

THE RELATION OF EUROPEAN THOUGHT
TO THE 'LOGOS' AND 'LOGIC':
A POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION
TO CULTURAL WORLD INTEGRATION?

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Modern Secular Culture primarily is the result of world wide extension and influence of European Culture. Therefore, in order to determine the constructive and destructive power of Modern Secular Culture for shaping a dynamic world peace in encounter with traditional Asiatic and African Cultures, an analysis of positive and negative characteristics of European Culture seems to be necessary. These characteristics are to be comprehended by means of their historical manifestations, especially of the development of European Philosophy from Antiquity and Middle Ages to Modernity, which we have to look over in the following exposition under this aspect.

In the *first part*, we will try to elaborate the primordial positive disposition and capacity of European Spirit. This consists, as I would like to demonstrate, in the development of Logos and logic; European culture, from its basic onto-anthropological identity and tendency, is a rational culture. This fundamentally means a particular faculty of an objectifying and distancing consciousness of Being, which makes possible a critical understanding and transcending of the past and an active projection and creation of the future. This rational ability gave birth the sciences, which have to analyse, and divide the original unity of experienced reality into its components and partial functions, and it produced modern technics, which have to synthesize and recompose the parts to new ingenious unities. Hence it follows an especial progressivity of European Mind and Culture. This consciousness confronting and dividing reality further included

the evolution of individual rights of the human person, as well as the construction of rational orders of society and economy. In these human values the possible contribution of European Culture to world integration is grounded.

But simultaneously this particular capacity of the Logos and of logical structuring of empirical reality, seems to have been partially perverted into negative attitudes: in alienation, exploitation and destruction. To point it out will be the intention of the *second part* of this exposition. Here occur historical phenomena like rationalism, empirism, positivism, which indicate the permanent danger and tendency of European Spirit, to fall into a subjectocentric nihilism. It is to be understood as a partial privation and perversion of the originally positive faculty and disposition just mentioned, and signifies a deep crisis of European Culture and – in its enlargement in Modern Secular World Civilisation – a threat for mankind's survival and therefore a strong provocation. The task of overcoming this crisis demands a creative encounter with the Asiatic and African cultural traditions which exactly embody those human values which could balance out the onesidedness of the European access to the reality.

I. The representation of the LOGOS as the primordial capacity and destiny of European Culture, as a possible contribution to world integration

a) Looking upon the historical development of European mentality in its philosophical conceptualization, we see the idea of the Logos as the leading motive of thinking since the earliest times. In the Antiquity, as it seems, the pre-socratic thinker *Heraklyte*, was the first who called the Logos the supreme and inmost principle of reality and the law of all processes and events, combining and determining the differences and contrarities of Being to an all-embracing floating unity, as a PALINTROPOS HARMONIAE, and in *Pythagoras* this Logos assumed more mathematical-harmonical and psychical features. Later on, with *Sokrates* the Logos in the play of questioning dia-logues and dia-lectics was recognized as the methodical principle of finding out the truth; and according to his disciple *Plato* all physical reality is transparent to its meta-physical Logos, it is to an order of through-shining archetypes or hypostatic 'ideas', as the good and the love or truth, beauty, equality, harmony and justice; and at least, *Aristotle* put these transcendent principles of sense and cognoscibility into the matter of the world, as the immanent forms of the physical beings and happenings. As to be seen, for the Ancient Greeks the whole world was ordered homogeneously by harmonical mathematical principles and reigned by the Logos, who worked out the chaos to the cosmos. But, because the material substratum to a certain extent resists the Logos, he does appear in the visible world only in a limited manner, and order can't overcome the chaos perfectly. This metaphysical opposition and

dualism in the constitution of the world's being also is the reason for an ultimate failing of all ethical efforts and for a deeply tragical feeling of fate. Therefore, human education was understood as the task to elaborate, represent, imitate and actualize the Logos and a Logos-corresponding order of Being: *theoretically* in the rational consciousness, *practically* in the ethical will and character, and poietically in the constructing of external culture. This European conception of cosmic Logos, embracing all nature and mankind and grounding world order, may be found in a similar way also in other cultures and certainly opens a basical perspective for future world integration.

b) In the second period of the historical development of European Culture, the so called *Middle Ages*, under the influence of Jewish and Christian Revelation the *cosmocentric* image of Being changed to a *theocentric* one. That means, in the center of Being it is not the logic of an anonymous divine energy that works, but the one and omnipotent personal God, who creates the world through the Logos, his personal word, by which he calls all things into Being. Now, the Logos is no longer understood as a part of the world, as its immanent forming and structuring force, but as a personal divine reality. According to Christian philosophers such as *Saint Augustine* or *Thomas of Aquin*, God in Himself realizes an interpersonal life; His act of being consists in a trinitarian dialog: By intellectual self-penetration God perceives His own infinite essence and expresses and pronounces it in the Logos, who therefore is named the co-essential 'Son of God'; He perfectly represents Him and corresponds to Him. The co-acting of self-pronouncing and of responding culminates in the origination and aspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which both accept each other in perfect love and unity. In this unlimited divine dialog, the world as a limited being in space and time participates. Thus God the Greater occurs as the father both of His consubstantial Son, the Divine Logos, and of all His creation which is pronounced through the same Logos – in the love of Holy Spirit; and the world, especially the human person, is invited to integrate itself into the Logos and His correspondence to God, that is in His responding and answering son-partnership to God. In this horizon, the evolution and history of the world appears as nothing less than an increasing or decreasing conformity to the reality of the Logos, that means: History is the response and responsible answer to the call of the creator, or also its denial.

It implies a mystery of Christian belief, that in the history of his fatherly partnership with the world, God has sent his Son as an incarnated brotherly being with the humankind, and that He was crucified; hence the cross is understood as a sign for the disturbed order of Being and for the suffering, as a consequence of the denial against creative divine Logos and Love, and simultaneously as a permanent offer to reconciliation and freedom.

Philosophically, thereby two important aspects of the Logos have been elaborated:

- 1) 'Logos' means personal dialog and creative encounter, and all human Being from its absolute divine fundament is disposed and directed to dialog and interpersonal; in this Logos-participating similitude to the Divine, especially an irreplaceable dignity of every human person is rooted, and this is the fundament of its individual rights and its social and cosmical obligations as dimensions of a dialogical and responsible being. This value, articulated in a peculiar way in the Christian Middle Ages, means an indispensable supposition and contribution for world integration.
- 2) But Logos and all Logos-participating order in reality also is violated and is deeply suffering; therefore the aim of history seems to be liberation and freedom through the relation to the Logos, by His personal assimilation and subjectification. Thus, in the line of Logos-accentuated European Culture development after the *cosmocentric* world view of the Antiquity and the *theocentric* of the Middle Ages, now in a third period, Modernity, a more *anthropocentric* version is initiated.

c) Since *Modernity*, the cultural and intellectual evolution of the European-occidental world appears as a spiritual movement of liberation; now occidental philosophy understands its fundamental intentions as 'Philosophy of Freedom and Liberation'. This setting out towards freedom and liberty first announced itself in a *new relation to nature* and gained form in the modern sciences and technics. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages human reason was considered as the capacity to perceive the Logos, the intelligible content of the sensorily given reality and to express it in rational concepts; the logical order of human reason had to correspond to the preceding order immanent in nature. Since Modernity, however, a new task has been attributed to human reason, the task of taking the empirical reality logically into its potency, of forming it as a disposable material according to man's subjective intentions- whether according to innate ideas, as in *Descartes*, or according to apriori forms, as in *Kant*, or according to interests of the society, as in Positivism or Neo-Positivism. Man intended to grasp reality rationally by 'logical' concepts, and to dominate it theoretically by science. In this way he could subject it also practically and dispose of it by technics. He confronted himself with nature, opposed it as a 'determined object' and imposed himself on it as the 'determining and free subject'. By means of the 'objectifying of nature' the 'subjectifying of man' should be mediated; the 'constitution of nature as a determined object' served the 'self-constitution of man as a dominating and free subject'.

Especially the quantifying character of the modern exact natural sciences can be understood by this tendency of reason to freedom. Because, if the concrete qualities of the objects of the sensorial experience lose significance and importance for the abstracting view of the natural sciences, and only the quantitative-mathematical aspects of reality formulatable in general laws are observed, then the human spirit gains distance from concrete nature and makes itself free from it. So, the paradigm of a 'Reduction of Quality to Quantity' serves as an instrument for an intellectual taking in possession of reality, as *Hobbes* says, and thus for mediating freedom.

A similar phenomenon to that in the natural sciences, especially in physics, chemistry and biology, can be observed in the modern development of *psychology*, whose prototype is the so called psycho-analysis, initiated by *Freud*. By an objectifying cognition of the unconscious psychic complexes which determine human life, and by dissolving them into their elementary functional components, man intends to subtract himself from their narrowing hindering and so to liberate himself. By means of psycho-analytical dissolution and destruction of opposite and undesired structures and by free psycho-synthetical construction of desired structures man will be the free creator of the psychic structure of his life.

In the modern history of the Occident an analogous process is equally realizable in the human co-existence, it is in *structuring society*, in *economy* and in *politics*. Here was more elaborated the concept of individual rights, of tolerance and solidarity – work of a dividing and distancing, but also unifying and ordering Logos, perhaps with an accent on distancing and liberating. Furthermore, the so called 'capitalistic liberalism' is conceivable as an expression of an unlimited aspiration of the individual towards freedom vis a vis the whole society; in the subsequent phenomenon of a 'collectivistic socialism' there operates a will to liberation of the lower classes or also of the whole humankind from the predominating and repressive higher classes of society.

As notable figures, who searched to interpret philosophically and to favorize historically this direction of social development, primarily *Kant*, *Hegel* und *Marx* are to be mentioned. *Kant* proclaimed the free and strongly transcendently valid self-determination as that state which solely corresponds to the dignity of man as the autonomous subject of morality. *Hegel* saw in the liberating and victorious anti-thesis of the third social class, the citizens, to the first and second class, the clerics and the nobles, as manifested in the French Revolution, a progress of the 'Spirit of World' and the 'Logos of Being'; this Hegelian 'Logos' with his three dialectical steps of self-realisation, identifies the world-history with the trinitarian structure of the Deity in the Christian Middle Ages, and so he understands the social progress to more freedom as a step of an absolute divine Logic. *Marx* saw – in a dialectical continuation of *Hegel* – in the

desired victory of the fourth society-class, the proletariat of the physical labourers, in a socialistic world-revolution, the last and definitive step towards freedom in the all-embracing 'equality' and 'fraternity' of the whole humankind. This progress to an always more unlimited freedom should in reality mediate itself by means of a rational analysis of the historical structures and complexes in their single causal factors – with the intention to dominate and manipulate them psycho- and sociotechnically, for instance by application of mediums of communication and propaganda, in order thus to create social structures of more humanity.

d) *To sum up*: What is the prevalent feature of European-Occidental culture and mentality, as it has shown itself in its self-explication in the course of history? It seems to be an especial relation to Logos, logic und rationality. In the *first epoch*, the more cosmocentrically thinking Greek Antiquity, the Logos seemed included in the cosmos, as its innermost fundamental part and forming principle; and so, as human values were generated: an intellectual sensibility for cosmic order and harmony, and its representation, imitation and continuation both in the theoretical rational consciousness and in the practical, ethical und external culture. In the *second period*, the more theocentrically oriented Christian Middle Ages, the Logos transcended the world and faced it as the word of the all-mighty Divine creator, who has even spoken it into his creation up to its personal incarnation in Jesus Christ; by association with Him and participation in Him, the possibility was offered to mankind to in-sist and engage in the world from the basis of its absolute and free Divine fundament, and so, new values-dimensions were opened such as free personal partnership on the basis of an unsubstitutable God-representation of human person and responsibility. In the *third and ultimate era*, Modernity, with its anthropocentric turn and orientation, the Logos is appropriated from its Divine transcendence and in a certain way identified with human rationality and human history. The Occidental spirit in Modernity conceives itself in evolution and realisation in the tendency towards freedom, exceeding and transcending every status that it already has reached and rejecting it again: gaining distance from it theoretically by means of 'acts of a rational objectification', and dominating it practically by 'real acts of technics'; so this spirit searches for its progress towards a greater freedom in all regions of physical nature and the psychic structure of the individual and the society.

It may occur that in the differentiation and cooperation of the geographically and culturally distinct sectors of Europe this process is accentuated differently. In the *northern part*, it is the Anglo-Saxon culture which also has expanded to North-America, a more abstract logico-analytical theory of science and the search for an economic appropriation of the world prevails – and

in this sense here we have a *progressive* culture. In a certain contrast to this, in the *southern part*, it is the Roman culture which also is extended to South- and Latin-America, a concrete intuitive and esthetical access to the Logos is prevalent, as seen in a typical development of arts and religion – and in this sense here the *expressive* dimension of culture is accentuated. Situated in the center of Europe, Germany participates in both regions and therefore seems particularly called to their ideological confrontation and creative conciliation, as realized in great German scientists, inventors, artists, philosophers and innovators of religion who have influenced world history. So, the cultural identity of Europe, according to the explicating and differentiating character of the Logos itself, is not a monotonous, but a polyphonic one, it does not express uniformity, but ana-logy.

II. The crisis of European Culture in modernity and overcoming it through world cultural encounter

The peculiar ability of European spirit for Logos and logical structure of reality, as described above, which basically means a creative capacity for culture and a positive disposition for integral human being, especially in modern and present times seems to have been partially perverted to a negative state, and so it has thrown all humankind into a deep survival crisis. One can't deny that domination and freedom, gained by means of science and technics, on the basis of Nominalism, Rationalism and Positivism have led to a removal, alienation and estrangement of the theoretical consciousness from the structures of sense of reality – and consequently to a practical attitude of hybris, it is of exploitation, destruction and unlimited manipulation.

According to the early modern nominalistic philosopher *Occam*, our rational concepts have not to perceive and represent a preceeding sense or immanent Logos of being, but to grasp the empirical reality and to bring it under the ordering intention and potency of human subjective consciousness; according to its rationalistic continuation in *Kant*, the rationally forming intentions were to be understood as expressions of the so called 'transcendental subject' or of the whole humankind as such; then *Positivism* substituted the strongly universal and transhistorical Kantian 'transcendental subject' with the multiple concrete human societies and their partial and variable interests, which now were considered to be the ultimate sense-giving instances and authorities. Hence nature was no longer comprehended as a subject of its own Being and sense, but still more as an object for man, who intends nothing else but only himself as an unlimitedly free subject. Nature was regarded as a pure medium and instrument for human self-realization; it was not apprehended and respected as 'value of sense in itself', but merely as 'value of use and utility for man'. It is in the end an effect

of this mentality and attitude, that we are nowadays threatened by the danger of a destruction of life through contamination of the air with poisonous emissions, by unintended secondary effects of radioactivity and through certain evolution of gene-technics which escapes human responsibility; and further in the future it cannot be ruled out that there will be a disturbance of the cosmic equilibrium by atomic energy, which is at no time absolutely controllable. A provocation of history becomes manifest, touching the possibility of survival for mankind from its physical basis.

A similarly lugubrious view is given by modern evolution in the regions of the psychic, the social and the political. It seems that the relations of the sexes and the generations are falling more and more into neurotic forms and the economic and intercultural activities of the peoples are most heavily disturbed by lacking mutual respect and confidence. Where are reason and freedom going to?

It is evident, that occidental history of freedom manifests itself not only as a rational movement of opening, representing and confronting reality, but also partially perverts itself in sense-failing estrangement and destruction; confer in this context *Sartre's* conception of freedom as rejection of all obligating claims of the beings, and *Heidegger's* interpretation of the occidental 'Seinsgeschichte' as an 'oblivion of Being', in the line of *Nietzsche's* prophecy of nihilism. The fall into a subjectocentric nihilism attacking the ontical fundament of the human subject and of his freedom is threatening. It is true that recently a new ethics is demanded, for instance in the realms of bio-chemical genetic manipulation and socio-economic activities; but one must ask if here an adequate conception of 'ethics' is commonly included: if 'ethics' is intended as an attitude of 'respect for the being because of itself' and not only another form of 'technics', namely a mere technics of survival.

So it seems concretely proved under different aspects that the peculiar capacity of European spirit to distance and objectify reality – which is the fundament of free self-determination and projecting the future, and which signifies an originally positive quality – has to a great extent become perverted to removal and estrangement from reality; occidental rationality has fallen into a rationalistic attitude, not sufficiently opened and susceptible for the voice of Being; Occidental Logos in its concrete habit means – if one might interpret it in a Christian perspective – a particular participation in the Crucified Logos. What Occidental Logos is missing in its actual state of alienation is the corresponding re-ference, the adequate re-obligation and re-implication to the original sense of Being. European culture today seems unilaterally more *progressive* by looking at the physical matter to dominate it rationally as a mere medium for economic prosperity, than *expressive* by representing and mediating an intuitively

perceived metaphysical sense in spiritual concordance and love; in short: it seems more mental and logical than spiritual.

Therefore, as the way to a more integral and free humanity, there suggests itself a creative encounter with other cultures, which in their basic onto-anthropological disposition are accentuated more spiritually, that means with cultures of the Asiatic Orient and of Africa. And it seems, that in the ultimate and most recent development of Modern European and Secular Culture, in the so called *Post-Modernity*, under the influence of Asiatic and African spiritual impulses, there is opened a new sensibility for the metaphysical expressivity of the physical world, and initiated a cosmic consciousness; transparent to the totality of Being. But the first signs of breaking up to a New Age of mankind, seem to a great extent to be rather confused, and more distinctness would be required, through a rationality which has regained its intuitive fundament and, on this basis, its metaphysical competence. Then there is hope that the abstracting and analyzing *rational reflection* which dissects reality in its parts, would be accompanied and balanced by an *emotional devotion* which rebinds the separated parts and acknowledges the whole. Thus the full and integral act of Being in its *triadic structure* will be realized: in its basic first step, the initial in-sisting and reposing of the being in itself; the second step, the recognizing and opening existence or outwards-movement and confrontation; and the third and ultimate step, the re-specting and loving inwards-movement and re-insistence, by which the being expressively accepts itself and the others and perfects its unity and identity.

A creative encounter of Modern Secular World Civilisation which mainly originated in Europe, and traditional Asiatic and African cultures, forced and favored by the present survival-provocation of Being of all humankind, could initiate in the scientific technological civilisation a critical self-consciousness: both of the positive human values, elaborated in the history of European culture since Antiquity and Middle Ages as we have described it, and of its own unilateralities, limits and deficits. Out of this could arise a practical impulse to actualize and develop the positive qualities and to accept and gradually overcome the negative ones in mutual dialog and completion. Motivation and inspiration for change and evolution of habits come from the experience that we can complete one another and so reach our own fuller identity. Perhaps the present sufferings of mankind are to be understood as the pains on the way to an essentially new kind of human Being, expressing more integration, humanity and freedom.