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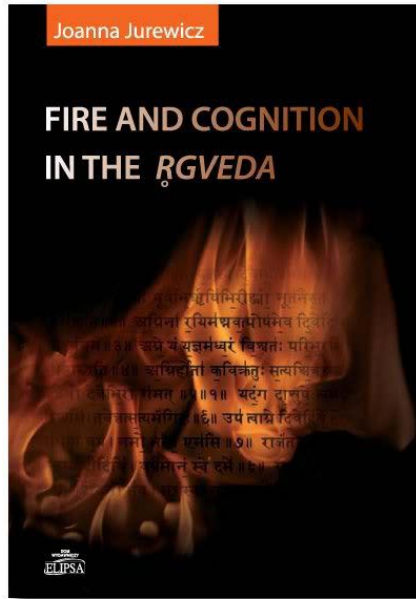


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Book Reviews

Joanna Jurewicz. *Fire and Cognition in the Ṛgveda*.¹ Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, 2010. (485 pages, ISBN 978-83-7151-893-5)

Reviewed by László Fórizs



*"There is, monks, an unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unconditioned."*²

¹ I would like to thank Joanna Jurewicz for reading the manuscript and for her clarifying comments.

² *atthi bhikkhave ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhatam*, Ud. 8.3.

In the following paragraphs I will review a very interesting but highly technical book by a Polish scholar, Professor Joanna Jurewicz from the University of Warsaw. This monograph is a result of many years of research and can be considered as an enlargement of her habilitation work.³

Putting Professor Jurewicz's work in context

Professor Jurewicz is an indologist, a distinguished Vedic scholar, but she has also made important discoveries in the field of Buddhology.

One of her first discoveries was published in the *The Journal of the Pāli Text Society*: "Playing with Fire: the *pratītyasamutpāda* from the Perspective of Vedic thought."⁴ In this article Professor Jurewicz related the terms and concepts of the famous *Nāsadīya-sūkta* to the chains (*nidāna*) of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and by the help of this connection she could "decipher the original meaning of the chain".⁵

In her own words:

"The character of the similarities between the Vedic creation and the *pratītyasamutpāda* enables us to propose a tentative reconstruction of the line of the Buddha's argument, which consisted in the redefinition of Brāhmaṇic notions and ideas."⁶

"It seems that the Buddha chose those cosmogonic descriptions which met two conditions: first, they explicitly express the cosmogony as transformations of the *ātman*; second, they preserve their cognitive meaning, even if they are taken out of the Vedic context."⁷

³ Jurewicz 2001.

⁴ Jurewicz 2000.

⁵ Gombrich 2009: IX.

⁶ Jurewicz 2000: 79.

⁷ Ibid.: 80. She summarizes the different roles of the *ātman* in Vedic cosmogony (viewed as a cognitive process) and the Buddha's reaction in this way: "In Vedic cosmogony, the cognitive process is undertaken by the self-cognizing Absolute. The reflexive character of this process is expressed by the word *ātman*, which denotes both the Absolute itself, the conveyor of the cosmogonic process, and the forms assumed by the Absolute in this process: the world, the human being, the inner Self, and finally the fire altar, which expresses those manifestations on the ritual level. The negation of the *ātman*'s existence postulated in the Buddha's doctrine of *anattā* leads to the conclusion that the whole Vedic cosmogony is based on a false assumption and its acceptance inevitably leads only to suffering." (Ibid.: 78.)

"At the same time, it seems that the Buddha (perhaps for polemical purposes) aimed greatly to simplify the Vedic ideas; the most important result of this is that he let go the cyclical character of the process: the *pratītyasamutpāda* is a simple, linear process."⁸

This "simple, linearized" approach is a bit misleading, but it helped to realize the deep connections between Vedic and Buddhist thought.

The importance of dependent origination in all of the Buddhist traditions can not be overestimated:⁹

"The essential aim of Dependent Origination is to illustrate the origin and cessation of suffering (*dukkha*)."¹⁰ "The teaching of Dependent Origination reveals [the] three characteristics¹¹ and describes the interrelated sequence of phenomena." "All natural processes, including the dynamics of *kamma*, are possible because things are impermanent and insubstantial."¹²

It is worth noting that any really non-substantialist account of the process should be, in a sense, circular (or at least cyclical). So it is not surprising that dependent arising has already been interpreted not only linearly, but also cyclically or even circularly from very early times.¹³

Professor Jurewicz's note is quite relevant here:

"I would also like to stress that I am aware that the interpretation of the *pratītyasamutpāda* as a polemic against the Vedic cosmogony tackles only one aspect of this huge problem; as the Buddha said to Ānanda: 'This conditioned origination is profound and it appears profound'."¹⁴

⁸ Jurewicz 2000, 81.

⁹ A clear and beautiful exposition of the traditional interpretation of dependent origination can be found in Payutto 2011: 3–17.

¹⁰ Ibid.: 15.

¹¹ (i) Impermanence and instability (*aniccatā*), (ii) inherent stress, conflict and imperfection (*dukkhatā*) and (iii) essential 'selflessness' or insubstantiality (*anattatā*). (Ibid.: 17.)

¹² Ibid.: 18.

¹³ The analysis of the difference between circular and cyclical interpretations exceeds the limitations of this review and will be discussed in a different paper. For an account of the different interpretations of *pratītyasamutpāda* see Payutto 2011.

¹⁴ *gambhīro cāyam ānanda paṭiccasamuppādo gambhīrāvabhāso ca*, D II 55, Gombrich's translation. Quoted by Jurewicz 2000: 77–78.

Professor Gombrich's assessment

Professor Gombrich assessed the worth of her research with the following enthusiastic words:

"Given the centrality to Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, I think this [discovery of Professor Jurewicz] may rank as one of the most important discoveries ever made in Buddhology'.¹⁵

About the reviewer

I have also been interested in the *Nāsadīya* since I first met it at the Benedictine Monastery of Pannonhalma in 1976. I wrote a poetic commentary to the hymn in 1989 which was published as the last chapter of my book on the cosmogonic hymns of the Ṛgveda.¹⁶ It consists of fourteen poems using each half stanza (*pāda*) of the *triṣṭubh* verse as guidance. My commentary is a non-linear and non-substantialist interpretation of the *Nāsadīya* according to which creation is a participatory process.¹⁷

Research methodology used in her scientific articles and in the book

In her research Professor Jurewicz not only uses extensively the available concepts and methods of cognitive linguistics, but also introduces new ones whenever it becomes necessary. For a proper understanding of her thoughts one has to be familiar with the conceptual apparatus of cognitive linguistics and the way she uses it. For this purpose reading and analysing her book, then meditating upon its content is the best choice.

Meaning in cognitive linguistics

In cognitive linguistics meanings are seen as emerging dynamically in discourse and social interaction:

¹⁵ Gombrich 2005: 154.

¹⁶ Főrizs 1995.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 74–97 & 153–170. See also Főrizs 2002: 113 (endnote iii); 2005; 2013c; 2016a: 117–119, especially notes 3–6 to the translation and interpretation of the *Gāyatrī-mantra* (RV 3.62.10) in BU 6.3.7 and [2003/2016b].

”Rather than being fixed and predetermined, they are actively negotiated by interlocutors on the basis of the physical, linguistic, social, and cultural context. Meaning is not localized but distributed, aspects of it inhering in the speech community, in the pragmatic circumstances of the speech event, and in the surrounding world. In particular, it is not inside a single speaker’s head. The static, insular view ascribed to cognitive semantics is deemed incapable of handling the dynamic, intersubjective, context-dependent nature of meaning construction in actual discourse.”¹⁸

In looking for meaning in the Ṛgveda Professor Jurewicz follows this guidance throughout her book.

Content of the book

The book consists of a long and important Introduction, three Parts and five Appendices.

In the first chapter of the Introduction the author outlines the basic concepts and assumptions of cognitive linguistics and explains how to use them in the analysis of the Ṛgveda.¹⁹

The second chapter gives a new and insightful interpretation of the famous *Nāsadīyasūkta* by applying the methods of cognitive linguistics.²⁰

¹⁸ Langacker 2008: 28.

¹⁹ Her main focus remains on Ṛgvedic metaphysics throughout the book: "In my investigation of the RV I will apply the main concepts of cognitive linguistics and analyze the text according to the assumptions of this discipline. ...However, I should mention that conceptual metonymies, metaphors and blends are discussed in this book only to the extent necessary for the reconstruction of metaphysical assumptions; their full reconstruction still awaits a detailed exploration. I am mostly interested in how general and abstract thought emerges from its experiential ground and how we can reconstruct the fiery core of Ṛgvedic metaphysics." (Jurewicz 2010: 43.)

²⁰ To see the relevance of Jurewicz's research on the *Nāsadīya* to our understanding of early Buddhist thought it is enough to quote Gombrich: "In arriving at my own ideas, I owe enormous intellectual debts, above all to Joanna Jurewicz and to Sue Hamilton. ...Her demonstration that the Buddha is always talking about experience chimes beautifully with Joanna Jurewicz's early work on the Ṛg Vedic 'Hymn of Creation', in which she shows how from the recorded beginnings of Indian thought, existence and consciousness are intertwined. Though the Buddha disentangled them, this philosophy of experience, as one might call it, influenced him profoundly. Joanna Jurewicz's other discoveries are no less momentous. Not only has she deciphered the original

The remaining chapters of the book are divided into three parts: Part I. The defining events. Part II. Philosophical models. Part III. Gods' activities and metaphysics. Professor Jurewicz gives the following summary of these parts:

"In the first part, I discuss the defining events and I demonstrate how the unified concepts of fundamental processes are created and how they can be evoked in the description of the *Nāsadīya*. I also present the basic assumptions of the Ṛgvedic cosmology according to which the processes of the world are seen as transformations of Agni.

The second part of my book is devoted to the analysis of the philosophical models: I examine their conceptual structure and links with the *Nāsadīya*. I also reconstruct Ṛgvedic metaphysics and anthropology, which were organised around the concept of Agni.

In the third and final part I focus on the concepts of four Ṛgvedic gods (Indra, Bṛhaspati, Viṣṇu and Varuṇa). I discuss their relationships with the defining events on the one hand and with the *Nāsadīya* on the other, how activities of the gods are elaborated within the frames of philosophical models and the tendency of the poets to identify these gods with Agni."²¹

The last chapter of the book summarizes the main results concerning the Ṛgvedic gods, Agni and the *Nāsadīya*:

"The only Ṛgvedic concept of a god which became metaphysically productive was the concept of Agni conceived as internally contradictory reality."²²

meaning of the chain of dependent origination. Her discovery of belief in rebirth in the Ṛg Veda also makes the entire early history of Indian religion far more plausible and coherent. I wonder whether any other single scholar in the last hundred years has made so important a contribution to the field." (Gombrich 2009: IX–X.; see also Jurewicz 2000.)

²¹ Jurewicz 2010: 25.

²² Ibid: 438.

"Seen in this way the cosmogony of the *Nāsadīya* is a story about the liberation of the Absolute and of human beings which is gained in cognition. This is the kernel of the RV put in general terms. However, it is enough to replace the concept of the Absolute with that of Agni to unfold the way to the metaphysics of fire."²³

At the end of the book there are four very useful appendices for the interested reader to pursue:

- I. Main conceptual metaphors in the RV analysed in the book²⁴
- II. Main conceptual metonymies in the RV analysed in the book
- III. The R̥gvedic general domains and the general model of reality transformation
- IV. Diagrams of (eight) philosophical models²⁵

The conceptual apparatus introduced by Professor Jurewicz

According to cognitive linguistics the main mental operations are *metonymy* and *metaphor*. They are based on the projection of one conceptual entity onto another conceptual entity (mapping).

"As a cognitive phenomenon, the word meaning is motivated by mental operations such as metonymy and metaphor. *Metonymy* is a mental strategy, which gives access to a whole conceptual domain via its salient point (e.g. "head" is a salient point of "person"). *Metaphor* is a mental strategy which allows humans to think about a conceptual domain in terms of another domain (e.g. we conceive time in terms of money). Whenever I use the words 'metonymy' and 'metaphor', I understand them like this."²⁶

²³ Cf. *ibid*: 440.

²⁴ The main metaphors concerning the Absolute analysed by Jurewicz: The Absolute Is A Human Being, The Absolute Is The Other, The Absolute Is A Warrior, The World Is A Living Being, A Group Of Living Beings Is An Organism.

²⁵ There is also a fifth appendix: Stanzas discussed in the book.

²⁶ Jurewicz 2012: 3.

In her reconstruction Professor Jurewicz not only makes extensive use of the available conceptual apparatus of cognitive linguistics,²⁷ but she also introduces new concepts and models suitable for her investigation:

Defining events

"In their hymns, the Ṛgvedic poets referred to some basic cosmic and ritual processes in such a way that they focussed more on their similar features than on differences between them. Thanks to that they could ...create a conceptual apparatus in terms of which they could express philosophical content. I call these basic cosmic and ritual processes *the defining events*." ²⁸

The defining events are divided into three groups by Professor Jurewicz:

- (i) the expansion
- (ii) the appearance of the morning light
- (iii) the pressing of Soma.

General domains

"The Ṛgvedic poets organised their thought with more general concepts which I will call '*the general domains*' and which betray a tendency to abstract concrete experience in order to express various phenomena and processes."²⁹

The general domains can refer to

- (i) natural phenomena (Water and A Rocky Hill),

²⁷ "In reconstructing the meaning of the Ṛgvedic words I accept the principles of cognitive linguistics, according to which language is grounded in human cognition and words reflect what people think about entities, relations or states named by them." Jurewicz 2012: 2.

²⁸ Jurewicz 2010, 24. In other words: "Defining events are the domains which refer to the most important experiences of the Ṛgvedic poets and which most strongly influenced their thinking. ... I call them defining events because of their formative influence on Ṛgvedic thinking and because they play the role of basic axioms or definitions within their conceptual system." (Ibid.: 36.)

²⁹ Ibid.: 24.

- (ii) objects (A Vessel Filled with Liquid)
- (iii) activities (Procreation, Creation of Space, Finding the Hidden, Freeing Cows and Cleansing by Heat).

Philosophical models and the general model of reality transformation

We can speak about such general models of reality within which the poets of the R̥gveda arranged their philosophical ideas. Professor Jurewicz distinguishes two types of them:

"The first kind are models which encompass as wide a range of processes as possible; such models highlight the links between them but the recipient is expected to imagine the processes in concrete detail. These models are called '*philosophical models*'. The second kind of model is the '*general model of reality transformation*' which reduces all processes into one simple schema of transformations of opposing aspects of Agni."³⁰

The *philosophical model* is nothing else than a complex conceptual integration (*blend*³¹). It is a model of reality which integrates "its various processes and phenomena so that the recipient can see correspondences between them."³²

"The R̥gvedic blends prompt their recipient to create complex, holistic notions of various aspects of reality or of reality as a whole. Some input spaces are abstract and general, others are closely connected with concrete phenomena and processes. Thanks to

³⁰ Ibid: 24.

³¹ Blending or conceptual integration is a kind of generalization of metaphors introduced by Fauconnier and Turner some twenty years ago. Jurewicz gives the following brief account of their concepts in the Introduction: "They constructed a basic theoretical model consisting of four conceptual wholes called 'mental spaces' which are integrated during cognitive processing. Two of these spaces are called input spaces. They partially map their content onto a third space, called emergent space. The fourth space is generic space. ...Conceptual integration involves compression of vital conceptual relations which are neurobiologically rooted, such as Cause-Effect, Analogy/Disanalogy, Time, Space, Change, Identity, Part-Whole and Representation. (Jurewicz 2010: 30, see also Fauconnier – Turner 2002.)

³² The main aim of a philosophical model is "to express the cosmogony and functioning of the world and of human beings". (Jurewicz 2010: 40.)

this it becomes possible to create emergent spaces which unfold an overall and, at the same time, a very detailed vision of all reality. The Ṛgvedic conceptual blends attest to the ability to unite abstract and general thinking with rich imagery, deeply grounded in experience. The poets skilfully balanced these two ways of thinking and invited their recipients to do the same."³³

The following philosophical models are discussed by Professor Jurewicz:

- (i) the model of Child of the Waters
- (ii) the model of the Boiled in the Raw
- (iii) the model of the Wave of Honey
- (iv) the model of Streams of Clarified Butter
- (v) the model of the Aṅgirasas Freeing Cows
- (vi) the model of Indra's Fight with Vṛtra
- (vii) the model of Footprints of Viṣṇu
- (viii) the model of the Copper Pillar.

The general model of reality transformation is the most abstract and general category which can be reconstructed on the basis of the Ṛgvedic text.

"It shows how reality is created and how the function of the world and human beings can be transformed into a simple schema of alternate transformations of Agni and Soma. In this model, the concepts of Agni and Soma are almost devoid of their concrete semantic layers of fire and plant/juice and of their godhead and rather refer to the opposing aspects of internally contradictory reality. This manifests itself in creation, in processes of the world (sunrise and raining) and in the activity of human beings (ritual and cognition)."³⁴

³³ "The model operates only conceptually and is never expressed in words explicitly but is implied by the way various processes and phenomena are presented in the RV, both by the defining events and philosophical models." (Ibid.: 40.)

³⁴ Ibid.: 39.

The aim of the book

What Professor Jurewicz strives to demonstrate in her book is that "the successive stages of creation are expressed in the *Nāsadīya* in such a way that they evoke concepts which not only facilitate understanding of the creative process but evoke earlier thinking about creation."³⁵

"It will be shown that the scenario of the creative process expressed by the *Nāsadīya* agrees with the scenario of the defining events and of cosmogony described in the philosophical models. In my opinion this basic similarity shows that thinking about cosmogony was motivated by thinking about the defining events and – generally – by this earlier thought. The analysis presented in the next chapters will also reveal those semantic layers of the *Nāsadīya* that are impossible to discover without knowledge of its Ṛgvedic background. I will also show that the myths describing activity of various gods describe processes the scenario of which agrees with the scenario of creation presented at the *Nāsadīya* — at least in its basic outline."³⁶

Appreciation of Professor Jurewicz's work

It is an impossible task to do justice in just a few pages to such a momentous enterprise as Professor Jurewicz's book. It is full of brave and original thoughts revealed by the help of the conceptual apparatus and extended methods of cognitive linguistics. This monograph opens up new perspectives in the study of the Ṛgveda and is in a sense complementary to the historical reconstruction of Michael Witzel.³⁷

In the following paragraphs I will restrict myself to a few critical remarks which are primarily related to the *Nāsadīya*

Translation of the *Nāsadīya*³⁸

Because of its importance I will quote the complete hymn in the translation of Professor Jurewicz together with her summary of her interpretation.

³⁵ Ibid.: 59. In her opinion this was an intentional act of the composer of the hymn.

³⁶ Ibid.: 59.

³⁷ Witzel 1995abc.

³⁸ For the text, see Appendix.

- "1. There was neither being/truth nor non-being/untruth then. There was neither space nor the heaven which is above. What was concealing/What was moving? Where? In whose protection? Was there the water unfathomable, deep?
2. There was neither death nor immortality there. There was no sign of day and of night. That One was breathing breathlessly with its own will. There was nothing else beyond it.
3. Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning. Everything was flood without any sign. What was about to be/what was empty was surrounded by the void. That was born thanks to the power of heat — One.
4. Desire firstly came upon that which was the first semen of thought/mind. The poets, having searched in the heart with reflection, found the kinship of being/truth in non-being/untruth.
5. Their ray/reins streamed sideways. Was there anything below? Was there anything above? There were givers of semen, there were powers — will below, endeavour above.
- 6–7. Who truly knows? Who could proclaim here whence it is born? Whence is this creation? The gods later, with the creation of this. So who knows whence this has come into being? Whence has this creation come to being? It has either placed itself or it has not. Who its eye-witness in the highest heaven, he either knows or does not know."³⁹

Interpretation of the *Nāsadīya*

According to Professor Jurewicz the process of creation presented in the *Nāsadīya* can be divided into the following stages (with the corresponding formulaic expressions in brackets):

- "0. The precreative inexpressible state ('There was neither being/truth nor non-being/untruth then')

³⁹ Jurewicz 2010: 48–55.

1. The first act is the passage from the precreative inexpressible state to the state which can be expressed ('That One was breathing breathlessly with its own will')
2. The Absolute's inchoate division into aspects unmanifested and manifested ('darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning')
3. The appearance of the first expressible form of the manifested aspect ('everything was flood without any sign')
4. The final constitution of the manifested aspect ('That which was about to be/that which was empty was surrounded by the void. That was born thanks to the power of heat —One.')
⁴⁰5. The appearance of desire for the manifested aspect ('desire firstly came upon that which was the first semen of thought/mind')
6. The creative activity of the poets ('The poets, having searched in the heart with their thinking, found the kinship of being/truth in non-being/untruth. Their ray/reins streamed sideways')
7. Realisation of the creative activity by concrete human beings (stanzas 6–7)."⁴¹

Comment on the *Nāsadiya*

First of all I agree with almost all of the translation. The proper understanding of its formulaic language is indeed one of the keys to the hymn.

My comment is on stanza 5a, *tiraścīno vītato raśmīr eṣām adhāḥ svid āsī3d upāri svid āsī3t*. In her translation:

“Their ray/reins streamed sideways.
Was there anything below? Was there anything above?”⁴²

⁴⁰ "Thus That One finally organises and determines itself. The opposition of both spheres, the hiding and the hidden one, becomes unequivocal. The dark void – That One which is not to be – is called non-being/untruth (*ásat*). The heated object of cognition – That One which has come to being – is called being/truth (*sát*)." (Ibid.: 52.)

⁴¹ Ibid.: 58.

⁴² Ibid.: 53.

"*raśmí* is usually interpreted as 'cord'; some scholars identify it with *bándhu* from the previous stanza. *raśmí*, however, means first of all 'the ray of the sun' and 'reins' of a chariot'. Both meanings evoke the concept of the sun: in the case of 'ray' the metonymy Ray for the Sun (Part for Whole) operates, in case of 'reins' the metaphoric mappings the Sun is a Horse, the Sun is a Chariot can be activated."⁴³

I am not convinced that 'cord' is not an acceptable meaning for *raśmí* here.

Geldner translates 'measuring cord' (*Richtschnur*):⁴⁴

"Quer hindurch ward ihre Richtschnur gespannt,
Gab es denn ein Unten, gab es denn ein Oben?"⁴⁵

Elizarenkova also gives 'cord' (*шнур*) for *raśmí*.⁴⁶

Joel Brereton renders the lines as:

"Their cord was stretched across:
Did something exist below it? Did something exist above?"⁴⁷

Michael Witzel also uses the same word in his translation:

"Obliquely stretched out was their cord.
Was there really 'below'? Was there really 'above'?"⁴⁸

Macdonell hesitated about the meaning of *raśmí*. In his Vedic reader he translated:

"Their cord was extended across: was there below or was there above?"⁴⁹

For *raśmí* he wrote the following:

⁴³ Ibid.: 53.

⁴⁴ Grassmann 1873 allows 'allegorically' (bildlich) 'reins' (Zügel) here, but he gives 'measuring cord' (Messschnur) in RV 8.25.18. See also Mayrhofer 1996 (*EWA*): *raśanā-*, f. Strick, Seil, Halfter (RV+) ... Von *raśmí-* (~*raśmán-*) nicht zu trennen. *raśmí-*, m. Zügel, Zugseil, Leitsel (RV+ [meist im Plur.; übertragen auch 'Strahl', s. Renou, EVP 3 (1957) 52]).

⁴⁵ Geldner 1951, Volume 35: 360.

⁴⁶ Elizarenkova 1999: 286.

⁴⁷ Brereton 1999: 256.

⁴⁸ Professor Witzel's translation is excellent; however, I do not understand why he uses the adjective 'salty' in verse 3b: "A featureless salty ocean was all this (universe)." (Witzel 2012: 107) It is an unnecessary etymologization which disrupts the imagery of the hymn.

⁴⁹ Macdonell 1917: 210.

"the meaning of this word here is uncertain, but it may be an explanation of *bāndhu* in 4 c: the cord with which the sage (referred to by *eṣām*) in thought measured out the distance between the existent and non-existent, or between what was above and below."⁵⁰

On the other hand, in his metric translation he interprets *raśmí* as ray:

"Their ray extended light across the darkness:
But was the One above or was it under?"⁵¹

Professor Jurewicz excludes the meaning 'cord' for *raśmí* in the Ṛgveda. For her *raśmí* means only 'ray' or 'reins'.⁵² But I cannot see convincing reasons that lead to such a clear isolation of the meaning of *raśmí*. It could clearly have this connotation in the case of reins.

Professor Jurewicz could have accepted this meaning too. She pointed out in the *Introduction* that the associations of the recipients of the hymns could encompass a very wide semantic range, and she also tried to preserve the ambiguity of the original.⁵³ In three important cases she rightly allowed both alternatives. See, for example, her comments on stanza 1 of the *Nāsadīya*:

The form *āvarīvar* is usually interpreted as derived from *ā √vr̥t* ('What was moving?'). Macdonell however proposes to derive it from *ā √vr̥* ('What was concealing?'). Both interpretations can be justified on the basis of later stanzas of the *Nāsadīya*. The answer to the question about movement can be found in the second stanza, which describes That One as breathing — so moving in some way. The answer to the question about concealment can be found in the third stanza presenting the state of darkness hiding the darkness."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 210.

⁵¹ Macdonell 1922: 19.

⁵² Personal communication.

⁵³ "In my attempts to understand the RV I have assumed that the recipient of this text was immersed in his contemporary culture and well versed in the RV itself. Its memorisation, which would have been usual in an oral and story telling culture meant that the recipient's associations could encompass a very wide semantic range. In my English translation of the stanzas I have tried to preserve the ambiguity of the original because it is an important way by which the poets prompt a recipient to open his mind to various associations." (Jurewicz 2010: 25.)

⁵⁴ Ibid.: 46.

And stanza 3:

“It is not accidental that the second part of the phrase *tuchyénābhv* can be understood both as *ābhú* – 'that which is about to be' and as *ābhú* – 'that which is not, that is empty, void'. This expresses the idea that inside the void there is a part of reality which is about to be but which does not exist yet at this creative stage.”⁵⁵

As well as stanza 4:

“The first hemistich of the stanza is usually translated differently: it is assumed after Macdonell 1917 that *yád* refers to *kāma* and *mánaso rétas* qualifies the desire and not *ābhú/ābhū*. ...However, we can also interpret *yád* as referring to *tád* from verse *a* which in turn anaphorically refers to That One which was born through the power of heat, i.e. to *ābhú/ābhū*. I think that the intention of the poet was to prompt the recipient to activate both senses of the hemistich and because of this its syntactic structure can be equivocally interpreted.”⁵⁶

I am not asking why Professor Jurewicz did not translate *raśmí* as cord, but why she did not allow that meaning at least as an option.

This interpretation has also profound consequences. It can evoke (geometric) construction/measurement.⁵⁷

Comment on the book

The book includes the translations of only four complete hymns: RV V. 63, VI. 9, X. 124 and X. 129. In addition, it quotes extensively from three hymns: RV IV. 1 (stanzas 10–18), IV. 58 (stanzas 1–9 and 11) as well as from VI. 1 (stanzas 1–4). This is not necessarily a problem, in fact a lot of hymns are compilations, however providing the complete text can be helpful in many cases.

⁵⁵ Ibid.: 49.

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 51.

⁵⁷ In fact, *raśmí* can evoke measurement even with the meaning 'ray' as can be seen from the following stanza: *pāri yó raśmínā divó 'ntān mamé pṛthivyāḥ* (RV 8.25.18.) [He] who measured ($\sqrt{mā}$) with his ray (*raśmí*) the ends of heaven and of earth on every side. Cf. Brereton – Jamison 2014: 1082. See also Fórizs 1989, 1995, 2005.

And the last question

Our interpretations are in fact close to each other:

*"Neither the non-existent nor the existent existed then.
Neither the midspace nor the heaven beyond existed."*⁵⁸

There are still no building blocks,
The joints of existence and non-existence
have not congealed yet;
There is no time, no space, no matter;
There is neither existence nor non-existence,
There is nothing.

But this nothing is more than existence
More than non-existence.
Everything is still possible,
No fate has been determined yet:
This nothing is free.
That One has not secernated yet.⁵⁹

The only difference in our understanding is [her assumption of] the [perfect] completeness/fullness of the starting point, and the perspective concomitant to it:⁶⁰

"... [I]n the precreative state, reality does not cognise because it does not want to cognise and not because it cannot do so due to any inner or outer limit. That would mean that the precreative state is understood as the state of the Absolute in the same way it is defined in European metaphysics: as perfect fullness without any lack which could justify future creation... The Absolute does

⁵⁸ Cf. "The non-existent did not exist, nor did the existent exist at that time. / There existed neither the midspace nor the heaven beyond. // What stirred? From where and in whose protection? / Did water exist, a deep depth?" (Brereton 1999: 250.) The Hungarian translation of the *Nāsadīya* was made by me in 1976 in Pannonhalma, and I used this rendering in my poetic re-creation (Fórizs 1989, 1995).

⁵⁹ Fórizs 1995: 157. In pp. 153–170 I consider the *Nāsadīya* as a series of enigmatic formulas (*brahman*); and I weave the new (contemporary) cloth (texture) of the hymn of creation by drawing the woof of my own words through the warps of these *brahmans*.

⁶⁰ But in this case it is almost everything.

not need the world and is not forced to create it. But it can — if it wills that."⁶¹

First of all, it seems problematic to assert anything about the precreative state. So it is at least very misleading to talk about it as "the state of the Absolute".⁶²

The adjective perfect and full also appears in the following passage though it is not quite clear what 'the perfect and full Absolute' refers to:

"It also seems probable that the idea of being a not-cognizing *ātman* may constitute one of the meanings of *avidyā*, which is the source of all the successive events inevitably leading to entanglement in the empiric world. This inevitability is also present in the Vedic cosmogony: once *ātman* manifested his inability to cognize, the rest of the creative process became a constant attempt to fill the epistemic and ontological gap which appeared in the perfect and full Absolute."⁶³

In other places Professor Jurewicz identifies the Absolute (or the creative power of the Absolute) with *tād ēkam*.⁶⁴

So she starts with the Absolute (*tād ēkam*) and the perfectness and fullness of it is assumed. This might be a legitimate assumption, but I do not share it with her.

For me the poet of the *Nāsadīya* and some of the greatest seers of the Ṛgveda are distinguished from the thinkers of later times by the unique perspective they made it possible to achieve: their starting-point is, in a sense, the incomplete.

⁶¹ Jurewicz 2010: 47.

⁶² A similar expression ('pre-creative state of reality') was also used in her analysis of the Vedic correspondent of the first *nidāna*: "The actual term *avidyā* does not appear in Vedic cosmogony. But the ability to cognize appears in it. Firstly, the pre-creative state of reality is identified with the state of being unknowable." (Jurewicz 2000: 81.)

⁶³ Ibid.: 81.

⁶⁴ *tād ēkam* is also referred to as the Creator (ibid.: 94), and the equivalence of the Creator and *ātman* also appears on the bases of BU 1.4 (ibid.: 82). Elsewhere she talks about 'the final formation of the Creator's *ātman*' (Ibid.: 89.), which expression is very interesting, and needs further scrutiny.

Completeness and wholeness is not the beginning but the end.⁶⁵ Instead of undergoing the transformations of an already existent *ātman*, we are taking part in the [re]creation of it:

"From the dark I go into the multicolored, and from the multicolored into the dark. Shaking off evil, like a horse its hair, and freeing myself, like the moon from Rahu's jaws, having [re]created the *ātman*⁶⁶, cast off the body, I attain the uncreated world of *brahman*, I attain [the uncreated world of *brahman*]."⁶⁷

This perspective makes an appearance even in some [early] parts of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.⁶⁸

brāhma vā idāṃ āgra āsīd ekam evā | tād ekam sām nā vyābhavat.

"In the beginning this world was only *brāhman*, only one. Because it was only one, *brāhman* had not fully developed." (BU 1.4.11.)⁶⁹

*sā eṣā ihā prāviṣṭa ā nakhāgrébhyo yāthā kṣurāḥ kṣuradhānē
'vahitah syād viśvambharó vā viśvambharakulāyē | tām nā
pásyanty ákṛtsno hí sáh prāñānn evā prāñó nāma bhāvati vādan
vāk páśyamś cákṣuḥ śṛṇvāñ chrótraṃ manvāno mánas | tány
asyaitāni karmanāmāny evā | sá yó 'ta ékaikam upāste ná sá
vedākṛtsno hy eṣó 'ta ékaikena bhāvati | ātméty evópāsītātra hy èté
sārva ékaṃ bhāvanti.*

"Penetrating this body up to the very nailtips, he remains there like a razor within a case or a termite within a termite-hill. People do not see him, for he is incomplete as he comes to be called breath

⁶⁵ This is the mystery of "re-creation" (a constructive, self-transcending act of the participant). See Fórizs 1995, 2005, 2013c and [2003/]2016b.

⁶⁶ *kṛtātman*, '[someone] with [re]created-*ātman*' (*bahuvrīhi* compound). The [re-]created *ātman* is not the beginning, but the end: the completion of the process; and the completeness is achieved [by my deeds] in the world. From the One through the Many to the Whole.

⁶⁷ *aśva iva romāṇi vidhūya pāpaṃ candra iva rāhor mukhāt pramucya dhūtvā śarīram akṛtaṃ kṛtātmā brahmalokam abhisambhavāmīty abhisambhavāmi*, ChU 8.13. Cf. Olivelle 1998, 287. He translates "I, the perfected self (*ātman*), cast off the body, the imperfect, and attain...".

⁶⁸ I give the text in Patrick Olivelle's translation.

⁶⁹ Olivelle 1998: 49.

when he is breathing, speech when he is speaking, sight when he is seeing, hearing when he is hearing, and mind when he is thinking. These are only the names of his various activities. A man who considers him to be any one of these does not understand him, for he is incomplete within any one of these. One should consider them as simply his self (*ātmán*), for in it all these become one." (BU 1.4.7.)⁷⁰

saiṣā bráhmaṇó 'tisṛṣṭir | yác chréyaso devān ásrjatátha yán mártyaḥ sánn amṛtān asṛjata, tásmād átisṛṣṭir|átisṛṣṭiyāṃ hāsyaitásyāṃ bhavati yá evāṃ véda

"This is *bráhma*n's supercreation. It is a supercreation because he created the gods, who are superior to him, and, being a mortal himself, he created the immortals. Anyone who knows this stands within this supercreation of his." (BU 1.4.6.)⁷¹

sá naivá vyābhavat|tác chréyo rūpám átyasṛjata dhármaṃ|tád etát kṣatrásya kṣatrāṃ yád dhármas|tásmād dhármāt páraṃ nāsti

"It still did not become fully developed. So it created the Law (*dharma*), a form superior to and surpassing itself. And the Law is here the ruling power standing above the ruling power. Hence there is nothing higher than the Law." (BU 1.4.14.)⁷²

This perspective has been changed irrevocably in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* with Uddālaka Āruṇi:

sad eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam|tad dhaika āhur asad evedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam|tasmād asataḥ saj jāyata

kutas tu khalu somyaivaṃ syād iti hovāca|katham asataḥ saj jāyeta|sat tv eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam

"In the beginning, son, this [world] was simply what is existent (*sat*) — one only, without a second (*ekam evādvitīyam*). Now, on

⁷⁰ Ibid.: 47.

⁷¹ Ibid.: 47.

⁷² Ibid.: 49.

this point some do say: 'In the beginning this [world] was simply what is nonexistent (*asat*) — one only, without a second. And from what is nonexistent was born what is existent.'"

"But, son, how can that possibly be?" he continued. "How can what is existent be born from what is nonexistent? On the contrary, son, in the beginning this [world] was simply what is existent (*sat*) — one only, without a second. (ChU 6.2.1–2.)"⁷³

Professor Jurewicz is also aware of the fact that "this Upaniṣadic concept of reality simplifies the ideas of the *Nāsadīya*:

"The hymn presents a vision of creation in which precreative reality is neither being/truth (*sát*) nor non-being/untruth (*ásat*). ...In later thought the word *sát* generally refers to the unmanifested aspect, *ásat* to the manifested."⁷⁴

This reversal can be seen in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28 where:

"*sát* denotes what is unmanifested, immortal and full of light, while *ásat* denotes the dark, mortal manifested world. It is also attested by *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1–2 which negates the possibility of origination of the world out of non-being/untruth (*ásat*) and considers being-truth (*sát*) as the source of creation."⁷⁵

However, what has been changed is not only the denotation of *sát* and *ásat*, but also the very perspective.⁷⁶ A perspective from which it can be clearly seen that no independent substance is possible here: neither an independent existent (*sát*) nor an independent non-existent (*ásat*).⁷⁷ Later on this perspective was lost, and no one else than the Buddha found it.

⁷³ Ibid.: 247.

⁷⁴ Jurewicz 2010: 52.

⁷⁵ Ibid.: 52.

⁷⁶ Cf. Fórizs 1989, 1995; see also Fórizs 2002: 112.

⁷⁷ Uddālaka Āruṇi assumes nothing else than this independence, when he replaces the independent – one without a second – non-existent (*asad ... ekam evādvitīyam*) with the independent – one without a second – existent (*sad ... ekam evādvitīyam*).

Appendix

nāsad āsīn no sad āsīt tadānīm nāsīd rajo no vyōmā paro yat |
kim āvārīvaḥ kuha kasya śarmann ambhaḥ kim āsīd gahanam gabhīram ||

na mṛtyur āsīd amṛtaṁ na tarhi na rātryā ahna āsīt praketaḥ |
ānīd avātaṁ svadhayā tad ekam tasmād dhānyan na paraḥ kim canāsa ||

tama āsīt tamasā gūlham agre praketaṁ salilam sarvam ā idam |
tucchyenābhv apihitam yad āsīt tapasaḥ tan mahinājāyataikam ||

kāmas tad agre sam avartatādhi manaso retaḥ prathamam yad āsīt |
sato bandhum asatī nir avindan hṛdi pratiṣyā kavayo maṁṣā ||

tiraścīno vitato raśmir eṣām adhaḥ svid āsīd upari svid āsīt |
retodhā āsan mahimāna āsan svadhā avastāt prayatiḥ parastāt ||

ko addhā veda ka iha pra vocat kuta ājātā kuta iyam viṣṣṭiḥ |
arvāg devā asya viṣarjanenāthā ko veda yata ābabhūva ||

iyam viṣṣṭir yata ābabhūva yadī vā dadhe yadī vā na |
yo asyādhyakṣaḥ parame vyōman so aṅga veda yadī vā na veda ||

RV 10.129, input by Holland and Van Nooten, version by Eichler.)

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http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/1_veda/4_upa/brup___u.htm

ChU *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

<http://titus.unifrankfurt.de/texte/etcs/ind/aind/ved/sv/upanisad/chup/chup.htm>

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