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Logos and Agnosiology: Fragments for a Theory of Non-Knowledge

Logos in nespoznavno: drobci za teorijo ne-spoznanja

Abstract: The author's point of departure is the Hellenic idea of logos, which contains the presupposition of meaningfulness in the ontological, epistemological, and semantic fields. Still, in various spheres we come to face the fact that certain existentially important kinds of knowledge remain inaccessible, not only as a riddle which (we may) unriddle, but also as a mystery which remains such even when revealed. Not only does the lack of knowledge exist as a motif and origin of knowledge, but principled unknowability exists as well: especially in the encounter with transcendence, in the experience of limit-situations, in mystical unknowing (which is a kind of knowing), in the experience wherein meaning is revealed, in the event of existential truth. The human being possesses awareness regarding that which surpasses it, and has a need to express the inexpressible, to know the unknowable. In such a case, our non-knowing is not an occasion for scepticism and agnosticism. Rather, non-knowing (as experiential metaphysics) becomes a kind of knowledge, a moment thereof. We face contingency, namely the uncontrollability of the conditions of our life, and we have a need to introduce meaning in order to overcome contingency. But, how do we overcome situations which defy meaning? Is it also possible to formulate a theory regarding the unknowable?

Key words: logos, meaningfulness, rationality, logic, scientific knowledge, mystical knowledge, existential truth, the apophatic, transcendence, mystery

Povzetek: Avtorjevo izhodišče je grška ideja o logosu, ki vsebuje predpostavke gleda smisla na ontološkem, na epistemološkem in na semantičnem polju. Kljub temu se na različnih področjih spopadamo z dejstvom, da nekatere eksistencialno pomembne vrste spoznanja ostajajo nedosegljive, ne zgolj kot uganke, ki jih (lahko) razrešimo, temveč tudi kot skrivnosti, ki celo ob svojem razkritju ostajajo skrivnosti. Pomanjkanje spoznanja ni zgolj razlog in izvor za doseganje spoznanja, saj obstaja tudi nespoznavno, ki je takšno v svojem temelju: to velja zlasti pri srečevanju s transcendenco, pri izkustvu mejnih fenomenov, pri mističnem nespoznanju (ki je nekakšna oblika spoznanja), pri izkustvu, skozi ka-

tero se razkriva pomen nečesa, pri dogodku eksistencialne resnice. Človeško bitje se zaveda tega, kar ga presega, in ima potrebo, da izraža neizrazljivo, da spoznava nespoznavno. Tedaj naše ne-spoznanje ni priložnost za skepticizem in agnosticizem. Nasprotno, ne-spoznanje (kot izkustvena metafizika) postane svojevrstno spoznanje, njegov trenutek. Spopadamo se s kontingenco, to je: z možnostmi našega življenja, nad katerimi nimamo nadzora, in čutimo potrebo po vzpostavljanju smisla, da bi kontingenco premagali. Toda kako lahko premagamo stanja, ki se izmikajo smislu? Ali je mogoče oblikovati teorijo o nespoznavnem?

Ključne besede: logos, smisel, racionalnost, logika, znanstveno spoznanje, mistično spoznanje, eksistencialna resnica, apofatičnost, transcendenca, skrivnost

1. Greek and Christian logos

Our entire activity, particularly our knowledge, moral acts, and artistic creativity, rests on the presupposition of meaningfulness. This presupposition of meaningfulness is so solid (as it were, it is a characteristic of life) that we could not envisage some contrary presupposition. Meaninglessness irritates us precisely because we presuppose meaningfulness as a condition of life-important orientability in the world of existence. Our complex knowledge about reality tells us it is meaningful, be it according to its nature and structure (»in itself«) or be it according to our knowledge, as known by us.

The complex rationality (meaningfulness) contained in language, thought and reality, including their multifarious connections, was expressed by the Hellenes through the concept of *logos* (λόγος).[1] For Heraclitus the logos signifies both the principle of the law-governed structure of the cosmos (as such it is omnipresent in the multifariousness of the phenomenal) and the capacity of the soul through which the logos structure of things is known (as such, it is universally valid for the understanding of things, and is characterized by self-augmentation). In Parmenides this connection between the ontic and epistemic aspect of logos is contained in the equalization of the verbs *to be* (εἶναι), *to think* (νοεῖν) and *to speak* (λέγειν). Otherwise, for Parmenides logos signifies reasoning about that which is. The sophists sever the objective-subjective character of logos, reducing it to speech and proof as a manifestation of correct reason (ὀρθὸς λόγος). For Socrates, according to Plato, logos is the laying-out of reasons for a certain proposition. In the same way Plato understands logos as the necessary condition for knowledge, and, against uncertain empirical exploration, posits conceptual and dialectical investigation as a »flight into logoi [concepts]« (εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα – *Phaidon* 99e). However, Plato reconnects logos to reality, for he comprehends it as a concept which formulates true being, as logos about something (λόγος τινός), i.e. as thought which is capable of listing reasons and of giving

[1] The noun *logos* (λόγος), derived from the verb *lego/legein* (λέγω, λέγειν – to pick, collect, count, to add; to converse, to speak, to discern), signifies: word, speech, statement, proof, explanation, concept, reason, calculus, sum, measure, proportion.

account (λόγον διδόναι). For Aristotle logos is a concept, definition and conclusion, as well as a propositional statement (λόγος ἀποφαντικός) which expresses something about something (τί κατὰ τινός) and therefore may be true or false. And since thought through logos raises a thing into a concept, thought and expression are held in unity. The determination of man as a being which possesses logos (ζῷον λόγον ἔχων), namely the capacity of discernment between good and evil, allows Aristotle to bind it with man's capacity to build a political community (πολιτικὸν ζῷον) on the bases of moral and law (*Politica* I 2. 1253[a]). The Stoics understand the logos as a divine cosmic force which through the logos seeds (λόγοι σπερματικοί) necessarily causes passive matter to become an intelligent world structure, whereas the individual logos (both as inner reason, ἐνδιάθετος λόγος, and as expressed speech, προφορικὸς λόγος), both in terms of knowledge and moral behaviour, needs to harmonize with this universal logos: hence the logos is a structural moment of unity of logic, physics, and ethics. For Plotinus logos is a creative force through which the soul (as emanation of mind, νοῦς) gives structure and form to matter, and makes reality intelligent.

Platonic-Stoic and Hebraic elements are united by Philo of Alexandria, according to whom the eternal logos is the transcendent mediator between God and the real world (where platonic ideas become God's thoughts for creation), and, as divine logos, it is immanent in the human mind. According to the Gospel of John (with reliance not only on Hellenic but also Hebrew comparisons: the Old Testament *dabar*, the targum *Memra*, the wisdom literature) the Logos is God's revealed, creative and incarnate Word (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, Jn. 1:14) as the Son of God Jesus Christ who became man and appeared amongst men. In this manner, Justin the Philosopher understands the Logos as Christ (who is the wisdom of God), as logos in all that is created and as the seed logos in the human mind through which truth is known. It is similar with Clement of Alexandria for whom the incarnation of the Logos signifies the immanence of God in the world, which is what Origenes asserts as well. The teaching of the Council in Nicaea that Christ as incarnate divine Logos is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) to the Father not only removed Arianism but laid the foundation for Christology and affirmed the Christian understanding of God as the Holy Trinity. At the same time it became the referential frame for the doctrine of the holy fathers regarding the Logos (e.g. St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas) and for the entire subsequent theology. Christianity did endorse both mentioned most important aspects of the Hellenic idea of logos – the theoretical and the practical. In theoretical philosophy and science, logical reason is the one which accepts the existence and validity of only that for which proof may be given (λόγον διδόναι). Not only is logos found in our cognitive powers (*epistemology*) but it is found in the structure of reality as well (ontology). Hence, the one who knows and what is known are understood in unity. In practical philosophy, logos as reason is the one which has the ability to discern between good and evil: the moral sense (*ethics*) which is the condition for the building of the polis, the community founded on moral and legal norms (*politics*). However, the Christian teaching about the incarnation brings a new and ennobling meaning of logos: The Logos of love and sacrifice for the other.

The filiation of Platonic, Stoic, and Christian elements of the teaching about logos characterizes the whole of European philosophy and culminates in Hegel's *panlogism* (logos is the rationality of what is, it is the world reason and absolute spirit). Contrary to that, in modern philosophy of logic the logical is understood as technical correctness in inferring and as exactness. The idea of logos in Russian philosophy is prominently developed by V. F. Ern and P. A. Florensky. The modern reduction of logos to speech, reason, and calculus is criticized from different positions by Husserl, Heidegger, the critical theory of society (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse), poststructuralism, and postmodernism (critique of logocentrism: Lacan, Derrida, Foucault).

In the idea of logos, the sublimation comes to pass of the encounter of philosophical-scientific rationality (which contains the presupposition of immanent logosness, i.e. meaningfulness of the whole of creation and complementary logosness of human knowledge, art creation, and moral action) with Christian belief in the transcendent Logos of love and sacrifice: an encounter which even today, beyond the limits of utilitarian and instrumental reason, offers the possibility of a responsible rationality (logosness, *slovesnost*) salvifically committed to goodness and justice. In opposition to instrumental rationality as logos of violence, which threatens us with a return to barbarism, where the only universal language is force, we need to rehabilitate all aspects of logos and refuse its reduction to *ratio*. We need a rationality which will be not only of the order of zero, namely an extended instinct of self-preservation, which will be interested not only in profit but also in goodness, not only in lawfulness but also in justice. The problem is that contemporary culture forgets both Socrates and Christ. It forgets, namely, that truth and knowledge are tied to virtue (thus they have an ethical aspect, not only a utilitarian one), and that only that community survives which deposits holiness in its foundations. This means that the civilization which forgets Socrates (reduced to scientific knowledge) may be of the same type as the society which pacifies its conscience by forgetting Christ (salvation as the purpose of knowledge).

2. Rationality and unknowability

Rationality and scientific knowledge have shown their limitations. Looking from a theoretical perspective, science holds a monopoly over reality: only one reality exists, and it is described and explained by sciences. This standpoint produces belief in the omnipotence and absolute authority of science. Looking from a practical perspective, science is evaluated according to its applicability: according to the measure in which scientific knowledge can make us masters and owners of nature. Into the foundations of such a status of science modern rationality was laid (an ethically neutral capacity of adaptation for survival and domination), becoming a new mythology. Idolatry and totalitarianism, autism and solipsism, self-sufficiency and self-verification – these became the main characteristics of the

rationality of the new era. Rationality proclaimed itself to be an instance which legitimizes everything else yet, at the same time, refuses to prove its own legitimacy. Neither does science exhaust the limits of human knowledge nor do the limits of science exhaust the limits of our existence. Since religion (like art) steps over the limits of human knowledge, and therefore contains the possibility of expanding the limits of human knowledge and likewise the possibility of realization of human existence, it is timely and necessary to rehabilitate religiousness in the domain of critique of scientific rationality as well (statements of religious experience must be recognized as having evident epistemic status, since they bring forth knowledge which cannot be obtained in any other way), and in regard to questions of valuative self-regulation of the society (fundamental values of the community abide in the moral and religious spheres, hence faith and ethics traditions are socially obligatory).

The scientific and religious relations towards reality do not exclude one another. However, they need to mutually support and complement each other. This is contained in the phenomenon of wonder. When Plato (*Theaitetos* 155d) and Aristotle (*Metaph*. A 2. 982^{b} 12–18) find the origin of philosophy in wonder (τὸ θαυμάζειν), they have in mind the thematization of the divine in the becoming of philosophy. This is not merely scientific inquisitiveness (underlined by Aristotle in the first sentence of the *Metaphysics*: πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει – »all men naturally desire knowledge«, *Metaph*. A 1. 980^{a} 21), for it relates to inspiredness by the miracle (θαῦμα) which, as a divine phenomenon, is inexplicable by natural causality. This wonderment before the divine miracle represents not only a psychological motivation but also a problem impulse for philosophical thought. Wonder has for its object both riddle and mystery as two types of relation towards reality and the lifeworld. The riddle symbolizes the scientific unriddling of reality (the world as riddle is the object matter of many sciences), and the mystery which is revealed and gifted to us symbolizes our religiosity and our capacity for creating art. The foundational structure of reality, the essential structure of all (»nature«), is not something hidden but »likes to conceal herself« (φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ), as Heraclitus says (Themistios, *Or.* 5 p. 69B [DK 22 B 123]). We discover the structure of reality as a riddle which needs to be unriddled. The riddle enables unriddling as the discovery of meaning. The riddle of the world (*Welträtsel*) enables the meaning of the world (which we do not receive in a prepared finished state) to be obtained by unriddling through the labour of knowing and interpreting and thus to understand the world. The presupposition of meaningfulness is affirmed by Heraclitus on the phenomenal and essential plane: »the unapparent harmony is stronger than the apparent one« (ἁρμονίη ἀφανὴς φανερῆς κρείττων – DK 22 B 54 [= Hippol. IX 9. 5]).

According to Wittgenstein (1922) »the world is the totality of facts, not of things« (1.1: *Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge*), and »the facts in logical space are the world« (1.13: *Die Tatsachen im logischen Raum sind die Welt*). Therefore, a riddle doesn't exist without unriddling: »For an answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed. The riddle does

not exist. If a question can be put at all, then it can also be answered.« (6.5: *Zu einer Antwort, die man nicht aussprechen kann, kann man auch die Frage nicht aussprechen. Das Rätsel gibt es nicht. Wenn sich eine Frage* überhaupt *stellen lässt, so kann sie auch beantwortet werden*) All (scientific) problems exist as questions and answers under the presupposition of meaningfulness. Namely, everything we can speak about is determined by logically ordered language, and »whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent« (7: *Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*), because: »There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical.« (6.522: *Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische*) Regarding this encounter of logic and the mystical, Wittgenstein feels that »even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all« (6.52: *Wir fühlen, dass selbst, wenn alle möglichen wissenschaftlichen Fragen beantwortet sind, unsere Lebensprobleme noch gar nicht berührt sind*). In certain situations, and conditions, we come to face the realization that precisely the knowledge which concerns us as such is inaccessible: knowledge which relates to essential existential questions, which touch us intimately.

Wonder springs forth from the impossibility to explain something by recurring to what we know. Therefore, it reflects the awareness of ignorance as a motivating origin of knowledge. When our ignorance is principled, then it, too, becomes an object of knowledge: *docta ignorantia* – be it as awareness of the limitedness of our own knowledge, be it as a way of knowing the unknowable. Not only does unknowing as motif and origin of knowledge exist, but principled unknowing exists as well. Especially in the encounter with the transcendent, in the experience of limit-situations, in mystical non-knowledge (which is a kind of knowledge), in an event which reveals meaning to us, in the event of existential truth. To an extent knowledge and non-knowledge relate mutually as sound and silence. Man has the ability not only to speak and listen to the speech of the other, but also the ability to »hear« silence (Muldoon 1996). Alongside, silence isn't merely an opposition to sound. Silence contains meaningful openness originating from its depth which we experience in anticipation of meaning. We hear silence under the presupposition of its meaningfulness. Such silence is a matter of our experience, not merely an objective fact of non-existence of sound. In this sense, we hear/listen to silence intentionally. For example, next to the metaphorics and metaphysics of light, Christianity has specially developed the metaphorics of listening and listening to (Blumenberg 1957). Like the sound makes the existence of silence clearer, so does knowledge refer to non-knowledge: knowledge is the »grabbing-away« from non-knowledge. On the plane of ontology, this epistemic analogy has the meaning of the relation of being and non-being. Non-being (i.e. nothing) is not only an ontic (i.e. meontic) fact of non-existence of being (as claims already Parmenides and discusses Plato in the *Sophist*), and it is not only a postulation of speculative reason (the fruitfulness of which is catered for by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*), but nothing can be the object of our experience as well (we experience nothing in anxiety) (Heidegger 1929). Nothing(ness) really exists in the moment

when it engulfs us. Similarly, evil (even though in the metaphysical sense it has a meontic character, that it is nothing: hence evil represents an intrusion into ontology, an ontological usurpation) exists as an everyday givenness. Man can introduce it from nothingness into existence and conferring it with astounding power of destruction. In the encounter with evil reason collides with the impenetrable membrane of meaninglessness and absurdity of evil (evil exists but it should not exist: the existence of evil is absurd). Hence, this conceptual elusiveness of evil is the reason why religion and art more successfully grasp evil than theory. Evil and suffering allow us to experience absurdity in an immediate way, which we cannot fully comprehend and explain. Evil and absurdity oppose our presupposition of meaningfulness.

Man has the awareness of that which surpasses him, and has the need to express the inexpressible, to know the unknowable. Then our unknowing is not an occasion for scepticism and agnosticism. Rather, unknowing (as experiential metaphysics) becomes a kind of knowing, a moment thereof. Mysticism and apophaticism speak of that in the manner of paradox (Šijaković 2013, 112–125). This paradox has three mutually interrelated levels: the ontological (which speaks about transcendence), the epistemological (about unknowability), and the linguistical (about inexpressibility). God, says Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite, is »above all existence and knowledge« (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν καὶ γνῶσιν – MT I 1, PG 3, 997B–1000A), He is »the One above all« (ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα – MT I 3, PG 3, 1000C and 1001A), He is »supra-essential/supra-existent« (ὑπερούσιος – MT II, PG 3, 1025A). Regarding this ontic pre-eminence, John Damascene says (*An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*): »God is not something amongst existent beings, not because He does not exist at all, but because He transcends all existent beings (ὑπὲρ πάντα ὄντα), transcending even being itself (ὑπὲρ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι).« (*De fide orth*. I 4, PG 94, 800B) Similarly, Dionysius regarding God, who is no determinate »what«, says He is Nothing (αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ ὄν). Nicholas of Cusa amplifies: God is »the Nothing of Nothing itself« (*nihil ipsius nihil*), »Nothing in Nothing« (*nihil in nihilo*).[2] Every determination of God is a reason to negate that determination. In order to negate all affirmative concepts about God we first need to presuppose them. From the ontological paradox the epistemological one follows suit: we know God as the One who is unknowable. This unknowability in principle is the consequence of ontological transcendence: about God there is no speech nor thought because He is supra-essentially/supra-existentially (ὑπερουσίως) above all, claims Dionysius (MT I 3, PG 3, 1000C). God is »the One above seeing and knowing« (ὁ ὑπὲρ θέαν καὶ γνῶσιν – MT II, PG 3, 1025A), »the One perfectly unknowable« (ὁ παντελῶς ἄγνωστος – MT I 3, PG 3, 1001A). God who wholly transcends the sphere of the ontical is perfectly unknowable in the sense that his essence is inaccessible to categorial understanding: He is on the other side of categoriality. The way to know God, therefore, is precisely his unknowability. Consequently, the way of god-knowing is knowing by way of unknowing – γνῶσις δι᾽ ἀγνωσίας (DN VI 3, PG

[2] »Propositionum de virtute ipsius non aliud septima.« (Nicolas Cusanus 1944, 61)

3, 872A). Then we are left to cognize our ignorance (*scire nos ignorare*), to attain learned ignorance (*doctam ignorantiam*), to be most learned (*doctissimus*) in ignorance, »and the more learned one will be, the more he knows that he does not know« (*Et tanto quis doctior erit, quanto se sciverit magis ignorantem*) – this is the insight of Nicholas of Cusa (*De docta ignorantia*, Liber I, cap. I 4.12–17). On the linguistic plane, mystical experience is the communication with transcendence: communication with the wholly Other. Such an experience is communicable through a wholly different language. This is a language, therefore, which is not language anymore. The inexpressibility of such experience is a consequence of God's transcendence and unknowability. In »supra-intellectual darkness« wordlessness (ἀλογία) and thoughtlessness (ἀνοησία) reign, claims Dionysius (MT III, PG 3, 1033C). God is nameless (ἀνώνυμος) and supra-named (ὑπερώνυμος).[3] He is inexpressible and ineffable. Accordingly, mysticism speaks of that which allows no speech. Mystical paradox is the attempt to formulate the cognisance of absolute transcendence and otherness (to think as unthinkable that which is unthinkable in itself): to describe the nature of communication with the wholly Other (to express as ineffable that which is ineffable in itself). This experience reveals the wholly Other as the One-who-cannot-be-known-in-knowledge, namely as the One-who-is-known-only-in-non-knowledge. Paradox, however, is not only an expressive means of religious language. Mystical discourse endeavours to introduce incommunicability into communication. The intention of mystical discourse, consequently, is paradoxical itself. Since mystical paradox is an attempt to render a religious experience as communicable, then mysticism expands the field of the transparent and inter-subjective. Paradox is a logical provocation, equally, for logic. However, paradox is not an epistemological blockade or a subversive obstacle which disables logical thought. Similarly, mysticism is not a strategy of non-transparency. Paradox is a reaction to all of that. It is a reaction which desires to move the borders of thought and solicit a redefining of basic concepts. Mystical paradox strives to introduce the presupposition of meaningfulness into the space of the unknowable and ungraspable, inexpressible and ineffable. It aims to understand unknowing (ἀγνωσία) as a kind of knowing and to solicit a theory of non-knowledge, agnosiology.

3. Contingency, religion, anthropodicy

There are insights of experience, experiential-cognitive acts, which are unique and unrepeatable, in which something truly important for us comes to pass: the event of existential truth. It is then that we understand that searching for »essence« (e.g. of love, friendship, life, meaning) is not supreme, but that precedence should be given to the experience within which mystery is revealed to us. Then consciousness about that which transcends us becomes a fact of empirical me-

[3] DN I 6, PG 3, 596A; I 7, PG 3, 596C; VII 1, PG 3, 865C: ἀνώνυμος; I 5, PG 3, 593B; I 7, PG 3, 597A; I 8, PG 3, 597A; XIII 3, PG 3, 981A: ὑπερώνυμος. – Cf. Gombocz 2015.

taphysics. It is very important in many areas of life to retain openness towards religious experience, the experience of proximity of what is remote, the experience of touching the incomprehensible. In religious experience (and in creation of art) Mystery is revealed and it remains a mystery even when revealed. We have a need to utter judgement about that, although we do know mystery is ineffable. This is similar to love poetry which speaks about the unspeakable. Religious experience opens the possibility of a different knowledge and understanding of reality, namely of existential knowledge different from the factual, object-bound, scientific knowledge in which reason limits itself to positivistic reason. In scientific knowledge man posits himself as the owner of knowledge, as a master of truth. Such a standpoint, however, makes another kind of truth retreat from him: a different and more important truth, which cannot be mastered, to which we need to open-up, which we need to receive, so that it could master us. The text of the New Testament (Heb 11,3) has an adequate phrase for this: πίστει νοοῦμεν – »by faith we understand«, by faith we know and comprehend. At hand we have »faith seeking understanding« (*fides quaerens intellectum*). As Anselm of Canterbury grasps: »I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but rather, I believe in order that I may understand. For this also I believe that unless I believed, I should not understand [Is 7,9].« (*Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia nisi credidero, non intelligam*. – *Proslogion*, cap. I)

Our complex and dynamical identity is constituted in circumstances which we do not decide and which we cannot fully influence (we do not choose the origin, nation, language, era to which we belong). Essential elements of our identity are not at our disposal. For this reason, we cannot fully dispose of our lives as we wish (Lübbe 2004, 144–160). What happens (*contingit*) in our life, what touches and engulfs us, characterizes contingency (as the modal attribute of that which may but needn't necessarily be, which is neither impossible nor necessary). We face the inevitability of contingency. We have the experience of irrevocable contingency (life conditions which are not in our command), the experience of uncontrollability of the conditions of our life. We are not determined by the past only. The future, too, as a challenge of contingency, remains determinant and important for our self-understanding. Standing before the future we receive the experience of contingency through the experientiality of anxiety and worry: through the experience that happiness is not distributed justly, and that justice is not present deservedly. Due to life circumstances, we may falter and fall into desperation and hopelessness. Then we are left without orientation in the lifeworld. Contrarily, concerning the experience of contingency, we may react by giving meaning to conditions of life outside our control and/or by simply accepting what is beyond the power of our deciding and anticipating. It is precisely religion that enables us to accept what we cannot influence. Religion is »the culture of behaviour towards that which is not at our disposal« (*Kultur des Verhaltens zum Unverfügbaren*) (Kambartel 1989). Religion is »the practice of overcoming contingency« (*Kontingenzbewältigungspraxis*): »Religion has its place in life practice where it would

otherwise be wholly meaningless to endeavour to transform contingency into meaning. /… / In religious life practice we relate towards that contingency which resists in principle the transformation into the meaning of action.« (Lübbe 2004, 154) Despite the need to introduce meaning into happening and into the lifeworld, in order to overcome contingency, events and states which resist meaning do exist. How are we to overcome them? Religion satisfies the function of acknowledging contingency, of bearing meaninglessness, which, in the contrary case, could even drive us insane. This is not the only function of religion, moreover, religion cannot be definitely functionalized. Religion is the culture of giving meaning and justice to the sacrifice victim.

Man is a logos-bearing being. Accordingly, he must satisfy the need for meaning. For this reason, man needs logotherapy. In this respect, philosophy and theology can offer therapeutic knowledge. Religion is one of the fullest and most important answers regarding the need for meaning, but meaningfulness is the presupposition of our life orientability. Meaningfulness characterizes all our (sensory and intellectual) powers of perception and understanding by which we open ourselves for reality. What we grasp as reality is, actually, constituted through multifarious and complex forms of production of meaning. Furthermore, language (in the widest sense) as communication and medium of hermeneutical experience exists and operates under the presupposition of meaning. Thence, hermeneutics is the adeptness of understanding and interpreting meaning. Our actions (whether simple or complex) have functional meaning as reasoned explanations of why they are undertaken for a certain goal. In our moral behaviour and creation of art and thought, valuative meaning is realized. We attach value to meaning even when we raise questions of life and of meaning of history. These questions are exacerbated, sometimes to the limit of what is bearable, precisely by the encounter with contingency which provokes our presupposition of meaningfulness. Then we endeavour to justify the existence of evil and suffering in the world: we strive to explain the usurpation of the favourable condition of things in the world through moralization, transforming brutal facts into values, and thus construing the alleged meaningfulness and consequentiality of events. Against our (gain-seeking or justice-seeking) desire that the world be morally well ordered, religion teaches us to accept suffering and anguish, i.e. the contingency of conditions of our existence which are beyond our control, which we shouldn't load with meaning. Contrary to that, theodicy (the question of the responsibility of God, not us, for evil in the world), like every philosophy of history which frees us from responsibility and freedom in history, represents a form of mental escape from responsibility. As if theodicy is the official apology of theology because not all sporadic inconveniences we summarily name as »evil« have been removed? Is theodicy, in fact, a cunning philosophical means for stifling the rebellion of those who, although innocent, pay by their lives the unbearable taxes to evil? In front of the hyperbolic and diabolic dimension of human suffering and anguish, theodicy needs to retreat and give way to anthropodicy, namely the question of human responsibility for evil in the world.

However, we do have the need to give meaning to history (Lessing 1919), especially when it is evil-fated and agonizing: not only in order to bear the brutality of history, but also in order to be able to understand and accept history. When we mythicize history, attributing axiomatic value to historical events, we in fact want to attain valuative orientation and points of grounding in which we find meta-historical meaning. Sacrifice is the sublimation of history. Historical truth is neither logical nor universal, but event-bearing and unique. The event of elevated sacrifice has the meaning of presence of the holy and gives meaning to historical time. It becomes the truth of historical time. The readiness for sacrifice, of course, doesn't entail the glorification of sacrificing as a value in itself because the value of sacrifice is in its purity and purpose. The meaning and purpose of history must be the improvement of life. Otherwise we are left with meaning-depleting duration in the flow of physical time. Truth from the perspective of the Sacrifice victim as subject differs essentially from truth from the perspective of Violence which seeks the victim as object. By stigmatization violence construes the victim as an object and thus rationalizes its acts. It demonizes the victim and thus conceals the holiness of the victim. It is precisely holiness that establishes responsibility and normativity in general. Our responsibility in history is not exclusively tied to concrete participance in historical events. Historical responsibility is trans-generational, and it produces the moral unity of historical time. Normativity becomes a special reason for our need to keep giving meaning to history. By virtue of containing imperative duty normativity introduces predictability into our actions (it norms the way we should behave). Namely, it gives moral orientation in contingent historical circumstances. This enables us, still, to transform historical fate into meaning. Whether on the speculative level like the Hegelian »reason in history« (*Vernunft in der Geschichte*), whether as tradition that constitutes us – normativity is in fact the way to accept historical challenges and reply to them, even when we are not capable of understanding their meaning. The importation of meaning into history makes it possible to bear the tragedy of historical reality. Whereas the need for justice, as well, is the expression of the need to normativize life and reduce the amount of the unpredictable.

As a wholeness, man reacts to reality in multifarious experiential-cognitive acts. There exists no uniform rational formulation which could cover all those acts. The Enlightenment and epistemological optimism pertaining to rationally cognize everything and capture it by a conceptual network have many times shown themselves as unfounded. It is necessary not only to broaden our understanding of rationality, but to endorse, as well, forms and types of knowledge and experience which are irreducible to rationality. Not only art and religion teach this, but so does life itself: in which emotionality, intuition, and perspectivism play important cognitive roles; in which our perception, too, is often an expression of our soul. Again Heraclitus: »Bad witnesses are eyes and ears to men, if they have barbarian souls.« (κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὦτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων – DK 22 B 107 = Sext. Emp. VII 126) Similarly: »The logos of the soul augments itself.« (ψυχῆς ἐστι λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὔξων – DK 22 B 115 = Stobaios, *flor.* III

1. 180a) Man is the producer of meaning and seeker of meaning. Logos is the meaningfulness which includes all forms of knowledge and experience and mustn't be reduced to narrow rationality. Just as there are differentiated forms of sense (implied even in synesthesia), so differentiated forms of intellect exist as well. The whole of this multiversity is encompassed by the unity of logosness (*slovesnost*). In the search for meaning man oversteps his own borders and delves into the space of transcendence. Not only when transcendence (God, Holiness, Mystery) addresses man, but also when the mystic endeavours to bridge what is graspable and what is ungraspable, when poetry and art in general display their unfathomable and fertile multitudes of meaning, when love makes it so that we remain speechless, when with passion we seek truth, when we understand that life, cannot be relayed in (auto)biography. Then it is important to awaken wonder which makes it possible to have the experience of riddle and mystery, so that we can defend meaningfulness and experience unknowability, which, in that case, we need to describe and protect with a theory of non-knowledge.

Abbreviations

CH – Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagites 1990–1991, vol. 2 [*De coelesti hierarchia*].
DK – Diels and Kranz 1974.
DN – Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagites 1990–1991, vol. 1 [*De Divinis Nominibus*].
EH – Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagites 1990–1991, vol. 2 [*De ecclesiastica hierarchia*].
Epist. – Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagites 1990–1991, vol. 2. [*Epistulae*].
MT – Dionysios Pseudo-Areopagites 1990–1991, vol. 2 [*De mystica theologia*].

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