

# THE PAULINE KEY WORDS πνεῦμα AND σάρξ AND THEIR TRANSLATION

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Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. (Gal 1,11-12)<sup>1</sup>.

For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (NRSV)<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Introduction

With Paul we go back to the roots of Christianity. His letters to the Thessalonians and the Galatians are the oldest Christian documents that have come down to us<sup>3</sup>. In these letters, just as in Paul's later writings, we find theological propositions which, through the interpretations of the Church Fathers, would be adopted as important dogmata of Christianity. In this way Paul, as is well known, has had an enormous impact on Western culture.

The terms πνεῦμα “spirit” and σάρξ “flesh” are key words in Paul's theology. In the limited corpus of preserved letters, the words occur 184 and 108 times respectively<sup>4</sup>. In 22 cases they are contrasted to each other. The starting point of our investigation into the terms πνεῦμα and σάρξ is a *lecture candide* of the Corpus Paulinum, an approach that tries to avoid

<sup>1</sup> The Greek text is quoted from E. Nestle - B. & K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* (Stuttgart 1984<sup>27</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> *New Revised Standard Bible - anglicised text* (Oxford 2003).

<sup>3</sup> R.E. Brown, *An introduction to the New Testament* (New York 1997) 468.

<sup>4</sup> The *Corpus Paulinum* comprises all the New Testament letters attributed to Paul. Although Paul's authorship in some letters is notoriously disputed or even proved false, we have opted for the traditional form of the corpus, in order to avoid discussions less relevant for our investigation. The corpus is not a compositorial unity, but consists of fourteen letters written on a concrete occasion and with a specific purpose, addressed to young Christian communities or fellow missionaries. It includes the letters to the Romans (Rom), the Corinthians (1-2 Cor), the Galatians (Gal), the Ephesians (Eph), the Philippians (Phil), the Colossians (Col), the Thessalonians (1-2 Thess), and the letters to Timothy (1-2 Tim), Titus (Titus) and Philemon (Phlm).

any preliminary conception of the interpretation of Paul's theology. By just observing the terms *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ* in their context, we enter the domain of two disciplines that are usually considered auxiliary sciences to theology and exegesis: semantics and traductology. In the first section a contextual description of the meanings of both terms is presented, without reference to the exegetical tradition. We adopt the methodology of a recent development in linguistics: cognitive semantics. In the second section we analyse the translation of *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ* in recent English Bible translations, clarifying as much as possible the link between meaning and representation in translation.

## 2. The meaning of Paul's *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ*

Οὐ πᾶσα σὰρξ ἡ αὐτὴ σάρξ (1 Cor 15,39)  
Not all flesh is alike (NRSV)

Imagine someone reading Paul's letters in the original language without a single notion of the meaning of the key words *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ*. He would observe that the words appear in different contexts and his impression of their meaning would be modified by every single context. In the case of *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ*, where the contexts sometimes differ dramatically, he would not be able to construct a coherent view of the meanings, unless he classified the contexts into more homogeneous groups and tried to form an image of the terms' meaning in each of the groups. In other words, he would have to accept that they are polysemous. A critical mind would also wonder how these terms came to be used in such a wide range of contexts and what is the precise relation between the different meanings.

This is exactly how we set about. We restricted ourselves to reading Paul's letters in the original Greek version, describing "the range of contexts in which [these] term[s] can be appropriately employed"<sup>5</sup> and processing the information explicitly or implicitly attached to the words by their contexts. Obviously this method does not produce a satisfactory description of the meaning of *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ*. It only gives us a skeleton, yet with a few muscles and tendons, a structure for a lexical description of their meanings. The missing flesh of the body is the encyclopedical knowledge about *πνεῦμα* and *σάρξ* provided by secondary sources. These consist mainly of other Ancient Greek texts that have come down to us,

<sup>5</sup> E.A. Nida - J.P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta 1992) 37.

the Hebrew Old Testament and, somewhat anachronistically, the commentaries on and translations of Paul's letters. These sources, however, have no share in the methodological part of our investigation, as we are concentrating on building the skeleton.

As a point of departure we have adopted a cognitive approach to semantics<sup>6</sup>. According to this theory, the meaning of a word consists of a range of associated ideas, of which some are more obvious or central (the *profile*) than others (the *base*)<sup>7</sup>. A good way to illustrate this is the window-on-network metaphor<sup>8</sup>. A word can be pictured as giving access to a room with a window from which one sees a huge network of ideas. Part of the network will be lit by the light shed through the window. Some ideas will be lit more clearly (the *profile*) than others (the *base*), but there is no clear dividing line to distinguish between the two. Both profile and base make up the meaning. In this respect, the influence of context on word meaning can be described as the light shed on the network through neighbouring windows, whereby the profile-base organization of the view through the original window is altered because less central ideas are lit more clearly now. Assuming that words can be polysemous, which will be necessary for the description of the meaning of the terms *πνεῦμα* and *σάοξ*, is assuming that a room has more than one window on the network. Ultimately, the light of the context will determine which window provides the clearest view.

Since the specific meaning activated by a word depends on the context in which it occurs, cognitive semantics does not accept the existence of a context-independent *Grundbeteutung*. And since polysemy develops out of the historical use of words, it is relevant that a lexical description of word meaning reconstruct its historical evolution. This is exactly the way in which the various meanings of the words *πνεῦμα* and *σάοξ* will

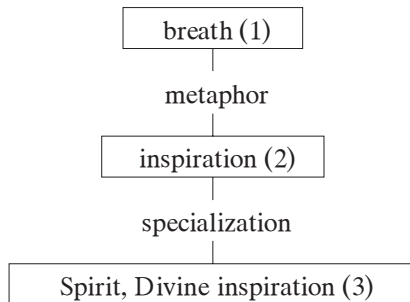
<sup>6</sup> For a brief description of the methods and their theoretical foundations, see R. Dirven – M. Verspoor, *Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics* (Amsterdam 1998), and D. Tuggy, “The Literal-Idiomatic Bible Translation Debate from the Perspective of Cognitive Grammar”, in K. Feytaerts (ed.), *The Bible through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantic Perspective* (Religions and Discourse 15; Bern 2003) 239-288. For more extensive discussions we refer to J.R. Taylor, *Cognitive Grammar* (Oxford 2002); J.R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization* (Oxford 2003); H. Cuyckens – R. Dirven – J.R. Taylor (eds.), *Cognitive Approaches to Lexical Semantics* (Berlin 2003); W. Croft – D.A. Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge 2004); D. Geeraerts, *Words and Other Wonders: Papers on Lexical and Semantic Topics* (Berlin 2006); V. Edwards – M.C. Green, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Edinburgh 2006); . Ungerer – H.J. Schmid, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* (London 2006); V. Edwards – B.K. Bergen – J. Zinken (eds.), *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader* (London 2007); R.W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar* (Oxford 2008).

<sup>7</sup> D. Tuggy, *Literal-Idiomatic*, 250-251.

<sup>8</sup> D. Tuggy, *Literal-Idiomatic*, 251-253.

be presented here<sup>9</sup>. The graphical representation is conceived as a radial network, starting from the historically oldest meaning and with younger meanings presented as derived through cognitive processes such as metaphor, metonymy, generalization and specialization<sup>10</sup>.

### 1.1. πνεῦμα



At the top of the diagram we find the meaning “breath” (1). This meaning shows the original semantic affinity with the verb πνέω “to blow<sup>11</sup>, to breathe”, which is the morphological base of the noun πνεῦμα<sup>12</sup>. This meaning is rare in Paul. It occurs only once, in a quotation from the Old Testament:

(1a) Καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ἰησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ (2 Thess 2,8)

(1b) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the **breath** of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. (NRSV)

In innumerable languages from different language families the meaning “breath” has been taken as the base for a range of metaphors with

<sup>9</sup> Most of the meanings are found in the dictionaries and specialized encyclopedias we have used as frame of reference during this investigation. On the basis of our own lecture of the Pauline corpus and our cognitive approach to semantics, we have restructured and renamed the meaning distinctions.

<sup>10</sup> Dirven – Verspoor, *Cognitive Exploration*, 33-35.

<sup>11</sup> The use of πνεῦμα in the meaning of “wind”, which is metaphorically related to the meaning “breath” is not found in Paul. An illustration of this meaning can be found in Heb 1,7.

<sup>12</sup> H.G. Liddell – R. Scott – H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford 1996) s.v. πνεῦμα.

metaphysical associations. In Paul's letters, πνεῦμα can most appropriately be conceived as a medium to transmit metaphysical information, and promises and guidelines concerning human life. We have called it "inspiration" (2). The origin of the πνεῦμα is generally explicit. In most cases it concerns the πνεῦμα θεοῦ "spirit of God" or πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ "spirit of Christ". Together with ἅγιον πνεῦμα "holy spirit" they make up a range of very frequent expressions of which the meaning extension seems not to be clearly distinguishable. Even without any specification or determination πνεῦμα occurs in similar contexts. This was the reason to add the semantic specialization "Spirit or Divine inspiration" (3) to the diagram. Both meaning (2) and (3) are exemplified in the following example<sup>13</sup>:

(2a) Ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἶπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. Εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ. (Rom 8,9)

(2b) But you are not in the flesh; you are in **the Spirit**, since **the Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. (NRSV)

The meaning "breath", on the other hand, has produced in many languages a metaphorical extension of the idea of an invisible power related to life that is, contrary to the πνεῦμα as "inspiration", not operating from the outside, but is a part of the being itself, comparable to the English "breath of life", "soul" or "spirit". In Paul's letters, a πνεῦμα is attributed indeed to both God and man. But the Divine πνεῦμα can be identified with the Divine inspiration, and the πνεῦμα received by man, will be in fact a part of God's πνεῦμα. In this way the next passage can be understood:

(3a) Ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ. Τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ

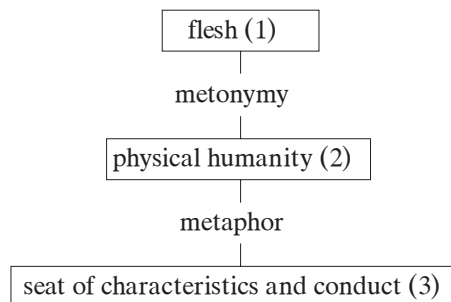
<sup>13</sup> Other passages where the meaning of πνεῦμα can be interpreted as meaning (2) are Rom 1,4; 5,5; 7,14; 8,9, 11, 14, 15; 9,1; 11,8; 14,17; 15,13, 16; 1 Cor 2,12, 14; 3,16; 6,11,19; 7,40; 12,3, 4, 8-11, 13; 14,37; 15,44, 45, 46; 2 Cor 3,3, 17, 18; 4,13; 6,6; 12,18; 13,13; Gal 4,6; 5,17; Eph 1,13, 17; 2,18; 4,3, 30; 6,12; Phil 1,19, 27; 3,3; 1 Thess 1,5, 6; 4,8; 2 Tim 1,7, 14; Titus 3,5. Meaning (3) is found moreover in Rom 1,9, 11; 2,29; 7,6; 8,2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 23, 26, 27; 12,11; 15,19, 27, 30; 1 Cor 2,4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15; 3,1; 4,21; 5,3, 4, 5; 9,11; 10,3, 4; 12,1, 7, 8; 14,1, 2, 14, 15, 32; 16,18; 2 Cor 1,22; 2,13; 3,6, 8, 17; 5,5; 7,1, 13; Gal 3,2, 3, 14; 4,29; 5,16, 18, 22, 25; 6,1, 8, 18; Eph 1,3; 2,3, 22; 3,5, 16; 4,3, 23; 5,18, 19; 6,18; Phil 2,1; 4,23; Col 1,8, 9; 2,5; 3,16; 1 Thess 5,19, 23; 2 Thess 2,2, 13; 1 Tim 3,16; 4,1; 2 Tim 4,22; Phlm 1,25.

θεοῦ οὐδείς ἔγνωκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τοῦ θεοῦ. ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν, ἀλλὰ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν. (1 Cor 2,10-12)

(3b) These things God has revealed to us through the **Spirit**; for the **Spirit** searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human **spirit** that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the **Spirit** of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit** that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. (NRSV)

Due to the theological content of Paul's letters and the context in which they were written, the central meaning in the Corpus Paulinum is πνεῦμα (2) (c. 75%). Indeed Paul's first concern has been to communicate to the Gentiles the possibility, realized by the coming of the Messiah, to receive God's πνεῦμα, their guarantee of salvation and eternal life.

## 1.2. σάρξ



The historically oldest meaning of σάρξ is “substance around the skeleton” that is, in opposition to κρέας, not meant for consumption (1). In Paul's letters this use of the word σάρξ concerns almost always *human* flesh<sup>14</sup>:

(4a) διό, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι **σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί**, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι. (2 Cor 12,7).

<sup>14</sup> Other passages where the meaning of σάρξ can be interpreted as meaning (1) are Rom 2,28; 15,27; 1 Cor 6,16; 7,28; 15,39; 2 Cor 3,3; 4,11; 12,7; Gal 2,20; 4,13, 14; 5,24; 6,12; Eph 2,11, 14; 5,29, 31; Phil 1,22, 24; Col 1,22, 24; 2,1, 5, 13. Except for 1 Cor 15,39 human flesh is concerned.

(4b) Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, **a thorn** was given me **in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. (NRSV).

Subsequently *σάρξ* is used metonymically to describe humanity as a whole in its natural and material aspect (2). Mankind is not only considered a synchronic unity, but also a diachronic unity (descendence). This meaning profile can serve as a ground for the interpretation of several expressions<sup>15</sup>.

#### ■ synchronic unity

(5a) διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται **πᾶσα σάρξ** ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.  
(Rom 3,20)

(5b) For “**no human being** will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law (NRSV)

(6a) εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην **σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι** (Gal 1,16)

(6b) I did not confer with **any human being** (NRSV)

#### ■ diachronic unity

(7a) Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν **κατὰ σάρκα**; (Rom 4,1).

(7b) What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor **according to the flesh**? (NRSV).

(8a) Ἐφ’ ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω, εἴ πως παραζηλώσω **μου τὴν σάρκα** καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν.  
(Rom 11,13-14).

(8b) Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry in order to make **my own people** jealous, and thus save some of them. (NRSV).

This physical aspect of humanity is used metaphorically as what we have called “the carrier of moral status” (3). At first sight this is identified with the natural inclinations of man and judged as morally negative, but in many cases expressions like *κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν* “to live according to the *σάρξ*” appear in contexts where the attitude vis-a-vis the Jewish Law, and particularly circumcision, is concerned. In this contexts it is usually

<sup>15</sup> Other passages where the meaning of *σάρξ* can be interpreted as meaning (2) are Rom 1,3; 3,20; 4,1; 9,3, 5, 8; 1 Cor 1,29; 10,18; 2 Cor 11,18; Gal 2,16; 4,23, 29; 6,13; Eph 6,5; Col 3,22.

contrasted to πνεῦμα as Divine inspiration. This use of σάϱξ is the most frequent one in Paul's letters (c. 45%). It plays a crucial role in Pauline ideology. Life in function of this σάϱξ, i.e. a nomistic view on religious life where the grace of YHWH is not assured by faith but by the concrete observance of the Law (e.g. circumcision), is presented as hypocrite and morally reprehensible, while Paul offers as an alternative the "inspired" religious life, based on faith<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. Translation of key words

οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἑβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῆ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν· οὐ μόνον δὲ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ νόμος καὶ αἱ προφητεῖαι καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων οὐ μικρὸν ἔχει τὴν διαφορὰν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λεγόμενα. (Sir Prol 20-25).

For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this book, but even the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little when read in the original. (NRSV).

Translation *stricto sensu* is considered to be a search for an equivalent of a source text in a target language. Since languages differ in form and in the way form is connected to meaning, the translator is supposed to fully understand the meaning of the source text and to render it in the most equivalent way, conserving its formal characteristics as far as possible.

Bible translation has always adhered closely to this view. The importance of an adequate transmission of the message has caused Bible translation to be conscientiously source-text oriented. In addition, the sacred status of the Bible has always implied a preoccupation with the form as well. This can be related to Old Testament passages such as Exodus 24,12, where YHWH himself is said to have engraved the Law onto stone tablets. The Latin Bible translator Jerome even proclaims to have abandoned his usual sense-oriented<sup>17</sup> translation-strategy shared with his guru Cicero, when translating the Holy Scripture in which *uerborum ordo mysterium est*:

<sup>16</sup> Meaning (3) is found in Rom 6,19; 7,5, 14, 18, 25; 8,3-9, 12, 13; 11,14; 13,14; 1 Cor 1,26; 3,1, 3; 5,5; 9,11; 15,50; 2 Cor 1,12, 17; 5,16; 7,1; 10,2-4; Gal 1,16; 3,3; 5,13, 16-19; 6,8; Eph 2,3; 6,12; Phil 3,3, 4; Col 2,11, 18, 23; 1 Tim 3,16; Phlm, 16,3.

<sup>17</sup> The term "sense" is used in contrast to "meaning" to refer not to the lexical meaning of a word, but to the contextual meaning of a text element. In cognitive linguistics, where lexical meaning and contextual use of a linguistic sign cannot be seen independent of each other, this distinction is irrelevant.



*Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor, me in interpretatione Graecorum absque Scripturis Sanctis, ubi et uerborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu. (Epist. 57.5)*

For I myself not only admit but freely proclaim that in translating from the Greek (except in the case of the holy scriptures where even the order of the words is a mystery) I render sense for sense and not word for word. (translation Fremantle<sup>18</sup>).

A more radical expression of this idea is found in the prologue to the Wisdom of Sirach (quoted above), where the grandson of the author felt the need to express some reservations against the Greek translation of his grandfather's manuscript: the sense of a text resides partially in the structure of the original language. We can conclude that in translating sacred texts, as it involves more rigid rules than in other texts, both form and meaning are the subject of translation. This close connection of form and meaning, however, is practically impossible to preserve in interlingual transfer. In other words, translation inevitably implies a loss of information.

The basic question is to which extent the formal aspect of a text can be preserved in translation, and, in case the connection between form and meaning in the source text cannot be reflected in a satisfying way in the target language, what is the importance of these formal aspects. A definitive answer cannot be given here. As the importance of formal aspects will always be under discussion (cfr. the literal-idiomatic debate<sup>19</sup>), we will give a brief survey of the more problematical features.

In cases where formal equivalence does not obstruct equivalence of meaning there is, of course, no reason to change the form. The macro-structural level is generally felt easy to preserve<sup>20</sup>. On the micro-structural level the problem is more complex<sup>21</sup>. In some cases the resemblances between source and target language admit to use similar formal patterns to render similar meanings, in others different idiomaticity obstructs it. In the latter case, the meaningfulness of the formal elements is often low. Yet, when the language form itself is part of the meaning, the translator will have to weigh its importance and its potential priority to the meaning<sup>22</sup>. There is, however, an intermediate level between macro- and

<sup>18</sup> W.H. Fremantle, *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works (A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series 6*, Edinburgh 1893, reprinted 1994).

<sup>19</sup> D.Tuggy, *Literal-Idiomatic*, 239-244.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. order of the sentences, division in verses, paragraphs, chapters, books, ...

<sup>21</sup> E.g. word order, syntactic structures, punctuation, ...

<sup>22</sup> E.g. word plays, etymological figures, allusions, metre, rhyme, ...

micro-structural level in which formal characteristics of a text appear. It is the level of the continuity of the text, the formal cohesion of its smaller units: the style and the lexical or syntactic peculiarities of the author.

Our investigation obviously focuses on the translation of important recurrent words (key words). Lexical repetition is undeniably a formal characteristic of a text. Yet the fact that the same term can occur in different contexts that select and modify its meaning, makes it hard for translators to preserve this formal coherence. We will have a close look at the translation of the two Pauline key words *πνεῦμα* and *σάραξ*, shown to be found in different contexts with a broad meaning extension (cfr. §2).

Examining twentieth-century English Bible translations<sup>23</sup> with respect to the translation of the keywords *πνεῦμα* and *σάραξ*, we find both differences and similarities. What all translations have in common, not unexpectedly, is that they have searched for an equivalent English form for the terms or the expressions in which they occur. In other words, in the English versions we can identify words or expressions that are the translational equivalents of *πνεῦμα* and *σάραξ*. The differences between the concrete translations, however, are very striking. A verse-by-verse comparison of the different versions reveals differences in vocabulary, but that is not our main concern. We want to compare the continuity of that vocabulary throughout the translation. To put it differently, we want to investigate to what extent the lexical repetition in the source text is conserved in the target text.

Before discussing specific examples of the translation of *πνεῦμα* and *σάραξ* in their different meanings, two terms need to be introduced to describe the general attitude of the Bible translators toward the treatment of key words: *concordant translation* and *interpretative translation*<sup>24</sup>. These terms do not refer to typologies, but rather to the two extremes of a continuum, a scale on which translations can be situated. Concordant translations prefer to preserve the formal cohesion of the source text by translating the same source term or expression by the same target term or expression. Interpretative translation, on the other hand, interprets

<sup>23</sup> We have examined six recent Bible versions: *The Bible: Revised Standard Version* (1952: RSV); *New King James Version* (1982: NKJ); *New International Version - US* (1984: NIV); *The New Jerusalem Bible* (London 1990: NJB); *Revised Webster Bible* (1995: RWB); *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version - anglicised text* (Oxford 2003: NRSV).

<sup>24</sup> The term “interpretative translation” has been introduced by Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation* (Oxford 1981) 35-36. Newmark states that “interpretative translation requires a semantic method of translation combined with a high explanatory power, mainly in terms of the source language culture, with only a side glance at the target language reader”. Although we will discuss translation on another level than Newmark did, we have considered this term appropriate for our purposes.

the meaning of a term or expression according to its context and tries to represent that variable meaning in the most appropriate way in translation. The degree of concordance is often high in older or consciously archaistic translations, while some younger translations adhere more closely to the opposite extreme. The following fragment illustrates the different attitudes towards the translation of *σάρξ*:

(9a) Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς **σαρκός**, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι **σαρκός** ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ **σαρκί**, ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ **σάρκα** περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα. Οἱ γὰρ κατὰ **σάρκα** ὄντες τὰ τῆς **σαρκός** φρονοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος (Rom 8,3-5)

(9b) For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the **flesh**, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful **flesh**, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the **flesh**, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the **flesh** but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the **flesh** set their minds on the things of the **flesh**, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (NKJ)

(9c) What the Law could not do because of the weakness of **human nature**, God did, sending his own Son in the same **human nature** as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin, and condemning sin in that **human nature**. This was so that the Law's requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not by our **natural inclinations** but by the Spirit. Those who are living by their **natural inclinations** have their minds on the things **human nature** desires; those who live in the Spirit have their minds on spiritual things. (NJB)

Obviously it is impossible to achieve either an entirely concordant or an intirely interpretative translation. Even in translations that can be situated closer to the extreme of the interpretative translation, such as the New Jerusalem Bible, there can be found strategies to preserve the concordance as much as possible. A typical phenomenon in this group of translations is e.g. the use of formally or etymologically related expressions to preserve the cohesion. In the NJB fragment the element “nature” is found both in the expression “human nature” and “natural inclinations”. A striking example of this combination of interpretative and concordant translation is the representation of *πνεῦμα*. Where the Divine *πνεῦμα* is concerned, the translation is often “Spirit” – with a capital letter, whereas in other cases “spirit” with a small letter will be used, as in 1 Corinthians 2,10-12 (texts 3a-b quoted above).

Having discussed the classification of translations with respect to the treatment of keywords, we now return to *πνεῦμα* and *σάραξ* in their different meanings. The reader will find below a range of passages in which the terms occur, classified according to our meaning specifications (see diagrams above) and their translation. The passages are selected for their prototypicality.

### 1.1. *πνεῦμα*

#### breath (1)

(1a) Καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ἰησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ **πνεύματι** τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ (2 Thess 2,8).

(1b) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the **breath** of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. (NRSV).

(1c) And the wicked One will appear openly. The Lord will destroy him with the **breath** of his mouth and will annihilate him with his glorious appearance at his coming. (NJB).

(1d) And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the **spirit** of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. (RWB).

#### (Divine) inspiration (2 & 3)

(2a) Ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν **πνεύματι**, εἴπερ **πνεῦμα θεοῦ** οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. Εἰ δέ τις **πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ** οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ. (Rom 8.9).

(2b) But you are not in the flesh; you are in **the Spirit**, since **the Spirit of God** dwells in you. Anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. (NRSV).

(2c) You, however, live not by your natural inclinations, but by **the Spirit**, since **the Spirit of God** has made a home in you. Indeed, anyone who does not have **the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. (NJB).

(3a) Ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ **πνεύματος**; τὸ γὰρ **πνεῦμα** πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ. Τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἔγνωκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τοῦ θεοῦ. ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν, ἀλλὰ τὸ **πνεῦμα** τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν. (1 Cor 2,10-12).

(3b) These things God has revealed to us through the **Spirit**; for the **Spirit** searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human **spirit** that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the **Spirit** of God. Now we have received not the **spirit** of the world, but the **Spirit** that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. (NRSV).

(3c) To us, though, God has given revelation through the **Spirit**, for the **Spirit** explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God. After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone except his own **spirit**, within him; and in the same way, nobody knows the qualities of God except the **Spirit** of God. Now, the **Spirit** we have received is not the spirit of the world but God's own **Spirit**, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given us. (NJB).

## 1.2. σάρξ

### flesh (1)

(4a) διό, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ **τῇ σαρκί**, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι. (2 Cor 12,7).

(4b) Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me **in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. (NRSV).

(4c) Wherefore, so that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn **in the flesh**, a messenger from Satan to batter me and prevent me from getting above myself. (NJB).

### physical humanity (2)

(5a) διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται **πᾶσα σάρξ** ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. (Rom 3,20)

(5c) So then, no **human being** can be found upright at the tribunal of God by keeping the Law (NJB)

(5d) Therefore by the deeds of the law no **flesh** will be justified in His sight (NKJ)

(6a) εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην **σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι** (Gal 1,16)

(6c) I was in no hurry to confer with any **human being** (NJB)

(6d) I did not immediately confer with **flesh and blood** (NKJ)

(7a) Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν **κατὰ σάρκα**; (Rom 4,1)

(7c) What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? (NIV).

(7d) Then what do we say about Abraham, the ancestor **from whom we are descended physically**? (NJB).

(7e) What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found **according to the flesh**? (NKJ).

(8a) Ἐφ' ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω, εἴ πως παραζηλώσω **μου τὴν σάρκα** καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν. (Rom 11,13-14).

(8c) Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse **my own people** to envy and save some of them. (NIV).

(8d) As far as I am an apostle to the gentiles, I take pride in this work of service; and I want it to be the means of rousing to envy **the people who are my own blood-relations** and so of saving some of them. (NJB).

(8e) Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy **those who are my flesh** and save some of them. (NKJ).

### seat of characteristics and conduct (3)

(10a) Φανερὰ δέ ἐστιν **τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός**, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, ... (Gal 5,19).

(10b) The acts of the **sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery,... (NIV).

(10c) When **self-indulgence** is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality,... (NJB).

(10d) Now the works of the **flesh** are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness,... (NKJ).

(11a) ... ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ **κατὰ σάρκα** περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα. (Rom 8,4).

(11b) ... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not **live according to the sinful nature** but according to the Spirit. (NIV).

(11c) This was so that the Law's requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not **by our natural inclinations** but by the Spirit. (NJB).

(11d) ... that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk **according to the flesh** but according to the Spirit. (NKJ).

From these examples, we can draw the conclusion that πνεῦμα, except in the meaning of “breath” and in a few other cases, is translated concord-

antly. This concordant translation of πνεῦμα, even in generally rather interpretative translations, is opposed to the large series of expressions rendering σάρξ, such as “human nature”, “self-indulgence”, “natural inclinations”, “sinful nature” and the like. Apparently the word “spirit” is clear enough in the context of Paul’s letters, while “flesh” is not, or evokes associations not meant by the author, associations with taboo and sexuality. While rather concordant translations continue to use the word *flesh* in most contexts, the more interpretative translations opt for paraphrasing the notion in certain contexts, either to make these associations explicit (e.g., “sinful nature”), or to exclude them (e.g., “human nature”).

#### 4. Conclusions

In the letters of Paul, πνεῦμα and σάρξ are key words. They appear in different contexts, often contrasted with each other. The lexical meaning of these terms has been discussed for about two thousand years and the results of this tradition can be found in dictionaries, commentaries and other reference works. A feeling of dissatisfaction with regard to the descriptive methods of these works was at the base of our investigation: a new reading of the source texts, combined with a cognitive view on semantics. This approach enabled us to work out diagrams in which the meanings of the two terms are presented in a structured way.

These networks subsequently served as a basis for the original purpose of our investigation, of which this article gives a sample: a description of the translation of πνεῦμα and σάρξ in recent Bible translations. The fact that these are recurrent words in the Pauline corpus, made it possible to observe their translation from a specific point of view. The main question was to which extent lexical repetition, a formal aspect of the source text, is preserved in translation or, more precisely, to which extent the conservation of this formal aspect interferes with the transmission of the original meaning, and, where it seems to do, which of the two, the form or the meaning, has taken priority. On a theoretical level, the best way to describe the attitude of translations on this point, is to situate them on a scale between two hypothetical extremes: concordant translation (priority of form) and interpretative translation (priority of meaning). This insight was confirmed later on by the detailed study of the translation of πνεῦμα and σάρξ. The positioning of a translation on this scale is probably a matter of an initial choice made by the translator(s) with respect to the intended audience. This question, however, has not been pursued in this study.



The πνεῦμα and σάρξ investigation has revealed another important factor that influences the concordance in the translation of source terms, namely the meaning of a traditional target term for the target language reader. The traditional representation of πνεῦμα in English, “spirit” or “Spirit”, appears to be considered an appropriate translation in almost all contexts where πνεῦμα occurs, whereas “flesh”, the traditionally corresponding target term for σάρξ, is avoided in several contexts by some recent translations, either for reasons of clarity or for the connotations which this word has. As a consequence, a tendency to concordant or interpretative translation is not only a translator’s choice, but can be influenced by the target language and its traditions as well.

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