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TRAVELLING THROUGH TIME

Essays in honour of Kaj Öhrnberg

EDITED BY

SYLVIA AKAR, JAAKKO HÄMEEN-ANTTILA
& INKA NOKSO-KOIVISTO



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Edited by Sylvia Akar, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila & Inka Nokso-Koivisto
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FOREWORD

Who was it that first suggested we should celebrate the 70th anniversary of our teacher and friend Kaj Öhrnberg, Phil.Lic., with a volume of studies in the fields he is interested in? Whoever it was, the idea was adopted by all and sundry as soon as it was expressed, and willingly at that. The editorial committee organized itself immediately and all those who heard about the plan were enthusiastic.

This is indicative of Kaj Öhrnberg's person. Over the years, he has been teaching and helping people around him. You need a bibliographical reference? Ask Kaj, he'll provide you with one and volunteer half a dozen others that just occurred to him might be relevant. Want someone to read your manuscript? Send it to Kaj, he'll be certain to read it carefully, comment on it and, at the same time, he'll routinely mark your misspellings and check your references. Need some help with Russian sources, Caucasian place names, history of Oriental studies? It is to Kaj we have always turned for help, advice, and sometimes even consolation when things were going awry. Under normal circumstances, many of the articles printed in this volume would first have been sent by their authors to Kaj for comment and corrections.

It is not only the people in his immediate surroundings that Kaj Öhrnberg has always helped. Our first circular concerning the Festschrift drew enthusiastic responses from Spain, Russia, Scandinavia, and other countries whose scholars he has been in contact with. Everybody was willing to, waiting to, and wanting to contribute. Contributions started flowing in almost immediately.

There were willing contributors galore, yet some we had to turn down. Early on we had decided that the Festschrift should be thematic and the themes discussed should reflect the scholarly interests of the honoree. His intellectual interests cover a lot more than just the topics he has been writing about – his love of Chinese cultural history, Spanish red wines, and Russian literature is well known to his friends – but we decided to limit the Festschrift to Arabistics and a few other topics he has himself been working with. Without this limitation, there would have been many others to join in and contribute.

For someone not privileged to know Kaj Öhrnberg personally, this collection of articles may perhaps provide a faint image of the person it celebrates. There are some more personal articles at the beginning of the volume. The rest have been selected because we think Kaj Öhrnberg might be interested in their topics. The wide scope of the articles reflects his equally wide interests. There are arti-

cles in English, German, French, and Spanish and there could as well have been several other languages, all of which Kaj Öhrnberg effortlessly reads.

But having said this, there remains one problem ahead. Always willing to help, Kaj Öhrnberg never pushes himself into the front line and he never particularly enjoys the limelight. How can we lure him into some occasion where his friends might come together to celebrate him and present him with the first copies of this Festschrift? We are still working on that ...

June 2013 in Helsinki

Sylvia Akar, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila & Inka Nokso-Koivisto

THE MICROCOSM-MACROCOSM ANALOGY IN MESOPOTAMIAN AND MEDIAEVAL ISLAMIC CONTEXTS

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We are extremely glad to be able to dedicate this article to our teacher and mentor. Kaj has meant a lot to both of us over the years. His kindness and encouragement have been invaluable. He has taught us both so much more than just content: he has taught us by his example what it means to be a good scholar, a teacher, and a humanist.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of the history of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy often start their examination with Ancient Greece. If earlier development of the idea is taken into account at all, it tends to be bypassed with a mere mention. In this article, some aspects of the Mesopotamian tradition will be approached from the perspective of the microcosmism and will be compared with those developed millennia later in the same area in the Islamic context. Our intention is to examine the way in which some – even quite different – ideas in intellectual history are approachable as interpretations of this manifold concept. On a very general level, it can be defined as the idea that similarities or corresponding features occurring at the level of a larger entity, a macrocosm, can be found encapsulated or reflected in an entity of smaller scale, a microcosm.¹

Throughout the whole of intellectual history – in its mythological, philosophical, theological, and more extensive scientific branches – appear elements that

¹ We would like to acknowledge funding from the Academy of Finland for the project “The Intellectual Heritage of the Ancient Near East” (University of Helsinki), which has employed us during the writing of this article. A technical note: in this article, square brackets indicate a reconstructed text passage, whereas parentheses within a translation refer to clarifying notes. Finally, we would like to note that although we have written the article together and use the first person plural to indicate authorship, Svärd bears special responsibility for Mesopotamian evidence and Nokso-Koivisto for Islamic evidence.

can be approached from the perspective of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. Microcosmism has a long history and, over the course of its development, the analogy has received a wide range of interpretations. It forms a part of, for instance, cosmological, anthropological, and religious views. In previous studies, it has been systematised with different classifications. In this article, we will apply especially Allers's, Tymieniecka's, and Milkov's divisions of the idea.² Analysing the forms of the analogy used in Mesopotamia and the mediaeval Islamic world by means of these divisions is in line with our aims to 1) examine the relevance of the concept of microcosm in these contexts and, 2) define the position of these traditions in terms of the development of microcosmism in the Near East. Our aim is not, however, to compare the Mesopotamian tradition with the Near Eastern traditions following it, or to prove any direct or even indirect influence between them. The significance of our work here is highlighted by the lack of previous studies on the microcosmic idea in the Mesopotamian context (either in Assyriological studies or in general histories of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy).

Among the most important studies of the development of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in the history of philosophy are the dissertation of George Perrigo Conger and the systematic study of the idea in Western philosophy by Rudolf Allers.³ Both examine microcosmism quite extensively, but when it comes to individual traditions, they are, as one might expect, rather superficial. More specific studies of the microcosmic idea that concentrate on individual thinkers or traditions are often unsystematic: some studies do not define the analogy or approach it from just one single perspective.⁴

Although the development of the microcosmism has been acknowledged much more widely in Greek studies, it has received some interest also in the Islamic context. For example, Greek elements in the Islamic microcosmic idea have been studied by Rémi Brague.⁵ Geo Widengren has approached it from the perspective of Indo-Iranian mythology,⁶ and recently there was published a collection of articles primarily comparing the Islamic microcosm-macrocosm analogy with that of Western philosophy.⁷ Microcosmic speculation has formed a part

2 Allers 1944; Tymieniecka 2006; Milkov 2006.

3 Conger 1922; Allers 1944.

4 As an example of the former, see Nasr 1978. The latter is the case, for instance, in the study of Rémi Brague (1997), in which he approaches the idea in its Islamic context by reducing it to its explicit forms, meaning the contexts in which the author either refers to the term "microcosm" or lists corresponding features in a comparison between microcosm and macrocosm.

5 Brague 1997.

6 Widengren 1980.

7 Tymieniecka 2006.

of the broader studies of some individual Islamic thinkers,⁸ and some specific areas of the mediaeval worldview.⁹ However, no monograph or wider comparative or comprehensive study on microcosmism in its Islamic context has been published.¹⁰

In this article, the Islamic mediaeval microcosmic idea and the Mesopotamian tradition will be approached in the thematic frame of the human being.¹¹ The Mesopotamian tradition will be discussed from a wider perspective at first, followed by a detailed discussion of the Mesopotamian king as microcosm. In Islamic thought, the human archetype as microcosm will be approached in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* and in the mystical philosophy of Shihāb ad-dīn as-Suhrawardī (al-Maqtūl) (d. 1191).

MICROCOSM-MACROCOSM ANALOGY IN THIS STUDY

Before going into specific examples, we will define the framework by means of which the microcosmic idea will be examined in this study.¹² First, we will present a brief description of contexts which we consider to be microcosmic. Then we will move on to draw some general outlines of the way in which these analogies occur in the continuum of intellectual history. Lastly, we will discuss different systematisations of the use of the analogy and its different forms as they appear in previous studies. These will also be used as theoretical tools in our examination of the topic.

Definition of the idea

It is often assumed that Aristotle was the first one to utilise the term “microcosm” with an analogy between the microcosm and its wider counterpart, the macrocosm.¹³ In the second book of the *Physics* (VIII), he argues that if animals can set themselves in motion, why not the universe: “If in a lesser cosmos (μικρὸς

8 For example Ibn 'Arabī, see Takeshita 1987: 74–108.

9 See, for example, the dissertation of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1978), which scrutinises the microcosmic idea as a part of Islamic cosmological systems.

10 One of the authors of this article has published two articles on the idea and is preparing her PhD thesis on its development in the Islamic mediaeval tradition, see Maukola 2009 and Nokso-Koivisto 2011.

11 We will refer to the microcosmic man with the personal pronoun “he”, which is used gender neutrally, since none of our sources make an explicit distinction between genders in this respect.

12 “Microcosmic idea” is in this article also referred to as microcosmism or microcosm-macrocosm analogy.

13 e.g. Conger 1922: xiv.

κόσμος), why not in a greater, and if in the cosmos, why not in the unlimited?”¹⁴ The idea of correspondences between the macrocosm, a bigger entity, and a miniature of it, the microcosm, is, however, much more ancient than the term. The notion of a correlation between two layers of reality is actually quite rarely connected with the term “microcosm” (or its translations, such as the Arabic form *‘ālam ṣaghīr*). Limiting the examination to these contexts alone would exclude, among others, Plato, who has been considered the most remarkable elaborator of the idea (see pp. 283–285 below).

Occurrences of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy may be divided into explicit and implicit examples. Sometimes the microcosmic idea occurs in the form of comparisons in which corresponding features between two entities have been listed. These comparisons, in addition to the contexts in which the term microcosm is used, can be regarded as explicit cases of microcosmism because they are easily definable and recognisable. As is acknowledged in most systematic studies of it, the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm is often an assumption which is not explained, but which implicitly is part of a metaphysical system or scientific theory (for instance, in Platonic epistemology or in astrological theory). In this article, the microcosmic idea is examined in both its explicit and implicit forms. When it is studied as a concept of intellectual history and not, for instance, as a metaphor used in literature, this type of broad definition can be especially rewarding.

The terms “microcosm” and “macrocosm” also require definitions. In broad terms, we can talk about the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, when correspondences between two uneven layers of reality are assumed to exist. As Allers explains, “One vague and broad conception is shared by all authors who ever speculated on the microcosmus and its relation to the macrocosmus. The former, which the Latin writers usually call *minor mundus*, has certain features or principles in common with the macrocosmus or the universe.”¹⁵ As a philosophical concept, the examination of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy has often been restricted to the contexts in which the human being is presented as a microcosm. Conger defines the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in the following way, “Man is a microcosm, or ‘little world,’ in one way or another epitomising a macrocosm, or ‘great world’ – i.e. the universe or some part thereof.”¹⁶ As we can see, despite the restriction concerning the role of the microcosm, the macrocosm can, according

14 Tr. Wicksteed & Cornford 1970.

15 Allers 1944: 321.

16 Conger 1922: xiii.

to Conger, refer to any entity larger than the microcosm. Here the term “cosmos” takes the Greek meaning of “order”, rather than “universe” or “world”.

In this article, we limit our examination to the contexts in which the human being, a generally accepted representative of the human species (e.g. human archetype), or a human-shaped hero is considered as a microcosm. The macrocosm, on the other hand, can refer to any larger, all-encompassing entity in relation to the microcosm.

Overview on the development of the idea

In order to define what we mean by microcosmic idea, it is necessary to offer a general overview regarding its history. As was already mentioned, studies of the early development of the idea usually begin with Greek antiquity.¹⁷ Microcosmic elements are said to have existed in earlier, mostly mythological traditions (for instance, in early animism).¹⁸ It has been acknowledged that various mythological traditions, including those of the ancient Near East, developed the analogy, and it is related to many basic concepts of religious studies. One of the ideas regarded as microcosmism is the creation of the universe as a reproduction of a living creature, which is a quite universal element among creation myths (see pp. 289–291 below).

Most studies, however, purport that the microcosm-macrocosm analogy took its first form in pre-Socratic philosophy with such thinkers as Anaximander, Heraclitus, Democritus, and Pythagoras,¹⁹ but that its systematic form was developed only in Plato’s dialogues, especially in *The Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Meno*, and *Philebus*. Descriptions of the function of cosmos as a living creature and the parallelism between the World of Becoming and the World of Being are among the most evident examples of Platonic microcosmism. In the epistemological system of Plato, the microcosmic idea is strongly present and his city-state metaphors are widely developed in his later microcosmism. In his study on the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in Plato’s *Timaeus*, Anders Olerud criticises previous research for considering Greek philosophical microcosmism, in particular that of Plato, as an independent tradition separate from the mythological

17 Many features attributed to the Greek tradition did, however, exist already in previous traditions. Rochberg-Halton (1984: 117), for instance, suggests that the microcosm-macrocosm analogy is essential to Hellenistic astrology, as it linked “the man’s soul” to “the cosmic soul”. This idea of a firm connection between heaven and earth certainly existed already in Mesopotamia, although the origins of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy are probably not directly linked there.

18 Levy 1967: 639.

19 Surprisingly, Allers (1944: 343) emphasises the importance of the pre-Socratics in the development of the idea and remarks that all the elements for later Greek microcosmic speculation were implied in the thought of the pre-Socratics.

one. According to Olerud, it should be examined as an idea springing from, at least partly, the same sources as the “oriental” or mythological one.²⁰ The fame of Plato as the elaborator of the idea has led to it often being regarded as a specifically Platonic feature of philosophy. Although Aristotle refers to microcosmism, for Aristotelians the analogy never had the same metaphysical or cosmological significance as it did for Platonists.²¹

In the Hermetic tradition, which in its eclecticism combined elements from not only Platonic, but also Greek popular philosophy, Stoicism, Jewish, and Persian thought,²² the microcosm-macrocosm analogy had an important position. It appears not only in the philosophical Hermeticism of the *Corpus Hermeticum*,²³ but also in its technical branch, which contains texts that refer to Hermes Trismegistus and pertain to what nowadays would be called pseudo-scientific fields, such as astrology, alchemy, and magic.²⁴ Through its connection with these fields, the microcosmic idea was not restricted to the sphere of esoteric philosophical speculation: the sciences, which included elements of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, maintained their position as a part of the prevailing worldview in Europe and the Islamic world until the Renaissance and even later.

In Late Antiquity, microcosmic speculation continued especially in the Neoplatonic tradition and, despite its disputed position in the cosmological system based on emanation,²⁵ the influence of Neoplatonists was essential in the adaptation of microcosmism in later Judeo-Christian and Islamic circles. In the Jewish tradition, it was developed as early as the writings of Philo (d. c. AD 50).²⁶ The microcosmic idea was especially characteristic of Gnosticism. Because early Christian theologians wanted to emphasise their difference from Gnostics, they did not elaborate on it. In later Christian theology, however, the idea was

20 Olerud 1951: 3–4.

21 This kind of distinction has been treated in more detail in relation to epistemology by Allers (1944: 331).

22 Yates 1964: 2–3.

23 In Hermetic cosmology, the lower is described to be the sign of the higher and reality is seen as a many-layered whole, in which the layers exchange influence with each other. This appears very clearly in works such as *Tabula Smaragdina* (see Ebeling 2007: 50) and *Asclepius* (see Copenhaver 1992: 72–73).

24 As Yates (1964: 47) already points out, the often employed division of Hermetic tradition into its philosophical and technical branches is in many ways artificial and the development of these two branches cannot be separated from each other.

25 The Neoplatonic world-order – the system of hierarchically arranged hypostases, through which the being emanates – has been seen, on one hand, contradictory to the microcosmic idea (see Schlanger 1968: 313–316) and, on the other hand, as the first system wholly compatible with the idea of human being as a microcosm (O’Brien 1964: 25).

26 Conger 1922: 16–17.

employed. For example, in the discussion on the bodily aspect of the human being, emphasising man as a holistic entity, the microcosmism was used as a tool against negative attitudes towards the human body that were presented, for instance, by Origen (d. 254).²⁷ Mediaeval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers continued to elaborate on the idea, and among its most important mediaeval developers are Johannes Scotus Eriugena (d. 877), Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ (10th c.), and Yosef ibn Ṣaddiq (d. 1149).²⁸

All three monotheistic traditions used the idea of the human being as a microcosm, emphasising his position at the centre of creation and often attaching it to the *homo imago dei* theme.²⁹ As Conger points out, for mediaeval theologians the microcosmism “served as a convenient and uncritical method of reconciling religion with the natural sciences, which even then were beginning to raise questions and difficulties for the faithful”.³⁰ During the Renaissance, the microcosm-macrocosm analogy occurs as a central element in the idea of the human being, but loses its metaphysical importance in the early modern period. After that, it is left to the margins and appears mostly in its metaphorical form.

Variety of interpretations

A systematic study of the microcosmism necessitates a classification system by means of which it can be examined. This has been noted by many scholars, but the ways to categorise the different forms of the idea vary widely. The main purpose in applying classifications to occurrences of the idea and analysing them in terms of these is to find systematic approaches to the analogy. This also enables intertextual comparisons and helps trace the general development of it. Although the classifications have overlapping elements, their premises differ from each other.

Sometimes the microcosmic idea has been divided into different classes, according to the definition of the microcosm (in this case, the human being). Leonard Barkan, in his studies on the human body as microcosm in Renaissance literature, makes a distinction between the *figurative* and *literal* microcosm: “the figurative microcosm, which views man – rather than his body – as a précis of all creation and seeks in that perception a spiritual and intellectual truth, and the

27 Conger 1922: 30–31.

28 On microcosmism in Johannes Scotus Eriugena, see Otten 1991: 110–114, and in Yosef ibn Ṣaddiq, see Doctor 1895.

29 Alexander Altmann (1969) has studied the microcosmic idea in the mystical tradition of these three monotheistic religions, and he has also examined elaborations of the *homo imago dei* theme in this context.

30 Conger 1922: 52.

literal microcosm, which assumes an equivalence of man's body and the cosmos and uses this equivalence as some sort of scientific key to the nature of the world and man".³¹ This distinction is drawn between the figurative, meaning the presentation of the human being as a microcosm as a whole (including his body and soul), and literal, meaning the bodily correspondence with the macrocosm. In this article, the focus will be on both the bodily and spiritual aspects of the human being, as in the studied texts this distinction is often difficult to make, given the holistic concept of the human being. Barkan's division is indisputably valuable when the microcosmism is examined as a stylistic feature in literature and the focus is on the use of the idea, rather than the meaning given to it.

A division into *metaphorical* and *metaphysical* microcosmism terminologically resembles that of Barkan, but is more convenient for the study of intellectual history. This division appears often in the background of more specific classifications and it concerns the general meaning given to the analogy: does the microcosm-macrocosm analogy stand as a metaphysical argument, forming a realistic part of the worldview, or is it used merely as a figure of speech? The difference between metaphorical and metaphysical microcosmism is not necessarily explicit and, as Olerud points out, the metaphorical microcosm often also has "realistic" dimensions, by which he refers to the form here called metaphysical.³² As is the case with all classifications, these two forms of the idea seldom occur in a pure form: the metaphorical may include metaphysical dimensions and, more often, vice versa. However, the metaphysical microcosmism is of special interest in this article. It is especially relevant in the ancient Mesopotamian context, since the microcosm-macrocosm analogy has not been employed there at the metaphorical level (see below).

The meaning given to the microcosmic idea has also been examined from the perspective of the context in which it is used. Tymieniecka mentions three such contexts: the *mystical*, which is linked to salvation; the *reflective* or *metaphysical*, which can be understood as the reason for everything (i.e. the "rational linkage of events, their causes and first principles"); and the *scientific*. These perspectives are said to "mutually influence and modulate each other", and, according to Tymieniecka, Plato (among others) approaches the microcosm-macrocosm analogy from all these three perspectives.³³ Milkov recognises three traditions in microcosmic speculation that resemble the perspectives defined by Tymieniecka, but adds some additional characteristics. The first one, also connected to mysti-

³¹ Barkan 1975: 28.

³² Olerud 1951: 7.

³³ Tymieniecka 2006: x–xi.

cism, stresses the unity of all life and assumes it to be based on parallel proportions. This kind of microcosmism usually presumes the existence of the World Soul, and it is typical of esoteric philosophy, like the Hermetic tradition and occult sciences. The scientific approach is, in Milkov's view, characterised by looking for similar types of order prevailing at different layers of reality. In this category, Milkov includes any part of the thing that represents or mirrors the whole.³⁴ The third one accentuates the unity formed by different parts of the whole, following certain principles.³⁵ As will be seen later, these forms of the idea often appear connected to each other in Mesopotamian and Islamic traditions.

In addition to these overall classifications, which help to place the microcosmic idea in the field of intellectual history in broader terms, the nature of drawing analogies has been analysed in more detail by Allers.³⁶ His six-partite division is well-known, and it has been referred to and developed in various later studies.³⁷ Allers's division is based on the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm, as well as the ways in which they are found to correspond to each other.³⁸

By *elementaristic* microcosmism, Allers refers to occurrences of the idea in which the correspondences between two entities are thought to depend on the elements or materials into which both of them can be divided. A common form of this is to examine the human being as a "middle-being" in the universe, with his unique twofold nature joining the spiritual and material. On the other hand, *structural* microcosmism concentrates on world-order: "If human nature is envisioned in such a manner, man is not simply subjected to the universal laws, because he is part of the universe, but he is himself, as it were, these laws, and he may become aware of them by looking into himself."³⁹ In other words, this type of microcosmism is based on relationships, for instance, between the distances of the planets, positions of the human organs to one another, or other correspondences in the configuration of two entities. Introducing another form of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, which he calls *holistic* microcosmism, Allers considers analogies that are based on the parallelism between man-made orders prevailing at different layers of reality. In its holistic form, the microcosmic idea often implies or works as an expression of the ideal order, which

34 As Milkov (2006: 44) points out, this definition does not consider as scientific microcosmism only pseudoscientific theories such as astrology and alchemy, but also, among others, the modern neurological idea that each part of the brain represents a certain part of the body or its faculties.

35 Milkov 2006: 44–45.

36 Allers 1944: 321–337.

37 See Takeshita 1987: 74–108.

38 Olerud (1951: 7) uses similar premises in his division of the microcosmic idea in Plato's *Timaeus* and ends up classifying them in terms of morphologic, physiologic and psychological microcosms.

39 Allers 1944: 322.

should be aspired to by one of the paralleled entities. The most extensively elaborated form of the analogy of this kind is the city-state metaphor found in Plato's dialogues.

A less common form of the idea in a philosophical context is *symbolistic* microcosmism, which usually requires a code in order to be understood. "One may speak of 'symbolistic' microcosmism insofar as the microcosm is not conceived, either as obeying exactly the same laws as the macrocosm, or as duplicating and reproducing on a minor scale the latter's construction, but as 'corresponding to' or being 'symbolic of' the universe, in its totality or some of its parts."⁴⁰ Symbolistic analogy cannot be empirically verified, since it is based on some culturally constructed relationships or meanings. *Psychological* microcosmism seeks correspondences at the mental level: the perfected human intellect, for instance, may be considered as a microcosm, which is a characteristic feature especially of Platonic realism. *Metaphorical* microcosmism treats the analogy as a mere figure of speech and is used in literature, as well as in the philosophical tradition, as a stylistic feature. The distinction of the metaphorical microcosmism as its own separate group implies that the other five groups are considered as a metaphysical statement, ideas which form a part of the larger entity – be it philosophical, mythological or religious, a system or a world-view. This division between metaphysical and metaphorical microcosmism is of crucial importance to us, as our aim is to discuss metaphysical aspects of microcosmism.

As will be seen, the borders between these classes are not evident and the different forms of the idea rarely occur purely on their own. This is especially the case in the Mesopotamian material, since Allers's classification system was primarily created for an examination of philosophical material.

MESOPOTAMIA

As stated above, the microcosmic idea is here examined in its explicit and implicit forms. In the Assyriological section of this article, the microcosmic idea will be illuminated from the implicit perspective, as the idea is not explicitly discussed in the Mesopotamian evidence.⁴¹

Furthermore, in studies relating to Mesopotamia, the evidence is – to our knowledge – very rarely interpreted from the perspective of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. Several scholars have used the term "microcosm" as a figure

⁴⁰ Allers 1944: 326.

⁴¹ By Mesopotamia, we mean both the geographical area extending roughly from the modern Persian Gulf to the Levant and the culture that flourished there c.3000–539 BCE.

of speech to illuminate a point, but the analogy has not been used as a serious conceptual tool. When the term “microcosm” is mentioned in passing, it often relates to spatial arrangements in the Mesopotamian capital cities and royal palaces. In one instance, “microcosm” is used to describe the reading of entrails for omens (extispicy). Furthermore, it is twice used to refer to the king (see references below). However, although the microcosm-macrocosm analogy has rarely been used in studies relating to Mesopotamia, the ancient phenomena themselves (such as “kingship”) have of course been studied extensively as part of the cultural history of Mesopotamia.

We will first examine the different types of microcosmic ideas presented above from the viewpoint of Mesopotamian studies. This is followed by a discussion of the Mesopotamian king as a microcosm.

Variety of interpretations from Assyriological perspective

In this article, instead of the metaphorical approach, the metaphysical microcosmism is of special interest to us. In particular, we examine how the microcosm-macrocosm analogy formed an integral part of the Mesopotamian worldview (see subsection “Variety of interpretations” above). In Mesopotamia, we can observe it in many places. As Nicholas Postgate states, “Both politics and religion subscribe to the same metaphor, a parallelism of heavenly and earthly events: events of earth are mirrored, and have to be explained, by events in heaven.” This principle was a constant factor in Mesopotamia throughout its history.⁴²

Milkov outlines a tripartite method for the study of microcosmism. The mystical perspective does not really have a relevant correspondence in Mesopotamian culture. However, the scientific approach is very relevant. The Mesopotamian art of divination (for example, taking omens from livers or reading the skies according to astrology) is a very clear example of this type of microcosmic idea, in which the microcosm mirrors the macrocosm.⁴³ In Mesopotamia, by examining the liver of the sacrificial animal (usually a goat or a sheep), the priest could find answers to many questions. Alternatively, the movement of the stars and planets could herald changes in the human world. Two concrete examples of this can be seen in these excerpts from Neo-Assyrian astrological reports: “If the Pleiades come close to the top of the moon and stay there, (this means that) the king will

⁴² Postgate 2000: 396.

⁴³ Milkov 2006: 44. Divination and liver omens will be examined from the perspective of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in Svärd & Nokso-Koivisto (forthcoming).

rule the world and expand his land,”⁴⁴ and “The right side of the moon means Akkad, the left side of the moon means Elam, the upper part of the [moon means the West]land, the lower part of the moon means Subartu.”⁴⁵

Milkov’s third category of microcosmic study relates to the principles of organisation: in other words, how a microcosm (for example, Mesopotamian geographical and/or social space) is ordered according to the same principles as a macrocosm (for example, according to the divine order of things).⁴⁶ Milkov’s principles of organisation resemble Allers’s structural and holistic microcosmisms. Therefore, it will not be discussed separately here.

Allers’s six-way division is based on the ways in which microcosm and macrocosm correspond to each other. The metaphorical microcosmism was already discussed above. Furthermore, two of Allers’s definitions do not really apply to the Mesopotamian evidence. The psychological microcosmism as defined by Allers is not applicable because micro-macro correspondences on the mental level are not recorded in the Mesopotamian evidence. Neither is structural microcosmism apparent in Mesopotamian material.

Whereas structural microcosmism is based on actual quantifiable relationships between the microcosm and the macrocosm, symbolistic microcosmism is not tied to direct empirical evidence and measurements. Instead, symbolistic relationships between the microcosm and the macrocosm are a cultural construct, based on symbols that have to be learned. Examples of this may be found in all divinatory arts in Mesopotamia, including astrology and liver omens. The term microcosm is even used in passing at least once in Assyriological literature to describe the reading of entrails for omens.⁴⁷ Further examples might include the king as a symbol of divine order, the pantheon and the country, and as the Perfect Man (see section “King as microcosm” below).

Allers’s idea of holistic microcosmism is difficult to pinpoint in the Mesopotamian evidence, but it could be reflected in the Assyrian idea that the king was the Perfect Man, a model for other humans to aspire to. Another example could be the interpretation of the king as the embodiment of the divine pantheon and cosmic order (see section “King as microcosm” below). Furthermore, Mesopotamian built spaces – for example, the capital city and the royal palaces

44 Astrological reports were sent to the king from all over Assyria, usually with explanations. The aim was to enable the king’s cultic staff to perform the relevant rituals to pacify the gods. The Neo-Assyrian astrological omens have been extensively published in Hunger 1992. The quotation is from Hunger 1992: text no. 296 (translation by Svärd).

45 Hunger 1992: text no. 316.

46 Milkov 2006: 44–45.

47 Koch 1978: 18.

– could be assigned to holistic microcosmism. The idea of built space being a microcosm seems to have taken root to some degree in Assyriological research, since the idea that a building or a city was a microcosm can be attested as the most frequent use of the term “microcosm” in Assyriological studies.⁴⁸

As Allers defines it, elementaristic microcosmism is based on the idea that the human “alone integrates within himself the constituents of reality”.⁴⁹ The Mesopotamian worldview seems to reflect this outlook in many of its creation myths, where humans are created from clay mixed with the blood of a rebel god – and in some versions also the spit of gods.⁵⁰ Such myths outline the human’s place between heaven and earth, marking him apart from all other forms of life. A further example of this might be the perception of the Assyrian king as a two-natured being, both human and divine (see below). This might have reflected a more profound understanding of human as a microcosm of the whole world.

On a more general level, it seems clear that elements of the body – divine or human – kept their connection to it even after they were detached. For example, in the Babylonian creation myth, the chaotic mother of all gods (Tiamat) was killed by the supreme god of the Babylonian pantheon (Marduk), who fashioned the world from the elements of her corpse.⁵¹ Another example of this is that Mesopotamian magic often required a symbolic part of the body of the bewitched in order to work.⁵²

Therefore, several cultural constructs from Mesopotamia could be examined from the viewpoint of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. However, we have chosen as the focus of this article the human being. Specifically, we examine the person of the Mesopotamian king, who was a microcosm par excellence. He embodied the divine world and the mundane world, as he was the only mediator between the gods and the people. Furthermore, it has been suggested that he also embodied divine order. For the study of the king, Allers’s symbolic, holistic and elementaristic microcosmic ideas are relevant.

48 All mention it only in passing as a figure of speech. Whole cities (Van De Mieroop 2003: 273), palaces (Brown 2010: 1–2; Thomason 2005: 212, 224–225), temples (Van Leeuwen 2010: 399, 416, 421; Van De Mieroop 2003: 273; Lundquist 1983) and rooms in them (Winter 1981: 20) have all been called microcosms.

49 Allers 1944: 322.

50 Lambert 2000: 1832–1834.

51 Dalley 1989: 254–257.

52 For example, “spittle, hair, nail parings, dirty washwater, a garment fringe and dust from where the victim’s feet had trodden” (Rollin 1983: 41). Figurines of spell targets (victims as well as witches) could also play an important part (Sefati & Klein 2002: 575–577, 579, 581, 583–585; Rollin 1983).

King as microcosm

Kingship was granted to the Mesopotamian king by the gods. The earliest recorded kings legitimised their rule by demonstrating both divine approval and support of the city's population. Roughly after 1600 BCE, however, when the heads of territorial states began owning their territory, the emphasis changed to the king's legitimate ownership of the land and the people living on it.⁵³ Nonetheless, throughout Mesopotamian history an important part of a king's legitimacy was based on his duty to care for the temples, secure food offerings, and participate in rituals. These in turn were connected to the ruler's responsibility of securing the favour of the gods for his land.

As a specific case in point, we will describe the royal ideology of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. In brief, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was one of the largest empires of the ancient Near East. Additionally, it is one of the best documented, since thousands of Neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablets have been found (mostly – but not only – from the area of modern Iraq). The Neo-Assyrian period is usually divided into two parts. During the first part (934–745 BCE), the kings consolidated their hold on the heartland of the Assyrian Empire, around the capital Assur and northern Mesopotamia. During the second stage (744–612 BCE), the Assyrian kings significantly expanded this area with aggressive military campaigns, until the Neo-Assyrian Empire became one of the largest in the ancient Near East, reaching from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.⁵⁴

The Assyrian concept of kingship did not radically differ from that of its predecessors. The king's role as something more than human was clear in Mesopotamia, occasionally even reaching divinity.⁵⁵ As in earlier periods, the Neo-Assyrian king was closer to the divine world than ordinary men. He was the representative of the nation's patron god Aššur, and as such was in charge of delivering the gods' will to earth. The divine sanction for his kingship was most probably needed already when he was chosen to be crown prince. Another important facet of royal ideology was the portrayal of the king as the greatest king who ever lived, "king of the universe, the one without equal", as the Assyrians themselves wrote.⁵⁶

We will now turn our attention to the interpretations of king and kingship from the perspective of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. As far as the king is concerned, we should restate that in this article we are interested in him as a figurative and literal microcosm (see section "Variety of interpretations" above).

53 Postgate 2000: 399, 405.

54 Kuhrt 1995: 478–501.

55 Postgate 2000: 400–402.

56 Radner 2010: 25–28.

Altogether we suggest four interpretations for king as a microcosm. We will start with the evidence relating to the king as a semi-divine being.

The Assyrians apparently viewed the king's physical body as a separate divine manifestation. Several texts hint at the Neo-Assyrian king's special status as a separately created entity. No doubt the following creation myth from a later period (Neo-Babylonian, c.900–539 BCE) was already influencing the royal ideology of the Neo-Assyrian era.⁵⁷

Ea (god of wisdom) opened his mouth to speak, saying a word to Belet-ili (goddess of creation): "You are Belet-ili, the sister of the great gods; it was you who created man, the human (*lullû amēlu*). Fashion now the king, the counsellor man (*šarru mālîku amēlu*)! Gird the whole of his figure so pleasingly, make perfect his countenance and well formed his body!" And Belet-ili fashioned the king, the counsellor man.⁵⁸

Furthermore, in three flattering letters addressed to King Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) by his closest advisor, Adad-šumu-ušur, the king was described as a semi-divine being. "The king, my lord, is the chosen one of the great gods ... The well-known proverb says: 'Man is a shadow of god.' [But] is man a shadow of man too? The king is the perfect likeness of the god."⁵⁹ Encouraging the king to go outdoors, he compared the king to Šamaš the sun god: "The king, the lord of the world, is the very image of Šamaš. He [should] keep in the dark for half a day only!"⁶⁰ Finally, in an elaborate letter thanking the king for his favour, the scholar wrote:

the father of the king, my lord, was the very image of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very image of Bel. This [honour] has fallen to my share from the mouth of my two lords. Who can ever repeat it, who can vie with it?⁶¹

These three quotations reflect just a few examples of the Neo-Assyrian outlook. Pirjo Lapinkivi presents a good review of pertinent evidence relating to the king's semi-divine status. A well-known epithet of the Neo-Assyrian king was

57 Radner 2010: 26–27.

58 The text is edited (in German) in Mayer (1987), but we quote here the English translation from Radner (2010: 27). Interestingly, a fragment of a duplicate of the passage has recently been discovered by Enrique Jiménez (Jiménez 29 Oct. 2012, presentation in the Venice International University). The fragment is mentioned here with the consent of Jiménez, who will publish it in the near future in *Kaskal*. The existence of the fragment suggests that the myth was part of a larger tradition.

59 Parpola 1993b: text no. 207.

60 Parpola 1993b: text no. 196.

61 Parpola 1993b: text no. 228.

“perfect man” (*eṭlu gitmālu*) or “perfect king” (*šarru gitmālu*). The idea of the king being a divine being or an “image” (*šalmu*) of a god is frequently attested in the royal correspondence. This idea is related to the ancient Mesopotamian tradition of divine kingship, although few Mesopotamian kings directly claimed divinity for themselves.⁶² Based on the existing evidence, we can say that the king was envisaged as reflecting or embodying the divine and was definitely viewed as something more than a man. This view of the king as the “middle-being” can be interpreted as elementaristic microcosmism.

The second idea we will explore is the notion that the king actually embodied the pantheon in his person. Simo Parpola suggests that an important Assyrian iconographical motif, the so-called sacred tree, was a coded message for the initiated elite, signifying the unity of all Assyrian gods. According to Parpola, in this figure of the sacred tree the great gods of the Assyrian pantheon were portrayed as aspects of the one true god, Aššur.⁶³ In Parpola’s view, the king represented the sacred tree, and as the embodiment of the tree the king can be seen as “the human incarnation of the almighty God, Aššur”.⁶⁴

Furthermore: “the king himself represented the realisation of that order in man, in other words, a true image of God, the Perfect Man”. Parpola compares the king as Perfect Man and Assyrian Tree to the Sefirotic Tree: “the Sefirotic Tree, like the Assyrian, can also refer to man as a microcosm, the ideal man created in the image of God. Interpreted in this way, it becomes a way of salvation for the mystic seeking deliverance from the bonds of flesh through the soul’s union with God.”⁶⁵

According to Parpola, during the Neo-Assyrian period the concept of human perfection was detached from the royal sphere and turned into a state attainable by any individual who was willing to follow the spiritual road outlined in the Gilgamesh epic.⁶⁶ The epic presents the story of King Gilgamesh, who seeks eternal life in vain through many hardships. At the end of the myth, he returns to his hometown enriched by knowledge.⁶⁷ Based on an esoteric interpretation of the Gilgamesh myth, Gilgamesh – the perfect king of olden days – could be seen as “a model against which men were measured”.⁶⁸

62 Lapinkivi 2004: 114–118.

63 Parpola 1993a.

64 Parpola 2000: 188–190.

65 Parpola 1993a: 167–168, 173.

66 Parpola 1998: 325, n. 40; Parpola 1993a: 192–195.

67 George 2003.

68 Parpola 1998: 326.

Lapinkivi sums this up in her work when she states that: “the Tree could also be understood as an image of the perfect human being, the king as Tree representing the realisation of the divine world order (macrocosm) in man (microcosm)”. She concludes her discussion by stating that the “identification of the king with the sacred tree certainly was ideologically important even in Sumerian times”.⁶⁹

To summarise, in Parpola’s view (partly shared by Lapinkivi), the king as sacred tree can be seen as A) an embodiment of the pantheon (i.e. the divine attributes of Aššur) and B) the Perfect Man, who served as a model human being to which the initiated could hope to attain. The holistic microcosmism as defined by Allers becomes relevant especially in relation to these interpretations, since the king here embodies the ideal order. Additionally, the symbolistic analogy is clearly relevant as well.⁷⁰

The fourth possible interpretation is that the king can be perceived as a microcosm for cosmic order. Whether or not one accepts Parpola’s hypothesis about the nature of the Assyrian king, it is clear that the king was the primary defender of the cosmic order of things on earth. It is conceivable that he even represented in his person the social and cosmic order. As Beate Pongratz-Leisten has convincingly suggested, “While formerly temple hymns such as the *Kesh Hymn* declare the temple as the stronghold against chaos, during the second and first millennia BCE, the agency of the king replaces the temple as key metaphor for the social and cosmic order.”⁷¹ If this is so, symbolistic microcosmism is pertinent here.

To name just one example of the king’s role as the upholder of the divine order; one of the most important rituals of the Mesopotamian cultic calendar took place at the vernal equinox, when the new year ritual took place. It was of utmost importance that the king confirmed ritually that he had fulfilled his obligations to the temple of the national god Marduk in Babylon. During the festival, the *Epic of Creation* was read and the king orated, among other things, that “I have not destroyed Babylon ... I have not forgotten its rites.”⁷² The epic itself was read to confirm the world order, perhaps in some sense recreating it ritually, presenting the king in the role of Marduk. The *Epic of Creation* begins by describing how the first god (Apsu) and goddess (Tiamat) appeared. They

69 Lapinkivi 2004: 114, 118.

70 In addition to perceiving the king’s person as the embodiment of ideal order, the kingship he exercised can also be seen as a microcosm. One could claim that his earthly kingship mirrored the perfection of the divine kingship of the head of pantheon, Aššur. In this sense, kingship – not only the king – can be seen in terms of Allers’s holistic perspective.

71 Pongratz-Leisten 2009: 427. For the importance of temple as an embodiment of cosmic mountain and cosmic order, see Lundquist 1983.

72 Postgate 2000: 398–399, 408.

were followed by younger, more vigorous gods, whose unruly ways led them into conflict with the first gods. Eventually Marduk, the city god of Babylon, emerges as the one who defeats and kills Tiamat and fashions the world out of her body. All other gods admit Marduk's supremacy and the myth ends with a long exaltation of Marduk.⁷³

To conclude: the king can be interpreted as 1) the middle-being, 2) microcosm for the pantheon, 3) an ideal human being (Perfect Man), and 4) microcosm for cosmic order. In our view, all these aspects are interconnected. Even if one decides to disregard the theory of the Assyrian Tree, it is clear that the king was perceived as a semi-divine being who acted as the main mediator between the divine realm and the nation he governed. It is more unclear whether or not he at the same time acted as the microcosmic blueprint of the "Perfect Man", to which others could aspire. If such an idea existed, it was not explicitly written down in cuneiform sources. Even so, to reflect the Mesopotamian microcosmic idea – summarised "as above, so below" – it was necessary for him to embody both the divine and the human in his person. Only by being both divine and human at the same time could he uphold the divine order in the material world.

To return to the first part of this chapter, how are these microcosmic ideas localised in Allers's arrangements? Altogether four interpretations were discussed above. The duality of nature of the king calls to mind elementaristic microcosmism. It is furthermore possible that the king signified the pantheon and/or the perfect man. These two interpretations (as well as the related one of "kingship") would fall under the category of holistic microcosmism, with some features from symbolistic microcosmism. Finally, we can associate the king as a microcosm of cosmic order primarily with symbolistic microcosmism, with some holistic features. Such categorisations can naturally be made in many different, equally valid ways. Nonetheless, it seems clear to us that the microcosm-macrocosm analogy provides a rich interpretative framework for the study of Assyrian kingship.

ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Roots for the Islamic microcosmism seem to be manifold and, in this respect, the Islamic authors received influence from Greek philosophical writings, mythological sources and the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁷⁴ The idea appears already in early Arabic texts, especially in those sometimes referred to as Hermetic.⁷⁵ Later

⁷³ Kämmerer & Metzler 2012; Teppo 2008: 79, 83; Dalley 1989: 233–277.

⁷⁴ The term "Islamic" is used in a cultural sense, not as a reference to the primarily religious nature of the texts.

⁷⁵ On the difficulties of this term in the Islamic context, see van Bladel 2009: 17–22.

the topic occurs to some extent in mainstream philosophical and scientific writings as well,⁷⁶ but has a more essential role – especially in its metaphysical forms – in the mystical tradition and, for instance, in astrological and alchemical texts.

In the Islamic tradition, the microcosmic idea has been developed in most of its forms. It has been variously interpreted in the philosophical systems and, more specifically, as a part of the idea of the human being. Since the material for the study of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in Islamic tradition is extensive, we will not go into detail on the different forms of the analogy. Instead, we will approach the Islamic tradition of microcosmism from the perspective of one particular theme: the human archetype as microcosm. This is of interest firstly in relation to the previously presented examples from the Mesopotamian tradition and secondly from the perspective of the general mythological origins of the Islamic microcosm-macrocosm analogy. The topic will be discussed in relation to the encyclopaedic text *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* and the work of Shihāb ad-dīn as-Suhrawardī (al-Maqtūl) (d. 1191).

Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā' was written during the tenth century and is attributed to an obscure writer or a group of writers referring to themselves as the Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'.⁷⁷ The work consists of 52 epistles, out of which two – the 26th and the 34th – are dedicated specifically to the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. The idea occurs, however, recurrently throughout the whole *Rasā'il*, and it takes various forms in relation to the cosmological, astrological, anthropological, and religious views of the authors. In other words, it can be regarded as an essential theme in the authors' idea of human being. Hence, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā'* is often considered as the text in which the microcosm-macrocosm analogy is most extensively elaborated in the Islamic tradition.

Suhrawardī's literary production can be divided into two branches, his peripatetic works and his mystical treatises. The microcosmic idea is employed especially in the latter, and some of Suhrawardī's Persian allegories are constructed on the basis of the analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm.⁷⁸

Hence, for both the Ikhwān and Suhrawardī, the microcosmic position of the human archetype is solely one dimension of the analogy, but, as will be seen in the case of the Ikhwān, it can be seen as defining other occurrences of microcosmism as well.

76 For instance, the idea of world or universe as a large man or animal was considered as a basic idea in Peripatetic philosophy (see al-Ghazālī (b): 144).

77 The identities of the authors and the timing of the text are disputed. On this topic, see Tibawi 1955; Stern 1964.

78 For instance, in the Persian allegorical story *The Lovers' Friend* (Suhrawardī (b)), there is a long description of the human soul as a city.

Human archetype as the microcosm

In this section, we refer by “human archetype” to the universal man, the cosmological prototype of human beings. As will be seen, three out of Allers’s six types of microcosmism can be found to occur in the context of the human archetype. Because all of our examples are from philosophical texts reflecting the cosmological views of the authors, it is clear that they have a realistic meaning and pertain to the scope of the metaphysical microcosmism. When the idea is considered from the perspective of the human archetype, elements of Tymieniecka’s reflective microcosmic idea, as well as those of her and Milkov’s mystical branch of it, are present.

In the *Rasā’il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā’*, the archetypal human being is described as the universal human rational soul (*an-nafs an-nāṭiqā al-insāniyya al-kullīyya*) or the absolute universal human being (*al-insān al-muṭlaq al-kullī*), sometimes also referred to as the First Adam (*Adam al-awwal*).⁷⁹ Hence, the human archetype is the purely spiritual forefather of human beings. In the 22nd epistle, the human archetype is described as the guardian angel of human species, who “is the universal human rational Soul, vicegerent of God on his Earth (Q. 2:30). She it was, who was linked to Adam’s body when he was formed from Earth. (...) The universal rational soul is still in Adam’s seed, just as the corporeal form of Adam’s body survives in his seed.”⁸⁰ This clarifies the distinction between the earthly Adam and his universal counterpart: the human archetype is the soul appearing for the first time in material form in the first created man, and through him the seed or principle of humanity is transmitted further to the descendants of Adam.

The human archetype is examined also in the ninth epistle of the *Rasā’il*. Although the human archetype is not referred to in the two epistles of the work that treat the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, in this context the microcosmism seems to be connected with the human archetype:

If a human being were innately to have all the characteristics (*akblāq*), he would not have difficulties in manifesting all the activities (*af’āl*) and all the arts (*ṣanā’i*). But it is not an individual man, only the absolute universal human

⁷⁹ As de Callatay (2005: 27–28) remarks, Adam has various roles in the *Rasā’il* and the *Ikhwān* are not very clear in their distinctions between different Adams. In addition to the human archetype as the First Adam, Adams appear at least in two other contexts: the first created man, the qur’ānic Adam, who is at times referred to as the earthly Adam (*Ādam turābī*) and, in eschatology, Adams occur in the beginning of each world era. The latter has been identified with the Ismā’īlī Imām by Marquet (1999 [1975]: 367).

⁸⁰ *Ikhwān* (b): 228, tr. Goodman & McGregor 2009: 274.

being, who innately receives every characteristic and is able to manifest all the arts and works. Know that all people are individuations of this absolute human being, and he was the one we have mentioned as the vicegerent of God (Q. 2:30) on His earth since the day of the creation of Adam, the father of human beings, until the day of the Great Resurrection. It is the universal human soul (*an-nafs al-kullīyya al-insāniyya*), which is present in all individual human beings. God says, your creation and your upraising are as but a single soul (Q. 31:28), like we have explained in the epistle on resurrection. Know, oh brother, and may God with a spirit from Him help you, that this absolute man, who we said is the vicegerent of God on earth, is innately able to receive all the human characteristics, all the sciences of humanity and all the arts of wisdom. And he is present at all times and eras, within each individual man. From the absolute man are manifested all the activities, sciences, characteristics and arts of an individual. Among the individuals, however, some are ones who are better prepared than others to receive sciences, arts, characteristics or works, and they are manifested in them accordingly.⁸¹

The microcosmic position of the human archetype is presented as threefold: he has innately all the characteristics, manifests all arts, and includes in him all knowledge. While such short references give too little information to be analysed as specific forms of microcosmism, in the context of the microcosmic speculation appearing elsewhere in the *Rasā'il*, they can be seen as references to three aspects of the idea of human being as microcosm in the work.

The universal man is mentioned, firstly, as innately having all the “characteristics”, which are later defined as referring to human characteristics: universal man is a microcosm of humanity. This way of defining man as a microcosm of human characteristics is similar to the form of the idea treated in the 26th epistle of the *Rasā'il*, entitled *On the saying of the wise that the human being is a microcosm*. Here the human being is examined as a microcosm, because he epitomises the specific characteristics of different animal species:

Regarding man sharing the special characteristics of all beings, you should know, o brother, may God help you and us with a spirit from Him, that each animal species has its special characteristic, which is innate to it. All of these characteristics can be found in the human-being: man is brave like a lion, cowardly like a rabbit, generous like a cock, niggardly like a dog, chaste like a fish, boastful like a raven.⁸²

81 Ikhwān (a), I: 306.

82 Ikhwān (a), II: 474–475.

The list continues with animal features presented in opposite pairs, which include both positive and negative attributes.⁸³ Naturally, the characteristics referred to in the passage on the human archetype are characteristics of the human being, not those of animals. Ways of formulating the microcosmic idea in these two contexts, however, share common features: the human being is described as a microcosm – or, actually, *the* microcosm – because in him the characteristics of a class of sub-lunar beings (in the case of the universal man, the class of human beings) are brought together. In Allers’s division, this form of the analogy stands as an example of elementaristic microcosmism.⁸⁴

Secondly, the passage on the universal man indicates that the human archetype manifests “all the activities and arts”.⁸⁵ In the *Rasā’il*, this topic is treated especially in the 5th epistle, entitled *On music*. Concerning individual arts and their relationship with the human being, the Ikhwān examine the proportions of the heavenly bodies, which, according to them, are reflected also in the human body and are imitated as ideal proportions in music.⁸⁶ Although the Ikhwān examine the topic in the epistle on music, not only the work of a musician but the work of any kind of compositor (especially that of a calligrapher) is seen as an imitation of the celestial harmony of proportions, which follow human proportions. Since the correspondence is due to the equal proportions appearing at different levels of reality, this form of the analogy is evidently an example of structuralistic microcosmism. Noteworthy here is that, in this case, the concentration is on the bodily aspect of the human being, although the human archetype is clearly a purely spiritual being.

Thirdly, the human archetype is described as being “innately able to receive” all knowledge and skills of wisdom. This implies the psychological microcosmism in the form of the human intellect as a potentially perfected microcosm. This topic

83 Similar references to the human being bringing together the characteristic features of animals appear quite often in the Islamic tradition. See al-Ghazālī’s *Mizān al-‘amal* (210) and al-Qazwīnī’s *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* (303). Contrary to the *Rasā’il* passage cited above, in these texts this idea is seen as something clearly negative, linking the animal attributes with the diabolic in the human being. For the Ikhwān, the animal features in the cited passage seem to have a more neutral or positive nature, emphasising the abilities of animals. On the other hand, the Ikhwān also present views more closely resembling those of al-Ghazālī and al-Qazwīnī in this respect in their 34th epistle. (Ikhwān (a), III: 229)

84 Allers 1944: 346–347.

85 This dimension of the microcosmic idea is essential in some texts pertaining to the Jābirian Corpus. For instance, in *Kitāb al-‘Awālim* (Jābir: f. 62a), the author refers to three worlds: the macrocosm, meaning the universe as a whole, which is mentioned as giving light to the other two; the microcosm (*al-‘ālam aṣ-ṣaghīr*), referring to the human being; and the middle world (*al-‘ālam al-awsaṭ*), which is the Art (*aṣ-ṣinā‘a*), referring to alchemy.

86 Ikhwān (c): 129–137.

is treated, for instance, in the 26th epistle.⁸⁷ Here the human soul is said to have been created as a miniature of the Well-Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*), which potentially includes all knowledge. The idea occurs frequently in other contexts of epistemology as well. For instance, in the epistle on sensory knowledge, the authors urge the reader to contemplate reality around him, because all knowledge is potentially integrated in the human soul.⁸⁸

Since the cited passage describing the human archetype refers to various aspects of microcosmism, it can be interpreted as clarifying the concept of the microcosm as a part of the idea of the human being in the *Rasā'il* in general. Although in the microcosmic epistles of the work the microcosmic position is not dedicated to the human archetype, in this passage the authors seem to attach these three aspects of the idea specifically to the human being at the universal level, not to the human being as an individual. This is particularly interesting in the case of the Ikhwān, since their microcosmic idea has a strongly physiological emphasis and, when we approach the archetype of the human being, we clearly refer to the purely spiritual being.

Suhrawardī also treats the topic of the human archetype as microcosm, especially in his mystical writings. He usually refers to the human archetype in terms of Gabriel, thus placing emphasis on its position as the guardian angel of the human species. The other Persian name used for the human archetype is Ravān-Bakhsh, Giver of Spirit. Together with Gabriel, this name emphasises the position of the human archetype as transmitter of the holy knowledge or spirit to the material world. In *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, the cosmological position of the human archetype is defined by means of Suhrawardī's metaphorical language of light: Gabriel is the lord of the talisman (*ṣāhib at-ṭilism*) of the human species, the dominating light which controls the managing lights (in this case, individual human souls).⁸⁹

In *Ḥikmat*, Gabriel is not presented as the microcosm, but elsewhere Suhrawardī expresses the all-encompassing role of the human archetype. For instance, in the allegorical story *Āvāz-i parr-i Jibrā'īl*, there is a passage which is of interest from the perspective of the microcosmic idea:

Gabriel has two wings, the right wing is pure light, the totality of which is an abstraction of the relation between his being and God. The left wing has traces of darkness, like dark spots on the surface of the moon that resemble peacock's feet. That is a sign that his being has one side toward non-being (...) Therefore

87 Ikhwān (a), II: 460–461.

88 Ikhwān (a), II: 416.

89 Suhrawardī (a): 132.

the vainglorious world of sound and shadow is Gabriel's wing, that is, his left wing, while enlightened souls are from his right wing.⁹⁰

The twofold nature of Gabriel is found in the middle of this passage, while his two wings represent the spiritual and material worlds: he includes both being and non-being. This can be seen as an example of the elementaristic microcosmic idea in Allers's division. In addition to bringing together the two aspects of being, the passage implies that the human archetype produces and works as some kind of mediator in the creation of these two aspects, since it is stated that "enlightened souls are from his right wing".

In particular, the last passage echoes the mythological notion of the creation of the world from the primordial man. The creation as a human reproduction is found also in the Iranian tradition, which has in previous research been considered as one of the main sources for the Islamic microcosmic idea.⁹¹ Obviously Suhrawardī does not support this idea of creation, but at least at the level of language, this passage may imply mythological influences that were most likely transmitted through Iranian sources.

As can be seen, the individual theme of the human archetype is related to various forms of the microcosmism: elementaristic, structuralistic, and psychological. Whereas the microcosmic idea in general in these texts focuses also on the development of an individual human being and the corporeal aspect of man, a particular feature of the idea when it appears in descriptions of the human archetype is that it is understood as being shared by humanity as a whole and it is centred on the spiritual aspect of man, although it seems to be connected with the idea of the human body as microcosm as well. In both of our examples, we can also see that the microcosmic position of the human being is not referred to explicitly, although both the Ikhwān and Suhrawardī elsewhere refer to the microcosm-macrocosm analogy explicitly.

90 Suhrawardī (c): 17–18, tr. Thackston 1999: 17–18.

91 Widengren 1980. According to R.C. Zaehner (1961: 198–201), in the Iranian tradition – especially in Zurvanian Zoroastrianism, and particularly in its materialistic branch – the idea of man as microcosm is given an important position. Zurvān's body, the heavenly sphere, is thought to form the macrocosm while man, the microcosm, has been created in the image of that. The idea more closely resembling Islamic microcosmism is found in Bundahishn, where creation is presented as a sacrifice of the cosmic man: the sky is created from his head, earth from his feet, water from his tears, plants from his hair, the bull from his right hand, and the first man, Gayōmart, from the seeds of the cosmic man. (Zaehner 1961: 198–201) As Zaehner (1961: 259) remarks, the Zoroastrian microcosmic idea can be regarded as a combination of Indian mythology and Greek sources. Zurvanian Zoroastrianism adopted elements especially from Indian mythology, which were expressed in terms of Greek philosophy. According to Zaehner, a parallel of the microcosmic idea in Zoroastrian writings can be found in Indian sources.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have examined some ideas appearing in the Mesopotamian tradition and some from Islamic thought, both from the perspective of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy. Our aim was to examine the way some quite different ideas in intellectual history can be approached as interpretations of the microcosmism. We have applied Allers's, Tymieniecka's, and Milkov's categorisations of the idea. In particular, Allers's classification proved to be a useful tool for analysis.

In the Mesopotamian context, several possible cultural phenomena were suggested for possible topics of such an analysis. Because the focus of our article was to approach the microcosm-macrocosm analogy within the thematic frame of the human being, we chose as topic the person of the Assyrian king. Overall, four interpretations were offered regarding the king. Most of these were related to Allers's holistic microcosmism and symbolistic microcosmism. Additionally, the king as a "middle-being" was seen to be an example of elementaristic microcosmism.

In the Islamic tradition, the microcosmic idea occurs in various forms, which can be seen even when it is approached through the specific theme of the human archetype. Although the microcosm-macrocosm analogy appears more extensively in contexts of the psychophysical human being dwelling on earth (especially in the *Rasā'il*), the spiritual archetype of man is to some extent considered to have a microcosmic position as well. Forms of microcosmism appearing in the Islamic tradition are quite easily applicable to Allers's classification system. The concept of the human archetype is found in the *Rasā'il* in contexts treating the human being as a microcosm in the elementaristic, structuralistic, and psychological sense. Suhrawardī considers the human archetype as microcosm for his twofold nature, which is an example of elementaristic microcosmism. In the case of Suhrawardī, we can see how mythological ideas had an influence on Islamic microcosmism, at least at the level of language.

To conclude, an examination of different materials of intellectual history by means of the microcosmic idea can provide new perspectives on the texts. Previous classifications of the idea, most importantly that of Allers, turned out to be a good tool for the examination, although it is clearly easier to apply them to the Islamic tradition. This is partly due to the different function of the texts: Allers's division was initially intended for the analysis of philosophical material, and in the Islamic context the concentration was on philosophical and cosmological sources based on the Greek tradition. On the other hand, in the Mesopotamian context the approach was less dependent on textual analysis and more focused on an analysis of cultural phenomena from the point of view of the

microcosm-macrocosm analogy. Additionally, there are no Mesopotamian texts that are directly comparable to Greek and Islamic philosophical texts. A more comprehensive study of the microcosm-macrocosm analogy in the Mesopotamian tradition would require developing the classifications of the idea even further.

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