Ælfric’s writings accurately reflect the early medieval or Anglo-Saxon deep contemplation of the universe, for Anglo-Saxon scholar’s ideas were culture-specific. Meanwhile, “Catholic Homilies” reveal the author’s personal style as well as the didactic concerns to teach his audience moral and spiritual values. In his sermons, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham has an abiding interest in doctrinal issues namely salvation, baptism, resurrection of the body, the soul and body dualism. The abbot identified the soul with the tenet of immortality. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the meaning of soul in Ælfric’s “Catholic Homilies”. The article advocates an interdisciplinary approach which embraces the fields of cognitive semantics, the history of the English language, culturology, philosophy, and theology. As far as Ælfric’s Sermons are concerned, they are regarded as a considerable and invaluable resource for a wide variety of linguistic and theological investigations. In his “Catholic Sermons”, the importance of soul and its faculties are indicated by the size and diversity of the vocabulary. The research reveals the connotations of sawel, i.e. sawel as a superordinate, and other words (such as gast ‘soul, spirit’, mōd ‘mind, soul, heart, spirit, mood’, gemynd ‘memoria’, gescead ‘ratio and wylla ‘voluntas’) as its hyponyms.

KEY WORDS: connotation, superordinate, hyponym, rational soul, mind, memory, spirit.

Introduction

Ælfric of Eynsham is well-known not only as a translator of the Holy Scriptures but also as the author of the homilies in Anglo-Saxon. His view on the nature of soul is distinct from other Anglo-Saxon classical writers including Alcuin and Alfred. On the one hand, Ælfric accepts Alcuin’s belief in the primarily intellectual character of the human soul. On the other hand, the abbot of Eynsham rejects Alcuin’s view that the mind and the soul are interchangeable terms in a variety of contexts (Godden 1987, p. 278). Indeed, this view encouraged great debates in the subsequent discussions on the mind-soul relationship in the classical tradition in particular and the interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon mind in general. Therefore, the article aims at disclosing the meaning of soul in Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies. In order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to fulfil the following tasks:
to introduce how the concept of soul was perceived in the classical tradition;
• to establish the affinity relationships among the concepts of soul, mind, memory and will in Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies.

This descriptive-analytical article advocates an interdisciplinary approach which embraces the fields of cognitive semantics, the history of the English language, culturology, philosophy, and theology. As far as scientific novelty is concerned, there are not many widely published articles on the writings of Ælfric. The Rawlinson and Bosworth professor Malcolm Godden is one of the most prolific scholars interested in Anglo-Saxon literature, especially Ælfric and the Alfredian writings. This article attempts to contribute to the homiletic interpretation of Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies.

The analysis of soul in Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies

Anglo-Saxons adopted a unique attitude towards the nature of human soul. It is important to note that the classical and the vernacular traditions of thought about the soul and mind are obvious among the Anglo-Saxons. The classical tradition is represented by the Anglo-Saxon writers, among them Alcuin of York (writing in Latin, but influential for Anglo-Saxon vernacular writers), King Alfred the Great, and Ælfric of Eynsham. Whereas the classical tradition identified the intellectual mind with the immortal soul and life spirit, the vernacular tradition “preserved a distinction of the soul and mind, while associating the mind at least as much with passion as with intellect” (Godden 1987, p. 271). As a result, mental, spiritual and volitional aspects of the individual are subsumed under the broad category connoted by sawol:

• “The soul is called many names in books, according to its functions. Its name is anima, this is sawul, and this name is fitting to its life. And spiritus, gast, appertains to its contemplation. It is sensus, that is andgit or felnyss, when it perceives. It is animus, that is mod, when it knows. It is mens, that is mod, when it understands. It is memoria, that is gemynd, when it remembers. It is ratio, that is gescead, when it reasons. It is voluntas, that is is wylla, when it wills something. But nevertheless, all these names are for sawul” (Harbus 2002, p. 35).

This passage illustrates that the concept of soul obtains various names according to its functions. The concept of soul covers an abundance of meanings. In the Anglo-Saxon culture, the importance of soul and its faculties is indicated by the size and diversity of the vocabulary used to connote these ideas. Soul is a radial category with metaphoric extensions; therefore, the concept of soul embraces the distinct concepts of spirit, mind, sensus, memoria and voluntas. Such a phenomenon might be explained by lexical variation which was considered to be the basic feature of the Anglo-Saxon extensive vocabulary. Dieter Kastovsky clearly underlines the fact that in the Anglo-Saxon language, many lexical items are described as bearing various shades of meaning (Kastovsky 1992, p. 400).

According to Malcolm Godden, “the soul is like God and created by him but not made of his nature” (Godden 1987, p. 280). Indeed, the soul and body, inasmuch as the good and the evil, are two basic principles in the entire universe that exhibit a complicated dichotomy. Consider the quota-
tion from Anglo-Saxon scholar’s Catholic Homilies which emphasizes that the soul is imprisoned in the body and is ungesewenlic ‘invisible’, bodiless, without weight or colour because it is incorporeal and immaterial, whilst the body is gesewenlic ‘visible’, corporeal and earthly because it is made of dust or loam:

- “Se lichama þe is gesewenlic: hæfd lif of ðære saule. þe is ungesewenlic” (ÆCHom I, 10 B1.1.11).
- “The body is visible: its life is soul. It is invisible” (Translation mine, L. I.).

In Ælfric’s Catholic Sermons, the gesewenlic part of a person, i.e. the body, is created first and then the principle of life is given to it because the body is created of ‘dust’. When the God breathes life into a man’s nostrils, he becomes a human being. The word soul acquires the connotation of breath. It follows that the soul is likewise described as a breath that pervades the body. Richard Broxton Onian explicitly states that the soul is related to breath, inhale (Onian 1951, p. 105). According to the scholar, it is clear from the root of sawol that it was something of the nature of breath or exhalation. In different Indo-European languages the concept of soul is etymologically connected with breath, inhale: PIE *anH-: Skt ániti ‘breathes’, ánila-h ‘breath’, Gr ánemos ‘breath, wind’, Olcel andi ‘breath, soul’, Lat anima ‘breath, soul’ (also spiritus ‘breath’). In the Indo-European tradition, animals, people and gods were conceived of as possessing breath, spirit and soul (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995, p. 388). In Ælfric’s Catholic Sermons, the gesewenlic and ungesewenlic, inasmuch as the saule and the lichama contain the antithesis of corporeal and spiritual, heavenly and earthly. Indeed, Ælfric was fond of emphasizing the opposition between spiritual and carnal, light and dark, soul and body. As a result, in his Catholic Homilies, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham induced all catholici to love heavenly things rather than the dying ones of earth (Fell 1991, p. 182). As Miranda Wilcox claims, such “a duality contributed to a unique spiritual topography based, as one critic has said, on complementarity, continuity, opposition, and paradox” (Wilcox 2005, p. 185).

Consider the citation from Ælfric’s Catholic Sermons which accentuates the fact that the body is the soul’s garment:

- “Se lichama þe is þære saule reaf. andbíðað þes miclan domes & þæs heo beo to duste fornsmnod. god hine arærð. & gebrincð tågedere saule & lichaman. to ðam ecan life” (ÆCHom I, 14.1 B1.1.15).
- “The body, which is the clothing of the soul, awaits the great judgment; and although it be crumbled to dust, God raises it and brings together soul and body to eternal life” (Translation mine, L. I.).

From the quotation above, it is possible to draw a conclusion that the body is temporary clothing, a temple, a fortress for the soul because when the death comes, it breaks the close connection between the body and the soul.

Moreover, the body which is made of flesh is not a permanent garment for the soul; cf. the lines below where the word soul acquires the connotation of immortality. As a consequence, the immortality implies the eternal existence of the soul, but not the body. The question of the immortality of the soul and its distinction from the body is a subject-matter of protracted dispute both in philosophy and theology. Consider the
following quotation, where the body is opposed to the soul:
- “Þæs Ȱlichaman lif is seo sawul: & þære saule lif is god” (ÆCHom I, 10 B1.1.11).
- “The body’s life is soul: the soul’s life is God” (Translation mine, L. I.).

As seen from the citation above, the soul is immortal. Hence, the body’s life is soul, whereas the soul’s life is God. In other words, the body is deprived of life without the soul, likewise the soul is deprived of life without the God. In this context, the soul is perceived as the ultimate internal principle of life by which people bodies are animated.

It is worth noting that the concept of soul bears resemblance to the concept of spirit. In his Catholic Homilies, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham uses the word gast ‘spirit’ several times and that instance is extremely intriguing. Indeed, both gast and sawul are distinct terms because gast refers to the divine essence, whereas sawul to the human essence. Consider the following quotation which states that the concept of soul pertains to the concept of spirit:
- “Wite gehwa þæt seo sawul is gast. and be eordlicum mettum ne leofað. ac ure hwilwendenlice lif bid mid mettum gefercod” (ÆCHom II, 36.1 B1.2.38).
- “Let everyone know that the soul is a spirit, and lives not only on earthly meats: but our transitory life is sustained by meats” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 463).

The Anglo-Saxon scholar claims that the sawul is gast ‘soul is a spirit’. He articulates the view of the soul as the intellectual, spiritual power and attributes to the soul what Augustine would ascribe to the mind (Godden 1987, p. 278). Namely, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham refers to the soul as the thinking power. Moreover, the citation explicitly states that the soul does not live only on earthly meats, i. e. food. Basically, both the soul and the body need ‘food’ in order to exist, however for the soul it is the spiritual food, i. e. the God’s word, which nourishes the soul of a Christian, whereas the body needs the earthly food. Consider the following example:
- “Hwæt þa forwel mænige hine geneosodon. and him lichamlice bigleofan brohton: and he him of his muðe. þa heofonlican lare. forgeaf heora sawle to bigleofan” (ÆCHom II, 11 B1.2.12).
- “Whereupon very many visited him, and brought him bodily food, and he from his mouth gave them heavenly lore, as food for their souls” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 157).

In the quotation above, one should not be mistaken because the word mouth is not interchangeable with a lip or tongue. The word mouth is viewed metaphorically as an opening into the inner person, a window through which the soul can be viewed (Ryken 1998, p. 575). It follows that through the mouth the soul may see and obtain the sapience, i. e. wisdom as its spiritual food. As Derek Wood in The Illustrated Bible Dictionary admits, it is the mouth which is filled with words or the spirit which causes certain words to be spoken (Wood 1998, p. 203).

Ælfric admits that the soul possesses a supreme control within the individual and accentuates the likeness between the Trinity and the soul’s own triad of memory, understanding, and will as well as soul’s manifestation under different names in accordance with its intellectual function. Consider the following citation in which the soul’s tripartite structure is reflected:
“Ælfric attempted to clarify that the human soul is both an immortal non-physical entity and a chiefly rational, intellectual agency. Consider the original lines from the author's Catholic Homilies where the word soul acquires the connotation of rationality, i.e. the only part of the person by which an individual can think:

○ “Se lichama soðlice ðe Crist on ðrowode was geboren of Marian flæsce. mid blode. and mid banum. mid felle. and mid sinum. on menniscum limum. mid gesceadwisre sawle gelíffæst. and his gastlica lichama ðe we husel hatað is of manegum cornum gegaderod buton blode. and bane. limleas. and sawulleas. and nis for ði nan ðing þæron to understandenne lichamlic. ac is eall gastlice to understandenne” (ÆCHom II, 15 B1.2.18).

○ “The body verily in which Christ suffered was born of Mary's flesh, with blood and with bones, with skin and with sinews, with human limbs quickened by a rational soul; and his ghostly body, which we call housel, is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone, limbless and soulless, and there is, therefore, nothing therein to be understood bodily, but all is to be understood spiritually” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 551).

The gesceadwisre sawl 'rational soul' is located in the head and it is responsible for thinking. Moreover, the abbot emphasizes that namely the rational soul distinguishes a man from the beasts and places him close to the angels. For comparison, in De Anima, Cassiodorus begins with the words that 'anima is properly applied to man, not to animals, because their life is based on the blood' (Godden 1987, p. 282). However, the Anglo-Saxon scholar devotes a meticulous attention to the theme of hierarchy, i.e. the distinction between God who has no beginning or end, angels and men who have beginning but no end, and animals who have both beginning and end (ibid., p. 278–279). Indeed, the soul is primarily an

○ “Pees mannes sawul hæfð on hire gecynde þære halgan þrynysse anlicyssse for þan ðe heo hæfð on hire ðreo ðing. þæt is gemynd. andgit. ðe willa” (ÆCHom I, 20 B1.1.22).

○ “Human soul has the innate likeness to the Holy Trinity in terms of understanding, memory and will” (Translation mine, L. I.).

The author's statement in particular, as cited above, implies that memory, understanding, will are embedded in the Old English word sawul 'soul'. These three parts mirror the divine Trinity. On the one hand, this sense-relation of inclusion comes close to the notion of gestalt and the gestalt principle of similarity, whereas individual elements are similar and thus are perceived as one common segment. On the other hand, according to the gestalt principle of proximity (i.e. individual elements with a small distance between them are perceived as being somehow related to one another), one may arrive at a conclusion that SOUL IS MEMORY, SOUL IS UNDERSTANDING, and SOUL IS WILL. The Anglo-Saxon scholar supports Alcuin's view that the soul has a threefold structure, i.e. gemynd 'memory', andgit 'understanding or perception', and willa 'will'. When the soul wills something it pertains to wylla 'will', whereas when it perceives it is referred to as andgit or felnyss 'sensus'. Moreover, Patrick Gary (cited in Harbus 2002, p. 17–19) claims that memoria is a key organizing principle, not only in medieval theology but in every aspect of medieval life. He establishes an important role for memory in spiritual life as well, as “the highest intellectual faculty and the key to the relationship between God and man” (ibid., p. 17–19).

Ælfric attempted to clarify that the human soul is both an immortal non-physical
intellectual inner self, whose mental activity mirrors God. Similarly as Cassiodorus, Ælfric explicitly states that beasts are sawulleas ‘soulless’:

- “Se mann is gesceapen to his scyppendes anlicynysse. and soðlice ā ða nytenu sindon sawulleas” (ÆCHom II, 21 B1.2.24).
- “Man is created in his Creator’s likeness, and verily the beasts are soulless” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 551).

As seen from the quotation below, the human soul is both rational and immortal, thus, it cannot be ascribed to animals. In Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies, consider the following context containing the idea of water having the enormous power to cleanse the body and the soul from all the mortal and venial sins. Consider the example from the author’s Sermons where the word water gains the spiritual connotations of cleansing and washing away the sins of the soul:

- “Þæt wæter aðwehð þone lichaman. and se halga gast aðwehð ða sawle fram eallum symnum. and se gefulloda man bid þonne godes bearn gif he on riht hylt fæder and moder. þæt is crist and his bryd seo ðe dæghwomlice acenð gastilc cild. and hwædere ðurhwunad on clænum meððade” (ÆCHom II, 1 B1.2.2).
- “The water washes the body, and the Holy Ghost washes the soul from all sins; and the baptized man is then a child of God, if he rightly hold to father and mother, that is, to Christ and his bride, who daily bears ghostly children, and yet continues in pure mainhood” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 13).

The passage above also focuses on a very important practiced ritual, i.e. baptism that washes the man both without and within. For comparison, in the New Testament, baptism performs a decisive role because it is the purifying and the sanctifying sacrament of rebirth in the Spirit and Grace of Jesus Christ (Rahner 1981, p. 38). Similarly, in Baker’s Concise Dictionary of Religion, Donald Kauffman points out that water is a religious symbol of purification and revival (Kauffman 1985, p. 430).

In Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies, the soul and the heart make a unity because it was believed that the soul is located in the heart. Thus, the heart is the space where the body and the soul merge and coexist, just as the inhaled air mixes with the very breath of life (Eliade 1987, p. 237). In this context, heart is equivalent to the noblest inner part of man, i.e. his soul:

- “Swa we sceolon eac habban annysse on urum drihtne. swa swa hit awritten is be ðan geleaffullan werode. þæt hi wær on swa micelre annysse. swilce him eallum were an sawul. and an heorte” (ÆCHom II, 15 B1.2.18)
- “So we should also have unity in our lord, as it is written of the faithful company, that they were in so great unity, as if there were for them all one soul and one heart” (ÆCHom 1846, p. 277).

In the New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words, Lawrence Richards maintains that “in our culture we tend to divide a human being into isolated functions, such as the spiritual, the intellectual, the emotional, the rational, and the volitional” (Richards 1985, p. 334). The soul is associated with life, whereas the heart is the center of emotions, feelings, moods and passions (Achtemeier 1985, p. 377).

Conclusions

A semantic analysis of the concept of soul in Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies led to the following conclusions:
1. Ælfric reveals the connotations of sawel, i.e. sawel as a superordinate, and other words (such as gast 'soul, spirit', mòd 'mind, soul, heart, spirit, mood', gemynd 'memoria', gescead 'ratio and wylla 'voluntas') as hyponyms.

2. The author attributes a very high status to the concept of soul. The soul is a rational, immortal spirit unique to man and created specifically by God for each individual to endow him simultaneously with life and understanding. The Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham distinguishes between the sawl and gast because the former refers to the human essence, whereas the latter refers to the divine essence.

3. Each individual has the body that is earthy, mortal, and intelligible, and the soul, which is immortal and unintelligible. However, it is death that breaks the intimate connection between the soul and the body.

4. The Anglo-Saxon scholar preserved the distinction between the sawl 'soul' and mòd 'mind'. For him, the soul is the life-surviving spirit. Mind is equated with the human consciousness, responsible for thinking and understanding.

5. Ælfric acknowledges the division of soul into three parts, i.e. understanding, memory and will. When the soul understands, it is called mod; when it remembers, it is known as memoria; and, when it wills something, it is called willa.

References


I. KALBOTYRA


Lina Inčiuraitė
Vilnius University, Lithuania
Research interests: cognitive linguistics, metaphor theories, philosophy, culture

Lina Inčiuraitė
Vilniaus universitetas, Lietuva
Moksliniai interesai: kognityvinė lingvistika, metaforos teorija, filosofija, kultūra

THE MEANING OF SOUL IN ÆLFRIC’S “CATHOLIC HOMILIES”

Summary
Ælfric’s “Catholic Homilies” are a series of preaching texts extant from Anglo-Saxon England which accurately reflect the early medieval contemplation of the universe. The Anglo-Saxon scholar’s “Catholic Sermons” are regarded as a considerable and invaluable resource for linguistic and theological investigations. In his “Catholic Homilies”, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham has a considerable interest in scriptural teachings, namely salvation, baptism, resurrection of the body, the soul and body dualism. The eminent monk, who was considered the greatest of his time, referred to late antique writers such as St. Augustine and the classical writers including Alcuin and Alfred. Still, the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham developed the concept of soul in a very specific and individual way. Hence, the article analyses the meaning of soul in Ælfric’s “Catholic Homilies”. The article advocates an interdisciplinary approach which embraces the fields of cognitive semantics, the history of the English language, culturology, philosophy, and theology. The author’s contemplations touch significantly on the problem of particular interest, namely the relationship between the body and the soul. The analysis reveals the connotations of sawel, i.e. sawel as a superordinate, and other words (such as gast ‘soul, spirit’, mōd ‘mind, soul, heart, spirit, mood’, gemynd ‘memoria’, gescead ‘ratio and wylla ‘voluntas’) as hyponyms. According to the Anglo-Saxon abbot of Eynsham, the soul and the mind are concepts in very close association with

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each other, still mod is referred to as the sawl’s knowledge and understanding. Moreover, Ælfric acknowledges the division of soul into three parts, i.e. understanding, memory and will. When the soul understands, it is called mod; when it remembers, it is known as memoria; and, when it wills something, it is called willa. In Ælfric’s “Catholic Homilies”, the mouth is viewed metaphorically as a window through which the soul can be viewed. It follows that through the mouth, the soul may get knowledge, i.e. wisdom as its spiritual food. Furthermore, the gesceadwisre sawle ‘rational soul’ is located in the head and it is responsible for thinking. Moreover, the abbot emphasizes that namely the rational soul distinguishes a man from the beasts and places him close to the angels. The human soul is both rational and immortal, thus, it cannot be ascribed to animals. In Ælfric’s “Catholic Homilies”, water plays a significant role as it has the significant power to cleanse the body and the soul from all the mortal and venial sins. Hence, the analysis revealed that the concept of soul obtains various names in accordance with its intellectual functions.

KEY WORDS: connotation, superordinate, hyponym, rational soul, mind, memory, spirit.