



THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF IGNORANCE IN THE REALM OF EGYPTIAN DEITIES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the conceptualization of ignorance in the realm of Egyptian deities in a theological context. It considers the associations between divine ignorance and divine mystery, where the latter is understood as that which cannot be comprehended by the human intelligence. It provides a more nuanced perception of this complicated notion as a modifier of divine behaviour and how it influences the realm of deities. The article thoroughly discusses the types of divine ignorance, its influence, threats, vindications and justifications, as well as its destructive and constructive connotations. The article examines the attested incidences of divine ignorance, their consequences and experience in the realm of deities including its effect on the relationship between deities and its harm in the realm of Egyptian deities. The article also examines the attitudes of deities that count as ignorance and the circumstances under which their ignorance can be regarded as justified or unjustified.

KEYWORDS:

Divine ignorance; Divine knowledge; Secret name;
Realm of deities

INTRODUCTION

Ignorance in the realm of deities has not thoroughly been considered by Egyptologists. The core question and research problem regarding divine ignorance in ancient Egypt is whether divine ignorance is a matter of choice, and whether it can be regarded as an excusable, neutral and inevitable type of ignorance. The article also raises the question of whether divine ignorance can be tolerated and if ignorant deities have any justification for their ignorance.

The concept of divine knowledge and ignorance in the perspectives of the ancient Egyptians is problematic. The presupposition of deities' total knowledge or total

ignorance is not true. Only specific creator gods are attested to have comprehensive knowledge while other gods may ignore specific matters.

The concept of divine ignorance completely differs from that of negligence regarding their phraseology and lexical semantics. For instance, the Egyptian words for neglect, be neglectful and negligence include *thi*, *ʿm ib*, *wnt*, *wn ʿwy*, *wsf* and *mkh3* (Faulkner, 2017, 52, 75, 84, 148, 369). Thus, they have different lexical, syntactic, and phraseological levels. In cases of genuine ignorance, deities lack access to relevant facts in their realm or other realms. In contrast, in cases of negligence, deities have access to the relevant facts but they fail to bring them into their consciousness at the appropriate time.

METHODS

In order to compile a comprehensive study one should make use of sources from a historical and textual scope to come to a broader understanding of such a phenomenon. The pieces of evidence include different genres, ranging from religious and ritual texts or monumental evidence including inscriptions and papyri.

The methodology followed is to examine and analyse occurrences in which deities are described as being ignorant. The occurrences are examined in phraseological and thematic textual analyses as a methodological approach. This can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon beyond the levels of lexemes and semantics.

KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE IN THE REALM OF DEITIES

In Egyptian religious and ritual texts, deities are described as omniscient and knowledgeable who know what is right and what is wrong. In a hymn to Amun describing his plan for creation in Hibis temple, it is said about him: “Established of understanding, who is omniscient, he cannot be ignorant of eternal things (*srwd ʿs3 ʿm-ib n hm.nf ht dt*) (Klotz, 2006, 148, hymn 5, col. 12).” In the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, Thoth deprecatingly said to Seth: “Do we (i.e. the gods) not know what is wrong? (*nn iwznn r rh p3 [gr]gy*). Shall one give the office of Osiris to Seth while his son Horus is there?,” (P. Chester Beatty I, rt. 1, 11, Gardiner, 1932, 38; Brunner-Traut, 1990, 127-41; Lichtheim, 1976, 215). Re-Harakhti was exceedingly angry because it was his wish to give that office to Seth. Thus Atum summoned Banebdjede that he may judge between Horus and Seth. Then Banebdjede said: “Let us not decide in ignorance. Have a letter sent to Neith, the great, the divine mother. What she will say, we will do,” (P. Chester Beatty I, rt. 2, 1-2, 6, Gardiner, 1932, 38; Brunner-Traut, 1990, 127-41; Lichtheim, 1976, 215).

The text clearly shows that the Ennead can make a decision in ignorance, and therefore Banebdjede recommended consulting Neith regarding the judgement of the two rivals. The Ennead ignores how to judge between the two gods. Horus went to see Neith regarding his right to the throne of Osiris and asked for judgement to be given. Horus stated that he and Seth had been in contention for eighty years and that the gods do not know how to judge between them (*hr bn twztw (hr) rh wdʿznn*) (P. Chester Beatty I, rt. 13, 12-14, 1, Gardiner, 1932, 55; Brunner-Traut, 1990, 127-41; Lichtheim, 1976, 221). Furthermore, Plutarch described Typhon as being hostile to Isis and dragged by

ignorance and deceit (Griffiths, 1970, 121). In a different context, Sinuhe wonders saying: “Does god not know what he has fated (*in iw ntr hm(w) š3t.nzf*),” (P. Berlin 3022 + P. Amherst m-q, B 126, Allen, 2015, 100; Koch, 1990, 49, 49a; Parkinson and Baylis, 2012, 35; Parkinson, 1997, 33). In another context, gods are knowledgeable of humans’ petitions.

In a text addressed to Isetweret the daughter of Harsiese, it is said about Amun that he “has heard her petitions; [he] is not ignorant (*mk sdmzf sprt3tn n hm3[f]*),” (Karnak Priestly Annals, Ritner, 2009), 58; cf. Kitchen, 1986, 315, §§ 273-74). This occurrence may indicate that Amun does not neglect the petitions and pleas of his devotees, since Amun is an omniscient god, who cannot be ignorant (Klotz, 2006, 148, hymn 5, col. 12).

The creator god Re and Isis are both attested as omniscient and knowledgeable deities. In a spell in the *Myth of Isis and the Secret Name of Re* for warding off poison, Isis is equated to the creator god Re. She is described as a wise and knowledgeable woman, who is smarter than an infinite number of gods and cleverer than an infinite number of spirits. Thus, there was nothing she was ignorant of in the sky or on the earth like the sun god Re, who takes care of the needs of the earth (*nn hm3s m pt m t3 mi R3 ir hrt t3*) (P. Turin 1993 [5], 2, 1, Borghouts, 1978, 51, spell 84). Furthermore, in the Coffin Texts, the deceased declares that he has come forth from to the House of Isis and her secret mysteries. As a result, he has been conducted to her hidden secrets, for she caused him to see the birth of the great god (CT IV 81 g-j [312], Faulkner, 1973, 231).

Deities had to know specific things about each other, but they may ignore specific issues. With the exception of the creator god, the other deities could be ignorant of specific matters: they were incapable of knowing issues they had not created or took part in (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 95). Gods do not live in one place and they could be ignorant of the whereabouts of one another (Caminos, 1972, 219; Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 95). Seth is attested to be ignorant about (i.e. unmindful of) the face of Osiris (*hm.nzf Stš hr Wsir*) (CT VII 454c [1122], Sherbiny, 2017, 523; cf. Faulkner, 1978, 165). In Chapter 136A in the Book of the Dead Osiris Wennefer is the god whom no one ignores (*iwt3 hm.twzf*) (P. Nu = P. London BM EA10477, Lapp, 1997, pl. 46).

The ignorance of Osiris’ face by Seth means that Seth does not see Osiris or he does not know his whereabouts (Sherbiny, 2017, 529, n. ak). In the ritual of *Overthrowing Seth and His Confederates* in the *Ptolemaic Papyrus Louvre 3129* and *Papyrus BM EA10252*, Seth is the “one who ignores laws (*mkh3 hpw*),” (Urk. VI, 7, 11; Kemboly, 2010, 227). In a different context, Osiris is attested to ignore his sister-wife Isis. In the *Papyrus of Imouthes*, Isis probably addresses Osiris saying: “I wish (that) your ignorance towards me ceases immediately! (*3bi3i 3b hm3k r3i m 3nt3*),” (P. New York MMA 35.9.21 = P. Imouthes, 40, 3, Goyon, 1999, 85, col. 40). The ignorance of Osiris towards Isis in this occurrence may indicate his negligence.

Some deities were ignorant of the cosmic ends and methods of creation. In a cosmological text in the *Book of Nut*, the borders of the cosmos are not known by gods. Thus, the far regions of sky are in dense darkness, “its boundaries (i.e. the boundaries of the darkness) to the south, the north, the west and the east are not known. No one knows its extent to the south, the north, the west, the east - that is to say, the darkness,” (P. Carlsberg I, D. II 23-24, Neugebauer and Parker, 1960, 53, pl. 46; cf. Hornung, 1982, 168). Furthermore, the land of the place in which is the darkness to the south, the north,

the west and the east is not known by the gods and the spirits (*n rḥ ḳḳf rsyt mḥtt imntt iḳbt in ntrw bḳw*) (P. Carlsberg I, D. II 28-29, Neugebauer and Parker, 1960, 53, pl. 46). Thus, the dark and watery cosmos before creation has no boundaries and cannot be penetrated by the sunrays or reached by any god (Hornung, 1982, 168). Although this place is the domain of Re, he never rises there. Therefore, this place is unknown to all gods and spirits (Neugebauer and Parker, 1960, 53).

Apophis the enemy of Re is attested as the one ‘who came out of ignorance’. A recitation in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis* in *Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* reads, “Fall on your face, Apophis, enemy of Re! Immerse, Immerse, who came out of ignorance (*ḥr ḥr ḥrḳf ʿḳpp ḥft n Rḳ hrp sp 2 pri m ḥm*),” (P. Bremner Rhind = P. BM 10188, 26, 7-26, 8, Faulkner, 1933, 42-88, cols. 22, 1-32, 12, Faulkner, 1937, 171, 179-80). This occurrence expresses the cause of Apophis’ action when he does something without understanding the consequences or the full circumstances of the situation and, notably, his combat with Re. Thus, in the *Book of Overthrowing Apophis*, the latter is addressed reading, “Your name has fallen. You are unknown (and) repelled (*ḥr irḳk rnḳk ḥm ḥsf*),” (P. Bremner Rhind = P. BM 10188, 24, 13, Faulkner, 1933, 42-88, cols. 22, 1-32, 12, Faulkner 1937, 169, 177).

Furthermore, the children of Geb will throw down the enemies of Re including Apophis, since “they do not know him in the bark of Re (*ḥmyw ḥmḳsn sw m wiḳ n Rḳ*),” (BD 134, P. London BM EA10793, ll. 23, 6-23, 7, Munro, 1996, pl. 24). In a relevant context, in the Ninth Hour in the *Book of Gates*, Horus punishes the enemies of Osiris, confederates of Seth calling them unknowing ones and ignoramuses (*ḥmyw*) since they revealed the hidden corpse of Osiris in the Netherworld (Hornung, 1979, 318-23). In a different context, deities may ignore matters in the realm of the living. Osiris in his kingdom of the Netherworld asks the deceased many questions about the outside living world (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 88-89; Posener, 1985, 65-67). These questions reveal the extent of Osiris’ ignorance regarding the condition of temples, the offerings being made there and the condition of the living people (P. Vandier 4, 1-6, Posener, 1985, 65-67).

Although Thoth is the god of writing, wisdom and knowledge, he can be ignorant of specific matters. In the closing prayer of the Opening of the Mouth ritual, opening the wooden doors of the divine statue’s shrine is likened to the opening of the sky: “Both gates of heaven are opened; both gates of the god’s house are Opened.” Thoth says: “I am Thoth who is ignorant of who entered; I am an ignorant; I know that not knowing the *ba* is to be ignorant of its abomination,” (Otto, 1960, scene 74A; Dieleman, 2005, 176). This text indicates the hiddenness of the divine statue whose identity is not known by Thoth.

IGNORANCE OF THE DEITY’S SECRET NAME

The secrecy of divine names was regarded as one of the characteristics of magic. In Papyrus BM 10188, Re-Atum declares that magic is his name (Ritner, 2003, 33). Divinities often have secret names protected from devotees and other gods alike. Although “god knows every name,” (Volten, 1945, 75, l. 138) the real name of each deity was kept secret from all the other deities (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 97). This name was regarded as one of the divine protective powers whose function was to guarantee the safety of each deity (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 97). All levels of power and control that the deities could exert are contained in the single word that existed

as the divine name. Thus, the deceased identified with Shu “puts the fear of him (probably the sun god) into whoever would search out his name,” so that the god can protect himself (CT I, 322b [75], Faulkner, 1973, 72, 75, n. 8).

The great god is addressed in the *Pyramid Texts* as the one whose name is unknown (*hmm rnꜥf*),” (Pyr. § 276c [254], Faulkner, 1969, 63). A hymn to Amun-Re describing the hidden *ba* of the god reads, “He is *ba*-like, hidden of name like his secrecy,” (Assmann, 2008, 67). The sun god Re is addressed as “Lord of Millions whose name is not known,” (P. Chester Beatty IX = P. BM EA10689, vs. B 12, 1, Gardiner, 1935, 110). Re says about himself: “I am the Phoenix which came into being of itself, the man of millions whose name is unknown (*ink bnw hprw dsꜥf s n hꜥw nn rh.tw rnꜥf*),” (P. Chester Beatty VII = P. BM EA10687, rt. 5, 4, Gardiner, 1935, 59, pl. 34).

Furthermore, in the myth of Isis and the Secret Name of Re, the sun god says: “My father and my mother have told me my name. I have concealed it in my body before I was born, in order that the power of a male or female magician might not be made to play against me,” (P. Turin 1993 [5], 2, 11-2, 12, Wilson, 1969, 13; Borghouts, 1978, 52). Thus, the secrecy of Re’s name protects him against magic and magicians. The epithet of Amun, “hidden of name,” is closely associated with the god’s invisibility. It amplifies the superiority of Amun by making him indescribable, incomprehensible and indomitable (Sethe, 1929, § 184; Klotz, 2006, 18). There is no god able to call him by name (Assmann, 1975, no. 138). Thus, Assmann argues that it is just an epithet concealing the true and hidden name of Amun (Assmann, 2008, 65).

At the beginning of creation, no god had the ability to know the names of other gods. In the Nineteenth Dynasty Ramesside *Myth of Isis and the Secret Name of Re*, the latter had a secret name which was unknown and concealed from all the other gods; since he fixed his names daily anew, as a god with numerous names (P. Turin 1993 [5], 1, 11-4, 5, P. Chester Beatty XI = P. BM EA10691, rt. 1-4, Pleyte and Rossi, 1869, 51-55, no. 84; Gardiner, 1935, 116-18, pls. 64-65). Therefore, no one was able to know any of his names (Borghouts, 1978, 51). Thus, he says about himself that he is the one whose name the gods do not know (Ritner, 2003, 34).

Although the *Myth of Isis and the Secret Name of Re* does not even mention what that name was, Isis plotted against Re to know this name so as to secure power for herself (Wilson, 1969, 12). In contrast, the deceased king addresses the sun god Re saying: “I know your name, I am not ignorant of your name (*rh N rnꜥk n hm N rnꜥk*); your name is limitless,” (PT 569, § 1434a-b, Faulkner, 1969, 222). Thus, the knowledge of the name of Re by the king is indispensable for the king’s resurrection and rebirth in the Hereafter. In a different context, in a spell for arriving at the first portal at the Field of Rushes, the deceased arrives at another portal where the two Sisterly Companions (probably Isis and Nephthys) are standing (CT V 181a-b, 182b-c [404], Faulkner, 1977, 48; Mueller, 1972, 113-16). They say to him: ‘Come, that we may kiss you’, and they will cut off the nose and lips of whoever does not know their names (*sꜥsn srt hnꜥ spty nt hm rnwꜥsn*), (CT V 182d-f [404], Faulkner, 1977, 48). The two goddesses protect sacred places in the Netherworld against impure trespassers. Thus, knowledge of their names identifies the deceased as pure (Quirke, 2013, 110).

Ignorance of the deity's name may have had bad consequences. In one occurrence, the *ba* of the Great One (probably Re-Atum) who is in the Abyss beside the sky ignores his name (*ḥm.n b3ꜥf rnꜥf*) (*CT VII 140-p* [815], Faulkner, 1978, 7). In this spell the deceased identifies himself with the limb of the Great One. It mentions that the deceased knows his name in contrast to the *ba* of the Great One who ignores his name. Thus, knowledge of the name by the deceased gives him the power to guard it and sever the heads of the gods (*CT VII 14p-r* [815], Faulkner, 1978, 7). Thus, a spell addresses the Provider, Lord of All not to be ignorant of his names (*n ḥm rnwꜥk*), (*CT VI 400s-t* [768], Faulkner, 1977, 298). Furthermore, in an incantation in *Papyrus Chester Beatty VIII*, the ignorance of Osiris' name by the god himself made him vulnerable to incineration at the beginning of the great season, and annihilation on the day of Sokar's festival (P. Chester Beatty VIII = P. BM EA10688 [11], vs. 4, 1-7, 5; vs. 4, 8-11, Roccati, 1969, 7-11; Borghouts, 1978, 7-10).

DISCUSSION

Divine knowledge has a secret and mythological nature and requires initiation. Deities are attested to conceal knowledge that remains enigmatic for humans and other deities, since it reveals their individuality and power (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 95). For instance, no one knows how to pronounce the names of the viscera contents of Osiris inside a chest made of acacia wood (P. Chester Beatty VIII [11], vs. 4, 4-4, 5, Borghouts, 1978, 7). No one knows the mystery which is in the Great House, i.e. the main temple of the ram-headed god Banebdjedet at Mendes (P. Chester Beatty VIII [11], vs. 6, 4, Borghouts, 1978, 9).

In Papyrus Westcar, the chief magician Djedi says that he does not know the whereabouts of the chambers of the sanctuary of Thoth (P. Westcar col. 9, ll. 2-4, Quirke, 2004, 102). The manifestation of such power is destructive. Therefore, in the story of the Shipwrecked Sailor trees were cracking, and the ground was quaking accompanying the manifestation of the snake god (P. Hermitage 1115, 59-60, Allen, 2015, 22). However, in some cases the Egyptian deities were willing to give access to their mysterious realm permitting the living and dead know some of their secrets through writings composed by Thoth (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 7).

In many spells of the Coffin Texts the deceased declares that he is the knower of different souls, gods and their mysteries. In spell 156, the deceased says: "I know the Souls of Khemenu," (*CT II 322c* [156], Faulkner, 1973, 134). In spell 157 he says: "I know the Souls of Pe," (*CT II 348b* [157], Faulkner, 1973, 136). In spell 158 he says: "I know the mystery of Nekhen," (*CT II 349b* [158], Faulkner, 1973, 136). In spell 159 he says: "I know that middle gate from which Re issues in the east," "I know those two sycamores which are of turquoise between which Re goes forth," "I know that Field of Rushes which belongs to Re," (*CT II 364a-b, 367a-b, 368c* [159], Faulkner, 1973, 137-38).

It is explicit that the major deities in the corpus of this article including Amun, Re and Isis are not described as ignorant. On the other hand, malevolent deities and entities and, notably, Seth, Apophis and their confederates are described as being ignorant, ignoramuses and unknown. This is probably due to the association between ignorance, as a typically negative notion, and evil, since evil is a consequence of ignorance. Ignorance is certainly unpleasant and considerably evil regarding its association with malevolent creatures in the Netherworld. Thus, knowledge may bear a resemblance to

goodness; meanwhile, ignorance may bear a resemblance to evil. The association between ignorance and evil can be attested in the Teaching of Ptahhotep reading, “You will make little of such a one who speaks evil, by not opposing him in his moment, he will be summoned as “this ignoramus” (*hm ht pw*),” (P. Priss 5, 11-5, 12, l. 64-66, Žába, 1956, 21; Parkinson, 1997, 251).

Ignorance and knowledge are fundamental to judgment. Ignorance can result in poor judgment and decision-making, since ignorance in its standard view is the lack of knowledge about the factors influencing an issue. Divine judgment is constrained by the nature and extent of the deities’ relevant ignorance, and thus such judgment is determined by the epistemic situation. This is made clear when the Ennead ignored how to judge between the two rivals Horus and Seth.

Divine ignorance can be attested in different types including factual ignorance or absence of knowledge of specific facts about the deities themselves and about the universe and its cosmology. Divine ignorance may also be designated as technical ignorance, which is an absence of knowledge of how to do something. This is made clear in the occurrence of the Ennead’s failure to make a judgement.

The creator god is mysterious in his aspect of *imn rnef*, “he whose name is hidden,” (*Pyr.* § 399a [273-74], Faulkner, 1969, 81). Thus, Assmann describes it as a negative unknowable name (Assmann, 2004, 193). In a New Kingdom hymn exalting the secret essence of Amun, as unknowable and mighty creator, there are destructive consequences of uttering his name. Thus, if someone utters his secret name he will drop dead in the place of terror (P. Leiden J 350 IV, 17-19 = ÄHG no. 138, Zandee, 1947, 82-86; Assmann, 1979, 33). People fall down immediately for in fear if the name of Amun is uttered knowingly or unknowingly as there is no god able to call him by name (Assmann, 2008, 65).

Ignorance of the divine secret name by the gods themselves renders them vulnerable to destructive threats. This is mainly because the secret name of each deity acts as a protective power and source of supremacy with the aim of safeguarding the deity. The lack of knowledge of the secret name by the god himself makes him vulnerable to aggressive attacks including incineration and annihilation.

In the occurrence of Osiris’ ignorance of his name in *Papyrus Chester Beatty VIII*, such ignorance made him vulnerable to incineration (P. Chester Beatty VIII = P. BM EA10688, [11], vs. 4, 1-7, 5; vs. 4, 8-11, Roccati, 1969, 7-11; Borghouts, 1978, 7-10). The incantation is threatening to set Osiris on fire, root out, annihilate and cut off his *ba* as well as to annihilate his corpse on the five epagomenal days (P. Chester Beatty VIII = P. BM EA10688) [11], vs. 4, 8; 5, 1; 15, 2; 15, 6, Borghouts, 1978, 7; Borghouts, 1970, 179, n. 437). Osiris is mentioned as the authority for the knowledge of his powerful name appealed to by the speaker. These threats are conditional on the idea that Osiris should not actually know his name, and thus rendering the spell ineffective and powerless. This indicates a way of establishing the cosmological impossibility of the spell’s failure to guarantee its efficacy (Joseph, 2019, 242).

Deities are attested to ignore specific matters because they were not in their scope of knowledge. It is evident that not every deity was omniscient. However, in specific occurrences they did know, but in order to maintain secrecy they did not exercise their

knowledge. Divine knowledge and ignorance stem from the realm of deities. Deities are not bound by the earthly physical things, but instead they surpass humans with a knowledge of that which is beyond these physical things. In contrast, human knowledge and ignorance stem from physical experience. Thus, nothing can ever be known to humans unless it is revealed to them from deities.

However, in spells of the *Coffin Texts* the deceased claims knowledge of complicated divine matters, sometimes unknown to the deities themselves. He can possess knowledge exceeding that of Thoth. Thus, he declares that he knows what Sia knows, (*CT* III 311e [237], Faulkner, 1973, 185) and what Sia did, (*CT* III 326f [241], Faulkner, 1973, 190) there is nothing which he does not know of what Thoth does not know, there is nothing which he does not know of what Thoth knows, and there is nothing which he does not know in his abode (*CT* V 305c-306d [443], Faulkner, 1973, 79). However, this remarkable knowledge cannot be taken as genuine without being questioned. This knowledge is only mentioned to serve the main aim of the spell which is repelling the two sisterly companions (*hsf Rhty*), (*CT* V 303a [443], Faulkner, 1973, 79).

CONCLUSIONS

Divine ignorance can be withdrawn, but mystery remains. Ignorance in the realm of deities is frequently associated with mystery. Therefore, divine mystery can turn into a kind of ignorance. The mysterious realm of Egyptian deities seems to be both invisible and unknowable. However, it is not always easy to recognize the limit where ignorance stops and mystery begins. Knowledge itself was regarded as a divine creation, and therefore specific types of knowledge were accessible only to certain deities. Such types were regarded as divine secrets and mysteries, since the latter are either tremendously valuable or dangerous.

The divine ignorance profoundly differs from that of humans, since deities ignore matters in their realm including the ignorance of divine laws, the ignorance of each other whereabouts, face and names, as well as making decisions and judgment in ignorance. On the other hand, specific gods may ignore their name, the cosmic ends and methods of creation. Thus, in most occurrences their ignorance is relevant to their realm and spheres of action and they are scarcely attested to ignore matters in the realms of living and dead. However, the ignorance of specific gods, as lack of knowledge, does not bring about any deficiency in the order of the universe, since knowledge and ignorance are required to maintain the cosmic equilibrium.

In the majority of occurrences, divine ignorance is blameless and might be justified since deities are known to conceal knowledge that remained mysterious for other deities or humans. This is mainly because such knowledge reveals their names, individuality and power. Therefore, it is said about the creator god that “he is too secret for his majesty to be revealed, he is too great to be inquired after, too powerful to be known,” (P. Leiden J 350 IV, Assmann, 1995, 140-41). However, deities can transmit or reveal part of what they know to one another; but this knowledge could also be acquired by trick, deception or by force (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1996, 95).

In contrast, divine ignorance could be culpable, inexcusable and condemned in case of failure to do something. This is also attested in case of vulnerability and posing threats to other deities. Failures are attested in the occurrences of the Ennead’s incapability to

judge and make decisions. The enemies of Osiris, confederates of Seth are called 'unknown ones and ignoramuses' since they pose threats to the hidden corpse of Osiris.

Although specific deities are described as ignorant, there are bounds and limits for their ignorance. In most occurrences, these limits are consistent with their realms and spheres of action. In other words, in the occurrence of Osiris' ignorance of the conditions of temples and those of the living humans, the god's ignorance is inevitable and blameless because of Osiris' association with the realm of the dead and not the living. This indicates that the knowledge of Osiris does not function in the realm of the living as opposed to the realm of the dead.

From an epistemological viewpoint, ignorance comes in variations. Divine ignorance can be classified into two types: factual ignorance and technical ignorance. The factual ignorance can be identified as an absence of knowledge of specific facts that are both unknown and unknowable. This kind of ignorance addresses the inaccessible knowledge of that which deities cannot know. Thus, there is no attested refusal to acquire knowledge by deities who remain uninformed. This implies the absence of some positive relation between deities and facts.

In Egyptian religion secrecy serves to preserve the efficiency of rituals. However, the violation of such secrecy may result in the rituals being profaned and losing their efficiency. Secret knowledge determines who is at the top of the hierarchy of power, and secret names are used to save the power of divine names from being misused. Deities might retain a secret name unknown to others, so as to maintain power over all other gods and humans as a source of supremacy (Wilson, 1969, 12). The divine names incorporated within them are obscurities that conceal the divinities' true nature and make them mysterious to each other. Deities were cautious to keep their name secret so as to avoid using it against them. It can be argued that the knowledge of the divine name is closely associated with the deity's existence. In contrast, a lack of knowledge of this name assigns the deity to non-existence.

It is evident that divine ignorance may harm the divine body. Ignorance of the divine name by the god himself may pose aggressive threats to his divine body. Osiris' ignorance of his name would result in preventing him from traveling to his two major cult centres, Busiris and Abydos (Joseph, 2019, 242). Therefore, the ignorance of Osiris poses threats of preventing his manifestation at proper times and places (Joseph, 2019, 242).

Although the real name of each deity was kept secret from all the other deities, it may be known by the deceased king and individuals in the realm of the dead. This may find an explanation in the fact that ignorance of a deity's name may have had bad consequences for the deceased.

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مفهوم الجهل في عالم المعبودات المصرية

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الملخص

يتناول هذا المقال مفهوم الجهل في عالم المعبودات المصرية في سياق لاهوتي. ويتناول الارتباطات بين جهل المعبودات وغموضها، حيث يُفهم الغموض لدى المعبودات على أنه ما لا يمكن للذكاء البشري إدراكه. كما يقدم تصورًا أكثر دقة لهذا المفهوم المعقد للجهل عند المعبودات باعتباره معَدلاً لسلوكها، وكيفية تأثير جهل المعبودات على عالمها. ويناقش المقال بشكل شامل أنواع جهل المعبودات وتأثيره وتهديداته وتبريراته، فضلاً عن دلالاته الهدامة والبناءة. ويتناول المقال الحوادث الموثقة للجهل لدى المعبودات وعواقبها وخبراتها في عالم المعبودات بما في ذلك تأثيرها على العلاقة فيما بينها، وأضرارها في عالم المعبودات المصرية. ويتناول المقال أيضًا مواقف المعبودات التي تُعدّ جهلاً والظروف التي يمكن فيها اعتبار جهلهم مبرراً أو غير مبرر.

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الكلمات الدالة:

الجهل؛ المعرفة؛ الاسم السري؛ عالم الآلهة؛ المعبودات المصرية القديمة