

*Chapter I***MULTIPLE TYPES OF “THE GOOD” IN  
HRYHORII SKOVORODA’S PHILOSOPHICAL  
DISCOURSE: *DOBRO* VS *BLAHO***

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**ABSTRACT**

This chapter is dedicated to the formation of philosophical terminology in the history of Early-Modern Ukrainian culture. Two philosophical concepts—*dobro* and *blaho* (добро and благо)—are the focus here. Both are related to notions of good and wellbeing, but contextual nuances may affect their discrete meanings rather significantly. My main goal is to track the differences between them and discover the rationale behind them. I consider the manner in which these two words functioned in the works by the prominent 18<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda. My study is based on a close reading of thirteen of his colloquies. In the process, I have also tackled the problem of translation posed by these complicated terms.

My study has led to the following conclusions: 1) Skovoroda uses the word *blaho* when discoursing about the Creator, the Sacral World, and reflections of the sacral in profane human life. In such contexts he uses *blaho* as a philosophical concept. 2) Skovoroda reserves the term *dobro*

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for the profane sphere, while describing things that are positive from a moral point of view. In such cases, the semantic field of the word is clearly defined, though it can hardly be called a philosophical term. 3) The common, conversational application of *dobro* does not have clearly defined boundaries and as such it does not represent a discrete concept. 4) When translating Skovoroda’s works into other languages, it is desirable to select the closest equivalents of each term. For example, the Greek κάλλος (τὸ κάλλιον) or τὸ εὖ and the English *Everyday Good* are good analogs for *dobro*. On the other hand, the Greek τὸ ἀγαθόν and the English *The Highest Good* or *The Ultimate Good* closely render *blaho*.

**Keywords:** *dobro*, *blaho*, lexeme, terms, philosophical concept, early-modern Ukrainian language, Hryhorii Skovoroda

## INTRODUCTION

Research into the formation processes of a language’s conceptual apparatus is productive and useful for many scholarly disciplines, such as the history of language and culture, as well as historical anthropology. It is especially fruitful in the study of philosophical thought. An understanding of how semantic fields, as well as individual words, terms and concepts were formed helps scholars in the reading of ancient texts. Such an understanding is essential for translators of historical sources who need to capture semantic nuances and relate the original to modern audiences without perverting the meaning of the original.

This chapter is dedicated to the problem of formation of Ukrainian philosophical terminology in the Early-Modern period. The main focus is on the difference between two nouns, conveying two different notions of “the good”: *dobro* and *blaho*. In contemporary everyday speech these two words function as synonyms, but in philosophical and theological tracts each one is a discrete term with its own specific context and rules of usage. To complicate matters, most modern European languages, as well as their learned predecessor—Latin—have only one word for both terms: *bonum* in

Latin; the good in English; *gut* in German; *dobro* in Polish, and so on<sup>1</sup>. This complicates the translation of Ukrainian philosophical texts. Rendering both *dobro* and *blaho* as *bonum*, *the good*, *gut*, *dobro*, etc., erases the semantic difference between the two and produces an inaccurate translation. This is especially true of texts that rely on the play of words highlighting the distinction between these two as separate phenomena.<sup>2</sup>

The formation of Ukrainian philosophical terminology in the Early-Modern period was greatly influenced by Old Church Slavonic, Greek, Latin, and Polish. Among these, only Greek and Old Church Slavonic have multiple names for the phenomena, which are designated as *dobro* or *blaho* in Old Ukrainian, as well as modern Ukrainian. In Greek they are τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τὸ κάλλος, τὸ χρηστὸν, τὸ εὖ, ἡ ὥρα. In Old Church Slavonic they are *doǒbro* and *blaǒzo*. This allows us to assume that the intellectuals of the Kyivan Metropolitanate<sup>3</sup> saw the need to distinguish between *dobro* and *blaho* and to separate their semantic fields from the ancient traditions of Eastern Roman theology. The fact that these old Byzantine roots were still present in their language in Early Modernity suggests that at the initial stages of its formation (till the middle of 17th century at least) Ukrainian theological and philosophical thought was under the considerable impact of Greek tradition. Therefore, despite the palpable dominance of Latin influences on Old Ukrainian traditions of philosophical writing, the Greek factor should not be neglected. The texts written by Hryhorii Skovoroda in the second half of the 18th century support this view. His language is a very unique and harmonious admixture of Old Ukrainian, Old Church Slavonic and Russian. However, when he needs to further dissect (in his own words, “to chew at the meaning” of) some difficult concepts,

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions here are Greek and Russian. In Greek there are five terms that may be used in similar ways: τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τὸ χρηστὸν, τὸ εὖ, τὸ κάλλος, ἡ ὥρα. Russian uses the same words – *dobro* and *blago* – but their semantic fields slightly differs from those of Ukrainian equivalents.

<sup>2</sup> This is exactly what happened in otherwise high quality English translations of works by Hryhorii Skovoroda. Further in this chapter I am going to analyze one of these translations.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term Kyiv Metropolitanate in reference to the Ruthenian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth within their boundaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These territories were slightly more expansive than the modern Ukrainian state.

Skovoroda turns to either Latin or Greek, organically intertwining them in his texts.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

A rigorous study of any philosophical theory or the views of any thinker needs a detailed analysis of word-usage in the relevant texts. This is a time-honored approach and I need not expound my methodology in detail. Here, I would rather focus on preceding research on scholarly language formation in Early-Modern Ukraine. Let me first note a recent successful project directed by Barbara Cassin, titled *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon* [Cassin, 2004]. This is one of the grand projects in the field of semantics that deals with the formation and usage of philosophical terms in multiple European languages. This work, especially in its Ukrainian redaction, informs my methodological approach and is a great source of factual information. In her Introduction, Barbara Cassin states that the language problem poses one of the prime challenges for European scholars in the humanities. This is not only a theoretical issue, but also a practical one. Mutual understanding is one of the key factors in any communication. But how do we achieve this understanding when our philosophic lexicons are so diverse? Maybe, it is possible to find one dominant language in this inter-lingual polyphony, something akin to Latin in earlier times? But this is hardly possible in a world where the pluralism of cultures, thought and manner of thinking is a preeminent value. Instead, Barbara Cassin proposes translation as a mechanism of agreement among the philosophical languages of different nations. However, since a direct literal translation does not work in every case because of the peculiarities of each individual language structure, scholars often have to work on finding the best interpretation of the original, rather than its closest equivalent. Such a task demands a specific manner of treating the philosophical text, one that would allow the study of semantic fields for every single word in every single language.

Significantly, Cassin's project, originally realized in French, today has already been translated (or is being translated) into English, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Persian and Ukrainian. Each of these new editions represents a research project on its own, each one broadening the original version by adding more and more new source languages, new synonyms and different equivalents for many terms, etc. For this chapter, I have relied on the Ukrainian redaction of the *Dictionary*, edited by Kostiantyn Sihov and Andrii Vasyl'chenko [Cassin & Sihov, 2009]. While working on the Ukrainian version, the authors not only searched for the best way to adapt "European philosophy" by the Ukrainian linguistic apparatus, they also conducted an analysis of their native intellectual tradition. As a result, they are preparing an additional fifth volume, which will be fully dedicated to Ukrainian philosophical language. The question of semantic differences between *dobro* and *blaho* will be covered there in a special article.<sup>4</sup>

Sihov's and Vasyl'chenko's large project is only the first specialized work in this field. Such questions as the history of philosophical terminology and its formation, the semantics of certain concepts, terms, notions in Old Ukrainian, and history of their development are all still considered marginal by Ukrainian historians of philosophy. This despite the fact that today Western scholars are pursuing such topics. Fortunately, there are many Ukrainian scholars in cultural, linguistic and historical studies, who are seriously interested in analyzing the semantics of specific terms and concepts within multiple disciplines, including philosophy. The results of their research are worth mentioning here. For instance, there is Hanna Dydyk-Meush' and Olena Slobodzianyk's interesting linguistic study of Old Ukrainian scholarly vocabulary, titled *Ukrainian Landscapes of the 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries: Word, Text, Vocabulary* [Dydyk-Meush, 2005]. This work provides a detailed analysis of Old Ukrainian words used to describe different natural objects and landscape elements. The authors emphasize the fact that many homonyms, used in both old and modern

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<sup>4</sup> The fifth volume of the Ukrainian edition titled *Slovnnyk ievropeis'kykh filosofii: leksykon neperekladnosti* [Dictionary of Ukrainian Philosophy: Lexicon of the Untranslatable] is to be published in 2018.

Ukrainian, significantly differ in meaning. Therefore, such words have to be treated with special care when found in Early-Modern sources.

Then, there are concepts connected to some definite values, which have been thoroughly studied, because they are still widely used in historical, cultural and political debates. These are *Otchyzna*, an Early-Modern term that roughly corresponds to Latin *patria* and modern Ukrainian *Bat’kivshchyna* or *Vitchyzna*. Then, there are the modern proper names for Ukraine and Ukrainians (*Ukraina* and *ukraintsi*). There are a number of interesting studies dedicated to semantic fields that could work for these terms in Early-Modern Ukrainian political discourse. Their authors include: Serhii Bahro [Bahro, 2015]; Larysa Dovga [Dovha, 2012]; Natalia Iakovenko [Iakovenko 2009, Iakovenko 2012]; Maksym Iaremenko [Iaremenko, 2012]; Zenon Kohut [Kohut, 2004]; Serhii Plokhii [Plokhii, 2005; Plokhii, 2006]; Frank Sysyn [Sysyn, 2006]; Tetiana Taiirova-Iakovleva [Taiirova-Iakovleva, 2013].<sup>5</sup> Along with the aforementioned work by Dydyk-Meush and Slobodzianyk, these texts clearly illustrate how the sense of certain terms could change in time and how radically it can differ from the modern one. For example, *otchyzna* was initially a term designating a land or property gained through inheritance; later it entered the political context with a noticeable shift in meaning; and only since the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century it became constantly used in reference to the Hetmanate, i.e., the Early-Modern Ukrainian State.

In a number of studies on the history of ideas in Early Modernity the same analytical methodology was applied to analyze terms from the moral sphere, such as *chest’* (honor), *sumlinnia* (conscience), *shchastia* (happiness), *virnist’/zrada* (loyalty/betrayal), *chesnota/provyna* (virtue/fault), *hrikh/tsnota* (sin/purity), *znannia/prostota* (wisdom/simplicity), etc.<sup>6</sup> [Bondarevs’ka, 2005; Dovga, 2012; Korzo, 1999; Spivak, 2016; Zema, 1997; and others]. In these works the authors show that the meaning of the given words, as well as the sense and connotation of the concepts behind them, depended on several key factors. In addition to the time frame when

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed historiography of this topic see: [Bahro, 2013].

<sup>6</sup> The English terms used here and further as equivalents of the Ukrainian originals are inexact and highly dependent on the context.

a certain text was composed, these scholars also pay special attention to its function as a possible factor in semantic change. The most important part of the investigations concerning such terms as *Otchyzna*, *Chest'*, *Znannia*, *Svoboda* considers the manner in which semantic changes correlate with shifts in the mentality of the Ukrainian elite in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. My own work includes studies about the semantic fields of the terms *dobro* and *blaho* as they were used in theological texts published in the Kyiv Metropolitanate during 17<sup>th</sup> century [Dovga, 2016a; Dovga, 2016b; Dovga & Olishchuk, 2016].

Before turning to the results of my own studies, I should present a historiography of Hryhorii Skovoroda and his writings. The scholarship devoted to his biography and intellectual legacy is really impressive. His works have been the focus of scholars, writers and journalists for more than 200 years now, and the list of all studies dedicated to him constitute a voluminous tome [Ushkalov, 2002]. I will only mention the literature that directly informed the making of this chapter<sup>7</sup>. The most important items here are the monographs by Maria Grazia Bartolini [Bartolini, 2010; Bartolini 2015], Karen L. Black [Black, 1994], Dmytro Chyzhevs'kyi [Chyzhevs'kyi, 2003], Lidia Hnatiuk [Hnatiuk, 2010], Oleksa Myshanych [Myshanych, 1994], George Y. Shevelov [Shevelov, 1994], Bohdan Strumins'kyi [Strumins'kyi, 1994] and Leonid Ushkalov [Ushkalov, 2007]. All of them address Skovoroda's use of language. Although these works are rather general and the authors do not go deeply into the details of certain cases, they pose a number of interesting questions: How did this Ukrainian intellectual experiment with vocabulary? Why did he sometimes neglect the "purity" of his own language and mix it with Old Church Slavonic and even some peculiar Russian choices [Shevelov, 1994, p. 129]? What was the purpose of using several different ways to write a single word? Did Skovoroda give the shape of the word a meaning equal to its sense?

Each Skovoroda text has multiple layers of meaning. It conceals numerous secret senses that can be understood and interpreted in a myriad of ways. His colloquies are usually based on a dichotomy of terms, on the

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<sup>7</sup> For further reading I recommend two historiographical works: [Bartolini, 2009; Dobko, 2007].

contrast between different senses conveyed in the same word and the diverse images associated with them. His interlocutors aim for the Truth as an ultimate value, but their ways of finding and realizing this Truth is based on different concepts. In some cases, all these diverse paths lead to finding a single word, the Right Word that would fully cover the meaning of the whole moral lesson, which is the object of the colloquy. This Right Word, as a real treasure, can only appear in the very end of the text. Thus, to understand the author’s message, the reader has to identify it clearly and get its meaning properly. There are numerous investigations in the fields of philosophy, cultural studies, history and theology, aimed at finding these treasures and decoding the messages of Skovoroda’s writings. Among the authors, I should name Maria Grazia Bartolini [Bartolini, 2014; Bartolini, 2017]; Iryna Bondarevs’ka [Bondarevs’ka, 2005]; Hryhorii Bilaniuk [Bilaniuk, 1994]; Dmytro Chyzhevs’kyi [Chyzhevs’kyi, 2003]; Archbishop Ihor Isichenko [Isichenko, 2013]; Georg Kline [Kline, 1994; Kline 1997]; Myroslav Popovych [Popovych, 2008]; Natalia Pylypiuk [Pylypiuk, 1990]; Olena Syrtsova [Syrtsova, 2014]; Leonid Ushkalov [Ushkalov, 2001], and Taras Zakydal’s’kyi [Zakydal’s’kyi, 1965]. Without their general works my analysis of certain individual terms would simply lose its point.

Finally, I have to mention two main source publications, which have made my research more feasible, namely *The Complete Academic Collection of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s Writings*, edited by Leonid Ushkalov [Skovoroda, 2011] and *Online Concordance to the Complete Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda* [Pylypiuk, 2008], created by Natalia Pylypiuk, Oleh Ilnytskyj and Serhiy Kozakov as an analytical tool to the texts within the *Collection*. This last study makes all the nuances and variations of Skovoroda’s linguistic games available for a detailed scholarly investigation.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

I have analyzed the following thirteen works, as they appear in the aforementioned *Online Concordance to the Complete Works of Hryhorii*

*Skovoroda* (Pylypiuk, 2008) and *The Complete Academic Collection of Hryhorii Skovoroda's Writings* [Skovoroda, 2011]:

- *Besida 1, narechennaia Observatorium. [Conversation 1]*
- *Besida 2, narechennaia Observatorium. Specula. Ievreisky: Sion. [Conversation 2]*
- *Besida, narechennaia Dvoie: o tom, cho Blazhennym byt' lehko. [Conversation The Two]*
- *Blahodarnyi Erodii. [Herodius]*
- *Bran' archystratyha Mykhaila so Satanoi u o sem: lehko byt' blahym. Borba i pria o tom: Pretrydno byt' zlym, lehko byt' blahym. [Dispute]*
- *Dialoh, ili Razhlahol o drevnem myri. [Dialog or Discourse]*
- *Dialoh. Imia emu: Potop Zmiin. [The Serpent's Flood]*
- *Knyzhechka Plutarkhova o spokoistvyi dushy. [Plutarch]*
- *Knyzhechka o chtenyi sviashchen(naho) pysaniia, narechenna Zhena Lotova. [Lot's wife]*
- *Knyzhechka, nazyvaiemaia Silenus Alcibiadis, syrigh Ikona Alkiviadskaia. [Alcibiades Icon]*
- *Kol'tso. Druzheskii razhovor o dushevnom myri. [The Circle]*
- *Narkiss. Razhlahol o tom: Uznai sebe. [Narcissus]*
- *Razhovor piaty putnykov o istynnom shchastyi v zhyzni [A Conversation]*

To provide a more general historical overview of the semantic fields of the concepts *dobro* and *blaho* I also studied the language of several other 17<sup>th</sup> century texts published in the Kyiv Metropolitanate. All of these texts appeared in Old Ukrainian or Old Church Slavonic, although some of them represent translations from other languages:

- *Likarstvo na ospalyi umysl cholovichyi...* (Ostrih, 1607). [Anonymous, 1607]
- *Dioptra* (Vievis, 1612). [Anonymous, 1612]

- *Homilies on all Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle* (Kyiv, 1623) and *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* (Kyiv, 1624) by John Chrysostom [Chrysostom, 1623; Chrysostom, 1624]
- *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Kyiv, 1625) by Andreas of Caesarea [Andreas of Caesarea, 1625]
- *A Slavonic-Ruthenian Lexicon and Explanation of Proper Names* by Pamvo Berynda (Kyiv, 1627) [Berynda, 1627]
- *Myr z Bohom choloviku* by Innokentii Gizel’ (Kyiv, 1669) [Gizel’, 1669]
- and a collection of sermons by Antonii Radyvylovskiy, titled *Vinets’ Khrystov* (Kyiv, 1688) [Radyvylovskiy, 1688]

## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

This chapter endeavors to determine with maximum possible precision the semantic fields of the terms *dobro* and *blaho* as they are used in Hryhorii Skovoroda’s philosophical works. My goal is to help researchers address important practical problems that arise when interpreting and translating the legacy of this prominent Ukrainian author.

Primarily, I wish to develop a method that is applicable when approaching and interpreting Skovoroda’s writings on a micro level. This method should lead from understanding specific words to determining the meaning of certain phrases and, consequently, clarifying the message of entire texts.<sup>8</sup> This approach coincides with one of the main approaches of Skovoroda, who himself analyzes many texts. He once proposed a treasure will not be found externally, but rather internally, within the Self.

My work follows on the footsteps of the microanalyses, conducted by many preceding scholars, who have:

- (a) identified the sources of Skovoroda’s writings, his inspiration, and the factors that influenced his general views;

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<sup>8</sup> I rely on the theory of Vladimir Propp, who proposes that words are the materials out of which the whole system of meanings of the text is built. [Propp, 1998].

- (b) identified the quotes in his texts, both direct and concealed, as well as the analogs he might have found in the mystical, philosophical and theological traditions of Western Europe, and
- (c) conducted detailed analyses and interpretation of discrete topics, motives and symbols that appear in his works.

My attempt at deconstructing the concealed meanings of Skovoroda's texts "from below," through individual word analyses will not replace the methodologies that are being used in this field. But I do believe that it represents a new and useful, supplementary point of view.

Let me outline the main stages of my work, which have led to the proposed conclusions:

1. I began with statistical calculations, by looking through the thirteen texts I selected and noting all the instances where any form of terms *dobro* and *blaho* is used. Then I performed a frequency analysis for each term.
2. Then I studied all the contexts in which terms *dobro* and *blaho* appear, classifying the semantic fields of both terms and separating them into two categories: quotidian usage, where they are simple words (e.g., *dobro nam zdi* – [it] has done good for us), and scholarly, where they function as philosophical or theological concepts (e.g., *sotvory Blaho* [create the Good], or *Trudna Dobrota* [Difficult Goodness]). Further on I analyzed these two categories separately.
3. Since one of the characteristic features of Skovoroda's philosophy is its dichotomous approach, I also selected all the opposing pairs for both terms (*blaho/zlo*, *dobro/zlo*, *dobro/lykho*, *dobre/lukave*<sup>9</sup>, etc.). They were statistically calculated and analyzed in their multiple contexts as well.
4. There is one other term that is very important for Skovoroda as a name of positive phenomena: *shchastia* (happiness). It is

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<sup>9</sup> *Zlo* and *Lykho* are semantically close terms that designate evil, trouble, misfortune, etc.

frequently combined with the concepts *dobro* and *blaho*; therefore, I also calculated and contextualized such combinations (*blaho/shchastia* and *dobro/shchastia*).

5. Based on the results of all aforementioned calculations, I made a chart of the principles by which Skovoroda used the lexemes *dobro* and *blaho*. The conclusions define the precise meanings the philosopher could give to these words and their dependence on different contexts.

### SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Skovoroda’s vocabulary was shaped under the influence of his linguistic environment. Consequently, even though he could imbue some words with new or additional meanings, his language remained the language of the Early-Modern Hetmanate and Sloboda Ukraine. For the sake of his audience, he had to adhere— to some extent — to their norms of word usage. It is conceivable that the philosopher wanted his texts to be read and understood by the average reader. But he also wished his audience to engage in his play on words, to solve his linguistic riddles, and by doing so develop their intellect and ethical stance. Thus, before going into an analysis of *dobro* and *blaho* in Skovoroda’s usage, we have to consider these terms in the more general context of Early-Modern Ukrainian common language. It must be noted at the outset that the word *blaho* was not used in Old Ukrainian, which relied on *dobro* to communicate all the possible meanings of “the good.” In Old Church Slavonic, on the other hand, both terms were employed.

The study of theological texts published in the Kyiv Metropolitanate from the end of 16<sup>th</sup> till the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup> demonstrates the following basic principles of how terms *dobro* and *blaho* were applied at the time:

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<sup>10</sup> This is merely an outline. For further details see: [Dovga, 2016a; Dovga, 2016b; Dovga & Olishchuk, 2016].

1. The word *blaho* was not used in Old Ukrainian texts. It was always replaced with the word *dobro*. At the same time, texts written in Old Church Slavonic used both *blaho* and *dobro*.
2. The choice of lexeme in both cases depended not only on the linguistic situation, but also on whether the text was written in the low, medium or high style.
3. In Old Church Slavonic texts:
  - (a) the noun *blaho* and other words beginning with a “*blah-*” stem dominate over the term *dobro* and its derivatives
  - (b) the noun *blaho* and the adjective *blahe* are reserved for the high style; they are usually used in the context of sacred matters
  - (c) the noun *dobro* and the adjective *dobre* are employed in profane matters, in reference to quotidian objects and phenomena (in most cases they serve as synonyms for *zruchne* [comfortable], *korysne* [useful], *krasyve* [nice], *pryvablyve* [beautiful, beguiling], *iakisne* [high-quality], etc.)
  - (d) both *blaho* and *dobro* can be used as synonyms when they define certain virtues; but even in such cases *dobro* is never used within a strictly sacral context, it can only mark phenomena that are between the sacred and the profane
4. In Old Ukrainian texts:
  - (a) the word *blaho* is absent
  - (b) in translations from Greek and Old Church Slavonic *blaho* is still replaced with *dobro* even though the latter lexeme sometimes erases the boundary between sacred and profane spheres, which is present in the original texts. For instance, the Greek terms τὸ ἀγαθὸν/τὸ κάλλιον which in Old Church Slavonic are respectively translated as *blaho/dobro*, in Old Ukrainian are rendered as *dobro/dobro*.
  - (c) in quotidian situations the term *dobro* can be altered by *zatsnost'* (nobility), *tsydnost'* (excellence), *uroda* (beauty), *potikha* (fun), *roskosh* (luxury) or other synonyms

5. We can be quite sure that when the intellectuals of the Kyiv Metropolitanate wrote (or translated) a text in Old Church Slavonic they always reserved the special high-register field for the term *blaho*.
6. The noun *dobro* functions as an equivalent of the term *blaho* in Old Ukrainian texts, but its semantic field remains blurred till the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, in this period it cannot be considered a clearly defined philosophical or theological term or concept.
7. In the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century, the boundary between styles (or registers) of language, namely between high theological discourse and low daily one, was demarcated by several factors. One of them was the choice of language itself<sup>11</sup>: the “sacral” Old Church Slavonic vs “common” Old Ukrainian. The other was the choice of certain words within each of these languages and the separation of terms close in meaning, depending on their sphere of usage.

Things changed in the second half of 17<sup>th</sup> century, as we can see from the analysis of texts published by the press of the Kyiv Caves Monastery (Pecherska Lavra). In that period the situation looked like this:

1. In Old Church Slavonic texts the segregation between semantic fields of the terms *dobro* and *blaho* becomes clear and strict. *Blaho* is only for the sacral sphere, *dobro* for the vernacular sphere, and cases of vagueness and in-between contexts are almost completely gone.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In the Early-Modern Kyiv Metropolitanate sacral texts and theological literature were translated, written and published in both Old Church Slavonic and Old Ukrainian, though the former was dominant. Among the works published in Old Ukrainian the most significant are: *Peresopnytsia Gospels* [PG, 2011]; the translations of John Chrysostom included in *Likarstvo na ospalyi umysl cholovychy...* [The Remedy, 1607], and the *Didactic gospel* by Cyril Tranquil Stavrovec'kyj [Stavrovec'kyj, 1619].

<sup>12</sup> This tendency is already evident in the translation of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Andreas of Caesarea, published in 1625 [Andreas of Caesarea, 1625], and becomes constant since *Myr z Bohom choloviku* by Inokentii Gizel' (1669) [Giesel, 1669].

2. The term *blaho* enters into the sermons written in Old Ukrainian.<sup>13</sup> It is used to describe phenomena of the sacral world or some of the sacral elements as they are incarnated in the realm of the profane.
3. The word *dobro* does not gain a precise, strictly determined sphere of usage. But, as statistical analysis shows, in sacral contexts the term *blaho* dominates now.
4. Old Ukrainian vocabulary gradually develops a semantic differentiation between theological discourse and daily spoken language. It acquires certain new words that come from the high register, namely theological and philosophical scholarly style, and at the same time remakes some of its usual words into terms with more or less clear definitions and contextual fields.
5. The term *blaho* is adopted into Old Ukrainian writings by the intellectuals of Kyiv in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later in the 18<sup>th</sup>. It functions as the term that draws a conceptual line between the vocabularies of two registers. It separates the “high” style of the sacral language from the “middle” style used to explain the sacral to “simple” people.

Finally, texts written in the first half and the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century demonstrate that at that time the situation became more or less stable. In these texts both lexemes seem to gain their semantic fields in both Old Ukrainian and Old Church Slavonic languages. The term *blaho* (and adjective *blahe*) function as the characteristic of:

- (a) God and His Gifts;
- (b) treasures of the Upper World;
- (c) ultimate satisfaction of the moral needs of humans;
- (d) ultimate goals and absolute value of human life;

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<sup>13</sup> The first author to introduce this term to Old Ukrainian vocabulary was Antonii Radyvylovs'kyi (See: [Radyvylovs'kyi, 1676] and [Radyvylovs'kyi, 1688]). It appears that he perceived this term to be foreign in the Ukrainian language; thus, in some instances he specially describes and explains it to his flock. See my analysis in [Dovga, 2016b].

- (e) absolute perfection, highest moral values, balance and harmony of the soul;
- (f) occasionally to designate acts of charity;

The term *dobro* (and adjective *dobre*) are used to describe:

- (a) moral virtues and other positive traits of a person’s character;
- (b) acts of charity and a person’s will to perform them;
- (c) physical beauty and attraction;
- (d) wealth and material goods (in such cases usually in plural – *dóbra*);
- (e) anything pleasant, comfortable, helpful in a usual profane life;
- (f) work well done or a person’s ability to perform it (as a synonym to *staranno* [carefully], *uvazhno* [attentively], *sumlinno* [conscientiously]);
- (g) positive features of natural objects (such as good grain, good horse, etc.);

In instances where the moral virtues of human beings are discussed, the semantic fields of *dobro* and *blaho* may still intersect in Old Church Slavonic texts, while in Old Ukrainian almost every such case is covered with the term *dobro*.

Worthy of note is the manner in which these terms were used in the plural. In modern Ukrainian the word *blaho* has a standard plural form: *bláha*. But *dobró* has lost its plural and is used only in the singular. In Early-Modern Old Church Slavonic and Old Ukrainian, we see the opposite. The word *blaho* is hardly ever used in the plural, but the plurals of *dobro* – *dóbr* and *dóbra* – are rather common. This might result from the fact that the sacral world in early modernity was perceived as a unified, monolithic entity, while the profane sphere represented a multiplicity of detached elements.

### ***BLAHO AND DOBRO: THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION***

As already mentioned, the difference between the semantic fields of *dobro* and *blaho* becomes especially relevant when translating Ukrainian philosophical texts into languages that do not have the means to express their difference. In the case of Skovoroda's works it becomes even more complicated because, in addition to the traditional semantic distinction of these two words, a translator also needs to consider the author's specific word usage. Skovoroda sacrifices the general rules of Old Ukrainian language to convey the philosophical sense with which he imbues words. At some instances he picks a certain word according to the subtle nuances of its meaning in a specific context, to the semantic peculiarities of its specific form, or even its sound or graphical appearance. Such details lead him to ignore usual grammar rules and even erase the boundary among different languages (e.g., Old Ukrainian, Old Church Slavonic, and standard Russian). He transforms words into the strings of a musical instrument, depending on which he touches and meaning he selects, the music changes its tone, key and character. As George Y. Shevelov noted, for Skovoroda: "*verbal experimentation conveys the ultimate truth, and the web of words becomes an adequate means to express the wealth and intricacy of God's manifestations in the visible word.*" [Shevelov, 1994, p. 113].

Skovoroda "plays" the strings of *dobro* and *blaho* with subtlety and care. Hence before presenting my analysis of his works in a wider perspective, I would like to provide a case study on his word-usage and attempts at its interpretation in English. As an example, I chose the translation by an excellent specialist whose scholarship is very sophisticated. This makes my example of misunderstanding between author and translator highly representative.

Let us consider George Kline's translation of *Razhovor piaty putnykov o istynnom shchastyi v zhyzni*, titled *A conversation among five travelers concerning life's true happiness* [Skovoroda, Kline 1965].

In this colloquy the term *blaho* is used twice as a noun; it is not used adjectivally or adverbially (e.g., *blaho*, *shcho* or *blahyi*); but there are 25 other terms that begin with the *blah-* stem, such as *blahovonnyi* (fragrant), *blahovistvuiut* ([they] glorify, praise), *blahodaryty* (to praise, to thank), *blahodarnost'* (gratitude), *blahodat'* (grace), *blahopoluchiie* (prosperity, well-being), *blahoprystoinist'* (decency), *blahorodnyi* (noble, decent, faithful), *blahosloven* (blessed), *blahoslovliu* ([I] bless, praise), *blahoukhannyi* (scented).<sup>14</sup>

The word *dobro* appears in this text three times as a noun and twelve times as an adjective (*dobryi*), but the stem *dobro-* appears in only six cases, among them: *dobroditel'* (virtue, goodness), *dobroditel'nyi* (virtuous, righteous), and *dobroserdechnyi* (kind, good-hearted).

Now let us consider Kline’s translation of the fragments where the nouns *blaho* and *dobro* appear. In Skovoroda’s text there are three such moments, but Kline translates only two of them:

Original text by Skovoroda	English translation by Kline
Яков: ... Вить тое, что лучше всего, то и выше всего, а что выше всего, то всему Голова и Конец. Сіе главнѣйшее <i>добро</i> <sup>15</sup> названо у древних философов Окончаніем всѣх <i>добр</i> и верховнѣйшим <i>добр</i> ом. Кто ж тебѣ может развязать, что такое есть Край и Пристанище всѣх наших желаній? [A Conversation]	For what is best of all is highest of all, and what is highest of all is the head and crown of all. This chief good was called by the ancient philosophers the “ <i>ultimate good</i> ” and the “ <i>summum bonum</i> ”. But who can unravel for you the homeland and haven of all our desires? [Skovoroda, Kline 1965]
Григорій: Потому что не разумѣем, в чем оно состоит. Голова дѣлу то, чтоб узнать: Отсюду родится желаніе, от желанія иск, потом полученіе. Вот и <i>благодолучіе</i> , сирѣч полученіе, что для тебе <i>благо</i> . [A Conversation]	Because we do not understand in what it consists. The chief thing is to discover the source of desire. Desire seeks something and then receives it. This is <i>well-being</i> , that is, the getting of what is <i>good</i> for you. [Skovoroda, Kline 1965].

<sup>14</sup> Most of these words have synonyms that are not derived from *blaho*. Some examples from the *Lexicon* by Pamvo Berynda: *blahovisitiiie: dobraia povist'*; *blahodareniiie: diakovaniie, dobroie podiakovaniie*; *blahodarnyi: podiachlyvyi, vdiachnyi*; *blahodaru: diakuii*; *blahodat': laska*; *blahopoluchiie: shchastie*; *blahoslovliaiu: dobre movliu, khvaliu, vyslavliaiu*; *blahoukhaniie: vdiachnyi zapakh* [Berynda, 1627, colum. 6-11].

<sup>15</sup> In this table, all *italics* are mine – L.D.

Original text by Skovoroda	English translation by Kline
Лонгин: Длѣчего ж не зваться Ему Миром и Мира имущемоу Крѣпостью, если Он показывает, гдѣ Мир, и побуждает к нему, находясь сам всему благу Началом и Источником? [A Conversation]	Klein omits this section.

Scholars usually note the dichotomous nature of Skovoroda's writings, and *Razhovor piaty putnykov o istynnom shchastyi v zhyzni* is not an exception. The fragments given in this table include two main lines of thought pursued by the interlocutors. One of them is framed within the sphere of earthly life, it is profane, simple and mortal, while the other one leads to the sacral sphere, to the world of sacred and eternal truth.

The first fragment comes from the beginning of the dialogue. It initiates a dispute on earthly values. The five travelers are pondering the problem of happiness: what is it, and where can it be found. Their first solution seems to be the most obvious one: happiness can be found through possession of something good and desirable; the happy person has a lot of *dobro*. But Iakov appeals to the "wisdom of the ancient philosophers" (Aristotle, perhaps) and draws attention to another concept. He supposes the existence of the preeminent or highest good. His interlocutors support this idea. Yet Iakov does not explain what is so special about this good that brings true happiness to the individual. Either he does not know it, or he is not willing to reveal his knowledge yet. In this part of the colloquy the disputants limit their search of happiness to the boundaries of the profane sphere; they only discuss earthly lures, such as high offices, riches, estates, intellect, beauty, health, fame, strong family, loyal friends, etc. But none of these can be possessed in absolute fashion. There is always going to be someone richer, wiser, healthier than you. It is difficult to imagine someone in complete possession of all of these. Moreover, experience shows that wealth, fame, beauty and the like frequently lead people to moral degradation, propelling them to evil deeds that can cause misfortune in private and social life.

Once the discussion about these issues is exhausted, Hryhorii initiates a new line of thought. He proposes to look for a real, True Happiness, not

the fictitious one they have been seeking thus far. What they need is to abandon the land of profane, animal passions and turn to the path of moral development, which leads toward the Divine Wisdom and Light. This is the moment in the text where the “preeminent place” of *dobro* cedes to *blaho*. Skovoroda does not use any modifiers with the term *blaho*. He has no need to qualify it as “prime,” “highest” or “ultimate,” because it is already an absolute concept. Worthy of note is the manner in which Skovoroda changes his references here. When he has Iakov speak about *dobro*, he labels it as the “highest good” and cites the “ancient philosophers.” But once the conversation turns to *blaho*, he introduces symbols taken from the Bible. Thus, the author distinguishes even more vividly the profane field of *dobro* from the sacral field of *blaho*.

For this reason, in this first piece of the text Skovoroda allows Iakov to use neither the term *blaho*, nor any Greek or Latin words. This part of dialog is set among “simpletons,” the common folk, so the language has to have a suitable register. Kline’s English translation of this fragment does not recognize this semantic difference. Kline could not find a proper English equivalent that would express the difference between *okonchaniie vsikh dobr* [“the highest level of all goods”] and *verkhovniishie dobro* [“the highest good”]. Therefore, he translated the first as “ultimate good” (which could have worked had he not made Skovoroda’s plural concept of disunited “goods” into a singular “good”), while replacing the second with a Latin term. This usage of Latin contradicts the conceptual meaning of the whole text. At first, it might appear that the author himself had used this Latin term. The use of Latin automatically “upgrades” the language from common, daily speech to a “higher” register that creates an association with the sacral sphere. This association then confuses the readers, because at the beginning of the colloquy Iakov does not as yet address such matters. His mention of the “highest good” as *verkhovne dobro* (not *blaho*) is a powerful hint. It foreshadows the existence of a sacral sphere, but neither Skovoroda’s characters nor the readers are invited to visit the sacred world yet. Quite the opposite, these hints merely initiate a long process of searching. The readers are going to dwell on detailed explanations for a good part of the text before they could reach the full understanding of the

high sacral concepts. However, the English translation spoils the process by revealing the goal of the discussion at the very beginning of the text, prematurely simplifying the journey toward understanding.

The second fragment in the table argues that none of the earthly lures can make a person happy because they are not stable; a human being could never rely on any of them. The only thing that is really stable and reliable is a life in union with God. To live with God in your heart is the only way to gain true happiness. Happiness is *blahopoluchchiia*, which means acquiring the things that impart real *blaho* on a human being. This is the first place in this colloquy where Skovoroda replaces the term *dobro* with the term *blaho* to show the transition of the “good” under discussion from the profane to the sacral sphere. Here the readers’ journey takes them to the frontier, the place where the profane meets the sacral, the mortal meets the eternal, the human meets the Divine, the *dobro* meets the *blaho*. But the English translation does not make it clear, since “well-being” and “good for you” which are meant to express *blahopoluchchiia* and *blaho* cannot show this transition in any way. They are not distinct from the “ultimate good” which is used for *dobro*. The English equivalents used here are so quotidian that they draw this segment of the text back to the usual, profane world. Thus, the translation loses the deep didactic and philosophical sense intended by the author.

The last of the aforementioned fragments is fully dedicated to *blaho*, i.e., the true value, to which “(the Creator) himself is the Reason and the Source” (“[Творецъ є] самъ всьому благу Началом и Источником”). It also emphasizes on the wholeness of *blaho*; this is why it is expressed in the singular “*vsionu blahu*,” not in the plural. “*Vsim blaham*” (plural) would not be possible for Skovoroda. Special attention is given to the omnipresence of *blaho*: it is a constant part of the whole of Nature. But in the English translation this part is just absent.

There is one more detail, which is prominent in the original text but lost in translation. The two discourses formed by the contexts of two terms – *dobro* and *blaho* – are connected by some elegant transitions, and so are the two worlds they represent – profane and sacral.

One of these transitions is the notion of happiness, *shchastia*. The ways Skovoroda uses this term and its possible meanings in his works may be the topic of an entire new chapter. Noteworthy here is the role of *shchastia* as a destination about which the debates in *A Conversation* turn. The concept of absolute happiness, which is the goal of life of any normal creature on Earth, serves to visualize the boundary between *blaho* and *dobro*. Therefore at the very end of the discussion the travelers agree that *blaho* is almost equal to *shchastia*, whereas *dobro* stands very far from both of them. It is not even on the way to either.

The second transition between the two spheres is constructed by composite words, e.g., “*Вот и благополучие, сирѣчь получение, что для тебе благо.*” These words of Hryhorii could be roughly translated as follows: “Here you find well-being, which means the being that is well for you.” Both “well-being” in the main clause – *blahopoluchiie* – and “well” in the subordinate clause – *blaho* – are formed with the stem *blah-*. Therefore, this “well-being” cannot be simply replaced with Ukrainian *shchastie* (happiness), which is formally its synonym, as Pamvo Berynda’s *Lexicon* states. *Blahopoluchiie* is not just happiness caused by the good conditions of life. *Blahopoluchiie* is the state of receiving *blaho*, which in Skovoroda’s *Dialog* means entering into a unitive exchange with the Creator. I suppose, this is the reason why we find so many words with the *blah-* stem in this text. Usually this peculiarity of Skovoroda’s vocabulary is explained by the impact of Old Church Slavonic and Russian on his language. But, this is reductive reasoning. They are written with a definite purpose, i.e., to show the presence of the Divine in a human being’s daily life. Fragrant things are called *blahovonni*, the fresh air is referred to as “*svitlyi i blahovonnyi vozdukh*” that brings joy to people, whereas the scented smoke (*blahoukhannyi*) rises to the Creator. All those who smell like true *blaho*, their smell elevates the human spirit and delivers it to the God. A similar situation pertains to such terms as *blahodarite*, *blahodarnost’*, *blahodareniiie*. They all express gratitude in some way, but in Skovoroda’s text they can not be taken as synonyms of Ukrainian *diakovaniie*, *podiachlyvyi/vdiachnyi* or *diakuiu*, even though these words are also directly translated as “thanks”, “grateful” and “thank you.” When

the philosopher uses these composites with *blaho* he refers to the transfer of *blaho* from the sacred sphere to earthly life, when human express thanks to the Lord for his Grace. This is not about the simple “thanks” that we say to each other every day. When Skovoroda wants to speak about positive things in our daily life or the positive features of a man, he uses the term *dobro* or its derivatives. For example “*k dobromu dilu*” is applied to a good business, “*dobryi konets*” to the good end, while “*dobryi liude*” means “good people.” A number of similar composite words—like *dobroditel’nyi* or *dobroserdechnyi* (could be translated as virtuous, righteous, kind)—refer to some specific ways in which people can be “good.” Skovoroda uses the *dobro*- stem words much more rarely than the *blaho* compounds, since the human world makes only a tiny part of the Great World made by the Creator.

### ***BLAHO AND DOBRO IN THE CONTEXT OF SKOVORODA’S COLLOQUIES***

As my analysis of the *Razhovor piaty putnykov o istynnom shchastyi v zhyzni* shows, this text makes a strict distinction between two types of “the good.” The term *blaho* is reserved for the sacral sphere and the reflections that God’s Grace makes on human life, while the term *dobro* is mostly used to describe the profane realities of the earthly world. But does such a distinction work in all of Skovoroda’s writings? Could one claim that he confers these two Ukrainian words with certain permanent semantic fields and thus entitles them to represent specific philosophical concepts? To answer these questions I propose to analyze a wider selection of his texts and see if this rule is true for all of them.

First, let us turn to statistical data. In the selection of 13 works that I have studied,<sup>16</sup> the term *blaho* appears altogether 98 times: as a noun it appears 15 times; as an adverb 15 times; as an adjective (*blahyi* in three gender forms and two numbers) 68 times. There are 140 cases of *dobro*: as

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<sup>16</sup> See the list of these texts in the Primary Sources section of this chapter.

a noun it appears 24 times (once in a diminutive form *dobretsa*); the noun *dobrota* (a derivative, meaning “kindness”) appears 12 times; as an adverb *dobro/dobre* appears 10 times; as an adjective *dobryi* (in three gender forms and two numbers) 94 times.

As we can see, in Skovoroda’s works, the general usage of the term *dobro* in its multiple forms predominates significantly over the term *blaho*. Yet, when one reads these texts, *dobro* is far less visible than the numerous compounds utilizing *blaho*. The analyzed texts give us 324 examples of the latter, while there are only 21 terms combined with *dobro*. I will propose an explanation of the possible reasons for this later in this chapter.

Hryhorii Skovoroda used the term *blaho* as a philosophical concept with a strictly determined semantic field. Analysis of the listed texts demonstrates it very clearly. He only uses this term in the context of something sacred, be it the sacral world itself or the narrow “borderland” where the two worlds intersect and where the ultimate meaning of human life can be found. If an individual or a society attempts to imitate the Divine, thus bringing some sacred elements into the profane world, such efforts are also defined as *blaho*. Here I would like to provide a more detailed illustration of how the semantic fields of *blaho* work in Skovoroda’s texts. With this purpose in mind, I list the examples of different applications of this term in accordance with their contexts:

1. *Blaho* works directly as an alternative name for the Creator or as His symbol: *Сей есть один родник неисчерпаемый всему благу и блаженству нашему, он сам есть оное блаженство, безвиновное НАЧАЛО ... Сія высочайшая вина всеобщим именем именуется БОГ*<sup>17</sup> [The Circle]; *Кто благ? или кто мил, кромъ Бога?* [Conversation The Two]; *...Она есть Лъствица, Все возводящая к Богу. Он Един благ и Един высок.* [The Serpent’s Flood]; *...не благій ли Дух? а Дух благій не тожели, что БОГ? ... кромъ Бога, ничтоже Благо* [Lot’s Wife].

<sup>17</sup> Here and subsequently, I quote Skovoroda only in the original, for fear that any translation of his sophisticated play on words can be unclear or, at best, misleading. The orthography and formatting of the original is preserved.

2. *Blaho* is associated with the Creator through the mediating notion of Nature<sup>18</sup>: *Природа Благая есть Всему Начало и без нея Ничтоже бысть, еже бысть БЛАГО*. [Herodius].
3. *Blaho* characterizes the Upper World and its creatures: *Великая и благая Дума Есть-то Главный Ангел, вѣсть благая, Совѣтъ прав...* [Conversation 2].
4. *Blaho* expresses the idea of the direct impact of God: *Сіе Иго велми Благо и Легко есть...* [Conversation The Two]; *Иногда, де, во убогом Домикѣ, исполненном Страха Божія, Друг Роду Человѣческому Благо рождается ЧЕЛОВѢК, ... яко не Красота Мыра сего, ни Тварь кая-либо, но едина Благодать Божія Благому Рожденію Виновна бывает*. [Herodius].
5. *Blaho* expresses the presence of God's Will in certain earthly phenomena, usually a person's deeds or thoughts: *Однак благая во мнѣ дума* [Conversation 2]; *...как всякое благое Дѣло в зачатіи и в коренѣ горкое...* [Conversation 2]; *Двѣ суть Главныя Родительскія Должности сіи: "БЛАГО родить и БЛАГО научить* [Herodius]; *Воспитаніе же истекает от Природы, вливающія в Сердце Сѣмя Благія Воли...* (Herodius); *...здравая и мирная душа благія пристрастности любит...* [Plutarch].
6. *Blaho* defines the highest value as the ultimate goal of a human being's life: *Вся испытайте, благая же пріемлите* [Conversation The Two]; *Сыне мой! ... учися единыя Благодарности. ... Ты рожден еси Благо, и сія Наука есть Дщерь Природы твоя...* [Herodius]; *БЛАГА МУДРОСТЬ ... паче же видящим Солнце* [Icon of Alcibiades]

In the above quotations the term *blaho* can probably be replaced with the Greek equivalent τὸ ἀγαθόν and translated in English as "Highest Good" or "Ultimate Good."

<sup>18</sup> Almost all of the scholars who study the philosophy of Skovoroda point out that he tends to treat Nature and the Creator as equal notions. E.g.: [Bilaniuk, 1994; Chyzhevs'kyi, 2003; Kline, 1994; Kline, 1997; Popovych, 2008; Ushkalov, 2001]. Yet the linguistic analysis of this specific feature remains undeveloped.

The application of *dobro* and its derivatives in these texts has many more diverse semantic fields. First of all it works as an adaptation of *blaho* for realities of the profane world, which makes this high concept easily understandable for simple people. An example of such usage can be found in *Herodius*: “Ничтоже бо есть Бог, точію СЕРДЦЕ Вселенныя, наше же Сердце нам же есть ГОСПОДЬ и ДУХ. Сіе Домашнее они свое БЛАГО со Временем узнав и плънився Прекрасною ЕГО Добротою, не станут безобразно и бѣсновато гонитися за Мырскими Суетами...”[*Herodius*]. *Dobro* may also stand for the positive characteristic of earthly phenomena. It defines profane things, deeds and ideas that are appropriate and truthful. In such instances, it might be seen as a reflection or a shadow cast by *blaho* into the world of human beings. Yet *dobro* can also gain negative connotations and stay in opposition to *blaho*. Skovoroda frequently turns to the word *dobro* when speaking about the elements (e.g., wealth, health, physical beauty, high offices, manors and lands, intellect, fame, power, etc.) that people erroneously confuse with aspects of true happiness. In fact, this is the main difference between *blaho* and *dobro*. The former is always real and is eternal. The persons who do *blaho*, want *blaho*, struggle for *blaho*, aim at *blaho* in their life are always right. Such persons cannot be mistaken, their path is truthful, therefore they cannot possibly be let down or cheated. The reward is waiting at the end of their difficult journey. *Dobro*, on the other hand, may be fake, deceptive and temporary. *Dobro* is plural and it seems to provide many alternative ways in life. But the person who falls into temptation and chooses *dobro* over *blaho* is in fact cheating the self. Trapped by earthly passions, such a person is bound to loose more and more life energy while accumulating more and more needless *dobra* (pl.!), and finally gets frustrated. This road leads a person toward complete unhappiness, away from God and his *blaho*.

Let us have a closer look at the different contexts where Skovoroda employs the term *dobro*. Again, I list the examples according to their semantic fields and possible implemented connotations:

1. An element of the sacral world, God's creation or the secret knowledge of God ("fundamental *dobro*"): *На сіє доброе свое дѣло взирал ВЫШНІЙ добрым своим Оком.* [Icon of Alcibiades]; *Сіи суть добрыя дѣвы...* [Conversation 2]; *...от сих же Источников раждается двойный вкус в Библии: Добрый и Лукавый, спасительный и погибельный...* [Conversation 2]; *ДОМ БОЖІЙ. ... что добро, и толь красно, яко ДОМ ЕГО?* [Conversation 2]; *Добрый и злый Ангел приставляются в рожденіи каждому челоуьку...* [Plutarch]; *... называя ЗДБ остающихся Людьюми, вѣдуцими ДОБРО и ЗЛО, каков, видно, был Адам, изганяемый из Рая.* [The Serpent's Flood].
2. Something positive, praiseworthy, desirable, charitable, truthful: *Тó κάλλος χαλεπόν ἐστί. Трудна Доброта* [Conversation The Two]; *Вот тебѣ от мене награда! За твое доброе Слово!* [Conversation The Two]; *...имѣть Дома, внутрь себе, все свое некрадомое Добро* [Herodius]; *Наше Добро во Огнь не горит, в Водѣ не тонет, Тля не тлит ...* [Herodius]; *Добрыи Плоды, приносиміи Богу* [Herodius]; *Фортуна ... над истинным добром твоим не имѣет власти* [Plutarch]; *Тогда сердце дѣлается доброю нивою, падает и пріемлется ВБЧНОСТИ Зерно* [Lot's Wife].
3. A positive feature of a person or a natural phenomenon, also a sign of harmony between a person and human nature: *Поговори еще мнѣ о добрых Птицах* [Conversation The Two]; *Рожденнаго на Добро не трудно научить на Добро...* [Herodius]; *Как же не противно разуму бѣситься и мучиться тѣм, что не всѣ тѣ добрыи и вѣжливы, с коими нам жить довелось?* [Plutarch].
4. Praiseworthy moral deeds: *За добрую же славу лучше желает Павел умерѣть* [Conversation 2]; *Если Совѣтъ добр, то и плоды добрые...* [Lot's Wife].
5. Its negative meaning can be discerned where the earthly world's vanity, false aims, delusions abide: *Оно Глупомудрым Сердцам видится Добром, по Естеству же своему есть лукавое.*

[Dialog or Discourse]; *Конечно, сей Змій есть тот же, что нашептал Еву, будто у Смертнаго Древа добрый Плод* [The Serpent’s Flood]; *...есть нещасливая душа, щастіе свое на пьску стихійном основавшая и увѣрившая себя, что можно добро свое сыскать внѣ Бога ... По сему видно, что все свѣтское добро нѣсть добро; оно сокрушается...* [The Circle].

Finally, there is one more important element which helps to define the semantic distinction between *dobro* and *blaho* in Skovoroda’s works. This is the way he chooses antonyms for each of term. Since the dichotomous approach is one of his most usual philosophical instruments this detail cannot be omitted from my analysis.

In all analyzed texts there is only one antonym for *blaho* – *zlo* (evil). It appears in eleven out of eleven antitheses. A couple of examples will suffice: “Ангел благій и злый... благій и злый Дух” [Conversation 2]; “Уклонися от зла и сотвори Благо” [Conversation on The Two]. In contrast to *blaho*, the term *dobro* has a lot of antonyms. The first and most frequently used is the noun *zlo* and the adjective *zlyi*; it appears thirteen times in the texts (e.g., “Таков, аще себѣ Зол, Кому добр будет?” [Herodius]; “Добро и Зло, Нищету и Богатство Господь сотворил и слѣпил во ЕДИНО” [The Serpent’s Flood]). The second most used word pair is the noun *lukavstvo* and the adjective *lukavyi*, which could be approximately translated as “wicked” or “cunning.” These can be seen in such cases, as “лукавое и доброе, лжа и Истина” [Conversation 2] or “видится Добром, по Естеству же своему есть лукавое” [Dialog or Discourse]. The total number of such cases is nine in all texts. But I also found such antitheses as *dobryi* – *smertnyi* (mortal): “будто у Смертнаго Древа добрый Плод” [The Serpent’s Flood]; *dobroe* – *durnoie* (bad): “Будто чрез нея ... дурное случилось или нѣчто доброе не досталось” [Plutarch]; *dobryi* – *pustyi, khudyi* (vain, shallow); *dobroe* – *rastlinnoie* (corrupted, immoral) and a many others. The opposition between *dobro* and *zlo* is fundamental. This refers to that eternal struggle between good and evil, which generates the dichotomous nature of our

world and always forces humans to make a choice. However, the opposition between *blaho* and *zlo* has another meaning. It could also be interpreted as the war of Good and Evil. In this case both words are capitalized, since this pertains to concepts of the high register. *Blaho* with its antagonist *Zlo* is used to speak about the God's wisdom and His Will in the struggle against demonic Evil. In fact all applications of *zlo*—with *blaho* or *dobro* being its antonym—convey the concept of evil as a matter of choice. The term *zlo* never refers to a mistake or a delusion, but always to the conscious decision a person makes within the struggle between Light and Darkness, between God and the Dark Forces. This decision is principal for the author and must be understood as such by his readers. In cases where Skovoroda posits *lukavstvo* as an antonym of *dobro* he is speaking about a mistake, a situation when a person was cheated by his/her human passions. The importance of making a decision is also present in this context: a person has to choose *dobro*. But it appears that this is not a principal matter with *lukavstvo*. All other antonyms of *dobro* bring us to matters of daily life, they are mostly descriptive and do not bear any philosophical or ideological weight.

## CONCLUSION

Many more examples could be used to shed more light on the nuances of the semantic differences between *dobro* and *blaho*. But the analysis I have provided allows me to draw a few conclusions:

1. Hryhorii Skovoroda defines a clearly limited field of usage for the term *blaho*. He reserves it for topics concerning the Creator, the Sacral World, and the reflections of certain sacred phenomena in the human world in the form of true absolute values and ultimate goals. This term is not used to describe the moral virtues of a human being or any deeds motivated solely by the human will. These strict contextual limitations convince us that the term *blaho*

functioned as a definite philosophical concept in Skovoroda’s system.

2. This conclusion is supported by the vast number of compound words that begin with the *blah-* stem in Skovoroda’s works. The presence of God in human life and the projection of His Will into the earthly world are “visualized” by some symbolic events or images. Such reflections or shadows of the Sacral can be seen through the *blah-* elements, which affect certain profane objects. This is how we get *blahopoluchiie* (literally “the receiving or gaining of *blaho*,” meaning well-being, prosperity), *blahodarnist’/blahodareniiie* (literally “the giving of *blaho*,” meaning gratitude), *blaho-rodstvo* (literally “the innate *blaho*”, meaning righteousness, faithfulness, also nobility, but in moral terms rather than nobility of birth), and so forth.<sup>19</sup> These derivatives of *blaho* could be called the terms of the intersection. Their semantic fields lie within the boundary where the sacral and the profane worlds meet.
3. In Skovoroda’s texts, the lexeme *dobro* is applied only to the earthly world. Even in cases where it is used to describe or explain the term *blaho*, it does not serve to complete this high concept in any way. The *dobrota* (“goodness”) of *blaho* may occur when the text addresses simple human beings whose imagination is limited by the profane sphere, and therefore the sacred notion has to be explicated in a way accessible to them. *Dobro* is also used to define highly moral human deeds, as well as other positive and praiseworthy aspects of daily life. This is a likely explanation for a comparatively small number of *dobr-* stem words in the philosopher’s vocabulary. A logical conclusion here would be that *dobro*, as well as *blaho*, has a strictly determined semantic field,

<sup>19</sup> This what Skovoroda says on this matter: *Развъ же То не Тожде есть: Благое чествовать и Благий Дар за Благо почитать? Благочестіе чествует тогда, когда Благодарность почтет за Благое. ... Благочестность есть Дщерь Благодарности. Сыне мой! ... учися единыя Благодарности. ... Ты рожден еси Благо, и сія Наука есть Дщерь Природы твоя ... Благодарность же есть Твердь и Здравіе Сердца, пріемлющаго Все во БЛАГО и укрѣпляющагося. ... Во Благодарности (рече) так сокрылося всякое Благо, как Огнь и Свѣт утаился во Кремешкѣ. [Herodius]*

and it is out of the philosophical terminology used by Skovoroda. In other words, *dobro* is not a concept; it is just a descriptive word.

4. The word *dobro* is often used in the context of daily life as part of colloquial language. Here its senses are rather blurred and diverse, but again it is definitely not a special term.
5. According to Skovoroda's vocabulary, one could place *blaho* in hierarchical dominance over *dobro*. At the same time *dobro* — together with its analogs *dobrota*, *dobrist'* and the like—are clear, accessible and desirable for every human being. Meanwhile *blaho* is connected with moral advancement and development, and so may become difficult to obtain. Therefore the *dobrist'* – goodness and need – of *blaho* is not necessarily obvious. Sometimes it has to be especially explained to the people who are captured by love for earthly attractions, pleasures, profits and other advantages.
6. Concerning the translation of Skovoroda's oeuvre, it is important to note the contexts of his word-usage can give us an idea of how to find the best equivalents. I suggest that the closest analogy of *dobro* would be the Greek terms κάλλος (τὸ κάλλον) or τὸ εὖ, and in English the Everyday Good. For *blaho* I would propose to use the Greek term τὸ ἀγαθόν and English the Highest Good or the Ultimate Good.
7. The demarcation line between *blaho* and *dobro* that we see in Hryhorii Skovoroda's works is also present in most of the philosophical texts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century written in Old Ukrainian. *Blaho* is always truthful and reliable, for it belongs to the Creator; it can be performed only by His Will and Grace, and serves as a kind of emanation of the Sacred into the profane sphere. *Dobro* may be true if it is an earthly analogy of *blaho*, but it may also be fake; it may appear to be positive and useful while really being wrong and evil. Such imaginary *dobro* or “individual *dobro*” that is aimed at personal, temporary needs might prove to be evil for the others (or for society) since it does not contain absolute *dobrist'* for everyone. In many cases it leads a person to *zlo*, which may be followed by death.

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- [1] The value system in the Ukrainian culture of the second half of the XVII century (on the basis of theoretical heritage of Inokentii Gizel) [Система цінностей в українській культурі другої половини XVII ст. (на прикладі теоретичної спадщини Інокентія Гізеля)] – Kyiv – Lviv: Svichado, 2012 – 344 p.
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