The Classics and Jerome's Prefaces to the Biblical Translations "From the Hebrew"[1]

NEIL ADKIN

Hagendahl's masterly survey of Jerome's debt to the classics notes that in the period following his settlement in Bethlehem "without doubt Jerome's greatest achievements" are his labours on the text of the bible[2]: Jerome began by revising the version from the Septuagint for some books, but then proceeded to translate all the canonical books afresh from the Hebrew[3]. Hagendahl observes that in the prefaces to all of these versions references to the pagan classics are admitted "only seldom"[4]. In connection with the revisions of the Septuagint text he cites only the prefaces to Chronicles and Job[5]. Hagendahl then goes on to state that by way of such allusions to the classics "the prefaces to the books translated from the original text afford still less". Few of the pas-

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[1] Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*², Leipzig 1990.

[2] H. Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics: A Study on the apologists, Jerome and Other Christian Writers,* Göteborg (Acta univ. Gothob. 64, 2) 1958, 132.

[3] For reminiscences of the classics in Jerome's biblical text itself cf. the present writer, *"Biblia Pagana:* Classical Echoes in the Vulgate", *Augustinianum* 40 (2000) 77-87; id., *"Biblia Catilinaria", Maia* 55 (2003) 93-8.

[4] *O.c.* (n. 2) 132 with 416.

[5] On the former cf. the present writer, "The Younger Pliny and Jerome", *RPL* 24 (2001) 41-6; on the latter cf. id., "Virgil, *Eclogues* 2 and 10 in Jerome", *Eirene* 35 (1999) 102-13.

sages that Hagendahl adduces in this regard involve a verbal debt. The aim of the present article is to show that this number can be substantially increased. In view of the paucity of echoes so far identified such an amplification of the entire Vulgate: no reminiscence of the classics has hitherto been detected in it. This very important prelusory text opens as follows: *Desiderii mei desideratas accepi epistolas… obsecrantis ut translatum in latinam linguam de hebraeo sermone pentateuchum nostrorum auribus traderem. Periculosum opus certe,…* (*Praef. Vulg. pent*. pp. 63, 1-64, 1). Jerome was thoroughly familiar with the whole of Horace's *oeuvre*[6]. Horace's ode to Asinius Pollio opens the second book, whose "τηλαυγὲ πρόσωπον" it is[7]: this particular poem is therefore highly prominent. It begins thus: *motum ex Metello consule civicum / bellique causas et vitia et modos / ludumque Fortunae gravisque / principum amicitias et arma / nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus, / periculosae plenum opus aleae, / tractas* (*Carm*. 2, 1, 1-7).

Here the Horatian *periculosae plenum opus aleae* has evidently inspired Jerome's similarly proemial *periculosum opus*[8]. On each occasion the formulation follows in accusatival apposition an opening statement of the respective work's content[9]. At the same time Jerome compresses Horac's wording *à sa façon*[10]: he eliminates both *aleae* and *plenum,* since the former merely reduplicates the sense of *periculosae*[11], while *plenum* simply attaches *aleae* to *opus*[12]. Two further points may be made. Firstly detection of this Horatian echo in the passage that

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[6]   Cf. Hagendahl, *o.c*. (n. 2) 281 ("Next to Virgil, Horace is Jerome's favourite poet") and 408.

[7]   So E. Fraenkel, *Horace,* Oxford 1957 (repr. 1997) 234.

[8]   *Packard Humanities Institute CD ROM #5.3* and *Patrología Latina databese* provide no further example of the combination of *Periculosus* and *opus* in classical and patristic tests respectively. In both Horace and Jerome the two words occur in the same order. The Horatian phrase is notable enough to be quoted by Servius on *Ecl*. 3, 84.

[9]   In addition the two phrases are directly juxtaposed with a verb denoting literary composition (*tractas / traderem*), while both also occur in conjunction with a reference to the addressee (*tractas* [sc. Pollio] / *Desiderii mei*).

[10]   For Jerome's habit of subjecting his source to such coarctation cf. the present writer, *Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Letter 22),* Cambridge (ARCA 42) 2003, 457 (index *s.v*. "source: compression of").

[11]   Cf. (e.g.) H.J. Botschuyver, *Scholia in Horatium λΦΨ,* Amsterdam 1935, 80: *aleam… posuit pro periculoso labore*.

[12]   Significantly Horace's formulation is paraphrased as just *opus periculosum* by I.G. Orelli, I.G. Baiter and G. Hirschfelder, *Q. Horatius Flaccus* 1[4], Berlín 1886, 212. Horace' antecedent *hirmos* (cf. [e.g.] Charisius, *Gramm*. p. 371, 9-10 *hirmos est oratio unius tenorem casus ad clausulam usque custodiens*), which occupies the whole of his first stanza (*motum… arma*),

opens the Vulgate would seem to have a bearing on the punctuation of this very important text. Horace's apposition (*periculosae…*) is separated from the foregoing direct objects by just a comma, since this phrase in followed by the verb that governs all these accusatives. On the other hand the critical editions of the Vulgate instead place a full stop before Jerome's similarly appositional phrase[13]. The Horatian parallel would however appear to indicate that this punctuation is wrong: it should be replaced by a simple comma, as in Horace. The second point concerns the distribution of Jerome's borrowings from Horace. All Hagendahl's reminiscences in *Odes* 2 occur in the latter part of this book. Identification of an echo at the very start is therefore particularly significant[14].

Jerome's preface to Daniel belongs to the same period as the one to the Pentateuch. Here he refers to his apprenticeship in Hebrew as follows: *ego adulescentulus, post Quintiliani et Tulli lectionem ac flores rethoricos, cum me in linguae huius pistrinum reclusissem…*[15]. The noun *pistrinum* is found only here in the whole of Jerome's vast *oeuvre*. It is therefore noteworthy that the same term should have occurred in exactly the same figurative sense in Cicero's *De oratore*, which Jerome knew intimately[16]: *oratorem… tantum in iudicia et contiuncu-las tamquam in aliquod pistrinum detrudi et compingi videbam*[17]. The

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undergoes similar compression, since five entire books of the Bible are telescoped by Jerome into a single word: *pentateuchum*.

[13] Viz. H. Quentin, *Biblia Sacra iuxta Latinam vulgatam versionem* 1: *Liber Genesis,* Rome 1926, 64; R. Gryson *et al., Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*[4], Stuttgart 1994, 3.

[14] The imitation is overlooked in the detailed commentary on this text by P. Lardet, *L'Apologie de Jérôme contre Rufin: Un commentaire,* Leiden-New York-Cologne (Suppl. *VChr.* 15) 1993, 217. The borrowing also fails to find mention in the recent treatments of this preface by S. Rebenich, *Jerome,* London-New York 2002, 101-4, and by A. Fürst, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spaätantike,* Freiburg-Basle-Vienna 2003, 275-7. In this connection a word may also be said about the latter's interpretation of a phrase in the same sentence of the preface (O*ita ingenium quasi vinum probantes*), which he explains thus: "Das heisst: Veraltetes Know how ist so schlecht wie zu alt gewordener Wein". Jerome's meaning is in fact the opposite: the older the wine, the better; cf. (e.g.) his *In Mich,* 7, 5 II.196-7, referring to Ecclus, 9, 15 (*vinum novum amicus novus; veterascet, et cum suavitate bibes illud*) and Cicero, *Lael,* 67 (*veterrima quaeque* [sc. *amicitia*] *ut ea vina quae vetustatem ferunt esse debet suavissima*).

[15] *Praef. Vulg. Dan*. p. 6, 12-13. On the ensuing of this preface cf. K. Smolak, "Hieronymus als Übersetzer", in H. Loos (ed.), *Athlon: Festschrift für Hans-Joachim Glücklich,* Speyer 2005, 131-2, and the attempted rebuttal by the present writer, "Jerome's Dream and the Book of Daniel", forthcoming in *ACD.*

[16] Cf. Hagendahl, *o.c.* (n. 2) 401.

[17] *De orat,* 1, 46. While *Patrologia Latina Database* furnishes no other instance of such a tralatitious use of *pistrinum* in the Fathers, *Packard Humanities Institute CD ROM #5.3* does not provide a classical example outside the *De oratore.*

parallelism also goes beyond the word *pistrinum*. Jerome's *in pistrinum recludere* forms an exact counterpart to the Ciceronian *in pistrinum compingere*: just as *compingere* is "often used… of inprisonment"[18], so too is *recludere*[19]. In both passages the context is "speech", while both employ *pistrinum* to describe a descent from a pleasant and distinguis-hed activity to drudgery[20]. Again the identification of this echo throws interesting light on Jerom's compositional technique. The *De oratore* itself stipulates that a bold metaphor like this should be *mollienda… praeposito… verbo*[21]. Cicero duly obeys the rule: *tamquam in aliquod pistrinum*[22]. Jerome on the other hand evinces a characteristic zeal to trump his source by heingtening its language[23]. He therefore dispenses with the prescribed *remedia* altogether: *in linguae huius pistrinum*.

The last Hieronymian preface to be considered in the present article belongs to a later period than those examined above. Since this time a number of different sources are involved, a fuller treatment would seem to be in order. Jerome's preface to Ezra begins thus: *utrum difficilius sit facere quod poscitis an negare necdum statui; nam neque vobis aliquid imperantibus abnuere sententiae est…* (*Praef. Vulg. Esdr.* p. 3, 1-2). This statement is evidently indebted to Cicero's *Orator*[24], whose similarly opening passage reads: *utrum difficilius aut maius esset negares tibi saepius idem roganti an efficere id quod rogares diu multumque, Brute, dubitavi, nam et negare ei quem unice diligerem cuique me carissimum esse sentirem, praesertim et iusta petenti et*

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[18]   A.S. Wilkins, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Oratore libri tres,* Oxford 1892 (repr. London 2002) 106.

[19]   Cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 3 (1906-12) 435, 45-7; 436, 12-14 (*s.v. carcer*).

[20]   Both are also preceded by a *synathroismos* of names; cf. *De orat,* 1, 45 (*cum eam* [sc. *Academiam*] *Charmadas e Clitomachus et Aeschines obtinebant… vigebatque auditor Panaetii illius tui Mnesarchus et Peripatetici Critolai Diodorus*); *Praef. Vulg. Dan.* p. 6, 12 (*post Quintiliani et Tulli lectionem*). For Jerome's habit of using Ciceronian phraseology directly after mentioning him by name cf. C. Kunst, *De S. Hieronymi Studiis Ciceronianis,* Vienna-Leipzig (Diss. Philol. Vindob. 12, 2) 1918, 183, n. 5.

[21]   3, 165. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 8, 3, 37 *quibusdam remediis praemuniendum est: "ut ita dicam", "si licet dicere", "quodam modo", "permite mihi sic uti"*.

[22]   Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.* (1982) 1904 (*s.v. tamquam,* sect. 6): "used to soften an unexpected, striking, etc., word or expression"; ibid. 99 (*s.v. aliqui,* sect. 1b): "in apologizing for metaphors, etc."

[23]   Cf. the present writer, *o.c.* (n. 10) 457 (index *s.v.* "stulistic enhancement, of borrowings").

[24]   For Jerome's thorough knowledge of this treatise cf. the present writwr, "Cicero's *Orator* and Jerome", *VChr* 51 (1997) 25-39.

praeclara cupienti, durum admodum mihi videbatur… (*Orat.* 1). The correspondences between the Ciceronian and Hieronymian texts may be summarily enumerate: *utrum difficilius = utrum dificilius*[25]; *esset = sit; negare = negare; an = an; efficere… quod rogares = facere quod poscitis; diu… dubitavi = necdum statui; nam = nam; et = neque*[26]; *negare = abnuere; ei = vobis*[27]; *iusta petenti et praeclara cupienti - aliquid imperantibus; mihi videbatur = sententiae est.*

Here too Jerome has modified his sourde in a number of ways that illustrate his compositional method. Three points may be made in this connection. In the first place Jerome once more streamlines the original by both compression and omission. Secondly he again heightens its language. The *Orator*'s compositum *efficere* is replaced by the more direct simplex *facere*, while its *rogare* similarly gives way to the stronger *poscere*[28]; finally Jerome substitutes *imperare* for the Ciceronian *petere / cupere.* The third point concerns the requirement that a preface shouls make the addressee *benevolum*[29]: here Jerome evidently felt that he could improve on his source. Jerome accordingly inverts the order of Cicero's double indirect question: *negare* is relegated to a position after the more polite *facere*[30]. For Cicero's second *negare* Jerome substitutes the milder synonym *abnuere*[31], which is again postponed[32]. Finally the *Orator*'s concluding *durum admodum mihi videbatur* would also seem to have struck Jerome as a somewhat "hard" form

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[25]   Neither *Packard Humanities Institute CD ROM #5.3* nor *Patrologia Latina Database* provides any further example of this collocation.

[26]   Both are correlatives.

[27]   The Hieronymian dative *vobis* is evidently due to the *Orator*'s similarly datival *ei,* since Jerome employs *vobis* with *abnuere,* for which *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 1 (1990) 113, 19-114, 45 (*s.v. abnuo*) significantly records no other example of such absolute use of the dative in this sense of the verb. On the other hand such a dative is common with Cicero's *nego*; cf. *Oxf. Lat. Disct.*(1982) 1168 (*s.v.,* sect. 3).

[28]   Cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 10, 2 (1980-) 70, 81-2 (*s.v. posco*). For the nuance of *poscere* cf. (e.g.) Donatus, *Ter. Andr.* 422, 2 *poscimus imperiose.*

[29]   Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*[3], Stuttgart 1990, 156-60.

[30]   The dative (*tibi*) that in the *Orator* accompanies *negare* would also seem to have been omitted with a similar view to increased *politesse.*

[31]   For the tone of this verb cf. the *auxesis* in Jerome, *Epist.* 18A, 12, 1 *non abnuo, non recuso.*

[32]   Jerome's use of *abnuere* avoids the *Orator*'s somewhat inconcinnous repetition of *negare,* just as Cicero's duplication of *rogare* is circumvented by the afore-mentioned resort to unrepeated *poscere.*

of expression. He therefore replaces it with an emollient deprecation: *neque… sententiae est*.

Jerome then continues: *et magnitudo oneris inpositi ita cervices premit, ut ante sub fasce ruendum sit quam levandum*. Cicero himself had continued: *et suscipere tantam rem, quantam non modo facultate consequi difficile esset sed etiam cogitatione complecti, vix arbitrabar esse eius qui vereretur reprehensionem doctorum atque prudentium*. Again Jerome has abridged. At the same time he would here seem to be drawing on two further sources[33], Cicero's *Orator* contains a species of "proemio al mezzo", which deals with the same themes as his afore-cited preface[34]. This time Cicero states: *volo enim mihi tecum commune esse crimen, ut, si sustinere tantam quaestionem non potuero, iniusti oneris impositi tua culpa sit, mea recepti*[35]. The *suscipere tantam rem* of Cicero' initial proem has evidently put Jerome in mind of the parallel *sustinere tantam quaestionem* of this second one. While the *suscipere* of the first Ciceronian preface would seem to have inspired Jerome's *levandum* (sc. *onus*)[36], the *sustinere… non potuero* of the second preface appears to have suggested the Hieronymian *ruendum*. At the same time the immediately succeeding *oneris impositi* of this second preface has been taken over by Jerome verbatim: *oneris impositi*.

The *iniusti oneris* of this second Ciceronian proem would seem in turn to have reminded Jerome of *Georgics* 3, 347 (*iniusto sub fasce*), which is glossed by Servius as *sub magno onere*. While therefore the *sub fasce* of Jerome's preface is evidently due to Virgil's use of exactly the same wording[37], Jerome's *magnitudo oneris* would appear to have been inspired by the gloss on this same Virgilian text: *magno onere*[38].

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[33]   For this feature of his praxis cf. the present writer, *o.c.* (n. 10) 457 (index *s.v.* "source: multiple").

[34]   Cf. J.E. Sandys, *M. Tulli Ciceronis ad M. Brutum Orator*, Cambridge 1885 (repr. New York 1979) 37.

[35]   *Orat*. 35. For an earlier borrowing by Jerome from immediately antecedent ch. 33 cf. the present writer, *art*. *c*. (n. 24) 28-9.

[36]   For *suscipere* used likewise of an *onus* cf. *Thes*. *Ling*. *Lat*. 9, 2 (1968-81) 646, 67-8 (*s.v.* 1. *onus*).

[37]   No example of the particular phrase *sub fasce* is found outside Virgil's *Georgics* in the whole of classical literature; cf. *Packard Humanities Institute CD ROM #5.3.*

[38]   Here Servius is presumably indebted to the canonical commentary of Jerome's own *grammaticus,* Donatus; for the very considerable extent of Servius' debt cf. R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language; The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity,* Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1988, 169-70.

Further evidence for Jerome's familiarity with this gloss would seem to be provided by his only other use of *sub fasce*, which had already been employed at *Vita Malchi* 7 in reference to ants. The afore-mentioned text of *Georgics* 3, 347 is quoted by Servius on *Georgics* 4, 204, where *sub fasce* is used of bees[39]. This passage of *Georgics* 4 (*animam sub fasce dedere*) has evidently influenced *Vita Malchi* 7 (*sub fasce… et onere concidisse*): in both texts the insects drop *sub fasce*[40]. Here Jerome's wording is notably: *sub fasce… et onere*[41]. Jerome's *perissologia* is evidently due to the gloss on Virgil's *sub fasce*: *sub onere*.

If Jerome's insertion of this Virgilian phrase generates a more impressive formulation than his Ciceronian source, this remodelling also entails a number of slight but significant inconcinnities that are absent from Cicero[42]. In the first place *fasce* is an awkward intrusion between *oneris* and the neuter *levandum* that agrees with the latter noun: the use of *pondere* instead of *fasce* would for example have eliminated the inconsonance[43]. Secondly in order to collapse "under" a *fascis*[44], the *fascis* must first (*ante*) have been "lifted" (*levandum*). However Jerome absurdly makes the collapse precede the lift: *ut ante sub fasce ruendum sit quam levandum*. Finally Jerome's *levandum* is at odds with the *inpositi* of his *magnitudo oneris inpositi*: if the burden has already been "placed upon" him, it does not have to be "lifted",

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[39] For Jerome's debt in *Vita Malchi* 7 to Virgil's description of the bees' way of life cf. P. Leclerc and E.M. Morales, *Jérôme: Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus, Hilarion),* Paris (SC 508) 2007, 202 (for "257" read "256").

[40] This Virgilian reminiscence is overlooked in the recent edition of the *Vita Malchi* by Leclerc and Morales, *o.c.* (n. 39) 202. Since fewer echoes have so far been identified from *Georgics* 4 than from books 103, the detection of such a borrowing from book 4 is all the more significant; cf. the present writer, "Virgil's *Georgics* and Jerome, *Epist.* 125, 11, 3-4", *WJA* N.F. 22 (1998) 193-6.

[41] It is significantly abbreviated by th Greek translation, which instead has merely τοῖς μετὰ καμάτου φέρουσιν; cf. H.C. Jameson, "The Greek Version of Jerome's *Vita Sancti Malchi*", in W.A. Oldfather *et al.* (ed.), *Studies in the Text Tradition of St. Jerome's Vitae Patrum,* Urbana 1943, 528. Similarly Rebenich, *o.c.* (n. 14) 90 renders an simply "beneath his burden".

[42] For such dissonance resulting from the appropriation of striking material from elsewhere cf. the present writer, *o.c.* (n. 10) 453 (index *s.v.* "inconcinnity").

[43] Such awkwardness incidentally supplies further proof that here Jerome is borrowing from Virgil.

[44] For this sense of *sub* cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.* (1982) 1834 (*s.v.,* sect. 3a): "w. ref. to downward pressure) Under (a load) ". For *ruere* meaning "to collapse (of a person)" cf. ibid. 1669 (*s.v.,* sect. 6c).

but "borne"[45]. It is noteworthy that each of these three inconcinnities is carefully avoided in the imitation of this Hieronymian text by Peter Damian: *conversionis… tue prospiciendum est novitati, ne si cervicibus tuis longe disputationis onus imponitur, teneriores adhuc vires ante sub fasce deficiant, quam portare sarcinam discant*[46].

Further inconcinnities are occasioned by the modifications that Jerome has made in the first half of his opening sentence: *utrum difficilius sit facere quod poscitis an negare necdum statui; nam neque vobis aliquid imperantibus abnuere sententiae est…* Jerome's *necdum statui* is a typical attempt to outdo his Ciceronian source, which had simply said *diu multumque… dubitavi:* Jerome on the other hand "still cannot make up his mind". This heightened language entails an inconsistency with Jerome's afore-mentioned *oneris impositi:* if he has already shouldered the burden, he must already have "made up" his mind[47]. The same Hieronymian *necdum statui* involves a further problem. *Statutum* is glossed as *certum* (*Gloss.* II 188, 12): accordingly Jerome is saying that he has not yet achieved "certainty". However Jerome immediately proceeds to declare: *Nam neque… sententiae est.* The term *sententia* is glossed as *firma et indubitata* (*Gloss.* IV 283, 17). *Statuo* and *sententia* are in fact synonymous[48]. Here this synonymity leads to self-contradiction: no sooner has Jerome said that he is not certain than he affirms that he is.

Jerome's "improvement" of the *Orator* generates yet another inconcinnity. Jerome cannot "make up his mind" whether it is harder to comply with the request of his addressees or not: both options are evidently open, as they had been in the *Orator.* Whereas however Cicero had merely said that non-compliance *durum… videbatur,* Jerome's heightened language now excludes this option: *neque… sententiae est.* Similarly whereas Cicero had used a qualificatory *difficile, vix* and

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[45]   Significantly the *Orator* does not use *impositi* in conjunction with the first proem's *suscipere*, which has inspired Jerome's *levandum,* but instead with the *sustinere* of the second preface.

[46]   *Epist.* 81, 36. The echo is not identified by K. Reindel, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani* 2, Munich (MGH Briefe d. deutsch. Kaiserz. 4, 2) 1988, 434, or by O.J. Blu, *Peter Damian: Letters 61-90,* Washington, D.C. 1992, 224).

[47]   Again Cicero by contrast does not use *impositi* in connection with the "indecision" of his first preface, but in his second one, where he has already begun to do as requested: *testificor me a te rogatum… haec scribere esse ausum* (*Orat.* 35).

[48]   Cf. (e.g.) *Synon. Cic.* p. 429, 18-19 *statuit… fert sententiam.*

generic subjunctive in referring to compliance, Jernome flatly states its impossibility: *ante sub fasce ruendum… quam levandum*. The two options which Jerome has appropriated from the *Orator* accordingly turn out to be no options at all. The inconcinnity is exacerbated by the additional "improvement" that now representas the indecision between them as "on-going": *necdum statui*. Jerome's efforts to outshine his Ciceronian source thereby reduce its carefully crafted *subnexio*[49] to nonsense.

Abstract

Few echoes of the classics have so far been identified in the prefaces to Jerome's translations from the Hebrew Bible. The present article draws attention to a number of unidentified reminiscences in the prefaces to the Pentateuch, Daniel and Ezra. All of these borrowings shed significant light on Jerome's method of composition. Such is especially the case with the last one.

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[49] Cf. Lausberg, *o.c.* (n. 29) 428-9: "Die *subnexio* ist die Anfügung eines erläuternden, meist eines begründenden (Neben-) Gedankens… an einen Hauptgedanken".