

SUMMARY

One of the main objectives of this publication lies in determining the group of works related in form – dialogical existential disputes.

Following the careful methodological consideration of possibilities of working with the text of translation, the ancient Egyptian text called the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* was selected as a core of the similarly focused texts – given its age, archetype of form and thematic seriousness and impressiveness from the recipient's viewpoint. Especially this text may be considered the oldest known dialogical text with the predominant position taken by existential themes.

The presence of archetypal elements (dialogism, philosophical and existential importance of the topic, the element of dispute and the language imagery) in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* became the presumption for formulating the hypothesis on occurrence of the similarly oriented texts even under totally different geographical and cultural conditions.

To compare the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* with other texts, the text was defined as to its form and the following comparative criteria were – in line with the TODOROV's model of literary analysis – determined on the construction, stylistic & poetological and semantic planes:

1. Construction plane

- *Dialogical nature of the work – narrow and constant group of fictional speakers*
- *Dialogue interrupted by the exemplum promoting the argumentation influence*

2. Stylistic and poetological plane

- *Occurrence of expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations*
- *Metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in nature*

3. Semantic plane

- *Thoughts on termination of life as a way out of the escalated situation in life*
- *Reflections on temporality and transience of human life*
- *Abandonment by the closest people + a negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics*

The study of secondary literature for the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* has revealed that this work is primarily classified according to semantic parallels as one of the *Book of Job* circle literature (*Hiob-Literatur*) and that also other ancient oriental texts belong to this circle of literature. Based on this knowledge, the fundamental literary comparative question has been raised – whether the literary texts from the *Book of Job* circle affected the biblical *Book of Job* or not. When finding the answer to the above question, the results of so far research make it clear that we have no direct evidence on the influence of ancient oriental “Job” texts on the Old Testament text, and that despite the literary scientists’ hypotheses about the direct relationship between these works and the Hebrew circle the typological literary-comparative approach needs to be taken into account. Here, a considerable disension was apparent between the literary historians admitting the contactological relation and the theologically oriented researchers who rejected this.

With respect to the cultural and literary importance of the parallel between the *Book of Job* and the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the process of comparative analysis started from these two texts. The very genre definition of the *Book of Job* proved to be difficult, as the text is so specific that it seems to be impossible to unambiguously define its genre and to give it a *genre label*. In the context of predominance by dialogues (construction plane), occurrence of dispute aspects and overall existential impression of *Job*, the genre conformity in allocating this text to the existential dialogical disputes was noted. The full conformity of both texts was revealed on the construction plane (*predominance by dialogues, occurrence of a narrow and constant group of fictional speakers, interruption of narrative flow by exempla*) and the stylistic and poetological plane (*occurrence of expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations, presence of metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in nature*). On the semantic plane, a considerable conformity in the criterion of *abandonment by the closest people + a negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics* was observed. The motif for portraying isolation of an unfortunate man in the *Book of Job* and the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* is identical. Another important conformity between both texts is the present aspect of the current situation insolvability. Although both desperate men wish their own death, in the *Book of Job* this wish, given the religious intention of the work, could not be, as described by the professional sources, represented in a literary way. The substantive core coincides in the idea of suicide only, or more precisely, an aspect of desire for suicide. Apparently, the only but significant semantic deviation between both works is associated with an extra-literary factor of the radically different religious background, whilst the language and construction of works reflect the common desire for the full-blooded description and selection of the impressive dialogical form from the recipient’s perspective. On the stylistic and poetological plane, the *Book of Job* coincides in both defined criteria – *frequent metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in nature* (simile of shortness of human life to the life cycle of plants, among others) as well as the *expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations* (especially, naturalistic description of the Job’s tribulations and appearance of his body suffering from the disease). The selection of specific linguistic means evoking the unpleasant sensual associations in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* is related especially to the environment of the text origin (widespread fishing, crocodiles and water fowl in the ancient Egypt), while the parable using the worms and moths (as a symbol of destruction and decay) and lions (as a symbol of power and cruelty) in the *Book of Job* apparently relates to the frequent occurrence of given animals in the biblical context.

The next part of the publication confronts the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* with the select Mesopotamian works (*Man and His God, Babylonian Theodicy, I Want to Praise the Lord of Wisdom*), also classified as *the literature of the Book of Job circle*. In case of the *Man and His God*, a book referred to as “a Sumerian version of the Job’s motif”, an important deviation on

the construction plane has been noted since the work is monologic lamentation of a sufferer, while the narrative flow is not interrupted by inserting any exemplary story. A parallel with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* can be seen at the semantic criterion of *negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics* (lament over hostile and insincere behaviour of his friends), however, an important difference was observed in the criterion of *abandonment by the closest people*: In the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* the fellow men abandon the unfortunate person, while in *Man and His God*, the family members of a desperate man eat their hearts out. The other two semantic criteria were not met, either – as to the *desire for suicide*, only a sort of “threat” as the last and the worst variant occurs in case the worries linger on even after saying a prayer to the personal god. Unlike the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the death is not interpreted here as a relief and rescue but as an escape to perhaps the same unbearable conditions. In terms of the third semantic criterion (*reflections on temporality and transience of human life*), no conformity was observed, as this circle of literary reflections is not included in the work. On the stylistic and poetological plane, there was the conformity in both criteria (*occurrence of expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations; metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in nature*); however, each of them occurs only once in the work and, as compared to their indicativeness and vividness in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, we can hardly talk about the same degree of impressiveness from the recipient’s perspective.

When determining the degree of literary affinity of *Babylonian Theodicy*, i.e. dispute of the dialogue, with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the name already clearly implies that the central construction criterion – *dialogism* – is met. Since two friends are talking to each other in the work, also the criterion of a *narrow and constant group of fictional speakers* is fulfilled. In order to have an influence on the counterpart with arguments, the dialogical flow of *Babylonian Theodicy* is interrupted with a number of rhetorical questions that demonstrate ungratefulness of people in their state of bliss using the behaviour of animals and people. *Babylonian Theodicy* thus has – on the background of defined comparative criteria, the same construction as not only the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* but also *Book of Job*. On the semantic plane, a substantial deviation from the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* was found in the criterion “*thoughts on termination of life as a way out of the escalated situation in life.*” Despite pronouncing the deepest life pessimism, the suicidal idea tone does not resonate in the *Babylonian Theodicy*. As far as other semantic criteria are concerned (*reflections on temporality and transience of human life, abandonment by the closest people + a negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics*), *Babylonian Theodicy* is identical with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*; conformity between both books is significant especially in the statements of overall injustice in human life, i.e. in formulating traditional paradoxes associated with the essence of human existence. Whilst this semantic parallel brings both works closer together, absence of *expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations* (the stylistic and poetological plane) and the only occurrence of *metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in the nature* are understood as an important deviation from both the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* and *Book of Job*. As compared to the distinctive representation of both stylistic and poetological criteria in the ancient Egyptian and Old Testament texts, *Babylonian Theodicy* appears to be less unrestrained; the text expressiveness is considerably reduced and the overall attractiveness for readers seems to be significantly lower.

On the third compared Mesopotamian text coming from the *literature of the Book of Job circle*, so-called *Babylonian Job*, the conformity in two criteria only was observed – in the portrayal of *abandonment by the closest people and a negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics* (semantic plane) and in the occurrence of *expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations* (on the stylistic and poetological plane). Especially the similar

passages in *Babylonian Job* and *Book of Job* that describe a destructive impact of disease on the human body initiate reflections on the possible acquaintance of the author of *Book of Job* with this Mesopotamian work.

The next part of the publication is focused on searching for the works from the Central European area, whose form is related to that of the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*. For the purpose of relevant selection of texts, the following two aspects were considered: a) Genre aspect (currency of dispute in the medieval literature) and b) semantic aspect – popularity of death motif and existential themes in the medieval literature. For the comparison purposes, two dialogical literary disputes from the first decade of 15th century, referred to as the top works of the Late Middle Ages, were chosen, namely the German work *Ackermann aus Böhmen (Ploughman from Bohemia, in Czech: Oráč z Čech)* and the Old Bohemian work *Weaver (Tkadleček)*.

A regular dialogical construction of *Ploughman from Bohemia* and the occurrence of a narrow and constant group of fictional speakers is a clear indication for ranking this text in the group of compared works. Although the strict composition construction of the work, so typical for the Middle Ages, is not identical with the multilayer structuring of the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the dialogical character (*conversation between a lyrical entity and the fictional allegorical partner in dialogue*) is a common feature of both works. We may talk about the possible literary representation of internal monologue and internal ambivalence, as the function of both imaginary counterparts in dialogue (allegorized souls in the ancient Egyptian work, personified death in *Ploughman of Bohemia*) has consisted in looking for answers to existential questions that the lyrical entities found it hard to answer and answering of which required thorough consideration of various viewpoints of the current life situation. The presence of inner ambivalence opened the eyes of the characters and enabled them to understand the cause of their misery in a wider context. The construction plane of the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* and *Ploughman from Bohemia* is similar as to the occurrence of *exempla with a general function promoting the argumentation influence* that interrupt the flow of literary dialogues several times and contain, among others, statements about the man's eternal hatred for death, about the inevitability of every living creature's decease, false essence of statements made by the Reaper on its fair doing, while the exempla are used by both the plaintiff (*Ploughman*) and defendant (*Reaper*) to support their opinion.

Assumption of impossible literary portrayal of the suicidal intention in *Ploughman from Bohemia* in connection with the Christian background of the work was fulfilled – although the heroes in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, *Book of Job* and the Mesopotamian works are unhappy and desperate, noting that their life in current circumstances does not make them happy in any way, only in the ancient Egyptian work despair – based on selected interpretations – was overcome by leaving to the next world.

On the semantic level, *Ploughman from Bohemia* demonstrates a high degree of comparative conformity – both *reflections on temporality and transience of human life* (with predominance by and cyclic return of reflections on transience of everything terrestrial) and a *negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics* are present. The counterpart in dialogue, the Reaper, sees only the worst in the spiritual and physiological essence of human existence. Except for the list of negative sides of human nature (money-grubbing, conceit, general predisposition to evil, negative properties of women, etc.), this highly disapproving approach to all what is human is related to high expressiveness of statements on primitivism of principles of human body functioning and all of its imperfections. In this direction, a significant conformity with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* is apparent – in both texts, the essence of human being with a high degree of expressiveness and impressiveness from the recipients' viewpoint is compared with the most repulsive odours and physiological processes. If we consider what motivated authors of both compared texts

to select the above stylistically indicative expressions, this important and distinctive conformity might relate to the traditional efforts for literary originality and intensive aesthetic portrayal as well as for shocking and aesthetical excitement of the recipients. Parallelism between both works is promoted by the consistent occurrence of *metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in nature*.

When comparing *Weaver* and the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the comparative analysis process was extended with the aspect of intertextual references to *Book of Job* that were present in *Weaver*. The group of compared books that have been initially classified upon the found semantic parallels without any proven direct relation (ancient texts) as belonging to the circle of *Book of Job* literature, may thus be extended by those works that directly relate to *Job* on the basis of present quotations, whereby the semantic field of the term *Hiob-Literatur* would be terminologically extended. As a result, both works demonstrating the same typological conformity with *Book of Job*, such as the ancient works, and the works with the proven interliterary relation may be classified as the *literature of Book of Job circuit*.

The statements from *Book of Job* are used in *Weaver* for argumentation and intellectual support of both partners in the dialogue – one of the Misfortune’s statements and the final passage of *Weaver* (dispute resolution) serve as a reminder of the call to enjoy the untroubled life, taken from the mouth of the counterpart in dialogue in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*. As the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, *Babylonian Theodicy*, *Book of Job* and *Ploughman from Bohemia*, also the *Weaver* is structured in the dialogue form where the lyrical entity talks to a fictional (anthropomorphized) partner and a *narrow and constant group of fictional speakers occurs*. The conformity on the construction plane is also apparent in the presence of a variety of *exemplary stories that interrupt the narrative flow*, which are typical of *Weaver*. Although we do not know the exact meaning of the exemplum in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*, the form of this ancient Egyptian text clearly acknowledges the current belief in the archetypalness on the narrative dialogic thinking:

- We have encountered thinking through a story (narrative rationality) since the earliest times.
- Use of short stories from the every-day life to support a specific statement may be interpreted as one of the fundamental artistic means of portrayal and explication.

In the semantic criterion “*thoughts on termination of life as a way out of the escalated situation in life*” the life termination idea is formulated in the same spirit as in *Book of Job*. *Weaver* is thinking about his death, but instead of committing suicide he asks – as *Job* – for being killed by the God’s hand. The conformity of *Weaver* and the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* is also apparent in the identical occurrence of *reflections on temporality and transience of human life, abandonment by the closest people and a negative view of the human race by way of the list of bad human characteristics*. If we sum up the so far findings as to the last semantic criterion, it is apparent that the majority of characters in the compared texts get to know the true face of their family members and friends after a great personal tragedy, as they face mockery, contempt and cast out by the society. It is an indicative moment of a real insight in the negative sides of human nature and reflections of the sudden isolation that is typical of the literature of *Book of Job* circle. The parallelism between the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* and *Weaver* may also be seen on the stylistic and poetological plane. At first, however, one occurrence of these expressions evokes the description of corporeity in *Ploughman from Bohemia* – it is a parable of pseudo existential essence of Misfortune and a stinking pit. Apart from other *metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life to those occurring in the nature*, *Weaver* includes, as *locus communis*, a usual metaphor of the sun that shines, without exception, on every living thing.

The last work included in the group of compared texts is *Mournful (Truchlivý)* (volume I & II) by J. A. COMENIUS, for the following reasons: 1) The work includes intertextual references to the *Book of Job*, 2) the work is written in the form of a dialogue, 3) it is a literary dispute, 4) there is a narrow and constant group of fictional speakers in the work and 5) the work contains a number of exemplary stories. The above description clearly shows that the conformity with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* on the construction plane is full and that also this work may be ranked in the *circle of Book of Job literature*. The sources dealing with the background of *Mournful* creation refers to the extra-literary background of this work origin. It is the *Letter to Montan (List Montanovi)* in which COMENIUS described his motivation to write this work. In case of *Mournful* we can be sure that it is a direct literary reaction to the difficult conditions in the country, while in case of the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* we only expect that the author of the text reacted, in the similar mood as COMENIUS, to the situation after the so-called First Transition Period in ancient Egypt and that both authors expressed interviews with their alter ego in the dialogical literary form and help themselves to find the reason of evil in the world. This hypothesis was also confirmed by the COMENIUS testimony in *Letter to Montan*, which reads that in conceiving *Mournful*, the initial reason was “*an interview of downcast Soul with Mind*”. Literary representation of inner dialogical reflections can be found in various periods of time. In certain works, it can be a direct reflection of extra-literary factors, such as the impact of the difficult social situation on the creative process associated with the genesis of one specific work.

Mournful includes intertextual references to not only *Book of Job*, but also to other Old Testament texts, whereby COMENIUS created a number of quotation mosaics. Their general function lies – as in *Weaver* – in argumentation support of statements made by literary characters, whereas in case of the *Mournful* character, the quotations taken from *Job* are used to refer to the authority in formulating disagreement with the God’s acts (blood war); Christ uses them to emphasize His omnipotence and sanctity.

On the semantic plane, the outlined trend of proclamation of so-called mandatory Christian optimism continues. Although the *desire for one’s own death* is uttered at the very beginning of *Mournful*, it is also desire for death by the hand of God. Despite this difference, the presence of existential message upon which the death brings rescue for us in the hardest times may be considered an identical element.

The criteria of presence of *reflections on temporality and transience of human life* and a *negative view of the human race* are also met. In *Mournful* the counterpart in dialogues defames mankind, whilst *Mournful* takes the mankind’s part – as *Ploughman from Bohemia* and *Weaver*. On the stylistic and poetological plane, the conformity was observed in both criteria. Apparently, the *metaphorical similes of events and processes in human life* are typical and frequently used in the group of analysed works. Conformity in the field of occurrence of *expressions evoking unpleasant sensual associations* lies only in the occurrence of words that produce antipathy; motivation for their inclusion in *Mournful* is, however, different from that in the *Dispute of a man with his Ba*.

The publication is closed by the comparison of the Old English medieval morality *Everyman*, *The Laments of J. KOCHANOWSKI*, SHAKESPEARE’S Sonnet 66 and selected works of Czech poetry with the *Dispute of a man with his Ba* and other texts.

If we had to summarize the main ideas of publication, we believe that:

- Dialogical existential disputes represent the written portrayal of archetypal dialogical essence of human being, as all thinking always goes in the dialogical flow and it is just the dialogue that is a typical feature of a man since the earliest time.
- Reason for existential dialogical literary disputes lies in the invincibly impressive and inimitable amalgamation of two aesthetically, philosophically and speech prag-

Summary

matically fundamental principles of humanity: dialogism and natural human competitiveness.

- Occurrence of similarly focused existential dialogical literary disputes may be viewed as an update of the general existential model changing in time (coming to terms with ill fortune in the form of wars, diseases, death of the closest ones, loss of property, etc.).

Based on the above facts, it can be concluded that the analysed existential dialogical disputes are aesthetically impressive and culturally informative even for a recipient in the early 21st century.