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Siarhei Sańko

Leading Research Fellow,
Department of The Centre for
History of Philosophy and
Comparative Studies, The
Institute of Philosophy of the
National Academy of Sciences of
Belarus, Minsk City; Republic of
Belarus, Europe

Composition and meaning: To the exegesis of the *ṚV* X.129

Siarhei Sańko

Abstract

The compositional analysis of the cosmogonic hymn (*ṚV* X.129), based on the discovering of such complex figures as *chiasma*, combined with the figure *hysteron proteron*, allows to reveal behind the surface structure of the text (which provoked the conclusion on the agnostic, skeptical or atheistic bias of the poem) some hidden text in which the composer sought to match antithetically two gnoseological positions, two theories of the origin of the universe, and apophatic and kataphatic versions of cosmogony, probably influential in his time.

Keywords: Ṛgveda, cosmogony, gnoseology, composition, chiasmus, hysteron proteron

Introduction

The hymn *ṚV* X.129 from the deep antiquity has been attracting attention of commentators and scholars. It is remarkable in that it was the first attempt in the history of humankind to philosophically comprehend the origin of the whole existence, which was closely connected with archaic cosmogonic myths, but essentially discerned from them by the very manner of asking questions and answering them.

The uniqueness of the *ṚV* X.129 is in that it itself in the full sense is the philosophical exegesis of the cosmogonic ideas that fueled the imagination of other Vedic poets and origins of which may be traced not only in the Indo-Iranian antiquity, but also in the world view of the so-called Proto-Indo-European community. Therefore, the hymn is full of allusions, references to other hymns, and, probably, to the folk tradition. It inherits composition techniques which were traditional for texts of this kind incorporating the deployment of discourse in the form of series of questions and answers, typical for many ancient cosmogonic texts, and at the same time organizing the text in the form of puzzles (*brahmodya*) with mysterious guesses or even without them. The only difference is that the questions asked by the author problematize answers expected from the point of view of the tradition, providing the tool of the deconstruction with the purpose of extracting the semantic components free from the naturalistic connotations and thus restoring the coherence of meaning of the tradition. At the same time, the answers, at least partially, turn out to be hidden in the structure of the text by means of various stylistic devices and figures of speech, in particular, such as *chiasmus* and *hysteron proteron*.

The aim of this study is to offer a new reading of the last stanza of the *ṚV* X.129 and reveal how this could influence understanding of the whole hymn.

Problematization of cognition in the *ṚV* X.129.7

Perhaps the most famous hymn of the *Ṛgveda* gained a persistent reputation of agnostic, skeptical and even atheistic one among both European (and North American) [Whitney, 1885, cx; Bloomfield, 1908, 239; Edgerton, 1965, 73; Feuerstein and Miller, 1971, 84; Huntington, 1978, 15] and Indian researchers [Bhattacharyya, 1953, 168; Mehta, 1956, 65, 71, 73; Acharya, 2004, 378]. These estimates mainly stem from the two last padas *c* and *d*:

yó asyádyakṣaḥ paramé vyòman só ańgá veda yádi vā ná véda //

and the understanding of the whole hymn depends on a correct interpretation of them.

Correspondence

Siarhei Sańko

Leading Research Fellow,
Department of The Centre for
History of Philosophy and
Comparative Studies, The
Institute of Philosophy of the
National Academy of Sciences of
Belarus, Minsk City; Republic of
Belarus, Europe

Most of the available translations one way or another accentuate the shadow of a doubt in cognoscibility of the emergence of the world. Here is an example from a recent English translation, which well reflects this trend [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 1609]:

he who is the overseer of this (world) in the furthest heaven, he surely knows. Or if he does not know...?

Existing translations are distinguished, of course, by the interpretation of the word *adhyakṣaḥ*, ('who performs supervision, superintendent, witness, observer'), and the range of them varies from atheistic to emphasized monotheistic ones (see overview [Huntington, 1978]). However, it is obvious that most of translators and commentators were confused by the last pada: *yādi vā ná véda*. Under such the division into words, adopted in most publications, the translation must correlate with similar constructions in padas *a* and *b*, in which a cosmogonical alternative is formulated (*ṚV* X.129.7ab):

iyāṃ vísṛṣṭīr yāta ābabhūva yādi vā dadhé yādi vā ná/

This creation – from where it came to be, if it was produced or if not –^[1], which, in turn, responds to questions set in the previous verse (*ṚV* X.129.6):

kó addhā veda ká ihá prá vocat kúta ājātā kúta iyāṃ vísṛṣṭīḥ /
arvāg devā asyá visárjanenāthā kó veda yāta ābabhūva //

Who really knows? Who shall here proclaim it? – from where was it born, from where this creation? The gods are on this side of the creation of this (world). So then who does know from where it came to be?²

In this case, the verse 7 without pada *d* more or less reliably translates as follows:

This creation – from where it came to be, if it was produced or if not – he who is the overseer of this (world) in the furthest heaven, he surely knows. ...^[3]

But whether the padas *c* and *d* suppose the same alternative which in the pada *b* is given by the standard construction *yādi vā ... yādi vā ná* "either ... or not?" The non-obviousness of referring the alternative *veda ... ná véda* to the same subject (*adhyakṣaḥ*) was felt by many translators and commentators, therefore there were offered such translations as [Colebrooke, 1808, 405]^[4]:

He, who, in the highest heaven, is the ruler of this universe, does indeed know; but not another can possess that knowledge.

The supposedly similar places from other texts were cited as well (see, for example [Oldenberg, 1912, 347; Renou, 1956,

254; Geldner, 1951, 361]), however, far from convincingly. Therefore, the explanation of the *ṚV* X.129.7 should be sought in other ways.

In particular, this is indicated by the fact that the pada 7b is shorter by two syllables than the metre triṣṭubh, which is mainly used throughout this hymn, requires, and that the syntax of the pada 7d is incomplete, which, according to J. P. Brereton, should have caused special attention of the audience [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 1607; Brereton, 1999, 249-250]. The most natural way is an alternative division into words of the pada *d* and a rendering *yādi vā ná véda* as *yā divā ná véda* with the alleged translation: "who (which) by day, he does not know" or "who (which) in the daylight, he does not know." However *yā divā*, clearly violates the rules of sandhi, since one would expect *yó* (from *yāḥ*) before *d*, the accentuated *divā*, as in the *ṚV* VI.3.6cd (*yó divā*) and the unaccented *veda*, as in the pada 7c.

One should take into account an essential circumstance here: for a very long time the *Ṛgveda* had been transmitted orally and was written down under the most optimistic estimates not earlier than the beginning of the second half of the 1st millennium BC (probably from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BC), and the oldest known manuscripts are not older than from the 11th century AD. According to J. Gonda: "Scholars are long since agreed that ... after a long period of oral transmission during which it [the linguistic material of the *Ṛgveda*. – S.S.] did not remain unaltered, the text of the *Ṛgveda* must – in the time elapsing between the oldest brāhmaṇa compilations and Pāṇini – have been 'edited' and established by diaskeuasts whose activity, in our so-called saṃhitā text, left many traces ..." [Gonda, 1971, 8]. Among other things, it is the incorrect division into words, for example, *ca rátham* "and chariot" instead of *carátham* "moving" in the *ṚV* I.70.7b, which M. Müller has commented as follows: "The very mistake is instructive, as showing us the kind of misapprehension to which the collectors of the Vedic text were liable, and enabling us to judge how far the limits of conjectural criticism may safely be extended" [Müller, 1891, lxxiv]. Cf. also cases where, for example, *mehánāsti* (*mehánā ásti*, wherein *mehánā* 'generously') in the *ṚV* V.39.1ab had been reinterpreted as a *ma iha nāsti* 'here is not for me' in the *SV* I.4.2.6.4ab; IV.4.2.13.4ab, *JB* III.203.12, which significantly changes the meaning of the verse (see [Oldenberg, 2005, 259]).

We do not know with certainty, whether the poet followed the above-mentioned rule of sandhi. We can assume that in the original text actually was *yāḥ divā*, which formed the alliteration with *yādi vā ... yādi vā* of the pada 7b, but later has been reinterpreted by the diaskeuasts as repetition and properly edited. The conjecture proposed here (*yāḥ divā ná véda*) seems the least pay for the great clarity, which, as we shall see later, could be obtained in the interpretation of the hymn as a whole.

A similar construction *ye divā* "who in daylight" is used in the *Praśna-Upaniṣad* of the *Atharvaveda*, namely in the *PrU* I.13, with the exception that the relative pronoun is in the form of pluralis:

ahorātro vai prajāpatiḥ |
tasyāhareva prāṇo rātrireva rayiḥ |
prāṇam vā ete praskandanti ye divā ratyā saṃyujyante |
brahmacaryameva tadyadrātrau ratyā saṃyujyante ||
Surely Prajāpati is day and night:
life energy is his day, material stuff is night.

¹ [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 1609].

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The translation [Wilson, 1888, 353] is very close to this one.

Who unite in love by day (in daylight), dissipate (their) life energy.

That they unite in love by night it is self-discipline.

It looks like the use of synonyms *áhar-* and *díva-* to denote the day is motivated by the need to emphasize in the second case that it is not just a part of the day, but namely, the light part of the day. The first word (*áhar-/áhan-/áhas-*), probably denoted that moment when the Sun reaches its maximum height above the horizon and thus gives off heat stronger (its etymological and semantic links, see [Buck, 1949, 991]). The word *díva-/dívasa-* etymologically relates to the verb stem **dei-* 'shine' and means the light part of the day, in contrast to the dark one. His second meaning – 'light, diurnal sky'.

It follows from the analysis of the *TS* VI.4.2.3-4 and the *RV* VI.9.1 that the words *ahah* ('day') and *rātrih* ('night') mean parts of the day, which have opposite tokens according to the distinguishing features "presence/absence of light," while the words *díva-* ('day') and *nákta-* ('night') rather mean these distinguishing features themselves. Generally, the pair *dívā* 'by day' and *náktam* 'by night' is most often used to refer to circumstances of certain actions or events (*RV* I.24.10b, 12a; I.34.2d; I.98.2d; I.139.5 b; I.144.4c; V.76.3c; VI.3.6c; VII.15.15c; VII.71.1d, 2d; VII.104.11d; VIII.7.6ab; VIII.18.6a; VIII.25.11b; VIII .61.17d; VIII.64.6a; IX.97.9d; IX.107.20a; X.87.1d; X.95.4d).

It is the circumstances (the conditions of possibility) of cognition that are opposed in the *RV* X.129.7, and the translation of the padas *c* and *d* would be:

Who (was/is) a witness to this in the ultramundane *vyòman* ⁵, he surely knows; who (was/is a witness) in daylight, (he) does not know.

To complete the interpretation of the verse 7 it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the word *vyòman*. J. P. Brereton has noted that the hymn has a specific ring structure when the end of the hymn echoes its beginning, but he has made traditional agnostic-skeptical conclusions from this: "note that the last verse echoes the opening of the hymn. The word *vyòman* "highest heaven" is repeated in the last verse for only the first time since it appeared in the opening verse, and the final *ná véda* "he does not know" recalls the opening *násad ásīt*. Such recursive composition, in which the beginning is repeated at the end, is common in Indo-Iranian and Indo-European poetry. It normally functions to define and to close a unit of discourse by marking its beginning and end. In this case, however, the ring has the effect not of bringing the hymn to closure, but rather of suggesting that there has been no real solution to the questions posed at the beginning. The semantics of the repeated elements point to this lack of resolution: *vyòman* describes a realm outside of human experience and "there was not" concludes in "he knows not." Uncertainties at the beginning become uncertainties at the end." [Brereton, 1999, 250].

Recognizing the subtlety of Brereton's observation concerning the composition of the hymn, we cannot accept his skeptical conclusions. Note that it is J. P. Brereton who found in the structure of the *RV* X.129 at least two cases of the so-called chiasmus: *ásat ... sát ... mṛtyúh ... amṛtam* (1a, 2a); *svadhā avastāt práyatiḥ parástāt* (5d) [Brereton, 1999, 251, 256].

The use of this figure by Vedic poets is a well-known fact, and it fulfilled not only purely ornamental functions. J. Gonda devoted it the entire 5th chapter of his book devoted to stylistic repetitions in the Vedic texts [Gonda, 1959, 109-127]. But, surprisingly, the Indian treatises on rhetorical devices that are called *alamkāra* ('ornament' and 'figure of speech'), are not aware of such a figure as chiasmus, and does not characterize it [Venkatasubbiah, 1964, 217].

Scholars often point out individual cases of simple chiasmus, such as in the *RV* V.83.2a: *vī vṛkṣān hantī utā hanti rakṣāso* "trees he breaks and kills the demons." But of the most interest are more complex forms of chiasmus, which cover large passages of text and, therefore, are no longer simple grammatical inversions [Wiseman, 2012, 88]. They are found in the *Ṛgveda* as well. One very interesting example was given by M. Bloomfield [Bloomfield, 1916, 233]. When analyzing the structure of the *RV* IV.42 in which Indra and Varuna are praised, he noted that the verse 4 mixes the normal functions of both gods, although the utterance belongs formally to Varuna:

ahám apó apinvam ukṣámānā dhārāyaṃ dívam
sádana ṛtásya /
ṛténa putró áditer ṛtāvotá tridhātu prathayad ví
bhúma //

I swelled the splashing (and mounting) waters; I upheld heaven on the seat of truth.

Through the truth the son of Aditi possesses the truth, and he spread wide the threefold earth ⁶.

The hymn was composed in such a way that it inherently deals with a paired deity *Indrāvaruṇā* (explicitly mentioned in the verses 9 and 10), which was to emphasize the unity of two aspects of royalty, but in the first two verses the functions of a pair are described from the side of Varuṇa, and in the verses 5 and 6 – of Indra. In the verse 4 chiasmus is formed through the repetition of the *ṛtā* and correlation of cosmogonical exploits of both gods.

However, this hymn is also interesting in that it is combined the chiasmus with another figure which in ancient rhetoric was called *hysteron proteron* ("the latter first"). "*Hysteron proteron* describes passages which are constructed so that their first thought refers to some latter thought of a preceding passage, and their latter thought, to some preceding passage's former thought" [Welch, 1981, 251]. From simple grammatical chiasmus *hysteron proteron* is discerned in that, "where chiasmus gives order to words, *hysteron proteron* gives a structural order to the poet's thoughts" [Welch, 1981, 252]. As it is now well known, this technique is widely used by Homer [Bassett, 1920]. *Ṛgvedic* poets have used it as well (see, for instance, [Geldner, 1951, 18, 19, 350, 388, 402]).

In the structure of chiasmus of the *RV* IV.42.4 the Indraic aspect of the royalty, which is disclosed later (verses 5 and 6) is placed in the first position, and the Varuṇaic one, characterized in verses 1 and 2 – in the second position. At the same time, verses, which relates to Varuṇa, and verses, which relates to Indra, are superimposed on one another, indicating a tight interweaving of functions (cosmological and regal) of the two gods. (Chiasmus performs a similar function in the hymn dedicated to another paired deity *Mitrāvaruṇā* [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 753]) As M. Bloomfield rightly observed, it is the chiasmus that provides the key to a correct

⁵ The meaning of the *vyòman* will be discussed below.

⁶ [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 625].

understanding of the hymn and to denying those interpretations, which emphasize the competition, if not the antagonism, between Indra and Varuṇa [Bloomfield, 1916, 233].

On the ground of these observations, we can go further and argue that chiasmic structures could play a much greater role in the *ṚV* X.129, than it was previously thought.

In this case, we notice the following distant chiasm: *nāsīd rājo nō vyōmā parō yāt - yó ... yó ... paramé vyōman ... yá divā ná*, which establishes a distant parallelism of the two outer and two middle terms, so that *vyōmā, párah* (in other forms), *ná* and *yá* are the common elements. However, to find out the role *vyōmā* plays in the composition of this hymn, one have to define what unites *rājah* and *dívah* and what opposes them to *vyōmā*.

Both words – *rājah* and *vyōmā* – have for a long time been serious etymological and semasiological issues which are not satisfactorily solved till nowadays. Their dictionary meanings are based rather on post-*Ṛg*vedic texts and works of Old-Indian grammarians: *vyōmā* (*vyōman*) ‘heaven, sky, ether’ i *rājah* ‘the sphere of vapour or mist, region of clouds, atmosphere, air, firmament’. However, what connotations of those words were most relevant to *Ṛg*vedic poets remains unclear. Therefore, commentators offer a large variety of assumed translations.

We offer our own version of the origin of these words without considering some technical details.

First of all, let us pay attention to a certain opposition, in which the *vyōman* is with regard to the *āvīh* ‘clearly, obviously’. This is indicated by the circumstances and consequences of the birth of Agni in the *ṚV* I.143.2ab:

sá jāyamānaḥ paramé vyōmany āvīr agnīr abhavan mātarīśvane /

This Agni, having born in the ultramundane *vyōmany*, became manifest to Mātariśvan,

that, in turn, is related to *ṚV* I.31.3ab:

tvām agne prathamó mātarīśvana āvīr bhava sukratūyā vivásvate /

You, Agni, first become manifest to Mātariśvan; and by wisdom – to Vivasvant.

And in the *ṚV* I.143.2d it is also added that Agni’s: *prá dyāvā śocīḥ pṛthivī arocayat* radiance illuminated heaven and earth.

Thus, what is important in the birth of Agni is the appearance of the source of light, without which the visual perception is impossible.

The word *āvīh* ‘before the eyes, openly, manifestly, evidently’ together with *āviṣya* ‘manifest’, *āviṣya* ‘apparent, manifest’ are genetically related to the Avest. *āviš* ‘obvious, before the eyes’, Slav. **avě*, **javě* ‘obviously’, **avь* **javь* ‘reality’, on the one hand, and Slav. **umь* < **au-mos* ‘mind’, on the other, as well as to the Gr. *αἰσθάνομαι* ‘to feel, to perceive (i. e. to hear, to see, to smell)’ (**αἰσ-θ-*), etc. [Mayrhofer, 1956, 57, 82; Pokorny, 1959, 78].

In the above-mentioned etymological relationships of the word *āvīh* the traces of the "naive gnoseology" of the Indo-Europeans are manifested, not least based on ancient ideas about the nature of sight. In the *ṚV* I.143.2 light is not only an object of visual perception of Mātariśvan (he "became manifest to Mātariśvan"), but also the condition of its possibility, since his "radiance illuminated heaven and earth."

On the other hand, *āvīh* is in opposition to *guhāh* ‘hidden’ (*ṚV* VII.58.5; VII.103.8; VIII.8.23; VIII.14.8; IX.95.2; X.27.24; X.54.5; X.88.2), which, in turn, has a close semasiological relationship with (*paramé*) *vyōman* as, for example, in *ṚV* IV.5.10, which is plainly expressed in the text of the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* with the clearly cosmogonic context (*TU* II.1.1):

yo veda nihitam guhāyām parame vyoman

who knows the hidden in a secret place in the ultramundane *vyoman*.

Taking into account the above said, it is possible to offer a more reliable alternative etymology of the word *vyōman*.

The prefix *vi-* gives to a word the meaning of separation, isolation, negation and even opposition to what is expressed by the root of a word. The reconstructed etymon of the word *vyōman* should then be **vi-au-m-*, and the word could mean ‘unmanifest’, ‘that which is separated from the realm of manifestation’, ‘which is beyond the manifested’. If "manifest" is understood as that which is available to the perception by the organs of senses, first and foremost, of course, of vision, then the *vyōman* could mean ‘supersensible’ or ‘realm of the supersensible’. In this sense, the word could easily be applied to denote the ultimate reality, which can not be accessed by the cognitive abilities of ordinary people and, of course, what lies beyond the boundary of the upper heaven. Similarly, the word *ἀναίσθητος* ‘insensuous, imperceptible, inaccessible to the senses’ became a part of a philosophical vocabulary in the ancient Greece, in particular, in the cosmological discourse of the Plato’s "Timaeus" (*Plat. Tim.* 52a):

... ἔν μὲν εἶναι τὸ κατὰ ταῦτὰ εἶδος ἔχον, ἀγέννητον καὶ ἀνόλεθρον, ... ἀόρατον δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναίσθητον, τοῦτο δὲ δὴ νόησις εἰληχεν ἐπισκοπεῖν:

... One Kind is the self-identical Form, ungenerated and indestructible, ... invisible and in all ways imperceptible by sense, it being the object which it is the province of Reason to contemplate^[7].

The use of the word *rājah* was mainly motivated by the word *vyōmā*, which, having been related to the *paramé vyōman* in the pada 7c, forms a ring composition of the hymn and correlates the alternatives *nāsīd rājo nō vyōmā parō yāt – yó ... paramé vyōman ... yá divā* forming distant chiasmus.

S. Chattopadhyay offered the following explanation of the word *rājah*: "*rajas* is the dust particle floating in the atmosphere through which the reflection of light could be observed" [Chattopadhyaya, 1937, 2], but further he does not use this idea. However, it returns to those arguments, which in 1925 were put forward by A. Meillet in support of the etymology of *rajas* < PIE **regwes-* ‘dark space’ [Meillet, 1925, 10]. They consisted of the observation that in the epic Greek (particularly in Homer) *ἀήρ* did not mean ‘air (in general)’ and yet less one of the four primary material elements, as in Aristotle, but rather a ‘cloud, haze, mist’, so that the original meaning of the word ‘suspension, what is in suspension’ has been associated with the verb *ἀείρω* (*αἶρω*) ‘lift, suspend’ rather than *ἄημι* ‘breathe, blow’ [Meillet, 1925, 7-11]. At the same time the word *ἀήρ* was opposed to the word *αἰθήρ*, which means ‘light of clear sky’, so the pair *ἀήρ*

⁷ [Plato, 1929, 123].

– *aiθḥp* relates to the Vedic pair *rājas* ‘region of darkness’ – *divo rocanā* ‘bright space of heaven’ [Kahn, 1960, 140-142]. Important here is the observation by C. H. Kahn, that initially *aiθḥp* is not so much a specific area of the sky but "the still clarity which has arisen (*ἔπλετο*) in heaven and which makes things visible" [Kahn, 1960, 142]. On the other hand, *áhp* was "originally neither a place nor a specific substance, but a force or condition, to wit, one which makes things invisible" [Kahn, 1960, 143].

But it is hard to accept that it should be a condition of invisibility. Rather, the presence of a dispersion medium (suspension of dust, vapors or other small particles of a substance) guarantees the minimum condition of visibility of otherwise invisible space, as well as the presence of the light source (the fire, the sun or the electric light bulb).

It could naturally derive the meaning ‘the environment or the area which itself is invisible, but which can become visible due to the presence of external conditions of visibility (e.g. light)’.

In this case, such derivatives as Lith. *regėti* ‘to see, to stare, to notice’, *regù* ‘vision’, *reginys* ‘view, sight’, Latv. *redzēt* ‘to see’, *redze* ‘vision’, Alb. *ruaj* ‘to look, to survey, to contemplate’ Old Icel. *rækja*, Old Eng. *rēcan, reccan* ‘to pay attention, to express concern, to take into account’ and a number of others may be linked with the Indo-European etymon **reg-* for *rājas* [Walde, 1927/1973, 366].

Taking this into account, the original meaning of the word *rājas* has to be defined as follows: ‘a region of space that becomes visible due to the ingress of light in it’. In this sense, such meanings, according to Yaska, as ‘light’ (*jyotih*), ‘water’ (*udakam*) and in plural number (*rajamsi*) ‘worlds’ (*lokāh*), are naturally construed on the basis of the proposed model, and therefore given by the Old-Indian grammarian quite rightly.

Then the pair *rājo – vyòmā* (*paró yát*) may be understood as ‘the area where the light rays can penetrate and which thus can become visible’ – ‘the area, which is invisible in principle and unreachable for the eyesight and light rays’.

In view of the above, one can translate the pada *b* of the verse 1 of the *RV* X.129 as follows:

nāsīd rājo nó vyòmā paró yát /

There existed neither the unmanifested (which could become manifest) nor the unmanifest beyond it.

Thus, the poet drew the audience’s attention not so much on a certain theory of the origin of the universe or its inconceivability, but on the fundamental difference between the two gnoseological positions.

The first position is associated with the witness-observer (*adhyakṣah*), who cognizes ‘in daylight’ (*yāh divā*), i.e. through external perceptions (*indriyāh*), primarily, through eyesight. Respectively, the realms (*rajamsi*) accessible for him can be perceived only in the presence of external conditions: the light – for visual perception, the air – for acoustic perception and so on.

The second position is associated with the witness-observer (*adhyakṣah*), who cognizes ‘in the ultramundane unmanifest» (*paramé vyòmā*), and thus can know the way all things came into existence. Hymns of the *Rgveda* explicitly mention certain categories of such chosen observers. They are Agni, Bṛhaspati, dead ancestors (*pitṛs*), *sadhyas* («gods of old»), inspired seers. The last ones were especially concerned in achieving this position.

From the point of view of these distinct observers very different perspectives on the origin of the universe, in

particular, on the very beginning of its appearance are opened. It is that to which the discovered distant chiasmus persistently alludes: *nāsīd rājo nó vyòmā paró yát – yó ... paramé vyòmā ... yá divā na*, in which two extremes *rājo – yá divā* correspond to the first position, and *vyòmā – paramé vyòmā* – to the second.

However, it is not sole chiasmus which the unknown poet included in the composition of the hymn, since he inserted two more chiastic structures in it.

The first structure brings into correlation two gnoseological positions with two "theories" of the origin of the universe, to which the *RV* X.129.7ab alludes:

iyām viśṛṣṭir yáta ābabhūva yádi vā dadhé yádi vā ná /

This emission (of the world) – what has it come from? Has it surely been produced (by somebody)? Or really has not?

The alternative indicated in the pada *b* is usually interpreted as the allusion to two "theories": "The one regards the universe as the result of mechanical production, the work of the carpenter’s and joiner’s skill; the other represents it as the result of natural generation" [MacDonell, 1897, 11]. Or, in the words of A. K. Coomaraswamy: "In the last stanza, alternative theories of "emanation" and of "creation by design" are propounded. In any case, the very form of the various statements and questions proves that sound ontological speculation was by no means a new thing, for it is inconceivable that such questions had been correctly formulated just a week or year before this particular hymn was published" [Coomaraswamy, 2002, 58-59].

Traces of both "theories" can be found, with more or less certainty, in various hymns of the *Rgveda* and they may have been respected in various brahmanic schools. Perhaps, therefore the unknown poet-philosopher, saying on behalf of Prajāpati Parameṣṭhin himself, presents these alternatives, masking them in the chiastic structure combined with *hysteron proteron*: *yádi vā dadhé yádi vā ná – yó asyādhyakṣah paramé vyòmā só aṅgá veda yāh divā ná veda*. Therefore, *yádi vā dadhé* (the theory of "creation by design") correlates with *yāh divā ná veda* (as *hysteron proteron*), that is with the position of finite knowledge based in sensory experiences, and *yádi vā ná* (the theory of "emanation") correlates with *yó asyādhyakṣah paramé vyòmā só aṅgá veda*, that is with the position of a some "transcendental observer". As in other such cases the terms which occupy a middle position in the chiastic structure of this hymn are on the positive pole of the antithesis. The masking effect is achieved by that the alliteration *yádi vā ... yádi vā ... yāh divā* is perceived as a repetition *yádi vā ... yádi vā ... yádi vā*. And in such a way it was regarded for all 3000 years, creating numerous interpretive contraverses and provoking the conclusion about ancient agnosticism, skepticism or atheism.

Finally, the third chiastic structure of this hymn problematizes the very *beginning* of cosmogenesis.

Continuing to monitor the composition of the *RV* X.129, one can notice that to determine the starting point of the origin of the world and reproduce this process in a discursive form, the author of the hymn uses three different adverbs: in the pada 1a – *tadānīm* ‘then, in that time’, in the pada 2a – *tārhi* ‘at that time, then, at that moment, in that case’, in the padas 3a and 4a – *āgre* ‘in the beginning’. The main issue that needs

explication is why the author of the hymn uses three different words, supposedly, to determine the same idea?

Adverbs *tadānīm* and *tārhi* 'then, in that time' are found only in this hymn. With their help, the contents of the statements in padas 1a and 2a is correlated with the state of things in some unspecified past, which is described as the complete opposite of that which is "now" (*etārhi*), when the phenomenal world manifests itself as a developed system of dual characteristics. Therefore a description of what "was" when the world has not yet existed is carried out by the denial of the existence of this dual organization of the world, which is characterized by the pairs of opposites *asat* and *sat*, *rajaḥ* and *vyoman*, *mṛtyúḥ* and *amṛta*, *rātryā* (*praketāḥ*) and *āhna* (*praketāḥ*).

But the feature of the *ṚV* X.129 is that ontological questions are aimed not so much to explicate what was (could be or could not be) "then", but what was actually "in the beginning". For us here it is essential to note that in a case of *tadānīm* and *tārhi* everything *ná āsīt* ("was not", "did not exist"), and vice versa, in a case of *ágre* something *āsīt* ("was", "existed"). Thus, the discerning of apophatic and kataphatic cosmogonies is added to the discerning of two gnoseological positions and two "theories" of the origin of the universe.

The distant chiasmus, which we have in this case is as follows: *nó ... āsīt tadānīm ... ná ... āsīt ... tārhi ... āsīt ... ágre ... – yó asyādhyakṣaḥ paramé vyòman só aṅgá veda yá divā ná veda*, where two extreme (negative) terms and two middle (positive) ones are antithetically related.

An apophatic cosmogony is a fate of the finite mind, which, being unable to rely on the evidence of their senses in the issue of the origin of all things, can not say anything positive about it. The author of the hymn gives benefits to a kataphatic cosmogony, however to that in which positive statements are produced by nobody but by an expert witness, who could see how everything was actually with their own eyes.

The later *Ṛgvedic* tradition really produces a special kind of gnoseology of "transcendental observers", certain components of which can be traced in the large body of hymns. And the *ṚV* X.129 alludes to one category of such witnesses-observers – *kavyāḥ* (poets-seers) who "searching in their hearts through inspired thought" "found the connection of the existent in the nonexistent" (4cd: *sató bándhum ásati nír avindan hṛdí pratīśyā kaváyo manīśā*) [Jamison and Brereton, 2014, 1609]. In the later *Ṛgvedic* cosmogony, when the idea of the sequence of cycles of creation and destruction of the universe was developed, a distinct category of "transcendental observers" appeared which can make transtemporal movings between cycles and thus to be truly credible witness of what was "in the beginning» (*ágre*). One example is the famous sage Mārkaṇḍeya in the "Mahābhārata" (*Mahābh.* III.186).

Conclusion

The compositional analysis of the cosmogonic hymn (*ṚV* X.129), based on the discovering of such complex figures as *chiasma*, combined with the figure *hysteron proteron*, allows to reveal behind the surface structure of the text (which provoked the conclusion on the agnostic, skeptical or atheistic character nature of the poem) some hidden text in which the composer sought to match antithetically two gnoseological positions, two theories of the origin of the universe, and apophatic and kataphatic versions of cosmogony, probably influential in his time. His own view and the advantage given by him to kataphatic cosmogony, the author presented in a gentle and aesthetically pleasing way, showing a relatively

high level of theoretical reflection achieved by the ancient Indian philosophy on the verge of the 1st millennium BC.

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Abbreviations

Alb. Albanian
Avest. Avestan
Gr. Greek
JB Jaiminiya-Brahmana
Latv. Latvian
Lith. Lithuanian
Old Eng. Old English
Old Icel. Old Icelandic
PIE Proto-Indo-European
PrU Praśna-Upaniṣad
ṚV Ṛgveda
Slav. Slavic
SV Sāmaveda
TS Taittirīya-Saṃhitā
TU Taittirīya-Upaniṣad

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