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Irrationality vs rationality? Irrationality as a door to the rational Greek thought

It is no surprise that we owe a certain vision of reality to the science, meaning there are certain social imaginaries originating in sciences and arts. Academic endeavour was influencing other spheres of culture and permeating into the common worldviews. Scientific and humanistic studies are fruits of the rational thought. We can find the roots of the academic way of problematizing the world in philosophy, and in the ancient historical context we can simultaneously observe the agency of irrational element. This constatation set me on the mission to have a closer look at the origins of western philosophy to evaluate the intersection of rationality and irrationality.

Our thinking has a binary structure, which means that for each thing or phenomenon our brains always set an opposed counterpart¹. If we think of rationality, we also consider its oppositional phenomenon – irrationality. The notion of rationality requests for an anti-notion, which must be its inverse. Usually, we serialize our notions according to the criteria of positive-negative. Thinking of rationality, we can feel the rise of energy because of positive connotations to rationality, that is we can find there all the human is and what he has. *Ratio* is our ally in individual and collective life. It is responsible for

¹ Although there is still disagreement among the psychologist and cognitive studies researchers as to how the human brain functions, many humanists have been developing theories assuming the binary structure of thinking, with their research based in language structures, e.g. F. De Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris 1968, p. 150–157.

the wealth and development of our societies. Moreover, it's responsible even for what we are and what we do. It is *ratio* that elevates us to the peak of our intellectual and moral possibilities. Its opposition is despicable. Irrationality needs to be associated with regress, primitivity and lack of all the things that make humans life possible. Rationality is rooted in human's nature. Thanks to rationality, humans act, develop, live fully. Then it doesn't seem strange that for mature philosophical minds it was *ratio* and λόγος that would appear as "the good". Individual, but also human community (republic) reaches its maximal development, its τέλος, only thanks to knowledge. However, it was not only philosophy that could elevate the mind to the pedestal as the greatest goodness of humanity. For example, Aeschylus's drama works and religious literature more generally draw our attention to the gods, who are the sources of all actions that are necessary to happen (instead of focusing on earth and natural causes).

Religious human would not only see himself as a dependable being reliant on the will of mighty gods ruling his reality, but, first and foremost, as limited by his own nature. Humans' life can head towards a disaster because, as temporary beings, they don't have the knowledge the divinities have. But the ultimate salvation from all the miseries appears to be the Zeus' mind. He owes power, victory, and rule over reality thanks to his mind. Rationality here becomes the salvation from disaster and chaos, since it brings arrangement and order into the world. For philosophers rationality could be envisioned as a path towards a better way of living. At the same time religion primarily situated rationality in divinity and considered rationality as the only salvation for the world of gods and humans. Gods can live safely thanks to wise Zeus. People, if pious, can count on gods' help. Orphism, as a faction of Greek religions, primarily faces towards proper life ethics, in order to find there a source of wisdom, which is identical to salvation. This feature will be reaffirmed and developed by Pythagorean. That's why for Plato rationality will seem like a pass to the Fortunate Islands.

The notion of rationality

Passing on to explaining the notion of rationality, we now have a few necessary steps to make. Firstly, we need to show primary etymological meaning of *ratio*, secondly – explain its links with another key term in philosophy: λόγος. I will refer primarily to all early philosophical reflection. Philosophy is nothing more

than holistic recognition of a reality in its unity and complexity, and rationalism enables the justification of a philosopher's stance. *Ratio* means proportions, measure, and relationship, indicates the proper relation of different mixed elements². Subject can see a system, a scheme in multitude and diversity, and this scheme is always perceived from a point of view that one can call "the reference". The referred vision is fragmentary, one-sided, and emotionally stimulated, and oftentimes marked with subjects' previous knowledge. Greeks, having aspiration to gain holistic and possibly objective knowledge, determine a specific starting point and the cause of the world. In holistic description of reality called φύσις certain ideas are made, as an effect of more empirical and open thinking expressed by the means of symbolical language and myths³. Those are *quasi* – rational imaginations presenting the world in his general condition, starting from "the beginning" which is associated with more than just time measure. Ascendants of Homer have shown that this holistic view is possible thanks to ἀρχή. Reflections of those who have (to some degree) left mythical and empirical recognition of ἀρχή as a principle of the universe and divine factor in the world have unique character. Rationality is the recognition of an order, created in the mind of the rational subject.

In the course of the history of philosophy, by which I mean the way of reflection on divinity and the world, the notion of λόγος can be drawn clearly. ἀρχή and λόγος are key terms to understanding early Greek rationality. I want to bring your attention to few important issues in this matter. In early Greek literature you can refer to the λόγος as to "the words in the form of a story" because spoken word is an act, to which there is a rational element. Originally the word λέγω was cognated with the word λόγος, it meant "to gather", "to collect", "to assemble"⁴. This understanding points out rather to merging multitude in unity than to the parole. Distributive trait of the root "leg" is present in Homer's poems: it can mean gathering – λέγωιμεφα, collecting – λέκσανφαι, but also assembling – λεγόν. These actions have a cause and a goal, they happen according to a plan. They don't occur by accident but require active participation of the mind. To the verbs meaning synthetical

2 Vide R. Trigg, *Reason and commitment*, Cambridge University Press, 1973.

3 Vide G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic philosophers. A critical history with a selection of texts*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, p. 10–48.

4 Vide K. Narecki, *Logos we wczesnej myśli greckiej*, Lublin 1999, p. 17; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, vol. 2, Paris 1986, p. 625; H. Fourrier, *Les verbes "dire" en Grec ancien*, Paris 1946, p. 53.

processes we shall add those concerning analysis and a procedure of selection. Verbs *ελεκταντο* – pick, *λεκτο* – count and *λεκκατο* – choose, indicate rational action in favour of a specific goal. Finally, as Narecki notices in Homer's poems verb *λεγειν* appears to signify action of speaking in a sense of telling a story⁵. Collecting some elements in a whole as a physical activity, *λόγος* transforms into speaking out as a rational, selective, and organized activity of a man. Telling a story, you assemble word instead of objects, words which have the power to affect in their own way and have their purpose. Xenophanes of Colophon argues that *λόγος* is a didactic story aiming to prove something, convince of something. *Λόγος* is then some ordered structure of narrative. That complements the other meaning of *λόγος*: proportion, relation, calculation. Heraclitus underlined *λόγος* rational character by identifying the divine principle with *λόγος*. Explaining this term, Narecki doesn't define the meaning of rationality. We assume that rationality is an act of mind that manifests in *λόγος*. While words *νοῦς* and *mens* indicate the principle of thinking and movement (latin verb *cogito* – to think demonstrates it in an interesting way, as it comes from *coagito* – to shake together), Greek terms *λόγος* (word, speech), *λέγω* (to collect, to speak) describe the act of talking. Meanwhile *γνώσις* (wisdom, knowledge) and *γινώσκω* (to gain knowledge, to get to know) have the same root *γένεσις* (beginning, origin) indicating the ability to know the object of thought that prompts the beginning⁶. *Λόγος*, meaning collecting, selecting, transforms into telling consciously and purposefully a collection of words, a speech. It is in a speech as a typically human activity that rationality (mind's participation) manifests. It manifests thanks to planned activities. So: rationality is an act of mind, that has a goal, distinguishes, selects, and synthesizes, and this process has its manifestation in the speech. Rational speech is gathering many things in one. Not only language has the ability to gather words into one. Pythagoreans are a good example. According to their theory a Number means rationality, that is ability to know and understand as Philolaos writes: "And all things that can be known contain number; without this nothing could be thought or known"⁷.

5 Vide P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, p. 626.

6 Vide A. Kowalski, *Troska o duszę w "Quis Dives Salvetur" Klemensa Aleksandryjskiego*, in: *Disputationes quodlibetales*, Prešov 2011, p. 39.

7 Fr. 4, Stobaeus, *Anth.* I, 21, 7b, in: G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic philosophers*, s. 310.

Rationality could be identified with a certain order of reality⁸, and precisely saying, with harmonizing many things in one⁹. This is the only reality one can grasp with his mind. Rational world extends from the external reality, through thought to the speech. In the end, rational world is one that can be explicated and justified concerning its goal and causes. United reality appearing to the mind doesn't have to come from the external world. It can be a product of the mind, as above-mentioned Pythagorean number, that becomes a tool to describing external world. It is almost certain that Greek Enlightenment was in a great measure induced by Pythagoreans, and it brings the notion of rationality as an order identified with harmony known only to a contemplative mind. Rationality is opposed to a passion and violent emotions because they make an obstacle in thinking according to the law of λόγος. For Pythagoreans passion and violent emotions are a threat to the proper vision of the world.

Irrationality in religion

Religious studies, centered on religious experience and human spirituality, indicate a link between the rational thought and the reality of divine manifestation. Rationality here doesn't eliminate religious, irrational (over-rational) elements. It is incorrect to oppose philosophical concern to religious thinking, because Greek thought doesn't contradict to religion. As we want to demonstrate, border between philosophical, mythical and religious thought is somewhat artificial. As Cornford states, the charm of early Greek philosophy doesn't rest on the fact, that they had no problem with inventing bad or wrong arguments, but on the fact they simply believed their assumptions about the world dogmatically. The world they were living in enabled them this creativity with almost no limits. They were like artists sculpting in stone, thanks to their work stone adopted shapes intended by author. Philosophers' attitude seems to say: "that's how the world should be" and basing on their views they constructed systems, and all the arguments that are within can be explained by it¹⁰.

8 From latin *ratio*— meaning measure, order, calculation, vide Ch. T. Lewis, Ch. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1879.

9 I develop this idea further in the chapter "Pythagoreans".

10 Vide F.M. Cornford, *From religion to philosophy. A Study In the Origins of Western Speculation*, New York 2004 (Originally Publisher: London 1912), p. 126.

Cornford develops the idea of magical type of thinking and indicates its appearance in the works of early philosophers, e.g. Ionians. He shows how the discovery of the natural world, either through the enlightenment coming from the gods in the form of a ritual, or through the magical type of thinking, or finally – through philosophical search for a divine principle of ἀρχή are all instances of a basic human drive to tame the Nature.

Behind the systems of representation, which the science elaborates and remodels, lies the practical impulse which drives man to extend his power over nature, impulse which found its first collective forms of expression in magic¹¹.

Magic is one of the irrational elements shaping philosophical reflection. Basic impulse for the system of representation developed and modified by rationality can be found in the magic of the first collective groups. To explain characteristic features of some tendencies in Greek philosophical world we need to get back to certain characteristics of magical practice. Magic is based on a representation of an object of a passionate desire¹². Firstly, the representation is mimetical. In other words: the realisation of desire is fulfilled in dramatical action. Emotion is satisfied by real enactment of the thing one intends to do. Besides, it is also verbal expression of the same emotion and desire – an element of myth, that is in the beginning only a statement of what is done and what is desired. In the last stadium, a myth becomes etiological, that means it becomes the description of an action attached as its explanation. However, the content of the myth stays in the representation in the same rite. So mimetic action and verbal expression are only the two modes in which same desire can find fulfillment and satisfaction¹³.

Religious experience is another irrational element from which rationality emerges. Irrationality will be defined in this case not as an opposition to rationality, but as something that transcends it, or that is evading it. Irrationality as an experience of *numinosum* cannot be grasped with mind, enclosed in terms, verbalized¹⁴. We should look for it in the circle of Dionysian religion. Our path of inquiry leads to the cult of Dionysus, which is not a regular rite,

11 Vide F.M. Cornford, *From religion to philosophy*, p. 139.

12 Vide F.M. Cornford, *From religion to philosophy*, p. 138–140.

13 Vide F.M. Cornford, *From religion to philosophy*, p. 127.

14 R. Otto, *The Idea of Holy. An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. J. W. Harvey, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 25–46.

but a transformation of consciousness in essence. Dionysian religion concentrates on practices, which means that in its centre there is a direct contact with a worshipped god. Dionysus is the god of life, moreover, he is the god of unlimited life ζωή, which takes form as βίος¹⁵. Only through religious experience one can know what is not given in the daily experience of the world. Thanks to the theory created by Eliade we can see deeper sense of Dionysian religion. According to Mircea Eliade rites of initiation lead to a transformation of an existential order¹⁶. I shall mention that certainly there was no radical change of social status in the original cult of Dionysus, that is in the cult of Maenads. Cult of Dionysus is not this initiation, in which you can elevate your social status, because there are no lessons one can learn there. Those we can find in orphic cult. Maenads, influenced by certain practices open you up to the spiritual sphere that leads you to a deep religious experience. Greeks eagerly adopted elements of other beliefs, but a cult leading to a transformation must have scared them because of its oddity and otherness. Eliade claims that mythical elements incorporated into the original beliefs have even been treated as a primal revelation. Thracian god has had a tough way with many obstacles to the hearts of Greeks, but in orphic variation it could already have gained many followers.

Dionysian religion rose out from the cult and included irrationality, that we can connect to the incomprehensible manifestations in different life forms. Orgiastic or ecstatic dance underlines its irrationality. The cult of Dionysus allows to cross the boundary of a human world to arrive in the sphere of divine. Human can thus elevate to a higher level than he was given in his mortal, earthly life. The god of life is closer to his worshippers than a god-creator and a world ruler. Greeks believed that in periodicity of phenomena there is hidden the durability and perpetuity of divine factor. Orphic accentuate this reality the most. Their statement about reality is symptomatic – domination of one over multitude. Experience is a scaffolding for mythical content present in beliefs and for symbolic bound with Dionysus cult and the personage himself. A key to understanding Dionysian religion with all the richness of its rites is the notion of transformation: transformation of consciousness, that effects in rise of vital force. Maenads can “see” one world, that consists of variety. Through

15 Vide K. Kerényi, *Dionysos. Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. xxxi–xxxiii.

16 Vide M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. W. R. Trask, Harper & Rowe, 1975, p. xiii–xv.

its elements humans take part in Dionysus' divinity. Ambiguity of God leads to multitude of practices, images, and symbols of divine attributes. Dionysus himself is at once a god of life and a god of death. It means we cannot treat him as a phenomenon, thing or being present in the world. Dionysus presents all diversity of nature but doesn't dissolve it. Religious experience is identical with the experience of otherness, which means that divinity can be understood as "something" totally different from a certain reality. A good visualisation of this, is the ambiguity of Dionysus' names. He is a polymorphic god, in which contradictions don't exclude each other. Contradiction is "suppressed", because it leads to identity, in which there "hides" divinity. The basis of Dionysian religion is experience, that is elicited with different means. Those methods, which are oftentimes stimulation of emotions to the extremum, serve going into trans, visions, losing common ordeal of the world. This losing of world as it is from the purview is also present in some presocratic philosophers, also in Plato. And, although this Dionysian religion has irrational elements to it, it is a signpost to knowing philosophical thought of Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Pythagoreans. Methods taken by worshipper of Dionysus to get closer to his god are thoroughly different to those taken by Zeus' worshippers. Moreover, Apollos's worshippers can even be reluctant and disgusted. The methods were: dance with music, often accompanied by bloody sacrifice, originally – omophagia, that is lacerating an animal and eating it raw. We also know that maenads – satyrs in the procession of Dionysus were wearing different clothes, that were imitating different being. Reaching a trans or ecstasy was enabled by wine or hallucinogenic drink or gases. The goal is to achieve a state of ecstasy, that makes Dionysus worshippers feel united with god. The notion of ecstasy is blurred and demands precise definition. According to religion studies and psychologists of religion, notion of ecstasy means a state of total or partial suspension of consciousness, that means disabling cognitive abilities to all or some of natural cognitive stimulus¹⁷. Moreover, ecstasy engages all the spheres of personality, so that you can see exhaustion and multiple sensual reactions: auditory, visual, tangible, also the organ of speech expressing in a sudden exclamation, sigh etc. Significant is also that the visions experienced during ecstasy seem to be more real than sensual experience, but are impossible to express with discursive language, as ecstatic men say.

17 R. W. Hood, *Psychological strength and the report of intense religious experience*, "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion" 13 (1974), p. 65–71.

Common features are *primo* suspension of normal consciousness and also, in greater or smaller degree, functions of sensual organs, as a result of excessive concentration on objects of religious life; *secundo* “the desire of soul in a God”, in which in higher states of ecstasy there comes to almost absolute merging with Him, wherein ecstatic has a clear consciousness of such communion¹⁸.

Assertion above refers to a position of an ecstatic man, who, by his will and concentration on a religious object, achieves another state of consciousness. You cannot exclude, that Maenads driven by Dionysian frenzy didn't present such an attitude. All their actions headed towards communion with fascinating and terrifying god. Ecstasy is a special state of mind, where it comes to suspension of consciousness and normal perception of the world. Szmyd argues, that features of ecstatic states are characteristic emotionality, need for activity and repetitiveness of ecstatic states in favorable conditions¹⁹. Divinity, which takes the form of Dionysus, conceals in it the power of life and a mystery of impersonal, elusive and overwhelming being connected with it. As myths convince, reality ζωή is totally different than the one we know from experiencing the world.

Reality in the sense of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Pythagorean Community

Above mentioned philosophers create slightly different image of the world than their Ionian predecessors. They explore the mystery of world connecting it to a divine sphere. All divine-human reality is one. Λόγος takes primary position in Heraclitus philosophy. It has divine traits although it is not a god in a manner of mythical gods. Λόγος creates the world, but it is totally different from the world and human, although paradoxically one can say, that it is in world and in human at one time. Recalling Rudolf Otto, if divinity expresses in absolute difference, otherness to the experienced world, then Λόγος is fully divine principle of the world. Paradox lies in that, although divinity of Λόγος cannot be grasped in the logic our language uses, we still can hear Λόγος

18 E. Gellhorn, W. Kiely, *Mystical states of consciousness. Neurophysiological and clinical aspects*, “Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease” 154 (1972) issue 6, p. 399–405.

19 Vide J. Szmyd, *Myślenie i zachowanie nieracjonalne. Tradycyjne i współczesne wymiary. Z psychologii i filozofii irracjonalizmu*, Katowice 1996, p. 232–233; A. Godin, *Psychologie des experiences*, Paris 1983.

itself, and in Heraclitus' teaching listening is identical with understanding²⁰. Having heard Λόγος, we can holistically comprehend reality. Λόγος is the highest Intelligence, so rationality fits in its essence. Human having in his soul (ψυχή) λόγος is not only able, but also predisposed to acts of knowing, to rational consideration on phenomena, particular things and the world in order to participate in common Λόγος. However, as results from Heraclitus words, λόγος is the most distant from people: Λόγος always existing, people always unaware of its existence.

Parmenides of Elea creates another kind of philosophy. In his opinion philosophical reflection should grasp what is, what exist, that is the Being²¹. What philosopher desires is not wisdom coming from people but from the gods. The Parmenides' poem is thoroughly academic and religious at once, because goddess lectures Elea about highest truths of thinking according to λόγος. To explore the mystery of the being, to gain knowledge about what is (in a true and significant way) is a challenge to someone who has reason and transcends his mortal condition following it. Divinity, impersonated by figures of goddesses is anchored in extrasensory sphere. That is also where lies the truth about One being, which is object of revelation of the goddess as well as judgement of the reason. Parmenides clearly creates his conception in opposition to opinion of Ionians, for whom physical world and mechanisms acting therein were object of their research. This way Narecki comments the way Parmenides thinks: "And now, this whole mass of experiences, mostly of sensual nature, suddenly stops to reckon. For philosopher from Elea rejects this basic and delusional, in his opinion, assumption of Ionians about the existence of such form of the world. Instead, he asks himself a question, is it even possible, the existence of something independent from sensually perceivable reality"²². θῦμός, inner energy which, as Greeks believe, pushes a man towards worthy acts, is what directs the journey of "knowing man"²³. A worthy act appears to be Intellectual action and a journey to the goddess, which shows the young man the heart of well-rounded truth, resembles magical hikes of shaman. Theme of shedding the veils from the faces suggests practices done in Eleusis. Of course, you need to agree with Sextus that the journey is allegory

20 J. Burnet, *Early Greek philosophy*, London 1920, p. 148–156.

21 Vide G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic philosophers*, p. 266–270.

22 K. Narecki, *Logos we wczesnej myśli greckiej*, p. 127.

23 Vide D. Kubok, *Prawda i mniemanie. Studium filozofii Parmenidesa z Elei*, Katowice 2004, p. 95.

of enlightenment and undoubtedly the gesture of virgins shedding the veils shows the essence of enlightenment. At least the enlightened was *ἐποπτεῖ* who after specific practices could see “the invisible”. Symbolic gestures didn’t stay in the intellectual sphere only, they referred to the whole human sphere, also the sensual one. As a consequence, they stimulated together the consciousness and emotions, even more: extreme emotions. Meanwhile philosophy of Parmenides moves whole universe of experience into the sphere of intellect. It is no more practices done to iniciants or *ἐποπτεῖ* that play the role of preparing mind to seeing divine, extrasensual world, but notions as transmitters of certain ideas. Consequence of rational understanding of the being is ascribing to it divine attributes. The being is perfect: immovable, complete, uncreated, indestructible and without end.

You cannot state about it that it was in past, nor that it is to be in future, because it is immutable in essence. Any modification of being would assume that something that hadn’t been, would start to be, what finally means that there was a moment when it had been and could have not been, and it is impossible. Anyway, how could a structure of being change? The being doesn’t have a structure, it is homogenous being and nothing more. No inconsistency, no internal division cannot be thought within it, because whatever you could inject into it, it won’t be a being anymore. Briefly saying, nothing other can be said about it, than that it is, and that what is not a being does not exist²⁴.

This passage of Gilson points out well Parmenides’ thought. What is must exist not only in the most overall but also the most precise way. However, mystery revealed by nameless goddesses remains a mystery. Teaching, that there is only one being, immovable, homogenous, eventually comparable to a sphere having its borders, is leading to a retreat from what is known to us²⁵. To see One Being of Parmenides is not to see the world, that surrounds us, a field of

24 “On ne peut pas dire de lui qu’il ait été dans le passé, ni qu’il doive être dans l’avenir, mais seulement qu’il est [...]. Toute modification de l’être supposerait que quelque chose qui n’était pas ait commencé d’être, c’est-à-dire, en fin de compte, que de l’être puisse a un certain moment n’avoir pas été, ce qui est impossible. D’ailleurs, comment la structure de l’être pourrait-elle se modifier ? L’être n’a pas de structure, il est l’être homogène, et rien d’autre. Aucune discontinuité, aucune division interne ne sont concevables en lui, car tout ce que l’on pourrait y introduire de tel serait, c’est-à-dire serait encore de l’être. Bref, on ne peut rien en dire d’autre, sinon qu’il est, est que ce qui n’est pas l’être, n’est pas” (E. Gilson, *L’être et l’essence*, Vrin, 1994, s. 25).

25 *Główne problemy filozofii starożytnej*, przeł. P. Domański, Warszawa 1996, p. 79.

our living and acting. Justifying falsity of conviction seems to be necessary only for those who haven't yet realized the Being. Truth has nothing in common with things among which we live. Thought with "an image" of a being is quite far from things whose physicality (presence) we experience. Question of principle of the world (ἀρχή) has no sense, because existing identical with itself doesn't allow existence of something aside from it. The being itself, το εἶναι is a basis for himself and all that it²⁶. W. Stróżewski, as E. Gilson and O. Gigon interprets the Being in a monistic spirit, accentuating primarily its identity. The Being of philosopher from Elea is identical with thought, and so it is true and rational in essence.

Pythagoreans

For Pythagoreans ἀρχή of an ordered whole of cosmos is a reality totally disingenuous to sensual one. It's a Number. Rational consideration concerning world and divinity lead to a conclusion that the causes of reality are not in sensual data but in a grasp of a mind. Limiting and Unlimited, or, at last, Harmony are notions far from natural and common vision of the world. Real existence of things needs to be eternal. Limited and limitless have oppositional nature; they are no similar and no kin, and yet they create cosmos. Pythagorean needed a third factor, and it was harmony. Thanks to it cosmos has an ordered structure and still retains its identity. As W. A. Heidel argues harmony is a principle, because two different principles constitute ordered structure of reality²⁷. Designing a conception of cosmos Pythagoreans didn't take Ionian philosophers as examples. For it is no immanent natural factor, but rather pre-material in a rank of a god. Although no of these three principles cannot be understood as a sensual quality, all of them create the world, and only harmony gives existence to whole reality by giving it a shape. Teaching of Philolaos found its expression in Plato's conception of world, which is called into being by Demiurgos. For harmony is the creator of cosmos – two contradictory principles is tune. The Border (πέρας) is imposing its measure on ἄπειρον (limitless). Cosmos is composed of measure and symmetry

26 Vide W. Stróżewski, *Istnienie i sens*, Kraków 2005, p. 59.

27 Vide W. A. Heidel, *Πέρασ and ἄπειρον in the Pythagorean Philosophy*, „Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie” 14 (1901), p. 384–399; W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's "Metaphysics". A revised text with introduction and commentary*, Oxford 1924.

and god – harmony is their creator²⁸. Manifestation of harmony in things is a number. Border containing a *ratio* can be the expression of what is good and what is rational (that is knowable) thanks to a number. Unlimited bears an opposition of the other principle, so, axiologically, you can describe it as negative. In the domain of theory of knowledge you can describe it as unknowable, something without form. Harmony which tunes those principles is not passive (like principles are). Harmony is active element of cosmos, it's its Demiurgos. In the fragment of work ascribed to Philo of Alexandria you can read such sentence: "There is a God, who reigns and rules everything, the one existing from all times, immovable, resembling only himself, different from all other"²⁹. And so God, as a cause of the world contains in himself the proper measure and *ratio*, and tunes two contradictory ἀρχαί in the best way possible. If we were to believe this sentence authentic, we need to add the fact that for Pythagoreans god was both cosmos and its creator (arch-principle) and was having different nature to all that exists. In this sense it is similar to Parmenides' all-being – all-oneness. **Measure that rose out of harmony** is something thanks to what we can recognize a thing. Thanks to it s certain thing is a separate, specific being, that gains its place in the world, that is comparable to other things. Narecki notices that measurements of things are described as mathematical relations, what makes it seem identical to the notion of λόγος³⁰.

Aside from Pythagoras school, we can see so called "orphyic renaissance" as an effect of one of the reforms of Dionysian religion. It is important that we understand its nature, because in effect of the changes Orpheus' figure gains apollonian character. In the circle of theology, Orpheus, who is ideal model in orphyic movement, is being tamed and mitigated – in one word he is being apollonized. As far as it concerns Pythagorean school, which transports this orphyic theology to philosophy, one more time there appears the same combination of elements of Dionysus and Apollo. We can see moreover that (as you can suspect) between the two ideals there is a deeply rooted contradiction, to which reunion opposes. Dionysus can become Orpheus without loosing his fullness of life and mystery. But if he makes another step (leading in a sense to Delphi) and becomes Apollo, he stops to be Dionysus. He has

28 G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic philosophers*, p. 307–308.

29 L. Cohn, *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, vol. 1, Berlin 1896, p. 1–60, fragment from *De Opificio Mundi*, 100, vide Ian Lydos *De Mensibus* 2, 12.

30 Vide K. Narecki, *Logos we wczesnej myśli greckiej*, p. 202–203.

left the earth and its life cycle of death and rebirth and ascended to his place among immortals where he is situated beyond morality³¹. He is not a demon in communion with his followers, but a God beyond the great bay of Moira. This mortal sequence: from the group of demons to a personal God, in interesting way finds expression in Pythagorean philosophy, that always goes from mysticism to rational argumentation, just as religion that went from Dionysus to Apollo. However both philosophy of Pythagoreans and religion don't stop to be mystical in their basis.

Conclusion

Analysis of materials concerning religious sphere, connected more to cult than to a myth, has shown in an unquestionable way, that inner experiences of different type give impulse to thinking about reality (including divinity) in a characteristic way. First of all, philosophers exploring the mystery of the being, were inspired with orphism (which has roots in Dionysus cult) more than with nature of the world. Their way of thinking differs significantly from Ionian way of perception and description of reality. For their philosophy doesn't only mirror holistic thinking, but also monistic and pantheistic thinking, leading to leveling of the distance between the god and the world, between the god and the human. At the same time, their descriptions reveal discovery of fields, that are significantly receded from divinity and are connected to temporality, limitedness, therefore – imperfection.

There comes a question: weather in its roots rational thinking needed to have its negative image in irrationality? If we assume that rationality is a certain predisposition of a mind, that allows to order reality, set up boundaries, segregate, connect and exclude to create a monolithic transparent image of reality; irrationality as a contradiction of this tendency must have its justification. In a rational world there exists irrational sphere as rationalities' contradiction. But irrationality as divinity (radical otherness), that is only given in direct, deep experience of individuals and societies, is not a contradiction of rationality, but its beginning. Particular and collective religious experience, both ecstatic, orgiastic, mystic and visionary in character, could have been a specific mental background, from which religious and metaphysical ideas emerged. The closeness of philosophers' thoughts with all the framework of orphic

³¹ Vide F. Cornford, *From religion*, p. 195.

conception indicates a relatedness of those two movements. Religion marked by Dionysus is filled with cult, what testifies its ambitions to transcend the borders between a god and a human. For this cause it becomes the grassroots of internal experiences leading to the change of consciousness, which results in creating more and more new ideas and conceptions of a god, a world and a human. "Otherness" means what is not given in empirical, sensual experience. Rational reflection about divinity tries to close it in notion of "eternity", because "other" is what is eternal, what lasts like ζωή, conceiving divine and terrestrial world. If in notion of eternity you can find common element of Dionysian religion and intellectual creations of early philosophy then you need to move a step forward and admit that irrational ζωή emerging from the figure of Dionysus is only the reverse of the same divine reality of Λόγος, Harmony or at last the Being. Rationality emerging from the mark of Dionysus must then set up boundaries where they haven't so far been made and demolish those risen up by sensual experience of the world and fixed by Homer.

Rationality of early philosophers appears as concern on divinity. Divinity is presented as radically other reality – it is eternal, and so it is Λόγος or Harmony. It finds its source in depths of an ecstatic or even mystic experience. Therefore, boundaries between a god and a human, between death and life, fate and human existence are only conventional signs, that human brain can (or even should) level. It is the mind that leads a human to liberation from all human limits by elevating in the space of eternal perfection. Rationality of philosophers "touching" with their minds the mysteries of the being is in another order to this known in common experience. It is questioned in intellectual reception of the world and in everyday life in action. In this context you can say, that philosophy not only satisfies curiosity to know the world, but also, in original sense, becomes a method needed to salvation in terrestrial and extraterrestrial life. Sometimes both the forms of life are indistinguishable. Death, which in consciousness of poets Homer and Hesiod still appeared as terrifying and irrational phenomenon, in orphic-style philosophy becomes a source of better life. Consciousness of "ego" that in some way exists after death, different from a mortal body, "turns upside down" commonly accepted views concerning human existence. In a rational world of philosophers close to orphic you make a statement which primarily could have been very problematic. Human was for poets still a conglomerate of his feelings, desires or sensations, he was incomprehensible for himself, funny to gods, he was standing in his fight for a moment of happiness on earth, that would be later taken

from him with cruelty. Rationality, which has irrational factor in its basis: an impenetrable mystery of divinity³², tells to watch the world from a different perspective. Philosophers take up the direction, that not only elevates human to a divine rank, but also gives autonomy to him. Human can decide his fate himself as a reasonable spirit. He can decide himself according to his liking. This is the new proposition of salvation for a human, nothing other than extending the spirit to the borders maximally possible, grasping with a thought eternal Λόγος, Being and Harmony. There is nothing wear that knowing is conjugated with self-shaping. Irrational factor takes the role of a spring, that runs the mechanism of rationality, that is of thinking about reality.

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32 In R. Otto's terminology this will be mirum, that has to remain impenetrable mystery, because the absolute cannot be comprehended. The absolute transcends the boundaries of knowing, because from his nature he is something "absolutely other". It lies beyond borders of our cognition because of its form, quality and essence. That's also why all the attribution that concerns the absolute gain different quality.

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Abstract

Irrationality vs rationality? Irrationality as a door to the rational Greek thought

The origin of western thought is commonly situated in Greek philosophy, with the over-arching story of logos-based rational inquiry deteriorating from the mythical stories presenting supernatural cause to the observable phenomena. This paper aims to investigate the intersection of rational and irrational factors contributing to the emergence of philosophy. Author proceeds through the examination of Ionian, Pythagorean and Orphic thought, all shaping the most influential works of Greek philosophers, such as Plato. The theoretical base of the study was embedded in the writings of Rudolf Otto and Francis M. Cornford. In result, the conclusions present the irrationality as a root for rational interpretation of reality, through the commonality endeavour of both, aiming at the elevation of human figure, its

independence from chaotic actions of gods and revelation of the higher truths through the embodied means of ritual action as well as through the thinking process of ordering and synthetizing. The examples brought by the author expose the intertwining of religious belief and philosophical thought.

Keywords: early greek philosophy, philosophy of religion, dionysian cult, irrationality, zoe

Abstrakt

Irracjonalność kontra racjonalność? Irracjonalność jako drzewi do racjonalnego greckiego myślenia

Początki zachodniej myśli zwykle umieszcza się w filozofii greckiej, gdzie ogólna historia racjonalnego dociekania opartego na logosie ulegała degradacji z mitycznych opowieści przedstawiających nadprzyrodzone przyczyny do zjawisk obserwowalnych. Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu zbadanie przecięcia racjonalnych i irracjonalnych czynników przyczyniających się do powstania filozofii. Autor przechodzi poprzez analizę myśli jońskiej, pitagorejskiej i orfickiej, które zostały ukształtowane przez najbardziej wpływowe dzieła greckich filozofów, takich jak Platon. Teoretyczną podstawę badania stanowiły pisma Rudolfa Otto i Francisa M. Cornforda. W rezultacie wnioski przedstawiają irracjonalność jako korzeń racjonalnej interpretacji rzeczywistości, poprzez wspólne dążenie obu, mające na celu podniesienie postaci ludzkiej, jej niezależność od chaotycznych działań bogów oraz ujawnienie wyższych prawd za pomocą ucieleśnionych środków działania rytualnego, jak również poprzez proces myślenia układania i syntetyzowania. Przykłady przytaczane przez autora eksponują splecenie wiary religijnej i myśli filozoficznej.

Słowa kluczowe: wczesna grecka filozofia, filozofia religii, kult dionizyjski, irracjonalność, zoe