



Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's translation of Dialogues of love by Leone Ebreo. The language of Philosophy in the Renaissance

Muriel Valcarcel Debouvry

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Muriel Valcarcel Debouvry (Paris)

Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's translation of *Dialogues of love* by Leone Ebreo. The language of Philosophy in the Renaissance

Abstract: This article focuses on the importance of the notion of divine knowledge in Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues of Love*, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's translation of the same work, and Garcilaso's *The Royal Commentaries*. The Neoplatonist theory of divine knowledge, rooted in Pauline, Aristotelian and Platonic thought, held that God had imparted his sacred secrets to mankind in textual form, but only a select few would be able to understand it fully. Elements of divine knowledge were also progressively lost, it was believed, as the knowledge was passed from person to person. This shouldered translators with the great responsibility of representing divine knowledge faithfully: they thus placed high importance on close translation, but also felt it right to bend the translated text closer to their particular conception of divine truth. We will also see indications that Neoplatonist ideas of knowledge were the foundation of a political theology.*

The lives of Yehuda Abarbanel,¹ better known as Leone Ebreo (b. circa 1460 – d. circa 1520), and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) seem to have been guided by the same inauspicious star, with foreign exile a gloomy commonality (Bernard 2006, 23–58; Gebhardt 1934a, 233–273, 1934b, 113–161; Novoa 2009).

Leone Ebreo was Portuguese-Jewish and spent most of his life exiled in Italy. Today, we still debate the language in which he originally wrote his *Dialogues of love* (*Dialoghi d'amore*, most likely composed in Genoa between 1501 and 1502, judging from the first edition of 1535).² Modern scholars tend to agree that Leone

* I thank the Institute of Romance languages and literatures of the Free University of Berlin for its generous support of my research.

1 The first and only translator that uses the name of "Abarbanel" was Guedelha Ibn Yahia in 1568: *Los diálogos de amor de Mestre Leon Abarbanel médico y filósofo excelente*. Today, scholars accept that there are only two probable spellings of this name: Abrab[v]anel and Abarbanel. See Hebreo 1989, 27.

2 The edition of Antonio Blado D'Asola was probably based on the Barberiniano Latino 3743 manuscript of the Vatican Library, or the Harley 5423 manuscript of the British Library of London, which scholars have determined based on the evidence of their stylistic similarities. Specifically, these manuscripts use a literary prose that follows the guidelines of Pietro Bembo in *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525) for the new standard for Italian language. Moreover, we find the date 1502 in the *editio princeps* and in the Barberiniano manuscript. Instead, the study of

Ebreo wrote his *Dialogues* in a variety of Tuscan mixed with Spanish (Garvin 2001, 233–273). However, his *Lament on Destiny*, an elegy on the loss of his two children, written between 1503 and 1504, was written in Hebrew.

One of riddles of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's career is why he choose to translate Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues*. José Duran (1950, 153–168) posits that in translating the *Dialogues* from Tuscan into Spanish, Garcilaso may have hoped to improve his literary Spanish. Garcilaso himself said that he had carried out this translation out of “military temerity” (“temeridad soldadesca”, Vega 1617). However, Carmen Bernand's (2006, 187) argument is more convincing. She suggests that Garcilaso de la Vega “had found in Leone Ebreo his own mirror”, noticing three similarities in their lives: exclusion, exile and the preservation of knowledge in accordance with Neoplatonic philosophy. For both Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Leone Ebreo, philosophical notions and biblical stories allowed them to restore, symbolically at least, the power of their people, despite the destruction of holy temples and the disappearance of living witnesses.

Some scholars assert that there are traces of Quechua left in Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's Spanish-language *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (*The Royal commentaries of the Incas*, 1609) particularly evident in the sentence syntax (Mazotti 2009; Cornejo Polar 2003). Garcilaso would have been pleased with this analysis, since he presents his knowledge of the Quechua language as an advantage over the Spanish chronicles,³ particularly over those of Francisco López de Gómara, whose text relates the story of the conqueror Hernán Cortés. For Garcilaso, the son of a Spanish conqueror and an Inca princess, translating ideas and stories from his mother language, Quechua, into the conqueror's language, Spanish, was above all a task of interpreting and transmitting both the history of Inca people and his own cultural memory.

In this article, we shall demonstrate the use of certain Platonist and Neoplatonist notions in Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues*, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's translation of the same work, and in Garcilaso's *The Royal Commentaries*. Our purpose is to demonstrate that Neoplatonic ideas of love and knowledge were the foundation of a political theology. As the King was considered the divine image of God on

manuscript Paretta 373 of the Vatican Library, the manuscript Western 22 of the Manuscripts and Rare Books Butler Library of Columbia University in New York and the manuscript of the communal Library of Ascoli Piceno revealed the use of Iberian and Mediterranean voices of Leone Ebreo's own community at that time. However, the manuscript Paretta was made certainly between 1511 and 1513, and the examination of other two seems valid this date too. So, according to this reading, Leon the Hebrew would have written his dialogues between 1511 and 1512. See the details in Novoa 2009.

3 On Inca Garcilaso's review of Spanish chronicles, see Vega 2015, 9–10, 75–76.

earth during the Renaissance, the love treatises were more a *tractatus theologico-politicus* than a *consolatio* for unrequited love.

1 Access to knowledge in the European Renaissance

In the sixteenth century, European philosophers and scholars believed that not everyone would be able to understand high knowledge, and this idea has its roots in ancient times. In The New Testament, in I Corinthians, 8:7, concerning the illusory nature of idols, Paul said to the Corinthians: “But there is not knowledge in everyone” (*Sed non in omnibus est Scientia, Vulgate, The New Testament* 2013, 892–893). Paul is referring here to knowledge of God. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite alludes to this passage in *Celestial Hierarchy*, when discussing initiation to the divine doctrine:

Though it may be correct to attribute shape to that which is above shape, and forms to that which is beyond form, this cannot be sufficiently proven by invoking that imbalance in our forces which prevents them from rising directly to spiritual contemplation [...]; it is also because it is most fitting for the secret doctrines to *hide under unsolvable and sacred enigmas – thereby rendering inaccessible to the masses – the sublime and secret truth of heavenly beings*. For, as the Scriptures declares, not everyone is holy, nor have all men knowledge.⁴ (emphasis mine)

By this logic, only theologues are capable of knowing God, even though God is unknown. This passage recalls us to another, I Corinthians 13:12: “We see now through a glass, in a dark manner, but then will know face to face.” (*Videmus nunc per speculum in enigmatē, tunc autem facie ad faciem. The New Testament* 2013, 916–917). This Bible verse implies that divine knowledge can be acquired through both a providential historical approach and a mystical initiation. In his

4 Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite 1958, II, 2–3 (140 A–B), 76–77: “Qu'on ait eu raison d'attribuer des figures à ce qui est sans figure et des formes à ce qui n'a pas de forme, il ne suffirait pas, pour le montrer, d'invoquer cette disproportion de nos forces qui leur interdit de se hausser directement jusqu'aux contemplations intellectuelles et requiert de nous des élévations appropriées et qui aient de l'affinité avec notre nature, capables par conséquent de nous procurer les figurations qui nous sont accessibles des spectacles sans figure et merveilleux, mais il faudrait dire aussi qu'il convient parfaitement aux dits mystérieux de cacher sous des énigmes irrévélables et sacrées, et de rendre inaccessible à la foule, la sainte et secrète vérité qui concerne les esprits supramondains. Car tous les hommes ne sont pas saints, et, comme l'enseignent les Dits, tous n'ont pas la science.”

long article *Figure*, Erich Auerbach (2017 [1938]) analyzes the figural structure of western history based on Pauline typology. In the Holy Bible, the historical events of The Ancient Testament were the figures (*τύποι*) that anticipated the New Testament's historical events. Namely, Isaac's sacrifice was the prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

In Paul's discussion with the Athenians in the Areopagus, in Acts of the Apostles, 17, he teaches the monotheistic doctrine. As is well known, many idols representing various Gods were associated with significant sacrificial sites or linked to some public benefit. But one idol remained unknown. Paul argues that the Athenians did not know the name or holy places of "unknown god" because this was *God*. For Paul, this "unknown god" was the *one God* under the guise of an idol. "We know", Paul says in I Corinthians 8:4, "that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no God but one" (*scimus quia nihil est idolum in mundo et quod nullus est Deus nisi unus*. *The New Testament* 2013, 892–893). But the Athenians still did not know God. They were still looking through a glass, darkly, and worshipping idols, because of lack of knowledge of the holy doctrine. But it is asserted that they eventually will see God face to face, when he decides to give them the grace *according to their faith*.

Paul the Apostle and Pseudo-Dionysius were discussing the knowledge of holy matters: they spoke as theologians. For Pseudo-Dionysius, the figural mode was God's way of making himself known to men and depended on their capacity of understanding. This was not only an intellectual notion but also a moral one, as clarified in Romans 12:3. Here Paul explains the notion's moral aspect, showing it is based on the premise that it is thanks to the divine grace God grants us that we may know him:

For I say through the grace (*per gratiam*) that is given me to all that are among you not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety (*non plus sapere, quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem*), and according (*sicut*) as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith (*mensuram fidei*). (*The New Testament* 2013, 842–843, emphasis mine)

In the *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, Boccaccio quotes *Celestial Hierarchy*: God gave an anagogical shape to the Holy Scriptures.⁵ Boccaccio certainly read Scot Erigene's translation of *De coelesti Hierarchia*, through which Pseudo-Dionysius's mystical thought reached Medieval and Renaissance scholars. In fact, Pseudo-Dionysius asserts:

⁵ Boccaccio 2001, 72. In the Middle Ages, scholars thought that Pseudo Dionysius had been effectively Paul's disciple in the Areopagus. Even Ficino was convinced of this.

[...] that first institution of the sacred rites, judging it worthy of a heavenly copy of the Celestial Hierarchies, gave us our most holy hierarchy, and described those spiritual hierarchies in various material terms and in compositions that might give them form, *so that we, each according to his capacity, might be elevated* by the most holy imagery to formless, unific, elevative principles and assimilations. For the mind can by no means be directed to the spiritual presentation and contemplation of the Celestial Hierarchies unless it uses the material guidance suited to it.⁶ (emphasis mine)

Continuing on the use of the figural expressions in the Holy Scriptures, Dionysius elaborates:

[...] all those who are wise in divine matters, and are interpreters of the mystical revelations, set apart in purity the Holy of Holies from the uninitiated and unpurified, and prefer incongruous symbols for holy things, *so that divine things may not be easily accessible to the unworthy*, nor may those who earnestly contemplate the divine symbols dwell upon the forms themselves as the final truth.⁷ (emphasis mine)

We may observe in the Neoplatonic texts, such as that of Pseudo-Dionysius, the use of Bible verses to reinforce this precept. Pseudo-Dionysius quotes Matthew 7:6: “Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls (*margaritas*) before swine” (*The New Testament* 2013, 31). The Areopagite advises his disciple Timothy:

[...] treasure the holy Mysteries deep in your soul, preserve them in their unity from the unpurified multitude: for, as the Scriptures declare, it is not fitting to cast before swine that pure and beautifying and clear-shining glory of the intelligible pearls.⁸ (emphasis mine)

6 Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite 1958, I, 3 (121 C–D), 72: “[...] le Principe initiateur qui institua les rites sacrés – l’ayant jugée digne d’imiter de façon supramondaine les hiérarchies célestes et ayant présenté les dites hiérarchies immatérielles sous une bigarrure de figures matérielles et de compositions aptes à leur donner forme – nous a livré cette tradition afin que, dans la mesure où nous leur sommes proportionnés, nous soyons, à partir de ces très saintes fictions, élevés aux élévations et assimilations simples et sans figure car notre esprit ne saurait se hausser à cette imitation et contemplation immatérielle des hiérarchies célestes à moins d’y être conduit par des images matérielles convenant à sa nature”.

7 Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite 1958, II, 5 (145 A–B), 84–85: “[...] tous les connaisseurs de la Sagesse divine et tous les interprètes de la secrète inspiration, pour que ne soit point souillé le ‘Saint des saints’, le séparent des êtres profanes et dépourvus de tout caractère sacré, et ils veillent à le représenter par de saintes figures sans ressemblance, de peur que les mystères divins ne soient facilement accessibles aux non initiés”.

8 Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite 1958, II, 5 (145C), 86–87: “[...] ayant caché les saints mystères dans le secret de ton esprit, à l’abri de la foule profane, veille sur eux, car ils portent l’empreinte de l’Un; il est sacrilège, en effet, selon la formule des Dits, de jeter aux pourceaux l’harmonie sans mélange, lumineuse et génératrice de beauté, qui appartient aux perles intelligibles.”

In his article "Myth", Carlo Ginzburg (³1998) reminds us of Saint Augustine's insistence on the distinction between he dubs a "false" fiction and a fiction that is *aliqua figura veritatis*. Is God a liar like the city poet Plato banished from the ideal State? Certainly not. Ginzburg argues that God, "in addressing men, adapted himself to the limits of their capacity for understanding".⁹ Divine theology uses poetic fictions because God must do so in order to accommodate for man's immaturity (*ibid.*, 49).

Another Bible passage points to the biblical roots of European Renaissance theories on the access to knowledge. Ginzburg observed that, for several centuries, the interpretation of one biblical passage, *Non sapere aude, sed time*, Romans 11:20, had heavily influenced much of the political, scientific and theological sphere of knowledge. While these words carried a moral weight in the Bible – "be not high-minded, but fear" – and were addressed to the rich rather than those curious about the higher truths, they were received in a more intellectual manner in the sixteenth century.¹⁰ This is particularly evident in the multiple interpretations of the Bible produced at the time of Luther's Reformation which concluded that if God had spoken to men through poetic fiction, only theologians were able to grasp the correct interpretation. It was therefore necessary to guide men in the knowledge of God(s). This is also the task of philosophers in Plato's ideal State.

The idea that knowledge can be received proportionally to a man's capacity for understanding is one of the main biblical notions to which Marsilio Ficino and Leone Ebreo were attached. And it is in Plato that we find the crucial question: who is capable of correctly understanding the meaning of allegories? Are children and their nursemaids able to understand the divine fable? Or are philosophers the only men that can? In this discussion, Ficino in *Commentarium in Convivium de amore* follows Plato closely. Conversely, Boccaccio and Leone Ebreo propose a slight political correction. For them, the poets and God transmit the sacred ancient histories through figural and stylistic writings. Their interpretation depends on people's understanding. However, the mob preserve the ancient science better than philosophers, despite the fact that they cannot grasp the allegorical sense.

⁹ See Ginzburg ³1998, 49: "nel rigolversi agli uomini, si è adeguato alla loro limitata comprensione".

¹⁰ Ginzburg 1986, 107–132. This is a matter Ginzburg investigated in many of his works: who was able to access high knowledge, and how did this issue concern both political and theological ideas about the world? See also Ginzburg 1976.

2 Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Leone Ebreo as Plato's interpreters in the European Renaissance

It is worth revisiting Leone Ebreo and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's interpretations of Plato's political use of poetic fiction in his *Republic*, particularly as both author's use of sacred stories for the transmission and preservation of their respective people's cultural memories was of great importance.

In *Dialogues of love*, Leone Ebreo follows platonic thought on divine knowledge as found in the *Republic* II/377b–378b. In chapter II, which treats the universality of love, Sophia asks Philo why the ancients did not declare their teaching more openly. Philo answered that they

considered it was hateful to nature and to Godhead to reveal their exalted secrets to every man, and in this they were certainly right, because to declare too much of the truth and profound science is to introduce it to those who are not competent to receive it, in whose mind it becomes spoilt and adulterated, like good wine in an ugly container.¹¹ (emphasis mine)

In this chapter Leone Ebreo is referring to Plato's argument about Homer and Hesiod's poetry. For Plato, the poets' fables about the passionate affairs of the gods are dangerous for the peace of State. The fable which tells of the son who punishes his own father, as with the fable which tells of a war between giants and heroes, might lead to a rebellion. We must not allow men to learn to hate each other. The common good must rise above all men's passions. But, he added, even if these fables were true

I think they should not thus lightly be told to thoughtless youth; they are best passed over in silence. But if they must be told, the fewest possible should hear, as in a mystery, after sacrificing not a pig but some rare and unaffordable victim, so that the least number possible may hear. (Plato 2006, II, [378a], 62)

Moreover, Plato points out that children cannot understand the allegorical meaning of fables:

¹¹ Pescatori 2016, 108. See Ebreo 1535, II, 27fv: “[...] stimavano essere odiosa alla natura, et alla divinità manifestare li suoi eccellenti segreti ad ogni huomo, et in questo hanno certamente havuto ragione, perche dichiarare troppo la vera et profonda scientia è commutare gli inhabili di quella, nella cui mente ella si guasta, et adultera, comme fa il buon’ vino in tristo vaso.”

a child cannot distinguish the allegorical sense from the literal, and the ideas he takes in at that age are likely fixed; hence the great importance of seeing that the first stories he hears shall be designed to produce the best possible effect on his character. (Plato 2006, II, [378e], 63)

However, there is a crucial difference between Leone Ebreo's thought and Plato's. Leone Ebreo writes on the transmission of sacred philosophy. For him, Plato and Aristotle were the first men to break the law preservation of the secret doctrine. Instead, the ancient poets preserved it more carefully, because they concealed many hermeneutical meanings in their fictional writings, discernable to varying degrees according to men's clarity of mind. Leone Ebreo compares the ancients' poetic fictions to a communal food: the ancients could, using the same food

[...] feed different guests with different flavours, since *baser minds* can only take from the poem the story with the embellishment of verse and melody; other, *higher minds*, beyond that, feed on the moral sense; and others still, *the highest*, beyond his, can feed on the allegorical food, not only natural philosophy, but also astrology and theology.¹² (emphasis mine)

Thus, the secret doctrine was preserved by means of allegories whose meanings "only minds fit for divine and intellectual matters might penetrate"¹³: the knowledge of natural, celestial, astrological or theological things are "like the kernels of the fruit beneath its rind"¹⁴. Some men only understand the history of past men's deeds, other minds grasp the moral sense, and wise men can understand the allegorical sense. Ebreo adds, however, that although mankind may deviate from doctrine, knowledge can be "preserved in the mouths of the common people, men, women, and children."¹⁵

By this reasoning, Plato and Aristotle broke the divine precept by unlocking knowledge. Firstly, Plato removed the verse, but he at least helped forge the poet's style by offering them models to create fables, such that the impression

¹² Abravanel 2009, 108. See Ebreo 1535, II, 28fv: "[...] potessero dar' mangiare a diversi convitati cose diversi sapori, perchè le menti basse possono solamente pigliare dagli Poemi l'istoria con l'ornamento del verso, et la sua melodia. L'altre più elevate, mangiano oltr'a questo del senso morale, e altre poi più alte posson mangiare oltr'a questo del cibo allegorico, non sol' di Filosofia naturale, come ancora d'astrologia, et di Theologia."

¹³ Abravanel 2009, 108. See Ebreo 1535, II, 28fr: "acciò che non potesse intrarvi dentro se non ingegnio atto a le cose divine et intellettuali, et mente conservatiua de le vere scientie, et non corruttiva di quelle."

¹⁴ Abravanel 2009, 106. See Ebreo 1535, II, 26fv: "come le medolle del frutto dentro le sue scorze."

¹⁵ Abravanel 2009, 109. See Ebreo 1535, II, 29fr: "et si conservano sempre en bocha del vulgo, d'huomini, di donne, et di fanciulli."

made in men's souls be none other the image of divine truth. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates proposes the metaphor of the trace (τύπος) made in wax to explain the process of memory (Platon 1967, 191d–192c). We have in our souls the mark of past events or knowledge. For this reason, these philosophers hold that fables should tell stories that encourage men to develop the virtues of the ideal city: the task of poets and nursemaids must be to model (πλάττειν; Platon 1967, 377c)¹⁶ the wax soul of men so as to preserve the good order of the Republic, for the sake of the common good.

Conversely, citizens, or at least not all citizens, must not attain secret political and scientific knowledge which belongs to their rulers. It is a task of the founders of the ideal city to choose which of its children might become guardians of it. And that is why it is necessary to keep an eye on the nursemaid who tells stories to children. The poets and nurses must mold the people's memories by telling stories according the philosophic rulers' laws.

Secondly, Aristotle removed the verse and the fables and used a didactic method. For Leone Ebreo, the didactic method was the mode of expression that introduced corruption into the secrete doctrine. Plato had acquired divine knowledge in Egypt and directly from the Holy Scriptures, but for Leone Ebreo, the ensuing Platonic and Aristotelian schools of thought produced adulterated versions of the sacred wisdom, just as the Androgyne fable had been an adulteration of history of the Tower Babel. Leone Ebreo, introduced to the mosaic interpretation like his father, considered that:

The universal corruption of doctrines among all men follows such adulteration, and each of them becomes more corrupted as it is passed from incompetent mind to incompetent mind. This malformation derives from too much open promulgation of scientific truths, and in our time this has become – speaking in the broad terms of the moderns – so contagious that we can no longer find intellectual wine that is not already spoilt. But in the ancient times the secrets of intellectual knowledge were included within this rind of able with the greatest artifice, so that only minds fit for divine and intellectual matters might penetrate them, minds capable of preserving, and not corrupting, the true sciences.¹⁷

16 On the analysis of the term πλάττειν in Plato's *Republic* in this sense, see Scavino 2016.

17 Abravanel 2009, 108. See Ebreo 1535, II, 27fv–28r: “[...] del quale adulterio seguita universal' corrutione dele dottrine apresso tutti gli huomini, et ogn'ora si corrompe più, andando d'ingegno inhabile in ingegno inhabile la quali infermità deriva da troppo manifestare le cose scientifiche, et al tempo nostro è fatto per il largo parlare de moderni tanto contagiosa, che appena si truova vino intellettuale, che si possa bere, et che non sia guasto, ma nel tempo antico includevano i secreti de la cognition intelletuale dentro le scorze fabulose, con grandissimo artificio, acciò che non potesse intrarvi dentro se non ingegno atto ale cose divine et intellettuali, et mente conservativa de le vere scientie, et non corruttiva di quelle.”

Although Ebreo recognizes the greatness of Aristotle's genius, he claims that "his intellectual power could not rise as high as that of Plato; unlike other thinkers, he did not wish to believe the master in the things that he was unable to prove by the powers of his own genius."¹⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius had already remarked in *Divine names* that there were two types of knowledge:

[...] the sacred writers give us their knowledge in two ways: on the one hand, unspeakable and hidden; on the other hand, obvious and more easily recognizable. The first fashion is *symbolic* and implies an *initiation*, the second is *philosophical* and operates by way of *demonstration*. We may add that the *inexpressible* overlaps with the *expressible*.¹⁹ (emphasizes mine)

Ficino says in his commentary on *Divine names*:

In the *Timaeus* Plato says that we must believe in the divine truths told us by the sons of God, even if they provide us with no proofs at all. In the *Laws* too, he says that the discoveries of theology are confirmed by oracles. Dionysius similarly thinks that we should not assert anything about matters divine except insofar as they are confirmed by those who are divinely inspired. (Ficino 2015, 1, III, 95)

The Renaissance Neoplatonists thought that the truth is a process of revelation in our souls. That is why the metaphor of a "mirror" is amongst the most commonly used in Neoplatonist texts. We cannot know the truth directly, only through divine reflections of it in our soul. Moreover, light has a double origin: the sun, which is the *simulacrum* of God, and God himself, who allows men to see the light of the sun. There is a semantic field constructed around this metaphor. Knowledge depends on men's clarity of mind. The clearest mind will know the divine secrets better. In the dialogue on the origin of love, Leone Ebreo picks up on an apparent distinction:

Plato says that our speech and understanding is the reminiscence of things pre-existing in the soul in a state of oblivion, and this is the same as the potentiality of Aristotle, and the latency of which I have told you. [...] This enlightenment Aristotle calls the *act of*

¹⁸ Abravanel 2009, 325. See Ebreo 1565, III, 220: "[...] mi credo che nell'astrattione il suo ingegno non si potesse tanto sollevare, come quello di Platone, et egli non volesse, come gli altri, credere al maestro quello che le proprie forze el suo ingegno non li dimostrassero."

¹⁹ Pseudo-Denys 1991, 105: "[...] les théologiens enseignent selon deux méthodes: l'une secrète et mysthique, l'autre claire et bien évidente. La première méthode symbolique est propre à initier aux mystères, la seconde est philosophique, donc propre à convaincre. Il y a aussi entrelacement entre du non-dit avec le dit."

understanding and Plato *memory*, but their meaning is the same though expressed differently.²⁰

Nevertheless, for Leone Ebreo, this distinction implies a corruption of true science, which is the ancient Mosaic theology. If Ficino believes that Christ had perfected Plato, given Paul's preaching in the Areopagus and Dionysius's conversion, the Portuguese-Jewish philosopher argues that first Plato, and second Aristotle, were less able to penetrate the ancient wisdom, despite the fact that the former "had greater notions of this ancient wisdom than Aristotle". Consequently, there is a progressive decline in clarity of vision of the divine.

Indeed, the Neoplatonists held that Plato had studied with the Ancients in Egypt. We must recall Solon's embassy in Egypt. In Plato's *Timeo*, the Egyptian priest reminds Solon that the Athenians did not conserve their own laws and ancient stories as well as the Egyptians, due to the continued natural disasters that the Greek city had suffered. In *Against Apion*, Flavius Josephus appeals to this story to praise the Hebrew people's conservation of the Mosaic Laws. Precisely, he tried to demonstrate that the Hebrew people were older than the Greeks and that the Jews knew the true nature of God better than Greeks because they did not alter the Mosaic historical Scriptures (Josèphe 2018, I, chap. II, 9; II, chap. XXV, 237). This is the sacred aspect of memory.

We note this concern about the loss of people's history in philosophers and historians during the Spanish Renaissance. Effectively, the Egyptian priest's words became a historiographical and political concern for the historians working under Spanish Kings Charles I and Philip II:

Empires, lordships, nobility, and ancient lineages all decline, and others are born afresh. Human memories are erased by floods, pestilences, wars, and world affairs. Of all these things there are traces not only in these our parts, but also among the Indians, if we want to read their histories.²¹

We can also find this political thought on the access to knowledge in Inca's *The royal commentaries*. In book 4, chapter XIX, entitled "Some laws made by King

²⁰ Abravanel 2009, 306. See Ebreo 1565, III, 205: "Dice Platone ch'l nostro discorso et intendere e emiscentia delle cose antesistenti nell'anima in modo d'oblivione: che é la medesima potentia di Aristotele, et il modo latente, ch'io te dico. [...] Questa rilucentia Aristotele la chiama atto di intendere, e Platone ricordo: ma l'intentione loro è una in diversi modi di dire."

²¹ Páez de Castro [1550], 3fv: "Piérdense los imperios y señoríos y las noblezas y linajes antiguos, y alzanse otros de nuevo. Vénçense las memorias humanas con dilubios, pestilencias, guerras y fuego general. De todas estas cosas ay rastro no solo en estas nuestras partes, pero también entre los indios, si queremos leer sus historias."

Inca Roca; and the schools he founded in Cuzco, and some of his sayings", he points out the second main law created by the King: "It was proper that the sons of the common people should not learn the sciences, and that these should be restricted to the nobility: otherwise the populace would grow overweening and overthrow the republic".²²

This echoes the *Republic* and Romans 11:20, as well as Pseudo-Dionysius's texts and Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues*.²³ As we can see, curiosity or haughtiness concerning sacred knowledge were damned by both theologians and philosophers, whereas sobriety – meaning seriousness and humility – was praised. Men do not know the divine truth, but God reveals it to varying extents according to men's clarity of mind.

Concerning the likenesses between the Holy History and the Inca sacred fables, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega states that "I do not venture [to comment] on such profound matters: I simply repeat the fabulous accounts I used to hear my family tell in my childhood; let each take them as he wishes and apply whatever allegory he thinks most appropriate."²⁴ On the resurrection of the bodies, he writes:

I do not know how or by what tradition the Incas may have received the resurrection of the body as an article of faith, nor is it for a soldier like me to investigate it; nor do I think that [the truth] can be established for certain until the Most High God be pleased to reveal it.²⁵

Besides, Garcilaso claims that the Incas "[glimpsed] by the light of nature the true supreme God our Lord"²⁶, because they worshipped the Sun as the "Dios visible", and "Pachacámac" as the unknown God, for "they did not know him because they had never seen him, so they did not make temples to him or offer him sacrifices, but adored him in their hearts – that is, mentally – and held him to be the

²² Vega 1966, 1, 226. See Vega 2015, IV, chap. XIX, 285: "De algunas leyes que el Rey Inca Roca hizo, y las escuelas que fundó en el Cuzco, y de algunos dichos que dijo: Que convenía que los hijos de la gente común no aprendiesen las ciencias, las cuales pertenecían solamente a los nobles, porque no ensoberbeciesen y amenguasen la república."

²³ On Inca's library see Duran 1948, II, 3, 239–264.

²⁴ Vega 1966, 1, 49. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XVIII, 73–74: "Yo no me entrometo en cosas tan hondas; digo llanamente las fábulas historiales que en mis niñeces oí a los míos; tómelas cada uno como quisiere y deles el alegoría que más le cuadrare."

²⁵ Vega 1966, 1, 85. See Vega 2015, II, chap. VII, 117: "Cómo o por cuál tradición tuviesen los incas la resurrección de los cuerpos, siendo artículo de fe, no lo sé, ni es de un soldado como yo inquirirlo, ni creo que se pueda averiguar con certidumbre, hasta que el Sumo Dios sea servido manifestarlo."

²⁶ Vega 1966, 1, 70. See Vega 2015, II, chap. II, 98: "rastrearón con lumbre natural al verdadero sumo Dios y Señor nuestro".

unknown god.”²⁷ Therefore, he continues, “the Indians were on the track of the truth with this name [Pachacámac], and gave it to our own true”.²⁸ Writing on the Cuzco foundation, Garcilaso highlights that

[the Inca philosophers] said that the fact that the Sun had cast its first rays on that island to illuminate the world was a *sign and promise* that he would place his first two children there to teach and illuminate the natives, and to draw them out of their primitive savagery, as the Inca kings later did.²⁹ (emphasis mine)

While these peoples were living or dying in the manner we have seen, it pleased our Lord God that from their midst there should appear a morning star to give them in the dense darkness in which they dwelt some glimmerings of natural law, of civilization, and of the respect men owe to one another. The descendants of this leader should thus tame those savages and convert them into men, made capable of reason and of receiving good doctrine, so that when God, who is the sun of justice, saw fit to send forth the light of His divine rays upon those idolaters, it might find them no longer in their first savagery, but rendered more docile to receive the Catholic faith and the teaching and doctrine of our Holy Mother the Roman Church.³⁰

Here, Inca Garcilaso recalls the Pauline notion of the unknown God.³¹ This prompts us to verify the use of the ancient political philosophy and the catholic doctrine in a new historical context, as scholars and theologians had already

27 Vega 1966, 1, 70. See Vega 2015, II, chap. II, 99: “no le conocían porque no le habían visto, y que por esto no le hacían templos ni le ofrecían sacrificios; mas que lo adoraban en su corazón (esto es, mentalmente) y le tenían por Dios no conocido.”

28 Vega 1966, 1, 71. See Vega 2015, II, chap. II, 99: “los indios rastrearon con este nombre y se lo dieron al verdadero Dios nuestro.”

29 Vega 1966, 1, 190. See Vega 2015, III, chap. XXV, 243: “Decían que el haber echado el Sol en aquella isla sus primeros rayos para alumbrar el mundo había sido *señal y promesa* de que en el mismo lugar pondría sus dos primeros hijos para que enseñasen y alumbrasen aquellas gentes, sacándolas de las bestialidades en que vivían, como lo habían hecho después aquellos reyes.”

30 Vega 1966, 1, 40. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XV, 63: “Viviendo o muriendo aquellas gentes de la manera que hemos visto, permitió Dios Nuestro Señor que de ellos mismos saliese un lucero del alba que en aquellas oscurísimas tinieblas les diese alguna noticia de la ley natural y la urbanidad y respetos que los hombres debían tenerse unos a otros, y que los descendientes de aquel procediendo de bien en mejor, cultivasen aquellas fieras y las convirtiesen en hombres, haciéndoles capaces de razón y de cualquiera buena doctrina, para que cuando ese mismo Dios, sol de justicia, tuviese por bien de enviar la luz de sus divinos rayos a aquellos idólatras, los hallase, no tan salvajes, sino más dóciles para recibir la fe católica y la enseñanza y doctrina de nuestra santa madre iglesia romana.”

31 I am grateful to Dardo Scavino for pointing out to me the Pauline idea of the ‘unknown God’ in Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s *The royal commentaries*. For details on this approach see Scavino 2014, 27–45. See also Bernand/Gruzinski 1988, 124–133.

done in the Middle Ages.³² In the late sixteenth century, the Spanish mythographer Juan Pérez de Moya, who certainly had read Boccaccio's *Genealogy* and in all probability Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues*, also reviewed the Paulist story in his *Philosophia secreta* (1585).

In this context, the translation of texts that deal with the Holy Wisdom should not only be a faithful translation, but also a correct translation according to the translator's doctrine. Hence, I will examine Inca Garcilaso's translation of *Dialogues of love* to shed light on the debate between philosophy and philology in the Renaissance. What kind of power did the translator have? Inca Garcilaso's phrase "temeridad soldadesca" was certainly a joke between colleagues. But, might these words have another sense in the light of political framework in the sixteenth century?

3 Inca's translation of Leone Ebreo's *Dialogues*

In his letter to Maximilian de Austria, published in the *editio princeps* of the *Traducción del Indio de los tres Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo* (1590), Garcilaso emphasizes that he had tried to perform a literal translation.³³ The accuracy of translation particularly concerned Italian humanists. Lorenzo Valla had spoken out against the bad translation of ancient manuscripts, and even worse, the making of fake manuscripts to influence political decisions.³⁴ The analogy of the faithful copy of an ancient painting or sculpture was well-known at that time. For Plato, faithful translation becomes an "affair of State". We find the metaphor of modelling according to an original archi-type in Flavius Josephus (2018, book II, XXXV, 237). Leone Ebreo reminds us also of the Platonic analogy.

There were two previous Spanish translations of the *Dialogues*, Guedelha Yahia's in 1568 and Carlos Montesa's in 1584 (Hebreo 1584 [1582?], repr. 1593, 1602). Guedelha Yahia produced a literal translation but considered it necessary to guide the reader by adding margin notes. It is important to point out that Guedella Yahia was a Spanish Hebrew, as was Judah Abravanel. Consequently, he aims to ensure the correct interpretation according to the Hebrew tradition. By comparison, Montesa did not add the marginalia, but modified certain terms to

³² For an analysis of the process of reutilization of Biblical quotations in the Middle Ages, see Anheim 2014, 235–252.

³³ Hebreo 1989, Dedicatoria a Don Maximiliano de Austria: "la pretensión que tomé de interpretar-le fielmente por las mismas palabras que su autor escribió en el italiano".

³⁴ On the well-known history of the fake manuscript *Donation of Constantine* see Burke 1970, 50–69; Ginzburg 2001, 69–86.

produce a doctrinal catholic reading. For example, where Leone Ebreo wrote that the initiator to the doctrine “copulates” with God, Yahia translate this as “copulates”, while Montesa preferred to use circumlocutions to refer to Ebreo’s idea (Abravanel 2009, 364).³⁵

Montesa rendered us an unfaithful version of *Dialogues* because he aimed to give a Catholic interpretation. As Damian Bacich (2016, 364) remarks, where Leone Ebreo wrote “we faithful”, Montesa translated “we Catholic”. Indeed, Montesa tried to “adapt the text to the sensibilities of Counter-Reformation Catholic Spanish”, in a context where the Humanist time had ended.³⁶ In this way, translator-philologists shouldered the duties of a Platonist philosopher of the *Republic*.

It is interesting to observe that Guedella Yahia’s translation is more impenetrable than Montesa’s. We know that Leone Ebreo’s style of the original manuscript would had been less clear, given the mix of Spanish and Tuscan voices and his aim of preserving the secret doctrine between knowers. There were important stylistic differences between the only five manuscripts discovered so far. The manuscripts with a more literary Italian, namely, the Barberiniano and the Harley, would had been modified to improve writing according to literary contemporary rules of Italian prose. Meanwhile, in the Western and Paretta manuscripts, and that of the manuscript of the communal Library of Ascoli Piceno, we find the Mediterranean voices of Leone Ebreo’s community in the late fifteenth century. In this sense, we are reminded that the *Dialogues of love* manuscripts had a wide circulation between scholars and theologians, before the 1535 Blado d’Asola first edition. The manuscripts were, however, kept from the public, and this restricted circulation is likely to have been due to the censorship of Jewish ideas by the Crown, which suppressed the Kabbala and Christian-Pagan syncretism. But the idea of spreading public knowledge clashed with the law of preservation of secret knowledge. The contemporary invention of the Printing Press could be seen as a means of corrupting true knowledge. Scholars believed that books printed in Latin preserved knowledge more purely than the editions in vulgar tongues. In this sense, Inca Garcilaso would later accept the censorship decision forbidding the reissue of his *Dialogues* by the same argument:

Therefore, with just agreement, I accept that the Sancta and General inquisition of these Kingdoms, in this last purge of forbidden books, has, while not forbidding it in other

35 See Ebreo 1535, I, 28fv: “[...] et viene in una tal’ unione et *coppulatione* col summo Dio [...]”; Guedelha Yahia 1568, 13fv: “[...] y viene en una tal unión y copulación con el sumo Dios [...]”. For Inca Garcilaso’s translation see Hebreo 1989, I, 33v: “[...] y llega a una tal unión y copulación con el sumo Dios [...]”.

36 For details of books forbidden in the latter sixteenth century see Bernand 2006, 163–166.

languages, commanded to collect it in our vulgar tongue, because it was not meant for common people.³⁷

Indeed, he had already stressed this point in his dedication to Maximilian of Austria:

For whose good intelligence I understand that there will be no more than two warnings (that is, talking to the reader): on the one hand, it is to be read with attention, because Leone Ebreo, it seems, aimed to write not for careless people, but for deliberate philosophers such as himself. On the other hand, some appearances of the relative pronouns should be looked at closely, because we left them as they were, so as to avoid stripping the own work of its artifice. And also because it is worth much to see that in language so vulgar, with similar inventions, as one can notice, he writes, not for the common people. With these two cautions, I believe that, although the topics are lofty, subtle, and expressed in a different way to our common language, they will make themselves understood [...]. What is lacking [clarity], will be my fault, forgive me, for in those places I will not have done as I would have liked. Of mine I can say that the misprints of the mold cost me a lot of work, and much more the pretension that I had of interpreting it faithfully by the same words that the author wrote in Italian, without adding other superfluous ones, because it is sufficient for one to understand it by the words he meant and not add others. That will add them, was to make his doctrine very common, which is what he the more fled.³⁸

Subsequently, if a Neoplatonist philosopher was translating, he had to ensure he produced a correct, Platonist interpretation of the text. Inca Garcilaso de la Vega made a “Table of the most notable things contained in this work” (“Tabla de las cosas más notables que en esta obra contienen, dividida por las letras del ABC”). This is a list of marginalia that guide the reader on the text and its correct reading.

37 Vega 1617: “Por lo cual, con justo acuerdo, la Sancta y general Inquisición de estos Reynos, en este último expurgatorio de libros prohibidos, no vedándolo en otras lenguas, lo mando recoger en la nuestra vulgar, porque no era para vulgo.”

38 Hebreo 1989: “Para cuya buena inteligencia entiendo que no serán menester más que dos advertencias (esto es hablando con el lector): la una, que se lea con atención y no cualquiera, porque la intención que su autor parece que fue escribir, *no para descuidados, sino para los que fuesen filosofando con él juntamente*. La otra, mirar en algunos pasos, a donde apelan los relativos, que, por no descuadernar la obra a su dueño de su artificio, los dejamos como estaban. Y también porque es de estimarle en mucho ver que en lengua tan vulgar, con invenciones semejantes, como se podrán notar, *escribiese, no para el vulgo*. Con estos dos cuidados, creo que, aunque las materias son altas, sutiles, y dichas por diferente manera de hablar que el común lenguaje nuestro, se dejarán entender [...]. Lo que de esto faltare, que será por mi culpa, se me perdone, que yo quisiera haber podido lo que he deseado en esta parte. De la mía puedo afirmar que me costaron mucho trabajo las erratas del molde, y mucho más la pretensión que tomé de interpretarle fielmente por las mismas palabras que su autor escribió en el italiano, sin añadirle otras superfluas, pues basta que lo entiendan por las que él quiso decir y no por más. Que añadirse las, fuera hacer su doctrina muy común, que es lo que el más huyó.”

Regarding the matter of breaking the law of the preservation of science, Garcilaso translated:

No quebrantan jamás las leyes los pequeños sino solamente los grandes.³⁹

This is a faithful translation of a sentence found in the body of Leone Ebreo's text:

Non rompeno mai le leggi i piccoli, ma solamente i grandi.⁴⁰

Garcilaso added the following marginalia:

The poor do not break the laws, only the rich and the powerful. Plato used fiction but not versification.⁴¹

In his library Inca had a French translation of the *Dialogues* (Duran 1948, 239–264). Bernand (2006, 172) proposed that this was most likely that of Pontus de Tyard, Seigneur de Bissy (1551). This text does not have marginalia.⁴² But there is another French translation in 1551, that of Seigneur Du Parc Champenois. Du Parc also claims that he made a faithful translation and that he followed the Italian copy

“almost word for word, without stretching the meaning, and without indulging my mind's impulse to roam, because I saw that such philosophers, like such as ours know well enough what should be said, and what *should be silenced*”.⁴³ (emphasis mine)

Furthermore, Du Parc also added marginalia like Guedelha Yahia. Inca inserts marginalia in his translation in almost the same places as Du Parc and Guedelha Yahia, but the notes made are different. According to the list of his personal library, Inca Garcilaso had an Italian copy of the *Dialogues*, likely the 1545 Aldine edition, whose text he followed in his translation, as well as a French edition, Du Parc's or Pontus de Tyard. However, Inca Garcilaso certainly consulted Giovan Carlo Saraceni's Latin edition (1564). Effectively, we find almost the same words in Saraceni's marginalia concerning the breaking of the law of preservation. Saraceni translated the Italian text in question:

Non tenues, sed potentes tantummodo Leges evertere & perstringere solent.

³⁹ Hebreo 1989, 78fv [“Common men never break the law, only great ones.”].

⁴⁰ Ebreo 1535, II, 29fr.

⁴¹ Ebreo 1535, II, 78fv: “Las leyes no las *quebrantan* los pobres, sino los ricos y poderosos. Platón uso de la fábula y no del verso.”

⁴² Hebreo 2006.

⁴³ Hebreo 1596, 8: “[...] presque de mot à mot, sans extravaguer, et sans m'égayer en la liberté de mon esprit: parce que je voyais que tels philosophes, comme est le nôtre, savent assez ce qu'il faut dire, et *ce qu'il faut taire*.” See also Rouillé 1551.

And he added the following margin note:

Potentes tantummodo Leges & evertere perstringere solent.⁴⁴

So it is interesting to observe that Inca Garcilaso chose to make a faithful translation but, at the same time, aimed to give a correct political and moral interpretation of the text by adding marginal notes. As is well-known, the subject of power and wealth has been central to political philosophy since Plato. In *Laws*, we read of the relation between divine truth and mankind's laws. However, the Renaissance scholars read Plato through a mindset contemporary with their time, as we do today. In *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy* (1531), Machiavelli recalls the Roman King Numa's use of the fable of the nymph Egeria to consolidate his royal power.⁴⁵ Inca Garcilaso did not read Niccolò Machiavelli's texts, as far as we can tell from his inventory, but he certainly read Juan Luis Vives's *De ratione dicendi*. We find in *De ratione dicendi* the following rule concerning historical writing:

It is convenient that the narration preparing to explain is truthful; we call this one History. But to persuade, if we want to be persuasive with what we narrate, it should be probable. If it's not, you have to fake it properly, like in fables.⁴⁶

And he tells us about the political use of fables:

In our time, those men who inhabit a world recently discovered, venerated the Spaniards, because they were superior in knowledge and prudence and called them children of the sun [...]. The Greeks, for their part, said that the gods of heaven were in the regions of the east and the north, where the land is higher, and those of Hell in the west and noon, where the earth is more inclined [...]. They were also deceived by the figurative language, because, as they did not understand the figures, they took them in a natural and straight sense and they had confidence. But then the people were more educated and more careful in the way of living and talking. So since then the common people were less deceived, and few fables were invented.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Hebraei 1587 [1564], 398.

⁴⁵ Machiavelli 2003 [1997], vol. 1, chap. II, 51.

⁴⁶ Vives 2000, III-11, 137: "Narrationem quae ad explicandum paratur, veram esse par est, hanc historiam vocamus. Ad persuadendum vero, si id volumus persuadere quod narratur, oportet esse probabilem; sin aliud per eam apte est confingenda, quales sunt apologi."

⁴⁷ Vives 2000, III-29, 151: "Memoria nostra homines illi qui orbem recens inventum habitant Hispanos venerabantur tamquam deos, quod experimentis et vitae prudentia plus valerent; tum filios solis appellabant [...]. Graeci autem superos dixerunt ad orientem at aquilonem regiones, ubi terra est altior, inferos vero ad occidentem et meridiem, ubi declivior [...]. Falsi sunt etiam figuris loquendi, quas quod non intelligerent, acceperunt naturaliter ac simpliciter et habuerunt

We find this seminal thought about the relation between power and knowledge again in *The royal commentaries*. Garcilaso explains the foundation of Inca republic using the same linguistic device:

From what I saw of the state and character of these Indians, I suppose that the origin of this prince Manco Inca, whom his subjects called Manco Capac on account of his greatness, was that some Indian of good understanding, prudence and judgement, perceiving the great simplicity of these tribes, realized the need they had of teaching and instruction about the natural life, and wisely and cunningly invented the fable to win their esteem, saying that *he and his wife were children of the Sun, that they had come from heaven, and that his father had sent them to teach and help those tribes*.⁴⁸ (emphasis mine)

The Inca Manco Capac settled his vassals in villages and taught them to till the soil, build homes, make irrigation channels, and do all the other things necessary for human life. At the same time he instructed them in the urbane, social and brotherly conduct they were to use toward one another according to the dictates of reason and natural law, effectively persuading them to *do unto one another as they themselves would be done by*, so that there should be perpetual peace and concord among them and no ground for the kindling of envy and passion. They were not allowed to have one law for themselves and another for the rest.⁴⁹ (emphasis mine)

So, Inca's interpretation aims to highlight the political aspect of the creation of laws. While Leone Ebreo's statement remains within the realms of theological doctrine, Inca Garcilaso strongly emphasizes the links between theology and political power:

fidem. Postea vero et populus fuit eruditior et ratio accuratior vitae ac loquendi. Itaque deinceps minus est populo impositum et fabulae sunt confictae rariores."

48 Vega 1966, I, 61. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XXV, 89: "Lo que yo, conforme a lo que vi de la condición y naturaleza de aquellas gentes, puedo conjeturar del origen de este príncipe Manco Inca, que sus vasallos, por sus grandezas, llamaron Manco Cápac, es que debió ser algún indio de buen entendimiento, prudencia y consejo, y que alcanzó bien la mucha simplicidad de aquellas naciones, y vio la necesidad que tenían de doctrina y enseñanza para la vida natural, y con astucia y sagacidad, para ser estimado, fingió aquella fábula, diciendo que él y su mujer eran hijos del Sol, que venían del cielo y que su padre los enviaba para que doctrinasen y hiciesen bien a aquellas gentes [...]."

49 Vega 1966, I, 53. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XXI, 79: "El Inca Manco Cápac, yendo poblando sus pueblos, juntamente con enseñar a cultivar la tierra a sus vasallos y labrar las casas, y sacar acequias y hacer las demás cosas necesarias para la vida humana, les iba instruyendo en la urbanidad, compañía y hermandad que unos a otros se habían de hacer, conforme a lo que la razón y ley natural les enseñaba, persuadiéndoles con mucha eficacia, que para que entre ellos hubiese perpetua paz y concordia y no naciesen enojos y pasiones, *hiciesen con todos lo que quisieran que todos hicieran con ellos*, porque no se permitía tener una ley para sí y otra para los otros."

With these and other *inventions* made for their own benefit, *the Incas induced the remaining Indians to believe they were children of the Sun and confirmed it by the good they did*. Because of the fables the Incas and all the peoples of their empire regarded the island as a sacred place, and therefore ordered a very rich temple to be built on it, completely lined with gold plates, and dedicated to the Sun.⁵⁰ (emphasis mine)

The Indians, with the simplicity they have displayed then and ever since down to our own times, believed everything that the Inca told them, especially when he said that he was a child of the Sun. For among them too there are tribes that vaunted a similar fabulous descent, as we shall have cause to mention, though they did not make such a good choice as the Inca, but prided themselves on their origin from animals and other low and earthly objects.⁵¹

In *Gorgias*, Plato refers to *nomos* as *nomos basileus*, that is, *nomos* as sovereign. Neoplatonists insisted that One is the King and the Lord. And Inca Garcilaso tells us that: “The name Inca, applied to the prince, means ‘lord’, or ‘king’, or ‘emperor’, and when applied to others means ‘lord’ [...] and to distinguish the King from the other Incas, they call him *Çapa Inca*, meaning ‘sole lord’.”⁵² Thus, fables are not only fictional poetics but also legal fictions. Polybius, Vives, Machiavelli and Garcilaso re-use Plato's argument: “*it belongs to the rulers of the city* – if indeed to anyone – *to deceive enemies or citizens for the benefit of the city*. No one else is to touch such a thing. On the contrary, it is an even greater sin for a private citizen to lie to such a thing (Plato 2006, 389c, emphasis mine).

50 Vega 1966, 1, 190. See Vega 2015, III, chap. XXV, 243: “Con estas invenciones y otras semejantes, hechas en su favor, hicieron los *Incas creer a los demás indios que eran hijos del Sol*, y con sus muchos beneficios lo confirmaron. Por estas dos fábulas tuvieron los Incas y todos los de su imperio aquella isla por lugar sagrado, y así mandaron hacer en ella un riquísimo templo, todo aforrado con tabloncillos de oro, dedicado al Sol, donde universalmente todas las provincias sujetas al Inca ofrecían cada año mucho oro y plata y piedras preciosas en hacimiento de gracias al Sol por los dos beneficios que en aquel lugar les había hecho.”

51 Vega 1966, 1, 54. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XXI, 80: “Los indios, con la simplicidad que entonces y siempre tuvieron hasta nuestros tiempos, creyeron todo lo que el inca les dijo, principalmente el decirles que era hijo del Sol, porque también entre ellos hay naciones que se jactan de descender de semejantes fábulas, como adelante diremos, aunque no supieron escoger tan bien como el Inca porque se precian de animales y cosas bajas y terrestres.”

52 Vega 1966, 1, 60. See Vega 2015, I, chap. XXIV, 86: “El nombre Inca, en el Príncipe, quiere decir señor o Rey o Emperador, y en los demás quiere decir señor [...] y para distinguir al rey de los demás Incas, le llaman *Zapa Inca*, que quiere decir, Solo Señor.”

4 Conclusion

To conclude, we may argue that both Leone Ebreo and Inca Garcilaso believed in the importance of sacred knowledge and its traditional transmission between authoritative scholars. Given that ancient memories are lost progressively through the generations, historians must preserve them through documentation and archiving. However, a plurality of written histories is not compatible with a “secret doctrine”, “secret knowledge” or “sacred memory”, for the translation of a sacred text can alter its meaning, bending its message towards the political and religious doctrine of the translator. Leone Ebreo in particular held that Aristotle’s modern interpreters had corrupted the superior knowledge rooted in Mosaic Theology.

Conversely, the scholar’s positions differ in that Inca Garcilaso also considers it a valid path of historical enquiry to conduct scientific readings of the text, in the modern sense of the word, which introduce new dynamics into the perceived relationships between memory, language and terrestrial law. Nonetheless, Inca’s account of the Inca people’s origins is firmly anchored in Neoplatonist and Scholastic political ideas and falls in line with ancient theories of the links between human memory and political laws.

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