

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES AS "AXIAL" ARCHETEXTS OF THE POETRY BY ANDREAS GRYPHIUS

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The Bible is one of the most significant exemplary texts for the European literature since the Middle Ages. English poet-imaginer W. Blake once called it "the Great Code of Art". We can consider it "axial" archetext of the European culture and – in a broader concept – of the whole Jewish-Christian world. This great book for a reason called "the Book of Books" has played this role not only in religious discourse, but also in ethics, philosophy, arts and above all in literature. We comprehend "axial" text as an ancient text ("text at the beginning") which has an increased value significance, high level of reference, reinterpretation and citing and fulfils meaning and text generating function.

The Book of Ecclesiastes (4th–3rd cc. BC) is one of the most demanded in European culture, the most cited according to data and one of the most mysterious books which can't be unambiguously interpreted, in the biblical canon. It is a lyrical and philosophical poem belonging to the biblical "literature of wisdom". Its leitmotif is frailty and vanity of earthly life and its core problems are existential: solitude and tragedy of human existence, reason for living and possibility of happiness in imperfect world, absurd of being and incomprehensibility of Providence, the problems of life, death and opportunity to achieve eternity for human. Ecclesiastes asserts stoical pathos of overcoming vanity and fuss by ongoing daily effort of spirit, acts of virtue, and says that it's important to fill every moment of temporal life with sense and joy. Lines of various length are accompanied in The Book of Ecclesiastes, which is written in biblical accentual verse. It makes an impression of free verse in translation to other languages and is particularly relevant for the poetry of the 20th c.

Interest to The Book of Ecclesiastes increases in difficult crucial tragic ages. The 17th c. is such an age for European culture. The Book of Ecclesiastes is an "axial" archetext for the literature of Baroque, which is especially clearly reflected in German poetry of the 17th c., first of all in works of Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664), the greatest poet of Thirty Years' War epoch and German Baroque in general. Immensely close to Gryphius's attitude and poetical system baroque principles are reflected in The Book of Ecclesiastes. They are: Vanitas (temporality, vanity and absurd of the world), Discordia concors (connection of dissenting things, antinomy of the world, juxtaposition in attitude to the world and human), Constantia (permanence of human spirit devoted to God and himself). The ideas of stoicism, and more exactly – neostoicism (Ancient stoicism through the prism of Biblical view of the world) are extremely important for Gryphius, who was called "German Seneca" by his contemporaries. These ideas are to a great extent preceded by Ecclesiastes, its inherent skepticism and pathos of moral duty and necessity of faith.

Gryphius's poetry is greatly the result of a productive dialogue with Ecclesiastes. It was Ecclesiastes that predetermined the main topics, motifs, most sustainable topoi and distinctiveness of metaphoric of Gryphius's poetry. Creative work of German poet represents a tense search of truth and life meaning in the absurd world without any sense. It brings his poetry closer to Ecclesiastes at the greatest extent. On the one hand, Gryphius's view of the world and man is more tragic, intractably pessimistic, on the other hand – it's full of desperate believing in might of human spirit and celebration of spiritual. The belief in immortality in the afterlife is expressed much more explicitly in Gryphius's poetry, as he was a poet of Christian world living at the beginning of modern period. The German poet also maintains the belief in immortality of memory and poetry, and his skepticism isn't as total as Ecclesiastes's skepticism. At the same time the idea of temporal futile world and God working in mysterious ways (who you, however, should trust) brings the poet of modern period closer to the biblical sage.

The text of The Book of Ecclesiastes appears in Gryphius's poetry as intertext, paratext, and architext determining the special genre character or his philosophical lyrics. The motifs and allusions of Ecclesiastes in Gryphius's poetry are so numerous and permeate his texts so much, sometimes becoming direct quotes and detailed paraphrases, that we can consider The Book of Ecclesiastes as an "axial" archetext for the German poet, who rightly deserves to be called "German Ecclesiastes".

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