

## **SOME REMARKS ON THE CONCEPT 'PERSON' IN THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CULTURE**

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In his article on the concept of person in Western philosophy Hubbeling several times drew attention to the I-Thou relation of man to God as the starting-point or terminal point for an understanding of the concept 'person'. This I-Thou relation, which has a central place in the modern monotheistic religions, is also found in primitive and ancient near eastern religions. This has sometimes been greatly exaggerated, because it was thought that primitive and ancient eastern man had personal relations with all kinds of things in nature. Thus Wilson writes (1949, 49):

The Egyptians might - and did - personify almost anything: the head, the belly, the tongue, perception, taste, truth, a tree, a mountain, the sea, a city, darkness, and death. But few of these were personified with regularity or with awe; that is, few of them reached the stature of demi-gods. They were forces with which man had the 'Thou' relation. And it is a little difficult to think of anything in the phenomenal world with which he might not have that relation as indicated in scenes and texts. The answer is that he might have the 'Thou' relation with anything in the phenomenal world.

However, closer examination of the available Egyptian textual and visual material often shows, at least as regards the Egyptian material referred to above (cf. Baines: 1985, 10) that the personifications are little more than metaphors - certainly with regard to the first three examples mentioned above - or speculative figures. When poets of Egyptian love songs let trees speak in their poems, this really does not mean that people, even when in love, have an I-Thou relation with trees. Egyptian gods and goddesses could indeed reveal themselves in trees, but one cannot deduce from this that Egyptians had an I-Thou relationship with trees as such.

Even if the personal relation of man with his god is not so central in the primitive and antique religions as in the modern monotheistic religions, it is not so surprising that the I-Thou relationship is found, not only in the Hebrew psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament, but also

in Egypt. This relationship is found in many religions, also in the Egyptian which, besides its differences, bears many resemblances to the Israelite religion. In Egypt this I - Thou relationship is found especially in the material concerning what is usually called personal piety. Especially from the second half of the history of the ancient Egyptian religion that comprises more than thirty centuries, i.e., which from the period after Akhenaten, we know many impressive documents of personal piety. We cannot treat these systematically here, and will only quote some parts of a text dating from the 13th century B.C., which was found a few decades ago in a tomb near Luxor (Abdul-Quader Muhammed: 1966, Pl. 58ff.; cf. Assmann: 1975, no. 173; Vernus: 1978, 144f.):

There was a man of Southern Heliopolis  
a true scribe in Thebes,  
whose name of his mother was Si-Mut (= son of Mut) and  
who was called Kiki.  
Now his god took notice of him  
and instructed him in his wisdom.  
He set him upon the way of life  
to protect his body (also).  
God knew him as a child  
and assigned to him plenty and prosperity.

Then he took counsel with himself  
to find a divine patron for himself  
and he found that Mut is the best of the gods.  
Talent and development lie in her hand  
duration of life and breath of life lie under her command.  
All that takes place is at her command.  
He said: Behold, I give her my possessions and acquisitions  
for I know that she is benevolent in my eyes  
that she alone is trustworthy  
that for me she causes fear to disappear  
that she protects me in time of evil  
that she comes with the north wind before her  
when I call upon her name.  
I am a pauper in her city  
a needy pilgrim in her temple precinct.

...  
I rejoice at thy strength  
for thou art greater than any god whatever.  
My heart is filled with my mistress.  
I fear no human being.  
When I lay me down, I can sleep  
for I have a protectress.  
Who makes Mut his protectress,  
no god can attack him.  
He has the favour of the king of his time  
until he has reached the venerable state  
(beatitude of the hereafter).

Who makes Mut his protectress  
no evil touches him.  
He is well protected at all times  
until he joins the city of the dead.

Who makes Mut his protectress  
how fair is his lifetime.  
The favour of the king penetrates to the physical existence  
of him  
who has placed her in his heart.

Who makes Mut his protectress  
blessed did he issue from his mother's body.  
Good fortune is assigned to him at birth  
and he will be venerable (in death).

Who makes Mut his protectress  
how blessed is he who longs for her.  
No god will cast him down  
because he is one who does not know death.

Kiki begins to testify to 'his god' and 'god', who at first is still nameless, but to whom afterwards he ascribes the plenty and prosperity of the years of his childhood or youth. Then the time arrives of when he has to make a choice, when he confers with himself. He chooses the

goddess Mut from all the gods to be considered in Thebes. The fact that at his birth his mother had already given him the name Si-Mut (son of Mut), indicates that this religious decision was not entirely unexpected. In the part not quoted above, he writes, among other things, that he has not chosen a human protector. He thought, or if one prefers a more serious phrase, he came to realize that for him this goddess was the one under whose care he could best put himself, so that it is to her that he gives all his possessions. In the beginning it is clearly stated that 'his god' has formed or taught him and has made him sensible or learned in his teaching or wisdom. Personal piety or devotion here proves to be not a matter of faith, but of knowing about the god and even a knowledge that has issued from the god. It is a matter of divine wisdom or teaching and human experience and human choice or action but not of faith. What is remarkable is the factual information that the goddess causes his fear to disappear and that at night he can sleep peacefully in her care. The relationship between this human being and his protectress is one of close attachment. Kiki calls himself poor, so that it is clear that the goddess gives him what he needs. The relation with her is his safeguard against evil. He finds favour with the king upon earth and becomes one of the venerable dead (*imakh*).

Being in favour with the king and attaining the status of a venerable dead person, represented in the document quoted above as following from the I-Thou relation with the divinity, are well-known desiderata in Egyptian culture and of great importance for an understanding of the Egyptian concept of a person, because in Egyptian culture life was to a very great extent determined - if we are to believe the official documents preserved - by the cult of gods, the cult of the king and the cult of the dead.

It is well known that in comparison with other cultures the Egyptian culture invested an unusual amount of exertion and attention in the cult of the dead. The Egyptian cult of the dead and everything belonging to it from mummies to pyramids, from books of the dead and all the rest of the funerary literature to plastic art and grave-gifts like the treasures of Tut-ankh-amen is directed to and centres around the person of the deceased. One might call the Egyptian cult of the dead personal glorification, if nowadays such a term did not suggest a specific political meaning and thus cause misunderstanding. Morenz (1969, 44ff.) put the Egyptian cult of the dead under the heading 'Personalität'. The human person that

grew naturally and developed in history is preserved in the cult of the dead and raised to the highest possible status of the king and god Osiris.

In the cult of the dead death is negated by positing and bringing it about that a human being continues to exist as an honourable dead person (*imakh*). In the document of personal piety quoted above it is stated that man attains this status through the care of the deity. In the cult of the dead we usually find not only mere references to such a personal relationship with the deity, but also a separate more or less complete synopsis of how the person wishes to live on as an honoured one, i.e., who he is and what he is like and wants to be like as a person and what, in Egyptian opinion, is essential for a human person and his eternal life. It thus becomes evident that the person is not merely a spiritual being in relation with the deity or with himself, but also a social and corporeal being.

The familiar distinction between *signifiant* and *signifié*, or, as history of religions used to put it, between symbol and reality, is not always so easy to make when examining the Egyptian material. This clearly appears from, for instance, the meaning of a person's name in Egypt. Men and gods have a personal name. But some animals, that is some favourite animals, also have a proper name corresponding to the personal name of people. We know many names of dogs, a few of horses, but not a single name of a cat or a monkey, which apart from that were mummified just like humans, buried in a sarcophagus and had the ritual of opening the mouth carried out for them. These animals, which had names of their own and with whom their masters considered themselves to have a personal relationship, may, submissive as they were, nonetheless have been credited with a certain independence and individuality. Furthermore, personifications of lifeless objects, such as a pyramid, a temple, a gateway, etc., to which were given personal status, and over which the ritual of opening the mouth was also performed, could also have a special proper name.

How close the connection between the person and the name representing him was considered to be in Egypt, is evident from the phenomenon of the *damnatio memoriae*, by which certain pharaohs and other persons in Egypt were struck long before some Roman emperors. Names were deleted, scratched out, obviously to strike down the person himself. Names of criminals were altered to bring them into agreement with their owner's criminal personality.

Gods often have many names, pharaohs have five names, which may

well be changed in the course of their rule. Humans have a name that was given them at birth, and sometimes a second name, the so-called 'beautiful name', which seems to have been given later. In the late period name and *ka*, and even the way of writing them, are increasingly confused and interchanged (Derchain: 1979, 4). The essential connection which is supposed to exist between *signifiant* and *signifié* is also evident from the countless puns on proper names in religious texts from early times till late. The Egyptians themselves seem to have regarded the name as an aspect of the person.

The grave and its equipment, varying from simple pots of food, a mirror, a weapon, to the many precious treasures, determine the status of the person. They are not merely a greater or lesser accumulation of material goods and possessions, but also have a personal aspect. Grave-gifts are gifts depending upon the favour of the kind and/or of others, although the owner of the grave already cares for the matter during his lifetime. Grave-gifts may bear the name of the departed, or sometimes also that of others and then especially of members of the family, ancestors or descendants. Especially images representing men and/or women in an idealized form, placed in the grave and later sometimes also in temples, are provided with the name, titles and sometimes (auto)biography of the deceased. To provide materially for the dead person was by modern standards sometimes an almost unimaginably costly matter. A sarcophagus alone was worth as much as a house (Morenz: 1969, 58). The grave and its equipment enable the dead to continue to exist as a person. It is difficult to determine in how far the grave and material grave-gifts do indeed present the person. In the two series of nine elements that seem to present the person in the tomb of Amenemhet, which dates from the time of the 18th Dynasty, 'this tomb that is in the necropolis' is expressly mentioned as a constituent element of the person (see below). One of the four *ka*-s particularly mentioned in late times is 'beautiful funeral' (see below). A person, at least a person belonging to the elite, seems not to have been complete and finished to the Egyptian mind without a tomb. Gods also have a tomb. Precisely because here we are far removed from the modern Western concept of a person, there is a great likelihood of misinterpreting the data. Egypt is the country of pyramids and mummies and we should consider whether there a tomb may not have been as important for a person or even more important than the I - Thou relation, consciousness of self, will, etc.

It becomes even more difficult to make a clear distinction between the person on the one hand and his social and material presentation in name and effigy on the other by means of the Egyptian source material when we pay attention to the person and the body. What has sometimes been called the most typical Egyptian custom, i.e., mummification, indicates that the Egyptians could not distinguish the person from the body. The body had to be preserved to guarantee the continued existence of the person. Cremation was only known as an exceptional punishment. If the body had accidentally been lost through fire or by drowning, one had to resort to magical spells to obtain a new body. Moreover, there was the fear of being chopped into bits or burned in the hereafter (Hornung: 1968, 10-36). There was an extensive funerary literature dealing with ways to avoid such dangers. On the other hand there was also, for instance, a rescue party at work in the hereafter to pull out of the water the bodies of people who had drowned, and whose bodies had therefore not been buried in the earth but had floated away; they were now brought ashore and thus preserved, according to the books of the netherworld Amduat, tenth hour, and Book of Gates, ninth hour (cf. Hornung: 1982, 137f.).

Two Egyptian words for body (*hc* ; *dt*) have, besides the principal meaning of body, also the secondary meaning of self. A third word for body (*ht*) has, besides the meaning of belly, also the wider meaning of inner life, the location of thoughts, feelings and memories (Assmann: 1982, 965). The body then is not just a body, but an aspect of the person from whom it cannot be separated. The flowering of sculpture in Egypt can in part be explained from the wish, the need and the forethought to provide the departed with extra bodies as standbys in the shape of images of wood, stone or other material marked with his name and titles. Something very noticeable is the attention paid to the body, not only at the end of life in mummification, but also during life in hair-style, cosmetics and dress both for men and women in such a way that the individual person is stylized into a type. De Buck (1928) already showed the great extent to which individuality comes to be hidden behind the typical in art and literature of Egypt.

In the remarks above about the specific individuality of the person from the material and physical point of view, we have already referred to the person's social symbol, i.e., his name. In addition to the name we usually see the titles of the offices that were held by the dead person

and sometimes his genealogy written upon effigies, stelae, tomb walls, etc. This may be extended into an ideal autobiography in the first, sometimes in the third, and rarely in the second person. Biography is the oldest literary genre that we know in Egyptian literature, and it existed or flourished into Roman times (Van de Walle: 1975, 815). These biographies are by no means 'personal' ego-documents, but accumulations of always the same conventional phrases, offering not an individual but a typical, ideal, moral portrait of the dead person conforming to social relationships and living in favour with the pharaoh. Here the king personifies the category of social acknowledgement that makes someone a person and a grave-owner. The king bestows upon his officials their biography and their personality not only in the sense that he allows the description to be laid down forever in stone, but also because he has let his officials play the roles in well-ordered society that, summarized in the biography, belong to the perfected person in the way the departed wishes to live on in memory. The emphasis is always on the favour (*hswt*) of the king, of parents, of fellow men and later of gods (see the text from Kiki's tomb quoted above). Thus we may read in the tomb of Harkhuf (+ 2200 B.C.) after the customary offering of formulas, name and titles and before the report of his African travels of discovery and the story of how upon the pharaoh's written order he hastily brought the Pigmy from the land of the horizon-dwellers to court to demonstrate his dancing there (Lichtenheim: 1973, 24):

I have come here from my city,  
I have descended from my home;  
I have built a house, set up (its) doors  
I have dug a pool, planted sycamores.  
The king praised me,  
My father made a will for me.  
I was one worthy...  
One beloved of his father,  
Praised by his mother  
Whom all his brothers loved.  
I gave bread to the hungry,  
Clothing to the naked,  
I brought the boatless to land.

This autobiography of the explorer and ruler Harkhuf, like that of so many other Egyptian officials, is determined by the Egyptian ideal of life, which as Assmann (1980, 58) once formulated it 'nicht vom Willen zur Macht, sondern vom Willen zur Gunst bestimmt war'. This personality ideal of serving the pharaoh and thus realizing *ma-at* (truth, justice, the correct order) or being in the king's favour was particularly strong in the time of the Old Kingdom. Later on we see more and more that the personality ideal is no longer so strongly founded upon the social relation with king, family and fellow men, but also and especially in the relation with oneself, one's heart, or one's god.

The collapse of the Old Kingdom with its destructive social consequences and sometimes so touching pessimistic literature, made room for a different type of person. The self-assured or self-glorifying note of the autobiography of Ankhtifi (+ 2100 B.C.), however, remains rather exceptional in Egyptian history (Vandier: 1950, 185-190; cf. Assmann: 1982, 972):

I am the vanguard of men and the rearguard of men  
One like me has not developed  
Neither will such a one develop  
One like me has not been born  
And will not be born.  
I have surpassed the deeds of the ancestors.  
No-one after me shall attain what I have done,  
in these millions of years.

It was in the First Intermediate Period when this local potentate Ankhtifi lived and the favour of the king was no longer important, or at any rate no longer had any real meaning, that the 'The Dispute between a Man and his *ba*' was written. A man asks (Lichtenheim: 1973, 167):

To whom shall I speak today?  
Hearts are greedy,  
Everyone robs his comrade's goods.

To whom shall I speak today?  
Kindness has perished,  
Insolence assaults everyone. ...

In spite of the question there is a dialogue. We would call it a dialogue of man with himself. It lies beyond the scope of this article to give an analysis of this text as a whole or to attempt to summarize the diverging explanations of Egyptologists. The partner in the conversation is called the *ba*.

In graphic or plastic art the *ba* was represented in the shape of a bird (jabiru stork) or as a bird with a human head, male or female according to the hairdress. Traditionally the *ba*, like the *ka* and *akh*, is counted among the Egyptian representations of the soul. Horapollo did indeed translate *ba* as psyche. This late explanation of the *ba* as soul may well be based upon Egyptian textual and visual material where the *ba*-bird unites itself with or settles upon the mummy. The *ba* is, however, not exclusively a spiritual-psychic being. Gods and men have a *ba*. It is known that the Apis bull is the *ba* of Ptah. The translation psyche is not really possible then: revelation or manifestation is more acceptable. The *ba* is an alter ego of humans both in a psychic and in a corporeal sense. The bird form of the *ba* indicates that the *ba* represents man's ability to move about. It unites itself with the mummy in the grave, but it also leaves the grave or the realm of the dead to behold the sun and to adore it. As a rule the *ba* of humans is not separately perceptible until after their death. A confrontation with the *ba* during one's lifetime upon earth, as in the conversation between the man who is weary of life and his *ba*, is exceptional. But a student given to drinking, is warned once that his *ba* might begin to wander about (papyrus Anastasi IV 11, 10; cf. Caminos: 1954, 182). This sounds like the conscious self contrasted with the 'unconsciousness' of intoxication. A man might go to the places he knows upon earth with his *ba*, i.e., consciousness of self, while his mummy remained in the grave. One might also, like Derchain (1979, 8), think of memory as the sum of a person's past. The *ba* of gods and men has to do with their identity. The *ba* is the alter ego or external manifestation, dealing with 'die äussere Kommunikation' (Assmann: 1979, JEA 65, 71). During life it is usually not distinguished from the person.

The *akh* is the human being as a glorified departed one, who resides in the grave or the realm of the dead, but can also intervene in life upon earth. In Christian-Coptic times the word lives on to indicate spirits and ghosts.

Although a human being can be said to dispose of *akhu* (divine,

creative or magical power) during his lifetime, the human person on earth as such is not an *akh*. Man is not an *akh*, but is acknowledged as an *akh* when the rites of glorification have been solemnized over him (Demarée: 1983, 190ff; England: 1978, 206ff.).

Man is also a shade, whose function can often be compared with the *ba*, i.e., external manifestation. Connected with the shade are the notions of coolness, protection and speed and mobility. The human shade is depicted as a black person (George: 1970 and 1983).

The specific qualities of the person on the spiritual-psychical level are indicated by the concept 'heart' (Brunner: 1977, 1158-1168). It is written with a hieroglyph that represents an animal's heart. The hearts of gods, humans and also animals, in so far as in this latter case it is not a poetic metaphor, were regarded as a purely physical matter. The heart of man is his core. The expression 'on the heart' (*hr-ib*) functions in the language as the preposition 'in the middle'. The heart as man's centre 'speaks', i.e., beats, in his members ('Book of the Dead' 27) and directs (Sauneron: 1962, 96). The heart must remain in the body for mummification. A heart-scarab may be added to the mummy, so that the human centre can continue to function. Many texts show that the heart was regarded as the seat not only of feelings, but also of understanding and memory. The heart has left a man, so that he has no self-control, when he is emotionally upset and fearful or when he is homesick. Someone 'without a heart' however is stupid rather than unfeeling. In the judgement of the dead the human heart, which is his true core and which has renounced his sins, is weighed against the ostrich feather, the symbol of social, ethical, and cosmic order. A lonely shipwrecked sailor, cast ashore on an uninhabited island, still has his heart as a companion, that is he is a person who remains conscious of himself, even if he is lonely. The pharaoh in his loneliness as a monarch consults his heart. The heart may have been thought of here as an organ with which he can learn to know his god and the directions he gives. God reveals himself and his will in the human heart. Kiki, who has a personal relationship with his goddess (see above), also declares that his heart is filled with his mistress. In Harper's songs, biographies and wisdom literature man is called upon to follow his heart. A yet unformed student may indeed be warned not to throw himself into the arms of the heart (Brunner: 1977, 1163). But a man well aware of the right path, because his heart is well formed and uninjured, can and must follow his heart. An Egyptian ideal is

to have an 'attentive heart' as we see from the autobiography of Amenhotep, the son of Hapu (Urk. IV: 1817, 8). We may compare this to Solomon's prayer for a heart with the ability to listen (1 Kings 3: 9).

He whose heart is injured is in a sorry state (*hd-ib*). His words are quicker than wind and rain (Amenemope 12, 1; cf. Brunner: 1977, 1162). He is characterized by lack of control, deceitfulness and mendacity. He is quarrelsome and a beast of prey (wolf) in the fold.

The heart of man is the *ka*, which is in his body (Book of the Dead 30 B). Ptahhotep says (186-189; cf. Lichtenheim: 1973, 66):

Follow your heart as long as you live,  
Do no more than is required,  
Do not shorten the time of 'follow-the-heart',  
Trimming its moment offends the *ka*.

In one of the manuscripts line 186 is changed into: 'Follow your *ka* as long as you live' (Zaba: 1956, 30 and 79).

The *ka* is rarely depicted in such a way that we can be absolutely certain. And when it is, it is always a kind of double of the human being created with it. Usually however the innumerable funerary figures which represent the departed in an idealized form, and which are provided with name, titles and offering formulas addressed to the *ka*, are interpreted as images of the *ka*.

The hieroglyph for *ka* represents two raised arms, i.e., a stylized representation of an embrace. This gesture could mean protection (Assmann: 1979, 71) or the transfer from the father to the son of that which is symbolized by the *ka* (Kaplony: 1980, 275). It seems less probable that the *ka* hieroglyph might be a gesture of adoration and indicate man's ability to have intercourse with the deity (Morenz: 1960, 214 Anm. 89).

Maspero (1878, 7, 47, 77ff.) called the *ka* the spiritual double, and Steindorff (1911, 152-159) referred to it as the genius or protective spirit of a man. The *ka* can, also in earlier times, be written with the single-letter signs *k* and *aleph*. Jacobsohn (1939, 57) connected the *ka* with the divine sexual or creative power and pointed out that the word *ka*, written with bull or phallus, can mean 'bull'. The king's *ka* would, in modern language, be 'die Erbmasse der Dynastie'. Frankfort (1948, 62) called the *ka* the 'vital force'. J. Sainte Fare Garnot (1955, 20) in his definition of the *ka* expressly used the term person: 'le *ka* est l'ensemble des forces

vitalles qui permettent à l'homme et à d'autres créatures raisonnables et conscientes (notamment les dieux) de subsister en tant qu'être et d'exister en tant que personnes'. In describing the *ka* Gardiner used the concepts 'spirit', 'personality', 'soul', 'individuality', 'temperament', 'fortune' and 'position' (1957, 172). Elsewhere (1950, 7 note 2) he wonders whether or not the word 'personality' really covers the various applications of the Egyptian word: 'The main point in which the Egyptian conception of personality would then differ from our own is that it assumes a separation from the owner's physical person'. If however one does not fix the identity of the person in the body remaining the same or in physical continuity and does not exclude, as the Egyptians did not, man's living on after death, then Gardiner's objection does not seem to be so decisive. For that matter, the mummification rituals clearly show to what an extent the Egyptians wrestled with the problems around physical continuity and identity of the person.

It seems clear even without entering here into a full account of the two monographs devoted to the *ka* by Greeven (1952) and Schweitzer (1956), that the concept '*ka*' is at least as complex as our concept 'person'. In text translations Egyptologists usually leave the word untranslated. In recent lexicographical research (Meeks: 1981, 393 and 1982, 306) the translation 'person' is also given for *ka*, besides other shades of meaning.

Summing up, one might call the *ka* the vital energy of men or gods or the ability to function as a person. It must be remarked here that the emphasis is not upon the person as an individual but on the person as a type, entirely in accordance with the fact that in Egyptian literature and art and other Egyptian phenomena it is not the individual but the typical which is stressed. Men and gods have a *ka*, have a personality structure that they have usually inherited or received from their ancestors. In so far as one would wish to go on ranking the *ka* among the various conceptions of the soul, the *ka* is the ancestral soul, the total of hereditary qualities that an individual human has received from the ancestors, his typical personal structure. Hence we can understand that the offerings to the dead made especially by the eldest son and members of the family are addressed to the *ka* of the departed. Children resemble their parents in the structure of their personality. That the Egyptians had observed this or hoped for it when a child was born, is evident from such personal names as Wehemkai (my *ka* repeats itself) and Kaesites (her

*ka* is her father), Wetetka(i) (my begetter is my *ka*), Kairi (my *ka* is my begetter) (Schweitzer: 1956, 36). Elsewhere also *ka* and ancestor are connected with one another. A wish expressed for the departed is 'that his hand may be taken by his *ka*-s, by his fathers' (Sethe: 1933, 189, 190; cf. Schweitzer: 1956, 84). Gardiner's descriptions of the *ka* as 'fortune' and 'position' become clearer if one considers the *ka* as ancestor-soul or hereditary structure of the person.

In this connection it is interesting to note the cult of the king's *ka*. In a recent study Bell (1985, 258) has remarked: 'the royal *ka* represents the 'dignity' or office of kingship, while the individual king is viewed as a link in the chain of divine kingship which stretches back into the very dawn of Egyptian history'. In the case of each king it had to be established that he really had a royal *ka*. The *ka* is not only passed on from father to son. This is evident, for instance, from one of the female names given above, but also from the case of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. One of her names is Weseret-kau (rich in *ka*-s). On the other hand Thutmose III could afterwards annul the legitimacy of Hatshepsut and deny that she had a royal *ka* by destroying her *ka*-statues. Especially the element *ka* in her name Maat-ka-Re was attacked (Bell: 1985, 257 and note 20) when her names were scratched out. From the fact that dynasties replaced one another one can deduce that the *ka* is not passed on exclusively by biological inheritance. This is evident for instance from a story in the Westcar papyrus relating how the woman Reddet, married not to a pharaoh but to a priest, becomes pregnant with three children who will afterwards become kings. This is a miraculous birth. Usually the reigning pharaoh functions as a *ka-mutef* (bull of his mother), the self-begetting god of fertility, father and son in one, who is reborn from sexual intercourse with his wife.

One god can be the *ka* of another god. The king is the *ka* of Egypt and of his officials and his subjects (Kaplon: 1980, 277), that is to say they are marked by his 'person'. The meaning of *ka* that Jacobsohn described as 'Erbmasse' comes close to the meaning of fate (*shai*). A pharaoh can be called: Shai of Egypt, *ka* of those who are in it (Quaegebeur: 1975, 111). From the New Kingdom onwards the pharaoh is credited with 14 *ka*'s. Later on these 14 *ka*'s are specified in diverse lists. One list (papyrus Nedjemet; cf. Schweitzer: 1956, 74) gives the following enumeration: riches, prosperity, abundance, glory, prestige, acumen, lastingness, sight, hearing, wisdom, creative word, creative

power, emanation and strength. Here we note the enormous attention that is paid, not only to the spiritual, but also to the social, physical and material aspects or capacities of the person concerned.

Later texts also mention the fourfold *ka* of non-royal persons. This special lot, happiness or possibility of functioning as a person that Ptah had created for meritorious humans at the creation of the world, included for instance plenty, long life, a beautiful funeral after a happy old age, and worthy descendants (Meeks: 1971, 40).

The sacrifices for the dead, as we have already remarked, were brought especially and particularly to the *ka*. But that was not always all. In the Theban tomb of Amenemhet (Davies-Cardiner: 1915, pls. 19, 20, 22, 23 and p. 99), the sacrifice to the deceased is made on the southern wall to the name and title of the dead man, his *ka*, his stela, to this tomb in the necropolis, to his fate, to his life-time, to his birth goddess, to the goddess of his upbringing, to his creation god and on the northern wall to the name and title of the dead man, to his *ka*, to his stela, [to this grave in the necropolis, to his *ba*], to his *akh*, to his body, to his shade, to all his forms of appearance.

We may reasonably suppose that on the damaged part of the northern wall the tomb and *ba* were written. Here the person proves to have many aspects that we see unfolded in personal relationships on the material, social, spiritual and divine level. Two series are offered, which differ from each other in part, though each series has 9 elements.

I do not know of identical series from elsewhere. It seems that a random selection was made from an available supply of concepts determining the person. It is the number that is systematic, here the number 9, as elsewhere the number 14 with regard to the *ka*-s of the pharaoh and the number 4 with regard to the *ka*-s of non-royal dead persons. One cannot assume that in these series one element implies the other. There was no academic philosopher at work here, but someone who reminds us of the famous 'bricoleur' of Levi-Strauss. Nevertheless it gives some insight into the Egyptian idea of what a person is. Apart from the first element in the two enneads consisting of the title and name of the person, all elements except the unmistakable 'this tomb that is in the necropolis' in which the inscription itself is placed, are provided with a possessive pronoun, which in Egyptian is at the same time a personal pronoun of the third person: To the person belongs that which one essentially is. The Egyptian person manifests himself, as Assmann has



expressed it in 'die Sphäre des Seinigen' (Assmann: 1969, 342). This 'sphere of that which is his' can be variously specified and formulated. In the network of personal relations various points of junction can be pointed out, some of which can sometimes be regarded as the kernel, for instance the heart or the *ka* of the person. Yet the plurality also remains essential; like God, the human person in Egypt was also conceived as a plurality with material, bodily, spiritual and divine aspects.

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