

# eTopoi **Journal for Ancient Studies**

Special Volume 6 (2016): Space and Knowledge. Topoi Research Group Articles, ed. by Gerd Graßhoff and Michael Meyer, pp. 736–756.

Verena Lobsien – Bernd Roling – Cornelia Selent

## The Gaze to Heaven: On the Topopoetics of the Body-Soul Relationship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Edited by Gerd Graßhoff and Michael Meyer,  
Excellence Cluster Topoi, Berlin

eTopoi ISSN 2192-2608  
<http://journal.topoi.org>



Except where otherwise noted,  
content is licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution 3.0 License:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>



# The Gaze to Heaven: On the Topopoetics of the Body-Soul Relationship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

This project consists of three studies which examine how the cognitive faculties are hierarchically ordered and related to each other in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. Special attention will be paid to the epistemic relationship between the body and soul as well as the exact role and status of the senses. The following questions will be asked: how did medieval philosophy view Adam's natural cognitive ability before the fall? How dependent was his knowledge on the senses? Which role did the School of Chartres, influenced by Plato, assign to the senses in the story of creation? How do such 'metaphysical poets' like John Davies or George Herbert express the connection between the body and soul and its epistemic function through the medium of poetry? All three studies are situated at the intersection between the history of philosophy and literature and seek to show how poetry and philosophy interact when addressing philosophical questions.

Body-soul relation; the senses; Adam; Suarez; School of Chartres; Bernardus Silvestris; Metaphysical Poets; Sir John Davies; George Herbert.

## I Introduction

More so than in the modern period, pre-modern epistemological reflection refused to reduce knowledge to a single level, but instead sought legitimizing hierarchies of validity, creating a complex framework in which different types of knowledge and cognitive abilities were defined, brought together in their various modes of interaction and structured in hierarchical relationships. The work of the research group D-4 *Immaterial Causes* investigates this epistemological ranking of knowledge together with the specific topopoetics that such a scale of knowledge demanded in the philosophical tradition across different historical periods.<sup>1</sup> Such questions will be asked as: how did the theorists of epistemological status bridge the gap between ideal maxims and empirical intuition? How could a knowledge based on Biblical revelation be related to or distinguished from a knowledge based on the use of the cognitive faculties bestowed upon a human being by nature? Which cognitive possibilities enabled one to progress from the instantiated idea to a concept acquired by abstraction from this idea? How could instantiated idea and abstracted concept be distinguished in their scope and validity? Who was responsible for the articulation, transfer and organisation of such knowledge? Which philosophical and poetic media were used for these purposes, as the dividing line between poetry and treatises was fluid? Principles that constitute certain knowledge were not just necessary at the beginning of a sequence of causes, i.e. from the first, absolute and immaterial down to the sensible, corporeal and material; for all types of knowledge and cognition, the certain and indubitable principle also offered an ideal form against which the other, deficient forms could be measured. As will become clear in the following, this ranking of knowledge

1 For the idea and concept of a topopoetics see Lobsien 2012.

corresponded to a process of increasing specification, visualization and metaphorization of cognitive possibilities, a *descensus* that began from purely mental contents and first principles and progressed to multidimensional, poetic images in the domain of the imagination and the senses. These images made the abstract tangible.

The empirical world of the senses could stand at the start of this epistemological and ontological scale of knowledge, so it was necessary for thinkers of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period to examine the connection between the body and soul as a hylomorphic unit and so to define the epistemic validity and scope of the senses. The three studies presented here may at first sight seem like sketches of contingent episodes in the history of philosophy, but all three document the kind of ranked topopoetics through which the epistemic interaction of body and soul was charted. All three studies are at the intersection of the history of philosophy and of literature. Bernd Roling's study revisits the beginning of this scale of knowledge as he examines the knowledge and cognitive possibilities of Adam, the first man. This beginning is understood to be not just the ontological and soteriological principle (*arché*) of all knowledge but also as its aetiological criterion. What did this perfect and first natural knowledge look like for Scholastic philosophy and what character did it need to have in light of the various philosophical traditions? What relationship should the body and soul have to each other in the acquisition of knowledge? Was the first knowledge a revealed knowledge? In which domain was it valid or relevant? Was it solely based on (Platonic) ideas, illumination or introspection, i.e. the contemplation of a superior reality within the human soul or mind? Or was it necessary to acquire this knowledge from the use of the senses in and about an external world, the world in which Adam found himself in the Garden of Eden? Cornelia Selent's study will pick up this thread and focus on 12th-century natural philosophy. Her project seeks to shed light on the status of the senses and empirical knowledge from the perspective of the Latin translation of Plato's *Timaeus*. What role did the senses play in the philosophy of the School of Chartres? How did the thinkers of the 12th century integrate the senses into their version of a philosophical creation story? This study, too, will deal with the epistemic relationship of the body and soul, but it will also focus especially on the poetic transformation of hylomorphism; this idea is developed in the work of the Latin poet Bernardus Silvestris and in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal*. Verena Lobsien's study will focus directly on poetry, in the English-language philosophical poetry of the 16th and 17th centuries. 'Metaphysical Poets' such as John Davies and George Herbert adopted ingenious – and very different – ways of grasping the body-soul relationship intellectually and of illustrating it in the imaginative and emotive sphere, as they tried to define the epistemic status of the soul, which in its embodied state strives for knowledge. How did they outline the scope of the senses and what language did they use to make tangible the role of the senses, imagination and emotions, both in the body-soul complex and in the whole project of salvation?

The studies of both Cornelia Selent and Verena Lobsien show that the language of poetry had the advantage of ambiguity, which it could appropriate for aesthetic purposes. With its help it was easier to articulate the *aporiai* which a purely conceptual philosophy had tried, perhaps in vain, to solve. One of the most important conclusions of our work is therefore to have shown that thus it was the knowledge of the poets that was ultimately able to react to the questions of the philosophers.

## 2 The pinnacle of natural cognition (*cognitio naturalis*): Adam's knowledge in the Garden of Eden<sup>2</sup>

A philosophically coherent reconstruction and exposition of ideal human knowledge had a fixed place in the vast machinery of Scholastic philosophy, namely in the discussion of what human knowledge and natural cognitive ability must have looked like in the Garden of Eden. Scholastic philosophers believed that, even before the fall of man, Adam must have been equipped with a natural knowledge and cognitive ability (*cognitio naturalis*) that was unaffected by the consequences of the Fall. But what would this have looked like? The assumption of an ideal natural knowledge was fraught with difficulties and even the connection between 'ideal' and 'natural' seemed to imply a contradiction in terms. How could the nature of and requirements for natural cognition be reconciled with Adam's supposed perfection? How could Adam have been created *ex nihilo* with all the powers and perfections of an intellect bound to an organic body yet at the same time be endowed with a natural ability for knowledge? The ensuing discussion shows how far Neo-Scholastic philosophers were willing to go to accommodate their Aristotelianism.

In his *Summa Theologiae* Thomas Aquinas gave a series of authoritative answers to this problem complex, which were highly influential in the following centuries.<sup>3</sup> In the late 16th century, Francisco Suarez, the most productive of the Jesuit commentators on Aquinas, offered the most complete discussion of this question, taking into account other possible answers and perspectives.<sup>4</sup> For Suarez there is no doubt that Adam both had to and was supposed to make use of all the perfections that the natural order had bestowed on him; this also applied to his knowledge and epistemic abilities. According to Suarez and Aquinas, it was therefore impossible that Adam could have had to acquire his knowledge of the world in the Garden of Eden through experience.<sup>5</sup> Although the acquisition of knowledge through experience is a defining characteristic of human knowledge, it would contradict the complete and perfect act of Creation, in which man was created in a single moment with all of his cognitive faculties and abilities fully formed and in perfect working order. An analogy illustrated this point: at the moment of Creation, God supposedly did not plant trees which first needed to grow, but instead created them in full bloom. Any form of ignorance or lack of knowledge would contradict Adam's primordial perfection. Moreover, as Suarez noted, Adam was not only created with the ability immediately to conceive children but also with the ability to raise and educate them in an ideal way. Therefore, it was necessary that, from the moment he began to exist, he had had at his disposal the complete store of natural knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Even Church Fathers such as Eusebius of Caesarea and John Chrysostom found clear proof of this in scripture: in the Book of Genesis, Adam had all the creatures come to him and he gave them names.<sup>7</sup> As Suarez emphasizes, in order for him to do this, he not only had to know the real natures of things but must also have had a vast ability to distinguish and identify; this implied that he must have been familiar with the disciplines of logic and dialectic.<sup>8</sup> However, not everyone accorded the same weight to this passage; Suarez's counterpart, the Prague Jesuit Rodrigo Arriaga, pointed out in a somewhat patronizing manner that names are contingent and *ad placitum*, which means that they are not natural but conventional. To partition and classify all creatures through naming was not in and of itself a sign that

2 Bernd Roling.

3 Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I, q. 94, a. 1–4 and Thomas Aquinas 1972–1976, q. 18, a. 1–6.

4 Suarez 1856, c. 9–10, 228a–243b.

5 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 1, 228af. and Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I, q. 94, a. 3.

6 Suarez 1856, c. 9, §§ 4–5, 229a–230a.

7 John Chrysostom 1856, *Homilia* 14, § 3 and Eusebius of Caesarea 1974–1991, Liber XI, c. 4.

8 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 3, 229a.

Adam possessed knowledge of the real natures of things; clearly Arriaga did not subscribe to a Cratylean philosophy of language. Yet he also had no doubt as to the perfection of Adam's knowledge and cognitive ability.<sup>9</sup>

If Adam could not acquire knowledge through the usual process of abstracting, which begins with the senses and passes through the production of mental images (phantasms) to the derivation of concepts from these images, how was it possible for him to have knowledge at all? A simple *infusio* or God directly implanting into Adam's soul a *species*, as mental contents were generally called, was ruled out because it would be, as Thomas and Suarez emphasize, of a supernatural and not natural character.<sup>10</sup> There was only one possible way, which nevertheless appears to be a compromise solution: according to Suarez, Adam had to receive all the mental contents, not alone but together with the associated phantasms from which the concepts were derived. Angels, on the other hand, only had the *species*, from the recombination of which they could derive all knowledge. Yet only by being equipped with both the *species* and the phantasms could Adam possess a *human* knowledge, as Aquinas explained. Therefore, it was necessary to create in him simultaneously not only the mental world of concepts and thoughts but also their ability to refer and relate to the world. Thus, Adam's knowledge did not differ from ours in substance and nature but only in accident, i.e. through how it was implemented. Qualitatively, it was on a higher level.<sup>11</sup> For Arriaga Adam possessed an ideal *syncrasia*, or an optimal relation of the humors, and so a tranquillity of the soul which could keep the emotions in check. As he could hardly be distracted or led astray by his emotions, he was on that account far superior to all other human beings.<sup>12</sup>

For the Scholastics of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, the Bible provided the impetus for investigating in more detail the specific objects of this ideal abstractive cognition. What did it mean to say that Adam knew everything? The naming of the animals suggested that the limits of human knowledge were given by nature herself. Moreover, since Adam gave no names to the stars and fish, Tommaso de Vio Cajetan suggested in his commentary on Aquinas' *Summa* that the first boundary of knowledge may be found in what a human being could actually experience in the course of life. Was knowledge therefore limited by the category of (geographical) space?<sup>13</sup> Both Hugh of Saint Victor<sup>14</sup> and Bonaventure, who in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* deals extensively with Adam's knowledge, rejected such an assertion.<sup>15</sup> For them Adam had the *entire* cosmos at his disposal and, as Aquinas concludes, the impressive beauty of it in its totality must have prompted him to praise God.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Thomas notes that his knowledge must have had limits which coincide with the limits of natural knowledge. Adam was able to construct long and complex syllogisms which included a myriad of details about the empirical world; he could do this much faster than anyone could today. His knowledge of the stars could be explained as arising from the internal logic of sense perception, yet it allowed him to make conclusions about the natural course of natural things and events.<sup>17</sup> However, knowledge of *futura contingentia*, i.e. contingent future events, was not available to him. If all natural things were at his disposal, the processes of the present, the stellar constellations and the workings of the stars could be projected onto the future with little difficulty and with maximum range, as they were all subject to

9 Arriaga 1643, Vol. I, Disputatio 37, Sectio I, 390a.

10 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 6, 230af. and Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I, q. 94, a. 2, ad primum.

11 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 7, 230bf.

12 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio I, 391a.

13 Cajetan 1888–1895, I, 94, a. 3, §§ 1–2.

14 Sankt-Viktor 1880, Liber I, Pars VI, c. 12–13, Sp. 270f., C–B.

15 Bonaventure 1883–1889, Liber II, dist. 23, a. 2, q. 1, 537 f.

16 Suarez 1856, c. 9, §§ 9–10, 231a–232a.

17 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 11, 232a.

an internal necessity; on that account Adam would immediately be able to predict a solar eclipse centuries away.<sup>18</sup> In the case of more contingent natural events such as heat waves, storms or bad weather – events that were not governed by the workings of the stars – the ability to foresee them was more difficult for him, as Arriaga noted. And once the existence of human free will is taken into account, Adam could not have had any knowledge of the future.<sup>19</sup>

Just as Adam in the Garden of Eden was able to draw conclusions about the future only through the observation of the present, Suarez emphasizes that the same held for the past. Adam's intellect, created *ex nihilo*, could not have received any thoughts and mental images of events that took place before he was created. To have such knowledge of the past would have been a miracle. According to Suarez Adam could know that the cosmos was created, but he did not know when it was created. God had to convey to him in an act of revelation what had happened during the previous five days. Through the *species* in his intellect and the many phantasms accompanying them, Adam grasped in the present all the concrete particular objects from the universal perspective and, moreover, a number of objects in his direct view.<sup>20</sup> However, did he grasp all of the concrete particulars in their concrete particularity? Without a doubt he had more knowledge of the objects than anyone ever had after the Fall. Yet he was not an angel and for that reason his concepts did not necessarily and automatically encompass the created world in its entirety.<sup>21</sup> Although Adam may have had a vast knowledge of orange trees, for Arriaga one could hardly claim that on account of the phantasms and concepts implanted in him he knew exactly how many orange trees were growing in America. Being familiar with all the orange trees – and by extension, all of the created objects – was not necessary for Adam to form a concept of an object and therefore did not call into question the perfection of Adam's knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Another impossibility, given the conditions of natural knowledge, was the ability to see into the mental life of another person. Since for Suarez external signs manifested the inner workings of the soul, Adam could marshal his vast knowledge of nature in order to draw conclusions about other people's thoughts. He was therefore able to grasp certain aspects of Eve's mental and emotional state, much more than was possible for anyone after the Fall, but he could not read her mind.<sup>23</sup>

Ever since Aquinas an important question had been whether God and the angels were included in Adam's natural knowledge. Obviously, God could directly provide a human being with a *species* of himself. If he did that, however, this knowledge of God would no longer be a natural knowledge. Aquinas was of the opinion that the intellect, the *lumen naturale*, could have knowledge of God through his created works, the *vestigia Dei*. Here both Suarez and Arriaga concurred.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Aquinas proposed another way by which Adam could have come to have knowledge of God: Adam's knowledge was free from all distorting factors and his senses did not hinder the formation and use of concepts; rather, the faculties of his soul existed in an ideal harmony and relationship to each other. Therefore, it would be possible for Adam to perceive God through the effects that directly showed themselves in his mind, i.e. the echo of divine perfection in his intellect (*effectus intelligibiles*).<sup>25</sup> Neither Suarez nor Arriaga were to make anything out of this conjecture, which ultimately could be understood as weakening the function and power of illumination. Even though no one questioned the hegemony of the intellect

18 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 12, 232af.

19 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 2, 391b.

20 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 13, 232bf.

21 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 14, 233af.

22 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 2, 391b.

23 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 15, 233a.

24 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 16, 233b f. and Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 2, 392a.

25 Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I. q. 94, a. 1.

in the First Man, could a knowledge of God acquired in this manner still be considered natural?<sup>26</sup>

A related question dealt with the natural knowledge of angels. Angels could not supply human beings with concepts of themselves. Once again, God could have imprinted a *species* of them in the intellect, yet this too would have been a form of revealed and not natural knowledge. Was Adam then in a position to acquire knowledge of angels without any direct help from God? For Suarez it was possible to have such knowledge of the pure intelligences through a consideration of the order of creation, because the angels controlled the spheres. If the Aristotle of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* had derived the existence of separate intelligences from the movement of the spheres, why should Adam not have been in a position to do so as well? Eve must therefore have known that the serpent that spoke to her was a demon; all she had to do was to synthesize her knowledge of the nature of angels with her knowledge of physical events, as Suarez noted.<sup>27</sup> Arriaga, who had read Copernicus thoroughly, even if he was not to his taste, was less optimistic: as angels were not necessarily responsible for controlling the movement of the spheres, the heavens were of no help here. Instead, Adam contemplated the nature of his mind and the corporeal world and was on that account able to progress by comparison to the possibility of pure intelligences, i.e. angels, which concluded the hierarchy of created beings. Yet Adam had no proof of their reality for so long as he met no angel in the Garden of Eden.<sup>28</sup> At the very least, his expulsion from the Garden, which was overseen by a cherub, would have provided him with help on this epistemological question.

The mode of Adam's knowledge, too, needed further explication. If his knowledge was identical with the form of knowledge possible for a typical human being, then did Adam think discursively, i.e. in deductions and conclusions that, step by step, bring together mental images, concepts and *species*? According to nominalists like Gregory of Rimini, both Adam and the angels thought discursively, but they possessed a form of discursivity that enabled simultaneous access to all *species*.<sup>29</sup> On that account Adam's thought was not limited by the categories of prior and posterior, categories which characterize syllogistic thought; this was similar to the angels, who had simultaneously at their disposal all the *species* of the intellect. Gregory called this type of discursivity *discursus illativus* and contrasted it with the *discursus successivus* of the normal human intellect. Aquinas himself suggested something similar when he claimed that Adam looks at the water and thinks immediately of God; this occurs in his mind simultaneously and cannot be considered a real conclusion, inference or syllogism. But is this really discursive knowledge or thought? John Capreolus clearly rejected Gregory's hypothesis and the Jesuits agreed with him in this.<sup>30</sup> If Adam's knowledge is to remain natural, acts must follow separately upon acts; these acts must then create a *habitus* or at least result from a *habitus* which consists of such acts.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, as Arriaga emphasized, Adam's *human* nature with its specific characteristics must be taken into account. Even if Adam's sense organs were entirely under the control of the intellect and no emotion threatened to hinder his analysis of concepts, he was still tied to a body and his cognitive ability was in that respect not without its limits.<sup>32</sup>

Connected to discursivity was the question of whether Adam's knowledge was capable of being improved upon or even expanded. Could his knowledge increase in relation to the number of his observations and experiences in the Garden of Eden? Or were new

26 Suarez 1856, c. 9, §§ 17–18, 234af. and Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 2, 392a.

27 Suarez 1856, c. 9, §§ 19–20, 234b–235b.

28 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 2, 392af.

29 Rimini 1979–1987, Vol. 5, Liber II, dist. 11, q. 1, Conclusio prima, 232–234 and Conclusio secunda, 239.

30 Capreolus 1908, Vol. 2, Liber II, dist. 3, q. 2, § 3, 293–298.

31 Suarez 1856, c. 9, §§ 21–24, 235b–236b.

32 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 3, 392bf.



experiences and the acquisition of knowledge impossible if he already had all the concepts and associated phantasms? Aquinas explained that the concepts that were already present in Adam's intellect could not formally allow for expansion, yet he was in a position to confirm their content by coming into contact with even more objects. In other words, this affected not a concept's extension but its intension.<sup>33</sup> Bonaventure, Aegidius Romanus and Alexander of Hales held the same view as Aquinas.<sup>34</sup> For example, Adam knew that the large flecked animal he saw for the first time was a giraffe without ever having seen a giraffe before. He not only obtained a concept of a giraffe from God but was also given a series of different perceptions of a giraffe, which showed larger, smaller, more or less flecked giraffes. God had adequately supplied reason and the intellect with the necessary objects and perceptions. Nevertheless, in encountering other giraffes Adam's concept of a giraffe could become clearer or more lucid. As Suarez suggests, perhaps the speed at which Adam formed judgements or synthesized mental contents could have increased the more familiar he became with objects of the same kind.<sup>35</sup>

Arriaga is skeptical. Could greater familiarity with concrete particulars really increase the intensity of a *habitus* which is in and of itself complete or perfect? Arriaga claims that he repeatedly prayed the Lord's Prayer, yet never had the impression that the last time he prayed had increased the power or intensity of his words and prayer. Yet was there not a value in and of itself in an encounter with something new, even if it was with objects with which Adam was already familiar? And could this not be of an advantage to Adam? In that respect, he should continue to familiarize himself with all sorts of giraffes. As Arriaga emphasized, it was not possible for Adam to forget a *species*, something which can so easily happen to *post lapsum* human beings on account of their fragile bodily nature. As his perfect life was not to last long, he hardly had any chance to do so.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the most decisive and difficult problem complex, however, was the question of whether Adam could err. If his knowledge was natural, then the answer must of course be yes. But how did his ability to err relate to his perfection before the Fall? Bonaventure in particular was concerned with this.<sup>37</sup> It was not necessary that all the objects be evident to Adam nor that they allow for certain and indubitable judgements; as mentioned above, future events or thoughts could be accompanied by opinions or beliefs which were not verified. Did Eve not err when she believed that there would be no negative consequences to her eating the apple? Human beings constantly experience situations in which they form false beliefs or opinions of things.<sup>38</sup> For Arriaga if an angel had appeared to Adam in the form of Eve, how would he have avoided being deceived and incorrectly believing the angel to be Eve?<sup>39</sup> Luis de Molina, a fellow Jesuit, offered up another point for consideration: it was obvious that Adam and Eve erred during the Fall. Even if it was impossible for them to commit most errors, did there not need to be at least a small domain of knowledge where it was possible for Adam to err? In order for demons to have tempted Adam and Eve, this possibility needed to exist. Molina responded to this objection by claiming that it was not Adam's error that resulted in the sin, but rather that the sin initiated by Adam's pride had affected his cognitive ability so much that afterwards he was susceptible to error.<sup>40</sup>

33 Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I. q. 94, a. 3.

34 Aegidius Romanus 1581, Vol. 2, Liber II, dist. 23, q. 1, a. 3, 237bf. and Alexander of Hales 1924–1980, Vol. 2, Liber II, Prima pars, Inquisitio IV, Tractatus III, q. 4, c. 2, a. 1, 770–772.

35 Suarez 1856, c. 9, § 28, 237bf.

36 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 3, 393af.

37 Bonaventure 1883–1889, Liber II, dist. 23, a. 2, q. 2, 539–541.

38 Suarez 1856, c. 10, §§ 1–2, 238bf.

39 Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 4, 394a.

40 Molina 1622, Disputatio 26, 696a. In addition, see Suarez 1856, c. 10, § 12, 242a f. and Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 4, 394af.

Was Adam, as one might infer from the foregoing remarks, in the state of nature immune to all errors *in rebus naturalibus*? Not only Aquinas but also Durandus and Augustine held such a view of Adam's primordial knowledge.<sup>41</sup> God created Adam with a degree of perfection that was incompatible with susceptibility to error. At the same time, as Aquinas admits, natural knowledge is in its *essence* always susceptible to error, even if one had to postulate in Adam's case an ideal body and the complete control of the intellect over all the other faculties of the soul, as well as assume that his will and desire never impeded the exercise and functioning of his intellect. Yet even in the Garden of Eden there were too many ambiguous cases, too many uncertainties and too many *opinabilia* that could have made Adam run the risk of claiming something false when forming a judgement.<sup>42</sup> For both Suarez and Arriaga there is only one solution. God himself had to help Adam with a gift (*donum*) of grace and so ensure his freedom from error. Suarez then needed to reconstruct how errors actually came about. Adam had a perception, a concept and a thought; then either an *aestimatio*, an assessment, linked the object and idea with previous ideas and concepts, or else a new concept was formed, a possibility which, however, was not envisioned for Adam. As Suarez emphasizes, a first judgement precedes the *aestimatio*, which tests the *probabilitas*, i.e. the probability or grade of reality, of an object. All further assessments of the object would either follow upon this initial judgement (*iudicium*) or not occur.<sup>43</sup> This is where divine providence had to be deployed.<sup>44</sup> For example, if Adam saw an antelope in the morning twilight and the conditions of perception were prompting him to conjecture that this creature was a giraffe, divine providence would intervene and block Adam's judgement. He would then ignore the antelope and not waste a single thought on its nature. If the conditions of perception were sufficient to recognize the giraffe, then God would allow Adam to form a judgement and identify the creature as a giraffe. Here the fact that Adam's knowledge is perfect must in reality be more important to God than the fact that it is natural.

I hope it has become clear by now what kinds of difficulties entangled the Aristotelian-inspired theologians of the Early Modern Period when they wanted to integrate such parameters as perfection and the complete absence of presuppositions into an epistemic system which did not allow for them. To put it simply, they had to manufacture a history as the precondition of their own existence and assume an experience which in reality was not an experience at all. In the same vein, in the 19th century Philip Henry Gosse taught that God had not only created Adam with a navel for which he had no use but had also placed fossils in the earth 5000 years ago to allude to its great age. At the same time Suarez and Arriaga had become occasionalists who had to force God to intervene constantly in the cognitive process for the sake of a higher purpose, so that they could maintain the illusion of the absence of presuppositions, an illusion which they, as Aristotelians, valued highly. It was paradoxical that Aquinas and Suarez had to choose this option precisely because abstraction and the experience of the sensible world as the precondition of all knowledge were so important that they had to exist even in the Garden of Eden.

41 Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895, I, 94, a. 4; Thomas Aquinas 1972–1976, q. 18, a. 6; San Porciano 2013, Liber II, dist. 23, q. 3, 32–35 and Augustinus 1884, Liber XI, c. 30, 362–364.

42 Suarez 1856, c. 10, § 4, 239bf.

43 Suarez 1856, c. 10, § 5, S. 240a, §§ 7–8, 240bf.

44 Suarez 1856, c. 10, § 9, 241af. and Arriaga 1643, Disputatio 37, Sectio 4, 394b.

### 3 The senses, emotion and the acquisition of knowledge: Two studies on the *Timaeus latinus* and the literature of the High Middle Ages<sup>45</sup>

For the poets of the 12th century who were committed to an allegorical interpretation of nature, the Latin translation of and commentary on a part of Plato's *Timaeus* by Calcidius, completed ca. AD 400, was an extremely inspiring source.<sup>46</sup> There they could read about the philosophical significance of the senses both in the origin of the human being and, following from that, for his existence in general. To treat the senses, which Timaeus constantly revisits in his narrative, merely as a point of contrast to the intelligible world of the Forms, would be to ignore many of the other ways in which *sensus* is woven into the cosmology of the Latin *Timaeus*. This presents the concretion of a human being in narrative form and offers a differentiated view of sensation in the context of the *primordium hominis*. After Timaeus brings up the *opifex deus* to explain why he wanted to fill the cosmos with living beings (Plato Latinus 1962, 41a–d), he clarifies what is special about human existence by claiming that human beings *praeter ceteras animantes deum suspiciant*<sup>47</sup> and can properly honor the gods (ibid., 41e–42a). Through the gaze to heaven he indicates for the first time the meaning and importance of sight for the investigation of the divine spheres. Subsequently, Timaeus mentions the key moment in the coming-to-be of a human being, which is when an immortal soul is implanted into a mortal body. The necessary and immediate consequence of this is the emergence of the passions or emotions, i.e. desire, fear and anger, which is immediately followed by the formation of the senses.<sup>48</sup> Sensation, therefore, emerges as the initial and specific result of the coming-to-be of a human being and, since it evidently developed from the emotions, it is in its nature associated with man's affective and disordered original state. While, due to this origin, the senses have less prestige compared to the non-affective intellect and the rational knowledge associated with it, they still have an important function as they bear witness to the successful integration of body and soul; thus, the senses are a *testis animalis* of the first order. In this sense Calcidius writes:

There can be no life without sensation since I believe that the difference that exists between what lives and what does not is that the former has sensation while the latter is without it and those that are just born begin to have sensations immediately but when the soul is separated from the body they cease to have sensations.<sup>49</sup>

In his commentary, William of Conches, a 12th-century natural philosopher, emphasizes the 'right of primogeniture' of perception and lists the individual senses, ranking them in their order of importance:

45 Cornelia Selent.

46 Plato Latinus 1962, XV.

47 In the divine sphere of the Forms not only the *sensibilia* themselves but also the modes of perception, through which things first become *sensibilia*, have a pre-existence. On the motif of the *contemplatio coeli* see Pfeiffer 2001, esp. 198–282 on the School of Chartres.

48 Plato Latinus 1962, 42a–b, p. 37: "Cumque necessitate decreti corporibus inserentur [sc. *animae*, C.S.] corporeaque supellex varie mutabitur quibusdam labentibus et aliis inuicem succedentibus membris, primo quidem sensum ex uiolentis passionibus excitari, post quem mixtam ex uoluptate tristitiaque cupidinem nasci, tum vero metum atque iracundiam ceterasque pedissequas earum perturbationes diuerso affectu pro natura sua permoventes; ..."

49 Plato Latinus 1962, p. 216: "uita quippe sine sensu esse non potest, siquidem inter ea quae uiuunt et quae uita carent haec sit, opinor, differentia, ut sentiant haec, illa sine sensu sint nascentiaque simul cum uita sensum auspicentur et in diuigio corporis et animae sentire desinant."

*primo quidem sensum excitari* before the imagination, reason and intellect. This happens *ex violentis passionibus* since, as Boethius says, in a living body affection precedes sensation in that light strikes the eyes, voice the ears, heat, cold, roughness or smoothness meet the hands, sweetness and other nuances of taste affect the tongue and a sweet-smelling odor or the opposite affects the nose; through this the inner soul begins to perceive.<sup>50</sup>

If sensation is the first clear sign of the successful integration of body and soul – and in essence, of life –, then this could be an important clue for the interpretation of the (Neo)-Platonic cosmology of Bernardus Silvestris.<sup>51</sup> His ambitious allegorical poem *Cosmographia*, written in ca. 1147, consists of two parts, *Megacosmus* and *Microcosmus*, which describe the creation of the world and of human beings respectively. Three instances, Urania, Physis and Natura, participate in the *creatio hominis*, whereby Urania leads the soul from aethereal heights down to earth and Physis forms the material body; Natura's task is then to join together body and soul.<sup>52</sup> If the moment of their connection coincides with the emergence of sensation, should *sensus* not find an echo in the poetical embodiment of this moment? The opening scene of the poem shows that this is indeed the case. With her complaint about the chaotic state of matter and her demand for an orderly shaping of it, Natura provides the impetus for the great work that has long been envisioned by and inscribed in divine providence. Yet Natura's poetic diction here differs essentially from that of Noys, who is the embodiment of the divine intellect. When Natura says of herself that *si sensu fortasse meo maiora capesso*,<sup>53</sup> she is offering fundamental insight into how she understands who and what she is, as she clarifies the perspective from which she grasps being and existence. The language that Natura chooses makes clear that her nature and essence have their roots in the senses and the key phrase *sensus meus* serves to highlight her area of competence. The semantic ambiguity of the word *sensus* plays a decisive role here because, in addition to referring to an idea, thought or even mental image, it can clearly describe bodily or physical sensation. Noys, however, has a very different understanding of herself, as she explains in the subsequent prose section; she is the *dei ratio profundius exquisita* and *scientia et arbitraria divine voluntatis*.<sup>54</sup> She is removed from the world of the senses, as she is closer to God, so she defines her area of competence without reference to the sensible world. Natura's view of God, however, is from a very different perspective: *nempe deus, cuius summe natura benigna est, / larga, nec invidie miseros sensura tumultus*.<sup>55</sup> Although the semantic field of *sentire* can also refer to what is intelligible, the semantics of sensation still remain. The God of Natura is a *deus sentiens*, whereas the God of Noys is a *deus rationalis*. When dealing with the chaotic *Silva*, the subject of this literary commotion, the poet keeps to the poetic diction that characterizes these figures, which at the same time expresses the ontological and epistemological worlds in which they move. For Natura, *Silva* is a material instance to which she only has access through the senses and it is this

50 Conches 2006, 221: "... PRIMO QUIDEM SENSVM EXCITARI ante imaginationem et rationem et intellectum, et hoc EX VIOLENTIS PASSIONIBVS quia, ut ait Boetius, sensum praecedit in uiuo corpore passio, uel cum lux ferit oculos uel uox auribus instrepat, uel calor uel frigus uel asperitas uel lenitas occurrit manibus, uel dulcedo et alii saporis afficiunt linguam, suavis uel contrarius odor tangit nares, quibus anima intus quiescens excitata sentire incipit." The small capitals mark quotations from the *Timaeus latinus*.

51 For the author and his work see Silvestris 1978, Introduction, pp. 1–15.

52 Silvestris 1978, *Microcosmus* XI, 142: "Trina igitur tribus superincunbit opera, cuique sua. Compositio anime: ex Endelichia, et virtutum edificatione; corporis, ex materie preparatione; utrorumque corporis et anime formativa concrecio, de celestis ordinis emulatione. Prior igitur ad Uraniam, secunda ad Physim, tertia ad te, o Natura, dinoscitur pertinere."

53 Silvestris 1978, *Megacosmus* I, 7. In the next verses (8f.) *maiore* is explained: "*mollius excudi Silvam, positoque veterno, / posse superduci melioris imagine forme*."

54 Silvestris 1978, *Megacosmus* II, 5–8.

55 Silvestris 1978, *Megacosmus* I, 11f.

fact that makes it possible to describe *Silva*: *Silva rigens, informe chaos, concretio pugnax, / discolor Usie vultus, sibi dissona massa, / turbida temperiem, formam rudis, hispada cultum / optat, [...]*.<sup>56</sup> As herself a figure with sense-perception, *Natura* performs in this moment what she will bequeath to human beings in the creation of ensouled life; with this she fades as an allegorical figure at the end of poem and becomes ‘invisible,’ as the action of connecting body and soul is not narrated but performed. In making *Natura* an epic heroine, Bernardus lends the senses – against the backdrop of a Platonic philosophy of nature – poetic validity and significance.

The relationship between the senses and the acquisition of knowledge is fraught with tension due to the proximity of the senses to the passions or emotions. Although the senses, taken as a collective, are the cause of confusion in the soul and of irrationality, they can also provide a remedy for this. Timaeus admits this much at least indirectly to his listeners; he appropriates an image of childhood, in which he can draw parallels between bodily growth (assimilation of food) and spiritual growth (education and the acquisition of knowledge through the sense of sound) (Plato Latinus 1962, 44). Subsequently, he makes a division among the senses and establishes an exact hierarchical relationship between the individual senses and their importance for the acquisition of knowledge. He gives an extensive explanation only of the physiology of sight (ibid., 45–46) and then praises the visual and auditory faculties of man (ibid., 47) while passing over the physiology of hearing. Plato expressly accords both senses a close relationship to the transfer and acquisition of knowledge whereas for the other three senses, i.e. smell, taste and touch, there is no relationship beyond an emotive or affective relationship. It is clear that practical considerations play a role here; this is not a universally valid downgrading of the senses of smell, taste and touch. The justification that is offered for the value of sight and hearing is that they are the prerequisites of philosophy and philosophical activity: the gaze to the heavens makes possible the observation of the stars and with that the contemplation of the laws that govern them, while through the ear we come to know of philosophical doctrines as well as the harmony of music and the cosmos. Plato’s preference here is clear, yet it is obvious that other professions, e.g. jurists<sup>57</sup> or doctors, have a different opinion about the relevance and significance of the senses of taste, smell and touch. Yet for the philosopher the pragmatic acquisition of knowledge is crucial for his view of the senses as he can only practice his profession through the information that is transmitted by them. Thus, Plato’s utilitarian view of the sensory apparatus can temper the predominantly negative assessment of the senses of sight and hearing in his work. A passage from Wolfram of Eschenbach’s *Parzivâl* can illustrate the influence of this utilitarian view of the senses which, besides in the philosophy, medicine and law of the 13th century, surfaces in Middle High German epic poetry. Gurnemanz, who trains knights, exhorts Parzivâl to make use of all the senses and perceptions if he wants to have a comprehensive knowledge of the world: “ir kunnet hoeren und sehen, / entseben und dræhen. / daz solt iuch witzen næhen.”<sup>58</sup> Since for the acquisition of knowledge the senses have an undisputed value that even Plato recognized, it is no surprise that this idea found its way into the vernacular literature of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in the 12th century, which was characterized by a ‘thirst for knowledge,’ this idea was expanded to include all the senses, not just sight and hearing.

56 Silvestris 1978, *Megacosmus* I, 18–22.

57 For jurists the testimony of any of the senses is important. In a court of law it is necessary to ascertain whether the defendant was seen or whether someone heard something suspicious; in addition, the senses of taste, smell or touch can provide relevant information about a crime. For this idea see *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, II, 8 (Nüßlein 1994).

58 Wolfram von Eschenbach 2008, 171, 22ff.: “You can hear and see, / feel and smell. / That should make you wise.”

#### 4 Poetic knowledge, poetic economy: ‘Ensoulement’<sup>59</sup>

One of the major problems for Early Modern thought is to understand how the soul lives in the body. Much depends on how it is solved, not least attitudes towards immortality, resurrection and salvation. Determining the relationship between body and soul or the relationship of the parts of the soul to each other appears to be a rather difficult task for the argumentative tools that philosophy has at its disposal. Even ancient philosophers were obviously well aware of this difficulty, for at crucial points in their argument they resorted to modes of poetic or more precisely, allegorical speech. Thus, in the *Phaedo*, Plato portrays the soul as an invisible and immortal entity that inhabits a body; the soul is supposed to appropriate and make use of the body as its visible place of residence but instead finds itself imprisoned in it.<sup>60</sup> In Book I of the *Politics*, Aristotle, too, maintains that the soul should rule over the body like an *oikos* and manage its sensual nature well; moreover, he argues that a thriving *oikonomia* should exist in the soul in which the rational parts control all others.<sup>61</sup> Such allegorizing forms of speech have both a poetic dimension and an epistemological function: they are able to express what cannot be expressed in other ways as they allow us to approach what is concealed through what is revealed and what is immaterial through the medium of material signs.<sup>62</sup>

As a mode of ‘speaking otherwise’, allegory says one thing and means another. As Neoplatonists like to emphasize, this semantic doubleness is well suited to express the workings of the divine. Although God does not appear to the senses, his operation may be brought to apparition allegorically, i.e. made apparent as a hidden efficient cause.<sup>63</sup> For Eriugena, the world is *metaphora Dei* – it is permeated by the world soul and continually and allegorically speaks of it. Thus, creation may be understood as the house of God and the human soul as his temple, created, maintained, inhabited by him and, ideally, ruled by his spirit. Christian Neoplatonists find additional support for this conception in scripture.<sup>64</sup>

Against the backdrop of a classically grounded topoetics, partially transformed in accordance with Christian doctrine,<sup>65</sup> Renaissance England offers interesting examples of ways in which the allegorical reference to ensoulment as a way of good household management and to *oikonomia* as a way of inanimating and governing a commonwealth is employed in the struggle for truth and orthodoxy. Here, at critical points in the debate, poetic knowledge begins to substitute or at the very least to complement philosophical-theological knowledge. This often happens in texts of considerable length and in the pursuit of didactic aims.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the extended comparison of the human body to a house, castle or household ruled by the soul structures Canto 9 (*Castle of Alma*) in Book II of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>67</sup> Taking as an example some of the shorter poems of the metaphysical poet George Herbert, I would like to show how the ‘poetic economy’

59 Verena Olejniczak Lobsien.

60 Plato, *Phaedo*, 79–84c.

61 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254b.

62 For a topoetics of allegory see Lobsien 2012 and Lobsien 2016.

63 For a brief account of this idea see the section above on the *Timaeus latinus* and the literature of the High Middle Ages. For a more detailed discussion of poetic Neoplatonism see Lobsien 2010.

64 E.g. 1 Cor 6, 19 or 2 Cor 6, 16.

65 This can be no more than a glance at what this transformation involves. In examining this complex one would have to take into account versions of ancient and early modern Stoicism with their recommendations of self-government and physio-psychological household management. On this and related topoetical problems see also Lobsien 2015, especially chapter 4.2 (200–220).

66 A satisfactory treatment of this subject would require readings of many long poems such as John Donne’s *Anniversaries*, written on the death of Elizabeth Drury, including a critical discussion of the ‘traducianist’ reading recently undertaken by Ramie Targoff (cf. Targoff 2008).

67 For a detailed discussion see Lobsien 2013, 255–282.

in the sense hinted at functions not only in producing poignant tropes but also powerful poetic concepts. To illustrate this, it is instructive to contrast Herbert's use of these figures of thought with Sir John Davies' long didactic poem *Nosce Teipsum* (1599). In dealing with the same conceptual complex, this poem places the emphasis quite openly and in a completely different manner on the re-arrangement and rehearsal of familiar propositional knowledge.<sup>68</sup>

For Davies it is precisely the topical character of these metaphors that enhances their persuasive power and enables politically opportune variations. For him the soul rules the body as Queen Elizabeth rules her kingdom:

Even as our great wise *Empresse*, that now raignes,  
By *soveraigne* title over sundrie lands,  
Borrowes in meane affaires her *subjects* paines;  
*Sees* by their eyes, and *writeth* by their hands.

But things of waight and consequence indeed,  
Her selfe doth in her chamber them debate;  
Where all her Counsellors she doth exceed,  
As farre in judgement, as she doth in state.

[...]

Right so the *Soule* which is a Ladie free,  
And doth the justice of her *State* maintaine,  
Because the *Senses* readie servants bee,  
Attending nigh, about her Court the braine,

By them the formes of outward things she learnes;  
For they returne into the fantasie,  
What ever each of them abroad discernes;  
And there enroll it, for the mind to see.

But when she sits to judge the good and Ill,  
And to discerne betwixt the false and true,  
She is not guided by the *Senses* skill,  
But doth each thing in her owne Mirror view. (337–344, 357–368)

The aim of this passage is not just to portray the origin and effects of a type of knowing, willing and deciding that goes beyond the dimension of the senses (“a power above the *Sense*”, 372). More importantly, it is about processes of interaction or a type of guidance and governance that views the instruments by which it accomplishes this as parts of itself. Even if the entity or instance that is fundamentally responsible for governing is placed over and above the instruments it employs, it appears still sympathetically connected to them. In other words, the fundamental model is one of an astoundingly frictionless transition between different spheres of being.<sup>69</sup> The senses, in particular sight and hearing, do the preliminary work for and assist the other faculties of the soul while the soul looks at things “through” them (433). This is what the “*Economicke Art*” (939) of the soul consists in: the

68 In the following I cite from Davies 1975 with line numbers in parentheses directly after the quotation. I have discussed *Nosce Teipsum* in greater detail in *Wissen vom Menschen in der Welt. Didaktische Poesie der Frühen Neuzeit (Sir John Davies' Nosce Teipsum und anderes)*, FU Berlin, February 2014.

69 We can find this idea in Nemesius' *De natura hominis*, which Louis Bredvold names as a source for Davies – see Bredvold 1923, 745–769. In addition, see van der Eijk, *Von der Natur des Menschen. Menschenbild und Naturwissenschaft im antiken und frühchristlichen Denken*, HU Berlin, December 2012 and Nemesius 2008.

soul governs the bodily household (940, 946) just as a monarch like Elizabeth governs the state. Everything here depends on the relations between the agents.<sup>70</sup>

From a systematic point of view, we are, however, treading on problematic ground. Middle Stoic and Neoplatonic ways of thinking seem to be conflated, with Davies' catchy and succinct verses glossing over the inconsistencies that may arise from the clashes of competing explanatory models.<sup>71</sup> In this sense, his text implies or veils questions rather than posing them. Despite its interrogatory gestures, *Nosce Teipsum* tends to give answers and bypass problems rather than confronting them. This also holds for Davies' treatment of his first major theme: the question of Adam and Eve's knowledge, including the exact nature and extent of their knowledge of self. Originally, Adam and Eve were provided with the faculty of reason, which enabled them to see the divine light and behold the Highest face to face:

[...] their reasons eye was sharpe, and cleere,  
And (as an Eagle can behold the Sunne)  
Could have approach't the *eternall light* as neere,  
As th'intellectual Angels could have done (9–12)

But curiosity-driven desire corrupted the human will. As a result, the superior faculty of insight is rendered powerless: "to give *Passion* eyes, [they] made *Reason* blind" (28). While the first humans once resembled eagles on account of their extraordinary power of vision, they are now transformed into bats: "*Battes* they became, that *Eagles* were before" (35). The dramatic loss of a higher form of understanding and epistemic access is described in words that refer to an impairment of the senses, and metaphysical blindness is allegorized as the (assumed) sensory deficiency of nocturnal hunters. Under these conditions it is difficult to imagine how the divine spark could be rekindled and the original perfection of the senses restored – and with it the possibility of clear and lucid knowledge:

How can we hope, that through the Eye and Eare,  
This dying Sparkle, in this cloudie place,  
Can recollect those beames of knowledge cleare,  
Which were enfus'd, in the first minds by grace? (61–68)

Such a *recollectio* can only succeed by way of a recovery of self-knowledge, and in his many verses Davies' poetry seeks, with considerable suavity, to lead his readers onto this path. In addition, the amplificatory mode typical of the genre suggests to the reader that the author possesses an infinite store of knowledge. More could easily be added to the already impressive sequence of stanzas. The poem's scope reflects the poet's confidence that it will be of equally vast utility for his readers. In keeping with this type of authorial stance, rhetorical poets like Davies tend to leave no problematic areas, doubtful responsibilities, room for uncertainty or productive irritation.

All this is different in the poems of George Herbert, although they, too, address economies of the soul. The epistemic advantage they have over *Nosce Teipsum* derives from the way they present their problems as yet awaiting satisfying solutions. For a long time

70 There are similar formulations in later passages; cf., e.g., "*Will* is the *Prince*, and *wit* the Counsellour" (1209) and the metaphors in 1210–1240.

71 In Davies the soul appears to be sympathetically connected with the body and with all the other creatures of the world. A human being can therefore be understood to be a microcosmic representation of the world – "the world's abridgement" (884). Man finds himself in a precarious intermediate position between angel and animal, the terrestrial and the divine – "th'*Horizon* twixt both kinds" (883). It is this intermediate position which allows him to participate in both spheres (879–880). Man's participation in and difference from creation are juxtaposed in Davies in a manner comparable to Pico's speech on the dignity of man.



scholars have viewed Herbert's preference for domestic figurations in the collection of poems published posthumously in 1633 as *The Temple* as a clear indication of his ideological orthodoxy. In contrast, a topo-poetic perspective could lead to a necessary revision of this cliché by focussing attention on the semantic potential of these tropes and their classical pre-figurations. It is undeniable that Herbert repeatedly foregrounds the ideas of God's fatherly concern and 'economic' care (*providentia*) for his creation. This becomes evident in the poem *Providence*, which thematizes one of the favourite ideas of Platonic-Hermetic natural philosophy – the Chain of Being –, illustrating it with scientific curiosities on the one hand and blending it with eucharistic ideas on the other (133–136). Here all creatures come together and are placed closely side by side as guests at the table of God, who as a host takes care that they want for nothing.

In other, more anthropocentric contexts, hospitality and domesticity appear more problematic. For example, in *Man* the human being is presented as a potential dwelling place for God, while at the same time it is shown just how little of this providential economy is accomplished and how much remains yet to be desired before a hylemorphic union of soul and body is fully realized. The coming of God – His soul moving in to the house, thus effecting its true 'ensoulment' – is still pending. Domestic comfort, good household management and hospitality in the required theological sense are throughout portrayed by Herbert as not yet actually present, or present only in an incomplete manner.<sup>72</sup> They appear to be dependent on the grace of God, which in turn requires a human being ready to welcome it in a state of receptivity hardly to be achieved for good under the conditions of this life.

In the poetic economy of *Man's Medley*, humanist certainties too are placed in topo-poetic suspense. The poem explores man's amphibious position, which was so important for the Neoplatonists from Plotinus to Pico. It emphasizes man's ability to attain to the divine as well as the dangers and temptations that threaten him on account of his sensual and material nature. Herbert's transformation of this *topos* does not so much reproduce<sup>73</sup> as question it. First, the opposition between mortal body and immortal soul is invoked in quite conventional terms ("In soul he mounts and flies, / In flesh he dies," 13–14). Next, however, it is translated into a textile metaphor which also, significantly, belongs to the domain of the household. This in turn reminds us to recognize man's superiority over all other creatures in the "trimming" of his garment (18) with "curious lace" (16), while these ornaments at the same time indicate that he belongs not to himself but to another. They are not mere decorations of his livery but also show his subservience and expected loyalty to his true lord. The lord of the house, however, seems all too often to reside elsewhere.

In his relationship to earthly pleasures and the obligation to enjoy them as befits him, man next becomes part of an ornithological comparison. As birds when drinking raise their head to heaven, this comes to be seen as a natural demonstration of the austerity and correct perspective that a human being must struggle to acquire:

Not that he may not here  
Taste of the cheer,

72 Among the famous poems compare, for instance, *The Collar*, *Affliction (I)*, and *Love (III)*; also *The H. Communion*, *Longing* (49–54), *The Call*, *The Search*, *Church-monuments*, *Church-musick*, *Church-lock and key*, *The Church-floore*, *The Windows*, *Content*, *The World*, *Coloss 3.3*, *Mortification* (see Herbert 1978 [1941]). See Drury 2013 for a recent attempt to review many of these from a biographical perspective.

73 And thereby 'transfer' it in an assured performance (7–12). – Bernd Roling has recently shown to what an extent the foundations of a transfer of knowledge from the beginnings to the 18th century lie in the aesthetic otherness and performative qualities of didactic poetry. See Roling, *Der Gesang der Philosophie: lateinische Lebrdichtung im 18. Jahrhundert*, Annual Conference of the Excellence Cluster Topoi, November 2013. In not overtly didactic texts (such as Herbert's), however, performativity may work against mechanisms that ordinarily ensure transfer.

But as birds drink, and straight lift up their head,  
 So he must sip and think  
 Of better drink  
 He may attain to, after he is dead. (9–24)

However, this twofold orientation and double alignment together with the emphasis on the ability of all earthly things to function as signs makes palpable a fundamental asymmetry that in turn exposes a systematic deficit. The two worlds that the human amphibium is equipped to inhabit are by no means symmetrical. Florentine Renaissance philosophy tended to gloss over this difficulty, which points to a fundamental problem: according to Neoplatonic thought, creation is perfect, the cosmos in its best possible working order. In an apersonal framework of emanation, ascent and descent, in which the One, the Intellect and the Soul are connected to each other ‘epistrophically’, there is no room for salvation. Neoplatonists need no soteriology. For Christian Neoplatonists, however, this is all-important. For Herbert, man’s intermediate position appears literally as a crux that amounts to a double threat. *Sensus* and *intellectus* do not readily work together to enable an *ascensus*, as the permeability of the sensible world and its receptivity to the intelligible are not simply given. Man is not only endowed with reflexivity, but also stricken by it:

But as his joyes are double;  
 So is his trouble.  
 He hath two winters, other things but one:  
 Both frosts and thoughts do nip,  
 And bite his lip;  
 And he of all things fears two deaths alone. (25–30)

There is, of course, a dogmatic way out of this difficulty, which would at this critical juncture attempt to establish the superiority of a Christian theology of the Resurrection. But it is not pursued here. Instead, the last lines of the final stanza take a different and at the same time this-worldly and meta-poetical turn: “Happie is he, Whose heart | Hath found the art | To turn his double pains to double praise” (34–36). The solution to this problem is thus shifted onto the heart and mind of man and is at the same time located in the text itself. The insight at stake is not just a matter of knowledge in the sense of cognition; rather, it can in the last resort only be articulated via the medium of poetry and the imagination. Moreover, it repeatedly requires the Redeemer’s hospitable welcome. Quite literally, God has to ‘concede’ to the human soul, who is thus guided into the position of a cordially invited guest.<sup>74</sup> This insight translates pain and mortification together with the artist’s labor into an act of praise which in the poem is both performed and reflected on. This is indeed “art” in the sense of concealed artifice. In the end, the text humbly points out that it has been practicing such art all along.

In contrast to the reassurance and tranquillity which John Davies derived from the ‘economic’ aspects of a universe of correspondences, according to which man by understanding himself as a ‘little world’ is enabled to grasp his relationship to the spiritual and intelligible, Herbert’s use of the same ideas is haunted by a remarkable uncertainty about salvation. Both draw attention to the dynamic operation of immaterial causes and to concepts of economy figured as good household management while subject to providential care. For Herbert, however, these figures of thought are clearly not self-evident. Still, he is not only aware of what is at stake, he also knows how he needs to say it. Most importantly, he articulates it in a manner different from scholarly (or, for that matter, didactic) dis-

74 As in the famous last poem of the *Temple, Love (III)*. Here, perfect hospitality is articulated not coincidentally in the language of a restored or ‘healed’ sense perception.

course. He transforms the ancient *oikonomia* of managing and governing soul and body into allegorical figures of a double occupancy, of being inhabited or ensouled by an absent landlord. Poetic figurations of absence thus evoke the idea of a communication with the wholly Other. Ensoulment is conceived as a figure of the presence of God experienced through his absence.

In this way, a theological outline of human subjectivity emerges together with the conviction that its roots lie elsewhere and accompanied by the knowledge that Man is not master of himself. In the poem *Giddinesse* there are, accordingly, no traces of Stoic *constantia* and hardly any sense of rational self-government:

Oh, what a thing is man! how farre from power,  
 From settled peace and rest!  
 He is some twentie sev'rall men at least  
 Each sev'rall houre.  
 [...]  
 He builds a house, which quickly down must go,  
 As if a whirlwinde blew  
 And crusht the building; and it's partly true,  
 His minde is so. (1–4, 13–16)

Herbert's analysis of the human lack of equilibrium goes beyond a merely cognitive transfer of certain and familiar knowledge. It gains additional affective power as ancient metaphors of governance and self-control are projected onto, and blend with, Christian *topoi*. As the fragility of human identity and its lack of reliable governance are exposed, the speaker announces his desire for a renewed and radical intervention on the part of the architect:

Lord, mend or rather make us: one creation  
 Will not suffice our turn:  
 Except thou make us dayly, we shall spurn  
 Our own salvation. (25–28)

For Herbert, a sense of enduring salvation remains the object of prayer, yet it continues to exert power over the imagination. Above all, it relies on the gaze to heaven. Thus, the disquieting effects achieved by Herbert's paradoxical allegories echo more deeply than Davies' confident reproduction of knowledge in chiselled verses. The struggle for a Christian art of life leads Herbert to rehabilitate an otherworldly focus in the medium of a very special kind of poetry, which appears conscious of itself and of the metaphysical challenge it faces. Rather than glory in the secure possession of well-known answers, Herbert's heterotopical imagination achieves the presence of subjectivity through searching the absence of God in the *oikos* of the world and by demonstrating the necessity of a dynamics of ensoulment directed elsewhere. Didactic poetry affects knowledge. The knowledge of the metaphysical poets affects us.

## References

**Aegidius Romanus 1581**

Aegidius Romanus. *Commentaria in libros Sententiarum*. Venice: Ziletti, 1581.

**Thomas Aquinas 1888–1895**

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*. Opera omnia 4–8. Rome: Commissio leonina, 1888–1895.

**Thomas Aquinas 1972–1976**

Thomas Aquinas. *Quaestiones de veritate*. Opera omnia 22, 1–3. Rome: Commissio leonina, 1972–1976.

**Arriaga 1643**

Rodrigo Arriaga. *Tractatus de opere sex dierum*. Disputationes theologicae in primam partem D. Thomae 1. Antwerpen: Plantijn, 1643.

**Augustinus 1884**

Aurelius Augustinus. *De Genesi ad litteram libri XII*. Ed. by J. Zycha. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 28/1. Wien and Prague: C. Gerold, 1884.

**Bonaventure 1883–1889**

Bonaventure. *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum*. Opera omnia 1–4. Quaracchi: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1883–1889.

**Bredvold 1923**

Louis Ignatius Bredvold. “The Sources Used by Davies in *Nosce Teipsum*”. *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 38 (1923), 745–769.

**Eusebius of Caesarea 1974–1991**

Eusebius of Caesarea. *La préparation évangélique*. Ed. by É. Des Places. Editions du Cerf, 1974–1991.

**Cajetan 1888–1895**

Tommaso de Vio Cajetan. *Commentaria in Summam*. Opera omnia 4–8. Rome: Commissio leonina, 1888–1895.

**Capreolus 1908**

Johannes Capreolus. *Defensiones theologicae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*. Ed. by C. Paban and T. Peguès. Tours: Cattier, 1908.

**John Chrysostomos 1856**

John Chrysostomos. *Homiliae in Genesim*. Migne Patrologia graeca 53. Paris: Migne, 1856.

**Conches 2006**

William of Conches. *Glosae super Platonem*. Ed. by É. A. Jeaneau. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.

**Wolfram von Eschenbach 2008**

Wolfram von Eschenbach. *Parzival*. Ed. by J. Bumke. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2008.

**Davies 1975**

John Davies. *The Poems of Sir John Davies*. Ed. by R. Krueger and R. Nemser. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

**Drury 2013**

John Drury. *Music at Midnight. The Life and Poetry of George Herbert*. London: Allen Lane, 2013.

**Alexander of Hales 1924–1980**

Alexander of Hales. *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis Minorum Summa theologica*. Ed. by B. Klumper. Quaracchi: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924–1980.

**Herbert 1978 [1941]**

George Herbert. *The Works of George Herbert*. Ed. by F. E. Hutchinson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978 [1941].

**Lobsien 2010**

Verena Olejniczak Lobsien. *Transparency and Dissimulation. Configurations of Neoplatonism in Early Modern English Literature*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.

**Lobsien 2012**

Verena Olejniczak Lobsien. *Jenseitsästhetik. Literarische Räume letzter Dinge*. Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2012.

**Lobsien 2013**

Verena Olejniczak Lobsien. "Topik und Tropik der Imagination. Revisionen frühneuzeitlicher Seelenlehre in Spencers Cantos of Mutabilitie". In *Die Frühe Neuzeit. Revisionen einer Epoche*. Ed. by A. Höfele, J. D. Müller, and W. Österreicher. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013, 255–282.

**Lobsien 2015**

Verena Olejniczak Lobsien. *Shakespeares Exzess. Sympathie und Ökonomie*. Wiesbaden: Berlin University Press, 2015.

**Lobsien 2016**

Verena Olejniczak Lobsien. "Topopoetik der Herrschaft: Allegorische Ökonomien bei Spenser und Shakespeare". In *Allegorie. DFG-Symposium 2014*. Ed. by U. Haselstein. In cooperation with Friedrich Teja Bach, Bettine Menke and Daniel Selden. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016, 382–413.

**Molina 1622**

Luis de Molina. *De opere sex dierum*. Commentaria in primam D. Thomae partem. Lyon: Rovillius, 1622.

**Nemesius 2008**

Emesa of Nemesius. *On the Nature of Man*. Ed. by P. Van der Eijk and R. W. Sharples. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008.

**Nüßlein 1994**

Theodor Nüßlein. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Lat./dt., hg. u. übersetzt von Theodor Nüßlein. Zürich: Artemis und Winkler, 1994.

**Pfeiffer 2001**

Jens Pfeiffer. *Contemplatio Caeli. Untersuchungen zum Motiv der Himmelsbetrachtung in lateinischen Texten der Antike und des Mittelalters*. Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2001.

**Plato Latinus 1962**

Plato Latinus. *Timaeus. A Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*. Ed. by J. H. Waszink. Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi 4. London and Leiden: Warburg Institute, 1962.

**Rimini 1979–1987**

Gregor of Rimini. *Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum*. Ed. by A. D. Trapp. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979–1987.

**San Porciano 2013**

Durandus of San Porciano. *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Distinctiones 22–38 libri Secundi*. Ed. by F. Retucci and M. Perrone. Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales / Bibliotheca 10,2,3. Leuven: Peeters, 2013.

**Sankt-Viktor 1880**

Hugh of Sankt-Viktor. *De sacramentis christianae fidei*. Migne Patrologia latina 176. Paris: Migne, 1880.

**Silvestris 1978**

Bernardus Silvestris. *Cosmographia*. Ed. by P. Dronke. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

**Suarez 1856**

Francesco Suarez. *Liber de hominis creatione et statu innocentiae*. Ed. by A. D. M. André. Opera omnia 3. Paris: Vivès, 1856.

**Targoff 2008**

Ramie Targoff. *John Donne. Body and Soul*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

## Verena Olejniczak Lobsien

Dr. phil. (1984 Hannover), Habilitation (1992 Frankfurt/Main) is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her major research interests are Early Modern English literature and culture with a focus on transformations of antiquity. She is author of *Subjektivität als Dialog* (München 1994); *Skeptische Phantasie* (München 1999); *Transparency and Dissimulation* (Berlin 2010); *Jenseitsästhetik* (Berlin 2012); *Shakespeares Exzess* (Wiesbaden 2015) and, with Eckhard Lobsien, co-author of *Die unsichtbare Imagination* (München 2003).

Prof. Dr. Verena Lobsien  
Humboldt-Universität Berlin  
Department of English and American Studies  
Unter den Linden 6  
10099 Berlin, Germany  
E-Mail: verena.lobsien@rz.hu-berlin.de

## Bernd Roling

(D.Phil., Münster 2002; Habilitation, Münster 2007) is Professor of Latin Philology at the Freie Universität Berlin and spokesperson for the research group D-4. In addition, he is the director of the project *Rudbeckianism as a Research Paradigm at Scandinavian Universities*, which is affiliated with the SFB 644 *Transformations of Antiquity* at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His areas of specialization are: medieval and early modern philosophy; history of science and the history of the university, particularly in Scandinavia; and Latin literature from ca. 450 AD to the present.

Prof. Dr. Bernd Roling  
Freie Universität Berlin  
Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie  
Habelschwerdter Allee 45  
14195 Berlin, Germany  
E-Mail: bernd.roling@fu-berlin.de

## Cornelia Selent

(M.A., Berlin 2012) is a doctoral fellow with the research group D-4, and, since winter 2015, assistant at the Institute for Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin at the University of Münster. Since 2012 she has been working on a dissertation entitled: *The Forgotten and Rediscovered Senses: olfactus, gustus and tactus in Late Medieval Anthropology and their Literary Reception*.

Cornelia Selent  
Freie Universität Berlin  
Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie  
Habelschwerdter Allee 45  
14195 Berlin, Germany  
E-Mail: cornelia.selent@topoi.org