

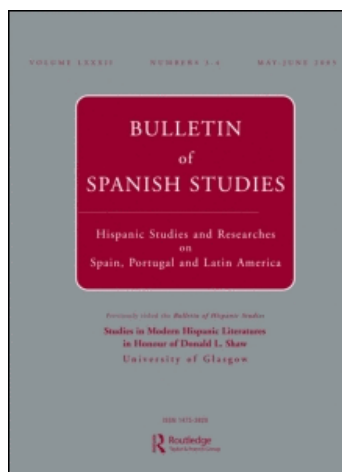
This article was downloaded by: [Fernandez-Medina, Nicolas][Pennsylvania State University]

On: 19 July 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 915425921]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Bulletin of Spanish Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713406790>

Pythagoras, Buddha and Christ: Antonio Machado's Poem lxxv of 'Proverbios y cantares' (*Nuevas canciones*)

Nicolás Fernández-Medina^a

^a The Pennsylvania State University,

Online publication date: 03 July 2010

To cite this Article Fernández-Medina, Nicolás(2010) 'Pythagoras, Buddha and Christ: Antonio Machado's Poem lxxv of 'Proverbios y cantares' (*Nuevas canciones*)', Bulletin of Spanish Studies, 87: 5, 613 — 624

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/14753820.2010.493061

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2010.493061>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Pythagoras, Buddha and Christ: Antonio Machado's Poem lxxv of 'Proverbios y cantares' (*Nuevas canciones*)

NICOLÁS FERNÁNDEZ-MEDINA

The Pennsylvania State University

lxxv

Siembra la malva:
pero no la comas,
dijo Pitágoras.
Responde al hachazo
—ha dicho el Buda ¡y el Cristo!—
con tu aroma, como el sándalo.
Bueno es recordar
las palabras viejas
que han de volver a sonar.

Of Antonio Machado's more than one hundred and sixty 'Proverbios y cantares' that appeared between 1909 and 1928, poem lxxv above, published in *Nuevas canciones* (1924), still remains somewhat of a mystery. In comparison to other poems in the section (for example, poem i: 'El ojo que ves no es / ojo porque tú lo veas; / es ojo porque te ve', or poem xxxvi: 'No es el yo fundamental / eso que busca el poeta, / sino el tú esencial'), poem lxxv has attracted little critical consideration, and when it has, it is often cited offhandedly as one of a scant few examples that reveal Machado's Far-East influences.¹ Furthermore, what is most alluring about this poem for many readers is not Pythagoras' opening dictum or the final verses concerning the 'palabras viejas', but rather the

1 For Gullón 'tanto en Darío como en Antonio Machado o en Herrera y Reissig, las dos figuras [Buda y Cristo] se equiparan en diversas formas; y a su lado, ejemplos paralelos de excelsitud en conducta y doctrina, aparecen los nombres de Pitágoras y Sócrates' (*Direcciones del modernismo*, 2ª ed. aumentada [Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1971], 274). Armand Baker argues that Far-East influences deeply affected Machado's poetry and thought. In the section titled 'Machado and Eastern Mysticism' of *The Religious and Philosophical Thought of*

‘curiosa identificación’, as Gullón worded it, between Buddha and Christ, for both are bound by the same proverbial expression.² Indeed, the Buddha-Christ association is intriguing, for it suggests that Machado considered Buddha favourably (and knew of Buddhist philosophy) by comparing him to Christ, an indelible and recurring symbol of love and fraternal union in his work (and often referenced is Juan de Mairena’s encomium of ‘[esos] hombres que ven un poco más allá de sus narices (Buda, Sócrates, Cristo) los cuales no abusan nunca de la retórica’).³ Yet, there is more to this poem—more poetic-philosophical depth—than first meets the eye.⁴ What purpose does Pythagoras’ dictum, specifically the ban on ingesting mallow, serve in the poem? How are Buddha and Christ associated in the proverbial

Antonio Machado (Sevilla: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 1985), Baker shows how Machado was attracted to Eastern philosophy and its theory of reincarnation. Elsewhere he interprets poem lxxv as follows: ‘Help nature to complete its creative task, but do it without personal gain; respond to violence with peace and beauty and, if wounded, turn the other cheek with love; be a loving person, in short, and don’t let yourself be carried away by passions—all of this is suggested by this beautiful little poem’ (162). For Philip G. Johnston, ‘the dialogue in number lxxv is obviously not to be taken at face value, since it involves Pythagoras in discussion with Buddha and Christ’ (*The Power of Paradox in the Work of Spanish Poet Antonio Machado* [Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002], 77). In a short article titled ‘Antonio Machado, poeta japonés’ in *El Sol*, 124 (1924), 6, Díez-Canedo was the first to suggest a Far-East influence in Machado’s poetry by comparing his ‘Proverbios y cantares’ to haikus. He references one poem in particular from ‘Hacia la tierra baja’ (‘A una japonesa / le dijo Sokán ...’) of *Nuevas canciones* to comment on Machado’s Far-East influences and their possible importance for his verse. Other articles like ‘A Occidente por Oriente: valor proverbial de Antonio Machado’ in *La Gaceta Literaria*, 34 (1928), 1–2, by Giménez Caballero; ‘Antonio Machado entre la tradición del haiku y el vitalismo lírico de su poesía breve’, in *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (Barcelona, 21–26 de agosto de 1989), ed. Antonio Vilanova, 4 vols (Barcelona: PPU, 1992), III, 201–08, by Francisco Javier Rabassó; and ‘El Haiku en Antonio Machado’, in *Antonio Machado hoy*, 4 vols (Sevilla: Ediciones Alfar, 1990), II, 393–405, by Ricardo Fuentes Ballester, have also dealt with Machado’s Far-East influences via the haiku.

2 Gullón, *Direcciones del modernismo*, 113.

3 Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena II (1936–1938)*, ed. Antonio Fernández Ferrer (Madrid: Cátedra), 121.

4 Ricardo Gullón’s interpretation of poem lxxv is the most complete I have found to date: ‘La aceptación del pitagorismo—y del budismo—no excluye en muchos casos la pervivencia de un cristianismo ideal, unas veces manifestado como reminiscencia de la persona y la palabra de Jesús y otras como aspiración a la fraternidad universal. En Antonio Machado encontramos esta curiosa identificación entre Buda y Cristo [...] Las palabras viejas—y los grandes nombres—seguían sonando, y no es accidental la coincidencia de esos tres. El deseo de la inmortalidad, si no la creencia en ella, y el imaginar como posible la reencarnación, inclina asociar almas del pasado entre las cuales parecían darse coincidencias, seres excepcionales a quienes se imaginaba viviendo el último instante del itinerario vital, aptos para participar en la beatitud suprema. Si por acaso no se trataba de figuras tan inclinadas a la meditación como en teoría pudiera exigirse, fue por dos razones: la una, considerar ciertos tipos de acción redentora y de sufrimiento aceptados por amor al prójimo como modos de ascender en la escala de perfección no menos legítimos que la contemplación; la otra, ya la he indicado: el desinterés de los poetas por la coherencia lógica; estaban interesados—y eso les bastaba—en la coherencia del sentimiento’ (*Direcciones del modernismo*, 113–14).

expression 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo'? What are the origins of this expression, and what does it disclose of Machado's thinking on Buddha and Christ? And finally, why are Pythagoras, Buddha and Christ represented on a more or less equal footing in the poem? Is it simply, as Armand Baker suggests, a demonstration of Machado's 'attitude of inclusiveness which incorporates Greek philosophy, Buddhism and Christianity'?⁵ These are some of the questions I will attempt to answer in revealing how poem lxv illuminates two foundational—and complementary—themes in Machado's poetry and thought, namely the concept of universal harmony and intersubjective reconciliation.

Pythagoras' Ban on Mallow: From the Singular to the Universal

It is well known that Pythagoras' philosophy appears often in Machado's work. We need look no further than poem xxii of the same 'Proverbios y cantares' of *Nuevas canciones* to find a direct proverbial reference: 'Sólo quede un símbolo: / *quod elixum est ne assato*. / No aséis lo que está cocido'.⁶ And in an untitled poem of the 'Apuntes, parábolas, proverbios y cantares' published in *La Lectura* in 1916, Machado discerns a philosophical continuity between Pythagoras and Descartes: 'Pitágoras alarga a Cartesius la mano. / Es la extensión sustancia del universo humano. / Y sobre el lienzo blanco o negro, la cifra o la figura'. Pythagoras, however, is most often related to the lyre symbol for Machado. Through divine numerology, Pythagoras and his followers devised a mode of thought based on numbers capable of exposing the structure of the universe. In observing how different lengths of vibrating strings yielded concordant sounds, and noting that the ratios of these lengths of strings were equivalent to the periods of planetary rotation, Pythagoras surmised that there existed a celestial 'music of the spheres' that governed the underlying harmony of the universe. From *Soledades. Galerías. Otros poemas* to Juan de Mairena's *Sentencias*, Machado alludes repeatedly to Pythagoras' lyre as a quintessential symbol of universal harmony.⁷ In poem lxv, he explores

5 Baker, *The Religious and Philosophical Thought of Antonio Machado*, 77.

6 'Lo natural suele ser en poesía lo bien dicho, y en general, la solución más elegante del problema de la expresión. *Quod elixum est ne assato*, dice un proverbio pitagórico [...] Sabed que la poesía—sobre todo en poesía—no hay giro o rodeo que no sea una afanosa búsqueda del atajo, de una expresión directa; que los tropos, cuando superfluos, ni aclaran ni decoran, sino complican y enturbian; y que las más certeras a lo humano se hicieron siempre en el lenguaje de todos' (Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena: sentencias, apuntes y recuerdos de un profesor apócrifo*, ed. José María Valverde [Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1991], 263–64).

7 In poem LXXXVIII of *Soledades. Galerías. Otros poemas* we read: 'Tal vez la mano, en sueños, / del sembrado de estrellas, / hizo sonar la música olvidada / como una nota de la lira inmensa, / y la ola humilde a nuestros labios vino / de unas pocas palabras verdaderas'. Prior to *Soledades. Galerías. Otros poemas*, Machado had encountered this concept of universal harmony during his formative years at the Krausist Institución Libre de Enseñanza (as an introduction to this topic, see Juan López-Morillas, *El krausismo español, perfil de una aventura intelectual* [México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956]).

this same theme once again, but he considers it from an altogether different angle of Pythagorean philosophy (and in fact, the dictum ‘siembra la malva: pero no la comas’ is the only mention in his work of Pythagoras’ famous—and oftentimes misunderstood—ban on ingesting mallow).

In *On the Pythagorean Life*, the fourth-century Platonist philosopher Iamblichus describes Pythagoras’ disciplined lifestyle. He notes that the philosopher led a temperate existence for the most part, particularly when it came to his rather strict vegetarian diet. As he explains it: ‘[Pythagoras] banned all foods which are windy and cause disturbance, and recommended and advised the use of those which settle and sustain the state of the body’.⁸ Pythagoras exhorted his followers to abstain from mallow (‘malva’), not out of any digestive concerns *per se*, but ‘because it is the first sign of the sympathy between heavenly and earthly beings’.⁹ In fact, mallow was known from antiquity for its beneficial digestive qualities, and it was consumed to cure everything from ulcers to constipation, among other things. Yet more significantly, it was used to suppress thirst and hunger (particularly in conjunction with asphodel), and it was thus considered a divine—and also a magical—food gifted to man by the gods. As the story has it, ‘Demeter, the food-producing power, was held to have invented [the mallow] in order to make it possible for Heracles to cross the desert and reach Libya’.¹⁰ Given the mallow’s association with the divine, eating it was an affront to the gods, and for this reason Pythagoras’ followers revered it as the most sacred of plants. And thus, in the thirty-eighth symbol in Iamblichus’ *Protrepticus* (the *Pythagorean Symbols*), we discover the Pythagorean dictum that inspired Machado: ‘Transplant mallows indeed in your garden; but eat them not’.¹¹

Pythagoras’ dictum, however, is more than simply an exhortation to abstain from mallow. What brought the plant in close proximity to the gods (aside from it being Demeter’s gift to Heracles) was its heliotropism. Two of

8 Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, translation, notes and introduction by Gillian Clark (Liverpool: Liverpool U. P., 1998), 47.

9 Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, 48.

10 Marcel Detienne, Janet Lloyd and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Gardens of Adonis* (Princeton: Princeton U. P. 1994), 49.

11 Detienne, Lloyd and Vernant, *The Gardens of Adonis*, 75. It must be said that Pythagoras himself was known to ingest mallow. In his *Life of Pythagoras*, Porphyry goes to great lengths to detail how Pythagoras mixed its leaves and seeds with other ingredients to create elaborate hunger- and thirst-fighting pastes: ‘To quiet hunger he made a mixture of poppy seed and sesame, the skin of a sea-onion, well washed until entirely drained of the outward juices, of the flowers of the daffodil, and the leaves of the mallows, of paste of barley and chick peas, taking an equal weight of which, and chopping it small, with honey and Hymettus he made it into a mass. Against thirst he took the seed of cucumbers, and the best drained raisins, extracting the seeds, and coriander flowers, and the seeds of mallows, purslane, scraped cheese, wheat meal and cream, all of which he mixed up with wild honey’ (Kenneth S. Guthrie and Joscelyn Godwin, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* [Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1991], 130).

the most common species of mallows—*Malva borealis* and *rotundifolia*—are heliotropic, and, like the sunflower, their foliage responds to the sun's movement. In the *Protrepticus*, Iamblichus offers a more symbolic explanation of Pythagoras' ban on mallows based precisely on the plant's 'divine' heliotropism:

Transplant mallows indeed in your garden; but eat them not. This Symbol obscurely signifies that plants of this kind turn with the sun, and it thinks fit that this should be noticed by us. It also adds *transplant*, that is to say, observe its nature, its tendency towards, and sympathy with, the sun; but rest not satisfied, nor dwell upon this, but transfer, and as it were transplant your conception to kindred plants and pot-herbs, and also to animals which are not kindred, to stones, and rivers, and in short to natures of every kind. For you will find them to be prolific and multiform, and admirably abundant; and this to one who begins from the mallows, as from a root and principle, is significant of the union and consent of the world. Not only, therefore, do not destroy or obliterate observations of this kind, but increase and multiply them as if they were transplanted.¹²

For Iamblichus, the mallow's heliotropism allowed one to consider the plant within the larger cosmic structure of the universe (and we cannot forget either that in Greek religion, the sun was considered a divinity, since the sun-god Helios, as Homer describes it in the *Iliad*, was believed to race over the earth each day from east to west in a golden chariot 'drawn by solar bulls'). Therefore, by 'transplanting' one's thoughts gradually from the singular case of the plant's apparent earthly-divine relation to the totality of nature (the mallow serving as a symbolic 'root and principle'), it was possible to gain insight into the harmonic infrastructure of the universe. As Salmon and Shipley point out, 'Iamblichus exploits [the mallow's] symbolic value within the different systems of late Platonist philosophy. He envisages several different levels of being, some closer than others to the One which is the source of all being'.¹³

Given the mallow's association with the gods and its seemingly divine heliotropism, Pythagoras' dictum 'Transplant mallows indeed in your garden; but eat them not' (and Machado's version: 'Siembra la malva: / pero no la comas, / dijo Pitágoras') can be understood as an invitation to consider the very processes by which forces of order, connectedness and

12 Pythagoras, *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras and Other Pythagorean Fragments*, selection and arrangement by Florence M. Firth, introduction by Annie Besant (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 1993), 98–99.

13 Graham Shipley and J. B. Salmon, *Human Landscapes in Classical Antiquity: Environment and Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 313.

harmony unite the self with the One. In this light, Pythagoras' strict vegetarianism (and his ban on mallow) can be considered part and parcel of his overarching philosophical concept of universal harmony, for he believed that human souls transmigrated into animals, and consuming animals—or any forbidden foods for that matter (particularly those associated with the gods)—not only demonstrated one's ignorance of Nature's interconnectedness, but could very well hinder one's full spiritual actualization in this life.¹⁴ It follows, then, that in abstaining from mallow, one sacrificed what would be an immediate nutritional benefit (a simple bodily event) for transcendental insight into the structure of the universe (a profound mental/spiritual event). Considering Machado's fondness for Pythagoras' concept of universal harmony, he was almost certainly knowledgeable of the deeper 'divine' implications of mallow.

Buddha and Christ: Truth in Non-Violence

Like the mallow, sandalwood ('sándalo') has also been associated with the divine. Its distinctive fragrance and the yellow hue extracted from its wood have been used in various Far-East religious rituals, some of which involve the veneration of Buddha. For centuries images of deities have been carved out of sandalwood in India and China precisely because its fragrance suggested divine qualities (its composition and density are also well suited to intricate carving):

The divinely sweet odor of the sandal expressed to the senses the antidemoniac properties concealed within its godlike body. For the same reason, sandalwood was the most suitable substance out of which to carve the fragrant body of divinity [...] sandal could become the epithet of a living god himself, as it was of the Buddha of the south.¹⁵

Aside from the references to Buddha and Christ, Machado's proverbial expression 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo' derives from a Far-Eastern proverb whose exact origins are unknown (it derives from either India or China, yet it is believed to originate with the

14 'Pythagoras' moral objections to flesh eating appear to be intimately tied to his religious conviction that human souls transmigrate, or reincarnate, after physical death. Consequently, Pythagoras warns, the consumption of a food animal may in fact be the devouring of a human soul. For this reason, he concludes that humans must regard all living things as kindred and bestow on them equal moral consideration. Failure to obey this principle results in actions that sully the moral purity of a person's life and prevent him or her from realizing full spiritual potential' (Kerry S. Walters and Lisa Portmess, *Ethical Vegetarianism: From Pythagoras to Peter Singer* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1999], 11).

15 Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), 137.

sixteenth-century Awadhi poet and philosopher Goswami Tulsidas).¹⁶ Although Machado could have well learned it from one of his *modernista* acquaintances at the turn of the century (during his visits to Paris in 1899 and 1902, for example, Enrique Gómez Carrillo was quite knowledgeable concerning the French *Japonisme* movement and its predilection for almost anything Far-Eastern and exotic),¹⁷ it is more likely that his interest in these types of proverbs came by way of Juan Ramón Jiménez. Between 1914 and 1923, Juan Ramón and his wife Zenobia Campubrí translated over twenty titles into English and Spanish by the Bengali poet, novelist and playwright Rabindranath Tagore, who rose to immediate worldwide fame after winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. Critics like Graciela Palau de Nemes have argued convincingly that Juan Ramón's poetry was heavily influenced by that of Tagore. 'There is, in the literary production of Jiménez after 1916', de Nemes explains, 'a new poetic vision, a mystical attitude toward his artistic endowments and a subsequent exalted satisfaction in his poetic creation, much like that which prevails in Tagore's work'.¹⁸ And we know that Machado avidly read Juan Ramón's poetry, and he must surely have been acquainted with the Tagore translations that were circulating throughout Europe at the time.¹⁹

16 In Shirman Narayan's work *Vinoba: His Life and Work* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1970) dealing with the Indian freedom fighter Vinoba, there is a brief passage that explains how Vinoba uses the sandalwood proverb and attributes it to Tulsidas: 'Vinoba exhorted the gathering to hold the ideal of the sandalwood tree before their mind's eye. As poet Tulsidas had said, the sandalwood imparts its fragrance even to the axe which cuts it to pieces. This is the way of non-violence and satyagraha. Our actions in the reverse direction are bound to lead to disaster and disintegration' (164).

17 In his article 'El Haiku en Antonio Machado', in *Antonio Machado hoy*, II, 393–405, Fuente Ballesteros proposes that the Guatemalan poet and writer Enrique Gómez Carrillo could have sparked Machado's curiosity for the Far East during his visits to Paris in 1899 and 1902. It is Gullón, however, who argues more convincingly for the relationship between 'pitagorismo' and 'modernismo' in Machado: 'Que el pitagorismo sea una de las corrientes más profundas y reveladoras del modernismo es cosa fácil de comprobar: basta ver la frecuencia con que el nombre de Pitágoras o alusiones a sus doctrinas aparecen en la prosa y el verso de los escritores de entonces, desde Rubén Darío a Juan Ramón Jiménez, desde Antonio Machado a Leopoldo Lugones, pasando por los más esotéricos, don Ramón del Valle-Inclán y Julio Herrera y Reissig' (*Direcciones del modernismo*, 111).

18 Graciela Palau de Nemes, 'Tagore and Jiménez: Poetic Coincidences', in *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume 1861–1961* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961), 187–98. De Nemes adds: 'Besides those works of Tagore and Jiménez reminiscent of their childhood and early youth [*The Crescent Moon* and Jiménez's *Platero y yo* respectively], there are other influences which merit comparison and throw light on the possible influence the Hindu writer may have had on the Spaniard' (189). De Nemes dates Tagore's influence on Jiménez to the years 1916–23, and then again to the years after 1941.

19 From what I understand from several minor references, the proverb 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo' appears in one of Tagore's works, although I have been unable to find it.

The proverb 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo' speaks to what is known in more contemporary nomenclature as *satyagraha*, a term brought into existence by Gandhi during his peaceful demonstrations in South Africa that means something akin to non-violent resistance. In Gandhi's words, it also meant finding Truth in non-violence: 'Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and its means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is the soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish'.²⁰ As Gandhi himself recognized, with the word *satyagraha* he only named a concept/belief which had already existed in India for centuries, that of not responding to violence with violence, and of attempting to seek the Truth above all things in one's relationship with the world.

What I believe Machado takes from the proverb 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo', are precisely the ideas of non-violence and Truth, and here is where Buddha is enjoined to Christ. Both non-violence and Truth are inextricably linked in an almost oppositional fashion for both figures: to any act of violence *from* an Other, the self must respond with love *for* the Other, which brings enlightenment and opens a path to Truth. Buddha preached non-violence (*ahimsa*) toward all beings as the fundamental way to the *dharma*, a complicated term loosely translated as ultimate Truth or Supreme Righteousness. This ethic of non-violence lies at the heart of Buddhist philosophy, and through various methods (or paths) of enlightenment, it opens one to a deep exploration in the self of such concepts as freedom, individualism/connectedness, craving and pain, as well as an intimate awareness of one's inner force for good. In the Eightfold Path to Nirvana (also known as the Middle Path or the Golden Mean) there are specific prohibitions against violence toward the Other in the fourth and fifth paths of Right Action and Right Livelihood:

Right Action [...] one should not only *not* kill any living being, but should also carefully practice compassion with a sincere concern for all [...] Acting in ways that destroy life, disrespect others, increase irresponsibility, hide or distort the truth, and lead to addiction, decrease[s] one's freedom, enlightenment, and compassionate living. *Right Livelihood* [...] means that the layperson should only pursue a living that will not cause harm or injustice to others.²¹

Similarly, the New Testament Christ is also defined by non-violence. The type espoused in the Gospel involves such things as moral fortitude,

20 M. K. Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance* (Chelmsford: Courier Dover Publications, 2001), 3.

21 Donald William Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2002), 54-55.

self-acceptance, compassion, and perhaps most significantly, not allowing sin to reign in one's heart. In Matthew 15:18–19 Jesus teaches: 'But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man "unclean". For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander'.²² It is through sin, and the temptation of sin that one internalizes the power of forgiveness, the cornerstone of Jesus' message of God's forgiving love (yet not all scholars agree on what Jesus' forgiveness actually means, and whether Jesus himself always practised what he preached).²³ In the proverb 'responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo', it is possible to connect with this biblical concept of forgiveness: through the act of forgiveness itself one embarks on a path to His glory. That is to say, respond to the 'hachazo' from the Other with the welcoming hand of love, as Jesus proposes in this famous passage in Matthew 5:38–48:

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile [...] You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.²⁴

Although there are countless examples of the transformative power of forgiveness in the Bible (personal, social, religious, etc.), it suffices to point to Luke 15 where Jesus is censured for embracing sinners ('This man [Jesus] welcomes sinners and eats with them').²⁵ In the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15, Jesus offers more reminders to embrace the sinful Other in light of God's ultimate forgiveness (and in the crucifixion we are offered the most transcendental act of forgiveness when Jesus forgives his crucifiers). As such, one of his most essential tasks as *man* was that he revealed a path from the self to the Other through forgiveness: '¿[A] qué vino Cristo al mundo? Él nos reveló valores universales [...] los nuevos caminos de corazón a corazón por donde se marcha tan seguro como de un entendimiento a otro'.²⁶ And, as Mairena later declared:

22 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (New York: Oxford U. P., 1991), 23.

23 See L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 3–91.

24 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 8.

25 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 106.

26 Antonio Machado, *Prosas dispersas (1893–1936)*, ed. Jordi Doménech (Madrid: Páginas de Espuma, 2001), 427.

Y reparad ahora en que el ‘ama a tu prójimo como a ti mismo y aún más, si fuera preciso’, que tal es el verdadero precepto cristiano, lleva implícita una fe altruista, una creencia en la realidad absoluta, en la existencia en sí del otro yo [...] ¿cómo he de atreverme, dentro de esta fe cristiana, a degradar a mi prójimo tan profunda y substancialmente que le arrebatase el ser en sí para convertirlo en mera representación, en un puro fantasma mío?²⁷

Given Machado’s lifelong concern about *cainismo* and the deep socio-economic divisions in Spain during this time that pitted brother against brother (also relevant is that when he published poem lxxv, the devastating experience of the Great War was still fresh in Europe’s memory), the proverb ‘responde al hachazo / [...] / con tu aroma, como el sándalo’, as conceived through Buddha’s and Christ’s teachings of *ahimsa* and forgiveness, appeals to his core idea of intersubjective reconciliation. According to Machado, Spain was in desperate need of a deep spiritual rejuvenation if it ever wanted to overcome *cainismo*, and an ideal of forgiveness, understood within the broader parameters of his intersubjective ‘diálogo amoroso’ (or that collective ‘comunidad [...] en verdades’), could serve as the foundation of a new Spain. In terms of Jesus’ teachings specifically, Machado explained it to Unamuno in 1918 stating: ‘con el inmenso amor que sientes por ti mismo—creo leer en Jesús—ama a tu hermano, que es igual a ti, pero que no eres tú’.²⁸ Machado came to the conclusion that the ‘yo’ and ‘tú’ had to *create* this common spiritual ground through not only the principles of love and forgiveness, but also by acknowledging the Other as Other (that is, acknowledging the Other’s difference and uniqueness, or what above reads as ‘ama a tu hermano, que es igual a ti, pero que no eres tú’). Only then would it be possible to establish a true dialogue between the self and ‘lo esencialmente otro’. In the end, Machado condensed his argument in the short phrase ‘¡Guerra a Caín y viva el Cristo!’²⁹ From this perspective, both Buddha and Jesus embody, as Machado suggests, the most perfect and conciliatory form of a ‘human’ love capable of divine illumination.

The Significance of Old Wisdom

Machado believed proverbs were an essential part of philosophy and philosophical thinking, and they appear throughout his poetry and prose. He appropriated a few key proverbs from ancient Greek philosophy, but the majority derive from the Spanish popular tradition, mostly as a way to condense, rephrase, or succinctly address with some type of ‘valor poético’ one of the many perennial philosophical questions prevalent in Western

²⁷ Machado, *Juan de Mairena*, 214–15.

²⁸ Machado, *Prosas dispersas*, 427.

²⁹ Machado, *Prosas dispersas*, 428.

philosophy. Hence, there is almost always some kind of extratextual framing that occurs with Machado's proverbs, in which he is invoking a tradition of thinking as a springboard for his own meditations.

In the case of poem lxv, as I have demonstrated briefly, Pythagoras' dictum on mallow, and the Far-Eastern proverb connecting Buddha and Christ, speak to two themes closely related in his work: universal harmony and intersubjective reconciliation. In both cases Machado uses Nature as a symbol. This, of course, is nothing new for him, yet what is singular here is the paucity of poetic material we have to work with: what on the surface might appear as a couple of inconsequential proverbial expressions relating to mallow and sandalwood are in fact the 'root and principle', to use Iamblichus' term, for much deeper and interrelated meditations. To reveal their full potentiality, it is necessary not only to be very familiar with Machado's work, but also appreciate how he continually distilled his poetry into pithy proverbial expressions to create a space amenable to both poetry and philosophy. In other words, pithiness does not imply a diminution of poetic or philosophical meaning, as Dámaso Alonso once suggested of the 'Proverbios y cantares', but, quite to the contrary, pithiness—especially through proverbs so pregnant with philosophical meaning—opens language to exegetic possibility.³⁰ Mairena alludes specifically to the poetic significance of recycling minimalist 'imágenes útiles' from old wisdom in such things as proverbs and the like: 'Los poetas, en cambio, pueden aprender de los filósofos el arte de las grandes metáforas, de las imágenes útiles por su valor didáctico e inmortales por su valor poético. Ejemplos: *El río de Heráclito, la esfera de Parménides, la lira de Pitágoras, la caverna de Platón, la paloma de Kant*, etc. etc.'³¹ These examples reappear throughout Machado's work, and they serve as conceptual paradigms from which he broached everything from the age-old question of the nature of Truth (to plumb the relativity or immutability of Truth, he was fond of using Heraclitus' dictum: 'You cannot step into the same river twice') to the pitfalls of solipsistic thinking. (The famous dove metaphor in the Introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* allowed him to poetize how 'Kant, con su crítica de la razón teórica, corta las alas al pensar metafísico'.)³²

30 In Alonso's opinion, the 'Proverbios y cantares' were 'poemas minúsculos, definidores, dogmáticos, condensación de turbias intuiciones puramente cerebrales, alejados de la experiencia viva' (*Cuatro poetas españoles: Garcilaso, Góngora, Maragall, Antonio Machado* [Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1962], 149–50).

31 Machado, *Juan de Mairena*, 134.

32 Antonio Machado, *Los complementarios* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1971), 218. In the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant imagines how a dove (metaphysics) might think it could take flight more easily without the resistance of air around it (experience): 'The light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance which it feels, could get the idea that it could do better in airless space' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2000], 129). Clearly, as Kant later explains, the dove would discover that flight in a vacuum is impossible.

In this vein, the ‘malva’ and the ‘sándalo’ are very effective symbols in poem lxv (particularly as they pertain to Pythagoras, Buddha and Christ), since they both bring to mind—as Machado attempted to do in much of his work—the relationship of self and world (order, universe, God, etc.). Image and symbol, and thus signifier and signified, continually blur the lines between poetry and philosophy in poem lxv, and it is in these liminal moments of poetic-philosophical *oneness* that the ‘palabras viejas’ become most effective, relevant, and original. For Mairena, ‘hay hombres [...] que van de la poética a la filosofía; otros que van de la filosofía a la poética. Lo inevitable es ir de lo uno a lo otro’.³³ In the end, it was this continuous dialogue between poetry and philosophy that brought to light how man was oftentimes no further along answering those fundamental questions about the human existential condition than the ancients, particularly when it came to the problematics of social harmony or intersubjective reconciliation. Thus, Pythagoras’ words, like those of Buddha or Jesus, are in essence timeless (but many times forgotten or discarded). ‘Hoy a mi juicio’, Mairena declares in 1934, ‘[...] se vuelve a creer en las ideas más que en los hechos y se reanuda la tradición de intuición intelectual que apenas Kant, entre los grandes filósofos, interrumpe’.³⁴ It is no surprise, therefore, that Machado often reminds us: ‘Bueno es recordar/las palabras viejas/que han de volver a sonar’. In poem xli of ‘Proverbios y cantares’, he admonishes us more directly: ‘—Ya se oyen palabras viejas. / —Pues aguzad las orejas’.

³³ Machado, *Juan de Mairena*, 137.

³⁴ Machado, *Juan de Mairena II*, 269–70.