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## Biblical Metaschematism as a Device for Religious Transfer

Paul's Communicative Strategy in a  
Situation of Religious Contact

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# Biblical Metaschematism as a Device for Religious Transfer

## Paul's Communicative Strategy in a Situation of Religious Contact

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**ABSTRACT** Paul's use of the concept of metaschematism in the *First and Second Letter to the Corinthians*, and in the *Letter to the Philippians* can be examined as a significant example of religious transfer in the form of negotiation of schemata on the level of object language that tries to establish a meta-language through negotiation of schemata. By metaschematizing, mental and behavioral dispositions become interfaces linking different systems together, though in an asymmetrical manner. By taking into account the role of metaschematic processes in medicinal and philosophical contexts, the article intends to scrutinize the role of metaschematism in schematic interaction.

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**KEY WORDS** Religious transfer; metaschematism; Paul; J.G. Hamann; schematic interaction

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*Nay, she is worse, she is the devil's dam; and here she comes in the habit of a light wench; and thereof comes that the wenches say 'God damn me'; that's as much to say 'God make me a light wench'. It is written, they appear to men like angels of light; light is an effect of fire and fire will burn; ergo, light wenches will burn. Come not near her.*

*(Shakespeare, The Comedy of Errors)*

The following paper<sup>1</sup> is intended to provide a case-study of religious transfer modeled as the negotiation of schemata additionally supplied with some examples from the history of philosophy. It examines the role of metaschematism in schematic interaction. Metaschematism is a way of dealing with schemata in a situation of contact that is, it is a processing mode. I hope that this example will show that the negotiation model is not only valid on the scientific meta-level but can also be found on the object-level, or to be more precise, on the level of object language that tries to establish a meta-language in the process of negotiating schemes. It additionally indicates that the negotiation of schemes might be quite a belligerent enterprise that works with certain stratagems. In its most prominent use in the letters of the Apostle Paul, metaschematism is such a transcending stratagem.

## Metaschematism in medicine

To explain my key notion let me first sidetrack the reader's attention for a moment into a strangely neglected topic of Religious Studies—that is into the depths of the history of pathology. The notion of metaschematism became increasingly popular in textbooks for students of medicine in the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, starting from Johann Gottlob Meyer's thesis *De metaschematismo morborum* (1747). Another important work is the *System der Medizin*

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the KHK-Workshop 'Social and Hermeneutic Constraints for and Related Strategies of Interreligious Reception and Adaption' (December 2011) at the Ruhr-University Bochum, organized by Ekaterina Shchus, Christian Bernard Mularzyk and Jörg Plassen. I am very grateful to Vivian Strotmann for her inestimable help with my English.

*zum Gebrauche bei akademischen Vorlesungen und für practische Aerzte* (1819) by Dietrich Georg Kieser, professor in Jena. In these works, metaschematism denotes transformation in general. With reference to pathology, this gives metaschematism the meaning of transformation of a certain illness into another one, but also the translocation of the place of an illness into another part of the body. Thus, skin diseases might, for example, turn into diseases of the intestines (Stark 1838, 784), but also cramps into paralysis or raving madness into feeble-mindedness. In his *Allgemeine Pathologie oder allgemeine Naturlehre der Krankheit* (1838) Karl Wilhelm Stark, also professor in Jena, describes the process of metaschematism as an *imperfect crisis*, by which the organism, being unable to destroy the disease, changes it into something else (Stark 1838, 784). This process of metaschematism might well lead to an antagonistic healing, where a dangerous disease is cured by being transferred into a less dangerous or harmless one. But, sadly enough, it may also be vice versa, thus describing a fatal process. Additionally, there are a few more general characteristics of the process. The illnesses most likely to undergo a process of metaschematism are those which are allowed to endure a long time by means of continuous suppression or even habituation. Most likely to be linked by metaschematism are those diseases that are somehow 'related' to each other by means of a certain frame of common formal characteristics. That is, for example, the same Gattung (species) as Stark puts it (Stark 1838, 792), or the äußere Potenzen (external forces), and the größere allgemeine Krankheitsanlage (the 'more general disposition to disease'), as it is termed by Kieser (1819). In metaschematism, the process of the disease is only pathologically / enduringly involved while the transformation of the appearance of the disease is conditioned by external forces (Kieser 1819, 163). Nowadays, the term Metaschematism seems to be replaced by the notion of 'metastasis', which in earlier times,

for example in Stark's and Kieser's books, appears as a synonym for or as a special case of the more general 'metaschematism'.

As the reader might notice, Metaschematism as a pathological process involves processes of intensification as an important characteristic. It affects the organism or person involved, mostly with reference to processes that have become habitual over time. Thus, a dispositional scheme is transferred between two states. All in all, metaschematism describes the processual link between two substantially different states of a given system, referring to an overarching structure that provides the possible connection between the two systems. Metaschematism thereby includes the transformed person him or herself into an intensified transitional process. Consequently, the notion of metaschematism is characterized by certain aspects that associate it with the notions of 'interface' or even of *conversion* (for a discussion of the concept of interface in religious contact situations see Stünkel 2011).

## **Philosophical metaschematism**

That 'metaschematism' is not any idiosyncratic and off-sided preoccupation of eighteenth century pathology is clear from the fact that the notion, far from being marginalized, even got its own entry in an enterprise as ambitious as the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. The author is Elfriede Büchsel who deservedly gained reputation with her study of the influence of biblical *formulae* on Johann Georg Hamann's thinking (Büchsel 1988). Accordingly, Hamann is the main author of reference in her article and given the fact that Hamann had a lifelong philosophical struggle with his friend and philosophical opponent Immanuel Kant, it consequently is

the latter against whom the concept of metaschematism was mobilized—a fact, which may lead to the inspired guess that the concept may not be unrelated to Kant's reflections on schematism. Of course, at first sight 'metaschematism' seems to be another instance of the frequent phenomenon that a good and productive idea is contested by another—seemingly more reflective—one. This contending idea will most certainly try to beat its opponent by turning the concept against itself (critique and meta-critique, theory and meta-theory). Basically, at closer inspection this is precisely what metaschematism is all about.

Originally, the term was used in Greek philosophy to denote the process of transformation. The notion is not very frequent. One especially interesting context in which metaschematism is mentioned is Plato's *Nomoi*. This context may be called a religious one. In Plato's text it is related to the Gods and their powers. Plato describes the possible transformation of fire into 'inspired' or 'animated' water as a metaschematic process (*Nomoi* X, 903 e 5). It is as well used to describe the change of denotation with reference to a different field: greed (or the need to possess more than others) in the context of the human body it is called 'illness', in the context of the state it is translated as 'injustice' (*Nomoi* X, 906 c 6). With regard to this field, greed is metaschematized into injustice. In order to transform it in this way, there has to be an overarching formal concept which allows the translation.

Another important philosophical use of the notion of metaschematism is to be found two thousand years later at the dawn of modern science in Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum sive indica vera de interpretatione naturae* (1620). Here, the knowledge / theoretical perception of metaschematism becomes an indicator for a new way (a revolution, as Bacon calls it) of dealing scientifically with nature, namely from a dynamic perspective. In aphorism LI of Book 1 it reads with reference to Greek philosophy:

Intellectus humanus fertur ad abstracta propter naturam propriam, atque ea quae fluxa sunt fingit esse constantia. Melius autem est naturam secare, quam abstrahere; id quod Democriti schola fecit, quae magis penetravit in naturam quam reliquae. Materia potius considerari debet, et ejus schematismi et metaschematismi, atque actus purus, et lex actus sive motus; Formae enim commenta animi humani sunt, nisi libeat leges illas actus Formas appellare (Bacon 1990, 114). Human understanding is carried away to abstractions by its own nature, and pretends that things which are in flux are unchanging. But it is better to dissect nature than to abstract; as the school of Democritus did, which penetrated more deeply into nature than others. We should study matter, and its structure (schematismus), and structural change (meta-schematismus), and pure act, and the law of act or motion; for forms are figments of the human mind, unless one chooses to give the name of form to these laws of act.

Surely, in Bacon's view, schematism and metaschematism function as ontological descriptions of matter without any obvious religious connotation. Here, metaschematism denotes the interrelation of matter and motion as a dynamic process of structural change. What is even more interesting is that Bacon introduces the notion on another scientific level than the mere phenomenal one. So by means of the terms schematism and metaschematism Bacon describes an important claim of future research which evades the human tendency to work with mere stable und unchanging abstractions (i.e. something that has to be avoided in the history of religions as well). In contrast to this 'dullness' and 'distortion of human understanding' he claims that form has to be interpreted dynamically as a process resp. as the dynamic laws of a process of which the 'structural change' (metaschematism) is a striking example. Therefore, the term

metaschematism indicates a reinterpretation of form in order to describe dynamic matter resp. the laws of the dynamics of matter. A great obstacle for human understanding is the fact that processes of metaschematism mostly cannot be seen directly, but are the result of interpretation of phenomena (*interpretatio naturae*). Accordingly, processes of metaschematism are described on a meta-level of reflection.

In contemporary philosophy, the notion of metaschematism is celebrated with a near-to apotheosis by the German philosopher Hans Lenk. For him, metaschematizing is the characteristically anthropological constant. At the end of his study *Schemaspiele*, Lenk characterizes the human being by his or her ability to metaschematize, i.e. his or her ability to recognize and reflect schemata on a meta-level. Therefore, humans may be called metaschematizing animals, which can represent their representations (and so on) on an open-ended scale.

Den Menschen[...] charakterisiert besonders die Fähigkeit des symbolischen Metaschematisierens. Er kann von höherer (meta)symbolischer Stufe aus seine Schematisierungen und Schemata erkennen, zu erfassen suchen und wiederum selbst zum Gegenstand metastufiger symbolischer, denkend-reflektiver sowie sprachlicher Repräsentationen machen. Er ist nicht bloß das symbolisch interpretierende, sondern das metasymbolisierende Wesen [...], er ist nicht allein das schematisierende, sondern das metaschematisierende Tier. Er ist das einzige Lebewesen, das alle seine Repräsentationen und Erfassungen (präsentierender wie strukturierender Art) in einer prinzipiell nach oben hin offenen, sich aufschichtenden Folge von Stufen wiedergeben, ‚re-präsentieren‘ [...] kann. Er ist das Wesen, das im Erfassen (i.S. von Erkennen verwoben mit Handeln) der prinzipiellen höherstufigen Metaschematisierung, Metainterpretation, Metasymbolisierung fähig ist. Der Mensch ist also generell das der

repräsentationalen Metastufenbildung fähige und bedürftige Wesen:  
das metaschematisierende und metainterpretierende Metastufenwesen.  
(Lenk 1995, 255)<sup>2</sup>

As such, dealing with schemata respectively negotiating schemata, seems to provide a common formal basis that can promote the contact of prevailing schemata, i.e. cultural or religious traditions. It additionally means that schematizing is always related to a meta-level, that it tends to develop a meta-level of description on the object-level of language.

## Pauline metaschematism

In the religious context, it was Paul who began to use the expression μετασχηματίζεω as a formal instrument of writing. Here, according to Elfriede Büchsel, it denotes a stylistic transformation of a given proposition (Büchsel 1980, 1300). This sounds quite unspectacular, but Paul's use of the term was groundbreaking for others. First of all for the church fathers, who related it to the transformation of the world and the believers' bodies modelled on the transfiguration of Christ's body (Luther translates the term as *Verklärung*<sup>3</sup>). Furthermore, Paul's way of employing the term 'metaschematism' also had considerable impetus for the later usage of the notion. This extends up to the most prominent use of the term, which

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2 For a translation of this quote refer to the quotations section towards the end of this article.

3 In Philippians 3, 20-21: "Vnser wandel aber ist im Himel/ von dannen wir auch warten des Heilands Jhesu Christi des HErrn/ Welcher vnsern nichigen Leib verkleren wird/ das er ehlich werde seinem verklerten Leibe/ Nach der wirckunge/ da er mit kan auch alle ding jm vntherthenig machen." (Luther 1974, 2370).

is Johann Georg Hamann's and following him Johann Gottfried Herder's. Accordingly, anyone who decides to use it as a formal device of writing puts him or herself into the Apostle's succession (at least Hamann does so explicitly).

Throughout his *oeuvre*, Paul uses the notion of metaschematism, or rather the verb 'to metaschematize', at some significant points, which deserve closer examination. Two of them appear in a context of religious contact. Among them, the most relevant is 1. Corinthians 4, 6:

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred (*μετεσχημάτισα*) to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Jürgen Becker describes the context of the verse as follows: The emergence and the development of Christianity at Corinth was conditioned by a newly founded heathen-Christian parish, which is still influenced by its former scheme of understanding (later to be described as referring to "religion, cult and worldview" (Becker 1998, 210/211), and which is, therefore, struggling with the problem of connecting the old knowledge with the new one. Thus, the situation might be described as a contact situation on the verge of transforming a religious tradition. In this situation, as Paul might suggest, the Corinthians are looking for orientation, which manifests itself in certain religious teachers. At this stage, these are teachers from outside, coming to town as wandering preachers. As such, they provide examples of a long-distance transmission of religious thought.

Now, in 1. Corinthians 4, 6, Paul refers to the Corinthians' tendency to favour one apostolic teacher above the other. In this case, this is in Paul above Apollos, or *vice-versa*. This behaviour seems to be connected

to each teacher's prevailing background. Accordingly, Roloff calls the question for Apollos' religious and cultural background (and its relation to Paul's background) the "key problem" of the passage on him in Acts 18, 24-28 (Roloff 1988, 278). This passage throws some light on the tradition that manifests itself in Apollos' teachings. According to Acts 18, 24, Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, he also was someone who "mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18, 28).<sup>4</sup> He was a Judeo-Christian from Alexandria, who had received a Hellenistic education and did missionary work with some success in Corinth after Paul had left the city for Ephesus (Lang 1994, 3 and 24). Obviously, there have been factions in the community of Corinth due to the question which preacher was better—and therefore more influential—than the other. The question which teacher is the better one is answered by examining whose background matches the background of the audience more closely. Zmijewski even calls Apollos a "paradigm" of ideal preaching as being scripture-oriented, precise, free-minded, vigorous and—most importantly with regard to religious contact situations—prepared for public discussion (Zmijewski 1994, 679-680).

Historically questionable as it is regarding the religious contact situation, however, a significant point of the report on Apollos is the idea that in his actions, one might witness a willingly initiated public discussion on religious matters. And this discussion is made possible for a counterpart, in this case the Jews.<sup>5</sup> He "convinced the Jews and that publicly" (Acts 18, 28).

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4 Compare Becker 1998, 162, who considers the report on Apollos in Ephesus, Acts 18, 24-28, based upon a local tradition, as historically not reliable.

5 Compare Jervell's analysis of Acts 18, 28 in Jervell 1998, 471. His statement may be rendered as follows: Apollos says exactly that which Paulus also said before. But now [he does not do so any longer] as missionary sermon. Accordingly, there is not only a missionary effect among Jews, but also public discussion with them, exactly in those places, where it is especially important to demonstrate that the scriptures bear testimony in favour of the Christians and against the unbelieving Jews.

The Acts' laconic description of Apollos' discussions thus provides *in nuce* one of the first 'religious dialogues' of two distinct traditions and their prevailing systems of understanding, in which one side might prevail due to better arguments. This basic feature of Apollos' appearance introduces the setting, in which the notion of metaschematism might prove to be useful, i.e. the contact of different schematic frames of understanding.

So there seem to be differences between Paul/Apollos and the Corinthians as well as differences between Paul and Apollos concerning each one's (schematic) background. The first difference may be real. But, at least according to Paul, the author of the text, playing one teacher off against another is a profound misunderstanding of the missionary intention. Paul does not compete against Apollos' preaching. Rather, he encourages Apollos to return to Corinth to continue and intensify his successful work:

I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren; but his will was not at all to come at this time, but he will come when he shall have convenient time (1. Corinthians 16, 12).<sup>6</sup>

But for Paul this misunderstanding is not the crucial point. It is rather this: the practice of the Corinthians shows that they put too much emphasis on the messenger rather than on the message itself, thus laying too much emphasis on what should be a medium, a vessel only. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" (1. Corinthians 3,5), Paul asks rhetorically. Nevertheless, the Corinthians' behavior shows that the form, the carrier, of the message is of no lesser importance than the message itself, at least when it comes to the emergence of a religious tradition through the introduction and transfer of a new idea into an environment of competing traditions.

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6 On the relationship of Paul and Apollos see Becker 1998, 166.

The question of the apostle's communicative success thus seems to be a formal one. To Paul, the Corinthians' practice conveys the impression of being a result of their normal way of handling things, which results from their every-day scheme of understanding. But neither Paul nor Apollos in their apostolic effort acted according to this scheme. The main problem seems to be a deficiency of communication between the apostle and his flock. Introducing this problem Paul writes

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able (1. Corinthians 3, 1-2).

The current state of mind, represented by its language, is not sufficient to understand the apostle's words, which are, of course, not his own ("for I know nothing by myself" 1. Corinthians 4, 4). On this higher (spiritual) level, Paul and Apollos prove to be colleagues who work in division of labor, but not as competitors. To make this point perfectly clear, Paul uses the following metaphorical scheme

I have planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour (1. Corinthians 3, 6-8).

Paul's pragmatic question is how to communicate a spiritual scheme to somebody who is still 'carnal'. Or to reformulate it in terms of schema theory: how are these conflicting schemes (spiritual/carnal) handled? As

an attempt to overcome this severe problem of communication, Paul uses the concept of metaschematism, seemingly as a rhetorical device “for your sakes” that is, for the Corinthians’ sake. He uses concepts (schemes or figures in this translation) which his audience can understand as being taken from its *Lebenswelt* (or at least close enough to it) and applies them to himself and his apostolic action. In this case the figures (concepts) are agricultural: planting, watering, increasing; and economic: being rewarded for that due to one’s own performance.

Now this as a pedagogical device does not seem to be very exciting as a religious strategy. But metaschematism as the ‘figure transferred to myself’ indicates a certain feature that might as well become important for religious contact in general. For it shows that communicative contact in the religious sphere is not guided by dialogue in the common sense in the first place. Here, we have a situation of contact and the special form of communication which takes place in it. The Corinthians are still carnal, Paul states, thus suggesting that their scheme of thought is not spiritual and, therefore, implying that they are not able to understand the spiritual meaning. Accordingly, even in Paul’s presentation itself, the situation of communication (respectively of negotiation of schemes) is essentially asymmetric. The ideal, symmetric, situation of dialogue is—of course—pure fiction. And considering it fact rather than fiction would be dangerous.

Paulus jedenfalls führt mit den Korinthern keinen Dialog. Vielmehr läßt er, aus Freiheit ihr Diener (1. Kor 9,19), sich so auf sie ein, daß er selbst an ihre Stelle tritt (1 Kor 4,6). Darin übersteigt er nicht die Ebene des Dialogs zur Anmaßung einer Herrschaft; er steigt unter sie als Diener. Die Alternative zum Dialog ist nicht die Bevormundung, sondern die Fürbitte in der Solidarität von Röm 9,3. In der aus dem Lernen durch Leiden kommenden Fürbitte der Gemeinde, die Kirche für andere ist, löst sich die im Wort

‚Dialog‘ bewahrte und mit ihm beschworene Illusion der Streitenden, zwischen sich eine Mitte zu finden und in ihr zur Verständigung und zu einem Konsensus zu gelangen. Gilt es doch, Asymmetrien nicht zu überspielen. (Bayer 1994, 520)<sup>7</sup>

In addressing the Corinthians and talking to them by means of a metaschematism, Paul does not seek to establish some kind of common ground that may pass for consensus. He also does not merely impose his figures of thought on his audience. Nor does he simply abolish their conceptual schemes respectively their way of thinking and speaking, to replace them with his spiritual scheme. Instead, Paul tries to adopt the other person’s position, he inscribes himself into the other person’s scheme respectively meta-schematizes the scheme in order to give an example that the opponent can understand with reference to his own frame or rather scheme of thought. Thus, metaschematizing might be characterized as a form of *Kenosis* (condescence). In his spiritual scheme, Paul uses the Corinthians’ interpretive scheme in a performative act of interaction. This might be a surprise to the audience: to metaschematize therefore means to express something in a way other than the usual one. But nevertheless, an overarching conceptual scheme remains intact. This scheme is ‘that what is written’, i.e. the Scripture. In Paul’s view it might easily be related to the new interpretation of the usual understanding.<sup>8</sup>

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7 For a translation of this quote refer to the quotations section towards the end of this article.

8 Based on this idea of metaschematism, Klaas Huizing (Huizing 1996, 159) develops a Biblical hermeneutics which is intended to overcome the shortcomings of traditional lecture of the Bible in favour of a prevailing structural reconfiguration of Biblical schemata.

His remarks (1996, 159) on this may be translated as follows: Where the old Protestant-Orthodox theory of reading required a sheepish reader, the text of the bible obviously requires a mature reader, capable of understanding the dynamic process between configured experience on the structural level,

Metaschematism is an attempt to overcome ('aufheben' in the Hegelian sense) the function of schemata as cultural filters by infiltrating them via inscription. This, of course, does not leave the position of the person who metaschematizes unaffected. By doing so, in his apostolic effort, "we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Corinthians 4, 9) as Paul himself states, later on. Contact of (semiotic) spheres structured by schemata, of apostles, angels and men, is role-playing or rather: contact is schematic work (that provides and allows inscription), mediating different levels of understanding. This situation may be staged by means of description.

In this first example of its Pauline usage, metaschematism is part of the apostle's concern for the spiritual welfare of his flock that is: part of religious practice itself. It is a way of dealing with a contact situation. It is a way by which a religious agent initiates a (deeper) religious entanglement. But the use of the schemes in a metaschematic way is not exclusively confined to the (from the Christian point of view) 'truly' religious. Rather, it is a general method of dealing with, or in, religious communication. This point is made clear by Paul contemplating another, most disturbing, situation of contact. In 2. Corinthians 11, 13-15 Paul shows that metaschematism is a neutral formal device that can be used by competitors of the true faith in situations

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and re-figured experience on the affective level of experience: at first, the reader can begin from daily perception. Then, the phase of destabilization. It is followed by fictional dis-illusioning of the experience of reality; finally the forced postfiguration: the reader identifies himself with a worldview, a hero and condenses what he has read into a facial feature on whose model he forms his own life. Amidst the wealth of stories, there are many facial features or schemata for the reader, which he needs to metaschematize upon himself. Success or failure of this metaschematization is shown by the text; for example in the implied reader of the parables, who needs to become concrete in the real reader—in this, the text meets the reader. Put differently: the given schema has to be transferred to reality by the real reader. And every new shape into which he forces the schema which he cannot fulfil, adds a new facet of religious living to Christian life as a whole.

of communicational contact, as well. Here, Paul's work of mission is threatened by religious agitation of preachers who seek to delegitimize his status as an apostle. Paul now characterizes these persons who, as hyper- (or super)-apostles, consider themselves able to judge the apostolate in general and that in the following way:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves (μετασχηματιζόμενοι) into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed (μετασχηματίζεται) into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed (μετασχηματίζονται) as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Obviously, the Corinthians' souls as a zone of possible contact of religious traditions are a contested space, where any forms of stratagems are used. Paul's opponents here are far from being identified beyond doubt. Some exegetes think that Paul refers to Judaeo-Christian law-abiding preachers with a dominantly Jewish background, some think differently, i.e. that he addresses Hellenistic speakers, who, as highly educated intellectuals, criticize his poor style. Some regard them as Gnostic 'apostles', or even as the 'original' apostles in Jerusalem and their messengers (Lang 1994, 336). But be that as it may. In any case, for Paul, it is a situation of severe religious challenge that requires a stout response (which in turn is likely to lead to a consolidation of religious expression, perhaps even dogmatic language). That Paul uses the expression 'to metaschematize' thrice here surely indicates the importance which the process of transforming oneself into something else has as a device for religious communication, which in turn may be used for good as well as for bad. Just as in medicine, the process of metaschematism may turn out to be either life-saving or fatal.

At this point, it may be of interest to note that theologians of early Christianity, for example Clement of Alexandria (coming from the same town as Apollos) use exactly these Pauline verses on the process of transfer in order to prove the compatibility of Christianity and Philosophy. In the *Stromata* VI/8 it reads:

Further, let those who say that philosophy took its rise from the devil know this, that the Scripture says that “the devil is transformed into an angel of light.” When about to do what? Plainly, when about to prophesy. But if he prophesies as an angel of light, he will speak what is true. [...] Philosophy is not then false, though the thief and the liar speak truth, through a transformation of operation. Nor is sentence of condemnation to be pronounced ignorantly against what is said, on account of him who says it (which also is to be kept in view, in the case of those who are now alleged to prophesy); but what is said must be looked at, to see if it keep by the truth. (Clement of Alexandria 2012, 586)

Transformed onto another level, another scheme of thought, even the devil must speak as an angel of light. Therefore, metaschematism changes existence profoundly.

Now what can be concluded from Paul’s use of the term in the two letters to the Corinthians? A metaschematism is a performative ‘reverse’ imitation, using an ‘opponent’’s expressions and frames of understanding (that is: schemes) in an indirect way in order to prepare a change of thought. If you consider schemes as internal frames of reference— or condensed texts respectively—it becomes clear that these mediating

mental structures are activated by minimal input<sup>9</sup>, thus mobilizing a whole horizon of understanding (*Verstehenshorizont* in the sense of Hans-Georg Gadamer) that supports the transfer of the message. Using schemes in a metaschematic way provides someone like Paul, who has to deal with contact situations of religious traditions, with a number of connectabilities (*Anschlußmöglichkeiten*)<sup>10</sup> to gain contact or connection to his audience's frame of understanding. And this process of connection is far from neutral. So, by using the form, the implicated content is transformed. The metaschematism thus becomes a device of turning the 'opponent's weapons' (or to put it more peacefully: his schematic devices to perceive the world) against himself. Respectively, doing so with his former way of looking at the world, i.e. the old horizon of understanding. It is therefore indeed a rhetorical instrument to prepare the opponent's conversion. But if this is the case, then metaschematism is not 'merely rhetorical'. Rather, it inaugurates an existential transformation of the individual and his social relations. Metaschematism is transfer both on the level of content and on the level of form, manifesting itself in an existential transformation (thus bringing the other one's understanding closer to one's own understanding, leading to a synergetic intensification of religiousness).

Paul refers to this point in his letter to the Philippians. Here, metaschematism describes a process of spiritual ascent, which cannot be performed by the believers themselves but can as such be described and prepared.

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9 This is an idea of the cognitive anthropologist Roy D'Andrade: "To say that something is a 'schema' is a shorthand way of saying that a distinct and strongly interconnected pattern of interpretive elements can be activated by minimal inputs." (D'Andrade, 1992, 29).

10 I use this term according to Jürgen Frese's definition: The sense of an action is the situation as the ensemble of possibilities to add further actions to this action. This means that the sense of an action is the manifoldness of possible connectabilities which it opens up (cf. Frese 1985, 77).

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before (Philippians 3, 13).

According to this description, the temporal perspective is changed from the things past to the ones to come. Something new is to be grasped, which by grasped transforms existence individually and socially to another level, not least another level of time. This is the one decisive spiritual transformation which is done by metaschematism. Paul is not at all happy with certain developments which seem to him a relapse into old patterns of behavior at Philippi. He contrasts the right and wrong form of circumcision and uses established political language, especially the notion of *politeuma* in order to make his point clear. In Philippians 3, 20-21 this reads:

For our *πολίτευμα* is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change (*μετασχηματίσει*) our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all this unto himself.

Metaschematism is the process materially linking the true believers to the Saviour. Of course, these lines have to be interpreted theologically in an eschatological and ecclesiological context (as it was done by the Church Fathers who use the notion of metaschematism). This may include a martyriological context, but this is not at the focus of the present examinations. The above optimistic statement about the change of the vile body into another glorious one might be formalized as follows: Through metaschematism, one gains a new perspective that allows for reinterpretation of the world on a higher (or at least different) level, which is characterized by a new form of communication. This process consequently

leads to an existential transformation of the individual and to a new form of communicative context, which may be described as a new community (*politeuma*). In his study on the relation of the near eastern religions and the antique *polis* rule, Hans Kippenberg points out that these seemingly spiritual or metaphorical ideas should not be considered to be void of practical relevance in this world (Kippenberg 1991, 360). Metaschematism thus is an eminently practical feature, combining the praxis of religious communication and political action.

To sum up, the examination of metaschematism might help to describe how (religious) contact phenomena are dealt with in the contacting traditions themselves. Metaschematism is a method of dealing with other/different schemata in a situation of contact, emerging, as the example of Paul shows, from object-language itself. It is an attempt by the protagonists of contacts to overcome the function of schemata, i.e. mental and behavioral dispositions, as cultural filters. This may allow different traditions to connect by the very means that prevented, or at least complicated, such a connection before. By metaschematizing, the schemata become interfaces linking different systems, though in an asymmetrical manner. In order to do so, some reflection of the function of schemata (on a meta-level) must have taken place. The cultural filters are overcome by means of infiltration, i.e. by inscribing oneself into the other's schema. Accordingly, by using the schemata of one's counterpart in reverse imitation, a change of thought is prepared, changing both content and form of the schema. This change of structure (as in Bacon) is intended to initiate an existential transformation.

## Epilogue: Pauline metaschematism in Hamann and Herder

In the history of ideas, the religious significance of processes of metaschematism became a matter of practice and theoretical reflection in much later times. Religious transfer by means of metaschematism as described by Paul had a late and perhaps surprising revival in the late 18th century philosophical discussion evolving after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Immanuel Kant's friend and critic Johann Georg Hamann uses the Pauline concept of metaschematism in his struggle against Kantian Philosophy. This is done in order to relocate the disputation from the philosophical into the religious arena. So, metaschematism as opposed to schematism is part of Hamann's philosophical strategy that opposes his *Metakritik* to Kantian Kritik in terms of religious conflict (Stünkel 2005). The final sentence of his *Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft – Metacritique on the Purism of Reason* (1784), his review on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, utilizes the model form of 1. Corinthians 4,6 in order to clarify the intention of his work

Was die Transzendentalphilosophie matagrabolisiert habe ich gedeutet auf das Sakrament der Sprache [...] um der schwachen Leser willen und überlasse es einem jeden [...] zu entfalten die geballte Faust. (quoted after the critical edition of Hamann's Text in Bayer 2002, 415) - What transcendental philosophy 'matagrabolized' I meta-schematized to the sacrament of language for the sake of the weak readers. I leave it to each one to open the clenched fist.

In this context to metaschematize is used as an indicating means for communication, which is as well a request. Hamann does so in order to fill

the empty general formulas in the *Critique*, which he had matagrabolated as such that is, he had shown their emptiness as crypto-metaphysical notions by means of description. Now, since they are empty, he is able to make the general notions concrete by 'wearing' them in person. He uses them as blank spaces that might be filled. Robert Sparling characterizes the complex use of metaschematism as follows:

'Metaschematism' or 'transfiguration entailed mimicry, irony, and *reduction ad absurdum*. He [i.e. Hamann, KMS] delighted in catching his opponents in their own logic. But it was more complex than this - 'metaschematism' often embraced his opponent's position not merely to mock or to confound, but also to complete or accomplish. Donning the mask of another's view, he would assimilate the view to his personality, altering its content. His Socratism is such a metaschematism." (Sparling 2006, 16).

To Hamann the Greek notion *σχήμα*, translated as 'clothing' or 'traditional costume', allows such an interpretation. Having adopted the schemes of transcendental philosophy Hamann is able to show that it is really philosophy of language based upon biblical assumptions, thus claiming for a structural conversion in the biblical sense of *metanoia*.<sup>11</sup>

Hamann will seinen Adressaten überführen, ihn ändern, ihn zur *metanoia*, zur Umkehr, bringen, indem er sich des Mittels bedient, das dem Adressaten Bekannte, dessen eigenes Wort, so zu verfremden, dass dieses kritisch gegen den Autor zurückschlägt und er seinem eigenen Wort nicht entrinnen kann. (Bayer 1988, 145)

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<sup>11</sup> For a translation of this quote refer to the quotations section towards the end of this article.

The meta-critique of the *Metacriticus bonae spei* as Hamann names himself in his 'Last Paper' (Bayer / Knudsen 1983, 60) is expressed by metaschematism in the same way as the critique of (pure) reason is expressed by the transcendental scheme.

In Herder's philosophy, i.e. in the work of Hamann's pupil and friend, the notion of metaschematism appears in his reflection on the way in which an object is appropriated to human thinking, meaning it proposes a way of overcoming the gap between subject and object. By introducing the notion of metaschematism, Herder inscribes himself into the Pauline tradition, especially in the tradition that intends to overcome communication problems.

Für den Theologen Herder war bestimmt Paulus mit seiner Verwendung der Begriffe ‚Schema‘ und ‚metaschematisieren‘ maßgebend. [...] Wenn Herder den Ausdruck ‚metaschematisieren‘ verwendet, dann mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit auf dem Hintergrund dieser Verwendungen bei Paulus. (Gaier 2010, 22)<sup>12</sup>

The notion is not used here as a rhetorical stratagem to prepare a conversion as in Hamann. In his article *Über Bild, Dichtung und Fabel* (1787) the appropriation of the object to human thinking is a threefold process, in which the soul sees objects as pictures and then transforms these pictures into what Herder calls *Gedankenbilder* (pictures of thought). The translation from pictures (Schemes) into *Gedankenbilder* is called metaschematism. Both schematism, i.e. the transfer from sensory impressions into sensations, and metaschematism, i.e. the transfer from sensation into knowledge,

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12 For a translation of this quote refer to the quotations section towards the end of this article.

therefore are translations into an ontologically different medium, more specifically, a rise onto a higher intellectual level. Herder describes this translation, in accordance with the Lutheran translation of metaschematism, as *Verklärung*, to be understood as a process of *Läuterung* (purification, reformation) (Gaier 2010, 39), through which the soul gains knowledge of its own.

In his critique of Kant, titled *Verstand und Erfahrung. Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1799), the notion appears in an analogous context in Herder's discussion of Kant's chapter on the Schematismus reiner Verstandesbegriffe. In contrast to Kant's 'Schematismus', Herder provocatively speaks of the *Denkbilder menschlicher Verstandesbegriffe*:

Das Bild, das meine Seele empfängt, ist ganz ihrer Art, nicht das Bild auf der Netzhaut des Auges; es ist von ihr empfangen, in ihre Natur metaschematisiret. Indeßen wars vom Eindruck veranlaßet, und sofern ein geistiges Bild einem körperlichen ähnlich sein kann, ist es ihm ähnlich. (Herder 1994, 117/118) - The picture received by my soul is all my soul's and not the picture on the eye's retina. As being received by it [the soul], it is transferred into its [the soul's] nature. But as it is caused by impression, as far as a mental picture can resemble a corporeal one, it resembles it.

The capability of resembling something describes the role of metaschematism as a linking interface between the mental and the corporeal. Thus, the competence of the soul to metaschematize might appear as an alternative of the Kantian schematism of reason, which diminishes the capacity of the human mind. According to Herder it does not only do schematic work. Rather, through language, the human mind is capable of communicating this previously schematic work to others, thus presenting as well as

representing the scheme which it employs. Thereby, the human mind reveals itself:

Auch erniedre man den menschlichen Verstand nicht so tief, daß man ihm die Gabe zu schematisiren, d.i. unbestimmte Nebelformen zu schaffen, als eine Leiter andichte, auf der allein er zur Erfahrung gelangen konnte. [...] Der menschliche Verstand hat eine viel höhere Kraft als dunkel zu schematisiren. Er kann seine erfaßten Merkmale durch Worte ausdrücken, er kann sprechen, daß man die Dinge sehe und ihn vernehme. (Herder 1994, 124/125) - Do not demean the human understanding so deeply as to attribute to it the capacity to schematize (that is to create undifferentiated fogginess) as the sole ladder to reach experience. Human understanding is capable of greater power than to schematize darkly. It can express its perceived characteristics through words, it can speak, for the things to be perceived and for itself to be heard.

To metaschematize is thus a process of letting someone see something by use of the potential of words, according to the Socratic principle<sup>13</sup>, which is one of Hamann's favourite ideas: "Rede, daß ich dich sehe, [Speak, that I shall see you]." (Hamann 1993, 87) Hamann relates this request to a conversation between the creator and his creature (Bayer 1990, 15). It is because of this principle as the aim of metaschematism that Herder's philosophical discussion with Kant is (re-)connected to the Pauline—i.e. religious—use of the concept.

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13 In fact, this quotation is an *apophtegma* by Lucius Apuleius of Madaura, which Erasmus attributed to Socrates. See Bayer 1988, 247. On Hamann's possible reception of this quotation compare Ringleben 1988, 212-214.

## Quotations

Quote from Lenk 1995, 255

*German text:*

Den Menschen [...] charakterisiert besonders die Fähigkeit des symbolischen Metaschematisierens. Er kann von höherer (meta)symbolischer Stufe aus seine Schematisierungen und Schemata erkennen, zu erfassen suchen und wiederum selbst zum Gegenstand metastufiger symbolischer, denkend-reflektiver sowie sprachlicher Repräsentationen machen. Er ist nicht bloß das symbolisch interpretierende, sondern das metasymbolisierende Wesen [...], er ist nicht allein das schematisierende, sondern das metaschematisierende Tier. Er ist das einzige Lebewesen, das alle seine Repräsentationen und Erfassungen (präsentierender wie strukturierender Art) in einer prinzipiell nach oben hin offenen, sich aufschichtenden Folge von Stufen wiedergeben, ‚re-präsentieren‘ [...] kann. Er ist das Wesen, das im Erfassen (i.S. von Erkennen verwoben mit Handeln) der prinzipiellen höherstufigen Metaschematisierung, Metainterpretation, Metasymbolisierung fähig ist. Der Mensch ist also generell das der repräsentationalen Metastufenbildung fähige und bedürftige Wesen: das metaschematisierende und metainterpretierende Metastufenwesen.

*translation:*

The human being [...] is characterized in particular by its capability to metaschematize symbolically. It can discern its schematizing and its schemata from a higher (meta)symbolic plane. It can endeavor to grasp this [schematizing and schemata] and in turn make it the subject of representations on the meta plane in symbolic, reflecting and language related respects. The human being is not merely a being who interprets symbolically, but rather the metasymbolizing being [...] it is not only the schematizing, but the metaschematizing animal. Man is the only creature that is capable of 're-presenting' all its representations and grasping (of a (pre-)presenting as well as of a structuring kind) in a mounting succession of stages which is generally opened upwards. Man is the being who by grasping [capturing] (in the sense of recognition entwined with action) is capable of the principally high-degree metaschematization, metainterpretation, metasymbolization. Accordingly, man in general is the being which is capable of and also seeking representational generation of meta planes: the metaschematizing and metainterpreting meta plane being.

## Quote from Bayer 1994, 520:

### *German text:*

Paulus jedenfalls führt mit den Korinthern keinen Dialog. Vielmehr läßt er, aus Freiheit ihr Diener (1. Kor 9,19), sich so auf sie ein, daß er selbst an ihre Stelle tritt (1 Kor 4,6). Darin übersteigt er nicht die Ebene des Dialogs zur Anmaßung einer Herrschaft; er steigt unter sie als Diener. Die Alternative zum Dialog ist nicht die Bevormundung, sondern die Fürbitte in der Solidarität von Röm 9,3. In der aus dem Lernen durch Leiden kommenden Fürbitte der Gemeinde, die Kirche für andere ist, löst sich die im Wort ‚Dialog‘ bewahrte und mit ihm beschworene Illusion der Streitenden, zwischen sich eine Mitte zu finden und in ihr zur Verständigung und zu einem Konsensus zu gelangen. Gilt es doch, Asymmetrien nicht zu überspielen.

### *translation:*

Paulus in any case does not enter into dialogue with the Corinthians. Rather, being their voluntary servant, he engages with them in a manner which puts himself in their place. Doing so, he does not transgress the level of dialogue towards a claim to rule; he descends below it as a servant. The alternative to dialogue is not paternalism, but intercession by solidarity as found in Röm 9,3. In its intercession, which originates from the congregation's (the church for others) learning through suffering, the antagonist's illusion (which is kept and evoked in the word 'dialogue')

of finding middle ground between them in order to reach consensus dissolves. After all, asymmetries should not be covered up.

### Quote from Bayer 1988, 145:

#### *German text:*

Hamann will seinen Adressaten überführen, ihn ändern, ihn zur *metanoia*, zur Umkehr, bringen, indem er sich des Mittels bedient, das dem Adressaten Bekannte, dessen eigenes Wort, so zu verfremden, dass dieses kritisch gegen den Autor zurückschlägt und er seinem eigenen Wort nicht entrinnen kann.

#### *translation:*

Hamann wants to disclose his addressee, to change him, to move him to *metanoia*, to conversion, by making the things known to the addressee, his own word, so alien to him as to make it lash out critically against the author, so that he cannot escape his own word.

## Quote from Gaier 2010, 22:

### *German text:*

Für den Theologen Herder war bestimmt Paulus mit seiner Verwendung der Begriffe ‚Schema‘ und ‚metaschematisieren‘ maßgebend. [...] Wenn Herder den Ausdruck ‚metaschematisieren‘ verwendet, dann mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit auf dem Hintergrund dieser Verwendungen bei Paulus.

### *translation:*

For Herder as a theologian, Paul with his use of the terms ‘scheme’ and ‘metaschematizing’ was certainly paramount. [...] Where Herder uses the term ‘metaschematising’ he very likely does so against the background of this usage with Paulus.

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