biblical one, pointing out relevant Jewish theological insights in him:

> L o n g i n u s. It appears to me that I'm getting a whiff of Plato's ideas.
>
> J a c o b. Whether I am a Pythagorean or a Platonist, there is no harm, as long as I do not worship the idols. Both Paul and Apollo are nothing compared to Abraham: "there is none good…"
>
> G r e g o r y. Let the matter rest! Please leave him alone. He has put a good word out of a pious heart. Filth is dearer to God than fine gold, if one has faith. Judging is not by looking at the face. Think back to the widow's penance. Do not confine your God-knowledge in the spacelessness of Palestine. The wise men, i.e., the philosophers, do also attain God. Just as there is one God of Jews and Gentiles, so there is one wisdom. Not all of Israel is wise, as well as nor are all Gentiles ignoramuses.[104]

Arguably also influenced by Plato, Skovoroda attacks those biblical narratives where chronotopical and fabulist inconsistencies are traced, placing a logical interpretation of biblical plots on top of his belief in the "symbolic style" of the Bible in *Dialoh. Potop zmiinyi* (1780s; 1791; Dialogue. Its Name is "The Serpent's Flood").

"Philosophical rhetoric" of Plato expresses a latent conflict between the possibilities of language expression and cognition and shows similarities with the principle of "emblem," above all the structure and logic of sense-bearing presentations rearrangement. "The theory of ideas" is a classic manifestation of one of the first cognitive emblematizations. Bertrand Russell regarded it as an attempt to reconcile logical and metaphysical interpretations in the realm of "the meaning of general words."[105] Undoubtedly, it shows the beginnings of semiotics, the first attempts to unravel the nature of the sign and its functions in epistemological and axiological

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104   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 463.

105   Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 123.

processes. Plato's reflections on the relation between tangible objects and their geometrical representations and on sign and association point to this, "…be aware that they summon up the assistance of visible forms, and refer their discussion to them, although they're not thinking about these, but about the things these are images of."[106] In Skovoroda's *"The Serpent's Flood"* we find similar justifications about the painter, the colours and the painted image, "The actual images, even before turned up on the wall, were always in the artist's mind."[107] Either way, these parallels underline the relevance of the contemplation and analysis processes, the "correct" relation of actual images and their intrinsic iconization in the cognitive analytical processes for both thinkers. For Plato, the definite objects of the real world were only a "shadow" of the ideal nature lurking within them. Skovoroda shares the same view, recognizing the hidden ideal presence of God in "figures, creatures, and images."

Plato underscores the metaphysical nature of the word, distinguishing between the real, ideal, and nominative forms. The perception of reality according to Plato is thus reduced to an "emblematic reduction"; visible objects are only "shadows" and can be cognized through decoding following a certain scheme, by equating with an ideal type. Gilles Deleuze remarked on the massive impact of such foundations on the European philosophical tradition, which would then permanently unfold epistemological models of world-view representations between icons and simulacra:

> Platonism thus founds the entire domain that philosophy will later recognize as its own: the domain of representation filled by copies-icons, and defined not by extrinsic relation to an object, but by an intrinsic relation to the model or foundation.[108]

The Ukrainian philosopher redefines and appropriates the meaning of Plato's "tale of the cave" to support his own theological and ethical conclusions:

> These patricides and the blind who grope the walls Plato denominates as meanness, which rests in a deep ditch and hell, beholds only murky night and considers nothing to be true, except what can be touched and clenched in the fist. It is the source of impiety and destruction of the heart-felt city.[109]

Skovoroda unfolds a structural scheme of classification and emblematic representation of the material and spiritual planes, the world order, man, the Bible, truth, guided by the principles and nominative generalizations of the ancient Greek philosopher.

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106   Plato, *The Republic*, 218.
107   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 944.
108   Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 259.
109   Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv,* 945.

Thus, Skovoroda formats his works according to the principle of meta-textual expansion (re-accenting, restatement), extensively interpreting primarily the Holy Scripture and the writings of theologians, author-developed and folk sources, which sound in different "voices" in his "verbal fugue." He seeks and modifies emblematically reduced patterns that can be used as semiotic models to articulate his philosophy. It is impossible to describe and denote this quality without using his emblematic reduction technique – his text is like a motley "fabric" (Roland Barthes) that weaves together various codes and voices, which create the effect of stereo and bitonality. Therefore, various semiotic and semantic parties can be observed in them.

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