The Alevi Logos

－ The Meta-Religious Sign －

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Abstract

In this paper, on the basis of a small selection of *Deyiş*, the differential properties of the sign peculiar to Alevism, on whose production, use and exchange the intellectual and social life of the Alevis is substantially based, will be presented and discussed. As the basis of the chain of argumentation a comparative semiotic approach to religion is employed.

Although it is no longer customary among experts and in relevant fields of research, I will provide concise explanations of the basic terms and fundamental facts where it seems useful, in order to enable or facilitate access to the main strand of the discussion conducted here even for readers outside the field. Especially with regard to the potential readership in Japan, a country where Alevi research has only existed since roughly the turn of the millennium and is still a fringe phenomenon, this appears to be a necessity.

Keywords: Semiotics of Religion, Alevi, oral tradition

Introductory remarks

The ultimate goal of this paper is to answer the self-posed question of what the specifically Alevi logos is, and what differential characteristics distinguish it and set it apart from comparable religious logoi.

My discussions, lines of argumentation, inferences and conclusions leading to this goal will be based on-dare I say-considerably unorthodox theoretical premises. In logical connection with this, the language used here will also be equipped with additional unconventional components and sometimes even with eccentric artifices in order to be able to serve as an adequate medium here.

As is often the case, this will inevitably lead to the circumstance that the preparatory work, that is, the paving of the path leading to the goal, will take up a much larger share of the total scope of the text than the main concern declared in the title.

Not only because of the known-and more often than not necessary-format-related physical limitations but also because of the peculiarity of the matter under discussion here, which, I claim, is incompatible with the intrinsic linearity of the traditional text struc-

ture, I will have to carry out the said preliminary work largely in the form of a more or less structured chain of loosely connected thought quanta or clusters of thought quanta. Since-not least because of my distrust and aversion against such customs and ceremonials-the detailed discussions or the so-called 'conclusive scientific demonstration' will, for the most part, be omitted, it will be unavoidable that my expositions will sound less like cogent arguments than like axioms and postulates.

In the initial section, a cosmogonic and a biogenetic model are presented in simplified outlines. On the one hand, these complementarily conceived models will serve as a framework on which my sign acts will be oriented, on the other hand, they will function as a load-bearing and gap-filling matrix for the ratiocination quanta.

Finally, my discourse will have throughout, implicitly or explicitly, a crucial multi-layered reference to that sphere of the specifically human mode of being and acting which was only effectively declared "religion" retrospectively and retroactively in late modernity, in the period from about the mid-nineteenth century to about the mid-twentieth century.

For firstly, it would be almost impossible to talk about Alevism without reference to the presumably broader context of "religion"; secondly, this event itself-together with the entire awe-inspiring edifice of structures and processes in which it is embedded-which is taking place here and now with my active participation, can be designated and treated as an instance of the category of so-called 'religious act'.

Thirdly, any conceivable rejectionist attitude or resistance to the religion in its dominant institutionalised form (that is, to-if not the mightiest, at least-one of the mightiest 'Ideological State Apparatuses' in the Althusserian sense[1] or in fact to anything comparable at all), however radical, must, willingly or not, also refer to it. It must face it, place itself close to it, interact and mingle with it. It must penetrate its territory and put itself in a position not only to stay alive in this hostile environment, but also to engage in effective subversion. Incidentally, this is one of the central distinguishing features - if not the decisive distinguishing feature-of the Alevi logos (cf. *Fragment 1*).

Fragment 1 (Gölpınarlı 1941: CXX)[2]

Ashiks[3] have nothing to do with religion and nation Qalandars[4], as they are, know not piety nor devotion	*Din ü millet sorar isen âşıklara din ne hâcet* *Âşık kişi harâb olur harap bilmez din diyânet*

Remarks regarding the handling of the "poetry"

I feel compelled to put the word 'poetry' in quotation marks in the above subtitle as an admonition for the reader to be cautious. The reasons for this are twofold: first, the linguistic sign 'poetry' does not lend itself so well to use as a conceptual tool for sociohistorical analysis and knowledge acquisition. At the latest since the beginning of modernity, that is, since structural features such as meter, rhyme, stanza have come to be regarded less and less as binding genre characteristics of the poem, it has become almost impossible - at least for the recipient - to distinguish with any degree of certainty between poem and prose.

Another circumstance that contributes to the questioning of the suitability of the word 'poetry' as an analytical term is the historical alliance of the poem with writing. The German sign 'Gedicht' (poem), for example, stood for anything written until about the 18th century. The source of the noun, the verb 'dichten' (to write poetry), originated under the influence of the Latin 'dictare' (say aloud words to be written down, to dictate) with the meaning of "to write, to put in writing, to conceive", and even after the change of meaning at the turn of modernity, it retained these original semantic features until today. 'Dichtung' (poetry) can still mean not only "writing a poem" but also "writing a novel or the like". Also the verb $\pi o \iota \varepsilon \tilde{\iota} \nu$ (to make), the ancient Greek source of the - not only - English sign set "poem, poet, poetry, etc." points to a crucial original link between 'poetry' and writing, which further underlines the nebulousness and ambiguity of the sign's reference signature and makes its suitability as a conceptual tool even more questionable.

On the other hand, the linguistic material, which is here underlaid to the chain of argumentation as quasi 'empirical evidence' and which originally consisted of spoken language, i.e., of auditory signs, cannot be declared as poetry without further ado, because it would be an inadmissible simplification / reduction of what it is and means for the Alevi society. For this sung language is for the Alevi community not what, for example, poetry is for the majority languages, but it is simply language *tout court*, it is simply the way how language is used[5].

What I am doing here with this oral material, which has been written down at a later time, i.e., already once subjected to transsemiosis, is to translate it, that is, to subject it to another transsemiosis by transferring it from one subspace of the human linguistic continuum (Turkish) to another (English). The approach I used in translating the fragments presented here could be traced, among others, to the translation theoretical approaches of

two people. One is the lyricist Stefan Anton George, who translated Dante and Baudelaire, among others, into German. For him, what a translation should aim at is not the faithful reproduction or restoration of the original meaning in the target language, but the fruition of the poetic, which consists in tone, movement, and form[6].

The other one is Walter Benjamin who comments on the relationship between the original and the translation as follows:

> It is self-evident how much fidelity in the rendering of the form complicates that of the sense. Accordingly, the demand for literalness cannot be derived from the interest of preserving the meaning. This is served far more-admittedly far less by poetry and language-by the unrestrained freedom of bad translators. Necessarily, then, that demand, whose right is obvious, whose reason lies very hidden, must be understood from more cogent contexts. Just as the shards of a vessel, in order to be joined together, have to follow each other in the smallest details, but not to resemble each other, so the translation, instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the original, must rather, and in detail, form its (of the original, A.G.) way of meaning in its own language, in order to make both-like shards, recognizable as fragments of a vessel-as fragments of a larger language.[7]

What is Alevism

Right at the beginning of my remarks I have to point out a socio-geographical factor that makes talking or writing about Alevism much more cumbersome than it already is. Especially in Japan, the expectation that an endeavour such as the one at hand should begin with an exact description or explanation of the scope and content of the term 'Alevi' or 'Alevism' would not only seem unspectacular, but also completely justified: namely with a definition that is intensionally exhaustive and ideally does not allow for ambiguity.

At the same time, however, this would precisely be a catastrophic prelude that would condemn the entire undertaking to failure already at the threshold, before the actual beginning. Because the constitutive properties of a definition express exactly what Alevism is not. Neither the so-called real definition of Aristotle, nor the analytical or 'synthetic definition' of Kant, nor the modern 'operational definition'[8] of the American physicist Percy Williams Bridgman would be serviceable conceptual tools in the context of a phenomenon like Alevism. The very existence and mode of operation of this phenomenon calls into question the legitimacy of a tool like "definition" and thus undermines the foundations

of the Aristotelian mode of knowledge production that still prevails. So, I will have to disappoint expectations and refrain from providing a definition.

Instead, I will provide a brief summary of the competing and enormously divergent viewpoints in Alevi studies in the form of a simple unstructured enumeration:

- Alevism is a religion.
- Alevism is not a religion.
- Alevism is the true Islam.
- Alevism is an independent religion and has nothing to do with Islam.
- Alevism is a religious sect.
- Alevism is a Sufi[9] brotherhood, a tariqa[10].
- Alevism is a culture and way of life.
- Alevism and Shia are the same.
- Alevism is crypto-Christianity in Islamized Asia Minor.
- Alevism and Shia have nothing to do with each other at all-they are fundamentally different.
- Alevism is a Turkish religion. It is the original religion of the Turks.

With regard to this small selection of-social-scientific-statements, I will merely content myself with pointing out that these statements and viewpoints, although all utterly untenable, do lend themselves to being exploited and used as powerful socio-political catalysts. Moreover, one could possibly derive some sort of marginal benefit from the above list-which is downright useless in itself-by applying to it probably the most fundamental principle of semiotics: that, namely, the meaning of a sign (or a string of signs) does not result from what it is, but exclusively from what it is not within a given set or subset of signs.[11] Consequently, we can construct one – possibly the only – secure connection between Alevism and the above-listed statements by asserting that Alevism must be something that is manifestly different from all those phenomena to which these statements appear to refer; in other words, it must be what they are not.

In my lines of reasoning throughout the discourse, I will refer primarily to the sung word of the Alevis. The so-called *Deyiş* (ritual songs performed to the accompaniment of the *Bağlama*, the sacred long-necked lute) will act as my primary sources. I will try to corroborate my arguments chiefly with fragments from *Deyiş*. Simply because they are, particularly when it comes to the Alevism which is based on what Ong dubbed 'primary orality' (cf. Ong 2002), the only reliable information sources.[12] In addition to this, it is now generally acknowledged that oral traditions, songs, stories, poems etc. are much more

durable and well preserved than assumed (cf. Rubin 1995, Gülbeyaz 2011).

Now that I have referred to the theory of orality associated – above all other researchers in question – with Walter Jackson Ong, I would like to point out, in order to avoid the looming misunderstanding that I agree with his dichotomy[13], that I hold the opinion that there is a third type in addition to primary and secondary orality, and that Alevism can be considered a prototypical example of this third type.

The detailed discussion of this third type of orality would not be physically feasible within the framework of this essay. Therefore, I would content myself here only with a few provisional remarks on the differential features of this type in direct comparison with primary and secondary orality. For reasons of sign economy, I would, for the time being, like to call this type "consensual orality". This orality can neither be explained by the fact that the social formation concerned is "totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print"[14], nor by the fact that the dominant communication technology is based on writing and printing techniques and depends on them existentially. It is a preferred orality (for a more detailed discussion of the reasons for this preference cf. Gülbeyaz 2011: 102ff.).

On the Concept of Logos

The term logos comes from Greek and has a whole realm of references – such as thought, tale, story, maxim, proverb, narrative, prose, ratio, reason, relation, proportion, analogy, calculation, reckoning, account; discussion, deliberation, dialogue etc. (cf. Klein 1966: 903) – which can, however, be subsumed without much danger under three connected meaning domains: 'word', 'speech', 'reason'. Probably the most common and, for the present context, most pertinent meaning is "divine word / divine expression", which may often masquerade as "supreme reason" without significant semantic change. The Greek original 'λόγος' is a deverbative from the verb λέγειν whose core meanings are 'to pick out, choose; to speak, declare'.

In a specifically religious context, the lexeme 'logos' appears in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Joh 1:1 KJV). In the Greek version appears 'λόγος' in place of the 'Word'. The most frequent term in the Old Testament for "word" is רבד, *dābhār*, which can also mean 'matter' or 'thing'.

For the present work, the relevant thing regarding the term 'logos' is the fact that the term originally, and indeed still means – above all other things – "spoken word". The

remaining semantic features and domains can be seen as secondary products of this core meaning. Also, the Hebrew *dābhār* of the Old Testament refers before anything else to "spoken word". In the dealings with Alevism, it is of utmost importance to focus attention on the verbality / orality, non-textuality of the Alevi logos (cf. *Fragment 2*)

Fragment 2 (Özmen 1998a: 523)

Before the dictum "be!" enunciated	*Kâf u nûn hitabı izhar olmadan*
We were the beginning of all existence	*Biz bu kainatın ibtidasıyız*
When no eyes were laid on the adulated	*Kimseler vasıl-ı didar olmadan*
We stood less than two yards away thence	*Biz kâb-e kavseyn'in ev ednasıyız*
When neither Adam nor Eve was in cosmos	*Yoğ iken Adem'le Havva alemde*
We were incised with God in the dim riddle	*Hak ile hakk idik sırr-ı müphemde*
One night we called on our Lady of Sorrows	*Bir gece misafir kaldık Meryem'de*
We're the real father of Immanuel	*Hazret-i İsa'nın öz babasıyız*
'Father' we were called by the divine infant	*Bize "peder" dedi tıfl-i Mesiha*
'Lord I want to see you' did Moses cry	*"Rabbi ernu" diye çağırdı Musa*
Whereupon we replied to him that he can't	*"Len terani" diyen biz idik sana*
We're the visitation of Mount Sinai	*Biz Tur-ı Sina'nın tecellasıyız*

Basic cosmogonic considerations

By and large, almost all contemporary theories dealing with the question of how the universe came into being assume that what was there before the materialisation of the universe must have been either a nothing, a quasi-nothing, an endless void or an immeasurably small, dense and heavy thing. The melange of such scientific doctrines and other comparable vagaries about the nature and structure of the pre-Big Bang universe is indeed much more colourful and richer than could be presented here adequately.

In the present context, however, for once I am not concerned with diversity, but with identity, or – in the words of the German Romanticism and more precisely – with the 'thesameness' (*Dieselbigkeit*) in the said diversity.

The fact of the matter is that all of these theoretical approaches or models converge to a significant degree – not to say that they agree entirely – with regard to the texture of the universe before the Big Bang. Either explicitly or tacitly, they all assume that it must have been a homogeneous, identical something. As a matter of course, it must be

added here that the – subsequently so-called – mythical-religious explanatory models about the origin of the universe and about what may have been there before the appearance of the universe do not differ significantly from the modern and thus scientific cosmogonies (cf. *Fragment 3*).

Fragment 3 (Özmen 1998b: 242)

This universe did not exist back then In the being all features was hidden	Ol zaman ki yoğ idi bu ka'inat Zat içinde nihan idi her sıfat
In the being, this face was wrapped tight This body was not, all was but pure light	Zat içinde bu sıfat mestur idi Bu vücud yok idi heman nur idi

Incidentally, the quasi-identity of these answers to the question of cosmic origin testifies to the fact that both religion and science ultimately stand for the same sphere of social activity and production, for the same network of social phenomena, that they are practically identical. If, for whatever reason, some kind of distinction were to be made between religion and science, the differentiation would have to be constructed on the socio-historical time axis.

With reference to the expositions above, the following basic considerations can be made in connection with the scientific-religious doctrine of the origin of the universe and its order.

- The speculative-theoretically inferred pre-big bang universe, which is a non-universe, a nothing, is characterised by homogeneity, undifferentiatedness, i.e., by absolute identity.

- Although all attempts of the physicists to look behind the big bang have so far been doomed to failure, it is well justified to assume on an abstract level that the ignition energy which initiated the process was some sort of difference: the ur-difference that put an end to the said absolute identity.

- Every difference is characterized by a potential of energy, by an energy balance. It would, by the way, make sense to take the mention of the concept 'energy' as an occasion to bring into mind the so called 'First Law of Thermodynamics', which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, in order, ultimately, to amend and supplement it as follows: Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can both create and destroy.

- In the narrow context of physical cosmology and particle physics, the sources of this energy are the fundamental physical forces: gravitation, electromagnetism, the weak and the strong interaction.

- Within the general context of human species and other life forms on earth, these interactional fundamental forces could or should be conceived and conceptualised otherwise (For a suggestion in this direction, see Gülbeyaz, 2016: 137 ff.).

- The first scientifically accepted difference in the cosmogonic context was that between matter and antimatter, or for that matter particle and antiparticle.

- If we, for the sake of clarity and for the purpose of amplification of its field of applicability, defined the concept of communication as 'transmission or sharing of something tangible or intangible between two or more instances or entities', we would be able to determine the ur-threshold where everything began.

- The threshold between the motionlessness resp. motionless inertia (absolute inertia) and motion, between death and life, between void and universe, between nothing and everything is nothing else than 'communication': communication between differences (or different instances / entities).

- The earliest and, in a sense, most primitive mode of communication is collision driven by the above-mentioned fundamental forces. The birth and becoming of the physical universe are the immediate product of communication of this kind: communication or collision between-in chronological order-matter and antimatter, subatomic particles and atomic particles.

- Difference and communication, that is, the oscillation between bringing-away-from-the-other (*dis-* 'from, away'+*ferre* 'bring, carry') and bringing-to-the-other or sharing with the other (*commūnicāre* to make common to many, share, impart) imply and necessitate the existence of each other reciprocally. They are the two sides of the same coin, the one presupposes the existence of the other, so it is, as it were, indeed a tautology, an unnecessary repetition, to use the two terms side by side.

- Analogously, the modal and structural changes in differentiation and communication are mutually dependent. Every new difference / every new differentiation-mode with its energy and interaction potential necessarily correlates with a new communication mode / a new communication technology.

- In other words, 'sameness' and 'identity' correlate with nothingness, void, absolute inertia and non-life (not to say 'death'), whereas difference and communication mark both the emergence-threshold of the universe and the entire becoming of every-

thing. (cf. Gülbeyaz et al. 2021: 170 ff.)

Basic biogenetic considerations

Scientists believe that the birth of planet Earth took place about 4.54 billion years ago, and that the first living organism appeared about one billion years after the formation of Earth.

However, there is as little agreement in modern science as in the corresponding pre-modern, pre-capitalist modes of knowledge production about the exact way in which life arose on Earth. And it does not seem to become any easier to find a final, unified answer to this question in the future either, because practically all traces of the transition to the emergence of the first form of life have fallen victim to the destructive or – depending on the point of view – transformative forces of nature. A second and in some ways more elementary factor complicating the search for the origin of life is the difficulty of defining "life."

From the point of view of the approach pursued here, however, these difficulties as well as the totality of the different attempts to define life can be safely ignored; for all these models-which differ from each other to a greater or lesser extent in several respects-are identical in their core configurations. They all presuppose, explicitly or implicitly, difference and communication as the trigger and driving force of abiogenesis.

Semiosphere and signlings

Since, according to the current state of human knowledge, all known forms of earthly life are body-bound, and thus life without corporeality is impossible[15], the communication between the different is necessarily carried out in the form of the exchange of signs. Expressed in short and formulaic terms: All life is based on sign processes.

The modus operandi based on signs is at the same time the modus vivendi not only of humanoids but of all known life forms on earth. In functionally simplified terms, this mode consists at the superordinate level in the production, exchange and processing of signs. In addition, there is a complex, interrelated bundle of subprocesses and subroutines that can be assigned to the three superordinate process domains.

Every perceived or theoretically accessible or conceivable phenomenon is therefore a sign, a sign-phenomenon. Thus, the whole universe, as it is perceived or conceived by

the humanoid earthlings, is an endless, amorphous extension of signs: semiosphere.

Consequently, the concept of the "individual", which is not infrequently declared to be the basic building block of human society, is to be abandoned, and – depending on the respective sphere of discourse – to be replaced either by the term "signling" or by the term "sociem". Both terms are analogous to the "physical field" term in particle physics and are thus amenable to further analysis (cf. Gülbeyaz 2016: 144-145).

Language and religion

When human signlings, and therein especially those who pursue the trade of social science, ponder professionally over the dawn of the human civilisation and the structure of primitive societies, they tend, as is well known, to believe, or at least to make others believe, that they have found therein a sundry lot of sophisticated social structures, procedures, institutions, in short, quite a number of fully differentiated types of semiosis (i.e., modi of meaning generation), such as science, religion, art, culture, education, and so on (all of which, by the way, things and phenomena that make up the ordinary day-to-day life of humans in modern capitalistic societies).

But this is obviously nothing more than the expression of that certain anachronism to which the human productive forces of the modern knowledge production sector not infrequently owe their salaries. For in those early social formations, in which human signlings developed and gradually improved the ability to speak and think, there can have been no phenomena to which one could readily refer by means of the arsenal of linguistic signs of modern society. More concretely, what gave the society of that time its differential social cohesion was 'something' that cannot be readily verbalized in modern society. We simply do not have the appropriate sign for it. At the very least, the automatistic assumption that such a sign would be available to modern human cannot be legitimized.

This 'something' corresponded to all those social phenomena and categories to which the modern signling refers with various terms such as language, art, religion, culture, science, education, entertainment, etc., and every single one of which he conceives as distinct spheres or entities. This 'something' can be made indirectly accessible with the help of an analogy from modern biology. It can be compared with the pluripotent stem cell of an embryo. Expressed in concrete-and perhaps overly simplified-terms, the so-called rock or cave paintings, for example, are not only "art", but practically everything: language, religion, science, child rearing, education, entertainment, etc.

This having been said, we can now say with great caution and in a modest whisper that this 'something', functionally resembling the "stem cell tissue", consisted – if not quite exclusively, at least predominantly – of language. The caution is due to the fact that also the concept of language, as it is generally used in modernity and taught in universities, is a construct of the modern capitalist mode of production and organization.

In this connection, in direct comparison with the Logos of the Abrahamic (Judeo-Christian-Islamic) religion, I would argue that the Alevi Logos has retained a significant portion of this pluripotency (cf. *Fragment 4*)

Fragment 4 (Olsson 1998: 208)

I held a mirror to my face What I saw was Ali's grace	*Âyine tuttum yüzüme* *Ali göründü gözüme*
He is Christ, he is Jesus A safe haven for the pious Lord of worlds, seen or abstruse What I saw was Ali's grace	*İsa ve Ruhullah odur* *Muminlere penah odur* *İki Âlemde Şah odur* *Ali göründü gözüme*
Ali is sweet and virtuous Both hidden and conspicuous Unbegun and continuous What I saw was Ali's grace	*Ali tayyib, Ali tahir* *Ali bâtin, Ali zahir* *Ali evvel, Ali âhir* *Ali göründü gözüme*
Ali is life, the beloved He is the faith and the creed Merciful and tender-hearted What I saw was Ali's grace	*Ali candir, Ali canan* *Ali dindir, Ali iyman* *Ali Rahim, Ali Rahman* *Ali göründü gözüme*

Inside and outside

A quick interpretation of the signs left at the (crime) scene of the social event implies that the interior was not given much importance in ancient Egyptian society. Mummification belongs to the social space-time prior to the advent of the symbolic writing. That which acts invisibly from concealment and yet – at the latest in the last instance – dominates everything else emerges at one and the same time as the emergence of monotheism and marks the transition from the Pharaonic to the Mosaic.

The development of alphabetic writing marks the advent of crypto-communication

and with it the advent of the one and only God, who is invisible, inscrutable, incomprehensible, but omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. The development of the phonetic alphabet-a small sign-system consisting of an extremely small number of meaningless visual signs, but capable to represent, i.e., to store and to reproduce fairly faithfully the physical component of an entire language-on the one hand, and the birth and steep rise of monotheism, on the other, are two sides of the same coin. In this context, a whole network of signs come unbidden to our mind, such as Scripture, God, tablets of the Law, the Ark of the Covenant, the place of All Saints which is forbidden to ordinary mortals, etc.

Shortly after the Mosaic turn, if not even immediately out of it, the discourse of Greek antiquity emerges, which, by the way, should come as no surprise to anyone, Ephesus[16] was after all always connected to Egypt, to the Levant and to the entire Mesopotamian World via several much-travelled routes by land and sea. From this invigorating fresh Aegean wind, the already triumphant march of the interior took such an enormous additional push that it has since dominated not only the traditional religious field but also the young field of modern science. To round off, we can say that from the birth of the Abrahamic religion to the French-speaking philosophers of the post-war period (the second half of the 20th century), the dominant mode of knowledge production remained by and large unchanged.

The central feature of this mode of knowledge production-that have an unassailable commanding influence over all other features-is a subliminally operating automatism which consists in the assumption (the creed) that any scientific investigation or, indeed, any cognitive act at all has to develop an unswerving, frontal relation to its respective object. It is a mode of relation, which can best be illustrated with the help of metaphorical expressions in which some copulation-like process serves as vehicle (cf. Gülbeyaz 2016: 1-2).

The tenor 'that something investigates or gains knowledge of something' is compared and considered as equivalent to expressions such as 'something penetrates something', that is, 'something enters by dint of some kind of force or special technique the hidden chamber, the pitch dark cryptal system of recesses and tunnels, the inaccessible internal cavities and invisible viscera of something – 'something' of which the investigating 'something' a priori and, with utter certitude, knows that there is an interior upon which everything regarding the former 'something' primarily – if not exclusively-hinges.

I would think that the Alevi logos differs radically from the Abrahamic logos also on this point. It does not consider the interior as a place for gaining knowledge or producing

meaning, nor as an otherwise significant sphere of the human mode of existence (cf. ibid.).

For it is categorically out of question that a thing, a phenomenon, could be directly resorted to with the object of acquiring knowledge – producing meaning – of that same thing or phenomenon. The idea of calling a phenomenon to the witness stand with the expectation that it will say something about itself must be rejected as pointless. Because phenomena have a lot to say about other phenomena, but they cannot say anything about themselves (cf. ibid).

The knowledge or meaning of the phenomena postulated here as signs, sign-phenomena or sign systems must be sought and gained in what I termed the 'interactional subspace'[17] in which confrontation, contact, friction, collision, dialogue, exchange, interchange, etc. occur uni-, bi- or multi-directionally between and among the phenomena. This interactional subspace-which I elsewhere call 'interphenomenal subspace'[18] -is the only place, where the meaning-constituting parameters can be located and read.

More concretely, the meanings of an individual phenomenon are to be sought and gained or generated, on the one hand, in its interphenomenal subspace, in which it realises and unfolds its operative power, and, on the other hand, in those phenomena that experience or suffer the impact of this operative power – i.e., once again and for the umpteenth time, not in the phenomenon itself, but outside the phenomenon.

The Alevi logos does precisely this. It does not seek and find meaning within itself, but outside it in the face of the other. The same modus operandi shines through in the principle of *Muhabbet*[19] – which I render as *agape* in contexts comparable with that of the present text – and in the principle of *Musâhiplik*[20] *(cf. Fragment 5).*

Fragment 5 (Olsson 1998: 208)

We are the adepts of the hidden riches	*"Küntü kenz" sırrının olduk agahı*
And beholder of the omniscient features	*Ayn'el yakin bildik cemalullahı*
Hey bigot! We untie deific hitches	*Ey hoca bizdedir sırr-ı ilahi*
Also called Bektashi, we are dervishes	*Biz, Hacı Bektaş'ın fukarasıyız*
Hear bigot! We're led by the Lord of ages	*Zahida şanımız "inna fetehna"*
Don't mistake Harabî for one of vagrants	*Harabi kemter'i serseri sanma*
Besides being those pernickety sages	*Bir kılı kırk yaran kâmiliz amma*
We are dervishes, Balım Sultan's servants	*Pir Balım Sultan'ın budalasıyız*

Closing remarks

In conclusion, what constitutes the core of the discourse conducted here should be summarised in short formulaic phrases below:

- The Alevi sign, unlike that of the Abrahamic scripture-based semiosis, is fundamentally a verbal sign.
- Writing, what is written, is not memory, it – is on the contrary – forgetting, it is non-memory / unmemory. For memory / remembrance must be alive, so that what is in it also remains alive and is actually preserved.
- Scripture is – as a consequence of the introverted, self-absorbed lifelessness implied above – not able to initiate or participate in a dialogue based on mutual consent.
- The spoken / verbal sign is never stable, it never assumes a final form, but on the contrary remains unstable and changeable. This changeability and impermanence serve as a protection against misuse and distortion of what was the case.
- The written text in its most innocent mode of action can only become a contingent and fragmentary capture of what is or was the case, in a frozen, final stance.
- The Alevi logos is meta-religious because it dwells and moves discursively outside the Abrahamic religion. It is meta-religious because it talks, or better and more precisely sings, about religion and God.

"Nothing means itself. The signifier cannot be at the same time its own signified. Meaning and every relevant aspect of meaning are prevailingly-if not even exclusively-determined by 'the other', 'the exterior', 'the distance', 'the interval', 'the interstice', 'the move', 'the migration, 'the process'" (Gülbeyaz 2016: 147).

Notes

1   Cf. Althusser 2014: 82 ff.
2   Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text are by the author.
3   *Ashik* (*aşık*, *âşık*, *ashiq*, *âshiq*, etc.) is a word which stems either from the Arabic root of *ishq* (love) or the Avestan root of *iš-* (desire, seek), meaning thus etymologically either 'lover, lovelorn' etc. or 'seeker, yearner' etc. (cf. a.o. Topaloğlu 1991: 547ff.; Norris 2006: 122), but apparently harbouring the entire gamut of the semantic features from both sources. Depending on the sociohistorical and geographical context, the word can refer to an entire series of more or less differing referents. In connection with the specific Alevi mode of social action and organization under discussion here, however, we can describe and consider the Ashiks as bearers and transmitters of the sung word peculiar to Alevism.
4   *Qalandars* are ascetic dervishes, members of the sufi order *qalandariyya*. They are indistinguishable

in fundamental respects from the dervishes of *haydariyya*, *malāmatiyya* (*malamiyya*), bektashiyya (*baktāshiyya*), *kharābātiyya* etc. The most important and often the only distinguishing feature is more often than not the respective founding master of the order (See also a.o. Lewisohn 1999a, Lewisohn 1999b).

5   Cf. Gülbeyaz 2016: 113ff.

6   ."The »original pure joy in forming«, George had written, made his translations of the 'Fleurs du Male' possible; and in the preface of his Dante translations there is the sentence: »What he (the translator George, H.B.) [...] believes to make fruitful is the poetical, tone movement form: everything by which Dante stands for every people coming into consideration (consequently also for us) at the beginning of all New Poetry.«" (Bothe 1991: 99)

7   "Wie sehr endlich Treue in der Wiedergabe der Form die des Sinnes erschwert, versteht sich von selbst. Demgemäß ist die Forderung der Wörtlichkeit unableitbar aus dem Interesse der Erhaltung des Sinnes. Dieser dient weit mehr-freilich der Dichtung und Sprache weit weniger-die zuchtlose Freiheit schlechter Übersetzer. Notwendigerweise muß also jene Forderung, deren Recht auf der Hand, deren Grund sehr verborgen liegt, aus triftigeren Zusammenhängen verstanden werden. Wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen." (Benjamin 1972: 18)

8   Cf. Bridgman 1970: 333 ff., Frank 1970: 280, Meredith 2017: 49-51, Fahnestock & Secor 1990: 89-91.

9   *Sufi* corresponds in its simplest and most basic meaning to the – originally Greek – term 'mystic' in the European languages. *Sufi* is an individual who aligns his actions and omissions with the time- and place-independent truth, which he seeks to attain through love for and direct experience of the Absolute that lies behind the worldly life and entire existence.

10   *Tariqa* (Arabic for 'road, path' etc.) is one of a variety of mystical paths in Sufism leading to the sought direct experience with the Absolute and to the knowledge thereof.

11   A more popular formulation of the said principle might look like as follows: "Saussure viewed language as a social phenomenon. His great contribution to its study was the discovery that meaning does not reside in individual words but in a complex system of relationships or structures. His motto was: 'Il n'y a de sens que dans la difference' [There can be no meaning without difference]. (Bronwen & Felizitas 2006: 3)

12   "The scholars of the theories of oral tradition have already made clear that singing has always been one of the most effective modes of storing and remembering information. I want to add to this that the musicalization of language does much more than that. It is the most effective way of constructing social memory and, with that, the only mode of social-identity-construction which offers an approvable basis for making the notion of social-identity presentable. I think it is, for example, safe to assert that the oral tradition, and particularly the sung oral tradition, has always played a much greater role in the construction of social identity in Japan than *Kojiki*, *Man'yōshū* or any other text." (Gülbeyaz 2016: 112)

13   "As noted above, I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality'. It is 'primary' by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print. Today primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mindset of primary orality." (Ong 2002: 10-11)

14   Ibid. 10.

[15] "Before all else, this fact has to do with the specific modality of human existence. It Stands in causal relation to the nature of the materiality of the tissue of the human species, i.e., its corporeality as an ontological entity. As opposed to the ideal liquid, ideal solutions or ideal gases, the human body does not constitute an amorphous, homogenous continuum, but rather manifests itself in the form bound, and to all appearances autonomous clumps or chunks of biomass. This fact is both the source and the explanation for the spatial-temporal laceration-that profound, baying breach-the differential aspect that defines human existence." (Gülbeyaz 2016: 56)

[16] Ephesus (Greek *Ephesos*) was the most important city in Ionia (ancient region on the western coast of Anatolia) and is considered, together with Miletus, the cradle of ancient Greek philosophy.

[17] Gülbeyaz 2015: 6, 145 ff.

[18] Ibid.

[19] *Muhabbet* in the shortest form can be called love-filled conversation. The form and scope can vary infinitely. It can be realized as a formalized or semi-formalized gathering in which all, the majority or a smaller number of local community members participate. It can be guided by a *Pir ／ Dede* (spiritual teacher, sage), but it can also take place without guidance.

[20] *Musahiplik* is perhaps the most important social covenant among Alevis. Each Alevi enters into a lifelong covenant based on mutual consensus with another non-blood-related Alevi in a ritual ceremony under the supervision of *Pir* or *Dede*. They become *Musahips*, i.e., they are from then on *ahiret kardeşleri* (eternal brothers). *Musahips* are obligated to support each other in in all circumstances and in all aspects of social life. (See also Mélikoff 1993: 89ff.)

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