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# Cloud and Clothe. Hildegard of Bingen's Metaphors of the Fall of the Human Soul

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## Abstract

The paper examines Hildegard's use of metaphors in her visions of the human fall, and the way she combined the biblical motif of Original Sin with the philosophical question of a soul's embodiment, particularly in her moral play, *Ordo virtutum*, but also in her medical and visionary writings. The metaphor of the cloud sometimes blends with the metaphor of clothing (as in, "to clothe"), since the corporeal vestment of the soul before the Fall is said to resemble a cloud of light. Both metaphors are present in Hildegard's other works, particularly the image of the cloud, which is frequently used to illustrate cosmological implications of Original Sin. The metaphor of clothing, on the other hand, reveals parallels with certain Christian Gnostic revelations, blended with the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the soul as enslaved to the body.

**Key words:** Hildegard, *Ordo virtutum*, cloud, metaphor, original sin, Adam and Eve, soul.

## 1 THE CLOUD OF DIVINE WISDOM AND GLORY

Hildegard's perception of Original Sin is reflected in the passages which refer to Adam and Eve, sometimes together and sometimes separately. References to Adam are usually depicting the human prototype rebelling against God, without specific allusions to Gen 3. It is different when the argument touches on the role of Eve, who was seen differently by different interpreters, Jewish and Christian: as Satan's instrument of temptation by some and as victim of his snares by others.<sup>1</sup> Woman was considered weaker than man, and this weakness predisposed Eve to be the first to break God's commandment, and to lead her husband astray. The interpretative tradition frequently dwells on the moral aspect of the biblical story. This aspect, however, clearly does not come first for Hildegard,<sup>2</sup> who is more interested in the physiological and cosmological consequences of the first sin.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, she points out purely physiological reasons for woman's weakness: her nature is "aereal," less resistant than Adam's who, by nature, is directly linked to the clay of which he has been made.<sup>4</sup> Even though Hildegard has adopted the traditional concept of Original Sin being transmitted and manifested through sexual desire, her views tend to be morally neutral. Original Sin resulted in psycho-physical disorder of all men, and has disturbed the natural order.<sup>5</sup> The physical changes following the Fall are described in detail in Hildegard's medical work, *Causae et Curae* (=CC), which gives full credit to her holistic vision of the cosmos and of man, a vision rooted in the ancient analogy between the world's order (macrocosmos) and human microcosmos.<sup>6</sup>

Hildegard's holism is most palpable in her medical writings, which show us that she was familiar with the works of 11<sup>th</sup> century medical writer and translator, Constantine the African.<sup>7</sup> Another source of inspiration for monastic medicine is said to have been the writings of the medical school of Salerno, which not only offered practical precepts against diseases, but also tried to identify their causes. The title of Hildegard's own work, *Causae et Curae*, points out the knowledge of

1 Christian (and particularly Western) tradition regarded Eve as the principal culprit in Man's Fall (see, Kvam, Scheuring and Ziegler, 1999, 116, 131–133, 135–141 in 147–155).

2 Newman: 1987, 107.

3 Cadden: 1993, 73–77.

4 Rabbinic tradition contrasted man's provenance from earth with woman's birth from flesh (see, Newman: 1987, 114).

5 On the connection between Original Sin and human illnesses, see Lautenschläger: 1993, 207–211; on Hildegard's perception of her own disease, see Stoudt: 2014, 262–264.

6 Wetherbee: 1973, 3.

7 Glaze: 1998, 139s.

the causes of a disease as a key to its cure.<sup>8</sup> She displays the same approach to moral depravity and psychic ailments. She also believes that the consideration of the original, uncorrupted state is crucial to the recognition of causes of suffering.<sup>9</sup> The pristine human condition is very important in Hildegard's eyes, since she considers that Original Sin is the cause of all bodily disorders. In this primal state, we observe the bond between the first man and woman, a bond so close that it reminds us of the androgynous archetype which played an important role in pagan Platonism, as well as in Hermetic and Gnostic literature.<sup>10</sup> This bond is highlighted in some of the Gnostic gospels,<sup>11</sup> which actually refer to the biblical story representing Eve as flesh of Adam's flesh. Hildegard herself observes this mutual involvement of man and woman with each other: "*Vir itaque et femina sic ad invicem admixti sunt, ut opus alterum per alterum est; quia vir sine femina vir non vocaretur, nec femina sine viro femina vocaretur. [...] et neuter eorum absque altero esse potest.*" (*Liber Divinorum operum* = LDO I.4.100). Eve is, after all, a *virago* (*Gen. 2.23*),<sup>12</sup> made from *vir* (a she-man). Man and woman define, complete and express each other.<sup>13</sup> They are united in God, each representing one side of the Son of God's nature: his divinity (man) and his humanity (woman): "*Et vir divinitatem, femina vero humanitatem filii Dei significat.*" (*Ibid.*) The Son of God is the Son of Man as well, which means that he is at the same time God and Man. Since God created man in His image, the first man, too, shares His nature.

How did this nature manifest itself? Though Adam "never managed to grasp her [*sc.* wisdom]" (*Eccl. 24.28*), he was nevertheless regarded as a sort of human ideal, until the biblical tradition started to view him primarily as the first sinner. Still, he was wise: in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Wisdom, we read that Wisdom "delivered him from his fault" and that "she gave him the strength to

8 On Hildegard's medical sources and medicine as a sort of philosophical art in the 12<sup>th</sup> cent., see Glaze: 1998, 131s. The medicine in Hildegard's time was also stimulated by the translations of Greek and Arabic philosophical and scientific texts, spreading northward (see Stoudt: 2014, 25ss.). Schipperges (1998, 65), however, regards Hildegard mostly as a voice of medieval medicine with its elements of folklore, ancient tradition and scholastic discipline.

9 *Constitutio prima*, as opposed to *status destitutus* of the prostrated man after his fall (see Schipperges: 1979, 302).

10 Brisson: 2008, 67–102.

11 See the selected passages in Kvam, Scheering in Ziegler: 1999, 120–128.

12 The reciprocal dependence of male and female nature is reflected by the fact that with Hildegard, each gender comprehends the characteristics of the other (Schipperges: 1998, 53).

13 The opposites are connected by immanent presence: thus the fire is part of the water and *vice versa*; for if the water did not contain fire, it would not flow, since movement is one of the properties of the fire (*vis ignis*). On the other hand, if the fire did not contain water, it could never go out by himself (*CC II*, pp. 39s. Kaiser). The opposites, therefore, limit as well as define each other (*de-finire*).

subjugate all things.”<sup>14</sup> In Hildegard’s play, virtues honor the Soul, which has risen from the very depth of God’s Wisdom: “*edificata es in profunda altitudine sapientiae Dei*” (*Ordo Virtutum* = OV 30). The creation of Adam is attended by a divine splendor (*splendor divinitatis*) which takes hold of Adam and embraces him in its light (*circumfulsit*; CC II, p. 42 Kaiser). After he has been created, God sends him a deep sleep, during which Adam is presented with a divine gift of prophecy: at his awakening, Adam “*propheta caelestium fuit et sciens in omni vi creaturae et in omni arte erat*” (CC II, p. 45). Before the Fall, Man possessed a prophetic wisdom which was a source of generative and vitalizing power that made him one with the rest of creation: “*Et deus omnes creaturas illi dedit, quatinus virili vi eas penetraret, quoniam illa scivit et cognovit. Nam ipse homo omnis creatura est, et spiramen vitae in eo est, quod finem vitae non habet*” (CC II, p. 45). Eve, according to *Gen. 2.21*, is created from Adam’s rib, while he is sleeping. Hildegard, of course, mentions Eve’s having been created from his flesh (*caro*); yet she also considers her spiritual role, which consists of her filling Adam with wisdom (*totus sapientia impletus est, cum inspexit Evam*; CC II, p. 136). For when he looks at her, he sees in her the mother of all men, and he delights in his own prophetic vision. In another of Hildegard’s visions, Eve is a bright cloud, full of lights representing the future mankind (*Sc. I.2.10*), which reminds us of the *splendor divinitatis* in *Causae et Curae*, for they both reflect the Wisdom descending from God. The physical bond between Adam and Eve is the emblem of the closeness of man and his wisdom which, as a gift from God, also creates a bond between God and Man, Creator and Creation.<sup>15</sup> But the nature of this gift from God is also a source of life:<sup>16</sup> if Eve is the embodiment of this gift, she also represents the generative power, the first Man’s *vis virilis*, which penetrates creation and makes him one with it. Since Eve is a *virago*, her role as a woman and mother is not yet realized or, better still, it is hidden in his prophetic vision. Hildegard’s vision of Adam and Eve before the Fall, therefore, depicts them as an androgynous unity enclosing the whole of creation. Their mutual insight (*inspicere*) is a source of knowledge to both: it makes Adam a prophet and it allows Eve to look “up,” making her similar to the soul, yearning for the Divine (*ut anima sursum tendit, quae caelestia desiderat*; CC II, p. 136).

14 This commendatory image of Adam can be found in apocryphal as well as in canonical writings of the Second Temple Judaism (up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BC). Soon it got tarnished (in Ezra and Baruch, see Toews: 2013, 26–32).

15 On Wisdom as God’s consort, and the feminine Divine in Hildegard’s works, see Newman: 1987, 42–50.

16 On Wisdom in the double role as *materia/matrix mundi* on one side, and as the world soul on the other, see Newman: 1987, 62–64.

## 2 WISDOM AND IGNORANCE

What could possibly eclipse the bliss of the first Man in Eden? Let us pause to consider the particular moment in the Bible, when “the woman saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.” (*Gen.* 3.4) It is a vague yet sufficient symptom of a certain deficiency or aspiration to a somewhat larger share of knowledge and wisdom. In Hildegard’s aforementioned vision, the “loathsome cloud” reaching up for the human form and his “white cloud” (*Sc.* I.2.1, 9 and 10) indicates the loss of wisdom, caused by Devil’s deception. In another of her works, she compares sin to a cloud covering the earth and corroding the acts of Wisdom (*LDO* I.4.37). The darkness in *Scivias*, however, does not attack the human form directly, but touches the white cloud, therefore Eve, first. Similarly in the Bible, the serpent addresses Eve, not Adam. The Devil, then, assaults Wisdom and, through it, Man himself.<sup>17</sup> In his cleverness (but not wisdom)<sup>18</sup> he realizes that ignorance is the fastest way to perdition. Indeed, this desire for knowledge seems to be Man’s weakest point, as well as Satan’s principal weapon. In the *Ordo*, the reproach of ignorance is frequently addressed to the virtues: you do not know yourselves, you do not know what you are worshipping... The virtues, however, are presented as clouds (*nubes*) which cannot be clouded over (*obnubilare*) by the darkness. This casts them in the role of the tools of Wisdom given to the soul in its fight against evil. As it turns out, Satan is the one knowing neither virtue nor God himself (*quis iste remunerator?*), while the virtues know all about him. The fallen state involves ignorance which has caused the fall of Lucifer no less than that of Man. Lucifer’s cleverness did not make him equal to God. In the same way that knowledge of good and evil turns out to be a poisoned fruit: the only knowledge that Adam and Eve seem to receive is the awareness of their own nakedness, which was interpreted by Hildegard as the loss of man’s original *splendor* (see below CC II, p. 46 Kaiser). It seems as if the first man and woman lived a reverse Socratic paradox. But having abandoned the state of an unconscious wisdom (“I am not aware of knowing everything”) – for, indeed, Man had possessed all the deepest knowledge regarding creation – they are now conscious of the consequence of their own act, which is the loss of wisdom and the shame of it. This gives them a different, post-Eden knowledge, expressed in frequent lamentations of their past transgression.<sup>19</sup> This knowledge brings them neither satisfaction nor relief. Hildegard’s *psychomachia* reflects the metaphysical despair of the exiles from Eden, and the uncertain wanderings of

17 His act is guided by envy (see, Newman: 1987, 113s.).

18 Cf. *De Gen. ad litt.* XI.2.4, where St. Augustine distinguishes between the cleverness and cunningness (*prudenetia, astutia*) of the snake and God’s *sapientia*.

19 Biblical tradition attributes it particularly to Eve: in *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (par. 30) we find Eve repenting her act and teaching her children not to yield to temptation.

the pilgrim-soul. In *Causae et Curae*, the Fall is explained at the psycho-physical level: the bodily-humors had changed their functions after the Fall, and Hildegard offers a rather original interpretation of the traditional humoral theory.<sup>20</sup> The black bile (*melancholia*), for example, used to be just bile (*fel*) and the source of a crystal radiance within Man, containing “wisdom and perfection of good deeds” ((*CC II*, p. 145 Kaiser). After the Fall, though, it turned sour and became a source of bitterness in Man. Psychological effects of sin are doubt, uncertainty and sadness, which lay foundations for anger. This description mirrors the state of the Soul in *Ordo*: inexplicably, she succumbs to despair as soon as she hears from the virtues about the forthcoming struggles, and from the state of love and happiness, she sinks into doubt and despair. Interestingly, the Devil only appears later, although this uncertain state is a downright invitation for him to step forward. In one of Hildegard’s visions, the Devil confuses the soul by questioning her knowledge, and tempts her with the fruit of knowledge of good and evil: “Who are you? And what are you doing? And what are these battles you are fighting? You are indeed unhappy, for you do not know whether your work is good or bad.” (*Sc.* 1.4.5) This confusion, labelled as ignorance, is looming over the soul’s drama in *Ordo*: *nescio* (I don’t know), admits the Soul, *nescis* is the gentle admonition of the virtues, encouraging her to perceive her present state (*vide, quo induta sis*); and finally *nescitis* is the insult cast by the Devil onto the virtues.

### 3 DESIRE, DESPAIR AND PRIDE

The optimistic Soul, full of love (*multum amas*) stands out among other souls groaning under the burden of their bodies. Why is she different? Her character poses an intriguing question: is this the soul of a man before or after the Fall? She displays some sort of yearning which implies a loss. On the other hand, there is a choir of other souls which are pointedly embodied (*in carne positae*), and they lament the loss of their heritage through Adam, and their own subjection to sin (*OV* 15–19). The difference is so obvious that we are tempted to consider the possibility that the loving Soul is an individual soul not yet fallen. Nevertheless she, too, is burdened by the consequences of Adam’s and Eve’s Fall, which is why she looks back nostalgically on the “daylight days” (*dies diurni*), which refer to the time when creation did not yet know the darkness of the night (*CC II*, p. 46 Kaiser). In the very next moment, facing the struggles against flesh, the Soul loses all her optimism. This is the moment of her individual fall, which is as much the result of Original Sin as it is of her own weakness. Good by nature, the soul is branded by the act of Adam. Her desire for *dulcis divinitas* results in despair,

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20 See, Flanagan: 1990, 92–94.

for she is in a great hurry to take off the “dress of this life” (*OV* 39 and 65). As in Eve’s case, the Devil seizes the opportunity to manipulate the moment of her discontent. The bond between love/desire and deficiency was established in Plato’s myth of *Symposium* (203b–204a), featuring Eros as the offspring of Poverty (Penia). Many centuries later, Plotinus introduced the allegory of the soul as Aphrodite, focusing her love (Eros) on her father (the First Principle), except that Eros, who in the case of the higher Soul is the entity by means of which she keeps her gaze fixed on God, can also be the instrument of the individual soul’s fall (*Enn.* III 5(50).2 and VI 9(9).9), because of the privation innate in her yearning. Plotinus considers this as the natural state of the soul. It is a yearning very similar to Hildegard’s individual soul’s reaching for heaven (*sursum tendit, quae caelestia desiderat*; *CC* II, p. 136 Kaiser). The role of Hildegard’s *anima felix* in the *Ordo* is, therefore, referring to the state of a soul starting to feel the negative influence of its body. She might even be presenting a Neo-Platonic picture of a soul on the point of entering the body. Yet in Hildegard’s view, a soul’s life outside the body is purely hypothetical: although the soul seems to cherish certain memories of the bodiless life (*CC* II, p. 45 Kaiser), it is always embodied. The original Man had a body, and the Soul in the *Ordo* does not want to leave the body, but to exchange it for the *vestis praeclara* (*OV* 25). This is the same robe she used to wear at the dawn of creation: “When shall I put on the flesh that I used to live with, in the days of light?” (*CC*, p. 46 Kaiser)

Neo-Platonic allegory of the soul as Aphrodite is closely related to Hildegard’s figure of Love (*Caritas*) and Divine Wisdom, carrying several attributes of the World Soul.<sup>21</sup> Yet the desire of the soul is not always legitimate. Gnostic literature features a fallen female aeon, Sophia (Wisdom),<sup>22</sup> whose degradation was brought upon her by her audacity. This *tolma* is sometimes described as an illicit curiosity which makes her want to comprehend what is clearly beyond her. Interestingly, her transgression is a result of the natural love (*storge*) she has for her Father (called Propator): “This passion, they say, consisted in a desire to search into the nature of the Father; for she wished, according to them, to comprehend his greatness” (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.2.2). Similar audacity was also imputed to Adam and Eve, particularly to the latter. The first woman not only desired wisdom, but was allegedly seized by *superbia*, which made her want to become similar to God. This view was particularly strong among the Western Church Fathers. According to St. Augustine (*De genesi ad litteram* XXX.38), Eve would have responded differently to the snake’s temptation, if she did not already have in her “a certain love

21 See above n. 13 and Newman: 2003, 138s.

22 On Gnostic references in Neo-Platonism, see Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being*, 21–26.

of her own power and a certain proud self-presumption.”<sup>23</sup> Hildegard, too, marks *superbia* as the source of evil, but she traces its roots to despair and frustration. In *Ordo*, the frustration leads the loving Soul to despair, and consequently to a certain degree of wantonness. The transition from despair to presumption is described in the *Scivias* (I.4.5): because of the Devil, the task appointed by God (to struggle against vice and follow virtues) suddenly seems too thorny to man, and he gives up. Blinded by despair, he recklessly acts beyond his abilities: metaphorically, he wants to fly “above the clouds” (this state is described also in *LDO* I.4.103, where it is called *elatio*). When he cannot, he becomes dispirited and sad. The results are doubt, despair and bitterness. The Devil himself is said to have tried to “fly above everything” (*volare super summa*, *OV* 88). The Soul is acting similarly. Although she “shows much love,” she wants to avoid the necessary battle with the flesh, on her way to God. The term *volans superbia* (flying arrogance) is an interesting counter-image to the Platonic image of the winged soul for, in the present case, the wings take the soul to the north<sup>24</sup> and to the place from which Lucifer has precipitated into the abyss. Opposed to *superbia* is the fear of God: in *Ordo*, *Timor Dei* is one of the virtues exhorting the souls to contemplate (*inspicere*) the living God, to avoid damnation. This actually means that the fear of God is the only legitimate way to “see” God without fatal consequences (known to the Gnostic Sophia, Greek Semele and other audacious seekers of the forbidden knowledge). There is an essential difference between the paralyzing horror and the due fear of God, in that the latter entails hope which is innate to God’s creation (man), together with fear (*CC* II, p. 144 Kaiser). Among the virtues in *Ordo*, there is also Hope (*Spes*) which introduces herself as the “beholder of the living eye” (*OV* 136). As the negation of fear, as well as of hope, *superbia* is therefore a natural offspring of despair.

#### 4 WHEN THE “CLOTH OF HONOR” BECOMES A SOURCE OF DISGRACE

The cosmic struggle between good and evil continues on an ethical level between virtues and vices, the latter being ruled by the Devil. On a cosmic level, evil seems to have won the first battle, by seducing Adam and Eve and entering the world through their act of disobedience. Eventually, however, it loses the war which, through Salvation, ends in Satan’s ultimate defeat. Hildegard’s moralistic allegories in the *Liber vitae meritorum* and *Ordo virtutum*, as well as her spiritual

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23 In *De Gen. ad litt.* XIX.25 the *superbia* of the fallen Man is paralleled to the pride of the fallen angels.

24 *Sc.* I.4.1. The north (*aquilo*) is the direction of darkness and evil: in *LDO* I.4.103 it is marked as the space where the first angel wanted, and failed, to rule. It is now empty.



interpretations of the Bible developed in the sermons collected under the title *Expositiones evangeliorum*,<sup>25</sup> reveal her interest in the individual battle of the soul. The moral aspect of evil is presented through the vices (presumption, love of the world, carnal desire, doubt, despair etc.) which are opposed to the alliance (*socii*) of virtues: in *Ordo*, these are Love, Fear of God, Obedience, Hope, Chastity, Contempt for the World and others. The Soul's duty is to fight, with the help of virtues. She fights against the Devil and sin, but her first victory must be over the body. This does not mean, of course, that entering the body is considered a sin in itself. Quite apart from the fact that Jewish and Christian traditions (as well as pagan Neo-Platonism) reject the negative view of the physical aspect of creation, Hildegard's own holistic view of the world precludes such notions: the world is good, as was Man (body and soul) before the Fall. There remains, however, a fairly strong Platonic dualism of body and soul, even in Hildegard's positive view of the physical world, and it entails some quite negative reflections on the body. This "lovely clothe" (*amabilis vestis*), as she calls it, is nonetheless a prison (*ergastulum*) for the soul. The reason for this lies in the fact that, after Original Sin, the body itself has changed for the worse and, as such, can be (ab)used by Satan. The body eventually stops the soul from seeing God, as it is unable to see the soul. The ambiguous role of the body appears in many of Hildegard's opinions: the senses, for example, have been given to us to lead us to God; instead, they frequently lure us away from him. In this sense, the bodily "clothe" is comparable to a "cloud" obscuring man's spiritual horizon: while in the body, the soul can never know God (*LDO* I.4.103.30 and 104.13).

Once splendid (*vestis praeclara*), the body has become a source of darkness and an impediment to the soul's vision. But the real reason behind the negative influence of the body is flesh (*caro*).<sup>26</sup> The soul must fight the flesh (*contra carnem pugnare*) and, if defeated, it finds itself in exile from God. In *Ordo*, such exiles are *animae peregrinae, filiae Regis* (wandering souls of royal origin) who had become derailed (*deviantes*). Hildegard has blended the old pagan motif of the wandering soul (the allegory of Odysseus journeying home) with the Christian ethics of the soul struggling against vice. This battle does not aim to destroy the body, but to defeat that which set down roots in the flesh through the actions of Adam and Eve. The soul's objective, therefore, is to perfect (*perficere*) the robe it wears.

25 Kienzle: 2000, 76–80.

26 For the difference between *caro* and *corpus*, see St. Augustine (*Omne caro corpus est, sed non omne corpus caro*) (*De fide et sym.*). For the flesh's liability to sin, see St. Paul Gal. 5.17ss. In the body, it is the *caro* that loves sin (*Sci.* II.6.53). Hildegard's holistic cosmology, anthropology and even theology (there are, for example, some very physical metaphors applied to the Divine secrets; see Emerson: 1998, 82) preserve this difference, thus affirming the bodily nature to be a necessary part of God's plan.

In the opening scene of the play, we observe the Soul's desire to return home, where she would put on a new clothe and regain what she had lost. The change of clothes is a common image of a spiritual renovation.<sup>27</sup> For Hildegard, who was reprimanded for overdressing her nuns, the white bridal veil, a sign of virginity, was also a symbol of "the radiant-white robe that human beings had in paradise, and lost" (*Letter 70*, to Guibert of Gembloux). She explains Adam and Eve's nakedness as the loss of the Divine enlightenment of which the original *vestis* is a symbol. Before sin, they were glowing in the sunlight, which enwrapped them like a cloth: after the transgression, the light went out and they felt naked (*CC II*, p. 46 Kaiser). On Judgement Day, the righteous will again shine like the Sun.<sup>28</sup>

The loss of honor is related to the loss of wisdom, e.g. of a comprehensive insight, which results in a spiritual blindness. The Soul in *Ordo* despairs over her robe of flesh, and the virtues have to remind her that her constitution is according to the will of God (*voluntate Dei constituta*). One of the virtues, *Scientia Dei*, urges the Soul to "see the dress (*Vide!*)" she is wearing (*OV 49*) and, observing the Soul's dejection, reproaches her "unhappy state of mind" (*infelix conscientia*) and her lack of insight: she does not know, and does not see (*tu nescis nec vides*) her Constitutor. When the Soul yields to the sudden desire to enjoy (*uti*) the world created by God, she is offered a different "insight" by the Devil: *Respice mundum!* The reason she follows his call and is blinded lies in the body, as transpires in another of Hildegard's visions: "When my tabernacle," says the soul, "saw that it could turn its eyes in all the ways, it turned its attention toward the north; ach, ach! And there I was captured and robbed of my sight and the joy of knowledge, and my garment all torn." (*Sci. I.4.1*) In this "place without beauty or honor," the soul is stripped of her garments: the "wounded" Soul in *Ordo*, too, was sometimes seen (and set on the stage) as wearing torn and dirty clothes.<sup>29</sup> In return, the Devil promises that she will be clothed in honor by the world: *amplectetur te magno honore mundus* (*OV 69*). In this garment, however, there is no honor, because it contains flesh, whose sensual delight has corrupted the soul's longing for God. Here, Hildegard continues the Western Church interpretation which gave to the first sin, and particularly to Eve's act, a connotation of carnal (sexual) desire. Some traits of this interpretation,

27 Cf. St. Paul *Col.* 3.9–10: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self, with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

28 Cf. the interpretation given in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (576), where Eve says: "And in that very hour my eyes were opened, and forthwith I knew that I was bare of the righteousness with which I had been clothed (upon), and I wept and said to him: "Why hast thou done this to me in that thou hast deprived me of the glory with which I was clothed?"

29 Potter: 1992, 37 and Sheingorn: 1992, 55.

which began with St. Ambrose and received the final touch with St. Augustine,<sup>30</sup> can already be found in the Jewish tradition.<sup>31</sup> In Hildegard's works, Adam and Eve generally share the responsibility for the Fall. However, her comparison between Eve and the Virgin Mary gives to the former a distinctly sexual character; she is also the first to have sinned.<sup>32</sup> The motif of a dishonored soul is comparable to the widespread motif of the ravished "goddess," found in the works of Hildegard's contemporaries, such as Alain of Lilles, where heretics are said to have sullied the robes of Nature fulfilling God's will, although Alain's connection with Hildegard is doubtful, according to some.<sup>33</sup> In all these characters, there is a significant resemblance with Gnostic Sophia, as well as with some other female figures subjected to violence and seduction, and sometimes represented as prostitutes.<sup>34</sup> This resemblance is even stronger in Hildegard's compatriot, who lived two hundred years before her time, the nun and poetess Hrotswitha of Gandersheim. In one of her plays, entitled *Passio sanctorum virginum Agapis, Chioniae et Hirenae (sive Dulcitus)*, the lust of the governor of Thessaloniki pursues three virgins whose names clearly point to a moral allegory. On the other hand, we follow the motif of a fallen and converted prostitute in the *Lapsus et conversio Mariae neptis Habrahae hermicolae (sive Abraham)* and in the *Pafnutius vel Conversio Thaidis meretricis (sive Pafnutius)*. In all of these plays, the resemblance of their heroines with the Gnostic figure is emphasized by the fact that the insidious attempts of their attackers are bound to fail: in *Dulcitus*, for example, the unworthy pursuer of the three virgins ends up embracing kitchen vessels, confusing them for his prisoners. Similarly, in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the evil archons who are trying to rape Eve only get to defile a "shadowy reflection resembling herself," while she laughs at their blindness (*NHC* II.4.89). Regarding the sexual connotation, Hildegard's picture is more subtle: mainly because, as it had been pointed out, the play does not dwell on her depravation, but on the celebration of virtues and their final victory.<sup>35</sup> Hildegard, moreover, prefers medical terminology and military imagery,

30 Augustine ponders various theories regarding the question of whether or not man was a sexual being before his fall. He favors the first option, but believes the sexuality of the first man and woman to have been free from physical lust and pleasure. (*De Gen. ad litt.* IX.10) We find a similar view in Hildegard, who defends the physical and spiritual (for that, see Allen: 1985, 408s.)

31 See the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* 25, where God predicts to Eve that she will regret that she has yielded to carnal desire.

32 On differences and similarities between the two women, see Garber: 1998, 105–118.

33 See Newman: 2003, 86–89. On Neo-Platonic influences on Hildegard through Bernard Silvestris, see Singer, 1951: 1–59.

34 Such as Eve in *The Hypostasis of the Archons NHC* II 4.89), Psyche in *The Exegesis on the Soul (NHC* II 6) and Sophia/Helen in the doctrines attacked by Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.23.2).

35 Potter: 1992, 36.

in her description of the Soul's misery. Nevertheless, there are several phrases hinting at the dire consequences of carnal desire: the *delectatio carnis*, followed by a reference to the *lascivia Adam*, as well as the Devil's words about the Soul's embraces (*amplexata es me*). And, last but not least, the leading conqueror of the Devil is none other than Chastity (*Castitas*), casting herself in the role of the Virgin Mary (Eve's counter-part) who has crushed the head of Satan. Exaltation of virginity has already been discovered as a common point linking Hildegard's play to Hrotswitha's tradition.<sup>36</sup> The joint message of both, Hrotswitha's plays and *Ordo virtutum*, is also the ultimate defeat of evil: the deceiver is deceived. The very last attempt of the Devil to confuse his adversaries, and to discredit the nature of Chastity by condemning its unnaturalness (*transis praeceptum, quod deus in suavi copula precepit; unde nescis, quid sis.*), comes to nothing, and the play closes with the triumphant chorus of the victorious virtues.

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<sup>36</sup> Sheingorn: 1992, 50.

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## Obleka in oblak. Prispodoba padca človeške duše pri Hildegardi Bingenski

Članek raziskuje uporabo prispodob oblaka in oblačila v Hildegardinih vizijah človekovega padca, predvsem v tistih besedilih, v katerih se svetopisemski motiv izvirnega greha prvih dveh ljudi povezuje s filozofskim naukom o bivanju duše v telesu. V ospredju analize je moralistična glasbena igra *Ordo virtutum*, vendar najdemo obe prispodobi tudi v drugih Hildegardinih delih, zlasti prispodobo oblaka, ki je pomemben del prikaza kozmičnih posledic izvirnega greha. Po drugi strani pa uporaba prispodobe oblačila razkriva vzporednice z novoplatonistično obarvanimi nauki krščanskih gnostikov o ujetosti duše v telesu.

**Ključne besede:** Hildegarda, *Ordo virtutum*, oblak, metafora, izvirni greh, Adam in Eva, duša.