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## JOB'S FINAL INSIGHT, NARRATIVES, AND THE BRAIN

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**Abstract.** In continental philosophy of religion, the hermeneutics of narratives takes a central role. Analytic philosophy of religion, on the other hand, considers religious statements mostly as assertions of fact. It examines the logical form and semantics of religious statements, addresses their logical commitments, and examines their epistemological status. Using the example of a passage in the Book of Job, it is investigated whether the methods of analytic philosophy are also suitable for analyzing religious narratives. The question is explored whether there is a genuine form of knowledge, besides propositional factual knowledge, which is bound to the form of narration. Particular attention will be paid to the inter-personal pragmatic embeddedness of narratives. The connection between second-personal knowledge and narratives is examined. Using the historical example of Ignatius of Loyola's theory of religious knowledge, it is argued that propositional argumentative knowledge is only one form of religious knowledge among others. The others are second-personal and narrative in character. Having thus established this distinct form of knowledge, it is asked whether our best empirical knowledge of the neurophysiological basis of intuitive and non-argumentative cognition provides a foundation for better understanding inter-personal religious cognition within narratives.

### I. INTRODUCTION

When I was a little boy, I asked my father if he was stronger than the good Lord. Presumably, my father was not a little startled by this question, because he could remember this event, which for me falls into the time of which one has no actual memories. He told me this episode later in life. He responded to my question by leading me outside the house and directing my gaze to the woods and mountains. He described the monumental scenery almost poetically -- how well all of this was made to provide a living place for us. He then addressed me directly with a question: Can you imagine your father creating all of this? The question already contained the answer for me in this situation. The question vanished.

Did my father simply express a rational argument in a child-friendly descriptive form, or was more semantic content conveyed in this situation? How important is the personal and affective address in which my father revealed himself to me as weak? The little boy felt the need to be protected by a strong father. But the father points him to the need and possibility of much stronger protection. The deepest desire of the heart, protection, is addressed in a new and surprising way. It is to Eleonore Stump's credit to point out the relevance of this dialogical personal knowledge, which can be transmitted primarily through the narration of interpersonal episodes. Such narratives situated in interpersonal dialogue are more than just illustrations of a theory based on logical reasoning. They are a form of knowledge in its own right, which is in the current debate often labeled as "second-personal knowledge", i.e., knowledge that is gained in I-Thou relationships and that can best be conveyed in narratives.

### II. JOB'S INSIGHT

This little autobiographical episode was itself such a narrative, intended to provide a form of cognition, an insight. It is at the same time a lead-in for understanding what is, at least in some relevant aspects, the most crucial passage in the Book of Job, namely, the beginning of Chapter 42. Previously, Job was

wrestling with his fate and God. The three friends tried to explain the meaning of suffering by means of classical wisdom -- to no avail. Elihu defends God and points to the inscrutability of God and His ways -- again, without success. Before Job's insight, God himself speaks to Job out of the whirlwind; but he does not engage in the theological debates that had gone on before. God speaks directly to Job, challenging him by figuratively demonstrating his power to create. He describes in all pictorial vividness and metaphorical richness how he created Leviathan and Behemoth, their power, perfection, grace and beauty. No man could ever create such a thing. And then, the totally unexpected happens: Job ceases his lament and his searching analysis of explanations and says, "Before I knew You only by words, but now my eyes have seen You" (42:5).

No rational argument could solve the problem of suffering. Job had argued with God at length. Then God tells Job a narrative about the beauty, strength and awe-inspiring might of nature and of the beasts he created. After this long series of vivid poetic images presented to him by God, Job states that now he has seen God. What has happened? What does it mean that now he "sees" God? "Seeing with my eyes", עֵינַי רָאֵתְךָ, here stands figuratively for the fact that Job had an insight. At least, that is how I will interpret this in what follows. This insight was not conveyed by a logical argument.

The problem of evil (theodicy) is probably the most difficult problem in rational theology. For Job, it seems to be resolved in an existentially satisfying way by the narrative that God presents to him in a personal message. What really happened here between Job and God is difficult to grasp. Again, the temptation is to understand this interpersonal episode as merely the simplistic presentation of a rational argument. But what argument should that be? One might be tempted to think that God is here presenting an argument from inscrutability. It would say that God is so much more powerful and greater than human beings that it is not for human beings to try to fathom the ways of God. This thesis of inscrutability had, after all, already been put forward by Elihu. However, what is happening here, I will argue, is something else. It is precisely not a matter of submission to the inscrutability of God, but in a sense the very opposite. Job says that he has now *seen* God, whom he had previously known only by words. Job achieves a new form of intimacy with God that is not at the level of words, which in the context of the previous debates stands figuratively for argumentation of propositional knowledge.

Job's insight is conveyed by a narrative that provokes mental imagery. Perhaps one could speak here of knowledge by acquaintance, but even that seems to miss the real point. Knowledge by acquaintance can be had of a wide variety of inanimate objects. But here it is a matter of arriving at knowledge through an interpersonal relationship. But why is this second-personal knowledge conveyed primarily in the mode of images, metaphors, and narratives? These are questions that I wish to explore in what follows.

I attempt this as someone who considers himself an analytic theologian and an analytic philosopher of mind, and so this exercise may come as a surprise. Analytic theology has often been accused by continental theology of methodologically excluding both the dimension of narrative and the dimension of the interpersonal I-Thou relationship, and of orienting itself to the ideal of scientific theorizing. By concentrating on conceptual analysis, it loses the capacity for that synthetic mode of thought of which the language of metaphor, narrative, and poetry is capable. While analytic philosophy from its beginnings closely followed the language of the natural sciences, many continental philosophers tended to see the language of literature as a close relative. In literature, one understands by exposing oneself to the life of another *person* in the *narrative*.

### III. ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND SECOND-PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

To understand this conflict, a very brief glimpse into the history of the analytic philosophy movement is helpful. In this context, "analysis" is understood to mean the dissection of a complex concept, thought, or theory so that deep logical structures - not directly recognizable on the surface - become apparent. The logical analysis of propositions, and thus of thought, digs deeper than syntax. Already for the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, the logical analysis of language also led to metaphysical conclusions about

the ontological structure of the world. But ethics and religious questions on meaning and significance were pushed into the realm of the ineffable.

The actual philosophical analysis remains in the realm of propositions that can be expressed clearly. It proceeds in two steps. After uncovering the logical deep structure of a proposition, the second step was to ask about the metaphysical implications of this logical analysis. This notion of philosophical analysis was advocated in the so-called “Cambridge School of Analysis”. In the Vienna Circle, which was founded by Rudolf Carnap and others, a broadly Kantian critical attitude towards metaphysics was prominent. Beyond the empirical in the sciences and purely analytical conceptual knowledge in mathematics and logic, there was no room for metaphysics. Philosophy became a second-order discipline that analyzed propositions of other disciplines. But in order to be able to analyze a linguistic expression logically, it is necessary to determine the exact formal place it occupies within the overall system of a language. From this point on, at the latest, one can speak of a completed “linguistic turn” in philosophy.

A third form of philosophical analysis was developed at Oxford. Here, too, the central idea was that the superficial semantic structure of a language leads philosophy astray. The analysis of the linguistic-logical form of statements must therefore explicate the deep logical structure that is not immediately given. For the Oxford School, which included the late Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, and John Austin, the focus was on natural languages, not formal languages. Its key insight was that a lack of critical analysis of natural language gives rise to many philosophical problems. Although one mistakenly believes to have identified a genuinely metaphysical problem, one is actually reflecting only on the syntactic form of natural language and not on the world.

It is obvious that none of these philosophical approaches has *prima facie* any real affinity to the analysis of narratives. The tools of philosophical analysis were predicate calculus, quantificational logic, modal logic and set theory. The ontological categories were propositions and sets. Narratives could not be studied with these tools. However, this set of tools could be used to tackle certain questions in the philosophy of religion, such as the question whether “God” is a proper name or a concept, or whether the classical proofs of God can be reformulated in post-Fregean logic.

This state of affairs changed when, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, analytic philosophy went from being mostly anti-metaphysical to being mostly pro-metaphysical. Quine blurred the clear line between natural science and metaphysics that Kant and the Vienna Circle had drawn. With Saul Kripke’s theory of proper names and natural kind terms, an essentialist metaphysical realism returned to mainstream analytic philosophy which had been in the grip of the anti-realist tradition of the Vienna Circle. Now, classical philosophical theology was able to be studied again in a much more profound way. Richer category systems such as substance ontologies were developed. Even a wealth of texts and scholarly activity on “pre-Kantian” topics such as the nature and attributes of God emerged. Some felt reminded of the High Middle Ages and Scholasticism.

But even in this form of theology-friendly analytic philosophy, narratives were nothing more than sets of propositions. There was no hermeneutics for narratives. Christian theology in Catholic and Protestant faculties distanced itself to a considerable extent from this movement of “analytic theology”. It was seen as a double anachronism. First, it seemed to be a relapse into the naive notion that talk about God could be interpreted directly in a metaphysical-realist semantics. Secondly, it was seen as a reversion to an age of rationalism that vastly overestimated the powers of analytical reasoning and refused to acknowledge the limits of reason that Kant had once and for all demarcated.

Even more precisely, analytic theology was accused of not having sufficiently acknowledged the debate raised by Wilhelm Dilthey on the difference between explaining and understanding. While analytic philosophy was oriented towards the scientific method of explaining, theology wanted to be associated with the method of understanding in the humanities. According to this view, one cannot approach the theodicy problem adequately if one insists on rationalizing or *explaining* the existence of suffering in creation. One can approach the problem much better by trying to *understand* people who can still believe in God despite suffering in the world. If one asks why it is still possible to pray after Auschwitz, then no free-will defense in the sense of Alvin Plantinga or Richard Swinburne will help. More helpful is the

empathic understanding of people who still prayed *in* Auschwitz. There is no answer to the explanatory question *why* one can still pray *after* Auschwitz, but one can attempt to *understand* that there was prayer *in* Auschwitz. One can pray after Auschwitz because there was prayer at Auschwitz, and we can hear and read the personal narratives of survivors who tell us of their prayers in Auschwitz.

And that is the central point in this context. A problem as difficult as the theodicy problem can be understood with “second-personal knowledge” in a different way than in a theoretical analysis from the third-person perspective. When a survivor of Auschwitz tells in person-to-person communication that she prayed at Auschwitz, this provides as good an answer to the question “Can one still pray after Auschwitz?” as one can get. Of course, the problem is not solved in a rational argumentative way, but the questioning comes to a state of peace because one trusts the person who communicates this story from her own life in a trustworthy way. The problem of evil is thus partly resolved because of the trust that was given to another person.

The case is similar to Job’s in the above mentioned passage. Extensive theological discussions had not provided a satisfactory answer for Job, but the immediate person-to-person communication, the narrative told by God himself from the whirlwind, leads Job to an insight that cannot be reproduced argumentatively. God’s narrative about his creative power and about his artful arrangement of everything enables Job to trust God and thereby also to recognize him as trustworthy. It is thus a cognition in the second-personal realm, to be distinguished from a cognition gained through rational argument.

In her work *Wandering in Darkness*, Eleonore Stump develops a form of theodicy that is essentially based on second-personal knowledge.<sup>1</sup> This is not simply a so-called “soul-making theodicy”. These are attempts to explain the compatibility of a benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent God with suffering by arguing that suffering is necessary to develop the full psychic potential of human beings. Suffering not only serves the growth of the soul, but is a necessary condition for the full spiritual development of a person. This alone, however, would still be a rational argument from the third person point of view. The crucial point in Stump’s approach is that the resolution of the theodicy question can only occur existentially in the individual’s interpersonal encounter with God. It can only be answered with second-personal knowledge, that is, the encounter with a “Thou” from the first-person perspective.

Whether analytic philosophy, by its method, can grasp such a kind of knowledge at all is the question posed here. The analysis of the logical form of language does is not very promising here, nor is the uncovering of the ontological implications of speech. Is there no connection to the analytic tradition at all? In fact, there are connections to questions raised by the founding fathers of analytic philosophy. It was, for example, the intuition of the early Wittgenstein that the analysis of language can also reveal the *limits* of language. Outside the realm of what can be expressed with language lies, for Wittgenstein, the mystical (Tractatus 6.44). To him, what cannot be said lies outside the rationally accessible world, because the limits of language are also the limits of the world.

It is precisely at this point that a connection of our subject to the linguistic analytic tradition becomes apparent. Narrative representation, when done in a second-personal context, can provide knowledge of the world that goes beyond what can be expressed with propositions in the third-person perspective. The philosophical thesis, then, is this: A particular form of speech (narratives) can provide its own form of knowledge of the world in a particular pragmatic context (I-Thou relationship). This is not simply Pascal’s general thesis that the heart has its reasons that the intellect does not know. Rather, it is a thesis in the philosophy of language. The referential scope of language in such interpersonal contexts extends to a reality that cannot equally be represented from the third-person perspective. The mysticism of the early Wittgenstein, who classified everything that could not be represented from a third-person perspective as inexpressible is thus countered by an expanded concept of language. This is, without doubt, a thesis in the context of philosophical linguistic analysis.

One might even counter that this was precisely the thesis of the late Wittgenstein: Language is not only a representation of language-independent state of affairs. The “grammar” of, for example, religious

<sup>1</sup> Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).



language cannot be understood if one does not consider the context of a religious practice, that is, the entire religious language game. Only in the context of a social practice does religious language make sense. Only within the practice of certain rites and narrative traditions does the meaning of religious language become apparent. This insight of the late Wittgenstein establishes already a clear link between a theory of narratives and the analytic tradition.

But the reference to the special “grammar” of religious language, the religious language game, does not explain how Job could gain the sudden insight into the nature of God that made the theodicy problem fade away. This sudden insight is more reminiscent of radical conversion experiences. Take the example of St. Paul’s conversion. Saul, without prior interior rational discourse, suddenly hears a voice speaking to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (cf. Acts 9:3–9). In this encounter, an insight and knowledge become available that can only be gained in an interpersonal encounter. If we want to communicate or transmit this knowledge, we can only do so by telling a narrative. The narrative might not even be fully understandable if the listener has not already experienced a somewhat similar situation from a first-person point of view. There seems to be more at stake here than a religious language game which is just a ritualized use of language within a certain social context. Narratives can give us access to insights that can only be gained from the first-personal perspective and the second-personal perspective. The idea of a language game still works within the boundaries of the third-person perspective, just relativized to a specific social and pragmatic context.

The philosophical thesis that an answer to deep religious issues like the problem of evil cannot be provided in full from the third-person perspective is something Wittgenstein would have accepted. But his own analysis of language does not yet provide a sufficient answer as to why this is the case. He is still limited by his somewhat behaviorist theory of meaning. Whatever is left out by the conceptual analysis from the third-person perspective can only be accessed by knowledge gained from the first-person and second-person (I-Thou-relational) perspective. That, however, implies that the semantic content is irreducibly particular and relative to certain speakers. Is this still analytic philosophy of religion? This remains to be seen.

Clearly, as we have tried to show with the example of the early and the late Wittgenstein, analytic philosophy has thematized from the beginning that there possibly is a dimension of meaning beyond the pure propositional content. For the early Wittgenstein, it was the mystical; for the late Wittgenstein, it was the deep grammatical structure of a life-form. The claim that there is semantic content that is only accessible in the second-personal perspective clearly moves beyond the Wittgensteinian account of meaning.

#### IV. RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES AND THE HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

It cannot be disputed, though, that narratives play an eminent role in religious language games. The religious tradition knew about the power of narratives. One prominent example are the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>2</sup> According to this classic method of Ignatius, the path to religious knowledge consists in taking three steps in sequence.

The first step is a personal turning to God. One asks of God to grant what one longs for; one communicates the deep desires of the heart. Let us suppose that someone asks herself how she can best follow Jesus. According to the Ignatian method of religious discernment, she should first ask for divine guidance in this search by addressing God in a personal dialogue.

In a second step, she is to choose an appropriate narrative from the Bible, such as, for example, the story of Jesus and the rich young man. Jesus addresses the young man with this sentence: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me!” (Matthew 19:21). The retreatant in the Ignatian method is to picture the episode

2 Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Loyola Press, 1992).

before her inner eye. She is to try to bring the narrative to life on the inner conscious stage. Retreatants are not only invited to see the incident with the inner eye, but also hear, taste, and feel it. They should identify with one of the characters in the narrative or at least imagine themselves being an observer who was present in the episode. Then they should focus their attention on what emotions they felt during this imaginative visualization, the positive and negative feelings.

In a final step, they are to turn back to God in direct speech and talk about what they experienced in this exercise. It is important to note that this is a process of discernment that relies on the holistic awareness of a situation, not primarily on arguments or concepts. The visualization of the narrative and the interpersonal dialogues are not meant to provide an explanation; rather they are meant to provide an understanding of one's own situation in the light of a narrative.

This is reminiscent of the process that occurs between God and Job. God enters into a dialogue with Job, leading him through a very rich pictorial visualization of his power to create; and Job responds again in a dialogue with God. In the end, Job arrives at a knowledge that resolves the problem of evil *for him* on an existential and thus particular level. This second-personal knowledge is gained in the medium of a narrative and an interpersonal exchange between him and God. First-personal and second-personal knowledge is thus to a large extent knowledge mediated by intra-psychic events not knowable through external observation or abstract reasoning.

But how does the soul know itself? It is clear since Freud, at the latest, that not all intra-psychic events are given directly and transparently in consciousness. How could the frail Ego have insight into the unconscious depths of the psyche?

This view is less of a modern discovery than it seems. Already much earlier, throughout the scholastic tradition of the Middle Ages, it was emphasized that the soul knows itself not primarily through rational analysis, but in the medium of mental images (*imago*), memories (*memoria*), and the imagination (*phantasia*). The conscious inner-psychic episodes of thought are not a reliable pathway to the innermost beliefs and desires of the person. The soul, the scholastics argued, does not recognize itself through itself but reaches self-knowledge through images of its own acts.<sup>3</sup>

The linguistic form in which this inner-psychic reality can be communicated is the narrative, the picture, the metaphor, but not the propositional argument. The rationalism of later Christian philosophy made it oblivious to this tradition. In fact, the rationalist philosophy of the neo-scholastics in the 19th and early 20th centuries led to a revolt in Catholic and, to some extent, Protestant theology. If today theologians experience analytic theology as an anachronism, it is also because they fear a relapse into this rationalistic reading of the tradition.

For Catholic theologians, who were still mostly in the grip of a scholastic rationalism, Karl Rahner's article on "The Logic of Existential Knowledge" (1956) represents a turning point.<sup>4</sup> In this article, Karl Rahner invokes the logic of cognition that underlies Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius distinguishes "three times in which a sound and good choice may be made" (*Spiritual Exercises*, 175–178). By "times", Ignatius did not mean temporal qualifications but inner processes of the deliberating mind. It would be better therefore to speak of three ways of making a decision. Making a choice is understood here as a cognitive act, an act of insight, and an act of understanding of spiritually significant information. I will briefly introduce these three ways, for reasons that will soon become apparent.

The *third way* is described by Ignatius as a process of quiet reflection in an objective manner. The mind weighs various alternative courses of action and their advantages and disadvantages. This is done analytically and from a third person perspective. One tries to place one's own life in the larger context of the divine plan for all creation. One wonders why human beings were created and what purpose human

3 Cf. for example: Suarez, *De Anima*, lib. 4, cap. 5, n. 2: "Quomodo intellectus cognoscat seipsum, animam, et quae in ipsa reperiuntur".

4 Karl Rahner, "Die ignatianische Logik existentieller Erkenntnis bei Ignatius von Loyola", in *Sämtliche Werke*: (Herder, 1996).

existence serves. It is against this larger background that one attempts to fathom how one's own life is to be shaped.

Let us briefly ponder the religious problem of moral evil in this third way. One can dwell on the fact that human beings were created free and that the purpose of their existence is the exercise of freedom in the service of God. Moral evil then becomes intelligible as a necessary consequence of this freedom. In a similar way, one could argue, as Leibniz does, that this world is the best of all possible worlds. On the basis of these considerations, I can then reflect on how I should deal with the existence of moral and physical evil, even if the result is somewhat personal and particular. The method of this deliberation is mostly linguistic, argumentative, and propositional. This is reasoning about oneself from the third-person point of view.

The *second way* a choice happens is by looking at affective movement and stirrings provoked by narratives and images. Observation of experiences of comfort or despair is the internal compass that indicates the direction of inner growth. One imaginatively represents a possible course of action and senses whether this imagination is associated with a positive affect or a negative emotion. A prolonged and deep positive affect leads to the realization that this course of action is more in line with God's will. For Ignatius, for example, reading the biographies of saints left him deeply consoled, whereas reading the novels of chivalry did not. He concluded that God called him to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis and other great saints. This way of acquiring spiritual knowledge is also still linguistic in form. The starting point is a narrative, but the verbal content is only a vehicle for eliciting affective responses. The interpretation of these affective responses, however, leads to the uncovering of relevant religious information. It thus leads to a kind of knowing.

In the context of the problem of theodicy, for example, one might imagine a person still praying in Auschwitz. Or one might read a biblical narrative that describes how a person penetrates to the "deepest desires" of her heart through suffering. This method was masterfully used by Stump in her work *Wandering in Darkness*. The emotional response that this mental exercise may produce contains spiritual information that transcends the propositional content of the narrative. What is essential here is that one empathizes with the life of another person, even if the person is only be presented through a narrative. The knowledge gained through this second Ignatian way is thus a form of second-personal knowledge.

The *first way* of acquiring spiritual knowledge according to Ignatius is when the mind is directly moved by God in such a way that an insight is directly given to it. Ignatius gives as example the mystical experience that led to Paul's conversion. Being addressed by God is something like a divine gift to the human mind that results in a sudden experience of understanding with overwhelming clarity. Many other mystical experiences can serve as an exemplification of this mode of knowledge acquisition. In Job's experience, there seem to be elements of both the second and the first way because God himself tells Job a narrative about God's creative power and wisdom. This personal narrative brings about a sudden "disclosure experience" that cannot be represented in purely argumentative terms.

This historical example of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola thus illustrates effectively that the tradition already knew that religious knowledge is often second-personal knowledge. It can be acquired with the help of narratives or by direct divine infusion.

## V. TAKING STOCK

Linguistic communication, especially when it is narrative and not argumentative, can convey semantic content that goes beyond what propositions analyzed from the third person perspective can convey. Second-personal knowledge can best be conveyed by telling a story about what the relevant two people experienced together. It is important to note that it is not simply the performative and pragmatic context that is responsible for this semantic content that reaches beyond the declarative propositional content. We are not talking about special speech acts in John Austin's sense, i.e. that certain utterances have a pragmatic-performative content that goes beyond the mere declarative propositional content. Second-personal knowledge conveyed by narratives is not a paradigm case of "how to *do* things with words."

Rather, it is a case of how to *understand* another person with words. It is a kind of *knowledge* that can only be gained in this interpersonal way. Inspired by Pascal, one could say that the knowledge gained from the second-personal perspective has reasons that the third person-perspective does not understand.

## VI. NARRATIVES, COGNITION, AND THE BRAIN

The epistemological question that immediately arises here is what cognitive faculty makes this particular kind of knowledge possible. Rational and inferential thinking is the domain of the ratiocinative intellect. The domain of feelings and needs, on the other hand, is non-cognitive. Is there a third between these two domains?

Classical analytic philosophy assumes a duality of beliefs, on the one hand, and desires, on the other. One could speak of a philosophical “belief-desire psychology”. Knowledge from the perspective of the first and second person, which is linguistically transported in narratives, has no place in this dual philosophical psychology. We do speak of “emotional intelligence” sometimes. Emotional intelligence can be defined as the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. This capacity is situated somewhere between raw emotions and analytical thinking. It is a kind of information processing that is not analytic, propositional, and sequential, but rather intuitive, symbolic, and holistic. We need it primarily for understanding people.

Empirical psychology has provided some evidence that there is a kind of information processing in the human mind that is clearly not analytic and ratiocinative but intuitive and associative. There are two information processing modules in the human mind. This “Dual Process Theory” is well established in psychological and neurophysiological research.<sup>5</sup> It claims a duality of conscious, explicit information processing, on the one hand, and unconscious, implicit information processing, on the other. Explicit information processing is verbal and propositional, while implicit information processing is symbolic and intuitive.<sup>6</sup> Within cognitive and social psychology, these two capacities are often labelled “system-1 thinking” and “system-2 thinking”.

System-2 is rational, analytic, and sequential “rule-based” thinking. It is a late evolutionary achievement that developed only in humans and not or very little in higher animals. System-2 operates slowly because of the step-by-step sequential information processing. Typical for system-2 is the focus on inferential and logical relations between statements. General intelligence tests primarily measure the capacity of system-2. Neurophysiologically, system-2 is primarily located in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

System-1 is to be distinguished from it. Knowledge in system-1 is not gained by logical reasoning. Since system-2 often works unconsciously, the cognizing subject has less influence on this system. It cognizes automatically and intuitively. Information processing in system-1 is not propositional. Information is processed holistically and associatively. In an experienced situation, system-1 associates similar episodes and interpersonal constellations that one has experienced before. These associations are connected with emotional responses of pain or pleasure based on past experiences. The medium of information storage is not logically connected propositions or theories, but mental images, metaphors, and narratives that are as close as possible to the situation that was actually experienced. Due to its extremely distributive-parallel information processing, System-1 works faster and must work largely unconsciously, which subjectively leaves the impression of an immediacy or intuition. One suddenly “sees” or understands something that one has not logically deduced. Neurophysiologically, system-1 is located in the medial pre-frontal cortex.

The knowledge gained with this cognitive system is especially important in interpersonal contexts. To give an example, imagine a complex and emotionally challenging social situation like the dynamics

5 Cf. Keith E. Stanovich and Richard F. West, “Individual difference in reasoning: implications for the rationality debate?”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, no. 23.5 (2000).

6 Jonathan Evans, “Dual-processing accounts of reasoning, judgment, and social cognition”, *Annual Review of Psychology*, no. 59 (2007).



in a group that faces emotionally challenging obstacles. Here, a mature and experienced person has little need to resort to rules and reasoning in order to act appropriately in the situation. They “sense” the right course of action in a way that has the immediacy of a sense experience without being sense experience, because it is already a highly complex cognitive interpretation of what was given to the senses. The social and interpersonal situation is intuitively and subconsciously analyzed, and the course of action which is appropriate to the complexity of the situation is chosen without inner deliberation.

When one engages with another person, especially when one enters into a deep interpersonal relationship, then one needs the intuitive system-1 to represent implicitly the totality of the other person’s experience. Only in this way can I understand the other person in all his complexity and history. In German there is a word for this kind of knowledge: “Menschenkenntnis”. This is not the scientific or philosophical knowledge of human nature, but the ability to understand the psychological characteristics of an individual person in all their complexity that defies logical representation.

We therefore postulate that second-personal knowledge is not generated by system-2, but by system-1. Since analytic philosophy has focused almost exclusively on knowledge gained by system-2, it is difficult to place the notion of second-personal knowledge within it. The information processing of the intuitive knowledge system is based on images, metaphors, narratives, and associations; and it thus is hardly accessible to the traditional analytic method. Peter Bieri, who is a leading philosopher in the analytic method in the German-speaking world, began a second career as an author of novels under the pseudonym “Pascal Mercier” because there were certain cognitive contents which were important to him, but which he could not express in the method of the analytic school.<sup>7</sup>

It is our claim that one can understand Job’s final insight much better if one locates it in the information processing typical of system-1. Just as one can recognize another person only very inadequately and one-sidedly by analytical sequential thinking, so one can recognize God as a person only in a very limited way by analytical thinking. Job says that after God revealed himself to him from the whirlwind by using pictures and metaphors, Job now sees God. Before that, he knew God only by words; now Job has seen him. This obviously does not mean that Job had a visual mystical experience bare of any linguistic content. Job does not have a “unio mystica”. Rather, the words of the divine narrative convey a semantic content beyond what inferential thought can represent. And the insight thus gained is informative and enlightening for Job at what we sometimes call an “existential” level.

In his seminal paper, Rahner spoke of the “logic of existential knowledge”. Existential knowledge is attained through the first-personal or the second-personal perspective. But why and in what way is this knowledge existential? Do we need to turn to the existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche to understand existential knowledge? Rather than doing that, analytic philosophers will be, at least initially, more likely to find enlightenment in science. Can we make scientific sense of the idea of existential knowledge? In quite independent psychological traditions, a distinction is made between the ego and the self. This distinction is found in such diverse theories as the psychoanalysis of Carl Gustav Jung and the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers. The ego is seen as the center of consciousness; the self encompasses the entire personality.

In his impressive and empirically well-supported system of personality psychology, Julius Kuhl has innovatively advanced this distinction.<sup>8</sup> Kuhl distinguishes four interacting systems in the human psyche. Only two are relevant in this context: the “Ego” and the “Integrative Self”<sup>9</sup>

An important aspect of the ego is the “intention memory”. It preserves the representation of conscious actions, plans, and projects. It represents these intentions propositionally and deliberates about the logical relations between them. Evolutionarily, analytical and logical thinking developed to assist the

<sup>7</sup> For example, Pascal Mercier, *Night train to Lisbon* (Grove Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Julius Kuhl, *Lehrbuch der Persönlichkeitspsychologie: Motivation, Emotion und Selbststeuerung* (Hogrefe, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> For an English introduction see Markus Quirin, Mattie Tops, and Julius Kuhl, “Autonomous Motivation, Internalization, and the Self: A Functional Approach of Interacting Neuropsychological Systems”, in *The Oxford handbook of human motivation*, ed. Richard M. Ryan (Oxford Univ. Press, 2019).

early humans in realizing their conscious and language-based intentions. If one has a plan or a project, then one must use rational thinking to figure out the way to realize these goals in a way that is superior to one's competitors. Later in the course of evolution, logical thinking was then often used without being tied to concrete actions. But that was a further development. Scientists, for example, can rationally pursue a question without having a concrete intention to act. Kuhl calls the "intention memory" in combination with the capacity of analytical thinking the "ego". This is where conscious decision-making about actions and rational life-planning takes place. The ego represents propositionally, and it reasons logically. It is a system that develops abstract, context-independent propositional rules. It is primarily this center that makes a human being an "animal rationale". The "ego" corresponds in many respects to System-2 of the "Dual Process Theory".

From the ego Kuhl distinguishes what he calls the "integrative self". The integrative self is also essentially connected with a form of memory, but not the memory of propositionally represented intentions; rather, it is the memory of all the biographical episodes that one has lived through, including their emotional content and the experiential knowledge contained in them. German has the term "Lebenserfahrung" (life experience) for this. This memory is largely unconscious. Kuhl calls this form of memory "extension memory". The form of information processing that works with extension memory is not logical, linguistic and sequential, but intuitive, associative, symbolic and highly parallel. This type of information processing plus extension memory together make up the integrative self.

If we ask a person who she is, she can give us an insight into her ego or, alternatively, into her self. The ego will answer the question about one's psychological identity by referring to life projects and goals for action. The self will answer by recounting one's formative life experiences in a narrative. Of particular importance here are the interpersonal experiences and the emotionally formative experiences, especially negative and traumatic experiences. Both systems are cognitive systems. However, the way information is processed and represented is different in the ego as opposed to the self. Since the information in the ego is sequentially and propositionally structured, the ego may not be able to understand the information encoded in the integrative self. This lack of integration leads to a lack of authenticity and mental congruence. Following Pascal, one might say that self may have reasons that ego does not understand.

One can also say that the ego stores information that is understandable from the third person perspective. The description of relevant intentions and projects that make up one's life is immediately understandable from the third person perspective. We talk about this in job interviews, for example. The self, on the other hand, stores the subjective experiential content of biographical episodes and of interpersonal relationships in particular. This information can only be understood from the first-person perspective or, in an interpersonal relationship, from the second-personal perspective. When we speak of existentially relevant knowledge, we almost always mean knowledge that originates from the self and not from the ego. The language that the self understands is the language of narratives, images and metaphors. The integrative self corresponds to the System-1 of the "Dual Process Theory". The ego is thus the domain of analytical, sequential and logical thinking. The integrative self is the domain of narratives, metaphors, and intuitions.

So, it is possible that one has found an answer to the question of the meaning of suffering existentially in the integrative self and in the context of one's own life story, which one cannot express argumentatively in the ego. The reverse case is also conceivable: A person has found a rational answer which does not really satisfy him at an existential level. Kuhl, in a monograph entitled *Spirituelle Intelligenz*, has argued that religious or spiritual information processing happens primarily in the self rather than in the ego.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, we would like to argue that Job's insight originated in the realm of his integrative self in dialogue with the divine Self. It comes as no surprise then that it cannot be fully rationally explicated from the third-person perspective either. Nevertheless, Job's insight is based on verbal communication. God speaks to Job in a narrative.

<sup>10</sup> Julius Kuhl, *Spirituelle Intelligenz: Glaube zwischen Ich und Selbst* (Verlag Herder, 2015).

This is why narratives are philosophically relevant. If analytic philosophy aims at the analysis of language, it cannot exclude this form of speaking from its sphere of interest. An account of religious narratives is thus still a desideratum and a field of research that deserves further studies.

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