

The Tablet of Cebes, the Pythagorean Y and Hercules at the Crossroads as Allegories of the Way of Human Life in the Early Modern Bohemian Lands*

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Abstract. The most frequent allegories of the journey of human life included in the early modern period are the Tablet of Cebes, the Pythagorean Y and Hercules at the crossroads. They all, in their own way, depict the crisis of choice. Their popularity in Europe is reflected in moral philosophical and emblematic literature, as well as in book culture and the visual arts. However, the Tablet of Cebes (*Tabula Cebetis*) rarely appears in the literature of the Bohemian lands and is documented first in the mid-seventeenth century in the works of Johannes Amos Comenius. Before that, perhaps the intellectual influence of the University of Wittenberg on Bohemian Humanists played a role in the lack of interest in this allegory. However, by a peculiar mistake of the editor, probably Beneš Optát, the term *Tabula Cebetis* was used in Bohemia and Moravia for the multiplication table, more commonly called *Tabula* or *Mensa Pythagorae*. The place of the *Tabula* as an allegory of the journey of life in the Bohemian lands was taken by the Pythagorean Y throughout the long sixteenth century, and to the greatest extent by the moralizing story of Hercules at the crossroads. The accompanying Latin text to the engraving of the *Tabula Cebetis* from 1640 is published in the appendix of the article.

Keywords: Tablet of Cebes, Hercules, Pythagorean Y, Neo-Latin literature, moral philosophy, Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius)

“Walking in the temple of Saturn, among other various sacrifices, we saw in front of the shrine a tablet of some kind, on which strange and peculiar things were painted; which ones and from where they should be, we could not tell. For the image did not seem to us to represent a city, nor a camp, but a kind of enclosure, two other enclosures, a greater and a lesser, within it.

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And there was a gate at the first enclosure, where a great multitude of people seemed to stand. And there were many women to be seen in the enclosure. And in the entrance of the first court and enclosure stood an old man, as if he had commanded the people that came in.”¹

When perusing this passage, the reader may recall the similarity to Jan Amos Comenius’ satirical allegory *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* (1631), as previously noted by Jaroslav Kolár, who considered the *Tablet of Cebes* a possible source of inspiration for Comenius.² I describe below the reactions to the *Tablet of Cebes* (in Latin *Tabula Cebetis*, in Greek simply named *Πίναξ*, i.e., Image) in the Bohemian lands³ in the period before Comenius, who in his work summarises the domestic and foreign tradition. I will also focus on related moral-educational motifs, especially the symbol of the Pythagorean Y, which is also used in the allegory of Hercules at the crossroads. This article was inspired by a 1640 print of *Tabula Cebetis* by C. J. Visscher, based on an earlier engraving by Hendrick Goltzius. Visscher took Goltzius’ original, reduced it and added a different text, which is edited in an appendix at the end of this article.⁴

The European tradition of *Tabula Cebetis*

In late antiquity, probably in the first or early second century AD, a Greek work was produced which was for a long time erroneously attributed to Socrates’ pupil, Cebes.⁵

- 1 Elichmann (ed.), *Tabula Cebetis*, 80: “Casu evenerat, ut in Saturni sacello deambularem; Ubi cum plerasque alias oblationes: tum Tabulam quandam pro templo positam intuebamur, in qua pictura quaedam erat peregrina, et quae peculiare fabulas contineret, quas conicere non poteramus, quoniam et quales essent. Neque enim civitas, neque vallum pictura illa nobis esse videbatur. Caeterum muri ambitus erat qui duos alios ambitus amplectebatur: alterum maiorem, minorem alterum. Porta etiam erat in primo ambitu, ubi nobis turba ingens insistere videbatur. Intra vero ambitum multitudo quaedam mulierum visebatur. Primi autem vestibuli et ambitus ingressum Senex quidam occupabat, qui turbae ingredienti quasi imperare aliquid videbatur.” The English translation of the beginning of the text of the *Tablet* was inspired by the older, 1824 Czech translation by Václav Karafiát, edited by Jaroslav Kolár, *Z paralel a příbuzností*. In addition to Karafiát, the text was later translated from Greek by Jan Chval, *Obraz Kebetův*.
- 2 Kolár, *Z paralel a příbuzností*, 49–76, upon which is based Voit, *Tabula Pythagorica and Tabula Cebetis*; recently Waisser, *Momenty*, 355–57.
- 3 At that time, Bohemian lands referred to the lands belonging to the Bohemian Crown, i.e. Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia.
- 4 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, call nr. RP-P-1887-A-11481. New Hollstein Dutch 194, copy a. About this graphic recently Baumann, Hammami and Rütth, *Topographie der Erkenntnis*. The original version of the engraving from 1592, including a transcription and translation of the accompanying text, was published in Kubíková and Volrábová, *From Michelangelo*, 229–32.
- 5 Socrates’ pupil Cebes appears in Plato’s *Crito* and *Phaedo*. For more, see Fitzgerald and White,

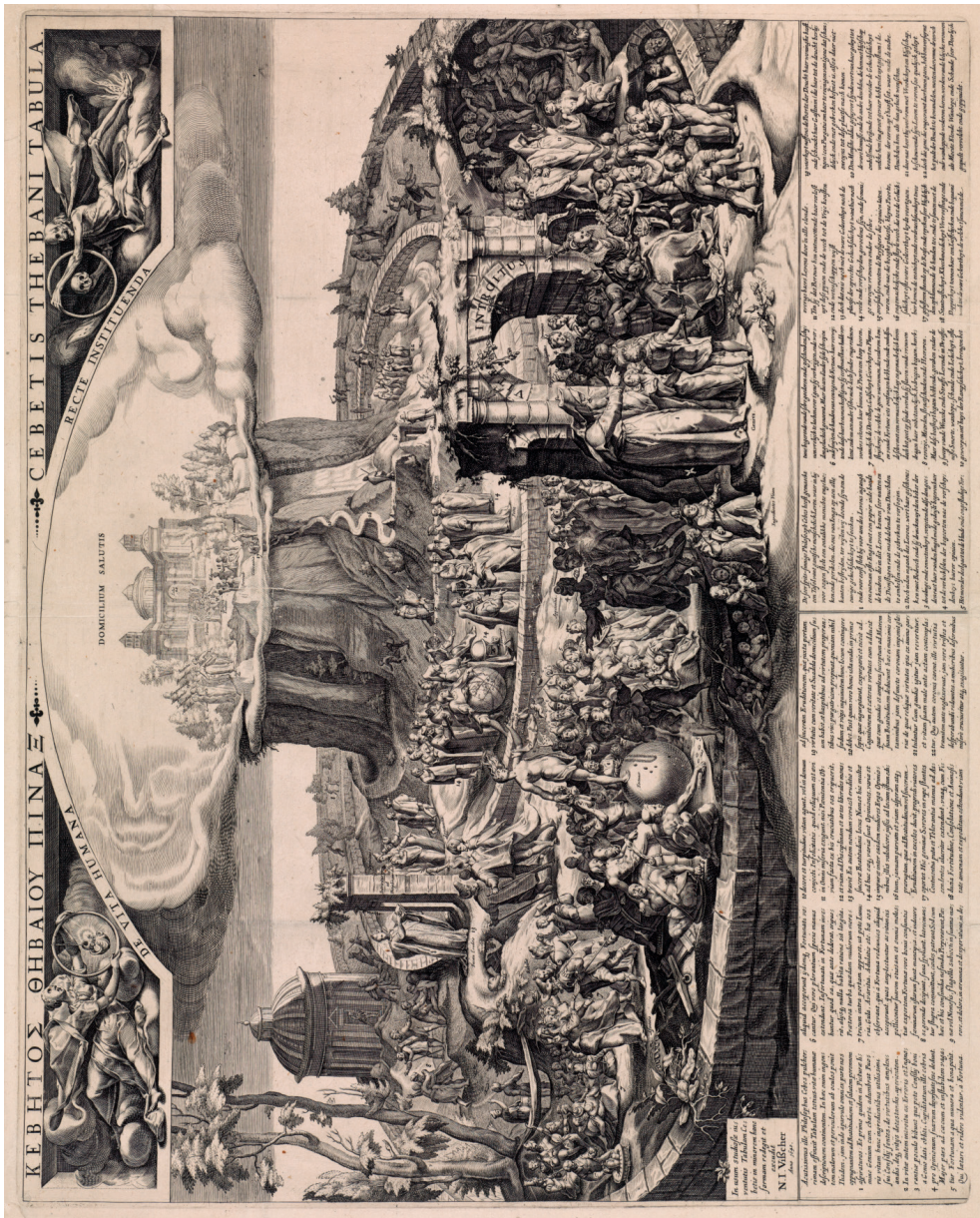


Figure 1 *Tabula Ceбетis*. Engraving printed by N. I. Visscher, 1640, after a design by Hendrick Goltzius, 1592. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, signature RP-P-1887-A-11481.

The Tabula of Cebes; facsimile edition of translations into nine languages, Sider, *Cebes' Tablet*; the translations of Pseudo-Cebes are recorded by Lutz, *Catalogus translationum*, and by Nesselrath, *Titel von Einzelausgaben*, 62–65; a comprehensive inventory of European prints of the *Tabula* from 1496 to 1700 is given by Janzsó, *A Tabula Ceбетis*. Selected secondary literature:

It is a dialogical description of a fictional image which depicts the various pitfalls of the journey of human life and advises the spectator on what constitutes a good path through life. Even at the time of its composition, *Πίναξ* was already popular, and Cebes (or more precisely, Pseudo-Cebes) was quoted by both Lucian and Tertullian. In the Middle Ages he dropped out of sight, if we do not count the Arabic paraphrase of the Greek text written around 1000, which still plays an important role in modern editions of the *Tablet*.

However, it came into use with all the more force after its rediscovery by the Italian Humanists. In 1496, the Greek original was published in print⁶ and a year later, Filippo Beroaldo the Elder in Bologna published a Latin translation by Lodovico Odasio (Lat. Ludovicus Odaxius).

In the Latin translation, the *Tablet of Cebes* soon conquered the Transalpine printing offices. Odasios' elegant Humanist Latin and the work's relatively easy-to-understand moral message made it a popular read throughout the sixteenth century. It was first published in Greek as a supplement to Constantine Lascaris' Greek Grammar, and later in Greek or Latin alongside other ancient moral-philosophical writings, such as Epictetus, the *Distichs of Cato*, and the *Golden Verses* attributed to Pythagoras, in Latin the *Aurea Carmina*. It was well suited for school reading, and with the development of Greek language teaching arose bilingual Greek–Latin editions. The first Transalpine edition of the Latin *Tabula* was published in Paris as early as 1498, and the first in the German lands was published in Frankfurt in 1507 with an introductory letter by Johannes Rhagius Aesticampianus⁷ and an illustrative woodcut. There followed a series of editions from German, Italian, Swiss, French and English printing offices, plus Austrian (Vienna 1515 and 1519 with a scholia by Ulrich Fabri) and Polish (the first edition in Krakow being a single leaf in 1519⁸ and others in 1522–24), with the older translation by Odasio predominating.

Pictorial decoration of the *Tablet* initially distinguished the Transalpine from the Italian prints, which lacked it, the first original illustrations not being produced

Hirsch-Luipold et al., *Die Bildtafel*; Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*; Pfisterer, *Europa 1507*; Kranen, *Moralische Landschaften*; Tucker, *Homo viator*; Benedetti, *Itinerari di Cebete*; Kulas, *Odrzucony topos*; Paczewicz, *Tablica Kebesa*; recently also Kiliańczyk-Zięba, *Vanished Components*.

6 GW 06442, ISTC ic00356000. There is perhaps an earlier undated edition; and the Greek text was also supposedly published by Aldo Manuzio as a supplement to Constantine Lascaris' Greek grammar by as early as 1494, see Kulas, *Odrzucony topos*, 32, but Benedetti, *Itinerari di Cebete*, does not mention this edition.

7 Tucker, *Homo viator*, 110, considers Aldo Manuzio to be the translator.

8 Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, 33, Fig. 3. For ensuing Polish editions see Kulas, *Odrzucony topos*, 34–35.

in Italy until around the mid-sixteenth century.⁹ The most famous woodcuts and metalcuts of the *Tablet* are probably the four variants of the title border or title frame by Hans Holbein from 1521 and 1522,¹⁰ which were still in use by Basel printing houses many decades after their creation. They were probably the result of a competitive process among printers;¹¹ paradoxically, they were never used for the publication of the *Tabula* itself but were used only as a decorative element: they formed a decorative frame for editions of Erasmus, Strabo, and the Greek Dictionary. In the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, a number of copperplates were produced, mainly by Dutch artists. The most famous, after a 1592 design by Hendrick Goltzius, with accompanying verses by his ‘court’ poet Franco Estius, was long used for other artistic representations of the *Tabula*, including the one printed at the beginning of this article (Figure 1). The woodcuts and copper engravings used to be part of the prints with the text of the *Tabula*, as was the case, for example, with the edition with illustrations after the woodcut by David Kandel at Isengrins in 1551 and Oporinus’ printing office in 1560,¹² or with the illustration by Matthias Merian in 1638,¹³ but they were often later removed from the prints and preserved separately in graphic collections.

Illuminated manuscripts with the subject of the *Tabula* are rare,¹⁴ but they served as inspiration for emblem books.¹⁵ In addition to book illustration, motifs from the *Tablet of Cebes* were used, for example, in paintings, on tapestries, and as models for the decoration of royal and noble residences, the most famous surviving ones being on a Renaissance frieze in Wawel, Poland, and an unpreserved one by

9 We omit the 1525 woodcut inspired by Holbein’s variant D, see Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, 42.

10 According to Hieronymus Frank, Variant A was first used for Tertullian’s *Opera*, published in Basel in 1521; that same year, Variant B was used in Niccolò Perotti’s *Cornucopiae*; Variant C was used in 1522 for Erasmus’ Commentary on the New Testament (VD16 B 4198); in the same year, Variant D, considered the most original, was used for the first time for the *Lexicon graecum*. See Frank, *Oberrheinische Buchillustration*, 392, 395–96.

11 Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, 34–36.

12 Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, 37, note 132.

13 *Die Kunstreiche Tafel*.

14 For the description of the illuminated manuscript with Latin verse translation, made by the Italian Servite Filippo Alberici for King Henry VII of England, see Sider, *Interwoven with Poems and Picture*. Recently the commentary to the facsimile volume was edited by Röschel, *Begleitband: Die Tabula Cebetis*.

15 Corrozet, *Le Tableau de Cébès* (modern reprint 1997), see also Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, Figs 18–28. On the emblematic aspects of the Latin translation of the *Tablet*, Sider, *Interwoven with poems and picture*; on emblematics also Benedetti, *Itinerari di Cebete*, in the chapter *Le icone e l’emblema: la Tabula fra iconologia e iconografia*, 280–94.

Tobias Stimmer in Baden-Baden.¹⁶ It is very likely that many of the images inspired by *Tabula* were based not on the Latin text but rather on translations into vernacular languages.

These translations are further evidence of the great popularity of the *Tabula*: the French translation dates from 1529, the English from 1530, the Spanish from 1532 (both published in Paris), and the Italian from 1538. The *Tabula* was translated into German in 1545 as *Spiegel des Menschlichen Lebens. Die Tafel Cebetis*, and six years later it was translated in rhyme by the well-known Nuremberg singer Hans Sachs. The *Tabula* was translated into Dutch in 1564¹⁷ and into Polish verse in 1581.¹⁸ While most translations into the vernacular languages were based on the Latin version, the *Tabula* was translated directly from the Greek original into German by Wilibald Pirckheimer, whose translation was published posthumously by Hans Imhoff in 1606 as part of the print *Theatrum virtutis et honoris*.¹⁹

In addition to Odasio's translation from Greek into Latin, there were other translations of the Tablet in the sixteenth century. Besides the aforementioned Aesticampianus, certainly worthy of note is the translation by Hieronymus Wolfius—who was the first to question the authorship of Cebes—published in Basel by Johannes Oporinus in 1561, in addition to the Johann Casellius 1591 translation with an earlier Latin verse paraphrase by Johann Stigellius.

Perhaps the most important version is the edition and translation by the Dutch scholar Johannes Elichmann who, in addition to the original and Odasio's Latin version, published a medieval Arabic paraphrase with his own Latin translation.²⁰ Elichmann's edition was published posthumously by Claude Saumaise in 1640 as a part of the multi-volume edition, *Simplicii commentarius in Enchiridion Epicteti*. In the table of contents on the reverse of the title page of the first volume is explicitly written "*Cebetis Tabula ... eiusdemque delineatio aeri incisa*". However, the engraving by C. J. Visscher has been removed from most copies of the print and became

16 About this Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, passim. On the frieze in Wavel, see Kulas, *Odrzucony topos*, 126–64.

17 Gillis, transl., *Cebetis des Thebaenschen philosophs Tafereel*. This translation may have inspired Goltzius' famous engraving.

18 *Cebes Tebańczyk Tablica*; modern edition Kiliańczyk, *Tablica albo Konterfet*. See Kulas, *Odrzucony topos*, 113–15.

19 The collection of Pirckheimer's translations is similar in its content to the collections of the Czech Humanist Řehoř Hrubý z Jelení (Gregorius Gelenius). Pirckheimer translated Plutarch, Erasmus, and the speech of Isokrates to Demonikos; the *Tabula Cebetis* is included at the very end.

20 Elichmann, *Tabula Cebetis graece, arabice, latine*. More on Elichmann recently from Van Hal, "*I am whom I know*". Elichmann's *album amicorum* is preserved in the Wellcome Collection in London (MS.257), and the Czech exile Ondřej Habervešl (Andreas Haberveschl) of Habernfeld also inscribed it.

part of graphic collections. I have found one copy, which has survived in the exemplar in the Bavarian State Library, folded and bound between the title page and the preface in the first volume.²¹

Mention should also be made of the (still in use) Latin commentaries on the *Tablet of Cebes*, especially that by Johann Camert of 1557, and the 1551 commentary on the six books by Justus Velsius, both published in Basel.²² Pseudo-Cebes' work was also a favourite subject for Latin verse paraphrases, of which we know evidence from German and French printing offices.

Bohemian lands and *Tabula Cebetis*: moral allegory or multiplication tables?

If we look at the reception of the *Tabula* in the Bohemian lands and the appearance of copies of it in libraries, we find that it is quite different from the above-described rich reception of this work in Western European literatures.²³ Bohuslaus of Lobkowitz and Hassenstein may have had it in his famous library in several printed editions, including the Greek original and the first edition of Odasios' Latin translation,²⁴ but there are no echoes of it in his own work, and we have been unable to trace any others throughout the period before 1620.

An isolated and rather accidental example of the appearance of the subject of the *Tablet of Cebes* in Bohemical (i.e. Bohemia-related) material is the broadsheet bearing the announcement of the Basel Disputation of Matthias of Gryllus.²⁵ Under the auspices of the nobleman Hieronymus Šlik, to whom he was court-master, and his father, Gryllus disputed at Basel on the second of March 1581 on the subject, *De iustificatione*. The printed invitation to the disputation was issued by the successors to Oporinus' press and is decorated by a border with the subject of the *Tablet of Cebes* (Figure 2). This is the variant D of the earlier woodcut after Hans Holbein, which was

21 Salmasius (ed.), *Simplicii commentarius in Enchiridion Epicteti*. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, shelf mark 4 A.gr.b. 616–1. The information about the inserted graphic by Visscher is also registered in WorldCat, OCLC 3786848. Visscher's print was published in England in 1675 by R. Pricke, who replaced the Dutch text of the description with the English one (British Museum, print 1917, 1208.2396).

22 Velsius' commentary is sometimes placed in Lyon, but in fact it was published in Basel by the printer Isengrin.

23 As in Bohemia, the reception of the *Tabula* was rather late in Hungary, see Janzsó, A *Tabula Cebetis Magyarországon*.

24 Boldan and Urbánková, *Rekonstrukce knihovny Bohuslava Hasištejnského*, 291, no. 249 (original), 293, nos 253–54 (translation); the last two call numbers were already known to Kolár, *Z paralel a příbuzností*, 52.

25 On Gryllus see Companion, 475–78; RHB 2, 238–240; Holý, *Ve službách šlechty*, 179–80.



Figure 2 Matěj Gryllus of Gryllov. *De iustificazione*, broadsheet. Basileae: ex officina Oporiniana 1581. Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Frey-Gryn E IV 2:27.

used successively by various Basler printers.²⁶ The popularity of Holbein's illustrations of the *Tabula*, used in Basel printing offices for occasional prints from the university milieu, can be documented in variant C, which still appears in 1618 (almost a century after its first use in 1521) in the workshop of the Basel printer Johann Schroeter.²⁷

Not long afterwards, the French printer and writer Jean II de Tournes dedicated to Charles the Elder of Žerotín his print of the *Thesaurus philosophiae moralis* which includes, in addition to Epictetus and Pythagoras, the *Tabula Cebetis* in a parallel Greek–Latin edition.²⁸ In the dedicatory preface, he writes that virtue necessarily belongs to high-ranking nobles in order to rule the people properly. During his studies in Strasbourg, Žerotín himself had previously delivered an oration on the path to true glory, in which he also works with the virtue motif, but we find no direct echoes of the *Tabula* here.²⁹

The undetected reception of the *Tabula* does not necessarily indicate that the work was unknown to readers in the Bohemian lands. A number of editions, including the earliest, have survived in major libraries. According to the available provenance, it appears that the majority of editions with known provenance, regardless of the confession of the publishers, came from Catholic libraries, especially from Jesuit colleges.³⁰ The explanation is simple—the *Tabula Cebetis* was already in 1599, together with the Greek Catechism, on the list of literature recommended for school reading and the practice of Greek for the *classis media* in Jesuit schools.³¹ In the Bohemian Jesuit Province, it was included in the reading books for the first year in their three-year cycle.³²

I have no findings on *Tabula* in the libraries of non-Catholics or on the reception in the literature published by them, which prompts the question of whether the

26 See Schleier, *Tabula Cebetis*, Fig. 8. Frank, *Oberrheinische Buchillustration*, 397 lists ten other uses of Holbein's frame between 1537 and 1592, including Gryllus, by the following printers: Walder, Curio, Henrich Petri, 1581 Oporinus' printing office and finally Sebastian Henricpetri.

27 The broadsheet with a congratulatory poem by J. J. Grasser on the graduation of three medical students, VD17 23:623694M. This document refutes the claim of H. Frank, who considers variant D to be the longest used (Frank, *Oberrheinische Buchillustration*, 397).

28 *Thesaurus philosophiae moralis*.

29 *Oratio de comparanda vera gloria* (modern edition Hrubý, *Etudiants tchèques*, 109–15).

30 In the provenance entries from the National Library of the Czech Republic, the libraries of the Jesuit Colleges in Prague and Český Krumlov, and the library of the Augustinians at St. Wenceslas' in the New Town of Prague can be found. There is also a copy of the provenance from the Jesuit college in Olomouc, now part of the book booty in Sweden (see <https://knizni-korist.cz/>; record number SJ 494). More about the exemplar from the Jesuit college in Telč in Bobková-Valentová, *Telč a jezuité*, 335, 338–39.

31 *Ratio, atque institutio studiorum societatis Jesu*, 134.

32 Bobková-Valentová, *Telč a jezuité*, 338.

popularity of the *Tabula* in Bohemian lands was not conditioned by religious denomination. The majority of Bohemian non-Catholic intellectuals studied in Wittenberg in the second half of the sixteenth century and were under the direct or indirect influence of the teachings of Luther and Melanchthon. It may be asked whether their disinterest in the *Tablet* had its roots here. Neither in Luther nor Melanchthon, nor in the 1538 *Philosophiae moralis epitome*, nor in the poetry cultivated in the Wittenberg University circle, which strongly influenced poetic production in the Bohemian lands, is there any extensive mention of the *Tablet of Cebes*.

In Wittenberg, unlike other German cities, no edition or commentary on the *Tabula* was published. Why this was so, and how the Lutheran reformers viewed the philosophy of the *Tablet*, can be inferred from the statements of Philipp Melanchthon in his defence against the Bavarian Articles, considered his final confession of faith.³³ In it, he compared the simple (and, in his view, superstitious) belief of Catholic clerics, monks, and their followers that they would go to heaven for their merits, to the *Tablet of Cebes* displaying the way to the top of the mountain.³⁴ Melanchthon, like Luther even more radically before him, but less vehemently than the Flacians, questions the free will of man in deciding upon matters of fundamental importance.³⁵ In Luther's view, man does not decide for himself, but is entirely subject to the will of God or the devil,³⁶ and can choose only one of two possible paths, good or bad, the first of which leads to salvation and the second to damnation.³⁷ This contrast of good and bad in

33 Kolb, *Melanchthon's Doctrinal Last Will and Testament*. On Melanchthon and the free will controversy also Gleiß, *Die Weimarer Disputation von 1560*, 170.

34 *Responsiones scriptae a Philippo Melanthono*, fol. H3a: "Etiam in hac quaestione de Operibus Ecclesiam omnibus aetatibus circumsederunt duo Exercitus: Alter Supersticiosorum, videlicet, Pharisei, Papistae, Monachi, et horum similes, qui deleta doctrina fidei somniarunt se Meritis suis in coelum ascendere, ut in tabula Cebetis ascensus in verticem montis pingitur." In the German translation of the defence from 1559, the term "*Himmelfahrt*" is even used for the way in the painting.

35 Melanchthon's views on God as the author of all successes and failures, who can add or subtract virtue to men by his decision, are taken up by Matouš Collinus in his preface to his interpretation of the Iliad. See Storchová, *Matthaeus Collinus and his Specimen studii*, 315–33.

36 Martin Luther in *De servo arbitrio* (1525, Weimar edition vol. 18, 638, 9): "Quodsi omnino vocem eam omittere nolumus, quod esset tutissimum et religiosissimum, bona fide tamen eatenus uti doceamus, ut homini arbitrium liberum non respectu superioris, sed tantum inferioris se rei concedatur, hoc est, ut sciat sese in suis facultatibus et possessionibus habere ius utendi, faciendi, omittendi pro libero arbitrio, licet et id ipsum regatur solius Dei libero arbitrio, quocunque illi placuerit; ceterum erga Deum vel in rebus, quae pertinent ad salutem vel damnationem, non habet liberum arbitrium, sed captivus, subiectus et servus est vel voluntatis Dei, vel voluntatis Satanae." See Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*, 143.

37 John Calvin went even further than Luther in his doctrine of double predestination, dividing believers into the elect and the reprobate. Baumann, Hammami and RÜth, *Topographie der*

Bohemia resonates with Hussite ideas. The simpler allegories of the Pythagorean Y and Hercules at the crossroads fit this clear distinction much better than Pseudo-Cebes' idea of the pilgrim who, on his way through life, is forced to make various choices that may ultimately lead him to a happy life—and he even can go back! This is perhaps one of the reasons why these two allegories found resonance in the Wittenberg circle and subsequently also in the Bohemian lands, as demonstrated below.

If we consider that the *Tabula Cebetis* was better received in a Catholic than Protestant environment, as evidenced by a provenance survey of Czech libraries, we could conclude that the editors and commentators of the *Tabula* in the early modern period were more likely to be Catholic.

However, the spectrum of authors who dealt with the *Tablet* in the early modern period is, in terms of religious denomination, very diverse: Johannes Camers (Giovanni Ricuzzi Vellini), the first commentator on Cebes and a disciple of Odasio, was of course a Catholic, given the times, and wrote the commentary around 1500 as a professor in Vienna; Maciej Wirzbięta, the Polish translator of Cebes, was a Catholic who converted to Calvinism; Justus Velsius, the author of the commentary on the six books, was a Dutch Humanist and reformer who gradually came into conflict with church authorities and developed his own idea of Christianity. Among other translators and editors, Hans Sachs, Johannes Caselius, and Johannes Stigelius were Lutherans; Johannes Rhagius Aesticampianus was a Reformation-leaning Catholic; the editors Claude Saumaise and Johannes Elichmann were Calvinists. Most early modern commentators provided Cebes with a Christian interpretation, but this did not become apparent in the title of the work until the second half of the seventeenth century, with *Cebes Christianus* by the Pietist Gottlieb Spitzel.³⁸

Nevertheless, in the non-Catholic book production of the Bohemian lands before 1620 we encounter the term *Tabula Cebetis*, and in a very surprising and unusual context. This is not a new finding; Jaroslav Kolár has previously pointed out that in *Knížky počební* [Books of Calculations] by Beneš Optát, published by Jan Günther in Prostějov in 1548, *Tabula Cebetis aneb Mensula Pythagorae* is printed at the end.³⁹ It is a simple table for multiplying numbers up to twenty (Figure 3). In the 1560s and 1570s, this table was published alternately in Prague and Olomouc,

Erkenntnis, 129 consider the possible influence of Calvinism on the form of Visscher's treatment of Goltzius' original image.

38 In Spitzel's *Infelix literatus*, 134–51, there is a chapter entitled *Cebes Christianus, dux literatorum ad verae felicitatis perennisque salutis domicilium tendentium sive Tabulae Cebeticae, arduam per angusta ad augusta viam praemonstrantis, commendatio et supplementum Christianum*. Spitzel claimed the legacy of Comenius and published at the end of the work part of a letter written to him by Daniel Komenský after his father's death.

39 Kolár, *Z paralel a příbuzností*, 51–52; Voit, *Encyklopedie knihy*, 872. *Knihopis* K06641, fol. L7b–L8a.

filling in the blank leaves of Culman's often reprinted edition of Donatus' *De octo partibus orationis methodus*⁴⁰ and later, also at the end of Codicillus' *Vocabularium trilingue*⁴¹ and in the Olomouc edition of Adam Ries' calculus book.⁴² In the German editions of Culman's *Donatus*, the multiplication table is missing and could not be found even in the German counting books. A singular case is known from the Polish environment; on Hungarian territory, the use of the name *Tabula Cebetis* for the multiplication table is documented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴³

It can be concluded that the name *Tabula Cebetis* (variants including *Mensa Pythagorae* and *Tabula multiplicationis*⁴⁴) was introduced into the Bohemian milieu by mistake (perhaps by Optát), probably caused by the fact that Pythagoras' *Carmina Aurea* was often published together with the edition of the *Tabula*. It is surprising how long this mistake was traditional, e.g., in the Olomouc prints it is repeated

Tabula Cebetis: a neb
Mensula Pythagore.

2	4	5	25
3	6	6	30
4	8	7	35
5	10	8	40
6	12	9	45
7	14		
8	16	6	36
9	18	7	42
		8	48
		9	54
		7	49
		8	56
		9	63
		8	64
		9	72
		9	81
		10	100

100:100:1000

Figure 3 Beneš Optát. *Knižky početni* [Books of Calculations]. Prostějov: Jan Günther, 1548, fol. L7b. National Library of the Czech Republic, 65 E 2042.

40 Entitled *Tabula Cebetis*: Melantrich 1560, I 17b (K17934), again 1562 (K02073), Günther in Olomouc 1567, I 14 (K02076), Melantrich 1568 (K02077), 1569 (K02078) and 1571 (K02079), Jiří Nigrin 1575, I2a (K02082) and 1577, I2a (K02083); the same as *Mensa Pythagorae* in 1585, 14a (K02085) and again 1604, I 4a, (K02089), again as *Tabula Cebetis*, Melantrich 1580, T7b (K02084) and 1598, I 7b (K02088).

41 Codicillus, *Vocabularium*, last page (p. 73).

42 Ries, *Arithmetica*.

43 A document in the Polish environment was brought to my attention by Jakub Wolak, to whom many thanks are due. *Tabula Cebetis* in the form of the table of gains and losses appears in one manuscript edited by Jan Czubek, *Pisma polityczne*, 490–91. On *Tabula* as a multiplication table in Hungary see Janzsó, *A Tabula Cebetis Magyarországon*, 188, 192.

44 E.g. Collinus, *Elementarius libellus*, fol. J7a: *Tabula multiplicationis*.

from 1636 to 1766,⁴⁵ and even for the historian Zikmund Winter at the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Tabula Cebetis* in the Jesuit School Order of 1599 is evidence of the teaching of arithmetic calculus, not Greek.⁴⁶

This special tradition is also continued in the works of Jan Amos Comenius, who very probably knew the *Tabula* as a numerical aid from an edition of Donatus, from which he often quotes in his *Labyrinth*.⁴⁷ Twice in his pedagogical work he mentions it serving this function.⁴⁸ However much the text of the *Tabula* recalls his *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*, it is very likely that at the time Comenius wrote this work, he was not yet familiar with the story of the *Tablet of Cebes*. Any similarities can be attributed to Comenius' inspiration by authors who themselves drew on the *Tabula*, notably Johann Valentin Andreae.⁴⁹ However, Comenius evidently read the *Tabula* before completing his *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica* [General Consultation on the Correction of Human Affairs], which he wrote before 1656. In fact, in the *Panaugia* chapter he mentions in a note the Pseudo-Cebes story of visiting the temple of Saturn in connection with the sphinx as a symbol of irrationality.⁵⁰ From this passage we can also determine exactly which edition Comenius was reading, for he quotes from the preface of the French scholar Claude Saumaise (Salmasius) to the Leiden print of Johannes Elichmann's 1640 edition of the *Tablet*.⁵¹ The sphinx motif is also repeated by Comenius later in *Clamores Eliae*.⁵²

45 The Trilingual Vocabulary was published by Mikuláš Hradecký of Kružnov in Olomouc in 1636 (*Tabula cebetis počet literní* is on p. 101). In 1747 the same printer published *Rechenbuch* in which *Die Tabula Cebetis oder das kleine Einmahl ein* is found. Again in Olomouc: by Rosenberg 1715, on G7a *Tabula Cebetis* (K16624a); and by Hirnleová 1766, 107 (K16633).

46 Winter, *Život a učení*, 566.

47 Kolár, *Z paralel a příbuzností*, 54.

48 Komenský, *Opera didactica omnia* II, 39: “Ex Arithmetice hic addetur multiplicatio et divisio cum Tabula Cebetis: ex geometria figurarum solidorum.” Another reference is in his *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, 528: “NB: Tabula Cebetis tantum docet compendia multiplicationis: cur non excogitantur etiam additionis, subtractionis, divisionis.”

49 A separate paragraph on the *Tablet*, with references to Justus Velsius' commentary, is found in Andreae, *Mythologiae Christianae*, 124: *Cebetis tabula*.

50 “Accommodari huc poterit, quod Cebes narrat in Saturni templo sibi a sene illo, qui Sphingis monstri mythologiam enarrabat, fuisse dictum: Insipientiam hominibus, quos tenet, quasi Sphingem esse: perdere eos non intellectam, perire ipsam intellectam.” Steiner et al., eds, *De rerum humanarum emendatione*, 196, note on 296b.

51 Elichmann, *Tabula Cebetis graece, arabice, latine*, fol. **b.

52 Nováková (ed.), *Clamores Eliae*, 148, 441: “lucta cum Sphinge.”

The Pythagorean Y and Hercules at the crossroads

The weak reception of the *Tablet of Cebes* in the Bohemian Humanist literature leads inevitably to a consideration of what took the place of this text, which was so popular in other European literatures and was used in schools not only for teaching Greek but especially for moral education. What other allegories for the human condition and decision-making in its individual stages were used in the Bohemian lands?

In Renaissance commentaries, the *Tabula* is often associated with comparable ancient themes such as Hercules at the crossroads and the Pythagorean Y. While in the *Tabula* we encounter only one path upon which to stand, down which to walk or from which to wander, related topics work with the motifs of two paths—the good and the bad. On the way to happiness, whoever strays from the good path into a dead end faces a life of unhappiness. We already knew this motif from Hesiod.⁵³ Later, the sophist Prodikos developed the theme in his parable of Heracles at the crossroads, which was preserved in Xenophon.⁵⁴ Here, the hero decides whether to follow Virtue or Pleasure, to which the different paths lead. The symbol of the crossroads and the choice then became the Pythagorean Y, as Persius writes in his third satire,⁵⁵ used further in literature and iconography. The left turn leads to vice and the right to virtue. In the process of Christianizing the ancient myths, the symbol of the Y and Hercules at the crossroads soon received a Christian interpretation as well, through the parable in St. Matthew about the wide gate and the road to damnation and the narrow gate and the steep road to eternal life.⁵⁶ Petrarch's interpretation of the Y corresponds to this idea, with one arm of the letter pointing upwards towards the stars and the other bending towards the earth.⁵⁷ In the emblematic imagery of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Y became the image of free will (*liberum arbitrium*).⁵⁸

Unlike the *Tabula*, both of these allegories can demonstrate a continuous reception from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the early modern period.⁵⁹ Later, even laymen were aware of the similarities and connections between

53 This is discussed in detail in Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*, 40 ff.

54 Yet Petrarch, who did not know Greek, drew this history from a retelling in Cicero's *De officiis* 1,118. See Schmidt, *Herakles als Ideal*, 300 ff.

55 Persius, *Satires*, 3,56–57.

56 Matthew 7,13. See Hirsch, *Ins Bild gesetzt*, 170, 191; Hirsch-Luipold, *Einleitung*, 20.

57 Petrarca, *Familiarum rerum libri* 12,3,6. More Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*, 165.

58 Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, 67. See also Waisser, *Momenty*, 365; Prosperetti, *The Forked Branch*. About the motive in the Rudolfine art see Konečný, *Climbing the rocky path*.

59 There is a large secondary literature on this topic, in particular Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*; Tucker, *Homo viator*; and Waisser, *Momenty*. The context of the Pythagorean Y and *Tabula* is mentioned in Dieter Wuttke's afterword to the edition of Panofsky's *Hercules am Scheidewege*.

the three allegories, as they are found side by side not only in Latin but also in vernacular languages—for example, Hans Sachs translated the *Tablet of Cebe*s and the Pythagorean Y into German in verse in the same year, and later added the dialogue of Hercules at the crossroads with Virtue and Vice, based on Xenophon’s version.⁶⁰ Tobias Stimmer,⁶¹ too, in his rhyming commentary on the fresco decorations of the mid-sixteenth-century castle in Baden-Baden, relates the figure of Hercules at the crossroads to the *Tabula Cebe*tis, to the Pythagorean Y, and to the Gospel motif of the narrow and broad way.⁶² Ancient motifs are not always artificially associated with Christian equivalents in literature; on the contrary, they can be rejected as pagan and replaced by a simple following of Christ, as we see in an example from a late sixteenth-century poem by Konrad Lei:

“Cebe

tis pueri ethnici tabellas,
 Aut anceps bivium Herculis sequantur,
 Aut ramos Samii senis gemellos,
 Illam litterulam, inquo, bicornem,
 Vitae quae doceat viam beatae:
 IESUM Christicolae aemulentur unum.”⁶³

The reception of both themes in the Middle Ages is rich and some evidence can be found in the Bohemian milieu. In his *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville discussed the mystical letter Y as follows: “Pythagoras of Samos was the first to create the letter Y as a model of human life: its lower shank signifies a tender age, since it is indeterminate and not yet inclined to iniquity or virtue; but the bifurcation which is above it begins from adolescence, its right side is difficult but tends to a blessed life, the left is easier but leads to ruin and destruction.”⁶⁴ This very passage is illustrated in the *Mater verborum* manuscript by the letter Y, on one side of which sits a monkey

60 Sachs, *Das erste Buch: Tabula Cebe*tis, fol. 172b–175b (1534), *Der buchstab Pitagore Y, baidereley strasz, der tugent und der untugent*, fol. 175b–176a (1534), *Kampfgespräch Xenophontis des Philosophi mit Frau Tugend und Frau Untugend*, fol. 180b–182 (1556). For a comparison of Maximin’s original and Hans Sachs’ version see Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege*, 66–67.

61 Or perhaps Johann Fischart, the authorship is not clearly established, see Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*, 179.

62 Schleier, *Tabula Cebe*tis, 110 ff.: “Diß Fingment und gmeldts ziert / Ist wie man Hercule finginirt / Glich Inhalts der Taffel Cebe

tis / oder wie von des Pythagori / Griechischen Y wahr bedeuth / nicht minder in der gnaden Zeit / Von unserm herren Christo wirt / der schmal und breithe weg einführt...”.

63 Leius, *Idiotismi sacri*, 69–70. On Leius see Flood, *Poets Laureate*, vol. 3, 1120–21; he was probably laureated about 1581 by Paul Melissus, but later ceased to use the title when he was Dean at Heilsbronn in Franconia.

64 *Etymologiae* 1, 3, 7–8. Czech translation by Daniel Korte, *Isidor Sevilský. Etymologiae I–III*, 52–55.

and on the other a man with a basket of grapes, one of the earliest examples of the Pythagorean letter Y in Bohemian book painting.⁶⁵ In the Middle Ages, the explanation of the Pythagorean Y was part of school education in the Bohemian lands, as evidenced by the poem of the school text in the description of Kříž from Telč.⁶⁶ Not long after Kříž, Bohuslaus of Lobkowicz and Hassenstein mentions the Pythagorean crossroads with his own scepticism in his *Treatise on Human Wretchedness*: “When a person reaches adolescence and arrives at that famous Pythagorean crossroads, he usually indulges in pleasures and indulgences.”⁶⁷

The Y motif was also popular because a Latin poem on the subject had long been traditionally edited under Virgil’s name,⁶⁸ although even in Sebastian Brant’s 1501 edition of Virgil’s *Opera*, the authorship of the poem is doubted. Its real author was Maximinus, but nothing is known of him except his name, and it is difficult to date more precisely than the wide range of the 5th–11th centuries.⁶⁹ Like the *Tablet of Cebes*, it was translated into German verse by Hans Sachs and has a late sixteenth-century Dutch variant by Karl van Mander. It was Maximinus’ poem, attributed to Virgil, that inspired the Bohemian poet Laurentius Špán in the mid-sixteenth century toward his poetic debut *Litera Christiana Y versibus descripta*.⁷⁰ Špán, who published the work in print while studying in Wittenberg, developed the theme of Virgil’s poem and enriched it with a Christian view of the journey of human life. One can either go to heaven, the way of salvation, or to hell, the way of damnation. Those who do not believe in God and the immortality of the soul and deny that God controls the course of the world are destined for hell.

One of the motifs distinguishing Špán’s poem from Maximinus’ is the addition of the character of Fortuna, described as follows:

“Aspicit hos primo vultu fortuna sereno,
ex humili educens ad loca summa statu.
Dum Deus ipse sinit, stolidos qui tollit in altum,
Eveci lapsu quo graviore ruant.”

Fortuna already played a role in Cicero’s paraphrase of the story of Hercules at the crossroads. For Špán, it is an image of the Christian Fortuna, after the model

65 The motif was identified by Jiří Sobek, see Waisser, *Momenty*, 355.

66 Doležalová, *Pythagorejské písmeno Y*.

67 Ryba, ed., *Bohuslaus Hassensteinius baro a Lobkowicz, Scripta moralia*, 2, 18–19: “Progressi in adolescentiam et famosum illud Pythagorae bivium magna ex parte voluptates deliciasque sectantur.” Czech translation by Dana Martínková, *Poselství ducha*, 74.

68 *Anthologia Latina* No. 632.

69 Harms, *Homo viator in bivio*, 160 ff.

70 Špán, *Litera Christiana Y*. More RHB 5, 290.

of Boethius, as depicted in his *De consolatione philosophiae*.⁷¹ Boethius grants man the freedom to choose whether or not to surrender to Fortuna's ephemeral gifts, but at the same time notes that those who are closer to God can make more prudent choices. However, Špán subordinates Fortuna to God, as Dante did long before him—God has commissioned her to dispense wealth, power, beauty, talents, etc. to men in ways they cannot foresee.⁷² It is up to God to decide which fools are raised on the wheel of fortune to fall from a much greater height.

In the illustrations to the *Tablet of Cebes*, Fortuna takes various forms. In the original text she is blind and standing on a sphere; in Erhard Schön's woodcut she has a medieval form with a wheel (*rota Fortunae*) and stands blindfolded on a sphere; in Holbein's bordure she is naked, not blind, and has new attributes – she holds a beautiful cup in one hand and a bridle in the other.⁷³

The image of Hercules at the crossroads was more frequently used in early modern literature than the Pythagorean Y, represented in Bohemia by the unique poem by Špán. Prodicus' story of Hercules was already known to Wittenberg students not only from Cicero but from Philippus Melanchthon's Latin translation of Xenophon.⁷⁴ On the basis of this, the first Latin retellings were soon produced in Wittenberg, two in particular—by Andreas Strophius in iambic senarii and by Heinrich of Starhemberg in elegiac couplets.⁷⁵ With a slight delay, the topic also appeared in Bohemical prints. In 1582, Adam Praetorius, a Silesian from Brzeg and preceptor of nobility, elaborated on the topic of Hercules at the crossroads in the work *Herculis cum voluptate et virtute colloquium*. It was published in Prague and reprinted a year later in Wrocław.⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, in both cases Praetorius dedicates it to his noble pupils, in the first case the young lords of Czerná, in the second of Ostrorog, as a text from which they should draw lessons concerning their way of life.

The well-known treatments of the topic by Bohemian authors are also related to education. As early as 1586 the story of Hercules at the crossroads, based on Xenophon, was published as part of Petr Codicillus' *Ordo studiorum* [School Rules], and graduates of Latin schools would have been familiar with the theme.⁷⁷ Thus, three years after Praetorius, a congratulatory collection for the graduation

71 Meyer-Landrut, *Fortuna*, 30–36. On Fortuna also Waisser, *Momenty*, 360–63.

72 Meyer-Landrut, *Fortuna*, 80.

73 Meyer-Landrut, *Fortuna*, 157, 159.

74 Storchová, *Řád přírody*, 215.

75 Strophius, *Hercules Xenophontis* (on the title page the poem *De littera Y* is printed, attributed to Virgil); H. a Starhemberg, *Hercules Prodicus*.

76 Praetorius, *Herculis cum voluptate et virtute colloquium*. I would like to thank Jan Pišna and Tereza Paličková for their help in obtaining copies of this and other prints.

77 *Ordo studiorum*, 108–11: *Narratio de Hercule ex II. libro Xenophontis de Socratis sermonibus*.

of students of Prague Utraquist University contained the verses of Martin Kochan from Strakonice, who took inspiration from Hercules at the Crossroads and depicts the celebrated graduates as having chosen the path of virtue which leads to Apollo's grove, who hands them laurels. Here too Fortuna appears, this time as the impermanent guide of Virtue.⁷⁸ The graduates will, with God's help, work for the benefit of their country and spread the glory of Prague University. A separate poetic work was published in 1597 by Řehoř Zhorský of Kladruby with the support of Jan Campanus Vodňanský.⁷⁹ Zhorský puts on one side Pleasure, which brings man to ruin with the help of the goddess Venus or personified vices such as Drunkenness; and on the other side stands Virtue accompanied by the learned Pallas Athena. She is joined by Apollo, who, as in Kochan's poem, crowns those who have endured the steep and terrible upward journey and promises them eternal glory.

The quadrilingual Greek–Latin–German–Czech edition of Prodicus' Xenophon story by Nicolaus Rittershausen was also an element of school literature.⁸⁰ He prepared it during his studies in Sušice in southern Bohemia at the suggestion of his teacher, Adam Rosacius the Elder, and dedicated it to his son, also Adam. It is not certain whether Rittershausen was the author of the Czech version, but he clearly did not use the earlier translation by Trojan of Bylany, discussed below.

Much has already been written about the figure of Hercules in the culture of nobility as an ideal of Stoic virtue, especially that of the virtuous ruler.⁸¹ Evidence of this tradition in literature can be found in the 1597 Czech translation of the story of Prodicus by Samuel Trojan of Bylany in a treatise written in memory of the deceased nobleman Jaroslav I of Smiřice, entitled *Vypsání o Ctnosti a Rozkoši rozmlouvajících s Herkulesem z Kněh Xenofonta o řečech Sokratesových* [The Account of Virtue and Pleasure conversing with Hercules from the Books of Xenophon on the Discourses of Socrates].⁸² The author dedicated the writing to the son of the deceased Sigismund, and in the second part of the preface, he speaks of the need to form a young man early, because what he becomes accustomed to in his youth, whether good or bad, he will hold on to later. According to Trojan's words, it was the desire to guide young Sigismund and provide him with a model to follow that led to the printing of songs of praise for his father and probably to the inclusion of the story of Hercules, although this is not explicitly mentioned in the preface.

78 *In honorem liberalis doctrinae* (see also RHB 1, 308).

79 Zhorsky, *Hercules Prodicus*, fol. A3a: "In honorem: Vivida tum ductrix VIRTUS, huic juncta decenter / Lubrica fallaci quae stat in orbe DEA."

80 Rittershausen, *Hercules Prodicus quadrilinguis*, see RHB 4, 349.

81 See Schmidt, *Herakles als Ideal*, 303 ff., here also older literature.

82 Trojan z Bylan, *Testament*, B5b–B8b.

Hercules at the crossroads also became the subject of Jesuit theatre plays in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; in 1593, for example, *Hercules in bivio*⁸³ was staged at the Jesuit college in Olomouc, and the tradition was long maintained there, as evidenced by the 1734 Latin–German theatre synopsis, *Cursus vitae humanae bivio Herculis comparatus*.⁸⁴ The theme of Hercules' choice was also popular in the visual arts, appearing in prints, paintings, medals and in the decoration of the interiors and facades of Renaissance houses and palaces, but here we focus on its appearance in literature, a focus which will certainly be expanded and supplemented in the future.

Comenius, who reflected upon the motif of the *Tabula Cebetis* only briefly, commonly worked with the related motifs of Pythagoras' Y and Hercules at the crossroads. In his rich oeuvre, he considers them in the traditional way, as the illustration to section CIX. *Učení o mravoch* [The Doctrine of Manners] in his scholarly encyclopaedia *Orbis sensualium pictus* shows (Figure 4). The following explanation is appended to it:

“This life is a path, or fork, like the Pythagorean letter Y, whose left path is broad, the right path narrow, that of wickedness, this of virtue. Observe, young man, follow Hercules. Forget the left side, shun wickedness; beautiful is the approach, but abominable and sudden the departure. Enter on the right hand, though it be thorny: no way is inaccessible to virtue. Follow where virtue leads thee, through difficulties to honours into the castle of Honour.”

Conclusion

The reception of the *Tabula Cebetis* as an allegory of man's journey through life is very rich and varied in early modern Europe, both in literature and in the visual arts. In the Bohemian lands, however, it is not documented to any great extent in literary works or in the libraries of non-Catholic intellectuals and institutions. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Greek text of the *Tabula* was a textbook in Jesuit schools, but its echoes in the literature of the Bohemian lands had not yet been heard.

In general, it is possible to argue whether the popularity or unpopularity of the *Tabula* is due to religious denomination. Perhaps it is possible to draw the cautious conclusion that the philosophy of the *Tabula* did not quite meet the needs of non-Catholic theologians, whereas in a Catholic environment it was a seamless part of the school education. However, a look at the confessions of the early modern editors and commentators of the *Tabula*, mostly outstanding scholars, reveals that

83 Waisser, *Momenty*, 357.

84 BCBT 11749.

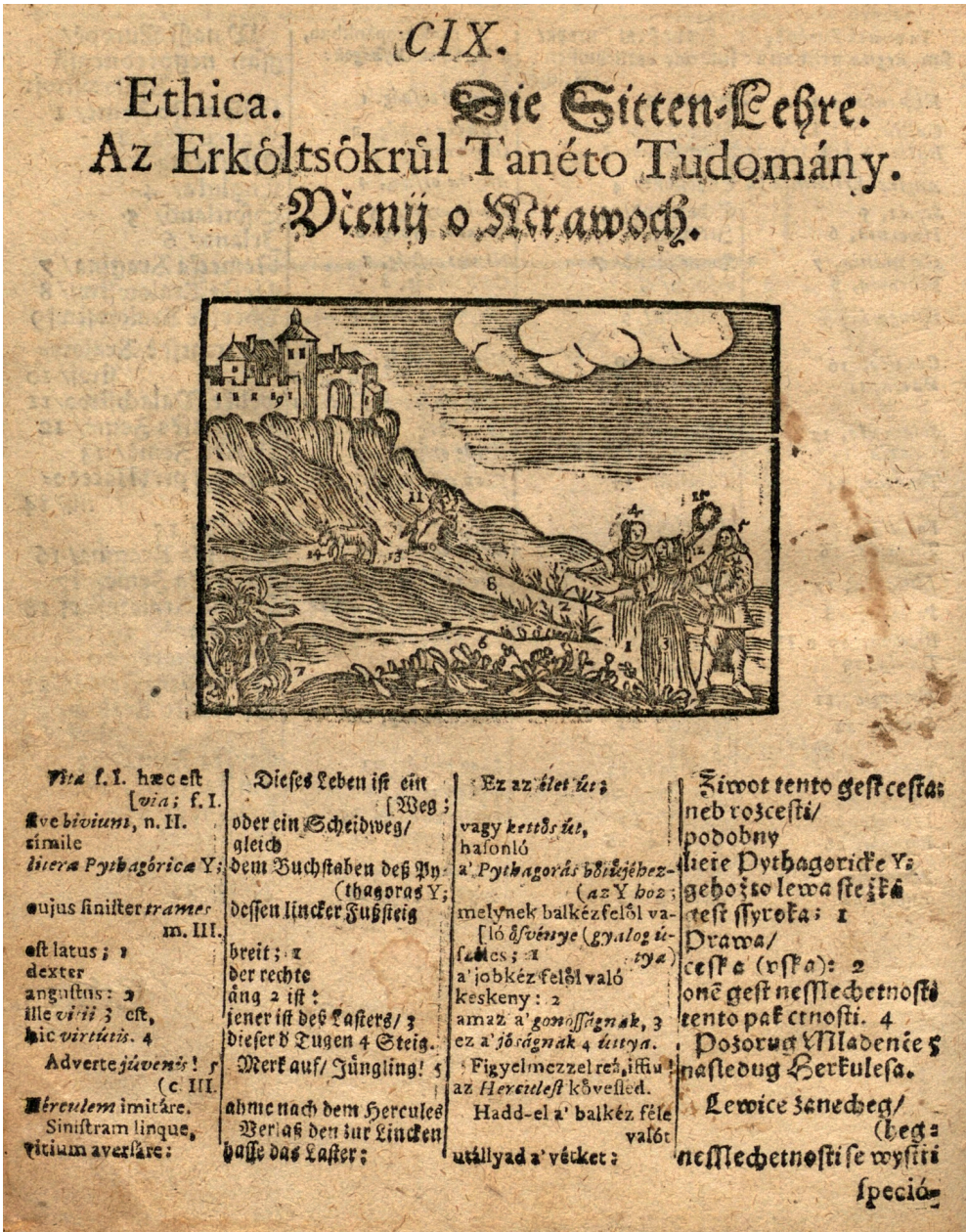


Figure 4 Johannes Amos Comenius. *Orbis sensualium pictus*. Leutschoviae: typis Samuelis Brewer, 1685, p. 224. National Library of the Czech Republic, 45 G 76.

they belonged to a variety of denominations, with the Catholic denomination being rather less represented.

The term *Tabula Cebetis*, however, was mistakenly used in Bohemian prints from the mid-sixteenth to eighteenth centuries for a multiplication table. This tradition is also attested in the pedagogical work of Jan Amos Comenius who, however, in his later work also discussed the original Greek writings of Pseudo-Cebes. He was evidently familiar with it from the groundbreaking Leiden edition by Johannes Elichmann, who also published an Arabic version for the first time.

In the Bohemical material we encounter much more frequently two other allegories of the journey of life that were already in use in the literature of medieval Bohemia and their popularity did not diminish in the early modern period. The Pythagorean Y and Hercules at the crossroads run through the work of the late medieval scribe Kříž from Telč and the Humanist Bohuslaus of Lobkowitz and Hassenstein. They occupy an important role in pedagogical writings, addressed to young noblemen, in Latin and the vernacular. They are also encountered in occasional texts associated with the University of Prague, equipped with a rich mythological apparatus. Here the graduates are referred to as those who chose the right path at the crossroads. Both allegories were also popular in Jesuit education, as evidenced, for example, by individual references to theatrical plays.

This paper was, as mentioned at the beginning, inspired by the copper engraving by J. C. Visscher, which survives in a number of graphic collections. Many illustrations of that kind are thought to have originally been part of a book, but over the centuries, due to increasing collector interest, they were removed and kept separately. Perhaps, then, it may be concluded that Visscher's illustration of the *Tabula* was originally part of a collection of moralistic works published by Claude Saumaise, as I have demonstrated above.

Appendix: Transcription of the main text from the engraving

The number of editorial interventions in the text has been minimised. I have preserved the original lowercase and uppercase letters. The abbreviations have been written out in square brackets. The original way of writing 'ij' is simplified to 'ii' (*vitijis–vitiis*), accent signs are omitted, and the original punctuation is replaced by the modern one according to the common editorial rules. Typographical errors such as missing spaces or extra spaces (*namet–nam et, ille cebris–illecebris*) are removed *tacite*. The footnotes include variant readings of the text, and as such, have a function of a critical apparatus. Numbers referring to particular scenes or characters in the engraving and its commentary are given in round brackets to distinguish them from

references. In the original engraving, these numbers are given on the front margin of the lines. For more clarity, I insert them directly into the text of the corresponding passage.

ΚΕΒΗΤΟΣ ΘΗΒΑΙΟΥ ΠΙΝΑΞ

CEBETIS THEBANI TABULA DE VITA HUMANA RECTE INSTITUENDA

In usum studiosae iuventutis Tabulam Cebetis in minorem hanc formam redegit et excudit N. I. Vißcher Anno 1640.

Acutissimus ille Philosophus Cebes pulcherrimam effinxit Tabulam totius vitae humanae descriptionem continentem. In haec enim ingentem malorum et periculorum ab oculos ponit Iliadem, jam inde a parvulo omni ex parte nos oppugnantem ad Beatitudinem et salutem perennem aspiraturos. Et primo quidem in Picturae limine Genium cum charta (1) adumbrat Pueris vitam hanc ingredientibus utilissimi sui Consilii fontes de virtutibus amplexandis, de[ue] vitiis detestandis aperientem. In vitae autem introitu (2) ex Erroris et Ignorantiae poculo bibunt (3), quo poto Consilii boni a Genio dati obliti. Cupiditatum illecebris pro Opinionum suarum diversitate sese dedunt. (4) Major pars ad caecum⁸⁵ et instabilem vagatur Fortunam, a qua munera et bona petit. Qui laetari et ridere videntur, (5) a Fortuna aliquid acceperunt iidem[ue] Fortunati vocantur. Qui vero plorantium specie manus extendunt, (6) Infortunati in Fortunam invehuntur, quod ea, quae ante dederat, eripuerit aliquid[ue] nulla habita ratione sit largita. Praeterea turba quaedam mulierum meretricum intra portam apparet, (7) utpote Luxuria, Gula, Avaritia, Adulatio etc., hae eos observant, qui a Fortuna redeuntes aliquid acceperunt, quos amplectuntur ac vitam eis pollicentur suavem, otiosam et omnis molestiae expertem. Fortunae vero bonis consumptis faeminarum istarum fiunt mancipia et indecore se gerendo decipiunt, (8) fana spoliant, latrocinantur, stupra committunt, caedes patrant. Sed cum haec et his consimilia nefanda Perperarunt,⁸⁶ Poenae vel Nemesis, (9) flagello subiecti in summo moerore et dolore, in aerumna et desperatione, in dedecore et turpitudine vitam agunt, (10) vel in domum coniecti Infelicitatis, quod reliquum est aevi, in Omni miseria exigunt, nisi Poenitentia (11) obviam facta ex his cruciatibus eos eripuerit et viam (12) ad Disciplinam (13) et artes liberales (14) monstravit. Ea autem nondum vera est eruditio et sinceræ Beatitudinis locus. Nam et hic multae adhuc eae[ue] variae sunt Opiniones, (15) variae et impurae inter easdem mulieres. Ergo Opinionibus illis valedicere iussis ad locum istum editum, (16) januam parvam et viam asperam atq[ue] praeruptam, quae ad Beatitudinem vel sinceram Eruditionem in excelso ducit, progredi viatores oportet. Hic geminae Sorores (17) in rupe stantes,

85 recte: caecam

86 recte: perpetrarunt

Continentia puta et Tolerantia, manus ad Ascendentes alacriter extendunt unaq[ue] cum Fiducia Fortitudine, Consolatione (18) et Animositate amoenam et expeditam ostendunt viam ad sinceram Eruditionem, (19) quae juxta portam virtutis cum veritate et Suadela domicilium suum habet et haspitibus⁸⁷ ad virtutem properantibus vim purgatricem propinat, quoniam nihil foedum et vitiis inquinatum⁸⁸ hunc locum contingere debet. (20) Postquam vero homo ista mala, in primo septo quae ingurgitarat, expurgavit et eiecit, ad Cognitionem et caeteras virtutes eum adducit, quae cum gaudio et amplexu susceptum ad Matrem suam Beatitudinem deducunt. Haec ei maximis certaminibus jam defuncto coronam imponit gloriae, de quae reliquae virtutes ipse⁸⁹ ex animo gartulantur.⁹⁰ Cum gaudio igitur (21) jam revertitur et vitam suam male ante actam contemplatur. (22) Qui autem coronis carent, ille⁹¹ virtutis tramitem ante neglexerunt, jam vero tristes et desperabundi redeuntes a mulieribus deformibus misere cruciuritur⁹² atq[ue] exagitantur.

Sources

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87 recte: hospitibus

88 recte: inquinatum

89 recte: ipsi

90 recte: gratulantur

91 recte: illi

92 recte: cruciantur

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- BCBT: *Bibliografie cizojazyčných bohemikálních tisků* [Bibliography of Foreign-Language Printed Bohemica up to 1800]: <https://bcbt.lib.cas.cz/#/>
- GW: *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*: <https://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/>
- ISTC: *Inculabula Short Title Catalogue*: https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search
- K: *Database Knihopis*: <http://www.knihopis.cz/knihopis-eng.html>
- VD 16: *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts*: <https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/sammlungen/historische-drucke/recherche/vd-16/>
- VD 17: *Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts*: <http://www.vd17.de/>
- WorldCat: <https://search.worldcat.org/cs>
- Book booty: *The Swedish Booty of Books from Bohemia and Moravia 1646-1648*. Bibliographic and Informational Portal: <https://knizni-korist.cz/en/>
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