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LANGUAGE AND STYLE
OF
THE VEDIC *ṚṢIS*

by

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Edited with an Introduction by
Wendy Doniger

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contentions (as well as die-casting, in later times) were held with the aim of “winning the sun” and establishing order in the universe. The goddess *Uṣas* presided over the distribution of generous gifts during these contests.

This sketch of the religious and social status of the Vedic *Ṛṣis* is based mainly on research done by Western scholars. It should be noted that interest in this range of problems has been growing lately among Indian scholars as well. The realization of the special role of the *Ṛṣis* in the archaic Aryan society of the *ṚgVedic* period has stimulated research in this area: much work has been published both in English and in modern Indian languages (Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati).¹⁹ Although this topic has generated a stream of publications, both of a scientific and of a more popular character, their main lines of investigation are beyond the scope of the present monograph; our interest is primarily linguistic. Nevertheless, we cannot avoid mentioning a remarkable phenomenon: an uninterrupted chain of tradition and continuity, though altered and variable to a certain degree, between modern India and the world of the *Ṛg Veda* Aryan—especially in those cases when the author of a work on the Vedic poets happens to be both a well-known Sanskritist and a descendant of a Vedic *Ṛṣi*, such as Dandekar, who traces his origin from the *Ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha* [63.312-350].

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Vocabulary

Some of the essential features of the model of the universe seen by the seers of the hymns find their fullest and clearest reflection in the vocabulary of the *Ṛg Veda*. On the one hand, this circumstance grants the scholar quite a few advantages, as it places at his disposal a general theory which permits him, using a single non-contradictory method, to interpret the historical and cultural situation as well as disparate linguistic facts. But on the other hand, the dangers of a vicious circle seem apparent. First, we construct a model of the universe on the basis of the *Ṛg Veda* hymns, and then we interpret the vocabulary of the *Ṛg Veda* with the help of this very model. This danger must never be overlooked. In addition, there can never be any certainty that many, and sometimes quite essential fragments of this model, have been construed in adequate agreement with the perception of the Vedic *Ṛṣis* themselves. This uncertainty has to be applied to any interpretation of certain parts of the Vedic vocabulary.

The vocabulary of the *Ṛg Veda* is characterized by both polysemy and synonymy [8. ch. “Vocabulary”]. Using these very characteristics, the poets quite consciously introduce puns, a play on words, thus creating an intentionally obscure, allusive and suggestive style. However, before we discuss the stylistic use of lexical polysemy in the *Ṛg Veda*, we should consider the definition of this phenomenon. Polysemy, as such, presupposes the discrete character of meanings tied to a word. The *Ṛg Veda* lexicon, as represented in classical Western dictionaries [91; 59], contains an amazing number of polysemantic words. It is remarkable that the highest number of meanings—sometimes more than ten—is ascribed to words that encode the key notions of the model of the universe (for example, words that denote members of basic oppositions), as well as proper names that are widely used as symbols in Vedic poetry. But a modern Vedic scholar cannot be certain that, in Vedic times, quite different types of semantic syncretism were not prevalent. What we perceive as different meanings of the same word in the hymns might have appeared to the *Ṛṣi* as a single meaning in different contexts.

Central to the *Ṛg Veda* world-model was the notion rendered by the word *ṛtá-*. Grassmann gives the following meanings for its use as a noun:

“divine order,” “eternal truth;” “justice, right;” “sanctity;” “truth;” “a pious deed;” “sacrifice.” It seems most probable that all the “separate meanings” are really context-bound variants of a single syncretic invariant meaning which, in this particular case could be conventionalized as “cosmic law.” On the speculative level it can manifest itself as “eternal truth,” but on the ritual level as “sacrifice.” Similarly, the various adjectival meanings of the word—“appropriate;” “good;” “sacred;” “truthful, pious”—could be rather easily reduced to a single invariant: “conforming to the law of *ṛtá-*.”

We should evidently assume the existence of a single meaning with widely differing contextual variants in the case of the hardly translatable noun *dhāman-*. Its semantic area is defined in the dictionaries as “a seat, place, residence, habitation;” “home, a favourite spot (especially, of *Agni* and *Soma*);” “retinue, a company (of gods);” “law, norm” [80]. Leaving aside for the moment the problem of the semantic evolution of these variants, it seems possible to suggest that for the *Ṛṣi* the meaning of *dhāman-* (from the verb root *dhā-* “to set, put, place, arrange”) manifest itself on the level of locality as “a place,” on the level of speculation as “law, order,” and on the level of social relations as “a retinue, escort.”

The invariant semantics of *krātu-*—*dakṣa-*, could be rendered by the opposition “spiritual power,” “power of action,” both of which have a multitude of meanings in our dictionaries. In the *Ṛṣi*’s mind, *krātu-* in different contexts may have corresponded to our notions of “ability, skill,” “reason(ing), understanding;” “intuition, inspiration, aspiration;” and “sacrificial drink (*Soma* as a source of inspiration).” Nevertheless, the word preserves the unicity of its basic semantics. So, too, *dákṣa-* denotes the “ability to act,” “skill;” “force, (ill)will,” all of which are perceived as various manifestations of a single property. In some contexts the opposition between the two members can be neutralized, and either of them may denote an undifferentiated mental-and-physical force at the same time, although other meanings of the neutralized member can also occur.

Principles of semantic syncretism, very different from those of modern scholars, tend to manifest themselves in a definite lexical stratum, namely, in the one dealing with various emotional and intellectual phenomena. The words denoting these phenomena are the same as those that denote the corresponding—for the Vedic mind—internal organ. This semantic syncretism is correctly rendered in Otto Böhtlingk’s *Wörterbuch* where, for example, the word *mānas-* is defined both as “inner emotion,” “spirit,” “mind,” “reason,” “thought,” and as “internal body-part,” “heart.” On the other hand, *hṛd-* or *hṛdaya-* in the *Rig Veda* can mean not only “heart (as part of body),” but also “the focal point of various emotions” (as joy, fear, inspiration, etc.), and *hṛd-* in the strictly anatomical sense often has the wider meaning of

“internal organs in general.” Some contexts play on the opposition *mānas-*: *hṛd-*, but in others the opposition is neutralized, for example: *samyák sravanti saríto ná dhénā / antár hṛdā mānasā pūyámānāḥ* (4.58.6) “Together flow the rivers (of speech), like rivulets, purified within by the heart (and) mind (or: “by feeling and thought”), but: *yá índrāya vacoyújā / tataksūr mānasā hári* (1.20.2) “(Those) who have fashioned by thought a pair of bay horses for *Indra*, (a pair) harnessed by word . . .”²⁰ and: *hṛdā yat taṣṭān mántrāñ ásaṃsan* (1.67.4) “. . . when they uttered the sacred words hewn by the heart,” where both *mānasā* and *hṛdā* are used in similar phrases, and the lexical differences between them are quite obscure.²¹

A typical example of semantic syncretism in verbal roots is represented by verbs of visual perception, where the meaning “to see” is usually combined with the meaning “to appear, to seem.” The difference in semantics is often indicated neither by inflexion (active/middle) nor by the stem-class. For example, *ví + khyā-*: *uccā vy ákhyad yuvatīḥ punarbhūr . . .* (1.123.2) “High up shone a young woman, appearing again,” and *ví nákam akhyat savitā várenyo . . .* (5.81.2) “the magnificent Savitar glanced at the sky-vault;” *caḥṣ-*: *yéna caṣṭe váruṇo mitró aryamā* (8.19.16) “. . . (that splendor) in which appear *Varuṇa*, *Mitra*, *Aryaman*” and *tvām caṣṭe muṣṭihā* (6.26.2) “At thee is looking the fist-fighter;” *cit-*: *ákavāri cetati vājínivati* (7.96.3) “Rich in reward, she manifests (herself as) generous,” and *tád índro ártham cetati* (1.10.2) “Here *Indra* notices the intention to sacrifice.” But the verb *drś-* realizes the semantic opposition through the formal contrast of active vs. middle endings, for instance: *kó dadarśa prathamām jāyamānam* (1.164.4) “Who saw the one being born first . . . ?,” and: *hótā mandró viśām dāmūnās / tirás támo dadrśe rāmyānām* (7.9.2) “The joyful *hotar*, the house (-ruler) of tribes / Is seen through the darkness of nights.”

The intransitive meaning “to seem, appear” of the verb *dhī-* is conveyed by the active inflexion, while the transitive “to look, think, contemplate” (“to see with inner sight”) is usually combined with middle endings, for example: *ákṣetravid yáthā mugdhó / bhūvanāny adīdhayuh* (5.40.5) “. . . (then all) beings looked like a (man gone) astray, not recognizing the place,” and: *māhi mahé tavāse dīdhye* (5.33.1) “Great (praise) for the great strong (one) I contemplate.”²²

The polysemy becomes even more complex in those cases in which the separate meanings of a word acquire a symbolic character. The metaphorical transfer of meanings occurs so frequently that the border-line between polysemy and homonymy almost disappears. However, even these cases may be accounted for by the imagery of thought, and we should recognize only one meaning as basic. For instance, when the *Ṛṣi* uses the word *gó-* (masculine) “a bull,” (feminine) “a cow” to denote constellations (“a herd of

cattle”), dawns (“reddish cows”), earth (“giver of food”), and rainclouds (i.e., they give rain as cows give milk), then the problem of polysemy appears to be a moot point. The same applies to the semantics of *ádri* = “a rock, a mountain” as well as “a sling-stone,” “a *Soma*-pressing stone” and finally, “a thunder-cloud” (as in the myth of *Vala*).

Often in the *Ṛg Veda* a word meaning has denotation on different levels, some of which belong to the visible world or to myth (the demarcation-line between the two sometimes being almost evanescent), while others are related to ritual. For example,²³ *gharmá-* can simultaneously denote “solar heat” and “a pot on fire,” or “hot milk” for the *Ásvins*; *páyas-* “(cow)milk,” “rain,” “the *Soma*-juice;” *mádhu-* “honey; mead,” “sweetness,” “milk,” “sacrificial ghee;” “the *Soma*-juice;” *vana-* “forest,” “tree,” “wood,” “a wooden *Soma* vessel,” “water” (particularly, the streams of water mixing with *Soma* in a vat); *samudrá-* “confluence,” “terrestrial sea,” “celestial sea,” “the *Soma*-juices in a big vessel;” *sánu-* “mountain-top,” “the back (of an animal or a demon),” “the surface of a *Soma*-strainer made of sheep-wool,” etc.

Such a play on the denotations of words is a recurring feature of the *Ṛg Veda* hymns. The problem of reference in this poetic text sometimes acquires rather special dimensions. For some textual fragments the reference of the fragment as a whole can become decisive, while in other cases what is important is the reference of a clause. In turn, the reference of some individual words depends on the clause, or putting it differently, there is a one-to-one correlation between the meanings of a word and the ritual or some other level of reference. For instance, verse 9.26.5:

*tám sánāv ádhi jāmáyo
háriṃ hinvanty ádribhiḥ /
haryatám bhūricakṣasam //*

“The sisters urge on with stones this bay stallion on the mountain-top, the beloved one who gazes at the numerous (ones).” This is the symbolic level, and behind it the ritual level can be discerned: “The (priest’s) fingers urge on the flow of the *Soma* juice with the help of the pressing stones on the surface of the strainer,” etc. Since we are aware of the fact that this is a *Soma pavamāna* (“Purified *Soma*”) hymn of Book 9, i.e., a hymn accompanying the *Soma*-preparation rites, we know the reference of the hymn and can, accordingly, select the appropriate ritual meanings in order to produce a correct interpretation of the text: *sánu-* “the surface of the strainer,” *jāmáyaḥ* “sisters’ denote the priest’s fingers (compare the other meanings of the word: “brothers and sisters,” “blood relatives,” “members of a family”);

hári- (literally “yellowish,” “golden”) denotes *Soma* because of its color; *ádri-* “a pressing stone.” It would be interesting to note how the meanings change when these words are used in a mythological context, such as: *vī jayúṣā yayathuḥ sánv ádrer . . .* (1.117.16) “You two have driven along the mountain-top in (your) victorious (*chariot*)” (about the *Ásvins* driving across the sky.) Another mythological verse contains a play on the various denotations of the word *hári-*:

*dýām índro háridhāyasam
pṛthivīm hárivarpasam
ádhrāyād dharítor bhūri bhójanam
yáyor antár háris cárat (3.44.3)*

“*Indra* supported the sky that feeds the golden (one), and the earth that glows like gold, the plentiful nourishment (of these) two golden (ones), between which the golden (god) wanders.”

In the first line, *hári-* as part of the compound is correlated with *Soma* or with the Sun, and in the second line with the earth. In the third line “the two golden ones” (*harít-*) denote Heaven-and-Earth; and in the fourth line, *hári-* is the Sun (according to Geldner) or *Indra* (according to *Sāyaṇa*—since the hymn is addressed to this god). In this way the various denotations of the word *hári-* are used in a pun within the bounds of a single mythological level. In another stanza that has been cited above (9.26.5), the formal indicator of the type of reference is found in the second line, as the phrases *háriṃ hi-* and *ádribhir hi-* are part of the *Soma pavamāna* phraseology and quite unambiguous in this sense.

The suggestive style of the hymns is often characterized by the double reference of a single word or phrase; there is a conscious tendency to achieve a simultaneous correlation with two levels, ritual and mythological, that may be seen, for instance, in 1.149.4 (a hymn to *Agni*):

*abhí dvijānmā trí rocanāni
vīsvā rájāṃsi susucānó asthāi
hótā yájiṣtho apām sadhásthe*

“The twice-born one rose over the three bright spaces, / Blazing over all the voids, / The *hotar*-priest who is the best sacrificer at the confluence of waters.” The phrase *apām sadhásthe* “at the confluence of the waters” may refer both to the celestial sphere (where the three bright spaces belong), and to the ritual domain, since according to *Sāyaṇa*, the fire-altar used to be sprinkled with water. Another example of a double reference occurs in verse 9.64.17 (a *Soma*-hymn):

*Marmjānāsa āyāvo
vīthā samudrām indavaḥ
āgmān ṛtāsya yōnim ā*

“The powerfully clarified, full of vitality, / *Soma*-juices willingly went to the sea, / into the womb of the law.” Both phrases (*samudrām* “into the sea” and *ṛtāsya yōnim ā* “into the womb of the law”) refer to the ritual sphere; in that context they denote a big vat where the clarified *Soma*-juices are mixed with several additives (water, milk, etc.). At the same time they can also have mythological connotations: they may denote the heavenly ocean of the mystic abode of the gods in heaven. Numerous other examples of this kind can be found elsewhere.

Another important feature of the vocabulary of the *Rg Veda* is the symbolic use of words with a very concrete basic meaning, particularly a small group of words denoting body-parts. Some of these words are more frequently used in their symbolic meaning (at the ritual and cosmic levels) while their basic, literal meanings are overshadowed. Obviously, no question of polysemy arises, since this is a clear metaphorical transfer of a single basic meaning onto different, but isomorphic levels. On a purely linguistic level, such words frequently make up fixed phrasal unities when joined with other words; the latter can belong to a single reference level as, for example, *devānām cākṣus* “the gods’ eye;” “the sun,” or they may refer to several levels, as *amīṭasya nābhīḥ* “the navel of immortality” refers to (1) an altar, (2) the heavenly center, and (3) *Soma* or another sacrificial drink. The group of words for body-parts consists of the following nouns:

Ākṣi-, *akṣi-* “eye:”

- 1) (primary meaning) . . . *ākṣī ṛjṛāśve aśvināv adhattam / jyōtir andhāya cakrathur vicākṣe* (1.117.17) “. . . to *Rjṛāśva*, O *Aśvins*, you have granted eyes. / You have done (it) so that the blind (man) has been the light;”
- 2) (secondary meanings) *ādhi śrīyaṃ nī dadhūs cārum asmin / divo yād akṣī amīṭā ākrīṇvan* (1.72.10) “The immortals bestowed magic beauty upon him, / When they were creating the (two) eyes of heaven” (“him” refers to *Agni*, and “the two eyes of heaven” to the sun and moon).

Ūdhar- “udder:”

- 1) (primary meaning) *ādhvaryavaḥ pāyasōdhar yāthā gōḥ / sōmebhir im pṛnatā bhojām indram* (2.14.10) “O you *adhvaryu*-priests! As the cow’s udder (swells) with milk, / Fill the generous *Indra* with *Soma*-spurts!;”
- 2) (secondary meanings) *dunānty ūdhar divyāni dhūṭayo / bhūmim pinvanti pāyasā pārijrayaḥ* (1.64.5) “The Shakers milk the heavenly

udder. / The ones who rush around make the earth swell with milk” (to the *Maruts*, “the heavenly udder” is a rain-cloud, and “milk” is “rain”); *duhānā ūdhar divyām mādhu priyām / pratnām sadhāstham āsadat* (9.107.5) “Having allowed them to milk the lovely mead from the heavenly udder, / (*Soma*) used to sit upon (his) primordial spot” (*Soma*’s heavenly udder” was a celestial source from which flowed the mead-*Soma*, and following which he descended to the earth); *suvānti sōmaṃ rathirāso ādrayo / . . . / duhānty ūdhar upasēcanāya kām / . . .* (10.76.7) “The hasty pressing stones press *Soma*; / . . . / They milk the udder to pour out a little (milk viz. *Soma*)” (“the udder” is the the *Soma*-plant from which the juice is pressed); *tā tū te satyā tuvinṛmṇa vīsvā / prā dhenavaḥ sisrate vīṣṇa ūdhnah* (4.22.6) “All these thy (feats) are true, O (god) of powerful virility: / The milch-cows are running out of the bull’s udder” (a Vedic paradox: rain-streams flow out of the udder of Heaven or *Parjanya* “udder”).

Gārbha- “womb,” “entrails,” “embryo,”
“fruit,” “a newborn child,” “offspring:”

- 1) (primary meaning) *gārbhe nū sānn ānv eṣām avedam / ahām devānām jānimāni vīsvā* (4.27.1) “Still being in the (mother’s) womb, I knew / All the generations of these gods;” *yāthā vātaḥ puṣkarīṇīm / samīṅgāyati sarvataḥ / evā te gārbha ejaṭu / . . .* (5.78.7) “As the wind stirs up a lotus pond on all sides, / so let thy embryo stir!.”
- 2) (secondary meanings) *āsūdayat sukṛte gārbham ādriḥ* (3.31.7) “The rock made (its) fruit ripe for the benefactor” (i.e., the *Vala*-rock opened up and gave out to *Indra* all it contained: milch cows, light, etc., just like a mother’s womb when the time came); *asmā ukthāya pārvatasya gārbho / mahīnām janūse pūrvyāya* (5.45.3) “Before this hymn the mountain’s entrails (were agape) / For the first birth of the great (dawns)” (the *Vala*-myth); *yām āpo ādrayo vānā / gārbham ṛtāsya pīprati . . .* (6.48.5) “Who the waters, the stones, the trees / feed as the offspring of the cosmic law . . .” (*Agni*); *tām id gārbham prathamām dadhra āpo / yātra devāḥ samāgachanta vīsva* (10.82.6) “It was he whom the waters received as the first embryo, / In whom all the gods came together.” Finally, in cosmogonic speculations, an important role was assigned to *hiranyagarbhā-* “the golden germ:” *hiranyagarbhāḥ sām avaratāgre / bhūtāsya jātāḥ pātir ēka āsīt* (10.121.1) “In the beginning he arose as the golden germ. / After being born he was the one lord of (all) creation.”

Cākṣus- “eye,” “sight:”

- 1) (primary meaning) *vī me kārnā patayato vī cākṣur / vīdām jyōtir hīdaya āhitam yāt / vī me mānas carati dūrād dhūḥ / . . .* (6.9.6) “My ears fly up, my

eye flies up, / (Flies) up this light that has been put into the heart, / (Soars) up my mind rushing into the distance. / . . . “(a self-description of a poet inspired by *Agni-Vaiśvānara*);

2) (secondary meaning) *úd u jyótir amṛtam viśvájanyam / viśvānarah savitā devó asret / krátvā devānām ajaniṣṭa cākṣur / . . . (7.76.1)* “The god *Savitar*, belonging to all people, sent / Upwards the immortal light, destined for all the tribes. / The gods’ eye was born on the (gods’) behest” (“the gods’ eye” is the sun).

Tvác- “skin, hide:”

1) (primary meaning) *tvám makhásya dódhātaḥ / sṛó 'va tvacó bharaḥ (10.171.2)* “Thou hast severed the head of the furious *Makha* from the skin” (about *Indra*); *mánave śásad avratān / tvácam kṛṣṇām arandhayat (1.130.8)* “Punishing the vowless (people) for the sake of *Manu*, / He subjected to him the black skin” (i.e., *Indra* subjected the aboriginal tribes of the *Dāsas/Dasyus* to the Aryans); *gavyáyī tvág bhavati nūnīg avyáyī (9.70.7)* “The hide may be the cow’s, the festive garb—the sheep’s” (about ritual tools for *Soma*-pressing);

2) (secondary meanings) *ójiṣṭham te madhyató méda údbhrtam / prá te vayám dadāmahe / ścótanti te vaso stokā ádhi tvac / . . . (3.21.5)* “The strongest fat, extracted for thee from the middle, we offer (it) to thee, O *Vasu*, the drops flow for thee down onto the hide” (*Agni*’s hide is the flame);

*yád im ṛtásya páyasā pýāno
náyan ṛtásya pathībhi rájiṣṭhaiḥ
aryamā mitró várunaḥ párijmā
tvácam pṛicanty úparasya yónau (1.79.3)*

“But when (*Agni*), swollen with the moisture of the cosmic law, / (Moves along) the straightest paths of the law, conducting (this moisture), / (Then) *Aryaman*, *Mitra*, *Varuṇa* who is (everywhere) around, / soak the hide in the womb of the nether (space)” (where “the hide” is the surface of the earth);

*ayám cakráṃ iṣaṇat sūryasya
ny étaṣaṃ rīramat sasṛmāṇám
á kṛṣṇá im juhurāṇó jigharti
tvacó budhné rájaso asyá yónau (4.17.14)*

“He set in motion the sun’s wheel. / He stopped *Etaśa* who had run forth. / Angered, he hurls him upon the bottom / Of the skin / into the lap of the dark space” / (“He” is *Indra*; *Etaśa* is the solar horse; and the black bottom of the skin denotes the darkness of the night);

Nābhi- “navel:”

1) (primary meaning) *nābhyā āsīd antárikṣam / sṛṣṇó dyaúḥ sám avarata (10.90.14)* “From his navel came the aerial space, / From his head the sky evolved” (about the cosmic giant *Puruṣa*, whose different parts became elements of the universe);

2) (secondary meaning)

*saṃgáchamāne yuvatí sámante
svásarā jámí pitrór upásṭhe
abhijighranṭī bhúvanasya nābhim
dyāvā rákṣatam pṛthivī no ábhvāt (1.185.5)*

“The two youthful sisters, blood relatives, joining in the parents’ womb, sharing a common boundary, kissing the navel of the created world . . . O Sky and Earth, guard us from Terror!” (“the two youthful sisters” are the Sky and Earth, and “the navel of the created world” is “the center of the universe”); *ātmanván nābho duhyate ghṛtám páya / ṛtásya nābhir amṛtam ví jāyate (9.74.4)* “From the living cloud ghee and milk are milked. / The navel of the law, the ambrosia is born” (a description of the *Soma*-pressing ritual in which the critical moment, “the navel of the Law,” is the appearance of the juice necessary for “the drink of immortality”; *úd u ṣṭitáh samídhā yahvó adyaud / várman divó ádhi nābhā pṛthivyāḥ (3.5.9)* “And the glorified youth (*Agni*) blazed up thanks to the fire-wood on the top of heaven, on the navel of the earth” (“top of heaven” is the sun in the sky, and “navel of the earth” is the offering fire on the sacrificial ground).

Prṣṭhá- “the back:”

1) *isudhíḥ sáñkāḥ pṛtanās ca sárvāḥ / pṛṣṭhé ninaddho jayati práśūtāḥ (6.75.5)* “The quiver strapped on a back wins the skirmishes and all the battles when it is set to work;” *kvā vó 'svāḥ kvābhūsavah / . . . / pṛṣṭhé sádo nasór yamáḥ (5.61.2)* “Where are your horses? Where (the) reins? . . . (Where is) the saddle on the (horses’s) back? (Where is) the bit in the nostrils?;”

2) *átyo ná pṛṣṭhám pṛuṣításya rocate (1.58.2)* “His back shines like a stallion’s (back) when he is washed (with ghee)” (about the sacrificial fire; *Agni* whose constant epithet is *ghṛtáprṣṭha*- “ghee-backed”).

*abhí kṣipāḥ sám agmata
marjáyantīr iśás pátim
pṛṣṭhá grbhñata vājinaḥ (9.14.7)*

“The fingers have joined, / Polishing the lord of sacrificial delight; / They grab the backs of the race-horse” (about *Soma*, depicted as a race-horse whose back is polished by the priest’s fingers); *ví tvád āpo ná párvatasya pr̥sthād / ukthébbhir indrānayanta yajñāih* (6.24.6) “From thee, O *Indra*, they conduct (their procession) with (their) hymns and rites, like waters (streaming down) from the mountain ridge;” *nākasya pr̥sthé ādhi tiṣṭhati śr̥tó* (1.125.5) “He rests, supported by the sky’s vault” (literally “back”); *eté pr̥sthānī ródasor viprayānto vy ānacuh* (9.22.5) “These (*Soma*-juices), spreading around, reached the backs of the two worlds” (i.e., the sky and earth).

Mūrdhán- “head:”

- 1) (primary meaning) *yás ta idhmám jabhārat siṣvidāno / mūrdhānam vā tatāpate tvāyá / bhúvas tāsya svātavañ pāyúr agne* / (4.2.6) “He who brings thee firewood, sweating profusely, / Or (he) who sets (his) head on fire because of (his) love for thee, / Be thou a self-powered protector for him, O *Agni*!”
- 2) (secondary meanings) *yāni sthānāny aśvinā dadhāthe / . . . / ní párvatasya mūrdhāni sādantā- / iṣam jānāya dāsūṣe vahantā* (7.70.3) “(Those) places which you have taken up, O *Aśvins*, / . . . / Sitting upon the mountain-top, . . . / (From there ride) to the people honoring (you), bring the sacrificial delight!” (“the mountain-top” is literally, the mountain’s head”); *agnír mūrdhā diváh kakūt / pātih pr̥thivyā ayám* (8.44.16) “*Agni* is the head, the peak; / He is the lord of the earth;” *mūrdhā bhuvó bhavati náktam agnis* (10.88.6) “At night *Agni* is (always) the head of the world;” *mūrdhán yajñāsya sám anaktu devān* (2.3.2) “As head of the sacrifice he shall unite the gods” (he is *Agni*); *yáj jātavedo bhúvanasya mūrdhān / átiṣṭho agne sahá rocanéna* (10.88.5) “Since thou, O *Jāta-Vedas*, hast taken the stand with (thy) light as head of the universe . . . ;” *eṣá n̄bhír ví n̄yate / divó mūrdhā v̄ṣā sutāḥ / sómo váneṣu viṣvavít* (9.27.3) “This (juice) is passed by men (through the strainer), / The sky’s head, the pressed(-out) bull, / *Soma*, in the wooden (vessels), (he is) the omniscient (one).”

Yóni- “womb,” “lap:”

- 1) (primary meaning)

*yás te gárbham ámivā
durnāmā yónim āśáye
agnis̄ tām bráhmanā sahá
niṣ kravyādam anīnasat* (10.162.2)

“That mangy one with an evil name, who lay down upon thy embryo, upon (thy) womb, / *Agni* will drive away that flesh-eater with an incantation!” (a charm against evil creatures that harm an embryo);
2) (secondary meanings) *yóniṣ ta indra niśáde akāri* (1.104.1) “O *Indra*, a lap has been prepared for thee to sit down upon” (the “lap” is the sacrificial straw mat); *gh̄rtám asya yónir . . .* (2.3.11) “Ghee is his womb/lap” (about *Agni* on whom ghee is poured); *sída hotar svá u loké cikivān / sādāyā yajñām sukṛtāsya yónau* (3.29.8) “Sit down, O *hotar*, skilled one, upon (thy) place! / Set the sacrifice on the lap of the good deed!” (about *Agni*); *rtāsya yónau sukṛtāsya loké / ’riṣtām tvā sahá pátyā dadhāmi* (10. 85.24) “In the lap of the law, in the world of the good deed / I set thee unharmed with (thy) husband” (benediction for the bride in the wedding hymn); . . . / *yónāv rtāsya sīdatam / pātām sómam r̄tāvrdhā* (3.62.18) “. . . sit (both of you) on the lap of the law. / Drink *Soma*, O (you) law-confirmers!” (an invocation of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*; “the lap of the law” is the place of offering).

This use of a series of words denoting human body-parts as metaphors for elements of the universe cannot be accidental in the *R̥g Veda*. The key to its understanding should be sought in the model of the universe as seen by the *R̥g Veda* Aryans. The archaic idea that the universe originated from the body of the gigantic primordial man who was sacrificed by the gods is clearly reflected in the *Puruṣa*-hymn 10.90. In this hymn a system of equivalences between the microcosm and the macrocosm is established. It has already been noted [40.215-28] that *Puruṣa* is characterized particularly by the opposition of totality and segmentation which enables the process of universe-generation to begin. The plot motivates the movement from one member of the opposition to the other, and in its turn, can reflect a certain ritual. This type of correspondence between parts of the body and cosmic elements had a long future in the Old Indian tradition, and its variants are also attested in other archaic cultures.²⁴ In the *R̥g Veda*, this system of equivalences becomes operational because the two series of elements are interchangeable. Hence the idea of semantic transfer, or metaphor, in the use of a vocabulary of human body-parts.

The text of the *Puruṣa*-hymn belongs to the semiotic sphere wherein the head is the sign for the sky, the eye is the sign for the sun, etc. Thus we see an interplay of paradigmatic equivalences which are transferred into syntamatics, i.e., into the text. A single denotation is connected with two notions which are quite different, from the modern point of view. Such a situation is remarkable on two counts. First, it could be based on the existing awareness of the identity of these two series, since the macrocosm and the microcosm are, generally speaking, isomorphic. Thus they could

possibly have different names, but they are essentially manifestations of a single "arch-name." For the Vedic model of the universe, identity is the conceptual framework wherein everything takes its due place. This is the collective heritage which is revitalized again and again by the poet-*Ṛṣi* in his creative activity. Second, the *Ṛṣi*'s generalizing and classifying work creates "a body code" of the cosmos. The evolution of this code can be illustrated as follows: "head" becomes "head of the sky." The *Rg Veda* reflects the second stage, that is, the explanatory collocations, much more consistently. Immediate identifications of the terms of the two series are rather infrequent, though examples do show some survivals. The further elaboration of these metaphorical phrases by the poets, being a purely literary device, results in an ever-growing erosion of the original identity.

An extreme case of polysemy in the *Rg Veda* is represented by the lexical group in which broadly opposed meanings within the semantics of a single word are combined. Here polysemy borders on antonymy, or even enantiosemy, an obvious paradox. This phenomenon is attested in the *Rg Veda*, and this semantic type can be met with both in noun (substantives and adjectives, primary and composite terms) and in verbs.

The key to the interpretation of this phenomenon was found by Renou in his fundamental "L'ambiguïté du vocabulaire du *Rgveda*" [117.161-235]. He was the first to draw attention to the circumstance that *Rig Veda* lexicon can be divided into two zones: the "auspicious" in which the gods are included and the humans under their protection, and the less differentiated "inauspicious" layer, denoting forces that are inimical to gods and poets. One and the same word can have both a "positive" and a "negative" meaning on its particular "zone" context.

This concerns, in the first place, a rather numerous class of verbal roots. In a few cases the semantic difference is not connected with any corresponding morphological difference, for example, *ruṣ-*, *róṣati* "to undo" and "to perish;" *yu-*, *yóṣati* "to separate" and "to be separated;" *pí-*, *píyati* "to insult" and "to be despised." However, in most cases semantic differences are reflected in grammatical oppositions: "primary verb" vs. "causative," "passive" vs. "active." Sometimes the opposition in meaning corresponds (wholly or in part) to the difference in stem-classes. For instance, the verb *ar-* has the stem *rchá-* and the aorist *árat* when an attacking enemy or a devastating sickness is involved, but forms other stems when describing favorable or neutral actions. Individual forms of a verb that has generally "auspicious" connotations may be used in a "negative" sense, and vice versa. The same ambivalence is characteristic of a certain number of nouns. Primarily it concerns epithets that can describe both gods and their opponents as, for example, *apratí-*, meaning both "irresistible" and "showing no

resistance," adjectives of spatial orientation used with various prefixes that modify their meaning.

Renou also noted the ambivalence of certain proper names, mostly belonging to the mythological cycle of *Indra*, such as *Kútsa-*, who figures both as *Indra*'s favorite charioteer and his enemy. Some ethnonyms from the same cycle also share this semantic ambiguity, as do some theonyms.²⁵ Sometimes this phenomenon manifests itself in the transfer of the enemies' attributes to the gods and their worshippers, while sometimes quite the opposite is true. Such reversibility of actions and formulas of the two zones, attested for the *Rg Veda*, is a peculiar trait of the magical outlook in general. Renou summed up his research with the flowing remark: In the end, these features of Vedic style together with the conditions of the sacral milieu appear to be the decisive factors in the orientation that was acquired by its vocabulary" [117.235].

The importance of Renou's work can certainly be judged by these overt conclusions concerning the ambivalent semantics of a certain part of the Vedic lexicon. But equally important are some indirect results of his description that can be defined in the following way. In the language of the *Rg Veda* the stylistic level ranks as the highest in the linguistic hierarchy. Grammatical oppositions are not necessarily universal: a given formal opposition does not always correspond to a semantic one. In the same way, a single derivational pattern in word-formation can be interpreted differently on the semantic level. These conclusions can be of importance for the further stylistic and functional study of *Rg Veda* vocabulary.

The "auspicious" domain in the *Rg Veda* is vast and considerably elaborated. On the other hand, the "inauspicious" level is comparatively undifferentiated; this act may be due to proscriptive considerations. As noted above, Renou established the presence of a layer of ambivalent vocabulary with changeable meaning dependent on its "zone." Using this method, we should be able to go further and discover within the "auspicious" zone a certain group of lexical units which undergo a semantic shift if included either within the domain of the deity or within that of the worshipper. This particular archaic lexical stratum contains the semantic reflexes of the Vedic model of the universe (see "Introduction," above). The idea of an exchange between the deity and the worshipper is lexically expressed by a "conversive" meaning²⁶ attested for a whole group of "auspicious" words. This meaning acquires a different logical emphasis in different contexts. In the *Rg Veda*, its directionality can vary, depending on the word's association with a god or his worshipper [70.129-136]. In this way, the "auspicious" zone itself can be seen as bipartite. It should be stressed that the ambivalent vocabulary of "auspicious" vs. "inauspicious" does not

take part in the bifurcation of the “auspicious” zone. These two lexical sub-systems can be viewed as two nonintersecting sub-multitudes. Moreover, the converse meaning of the “auspicious” is attested in various morphological and derivational classes: verbs, substantives and adjectives, primary words and compounds. Before describing the distribution of converse meaning among forms derived from a common verbal-root, a small group of verbs should be discussed. Their meanings cannot be labelled “converse,” but they can be combined with different object-classes, and consequently, they may encode quite different actions. The meanings of such verbs depend on the reference-class of their subjects—either deity or worshipper. Some examples:

jan- “to give birth to, to generate:”

subject (1): gods; objects: the universe, the sun, the dawns, etc.;

subject (2): worshippers; objects: sacrifice, prayer, song, etc.;

- 1) *yá imé dyāvapṛthivī jajāna* (4.56.3) “Who gave birth to Heaven and Earth” (about a god—compare 1.160.4); *īndro nṛbhir ajanad dīdyānaḥ / sākāṃ sūryam uśāsam gātūm agnīm* (3.31.15) “Indra, together with (his) men (-the Maruts), shining, gave birth / At the same time to the sun, the dawn, the (unobstructed) way, and fire;”
- 2) *āsmāi te pratihāryate / jātavedo vicarṣaṇe / āgne jānāmi suṣṭutīm* (8.43.2) “For thee, (who is) so joyfully waiting, / O Jātavedas, the far-moving, / O Agni, I generate this laudation;” *vaiśvānarāya dhiśānām ṛtāvṛdhe / gṛhātān nā pūtām agnāye janāmasi* (3.2.1) “For Vaiśvānara, the law-enhancer, we generate a poetic offering, clarified like ghee.”

If the subject of the verb *jan-* has a deity as its referent, the verb is in the second person (addressed to the deity), or in the third person of a past tense (for a description of his feats), since the universe “was generated” in the past. But if the referent happens to be the worshipper, the verb is usually in the first person singular of the present. In this way the verbal grammatical categories indirectly differentiate the various referent-classes of the subject. In the contexts of the first group the verb *jan-* is functionally synonymous with other verbs encoding the cosmogonic act. In the contexts of the second group this verb is synonymous with verbs with the meaning “to sacrifice,” “to donate,” etc.

Tan- “to draw, to pull” (*ā + tan-* “to stretch, to extend;” “to pierce”):

Among the numerous meanings attributable to this verb in the “deity-worshipper” interrelationship, the following object-opposition may be proposed:²⁷

subject (1): gods; objects: cosmic elements wherein light is extended (*ā + tan-*);

subject (2): worshippers; objects: sacrifice, prayer, etc.;

- 1) *ā dyām tanoṣi raśmībhir
āntārikṣam urú priyām
uśaḥ śukrēna soctṣā* (4.52.7)

“Thou piercest the sky (with thy) rays, / The wide glorious aerial space, / O Uśas, (with thy) pure blaze;”

- 2) *vīsvā matīr ā tatane tvāyā- / ādhā ma īndra śrnavo hāvemā* (7.29.3)
“All the prayers I have extended to thee with love. / So listen to these calls of mine, O Indra!”

Bhar- “to carry” (*ā + bhar-* “to bring”):

subject (1): gods; objects: wealth, gifts, power, glory, etc.;

subject (2): worshippers; objects: sacrifice, prayer, etc.;

- 1) *tām id va īndraṃ suhāvaṃ huvema / . . . / yó māvate jaritré gādhyam
cin / makṣū vājam bharati . . .* (4.16.16) “We wish to call for your sake this easily-invoked Indra / . . . / who brings swiftly to a poet like me / The spoils that are to be seized(?) . . . ;”

*sā na stāvāna ā bhara
gātatrēna nāvīyasā
rayīm vīrāvātīm īṣam* (1.12.11)

“Glorified with a new song, bring us wealth and support (consisting in) sons!;”

- 2) *asmā id u tyām upamāṃ svarṣām / bhārāmy āngūṣām āsyēna* (1.61.3)
“It is to him I bring (with my) mouth / This highest, sun-winning, praise;” *bharēndrāya sōmaṃ* (2.21.1) “Bring Soma to Indra!” (addressed to the priest).

Cud- “to sharpen,” “to inspire,” “to urge, to stimulate:”

subject (1): gods; objects: worshippers encouraged to battle, sacrifice, prayer; chariots, prayers, gifts;

subject (2): worshippers; objects: gods urged to donate gifts;

- 1) *asmān samarye pavamāna codaya* (9.85.2) “Sharpen us for the fight, O Pavamāna!;” *tvām hī sūrah sānitā / codāyo mānuṣo rātham* (1.175.2) “But thou art a hero (and) procurer. / Urge on the man’s chariot!;”
- 2) *tām=tam id rādhasē mahā / īndraṃ codāmi pītāye* (8.68.7) “Only him, Indra, I inspire for the great donation, for drinking.”

The relations are somewhat obscured when the worshipper addresses the mediating gods, *Agni* and *Soma*, asking them to urge other gods to be liberal in gift-giving, for example: *tvām no devātātaye rāyō dānāya codaya* (10.141.6) “Encourage the gods to endow us with wealth!” (to *Agni*); *yé te mādā . . . tébhir indram codaya dātave maghām* (9.75.5) “Those thine intoxicating juices . . . stimulate *Indra* (with) them to donate a generous gift!”

Budh- “to awake(n),” “to notice,” “to endow:”

subject (1): gods; objects: worshippers awakened for gift-receiving; invocations, sacrifices, etc.;

subject (2): worshippers; objects: gods awakened for gift-giving;

- 1) *juṣéthām yajñām bódhataṃ hávasya me* (2.36.6) “You both, enjoy the sacrifice! Take notice of my invocation! (to *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*);”

*mahé no adyá bodhaya-
úṣo rāyé divítmatī
yáthā cinno ábodhayaḥ
satyáśravasi vāyyé
sújāte ásvasūṃṛte* (5.79.1)

“Awaken us today for great wealth, / O *Uṣas*, full of radiance, / Just as thou wokest us / At *Satyáśravas Vayya*’s (place), O noble one, generously donating horses!;”

- 2) *bódhāmasi tvā haryaśva yajñair / bódhā na stómam ándhaso mádeṣu* (7.21.1) “We awaken thee, O (master) of dun horses, with sacrifices. / Heed our praise in (thy) intoxication with the *Soma*-juice!;”²⁸ *ghṛtaír bodhayatātithim* (8.44.1) (“With streams of ghee awaken the guest!”) (*Agni*).

The primary stem *bódha-* and the causative *bodháya-* are used indifferently with both subject-classes.

The third person singular aorist passive *ábodhi*, with a passive or intransitive meaning, occurs exclusively with the subject of a god who either has been aroused by his worshippers or has awakened himself in order to enrich and support them. As a rule, this meaning is implicitly contained in a wider context; but quite explicit is, for example, 5.1.1-2: *ábodhy agnīḥ samídhā jánānām* (1) “*Agni* is awakened by the people’s firewood;” *ábodhi hótā yajáthāya devān* (2) “The *hotar (Agni)* has awakened to honor the gods.”

Śru- “to hear:”

subject (1): gods; objects: worshippers, invocations, prayers, etc.;

subject (2): worshippers; objects: gods with positive qualities; various goods;

- 1) . . . *indra . . . śrudhī naḥ* (1.133.6) “O *Indra*, hear us!;” *ádhā ma indra śṛṇavo hávemā* (7.29.3) “So, O *Indra*, hear these calls of mine!;”
- 2) *evā hí tvām rtuthā yātáyantam / maghā víprebhyo dádatam śṛnómi* (5.32.12) “And I also hear that thou rewardest in time, / Making generous presents to the inspired ones;” *bhadráṃ kárnebhīḥ śṛṇuyāma devā / bhadráṃ pasyemākṣábhīr yajatrāḥ* (1.89.8) “The beautiful (thing), let us hear (it) with (our) ears, O gods! The beautiful (thing), let us see (it) with (our) eyes, O you, worthy of sacrifice!”

If the referent of its object is a deity, the verb *śru-* regularly appears with a double accusative, and the predicative accusative always denotes a positive quality, such as *revánt* (8.2.11), “wealthy;” *bhīṣáktama-* (2.33.4) “best-healing;” *sápati-pāñcajanya-* (5.32.11) “the good lord of five tribes;” *śīśayá-* (10.42.3) “generous;” *svavj-* (10.38.5) “possessing his own might.” These epithets, included in the predicate group, have a suggestive, or evocative, function.²⁹ The deity was supposed to display towards the worshipper those divine positive qualities that he had heard so much about.

In summing up we could say that the first three verbs represent various aspects of the same “deep” action of serving the deity when the subject is a worshipper. The specific forms of such service—making a sacrifice or a laudatory song, extending it to the deity, or offering it—are dependent upon the proper lexical meaning of each of these verbs. In this way verbs with different meanings can become synonymous in the context of the exchange between god and his worshipper. The latter three verbs seem to have a symmetrical predicate as regards their class of subjects and objects. Putting it differently, if *x* is the subject-class, then *y* (at least, in part) is in the object-class, and vice versa, (where *x* = gods, any *y* = worshippers). None of these verbs has converse meanings, but there are differences in syntactical constructions, determined by the respective subject-class. The list of such verbs is obviously far from complete. Sometimes the same verb has forms that differ in the choice of direct object and syntactical constructions, and on the other hand, there are forms with converse meanings.

Here we shall discuss some of those verbs whose meanings appear to be converse when their subjects are either gods or their worshippers. It ought to be mentioned at this point that quite often converse meanings only partly represent the total semantic range of a given verb.

Kan-, *kā-* (*ā + kan-*) “to rejoice,” “to be satisfied”—
“to seek,” “to strive to cause joy:”

- 1) *ā yāhi kṛṇávāma te / indra bráhmāṇi várdhanā / yébhīḥ saviṣṭha cākāno / . . .* (8.62.4) “Come! We want to compose for thee, / O *Indra*, invigorating prayers, / Through which, O Mightiest (one), thou shalt be joyful! . . . ;”

2) *tásmin sumnāni yájamāna ā cake* (3.3.3) “The sacrificer seeks to obtain favors from him” (*Agni*).

dās- “to make a donation” ← “to honor” → “to serve (a god):”

1) *só apratīni mánave purūñi- / índro dāśad dāsūše hánti vṛtrám* (2.19.4) “For the sake of man he (kills) numerous (enemies), who know not (their) equals; / *Indra* honors the one who honors (him); he slays *Vṛtra*”; *yásmāi tvám sudraviṇo dádaśo / 'nāgāstvám adite sarvátātā / . . . té syāma* (1.94.15) “O possessor of excellent wealth, to whom thou presentest as a gift / The full measure of sinlessness, O *Aditi* . . . we should like to be (similar) to those people!;” The verb *dās-* in this meaning is normally used with a direct-object accusative (without mentioning the indirect object), or with an indirect-object dative.

2) *yó vām yajñāñi saśamānó ha dāsati / . . . úpāha tám gáchatho víthó adhvarám* (1.151.7) “(He) who, exerting himself, serves you two with sacrifices, / . . . / Him you visit (and) taste (his) offering” (to *Mitra-Varuṇa*); this meaning of the verb *dās-* requires a direct-object accusative and an indirect-object instrumental.

The meaning “to honor” belongs to both areas. When the subject is a deity, the “honoring” of the worshipper is expressed by *Indra*’s slaying of his foes and granting the worshipper those physical and spiritual advantages that he asks of the god. The subject-worshipper honors the god by means of sacrifices and hymns offered to him. In other words, this particular meaning of the verb *dās-* could be included in the first group of non-conversives.

dhā- “to put, set, fix, arrange,” “to create:”

Various forms of this verb are quite numerous and have a wide currency in the *Rig Veda*, but the conversive meaning is attested on the periphery of its paradigm, namely, in the desiderative stem: “to wish to create” (goods for the worshipper)—“to seek to establish oneself” (in the god’s favors);

1) *té devāsaḥ svāravas tasthivāmsaḥ / prajāvad asmé didhiṣantu rátnam* (3.8.6) “These erected divine posts, / Let them strive to create for us a treasure, consisting of progeny . . . ;”

2) *índreṇa mītrám didhiṣema gīrbhír* (8.96.6) “We should like to obtain friendship with *Indra* by means of (our) songs!.”

Pan- “to cause admiration”—“to show admiration:”

1) *nūnám só asya mahimā paniṣṭa* (8.45.2) “Now this greatness of his arouses admiration” (a hymn to *Savitar*);

2) *índraṃ namasyā jaritúḥ pananta* (10.104.7) “The singer’s praises declare (his) admiration for *Indra*.”

Bādh- “to banish” (the enemy, the dark forces), “to widen”

(the limits of the universe)—“to attack,” “to besiege” (a god):

1) *pávamāna bādhasē soma sátrūn* (9.94.5) “O *Soma Pavamāna*, thou drivest the foes off;” *sámsa mītrāsya váruṇasya dhāma / súśmo ródasī badbadhe mahirvá* (7.61.4) “I wish to praise *Mitra*’s (and) *Varuṇa*’s custom. / Their fury will separate Heaven and Earth (through its) might;”

2) *asmā íd u práya iva prá yañsi / bhárāmy āngūśám bādhe suvrktí* (1.61.2) “This I hand to him as a refreshment, / I bring praise in order to assail (him) with happy words” (a hymn to *Indra*).

Bhaj- “to endow, to apportion” (*ā + bhaj-*, *ví + bhaj-*)—“to taste,” “to achieve,” “to obtain:”

1) *sá tvám na índra sūrye só apsv / ānāgāstvā ā bhaja jīvasamsé* (1.104.6) “Thou, O *Indra*, endow us with a portion of the sun, of the waters, / of innocence, of the speech of those (who are) alive!;” *ābhūd devāḥ savitā vándyo nú na / . . . / ví yó rátnā bhājati mānavébhyaḥ* (4.54.1) “Now god *Savitar* has appeared before us, (the one) worthy of praise, . . . who apportions treasures to men . . . ;”

2) *bhakṣimāhi prajám íṣam* (7.96.6) “We would like to obtain offspring (and) reinforcement.”

The second type of meaning is regular for stems in the middle voice, while the first type is more characteristic of those in the active voice.

Van- “to like, prefer,” “to accept readily,”

“to donate” — “to obtain,” “to win,” “to gain profit:”

1) *āsvinā purudamsasā nārā śávīrayā dhiyā dhīṣnyā vānataṃ gīrah* (1.3.2)

“O *Asvins*, rich in wonders, / O you two heroes, with (great) attention / Accept (our) songs favorably, O reverential (ones)!;” *ghramsām rákṣantam pári víśvátó gáyam / asmākam sárma vanavat svāvasuḥ* (5.44.7) “Let him grant us a swelling, protecting us on all sides from (his) heat, / A shelter (for us), he who possesses every boon” (he is the god *Sūrya*);

2) *kó vām adyá purūñām / ā vavne mártynām* (5.74.7) “Who—of all the mortals—has won you today for himself?;” *rtám yemāná rtám íd vanoti* (4.23.10) “He who adheres to the law, obtains from the law.”

Sap- “to accept reverence”—“to honor, revere,” “to serve:”

1) *té sīṣapanta jóṣam ā yájatrah* (7.43.4) “Let these (gods), worthy of sacrifices, accept the honors with pleasure;”

2) *indram vo nárah sakhyāya sepur / mahó yántah sumatāye cakānāh*
(6.29.1) "The heroes *revere Indra* for you for the sake of (his) friendship, / (They) who come, desiring favors of the great (god)."

Sādh- "to bring to the goal," "to fulfil"—
"to achieve the goal," "to be fulfilled:"

- 1) *tā na stipā tanūpā*
vāruṇa jaritṛṇām
mītra sādhatam dhīyah (7.66.3)

"These two defenders of our kin (and) of ourselves, / (These) singers, O *Varuṇa* / O *Mitra*, help (our) prayers to achieve the goal!;"

2) *sādhanām ugra no dhīyah* (6.53.4) "Let our prayers be fulfilled, O Terrible One!;"

Sūd- "to initiate (the worshipper)," "to make (him) worthy"—"to make (the sacrifice) tasty, delicious," "to spice," "to prepare," "to make well."

- 1) *nā sā jīyate maruto nā hanyate*
nā sredhati nā vyathate nā riṣyati
nāsyā rāya ūpa dasyanti nótāya
ṛṣim vā yām rājānam vā sūśūdatha (5.54.7)

"He is not oppressed, O Maruts, he is not killed, / He does not come to grief, he is not unsteady, he is not harmed, / Neither his wealth nor his provisions run out, / (He) whom you initiate, be he a *Ṛṣi* or be he a king!;" *yān rāyē mārātān sūśūdo agne / té syāma maghāvāno vayām ca* (1.73.8) "Let us become—together with our) generous (patrons)—those of the mortals whom thou, O *Agni*, makest worthy of wealth!;"

- 2) *yāt te sādē māhasā sūkṛtasya*
pārṣṇyā vā kāsayā vā tulōda
srucēva tā havīṣo adhvarēṣu
sārvā tā te brāhmaṇā sūdayāmi (1.162.17)

"If, during a ride when thou snortest hard, / Thou hast been struck with heel or whip, / Then—as a ghee-ladle in the sacrifices (expiates errors), / All this I shall make well with prayer" (addressed to the sacrificial horse); *tām tvā ayām pito / vācobhir gāvo nā havīṣo sūśūdima* (1.187.11) "O Food, we have made thee tasty (by means of) speeches, as cows (make) the oblations."

Although the semantics of this verb remains rather vague, and its meanings cannot be considered conversive, they still differ clearly when the subject of the verb is the god or the worshipper. This fact is also reflected in the

corresponding syntactical constructions. Worthy of note is the case of *Agni* the *Hotar* priest, in which the deity takes on the functions of the worshipper: then the meaning of the verb and the syntactical construction belong to the second type, for example: *agnīr havīṣ samitā sūdayāti* (3.4.10) "*Agni* the meat-carver shall make the sacrifice delicious!."

Svad- "to taste, eat with pleasure"—"to prepare:"

- 1) *svādasva havīṣ sām iṣo didhīhi* (3.54.22) "Taste the oblations with delight! Light up the sacrificial provisions!" (to *Agni*);
2) *svādāmi gharmām* (1.119.2) "I am preparing a hot-milk drink."

As in the case of the preceding etymologically related verb, the subject here, whose referent is the divine mediator (*Agni*), is regularly equated with the worshipper.

Hi- "to make (the worshipper) hurry" (to obtain a boon),
"to inspire (worshippers)," "to send (riches, etc.)"—"to incite (the mediating gods in sacrifices)," "to stimulate (gods to make gifts),"
"to be assiduous (in rites)," "to set in motion."

- 1) *sā no mahāñ animāno*
dhūmāketuḥ puruścandrāh
dhiyé vājāta hinvatu (1.27.11)

"He, the great, the boundless one, / The smoke-ensign, the all-bright one / Let him incite us to inspiration (and) reward!"

yām tvām vipra medhāsātā
agne hinōsi dhānāya
sā tāvoṭī gōṣu gāntā (8.71.5)

"(He) whom thou, O inspired *Agni*, drivest to the reward, so that he should gain wisdom, / With thy help he shall come (to possess) the cows;" *tvé tān nah suvédam usriyam vāsu / yām tvām hinōsi māryam* (8.4.16) "It is easy to obtain wealth (consisting of) cows from thee for that mortal (among) us whom thou inspirest;"

2) *kavīm ketūm dhāsim bhānūm ādrer / hinvānti sām rājyām rōdasyoh*
(7.6.2) "The poet, the ensign, the source, the ray, (the offspring) of the rock, / They incite him, the happiness and kingdom of the two worlds" (they are the priests; he is *Agni*);

tām durōsam abhī narah
sōmam visvācyā dhiyā
yajñām hinvanty ādrībhīh (9.101.3)

"The heroes (priests) *set in motion* this hard-to-ignite (?) *Soma* / With power-thought, directed everywhere, / (This) sacrifice (they drive) with pressing-stones;" *éte sámibhiḥ suśámī abhūvan / yé hinviré tanvāḥ sóma uktaih* (10.28.12) "Those (men) distinguished themselves by (their) sacrificial devotion (and) generous donation / Who were zealous in (their) hymns at the *Soma*-(pressing)." Some forms of the verb *hi-* appear to have conversive meanings, while other forms differ in their direct-object referents. This seems to depend on whether the verb's subject refers to the deity or the worshipper.

In the *Rg Veda* nouns have "auspicious" conversive meanings with reference to a deity or worshipper much more frequently than verbs do, and this fact can be explained by the particularities of the Old Indian system of derivations. It is still standard doctrine, taken over from the Indian grammarians, that the verb-root is basic to both inflexion and derivation, since the number of noun-roots is rather limited. In theory any verbal root can acquire nominal functions; it is irrelevant that for some roots such nouns are not attested. In the *Rg Veda* the root-nouns are much more numerous than in any other Old Indian text; after the *Rg Veda* they gradually fell into disuse. If a verbal root has conversive meanings, they are also inherent in the corresponding root-noun. The nominal derivational affixes, with the exception of some types of participles, are indifferent to active/middle distinctions, a feature which afforded ample opportunity for the development of conversive meanings in primary derivatives, depending on their reference to deity or worshipper. Compounds have even greater opportunities in this respect, since their structure itself admits of different grammatical interpretations, and in the end, too much is simply determined by context. Compounds are indifferent to some important oppositions that are usually grammaticalized in the verbal system, and this indifference is often made use of when these compounds are involved in the "auspicious" zone of the relationship between deity and worshipper. Compound words make up about half of all nouns with conversive meanings.

Of all the primary nouns, the root-nouns only rarely have a conversive meaning that reflects the "circular" gift-exchange between deity and worshipper. This is attested only in the following nouns:

iṣ- (feminine) "strength," "freshness;" "well-being," "prosperity"—
"an invigorating sacrificial drink," "delight in sacrifice:"

- 1) *tām agne asmé iṣam érayasva
vaiśvānara dyumātīm jātavedaḥ
yáyā rādhaḥ pínvasi viśvavāra
pṛthú srávo dāsúṣe mártvyāya* (7.5.8)

"This *well-being*, O *Agni*, obtain (it) for us, / O *Vaiśvānara*, this glistening (prosperity), O *Jātaveda*, / Desirable for all (of us), (by means of) which thou makest swell (thy) power to bestow, / The wide fame for the mortal who honors (thee)!;"

2) *sám vām kármanā sám iṣā hinomi- / Indrāviṣṇū ápasas pāré asya* (6.69.1) "With rite (and) *invigorating drink* I incite both of you, / O *Indra* and *Viṣṇu*, at the end of this (sacrificial) effort."

Dhī- (feminine) "attention," "understanding," "intention" (divine)—
"(poetic) speech," "prayer" (uttered by the worshipper):

- 1) *ásvinā púrudamsasā
nārā sávīrayā dhiyā
dhiṣṇyā vánataṃ gṛaḥ* (1.3.2)

"O *Ásvins*, rich in wonders, / O you two heroes, with strained attention, / Accept favorably (our) voices, O reverential (ones)!;"

- 2) *evā no agne amṛteṣu pūrvya
dhīṣ pīpāya brháddivesu mānuṣā
dūhānā dhenūr vjāneṣu kārāve
mánā satīnam pururūpam iṣāni* (2.2.9)

"Thus, O primordial *Agni*, human *poetic speech* has swollen up (with milk) for us among the immortal inhabitants of the high heaven, (speech) has become a milch-cow for the singer, among the sacrificing communities, so that it might by itself create a hundred-fold multiform reward."

But the bulk of noun stems with conversive meaning is derived from verbal roots with the help of various suffixes, both primary (including the stem-forming vowels) and secondary. Most numerous is the group of adjectives with secondary suffixes, where the most widely used suffix is *-yu-* (whose function may be considered only rarely primary). This suffix can be combined with nominal (and even pronominal) stems of various structure and has a range of meanings even wider than that of the conversives. Next in productivity is the suffix *ya-/-ia-*, also quite vague semantically, as it merely indicates some relation with the meaning of the primary stem. As such, it permits functionally different interpretations of the act "to give"/"to take"—depending upon whether the subject is the deity or the worshipper.

These nominal stems are as follows:

āma- (masculine) "impetuosity," "fury" (of a deity)—"scare, panic,"
"terror" (of mortal men):

1) *fkṣo ná vo marutah śmívāñ ámo / dudhró gaúr iva bhīmayúh* (5.56.3)
 “Your *onslaught*, O Maruts, (is as) mighty as a bear, / As terrible as an obstinate bull;”

*yó devó devátamo jāyamāno
 mahó vājebhir mahādbhis ca sūsmāih
 dádhāno vájram bāhvóṛ usántam
 dyām ámena rejayat prá bhūma* (4.22.3)

“The god who, being born as the most divine one, / Great in prizes and in mighty explosions of rage, / In his *fury* shakes Heaven (and) Earth, / When he takes into hands the thunderbolt (that) desires (it);”

2) *séneva sr̥ṣtāmañ dadhāty / ástur ná didyút tveṣāpratīkā* (1.66.7) “Like an army set loose, he inspires *terror*, / Like a bowman’s lightning (“arrow”) with a dreadful appearance” (about *Agni*); *tvám ádha prathamám jāyamánó / ’vísṡvā adhihā indra kṛṣṡīh* (4.17.7) “Being born, first of all, at that time, thou / castest all these peoples into *terror*, O *Indra*!” This noun, *áma*- stands out as not quite typical, since the subject of the act in both situations is a deity, not a worshipper, nor is any worshipper’s attribute mentioned in the second situation. The lexical meaning of the noun *áma*- is, as it were, differently evaluated, depending on its relation to the divine or the human sphere. In the second instance, we have a surface phrase *ámañ dhā-* or *áme dhā-* “to cast into terror.”

bhāgá- (masculine) “lot,” “fate,” “destiny,” “prize”
 (bestowed by the deity on the worshipper)—“the god’s share in sacrifice:”

1) *yám indra dadhiṣé tvám
 ásvam gām bhāgám ávyayam
 yájamāne sunvatí dáksīnāvati
 tásmin tám dhehi má paṇaú* (8.97.2)

“The horse (and) bull thou hast, O *Indra*, destined as the unchangeable *prize* / For the sacrificer, for the *Soma*-presser, for him who generously meets the sacrificial costs, / Give that (horse and bull) to him, not to a miser!;” *yaśásam bhāgám kṛñutam no ásvinā / sómam ná cārum maghāvatsu nas kṛtam* (10.39.2) “Create a glorious *destiny* for us, O *Aśvins*, / Make us delightful—like *Soma*—for the generous givers!;”

2) *práti víhi prásthitañ somyám mádhu / píḃāgnīdhrāt táva bhāgásya tṛpnuhi* (2.36.4) “Accept joyfully the offered sweetness of *Soma*! / Drink from the *agnīdh* (priest’s) cup, be sated with thy *share*!.”

vratá- (neuter) “(god’s) behest,” “divine law”—“(worshipper’s) vow:”

1) *ánu pūrvāny okyā
 sāmṛājyásya sascima
 mitrásya vratā váruṇasya dīrghasrūt* (8.25.17)

“We have always followed the ancient customary (behests) of the emperor, / the long-heard *behests* of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*;” *ánu vratām savitúr móky āgāt* (2.38.3) “Night has come, obeying *Savitár*’s law;”

2) *yó agníśómā haviṣā saparyād / devadrícā mánasā yó ghr̥téna / tásya vratām rakṣatam . . .* (1.93.8) “He who honors *Agni* and *Soma* with a libation, / With thought directed to the gods, with ghee, / Protect that (man’s) *vow* . . . !.”

várdhana- (neuter) “enhancement,” “prosperity”—
 “means of enhancing” (sacrifice, prayer):

1) *yó bhójanam ca dáyase ca várdhanam / ādrād ā sūṣkam mádhumad dudohitha* (2.13.6) “(Thou) who apportions food and *prosperity*, / From the moist (one) thou hast milked the dry (and) sweet (thing)” (to *Indra*);

2) *yásya bráhma várdhanam yásya sómo / yásyedañ rádhah sá janāsaíndrah* (2.12.14) “(He) for whom prayer (is) a *means of enhancing*, for whom *Soma* (is destined), / For whom this gift is made, he O people, (is) *Indra*!.”

dhítí- (feminine) “attention,” “intention”

(of a deity toward his worshipper)—“poetic vision,” “prayer:”

1) *yát te dhítim āvṛñmáhé / ’dha smā nas trivárūthah sívo bhava* (6.15.9)
 “Since we choose thy *attention* (and) benevolence, / Be merciful to us, (granting) triple protection!;”

2) *sá no dhítí váriṣṡhayā
 sr̥ṣṡhayā ca sumatyā
 ágne rāyó didīhi nah
 suvṛktibhir varenya* (5.25.3)

“For our exceptional *vision* and for the best well-turned prayer, / O *Agni*, light up for us the riches, for beautiful speeches, O Chosen (one)!.”

prásasti- (feminine) “fame,” “gift of honor,” etc.—
 “praise,” “glorification,” “respect:”

1) *prásastim nah kṛñuta rudriyāso* (5.57.7) “Create fame³⁰ for us, O sons of *Rudra*!;”

*mahír asya práñitayah
 pūrvír utá práśastayah
 nāsya kṣīyanta útāyah* (6.45.3)

"Grand is his rule, / And numerous (are) the gifts (in his) honor, / His supports are inexhaustible" (about *Indra*);

2) *ayám vām yajñó akṛta prásastim* (1.181.1) "This sacrifice has created respect for you."

rāṭī- (feminine) "gift," "(gods') favor"—"gift,"
"sacrifice," "offering" (made by a worshipper):

1) *devānāṃ rāṭīr abhū no ní vartatām* (1.89.2) "The gods' gift shall turn toward us!;"

2) *iyám ta indra girvaṇo / rāṭīḥ kṣarati sunvatāḥ* (8.13.4) "This presser's offering is flowing for thee, O *Indra*, who delights in songs of praise!" ("the offering" is the *Soma*-juice).

avas- (neuter) "help," "favor"—"support" (through sacrifice):

1) *diváspṛthivyór avasā madema* (5.49.5) "Let us rejoice in the help of Heaven-and-Earth!;" *ávo dhāta vidhaté rātnam adyá* (6.65.3) "Bestow today favor (and) treasure upon the one who honors (you)!" (addressed to the dawns);

2) *pūrvībhīr hí dadāsimá / sarádbhīr maruto vayám / ávobhīś carṣaṇinām /* (1.86.6) "We honored you, O Maruts, during many autumns / Thanks to the peoples' support." The second meaning is attested in the *Rig Veda* in several isolated cases only, and the idea of *avas-* is associated almost exclusively with the divine sphere.

práyas- (neuter) "reward," "joy"—"sacrificial delight:"

1) *tvám . . . agne . . . / yás tāṛṣāṇá ubháyāya jánmane / máyah kṛnoṣi práya á ca sūrāye* (1.31.7) "Thou, O Agni, . . . demanding (the same thing), createst consolation and reward for the protector (of the sacrifice);"

2) *ápād dhotrād utá potrād amatta- / utá neṣṭrād ajuṣata práyo hitám* (2.37.4) "He drank from the hotar's cup, and grew inebriated from the potar's cup, / and he enjoyed the sacrificial delight from the neṣṭar's cup" (about the deity *Dravinodas*).

rādhas- (neuter) "gift," "generosity," "reward"—
"sacrificial donation," "offering:"

1) *ní no rayím subhójasam yuvasva / ní vīrám gávyam ásvyam ca rādhaḥ* (7.92.3) "Bestow fine-tasting wealth upon us, / Be(stow) a son (upon us) and a reward (consisting) of cows and horses!;" *á tvā sakyām upamám rādho ánnaiḥ* (10.29.3) "I would like to incite thee to utmost generosity (by means of sacrificial) foods!;"

2) *brāhmaṇād indra rādhasaḥ / pībā sómam řiṭñr ánu* (1.15.5) "O *Indra*,

from the brahman's offering / Drink *Soma* at the proper time!."

ṛtāvan- "he who fixes the law," "supporting (the law)"—
"he who conforms to the law," "pious:"

1) *dhārāyanta ādityāso jágat sthā devā vísvasya bhūvanasya gopāḥ dīrghādhīyo rākṣamānā asuryām ṛtāvānas cāyamānā řṇāni* (2.27.4)

"The *Adityas* support (everything) moving and motionless. / (They are) the gods, the herders of the universe, / With far-reaching mind, protecting the *Asuras*' world, / Supporting the Law, punishing the offence;"

2) *prá vām sá mitrāvaruṇāv ṛtāvā / vípro mánmāni dīrghasrúḍ iyarti* (7.61.2) "To both of you, O *Mitra-Varuṇa*, this pious / Poet addresses (his) compositions, (he) the far-heard (one)."

nāmasvant- "accepting worship"—"offering worship:"

1) *nāmasvantā dhṛtadakṣādhi gárte / mitrāsāthe varuṇéḷāsv antāḥ* (5.62.5) "Accepting worship, O you (both) acting firmly, you sit / Upon the throne, O *Mitra*, O *Varuṇa*, in the midst of libations;"

2) *sá sukrátur řtaciḍ astu hótā / yá āditya sávasā vām nāmasvān / āvavártad ávase vām havīṣmān . . .* (7.85.4) "He shall be a very wise hotar, knowing the Law, / Who, O *Ādityas*, offering worship (and) libations, / Will be able to convert you two to assist (us) through (his) power . . ." (about *Mitra-Varuṇa*).

sūñtāvānt- "beneficial"—"sacrificing liberally:"

1) . . . *revád asmé vy ūcha sūñtāvati* (1.92.14) "Make the wealth shine for us, O beneficial (one)!" (to *Uṣas*);

2) *yuvám citrám dadathur bhójanam narā / códethām sūñtāvate* (7.74.2) "You have given fine food, O you two heroes. / Hurry (hither) for the sake of the generous (sacrificer)."³¹

dāsvāms- "merciful"—"respectful:"

ómāsaś carṣñidhṛto víśve devāsa á gata dāsvāmsō dāśúṣaḥ sutám (1.3.7)

"O helpers, protectors of the people, / O All-Gods, come (hither), / Merciful to the pressed (*Soma*) of the person who respects (you)."³²

ukthía- “praiseworthy”—“containing praises:”

- 1) *pávasva soma kratuvín na ukthyó / 'vyo vāre pári dhāva mádhu priyám* (9.86.48) “Clarify thyself, O *Soma*, seeking the mind’s power for us, O *Praiseworthy* (one); / Run in circles upon the sheep-wool strainer, (thus becoming) the delicious mead!;”
- 2) *gāya gāyatrám ukthyám* (1.38.14) “Sing the song that contains (only) praise” (address to a priest).

It should be mentioned that in the case of a god-priest, like *Brahmanaspati* the god of the prayer, the word *ukthyā* has to be interpreted in the second way:

*prá nūnám bráhmaṇas pátir
mántraṃ vadaty ukthyám
yásmínna índro váruṇo mītró aryamā
devā ókāṃsi cakriré* (1.40.5)

“Right now *Brahmanaspati* / is reciting a verse, containing praise, / In which *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Mitra*, *Aryaman*, / —The gods—take delight.”

*dhīṣṇya-*³³ “arousing inspiration”—“winning over (the god’s) favor:”

- 1) *tád aśvinā śṛṇutam dhīṣṇyā yuvám* (1.89.4) “hear this, O *Asvins*, you who arouse inspiration!;”
- 2) *kás chāndasām yógam āveda dhīrah / kó dhīṣṇyām prāti vácama papāda* (10.114.9) “Which sage knows the yoking in of the meters? / Which (of them) has possessed the speech that wins over (the god’s favor?).”

namasía- “worthy of worship”—“worshipful,” “adoring:”

- 1) *ayám mītró namasyāḥ susévo / rájā sukṣatró ajaniṣṭa vedhāḥ* (3.59.4) “This *Mitra*, worthy of adoration, very benevolent, / Was born as a king (with) kind authority, an establisher (of rites);”
- 2) *tā grñhi namasyēbhīḥ sūsatī / sumnébhir índrāvárūnā cakānā* (6.68.3) “Glorify both of them in songs full of adoration, / *Indra* and *Varuṇa*, (whose) favors are desirable.”

somyá- “worthy of *Soma*,” “fond of *Soma*,” “*Soma-lover*”—
“busy in *Soma*-pressing,” “preparing the *Soma*-juice:”

- 1) *índrah sá dāmane kṛtá
ójiṣṭhaḥ sá máde hitáh
dyunní slokí sá somyáh* (8.93.8)

“This *Indra* is ready to give (the gifts); / The Mightiest One is prepared to be intoxicated; / He, the splendid, loud, *Soma-worthy* one;”

*yás te ánu svadhám ásat
suté ní yacha tanvám
sá tvā mamattu somyám* (3.51.11)

“Pause by the pressed (*Soma*) / that will be to thy taste! Let it intoxicate thee, O *Soma-lover*!” (to *Indra*);

- 2) *ichánti tvā somyāsaḥ sákhāyaḥ / sunvánti somāṃ dádhati práyāṃsi* (3.30.1) “The friends, busy over *Soma*,³⁴ are looking for thee. / They press *Soma*. They prepare the sacrificial delights” (to *Indra*, about the priests).

yajñíya- “worthy of sacrifice,” “honorable,” “divine”—
“offering sacrifices,” “honoring,” “pious:”

- 1) *yájāmahai yajñíyān hánta devān* (10.53.2) “Let us now honor the gods, (the ones) worthy of honor!;”
- 2) *prāti vām ráthaṃ nṛpatī jarádhyaí / havíṣmatā mánasā yajñíyena* (7.67.1) “I would like to arouse your chariot, O you two lords of men, / By means of pious thought, sacrifice-entailing” (to the *Asvins*).

Noun stems of various structure, actually attested or securely reconstructible for the *Ṛg Veda*, serve as the bases for denominative verbs, some of which are characterized by conversive meanings. Their typical suffix, *-yá-*, is in itself indifferent both to (in)transitivity and diathesis. Among the meanings held by Renou to be typical of these verbs, he cites in particular, “to be like (somebody/something)” and “to cause (one) to be like” [120.304]. This semantic opposition is consistently played upon in the circular exchange between the deity and the worshipper. Very occasionally conversivity could be implicit in the semantics of the primary noun. This group includes the following verbs:

uruṣy- “to seek space” (of *Agni* on behalf of himself)—

“to create space,” “to save” (of the god on behalf of the worshipper):

- 1) *ayám agnir uruṣyaty / amṛtād íva jánmanaḥ* (10.176.4) “This *Agni* seeks space for himself / Both from being born and from immortality” (he strives to break away both from the men and the gods—a well-known motif in the *Ṛg Veda*);

- 2) *yó asmai havaír gṛtávadbhir
ávidhat prá tám prācā nayati bráhmaṇas pátiḥ
uruṣyátīm áṃhaso rákṣatī riṣo
mḥós cid asmā urucákrir ádbhutaḥ* (2.26.4)

“(He) who celebrated him with ghee-offerings, / Him *Brahmanaspati* leads forward. / He saves him from straits, protects (him) from injury. / The amazing god creates a wide space even from narrowness for him.”

The correlation of meanings in this verb does not fit the semantic opposition between the god and the worshipper as the subject of action: in this case the deity appears regularly as the subject. However, the meaning changes according to whether the deity's action is performed for its own ends or for the worshipper's sake.

duvasy- "to reward," "to bestow a gift"—"to honor" (the god):

- 1) *anehásah stúbhha índro duvasyati* (3.51.3) "Indra rewards for faultless melodies;" *yuvám pedáve puruváram aśvinā duvasyathaḥ* (1.119.10) "You bestow on Pedu the much-desired (horse), O *Aśvins*;"
- 2) *sūktair devaṃ savitāram duvasya* (5.49.2) "Honor the god *Savitār* with hymns!"

The relationship of the constructions is identical with that of the verb *dās-* (see above).

panasy- "to cause (the worshipper's) admiration"—
"to be appreciated," "to be acknowledged" (by the god):

- 1) *sanāt sá yudhmá ójasā panasyate* (1.55.2) "Since ancient times this fighter (*Indra*) arouses admiration (by his) strength;"
- 2) *ākaré vásor jaritā panasyate* (3.51.3) "He who showers the goods appreciates the singer" (about *Indra*).

vājay- "to bring reward"—"to strive for reward:"

- 1) *ād dákṣiṇā yujyate vājayántī* (5.1.3) "Then the rewarding *Dakṣiṇā* is yoked;"
- 2) *devásy savitúr vayám
vājayántaḥ púramdhyā
bhágasya rātīm īmahe* (3.62.11)

"(Counting on) the god *Savitār* for inspiration we, striving for the reward, pray for *Bhaga*'s gift."

sumnāy- "to be benevolent, merciful"—"to ask for favors:"

- 1) *sumnāyānn id víso asmākam ā cara* (1.11.43) "Come to our settlements, (thou) full of benevolence" (to *Rudra*);
- 2) *máruto yád dha vo diváh
sumnāyánte hávāmahe
ā tū na úpa gantana* (8.7.11)

"O *Maruts*, do come to us, when we, asking for (your) favors, invoke you down from the sky!"

The next step in derivation consists in the formation of *u-* stem adjectives from various denominative verb stems; some denominative stems are actually attested only within this class of adjectives. It contains a group of adjectives with conversive meanings within the "auspicious" zone, meanings that depend on the opposition "god"—"worshipper." These *u-* stems are rather heterogeneous, morphologically speaking. In the case of *yájyu-*, the primary suffix *-yu-* combined with the root *yaj-* allows us to include this adjective on purely formal grounds. But a formal analysis of these stems is not as revealing as a description of the influence of the functional aspect upon their semantics.

Although Renou conventionally labels the *u-* stems as "participles" based on secondary verb stems [120.155] because they function as verbal adjectives, they do not reflect such purely verbal categories and meanings as tense, voice, transitivity, etc. This freedom from purely verbal categories provides a wide range of possible context-bound semantic interpretations of these adjectives. A list of these *u-* stem verbs follows:

udanyú- "carrying water"—"thirsting for water:"

- 1) *prá vo marutas taviṣā udanyávo / vayov̄dho aśvayújah párijrayaḥ* (5.54.2) "O *Maruts*! Let your brave, water-carrying (chariots) (rush) forth, / the strength-increasing, horse-yoked, circulating (ones)!;"
- 2) *iyám vo asmát práti haryate matís / tṣṣnáje ná divá útsā udanyáve* (5.57.1) "This prayer of ours is pleasing to you, / Like heavenly wells to the thirsty one who seeks water."

panasyú- "exciting admiration"—"expressing admiration:"

- 1) *indrāya sáma gāyata
viprāya brhaté brhát
dharmakṛte vipascíte panasyáve* (8.98.1)

"For *Indra* sing the melody, / The lofty one—for (him), the lofty, the inspired (one), / For the Law-creator, the perspicacious, admiration-exciting (one);"

2) *prá vo dhíyo mandrayúvo vipanyúvaḥ / panasyúvaḥ samvāsaneṣv akramuḥ* (9.86.17) "Forward your prayers have moved, harmonious, laudatory, / Admiring, at the time of sacrificial feasts."

yájyu- "accepting reverence," "worthy of reverence,"
"revered"—"reverent," "revering" (the gods):"

- 1) *sá na indrāya yájyave
váruṇāya marúdbhyaḥ
varivov̄t pári srava* (9.61.12)

"Flow around (here), at our (place), for *Indra*, the revered one, for *Varuṇa* (and) the *Maruts*, finding a wide outlet!" (to *Soma*);

2) *bhūrīṇi hí tvé dadhíré ánikā- / ágne devásya yágyavo jánāsaḥ* (3.19.4) "A multitude of faces, O *Agni*, have put into thee the god-revering peoples."

vājayú- "obtaining the prize"—"striving for the prize:"

- 1) *tvám na indra vājayús*
tvám gavyúḥ satakrato
tvám hiraṇyayúr vaso (7.31.3)

"O *Indra*, thou art for us a *prize-obtainer*, / Thou art a *cattle-obtainer*, O a hundred-times sagacious, / Thou art a *gold-obtainer*, O *Vasu!*;"

2) *úpem asṛikṣi vājayúr vacasyám* (2.35.1) "Striving for the prize, I have poured out (my) eloquence."

vipanyú- "admirable," "fond of being admired"—"admirer:"

- 1) *á no gantam mayobhúvā-*
ásvinā sambhúvā yuvám
yó vām vipanyū dhūtíbhír
gīrbhír vatsó ávīvrđhat (8.8.19)

"Come to us as joy-bearers, O *Aśvins*, as two luck-bearers, / (Come) to *Vatsa* who has inspired you with prayers / (and) praise-songs, O you two, fond of being admired;"

2) *vayám hí vām hávāmahe / vipanyávo víprāso vājasātaye* (8.87.6) "We, the admiring poets, call on you in order to win the prize" (to the *Aśvins*).

sumnāyú- "merciful"—"asking for mercy:"

- 1) *á vām rátham avamásyām vyūṣtau / sumnāyávo vṛṣaṇo vartayantu* (7.71.3) "In the earliest morning the merciful brave (horses) shall bring your chariot" (about the *Aśvins*' horses);
- 2) *tám tvā vayám sudhyò návyam agne / sumnāyáva ímahe devayántaḥ* (6.1.7) "To thee (as such), O *Agni*, we, the pious ones, appeal again, asking for mercy, devoted to the gods."

About half of the nouns with conversive meanings are made up of compound words, and their semantics is much more context-conditioned than that of non-compounds. A list of these compound nouns follows:

ádabdha- "undeceivable"—"devoted" ("not-deceiving"):

- 1) *vidvāñ ádabdho ví mumoktu páśān* (1.24.13) "May the Knower (i.e. *Varuṇa*), the undeceivable one, loosen the nooses!;"

- 2) *satyám tád indrāvaruṇā kṛśásya vām*
mádhva úrmūḥ duhate saptá vāñih
tábhír dāśvāmsam avataṁ śubhas pañi
yó vām ádabdho abhí páñi cūtibhíh (8.59.3)

"True it is, O *Indra* and *Varuṇa*: *Kṛśa*'s seven voices flow to you with a wave of mead. / O lords of beauty, support the worshipper by means of them (the voices), / who, in (his) prayers, shows respect to you with undeceiving devotion."

anamívá- "not bringing diseases"—"free of disease:"

- 1) *anamívó rudra jáśu no bhava* (7.46.2) "O *Rudra*, be thou not a disease-bringer to our descendants!;"
- 2) *anamívāsaḥ . . . vayám mitrásya sumataú syāma* (3.59.3) "Free of disease . . . we should wish to be at *Mitra*'s mercy."

anehás- "incomparable"—"free of sin:"

- 1) *śivé no dyāvāpṛthiví anehásā* (6.75.10) "(Let the) incomparable Sky-and-Earth (be) merciful to us!;"
- 2) *vayám mitráśyāvasi / syāma sapráthastame / anehásas tvótayaḥ . . .* (5.65.5) "Let us be in *Mitra*'s greatest favors, free of sin, aided by thee . . .!"

ásvamiṣṭi- "(one) obtaining horses"—"seeking horses:"

- 1) *ayá te agne vidhema-*
úrjo napād ásvamiṣṭe
enā súkténa sujāta (2.6.2)

"Through this (song), O *Agni*, we want to honor thee, / O off-spring of vigor, horse-obtainer, / With this hymn, O fine-born (one);"

2) *úd vāvṛśasva maghavan gáviṣṭaya / úd indráśvamiṣṭaye* (8.61.7) "Pour (thyself) out, O generous one, for the cow-seeker, / O *Indra*, for the horse-seeker!"

ukthásuṣma- "maturing on praise-songs"—"emitting praise:"

- 1) . . . *ukthásuṣmān vṛṣabharān svápnasas / tán ádityāñ ánu madā svastáye* (10.63.3) ". . . For the sake of luck greet these *Adityas*, who mature on praise-songs, bearing an ox-burden, and rewarding well!;"
- 2) *samudráṁ na síndhava ukthásuṣmā / uruvyácasam gīra á viśanti* (6.36.3) "Like rivers (into) the sea, the songs that emit praise penetrate into the boundless *Indra*."

urusámsa- "wide-ruling"—"with a far-reaching voice:"

1) *áheḷamāno varuṇehá bodhy / úrusamsa má na áyuh prá moṣiḥ* (1.24.11)
“O *Varuṇa*, stay here without anger! / O wide-ruling (one), do not steal the term of our life!”

2) *asmábhyaṃ tād divó adbhyáh pṛthivyās
tváya dattám kāmyaṃ rádha á gāt
sám yát stotṛbhya āpāye bhavāty
urusāmsāya savitar jaritré* (2.38.11)

“Let us obtain the desired bounty given by thee, from the sky, from the waters and from the earth, / bringing happiness to the eulogizers, to the friend, the singer with a far-reaching voice, O Savitar!”

kṛtābrahman- “he to whom a prayer is made”—“he who made a prayer:”

1) *tūrvann ójīyān tavásas táviyān / kṛtābrahméndro vṛddhámahāḥ /
rājābhavan mádhunaḥ somyásya . . .* (6.20.3) “Winning (in the capacity of) the mightier one, stronger than the strong one, / Mightily grown as a prayer was made to him, / *Indra* became the king of *Soma*’s mead . . . ;”

2) *kṛtābrahmā sūsuvad rātāhavya ít* (2.25.1) “Only he, who has made a prayer (and) offered a sacrifice, will become stronger.”

yatásruc- “to whom the offering ladle is extended”—
“he who extends the offering ladle:”

1) *yé vṛkṇāso ádhi ksámi
nmitāso yatásrucaḥ
té no vyantu vāryaṃ
devatrā kṣetrasādhasaḥ* (3.8.7)

“(Those) that, cut down, (are) on the ground, / That (are) dug in, to whom the offering ladles are extended, / Let them reward (us) with the desirable gift, / (They) that mark the gods’ fields!” (about the deified sacrificial poles);

2) *híraṇyavarṇān kakuhān yatásruco / brahmanyántaḥ sámśyaṃ rádha
īmahe* (2.34.11) “(To these gods) of a golden hue, the outstanding ones, we pray with sacred words; ladles extended, for a favor (that is) worthy of celebration” (to the *Maruts*).

rātāhavya- “he to whom libations are offered”—
“he who performs a libation:”

1) *indrāviṣṇū havīṣā vāvṛdhānā- / ágrādvānā námasā rátahavyā / ghṛtāsutī
drāviṇaṃ dhattam asmé . . .* (6.69.6) “O *Indra-Viṣṇu*, growing on libation, / (You), the first-tasters, to whom the sacrificial drink is offered with reverence, / Whose drink (is) ghee,—bring us wealth!;”

2) *yó rātāhavyo ’vṛkāya dhāyase / kīrés cin mántram mánasā vanóṣi tám* (1.31.13) “(He) who has performed a libation to obtain safety, / That verse (of his)—though he be weak—thou shalt love (it) in (thy) mind” (to *Agni*).

sunīthá- “good leader,” “leading excellently”—
“he who has good leaders,” “well-guided:”

1) *ādityā rudrā vásavaḥ sunīthā
dyāvākṣāmā pṛthivī antárikṣam
sajóśaso yajñám avantu devā
ūrdhvāṃ kṛṇvantv adhvarásya ketúm* (3.8.8)

“The *Ādityas*, the *Rudras*, *Vasu*, the good leaders, / Heaven-(and)-Earth, The Land, the aerial space, / The unanimous deities shall help (our) sacrifice. / Let them erect the sacrificial standard!;”

2) *sunīthó ghā sá mártyo
yám marúto yám aryamā
mītráh pánty adrúhaḥ* (8.46.4)

“That mortal has good leaders / Whom the *Maruts*, *Aryaman*, / *Mitra*, the blameless (ones), protect.”

sumatí- “(divine) favor”—“(worshippers’) prayer:”

1) *devānām bhadrā sumatír rjūyatām / devānām rātír abhí no ní vartatām* (1.89.2) “The beautiful favor of the gods (is) for those who follow the straight path: / The gods’ gift shall turn towards us!;”

2) *áchā gíraḥ sumatīm gantam asmayú* (1.151.7) “(O you), devoted to us, come to our songs, to (our) prayer!;”

sumánas- “benevolent” (towards the worshipper)—
“joyful in spirit” (with respect to the gods):

1) *ebhír no arkair
bhávā no arvān
svár na jyótiḥ
ágne víśvebhiḥ sumánā ánikaiḥ* (4.10.3)

“Thanks to these songs of ours / Turn (thyself) towards us, / Like the sun’s light, / Benevolent in all (thy) faces!” (to *Agni*);

2) *kṛṣántas tvā sumánasaḥ sapema- / abhí dyumnā tasthivāmsó jánānām* (4.4.9) “Joyful in spirit, playful, / eclipsing (other) people’s splendor, we wish to care for thee.

suyajñá- “receiving excellent sacrifices”—
“(one) establishing a fine sacrifice:”

- 1) *índrah suyajñá uśasaḥ svār janat* (2.21.4) “*Indra, the receiver of excellent sacrifices, gave birth to the dawns (and) to the sky;*”
- 2) *táva práñitī táva sūra sármann / á vivāsanti kaváyah suyajñáh* (3.51.7) “*Under thy guidance, under thy protection, O hero, / The excellently sacrificing poets are striving to win*” (to *Indra*).

If *Agni* appears as a priest, officiating at sacrifices, then the epithet *suyajñá-* has the worshipper’s connotation, which is evidence for the purely functional semantics of this lexical group. For example:

*samidhyámānaḥ prathamānu dhármā
sám aktúbhír ayyate vísvárārah
soctṣkešo ghrítánirnik pāvakáh
suyajñó agnir yajáthāya devān* (3.17.1)

“Being inflamed in accordance with the primeval ordinances, / He anoints himself with ointments, (he), desirable to everyone, / with flaming hair, ghee-garbed, the purifying (one), *Agni, the excellent sacrificer*,—in order to make a sacrifice for the gods.”

surādhas- “rich in gifts,” “generous”—“generously endowed:”

- 1) *abhí prá vah surādhasam
índram arca yáthā vidé
gó jaritṣbhyo maghávā purívásuḥ
sahásreṇeva síkṣati* (8.49.1)

“I wish to direct (a song) for your sake to the *richly-donating / Indra*, as he is known, / (To this one) who, like a protector possessing various goods, / is ready to support the singers, even with a thousand (cows);”

- 2) *váruṇaḥ právitā bhuvan
mitró vísvābhír ūtibhíh
káratām naḥ surādhasaḥ* (1.23.6)

“Let *Varuṇa* become a supporter (to us), / (And) *Mitra* with all (of his) reinforcements! / Let them make us *generously endowed!*”

suvāc- “worthy of fine speech”—“eloquent:”

- 1) *prkṣáprayajo draviṇaḥ suvācaḥ / suketáva uśáso revád ūsuḥ* (3.7.10) “The dawns, endowing (us) with powers of satiation, (the dawns), *worthy of beautiful speech*, riches (incarnated), (the dawns) with beautiful brightness lit up the wealth;”
- 2) *daívyā hotārā prathamā suvācā / mímānā yajñám mánuṣo yájadhyai*

(10.110.7) “The two divine hotars should be honored, the first, the *eloquent* ones, measuring out the man’s sacrifice.”

svabhiṣṭí- / *suabhiṣṭí-* “superior,” “helping”—
“favored,” “having benefited from:”

- 1) *abhím avanvan svabhiṣṭím ūtáyo . . .* (1.51.2) “The reinforcements have subdued him, *the superior one*” (him is *Indra*);
- 2) *ásāma yáthā suśakhāya ena / svabhiṣṭáyo narām ná sámśaiḥ* (1.173.9) “Let us acquire good friends thanks to him, (let us become) the *favored* ones, as (is) usual in the glorification of heroes!;”

svávas-/suávas- “helping excellently”—“obtaining excellent help:”

- 1) *híranyahasto ásurah sunitháh / sumṛṭkáh svávāñ yāv arvāñ* (1.35.10) “The golden-handed Asura, the good leader, / Extremely merciful, *the excellent helper*, let him come here!;”
- 2) *sá ít sudānuḥ svávāñ ṛtāvā- / índra yó vām varuṇa dāśati tmán* (6.68.5) “Only that only one *obtains* beautiful gifts (and) *excellent help*, (and is) the righteous one, / O *Indra* and *Varuṇa*, who himself honors both of you.”

stómavāhas- “attracted by praise”—“bringing praise:”

- 1) *gántéyānti sávanā háribhyām / babhrír vájram papṭhí sómam dadír gāḥ / . . . stómavāhāḥ* (6.23.4) “The frequenter of *Soma*-pressings, with (his) pair of bay (horses), / The vajra-bearer, the habitual *Soma*-drinker (and) cow-giver, / . . . (has been) *attracted by praise*” (about *Indra*);
- 2) *ávīṛdhanta gótamā / índra tvé stómavāhasaḥ* (4.32.12) “Have been inspired by thee, O *Indra*, the men of *Gotama*’s clan bringing praises.”

hitáprayas- “the one, for whom the sacrificial meal is prepared”—
“the one, who prepared the sacrificial meal:”

- 1) *utá tyā me raúdrāv arcimántā
nāsaryāv índra gúrtáye yájadhyai
manuṣvād vṛktábarhiṣe rárāñā
mandā hitáprayasā vikṣú yágyū* (10.61.15)

“And also these two *Rudras*—the glittering *Nāsaryas*, O *Indra*—I have to honor (them) in order to succeed. / They grant gifts to him who has spread the sacrificial straw-mat, like *Manu*, / To the joyous ones *for whom the sacrificial meal has been prepared*, who are revered among the tribes;”

- 2) *vayám vo vṛktábarhiṣo
hitáprayasa ānuśák
sutásomāso varuṇa havāmahe
manuṣvād iddhāgnayaḥ* (8.27.7)

"We invoke you, O *Varuṇa*, we who have successively spread the sacrificial straw, prepared the meal, pressed the *Soma*, (and then) built the fire, like *Manu*."

The complete list of compounds with conversive meanings contains only a single substantive (*sumatī-*); all the rest are adjectives. As a result, the *tatpuruṣa* and *dvandva* classes of compounds are not represented. The greater part of them are *bahuvrīhis* (15), and the rest—*karmadhārayas* (4). The latter category contains three words with the negative prefix *a-*/*an-*, whose presence in the substantival or adjectival stem stimulates the appearance of conversive meanings. The most numerous type of compounds is made up of words with the adjectival prefix *su-* "good," "excellent," "kind" (eight in all: one *karmadhāraya* and seven *bahuvrīhi*). When this prefix is joined to a substantive, the result is as a rule, a compound adjective with conversive meanings. But the antonymous adjectival prefix *du-*/*dur-*/*duḥ-* "bad," "evil," "mis-," "ill-," which is also quite productive in the *Ṛg Veda*, naturally lacks derivatives with conversive meanings, since its semantics belongs in the "inauspicious" zone where no semantic bifurcation takes place. This is a further illustration of the decisive role of semantics and style in the language of the *Ṛg Veda*; of lesser importance was the purely derivational, or as will be shown below, the grammatical aspect.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the presence of conversive meanings of the "auspicious" words—depending on the "god-or-worshipper" application—is attested in various and relatively numerous lexical classes. They include primary verb-stems, nouns with primary and secondary suffixes, denominative verbs, and various compounds. In short, this phenomenon can be detected in almost every type of derivation, and thus cannot be accidental; it should rather be considered an important feature of the *Ṛg Veda* language. All of this re-opens the "language of gods" vs. "language of men" discussion relative to this Old Indian text and several other ancient Indo-European poetic traditions, as detailed below.

Synonymy has always been an outstanding feature of Old Indian vocabulary throughout its course of evolution, which is quite natural for a language with an abundant literary tradition. The core of lexical synonymy is the principle of rendering different features of a single denotate (signatum). Sometimes the semantic motivations of such words are quite obvious, synchronically speaking, while in other cases the facts of other Indo-European languages shed relevant light. In several instances—and we see the beginning of this already in the *Ṛg Veda*—the source of synonyms lies in substratum languages, whose importance in that regard grows with time. Thus, in the *Ṛg Veda* "man/male/human" was conveyed by derivatives of the Indo-European roots *man-* "to think:" *mānu-*, *mānuṣa-*, *mānus-*,

mānavá-, *mānuṣa-*; *jan-* "to give birth / to be born:" *jāna-*; and *mar-* "to die:" *márta-*, *mártya-*. But then there are words for "man" whose semantics can be elucidated only at the Indo-Iranian level, or even deeper, at the PIE level: *āyú-*, *nár-*, *nára-*, *nárya-*; *vīrá-*. Finally, we find words for "man" of obscure etymology: *pūms-*; *pūrú-*, *pūruṣa-*, *pūruṣa-*, which could be considered a borrowing from some other language.

This example is quite typical of the Old Indian language as a whole, but the *Ṛg Veda*, a document of archaic cult poetry, is distinguished by certain specific traits in the formation and use of synonyms. Generally speaking, one can observe a certain opposition between lexical and functional, or contextual synonymy, wherein the latter is clearly predominant. Putting it differently, words relating to different denotates and thus having different lexical meanings, can function as synonyms in certain phrases or, in broader terms, in certain contexts.

In the *Ṛg Veda*, functional synonyms are usually those lexical groups that reflect important concepts; through this peculiarity of their usage the Aryan model of the universe can be clearly discerned. An example of this can be seen in the semantic field, so essential for the Vedic *Ṛṣi*, constituted by the verbs "to know," "to be aware of," "to recognize," "to think," all of which are central to his mental activities and, in a way, regulate all other kinds of activity, since his knowledge is sacral by nature. There are two close synonyms, verbs whose basic lexical meaning is "to know:" *jñā-* and *vid-*, *véti*. The *Great Petersburg Dictionary* defines the primary meaning of *jñā-* as "kennen, wissen, bekannt-, vertraut sein, Kenntniss haben von, erkennen, in Erfahrung bringen, forschen nach, inne werden, merken, kennen lerner, erfahren," and that of *vid-* as: "Etwas oder Jmd kennen lernen, erkennen; wissen, begreifen, sich auf etwas verstehen, Etwas oder Jmd erkennen, wissen von Jmd, ein Bewusstsein von Etwas haben, eine richtige Vorstellung haben von." The semantic range of *man-* "to think" is given as "meinen, glauben, sich einbilden, sich vorstellen, vermuten, dafürhalten," etc. (*ibidem*).

As is generally known, "visual knowledge" was quite important for the Vedic *Ṛṣi*, since he was a visionary to whose inner eye supreme verities were revealed: "comprehension" signified "seeing." We have seen that only after a god had shown his chosen adept the mysteries of the universe could the latter become a *Ṛṣi* (compare hymn 7.88 telling how *Varuṇa* made the poet *Vasiṣṭha* a *Ṛṣi*). Thinking was also seen, to a large extent, as a process of inner vision. At the level of language this concept was made manifest by the use of verbs of visual perception (with or without adverbs or prefixes) that were used as synonyms for "to know," "to recognize," "to ponder," as in the following:

īkṣ- "to look," "to see;" "to have inner sight;" "to perceive;"³⁵

áva + īkṣ- "to notice," "to discern," "to recognize:"

áva yát své sadhásthe / devānām durmatīr īkṣe / rājann āpa dvīṣaḥ sedha . . . (8.79.9) "When I perceive the gods' unfriendliness in my house, O king, drive away the signs of enmity . . . !"

caḅṣ- "to appear;" "to see, look, notice;" "to declare," "to speak;"

"to consider;" *prāti* + *caḅṣ*- "to notice, perceive;"

ví + *caḅṣ*- "to recognize, make out:"

prāti caḅṣva ví caḅṣva-
īndraś ca soma jāgrtam
rākṣobhyo vadhām asyatam
aśāniṃ yātumádbhyaḥ (7.104.25)

"Observe! Recognize!³⁷ / O Indra and Soma, be vigilant! / Hurl the deadly weapon at the rakṣases, / (And) the javelin—at the sorcerers!;" *tád in náktiṃ tád dīvā máhyam āhus / tád ayám kéto hṛdá ā ví caṣṭe* (1.24.12) "They (repeatedly) say this to me by night, and that by day; / this makes apparent (to me) the insight in (my) heart."³⁸

ci- "to look," "to see," "to perceive;"

ní + *ci*- "to note," "to discern," "to understand:"

ádhā hí kāvya yuvám
dāksasya pūrbhír adbhuṭá
ní ketúnā jānānām
cikéthe pūtaḅḅasā (5.66.4)

"But you two, O admirable ones, through the mind's fortresses understand poetic insights, thanks to the illumination of the peoples, for you purify the mind!" (to *Mitra-Varuṇa*); *ví* + *ci*- "to discern:" *cítim ácittim cinavad ví vidvān / pṛṣṭhēva vitá vrjiná ca mártān* (4.2.11) "Let him knowingly discern people's reason and unreason, just as straight and curved (horses') backs (can be discerned)!;" *etác caná tvo ví ciketat eṣām / satyó mántraḥ kaviṣastá řghāvān* (1.152.2) "Not everybody will understand this. True (is) the amazing utterance pronounced by the poets."

cit- "to see," "to perceive," "to notice;" "to intend," "to seek;"

"to ponder," "to decide;" "to comprehend," "to know;"

"to appear," "to manifest (oneself):"

dvādaśa pradháyaṣ cakráṃ ékaṃ / tríṇi nábhyaṇi ká u tác ciketa (1.164.48) "Twelve fellies, one wheel, / Three naves—indeed, who can understand this?" (a cosmic riddle); *mūrā amūra ná vayám cikitvo / mahitvám agne tvám aṅgá viṣe* (10.4.4) "We the foolish ones, (can) not (comprehend thy) greatness. Only thou, O wise (and) knowing Agni, canst imagine (it);" *ihá*

bravitu yá u tác ciketat (1.35.6) "Let him who has recognized this proclaim it here!"

dhī- "to look;" "to observe;" "to appear;" "to ponder, meditate:"

tē 'vindan mānasā dīdhyaṇā / yáju ṣkannám prathamám devayānam (10.181.3) "Meditating in mind,³⁹ they found / The sacrificial formula rushing, first along the divine path;" *ānu + dhī*- "id:" *ṛtām sāmsanta ṛtām it tá āhur / ānu vratām vratapā dīdhyaṇāḥ* (3.4.7) "Glorifying the law, the law they do proclaim, / Like vow-keepers meditating upon the vow;" *abhí + dhī*- "to contemplate, plan, conceive:" *abhí táṣṭeva dīdhyaṇā manīṣām / átyo ná vājī sudhūro jhānaḥ* (3.38.1) "Like a carpenter (designing a chariot), I conceived a poem, / Like a racer, winning prizes, well-trained, running up!;" *ā + dhī*- "to recollect," "to think over:" *etē dyumnēbhír vísvam ātiranta . . . ā yé me asyá dīdhyaṇā ṛtasya* (7.7.6) "Those (people) surpassed everything (by their) splendor, . . . (those) who remember (gratefully) this rite of mine."⁴⁰

paś- / *dars-* "to look," "to see," "to recognize,"

"to conceive through inner sight;" *paś*-:

paṭamgám aktám āsurasya māyāyā
hṛdá paśyanti mānasā vipaścītaḥ
samudré antáḥ kavāyo ví caḅṣate
māricīnām padám ichanti vedhāsaḥ (10.177.1)

"The bird anointed with the magic of the Asura, / The sagacious ones comprehend (it) in heart and mind. / The poets discern (it) inside the ocean. / The sages seek the trace of the sunrays;"

ví + *paś*- "to see the constituent parts," "to discern," "to perceive:"

cákṣur no dhehi cákṣuṣe
cákṣur vikhyaṭ tanūbhyaḥ
sām cedám ví ca paśyema (10.158.4)

"Give sight to our eye, / (This) sight to ourselves, in order to see! / We desire to encompass and to discern this (universe) (by means of) sight; *dars*-: *dhrājir ékasya daṛṣe ná rūpám* (1.164.44) "The onrush of one is perceived, not (his) form."

Thus, it appears that under certain conditions all verbs of visual perception may function as synonyms of various verbs of cognition. In the first place, they denote the knowledge of objects that have form and color, i.e., visual knowledge ("to look" → "to have seen" → "to discern" → "to comprehend"). However, they may also have a wider application, being used with such abstract notions as "a god's greatness," "law," "prayer," etc., and in that case they are synonymous with the verb *man-*, denoting the highest,

most abstract form of knowledge, as different from *jñā-* “to find out” (compare *jan-* “to generate”) and *vid-* “to know” (compare *vid-* “to find”). The peculiarity of the *Rg Veda* seems to be this particularly wide application of the “vision” verbs in the area properly belonging to the “knowledge” verbs, an application that appears to be based on the role of visual knowledge in the *Ṛṣi*’s view of the world. But this particular type of synonymy finds numerous typological parallels in other languages.

A striking instance of the context-bound synonymy of words with radically different lexical meanings is Renou’s exemplary analysis of the semantic field of the verbs for “giving” [123,471-80]. First, several verbs are lexically synonymous: *dā-* “to give,” *rā-* “to donate,” “to give,” *dhā-* “to set,” “to give.” Secondly, in various contexts the meaning “to give” is assumed by other verbs, usually reflecting the outward form of the giving deity: *dī-* “to shine,” *duh-* “to milk,” *vas-* “to light up,” *vṛṣ-* “to rain,” *stan-* “to thunder,” *áva + dhū-* “to shake off.” The worshipper calls on the solar deities “to shine up” or “to light up” wealth, on *Indra*—“to thunder” it, on the *Maruts*—“to shake it off,” etc. The proper lexical meaning of each of these verbs is to a certain extent “levelled out” and subordinated to the general context semantics, thus reducing them to synonymy. The important fact—from the linguistic point of view—is their appearance in identical syntactic structures: “Thunder out / rain down / light up [etc.] wealth” = “Give wealth!;” only these structures make them synonymous.

It should also be emphasized that the semantics of these verbs is conceptually significant. “Donating” is seen as a motive force of the circular exchange between deity and worshipper. From the worshipper’s standpoint, the god’s action is the marked one, and it is this aspect that presupposes the presence of functional synonyms of the verb “to give,” and their absence from the verb “to take.” Incidentally, the principal verbs of “giving” express the conversive meaning “to take,” “to receive” by means of the same verbal root in the middle voice (sometimes, with an additional adverb/prefix). This reflects the PIE situation as reconstructed by Benveniste, whereby the same root could simultaneously mean “to give” and “to take” [54, Ch. 6 “Giving, Taking and Receiving”].

The worshipper’s response to the deity’s “giving” and “donating” consisted in “honoring” him. In the *Rg Veda* this meaning is attested in a considerable number of verbs. The core of the group is represented by several verbs whose principal lexical meaning is “to honor” (a god). This meaning makes them exact synonyms; the differences among them are normally due to differing sets of (secondary) meanings, i.e., the number of additional lexical meanings included in the whole semantic range of a verb. The basic syntactic structure is: accusative case of the honored deity’s name;

instrumental case of the noun denoting the means of honoring; dative case of the aim of honoring). Not so frequent is the construction with the deity’s name in the dative, although it is quite regular with some verbs. Here the means of honoring may appear in the instrumental, though sometimes it is expressed by the direct object in the accusative.

In the following examples, the sequence of each verbal construction reflects its frequency in the text. *dās-* “to honor:” *yáh samídhā yá āhuti / yó védena dadāsa mártō agnāye . . .* (8.19.5) “Which mortal *showed respect* for *Agni* (dative) with fire-wood (instrumental), which (mortal) with libation (instrumental), (and) which—with knowledge (instrumental) . . . ; *samídhā yó nísiti dāsad áditiṃ / dhāmabhir asya mártyaḥ . . .* (8.19.14) “Which mortal *honors Aditi* (accusative) with fire-wood (instrumental), with inflammation (instrumental), with its (various) shapes (instrumental) . . .” (its) = of the fire); *yó vām dāsad dhavíṣkrīṃ . . .* (1.93.3) “Who *respectfully* offers the prepared libation (accusative) to both of you (accusative-dative-genitive) . . .”

namasy- “to revere,” “to worship:” *súcim arkaír brhaspátim / adhvaréṣu namasyata* (3.62.5) “*Worship* the pure *Brhaspati* during the rites with praise-songs (instrumental).”

sap- “to worship,” “to serve,” “to respect:” *índraṃ vo nárah sakhyāya sepur* (6.29.1) “*Heroes worship Indra* (accusative) for you, for the sake of (his) friendship.” The means of honoring are usually omitted in constructions with this verb.

sapary- “to honor:” *tisró yád agne śarādas tvām íc / chúcim ghṛténa sūcayah saparyān . . .* (1.72.3) “The pure ones have been *honoring* thee (accusative), O *Agni*, the Pure One, by means of ghee (instrumental) during three autumns. . . ;” *mahó devāya tát rtám saparyata* (10.37.1) “*Dedicate* mightily this truthful (word) (accusative) to the god (dative)!.”

All of these verbs are very close in their lexical meaning, but they differ somewhat in the type of the frequency of their syntactic structures. Common to all of them is the construction wherein the verb governs the accusative of the name of the honored deity, and the instrumental case of the noun denotes the means of honoring. The construction next in frequency has the dative of the divine name and the instrumental of the means of honoring both governed by the “honoring” verb. The same two constructions are typical of a number of other verbs which have different lexical meaning but acquire the semantics of various kinds of worship in the general context of honoring the deity (through sacrifice, libation, invocation, chanting, laudation, etc.). These verbs which can be considered quasi-synonymous, are as follows:

yaj- “to worship,” “to sacrifice:” *devāvír devān havíṣā yajāsi* (3.29.8) “*Inviting* the gods, thou shalt *worship* the gods (accusative) with libation

(instrumental), compare also: *sómasya nú tvā sūśutasya yakṣi* (3.53.2) “Now I will *sacrifice* to thee (accusative) the well-pressed *Soma* (genitive partitive);” *svāduksādmā yó vasataú syonakṣj / jīvayājāṃ yājate sópamā diváh* (1.31.15) “(He) who offers a sweet dish, (who) prepares a soft bed in (his) dwelling, / (Who) sacrifices a live victim (accusative), he (goes) to the highest heaven;”

hu- “to make a libation,” “to offer,” “to honor:” *imā gira ādityēbhyo ghṛtásnūh / sanād rājabhyo juhvā juhomi* (2.27.1) “These songs, floating in ghee, I libate (them) with (my) tongue for the *Ādityas*, kings from the ancient past, (= “I worship the *Ādityas* with songs”), compare also *yamāya ghṛtavad dhavir / juhóta . . .* (10.14.14) “To *Yama* make a *sacrificial libation* full of ghee!”

īd- “to ask,” “to pray;” “to offer,” “to invoke;” “to honor;” “to praise:” *yás te agne námasā īṣṭa / rtám sá pāry aruśásya vṛṣṇah* (5.12.6) “(He) who offers thee (dative-genitive), O *Agni*, an oblation (accusative) with reverence, / He guards the law of the purple bull;”⁴¹ *tvám hí śmā carṣaṇāyo / yajñēbhir gūrbhir īlate* (6.2.2) “It is thee (accusative) that people *invoke* (= worship) with oblations (and) praise-songs”—compare *īle ca tvā yājamāno havīrbhir / īle sakhitvām sumatīm níkāmah* (3.1.15) “And I *invoke* thee (accusative), sacrificing with libations; I *invoke* (thy) *amity* (accusative), *benevolence* (accusative), *craving* (for them).”

mah- “to gladden,” “to rejoice;” causative “to glorify;” “to make great:” *sárasvatīm ín mahayā svṛktībhi / stómair vasiṣṭha ródasī* (7.96.1) “It is *Sarasvatī* (accusative) that I will *glorify* (= worship) with hymns (instrumental) / And with praises (instrumental), O *Vasiṣṭha*, (as well as) both worlds (accusative)!”—compare *ágne vísvēbhir agnībhir / devēbhir mahayā girah* (3.12.4) “O *Agni*, together with all the (other) *Agnis* / (And) with the gods, *make* (my) songs (accusative) *well-formed*.”

vand- “to praise,” “to glorify;” “to elevate (in prayers),” “to worship:” *girā vandasva marúto áha* (8.20.20) “Praise then the *Maruts* with laudatory speech” (= worship) —compare *vandārus te tanvām vande agne* (1.147.2) “As thy *eulogizer* I *eulogize* myself, O *Agni*.”

stu- “to laud,” “to praise:” *éto nv índram stāvāma / suddhām suddhēna sāmñā* (8.95.7) “Come here now! We shall *laud* (= worship) *Indra* the pure with a pure tune!” (a rare construction for this verb—with an instrumental). Compare the following typical construction:

*stāvā nú ta índra pūrvyā mahāny
utá stavāma nūtanā kṛtāni
stāvā vājram bāhvór usántam
stāvā hāri sūryasya ketū* (2.11.6)

“I will now *praise*, O *Indra*, thy previous great (deeds). / We also will *praise* (thy) present deeds. / I will *praise* the *vajra* in (thy) hands, (which is) desirous (of feats). I will *praise* the bay pair, the signs of the Sun.”

arc- “to shine,” “to flash;” “to sing,” “to laud;” “to worship;” *abhí + arc-* “to eulogize:” . . . *ārcantíndram marútaḥ sadhásṭhe* (5.29.6) “The *Maruts* began to *praise* (= to worship) *Indra* on the spot;” *abhí tyám vīrám girvaṇasam arca-* / *índram bráhmaṇā jaritar návena* (6.50.6) “Sing (= worship) that hero, the praise-loving one, / *Indra* (accusative), with a new prayer (instrumental) O singer (or: “O worshipper!”)—compare *ārcā-mārkam náre vísrutāya* (1.62.1) “We shall *sing* a song (accusative) for the famous hero (dative)” (*Indra*).

gā- “to sing;” “to eulogize;” *abhí + gā-* “to eulogize:” *gāye tvā námasā girā* (8.46.17) “I *sing* (I worship) thee (accusative) with reverence (and) praise-song;”⁴² *abhí vo vīrám ándhaso mádeṣu gāya / girā mahā vícetasam / índram . . .* (8.46.14) “Intoxicated by *Soma*, *eulogize* your hero, the perspicacious *Indra* (accusative), with a lofty song (instrumental)”—compare *tigmājambhāya táruṇāya rájate / práyo gāyasy agnāye* (8.19.22) “For the sharp-toothed, young, glittering / *Agni* (dative) thou art *singing* (the ear’s) *delight* (accusative).”

gar-/gir- “to invoke,” “to praise,” “to proclaim:” *tā grñīhi namasyēbhiḥ sūśaiḥ / sumnébhir índraváruṇā cakānā* (6.68.3) “Sing (praise) *Indra* and *Varuṇa* (accusative), (who) seek pleasure in favors, with hymns (instrumental) worthy of (their) worship!;” *sámiddham agnīm sámídhā girā grñe* (6.15.7) “I *praise* (I worship) the ignited *Agni* (accusative) with fire-wood (instrumental), with speech (instrumental).”

Although the verbs of the group do not differ in their semantics as widely as do the verbs of “giving,” the lexical differences among them are quite noticeable. When used in identical syntactic structures, in an overall ritual context, these verbs acquire a common meaning: “To worship (a deity) by various means.”

In the study of Vedic language it is necessary to draw a line between synonymy as a linguistic phenomenon and the isofunctional use of signs that encode various units of other semiotic systems such as myth, ritual, etc. In his analysis of the semantic structure of the *R̥g Veda*, in particular of one of its oldest fragments, cosmogony, viewed as a single text, Boris Oguibene demonstrated that a number of attributes of the Vedic deities can be regarded as isofunctional and treated as variants of the elementary cosmogonic act [30].⁴³ Such attributes include the following actions: to establish, to fix a support (*ruh-* causative, etc.); to be an intermediary in creating space (*antár + car-*, etc.); to hold fast, keeping the distance between the two cosmic zones; to be the basis (*stabh-*, etc.); to fill the space (*prá-*, etc.); to be

undivided, embracing the whole creation (*eka- bhū-*, etc.); to outgrow the universe (*pra + ric-*, etc.). The semantic invariant in this series may be defined as “to create an ordered universe, or Cosmos” as opposed to Chaos. This is a matter of the functions of signs in a certain fragment of a mythological system. But the verbs and phrases that encode the units of this system—the author calls them “attributes” of mythological characters—cannot be considered synonyms.

The isomorphism of the macro- and microcosmic levels can be manifested, for instance, in the identification of the units of different levels, such as myth and ritual. In linguistics, this phenomenon appears as the problem of double reference (see above).

The play with different signs that encode a single mythological character in different contexts cannot be viewed as related to linguistic synonymy, either. If, for example, in some cases the sun is called “a bird” (*patanḡá-*, *suparṇá-*), and its course “the bird’s foot print;” and elsewhere it appears as “a horse” (*étaśa-*), we still cannot regard the words “bird” and “horse” as synonymous in the *Rg Veda*. A further instance concerns *Soma*: in various contexts the *Soma*-juice, the basis of the drink of immortality, is variously called “mead” (*mádhū-*), “clarified butter—ghee” (*ghṛtá-*), “milk” (*páyas-*), “rain” (*vṛṣṭí-*), and so on. Since each of these words can refer to different denotates in the hymns, the intricacies of the nominations and references of this text in general should become quite evident. The same applies to synonymy, polysemy, and metaphorical usage in the narrow sense.

The wide use made of synonymy in the *Rg Veda*, wherein all the main word-classes are involved (verbs, nouns, and adjectives), has been given various interpretations. According to one hypothesis, this phenomenon can be reduced to the undifferentiated use of words that belong to a lofty and a low style, a confusion that could be the starting point for reconstructing a more archaic PIE opposition between the “languages of men and gods. This interpretation which is based on a comparison of other Indo-European poetic traditions, should be thoroughly checked in synchrony, i.e., “from the inside,” judging the facts on purely internal grounds.

The problem of the two opposed languages (that is, “the language of gods” and “the language of men”) as attested in some ancient Indo-European poetic traditions, was studied most thoroughly, both in a general way and with detailed investigation of concrete facts, by Hermann Güntert. First, he analysed the language of the *Avesta*; more precisely, he made a systematic study of the function of synonyms in this text [93.1-34]. As the author stresses on the very first pages, this function conformed to Zarathustra’s dualistic outlook: when designating the same notion, the

Avesta can use various synonyms depending on the context, that is, when speaking about Ahura Mazda’s followers or about his enemies, the *daēvas*. The sum total of the words that have positive figures, their attributes and actions as their referents, constitutes the Ahuric language, and the words describing demons the Daēvic language. The Daēvic words are characterized by negative emotional connotations or by a semantic component that deprives an action of its neutral meaning (for instance, “to run” as compared with “to go”). The Daēvic words may have rude or colloquial overtones, while the Ahuric words are, generally speaking, emotionally neutral; that is why the Ahuric vocabulary may sometimes be applied to the description of the *daēvas*, but the opposite does not occur. But the Ahuric words also include stylistically elevated literary devices of the kenning-type. In this way, to put it in modern terms, the marked members of a privative opposition are the Daēvic words (i.e., presence/absence of a distinctive feature). This phenomenon is rather widely attested in the *Avesta*, and such stylistic polarization concerns whole lexical classes (for example, body-parts, verbs of motion, etc.), though some strata are not involved in this opposition. The undoubted merit of the author’s work consists in the study of the function of language in a given text, wherein he is able to show the ways in which “the model of the universe” of the authors of the text regulated the function of its vocabulary. “The split of the whole cosmos into two parts should also cut through the Avestan language,” as Güntert put it, thinking about the basic tenets of Zarathustrianism [93.28].

The next stage in research concerning the “language of gods” and the “language of men” was the study of Greek and Old Norse material. In Güntert’s classic “On the language of gods and spirits” [94] this opposition is traced in the Homeric epics and in the “Speeches of Alvis” (*Alvíssmál*) of the Elder Edda. His basic basic idea is that prehistoric man saw the name as containing the essence of its bearer; this entails a belief in the magic power of the word, the necessity to conceal one’s name, the existence of hidden names known only to priests and witches, etc. The belief in the existence of a special “divine language” (or the language of spirits, good or bad) is also rooted in archaic conceptions of the power of words.

In the Homeric poems there are only six cases of a single denotate with double designates, but the attribution to “the language of gods or men” is explicitly stated in the text. In four cases the opposed pairs occur, while in two only the “divine” words are attested. Güntert noted that the “Geistersprache” vocabulary seems to belong to the ordinary Greek of the time (within which it is not an *ad-hoc* formation), while the words of the “Göttersprache” are quite foreign to everyday speech and should be seen as poetic descriptive terms. This elevated style is characterized by two main

categories: sacral archaisms and sacral metaphors.

The Old Norse material was represented by a fragment very similar to the Old Indian *brahmodya*, cosmologic riddles which constituted the basis of the sacred knowledge of the Brahman-priests. In the Edda the god Thor asks the dwarf Alvis—in order to expose and punish him—about the names of various cosmic elements in the language of men and in the languages of various mythic figures, such as the Ases, the Vans, the giants, the elves, and the dwarves. Alvis's answers are made up of strings of synonyms that could be explained—according to Güntert—by techniques of versification and alliteration. The Scandinavian author adhered to the archaic concept of a special “language of gods” an innovative feature may be seen in the redistribution of this language among several classes of mythic beings. This tradition also contains sacral archaisms and metaphors.

In this connection, Güntert cites the views of the Old Indian grammarians who were themselves guardians of the sacred poetic speech.⁴⁴ He observes that the language of gods is represented by the Vedic hymns; an idea that shall require our attention further on. A new stage in the study of this problem is marked by introducing Old Irish linguistic data.⁴⁵ Using the Old Irish grammatical tradition—mainly *The Scholars' Primer* (Auraicept na n-Éces), a treatise on grammar and poets compiled in the eighth through tenth century AD—Calvert Watkins discovered three language-type oppositions: 1) ordinary – archaic (*gnáthbérla – senbérla*); 2) professional – poetic (*bérla na Féine – bérla na filed*); 3) select, cultivated – secret, hidden (*bérla tóbaide – bérla fortchuide*) [154.1-17]. Watkins reduced these oppositions, mentioned by the Old Irish grammarians, to an original binary opposition between a neutral, semantically unmarked member and a marked member (one or more) with a distinctive feature. We should interpret in this way the opposition between the “language of gods”—and the “language of men” (i.e., between the neutral and the marked member) in all those ancient Indo-European traditions where this contrast can be attested. As for the Old Irish pattern, the right-hand members are the marked ones and represent the language of sacred poetry (archaic, poetic, secret).

The last of the Old Irish oppositions has been the object of Watkins's special attention, since in form (both members are passive past participles) they have a perfect counterpart in the Old Indian terms for different kinds of language: *samskr̥ta*—“perfect”—*prākṛta* “crude, raw.” Such a parallel is also of interest in the interpretation of the Old Indian tradition.

Both Güntert and Watkins pay special attention to a passage from a late Vedic text (*Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa* 10.4.6.1) that uses various synonyms for “horse” in a marked context: *háyo bhūrvá devān avahad vājī gandharvān ārvā āsurān āsvo manuṣyān* “As *háya* he carried the gods, as *vājīn*—the

Gandharvas, as *ārvān*—the Asuras, as *āsva*—men.” According to Watkins, *āsva*—here is the unmarked member of the opposition, while the other synonyms are the marked ones and belong to an elevated poetic style [151.5].

No examples of a similar distribution of synonyms have been adduced from the *Ṛg Veda* by these scholars. Nor are the “language of gods” and “language of men” directly attested in the *Ṛg Veda*, as is the case with the Homeric poems. It is known from the hymns that *Vāc*, Sacred Speech, was deified and regarded as a mighty cosmogonic force (10.125), that its innermost part is secret, it is hidden from the people and only the Brahmans can attain it (1.164.45). Nevertheless, the notion of these two languages was known to the Old Indian tradition, and it can be met, for instance, in the *Mahābhārata*:

*yasmāt kṣaram atīto 'ham akṣarād api c' ottamaḥ
ato 'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣ' ottamaḥ* (*Bhagavad Gītā*, 15.18)

“Since I have surpassed the transient and am higher than the intransient, thus I am known as the supreme person both in ordinary speech (*loke*) and in the *Veda* (*vede*).” Zaehner translated this passage as: “so am I extolled in Vedic as in common speech . . .” [58.368]⁴⁶ which seems quite convincing. This interpretation is also corroborated by devices of sound symbolism. The center of the verse is taken up by sound play *kṣara – akṣara*, i.e., “transient” – “intransient,” but the word *akṣara* also has the meanings of “word,” “syllable,” “the sacred syllable *om*.” The contrast between *loke* and *vede* is obviously archaic and reflects the Common Indo-European opposition between the “language of men” and the “language of gods.” The fact that it appears in the *Mahābhārata*, while there is no trace of it in the *Ṛg Veda*, cannot be claimed as a sign of its lateness. There are plenty of cases in which definitely archaic phenomena, absent from or obscured in the *Ṛg Veda* because of its circumscribed cultic content, appear in later Vedic literature (for example, in the *Bṛāhmaṇas*) or in the epics.

As Güntert notes, referring to Liebich's study [102], the Old Indian grammarians (even such late ones as Kumārila) regarded the whole of the *Ṛg Veda* as the “language of gods.” The contrast between poetic and common everyday speech is maintained in the Old Indian grammatical tradition. Pāṇini defines it as the opposition between *chandas* and *bhāṣā*, that is, “metrical Vedic language” and “colloquial speech”⁴⁷ (compare *bhāṣ-* “to speak”), and the rules that he prescribed for *bhāṣā* are constantly broken in *chandas*. Kātyāyana designates this opposition as *laukikavaidikeṣu* “in the colloquial speech and in the Vedic language,” which is directly related to the *Bhagavad Gītā* passage quoted above.

The Buddhist tradition—and in very different literary genres, at that—

also preserves the notion of two quite distinct languages. There is a passage in the well-known Buddhist philosophical treatise *Tarkasaṃgraha*, written in Sanskrit: *vākyam dvividhaṃ vaidikaṃ laukikaṃ ceti / vaidikaṃ isvaroktatvāt sarvaṃ api pramāṇam / laukikaṃ tv-āptavākyam pramāṇam / anyad apramāṇam* [140.53; 349]⁴⁸ “There are two kinds of utterances: Vedic and colloquial. The Vedic one is completely true because of the divine nature of expression. But the colloquial one is true only in the case of its expression by an authority. The rest is untrue.” Here have the same formal opposition of *vaidika*—*laukika* that occurs in Kātyāyana’s phrase.

Finally, one of the *Pālī Jātakas* mentions *Indra*’s two different names, one of which is current in the world of the gods, and the other among mortals.⁴⁹

Yamāhu devesu Sujampatī

Maghavā ti nam āhu manussaloke . . . [71.403-4]

“(Him) who is called *Sujampati* among the gods, they call *Maghavan* in the world of men.” It is remarkable that in *Pālī* too the word *loka* refers to men and their speech while *Indra*’s name is a kenning in the “language of the gods.”

This subject awaits further exploration, but even a first approach makes it evident that the Old Indian tradition as a whole has preserved a deep-rooted notion of the “languages of gods and men.” At various stages this opposition was expressed in different ways, one of which is represented by *veda* – *loka*, or *vaidika* – *laukika*.

Thus, if we are not able to discover in the *Rg Veda* any manifest contrast between the “language of gods” and the “language of men,” this fact cannot be accidental and should be carefully examined. The form that this opposition acquired in the *Avesta*, the nearest relation to the *Rg Veda* among other Indo-European texts (the Ahuric language vs. the Daēvic language), would not be possible in the hymns, because of the fundamental differences in the basic concepts. The *Rg Veda* has not clear-cut duality, that “split,” in Güntert’s previously quoted words, which divides the Avestan cosmos in two halves. The opposition between *devas*-gods and *asuras*-demons (inverted as compared with the *Avesta*) is attested in this text, but the *asuras* are quite ambivalent as members of this opposition. This problem has produced an abundant literature, and most recently has been minutely and consistently analysed by Kuiper [100].⁵⁰ There are gods who are called *asuras* (the *Ādityas*, in the first place), and there is a story about some mythic figures going from the Father-*Asura* over to the gods (10.124), etc. Since the Vedic system of religious beliefs is radically different from that of the *Avesta* it would be a mistake to expect a similar differentiation of

synonyms related to the opposition between the gods and the *asuras* along the Avestan lines. .

There is another reason, a very important one as far as the *Rg Veda* is concerned. In this text the Asuric world of chaos and evil is basically tabooed: it is not described, but is passed over in silence. If the *Avesta* exposes and indicts the *daēvas*, in the *Rg Veda* we observe nothing of the kind. It is rather indicative that Gonda’s book on epithets in the *Rg Veda* contains long lists of divine epithets, while those of the demons are almost absent [79.130]. The world of the gods and everything related to it, the world of their priests and poets, is described in rather abundant detail. Of course, it is true that the cult language is quite esoteric and as such does not yield clear and unambiguous information.

As has been mentioned above, inherent in the Vedic vocabulary is a constant play on polysemy that can pass over into autonymy, depending on the inclusion of a given word in the “auspicious” or the “inauspicious” zones—the so-called “ambivalent” stratum of the lexicon, in Renou’s terms. The same applies to shifts in the lexical meaning of a word, the modulation of its converse meanings within the “auspicious” zone in the case of its divine or human application. Only a small group is constituted by ambivalent words in the latter case. Much more numerous and structurally diversified are the words with converse meanings.

Summing up, one may say that the function of synonyms in the *Rg Veda* is based on rules quite different from those of the *Avesta*. These rules, in their turn, have an extralinguistic foundation in the differences between the religious outlooks of these two texts. The procedure adopted by Leonard G. Hertenberg in this connection [4.18ff.] does not seem quite justified. He regularly adduces Old Indian examples in order to illustrate the stylistic opposition between the Avestan Ahuric and Daēvic synonyms, but the Old Indian facts can serve only as evidence of a genetic relationship between the two languages; they do not shed any light on the Avestan distribution of the corresponding synonyms.

A few examples will suffice to show that any functional parallels in the distribution of synonyms between the *Rg Veda* and the *Avesta* are non-existent. Güntert already noted that Ahuric words, being neutral, could sometimes be applied to the *daēvas*, but the reverse was not possible. Daēvic words had no referents in the Ahuric sphere since they possessed clearly negative emotional connotations. In that case the correct method seems to require asking the question: can a given Avestan Daēvic word refer to “auspicious” notions of the *Rg Veda*? It could be useful to discuss in this light some of the Avestan oppositions treated by Hertenberg.

“To go, walk”—Ahuric *čar-*; Daēvic *pat-*. In the *Rg Veda* *car-* has the

meaning "to wander," and *pat-* "to fly" (as primary, basic meanings). The verb *pat-* encodes the principal act of the *Aśvins* who fly swiftly across the sky and rush precipitately in order to aid the adorator, for example, 8.1.6: *yád antárikṣe pátaḥaḥ purubhujā / yád vemé ródaśí ánu . . .* "When you two fly through the air, O much-needed ones, / Or when (you fly) along these two worlds . . ." The verb *pat-* also encodes the movements of *Sūrya*, *Vāta*, *Indra*, the *Maruts*, etc. In connection with the demons it is used very rarely as, for instance, in 7.104.18: *grbhāyáta rakṣásaḥ sám pinaṣṭana / váyo yé bhūrví patáyanti naktábhīr . . .* "Grab the *rakshasas*, crush (them) / Who, having become birds, fly (about) in the nights!"

"An eye"—Ahuric *dōijra-*; Daēvic *aš-*. In the *R̥g Veda*, the Daēvic *aš-* has an etymological cognate in the heteroclitic stem *ákṣi-lakṣi-*, *akṣán-*. It is usually applied to *Soma*, *Agni*, the *Aśvins*, and other gods, to the worshippers of the Aryan gods and to various deified objects, for example, 10.21.7: *tvám yajñēṣv r̥vijaṃ / cárum agne ní ṣedire / ghr̥táprat̥ikam mánuṣo . . . súkrám céiṣṭham akṣábhīr . . .* "It is thee, O *Agni*, whom people seated as the dear priest at the offerings—the ghee-faced, the bright one, the keenest observer with eyes . . .;" compare 1.72.10: ". . . *divó yád akṣí amítā ákr̥ṇvan*" . . . when they created the two immortal eyes of heaven" (i.e., the sun and the moon).

"A host, army"—Ahuric *spāsa-*; Daēvic *haēnā-*. The noun *sēnā-*, corresponding to the Daēvic word, does not necessarily denote the "enemy troops" and serves as a general term in the *R̥g Veda*. It is applied to *Dāsa's* host (5.30.9), but also to *Agni's* host (8.75.7), to that of the *Maruts* (1.186.9), of *Soma* (9.96.1), and some other deities. There also occur the compounds *indrasenā* (feminine nomen proprium) (literally "*Indra's* host"), *devasenā* "a divine host" (10.103.8).

The number of examples can be easily increased, but even those mentioned make it evident that the rules governing the distribution of synonyms and their "social stratification" differ widely in the *R̥g Veda* and in the *Avesta*.

After this short discussion of the Common Indo-European opposition between the "language of gods"—and the "language of men" as applied to the Vedic hymns, some conclusions are called for. The most probable interpretation seems to be the "internal" one, that is, the one suggested by the Old Indian tradition itself. According to the latter, the *R̥g Veda* as a text, as a document *in toto*, is considered to be the "language of gods" as opposed to everyday colloquial speech. This position is reflected in the post-*R̥g* Vedic Old Indian literature, and in grammatical and philosophical treatises of various schools.

Within the text of the hymns this opposition does not manifest itself.

Probably, it was just superfluous from the point of view of their communicative aims. The goal of the text was communication with the gods; it was produced and preserved in a self-contained priestly Brahmanical milieu, where the art of hymn composition was traditional. The poets adhered to the canonical poems of the "former *R̥sis*" that were thought to be of semi-divine origin, sacred knowledge (*veda*) was revelation or illumination, and the poets and priests were mediators between gods and men. Such a go-between ought to speak to the gods in their own language, and that language, in Vedic terms, had been revealed by the gods to the "former *R̥sis*" in ancient times. In the poet's view, the addressee of the communication act was a deity, not a man, and therefore there could be no question of the "language of men" in the hymns of the *R̥g Veda* itself.

The language of the Vedic cult poetry displays all those features which, in Güntert's opinion, were typical of the Common Indo-European "language of gods." Sacral archaisms and sacral metaphors are the prime characteristics of its style. But the originality of the lexical function of this text is based on a consistent play of polysemy and on the interplay of conversive meanings within a single word. The choice of a particular meaning in a given context largely depends on the inclusion of the word in a particular mythological zone or social sphere.

Thus, if the "language of gods" has been preserved in the form of the Vedic hymns, the problem of the "language of men" of that period is much more complicated, since no evidence of such a language has come down to us. One has to be satisfied with surmises and hypotheses, based on the *R̥g Veda* itself. We shall deal with the subject in a rather cursory way, as it is only of tangential importance for our discussion.

There are some grounds for the supposition that the spoken language during the period of the composition of the *R̥g Veda* was of the Middle Indian type; this is a purely linguistic, not a chronological attribution. At least, that language was characterized by strong Middle Indian tendencies; still, both languages, one of the cult and the other of everyday life, shared the background of a common dialect.⁵¹

At present there can be no doubt that the language of the *R̥g Veda* was receptive to various borrowings from the non-Indo-European substratum languages;* another source was the Indo-Aryan vernacular, where the origin of the so-called *Prākritisms* is usually sought. These *Prākritisms* in the language of the cult poetry (which we understand largely through the work of Paul Tedesco, Thomas Burrow and Manfred Mayrhofer), necessarily pose the problem of their origin. The solution requires several hypotheses concerning the linguistic situation in India at the turn of the second and first millennia BC, and particularly the relationship between the cultic and

the spoken languages of the Aryans. Renou, in his "Introduction générale" to the Wackernagel-Debrunner grammar [148.63a] put forward his suggestions in very careful but somewhat contradictory terms. In his opinion, the *Rg Veda* represents the state of language before the tenth century BC [148.1]. It was an artificial language, different from the vernacular [148: 2]. The phonetic basis of the priests' spoken language was identical with that of the hymns. But outside of the priestly milieu a more popular language was in use which was distinguished by all the main features of an Early Middle Indian type of the *Pālī* variety; some of the forms, attested in the *Rg Veda*, seem to confirm this thesis [148.7]. There was no full-fledged *Prākṛit* at the time, though some Middle Indian traits seem to have made their appearance [148.54-55 (note)].

A synchronic analysis of the *Rg Vedic* language makes it possible to pick out—at each level—some tendencies that greatly resemble those of Middle Indian. They are most noticeable in syntagmatics and even more prominent in phonetics. One can mention the tendency to keep the hiatus caused by the nonautomatic treatment of glide-clusters (*niak*, *yūjia-*, *tanūā-*, etc.), the disyllabic scansion of long vowels in certain grammatical forms and lexemes (Genitive case plural: *-ām*—disyllabic, *dhūrṣū*—trisyllabic, etc.), the relaxation of external vocalic *sandhi* rules, the appearance of intrusive vowels in some consonant-clusters (*ind^ora-*, *smāt/sumāt*, etc.), the sporadic voicing of single intervocalic voiceless stops (*nāthitā*—*inādhitā*), and a number of other phonetic phenomena along the Middle Indian lines. In morphology there are several well-known flexions and affixes that are absent from Sanskrit but persist in Middle Indian. In addition, some syntagmatic peculiarities recall those of Middle Indian: they include a wider range of combinational distribution of some Vedic morphemes as compared with Sanskrit [7], and they use the injunctive in a wide range of temporal meanings that could be reflected in the augmentless preterites in all Middle Indian languages, where the personal paradigm in the past tenses was preserved exclusively in this type. Some syntactic peculiarities of the *Rg Veda* can be explained within the framework of the hypothesis that there was a common dialect background for both Vedic and Middle Indian languages. The syncope of endings (compare the group-flexion in some *Prākṛits*) of the cases when the bare stem or the stem with a lengthened final vowel assumes the role of various caseforms, is an example which supports this hypothesis.

The presence of such Middle Indian tendencies, manifested to various degrees at various levels of the *Rg Veda* language, allows us to hypothesize that the "language of men" at that time was represented by a kind of *Prākṛit* (in the broadest sense of the term). It is probable that the oldest name for the sacred language used by the Vedic Aryans was *vāc-* [38.178]. In this way,

the original opposition ("language of gods" vs. "language of men") is represented by *vāc-*—*prākṛta-* in the Old Indian tradition. With the passage of time, as the language of the hymns and the goddess *Vāc*, Sacred Speech personified, became relics of the distant past, the left-hand member of the opposition was replaced by *saṃskṛta-*, isomorphous with the right-hand member.

This is the most general sketch of the development of the tradition of the "language of gods" vs. the "language of men" in ancient India, the origin of which is to be sought in the "divine language" of the Vedic hymns.

Generally speaking, the lexical level reflects the "model of the universe" of a speakers' community in a most obvious and immediate manner. In the study of such an archaic cult document as the *Rg Veda*, in the study of the function of its vocabulary, it is necessary to reckon with the peculiarities of the Vedic mythological system, as well as with the intimate intertwining of religious and magical strands of thought, which constituted the originality of Vedic man.

As is well known, the mythological system of the *Rg Veda* is rather heterogeneous. The central place is held by a pantheon in which the individual gods are more or less anthropomorphic. But this part has close ties with other fragments of another kind of mythological patterning, wherein the gods are zoomorphic, or in which some cosmic or landscape elements are deified, or abstract ideas, "notions," are personified.⁵² There are no clear-cut distinctions between these heterogeneous modes of mythological patterning.

It is widely held that the so-called "abstract deities," i.e., the personified abstract notions or agents, represent a later mode of patterning [see , for example, 106.115]. Undoubtedly, there are some grounds for this assertion, since a number of "abstract deities" make their first appearance in the last and latest Book Ten. But some personified abstract "notions" have been attested since the oldest "family" *maṇḍalas*: moreover, the general situation is considerably obscured by the general Vedic tendency to give a magic interpretation to various abstract notions such as "force," "energy," "might," "deception," "enmity," and many others. Consequently, in the text these notions sometimes acquire an existence of their own, half-independent of those figures that are usually regarded as the bearers of these qualities [84.30].

Although the *Rg Veda* is a document of the higher hieratic cult as distinct from the *Atharva Veda*, a collection of magic charms, some Atharvanic motifs are altogether apparent in the hymns. Not only have some charms and incantations found their way into the *Rg Veda*, but the affinity runs deeper: they share the common belief in the power of the word that can influence

real life, they connect the name and the nature of the object so named, etc.

The problem of the personified and impersonal nature of deified forces and objects in the *Rg Veda* was first raised by Gonda in his discussion of the god *Agni*'s definition as "the son of strength" [86]. He observed that here the shift from "an impersonal potency" to "a divine person" is made so easily as to be hardly noticeable [86.6]. In the Vedic poet's mind "a divine being is a power-substance, has it, and is to realize it" [86.35]. Powers that belong to various areas of nature can assume concrete forms and can enter the gods and even mortals [86.66]. In this connection Gonda discusses several passages of the *Rg Veda* that involve the translation of several words for "power" (*sáhas*, *ójas*, *távas*, etc.) proposed by Geldner and their (im)personal treatment in the Böhtlingk-Roth and Grassmann Dictionaries. Although Gonda correctly stressed the purely mythological aspect of the problem, he also drew attention to its linguistic consequences: the ambiguity of some nouns with the suffixes *-as*, *-ti*, *-man* in the *Rg Veda*, where in some contexts they can be interpreted as abstracts, denoting impersonal forces and agent nouns, as substantives, and as adjectives, corresponding to definite mythic figures. Linguistic ambiguity, in this case, is a consequence of the corresponding part of the outlook of the "model of the universe."

The linguistic manifestation of the mythological relationship between gods and powers should be seen in a still wider framework. Vedic language reflects this relationship in the semantics of a number of nominal stems (radical, *-ti*, *-as*, *-man*), and in the peculiarities of their gender system.

The root-stems are much more widely represented in the *Rg Veda* than in any later text, both as independent words—although their paradigms are usually defective—and as final members of compounds. This archaic stem-class combines the grammemes of all the three genders. Since the neuter is extremely rare, only the masculine and the feminine will concern us here.

These stems function as substantives as well as adjectives. Since the inflexion is not gender-differentiated, the gender can be determined only with the help of an adjective or participle in agreement. Sometimes the gender determination is apparent from the context, in cases where the root-noun refers to a male or a female. For example, *rāj-* (m.) "king," (f.) "queen" (with prefix-derivatives): *dvayāñ agne rathīno vimśatīm gā / vadhūmato maghāvā máhyaṃ samrāt / abhyāvartī cāyamāno dadāti / . . .* (6.27.8) "O *Agni*, (horse-)pairs with chariots, twenty bulls / with cows the generous great king grants me / *Abhyāvartin*, *Cāyamāna*'s son" / (where the masculine gender of *samrāt* is deduced from the concord); *utā gnā vyantu devāpatnīr / indrāny āgnāy asvīnī rāt* (5.46.8) "And the divine wives shall also come willingly, the gods' spouses, *Indrānī*, *Agnāyī* (and) *Asvīnī* the

queen" (where the gender of *rāt* is determined by its reference to a goddess).

An archaic distribution of gender grammemes can be observed with relation to the semantics of the root-stems. Those with the abstract meaning of action nouns are feminine, but when functioning as agent nouns they are usually masculine substantives, or adjectives. Renou remarked that the agent noun meaning in this case can often be regarded as rather superficial: The proper meaning of *sṛdh-*, *mṛdh-*, *rīṣ-*, *spṛdh-*, *dvīṣ-* is more like "enmity" (with additional overtones) than "enemy," although—when required—they can then shift to the masculine" [120.146].

It seems that this semantic rule of gender-grammeme distribution of the root-stems served as the basis for the authors of the classic dictionaries (that is, the *Great Petersburg Dictionary*, and in particular, Grassmann's) in their ascription of gender to Vedic root-nouns, notwithstanding the fact that there are a number of contexts wherein the gender cannot be determined either syntactically (i.e., by means of concord), or with reference to a particular denotate. The very semantics of a stem (abstract or concrete) is often quite vague; and this vagueness would be common, since it is a reflection of the features of the "model of the universe" we have been discussing. We shall illustrate this indeterminacy of the root-stems with a few examples.

gír- (adjective) "celebrating," "praising;" (masculine) "singer," "eulogizer;" (feminine) "(praise-)song," "eulogy:"

pārītō vāyāve sutām
gīra indrāya matsarām
āvya vāreṣu śiñcata (9.63.10)

"From here make libation-rounds for *Vāyu*, for *Indra*, of the pressed intoxicating (*Soma*), O eulogies (or: O eulogizers), onto the sheep strainer!" The lexical meaning of *gīraḥ* can be either abstract or concrete (there is no indication of gender in this phrase). From the point of view of grammar, at the beginning of the line *gīraḥ* is either vocative plural or accusative plural. Hence the possibility of different interpretations; thus, Geldner translates: "Ergiesset von da dem *Vāyu* den ausgepressten (*Soma*), die Lobreden, für *Indra* den berausenden (*Soma*) auf die, Schafhaare," referring in his commentary to *Sāyaṇa* and to *Ludwig*, who understood *gīraḥ* as "Sänger" [74.3.47]. Renou's version is: "Tout autour (en partant) d'ici, versez pour *Vāyu* (le soma) pressé (émettez) les chants, (versez le soma) enivrants / pour *Indra*, dans (le tamis en) piols de brebis" [118.8.36]. In his commentary he cites *Oldenberg* and *Neisser* who, for various reasons, decline to interpret *gír-* as "singer," and he himself suggests an alternative: "arrosez (le soma, objet de la) Louange" [118.8.94].

This example can serve as an illustration not so much of some kind of

lack of differentiation in the “model of the universe” as reflected in language, but rather of the difficulties of interpretation caused by a nondiagnostic context, which is frequent in the *R̥g Veda*. The designations of various evil forces vacillate between personified and impersonal ones in the hymns, and the linguistic conditions facilitate the ambiguity in nondiagnostic contexts.

drúh- (adjective) “harmful;” (masculine, feminine) “the harmful one;”⁵³ (feminine) “harm,” “injury,” “evil.”

*tvā yujā ní khidat sūryasyéndras
cakrām sāhasā sadyā indo
ādhi śnūnā bṛhatā vartamānam
mahó druho āpa visvāyu dhāyi* (4.28.2)

“With thee as (his) ally *Indra* squeezed the wheel (of the Sun)—mightily, at once, O Drop, / —(which) rolled along the high ridge (of the sky). / Taken away is the whole term of life of (that) great (masculine) *Harmful one*;” here *drúh-* refers to *Suṣṇa* the demon: the following stanza tells of the slaughter of the *Dasyus* by *Indra* and their burning by *Agni*; *drúham jighāmsan dhvarásam anindrām / tétikte tigmā tujāse anikā . . .* (4.23.7) “Desiring to crush the *harmfulness*, the pernicious one, not acknowledging *Indra* (feminine), / He whets the sharp arrow-points for the attack, . . . :” in this case *drúh-* appears rather as a female personification of evil, not an abstract idea; *sá ṛṇacíd ṛṇayā brāhmaṇas pátir / druho hantā mahá ṛtāsya dhartári* (2.23.7) “This *Brahmaṇaspati* is a collector of debts, a crime-avenger, / A crusher of evil in upholding the great (universal) Law,” where the abstract meaning of *drúh-* results from the opposition with *ṛtá-*; but its gender is ambiguous as the context is nondiagnostic.

dvīṣ- (feminine) “hate,” “enmity;” personified:
“hate,” “foe” (gender ambiguous):

*té asmábhyam sárma yaṃsann
amṛtā mártvebhyah
bādhamānā āpa dvīṣah* (1.90.3)

“Let them give us protection, / The immortals to the mortal ones, / Driving away enmities (accusative plural, or: “the enemies?”);” both Geldner and Renou translate *dvīṣah* as an abstract noun;

*tām tvā vayāṃ havāmahe
ṣṇvántam jātavedasam
agne ghnántam āpa dvīṣah* (8.43.23)

“Such as (thou art) we invoke thee / The attentive *Jātavedas*, / O *Agni*,

destroying *enemies*” (or: “enmities”); Geldner’s choice: “die Feinde,” and Renou’s “les inimitiés” [118.13.72].

Both contexts are nondiagnostic and contain analogous constructions. The choice between an abstract and a concrete meaning of the noun *dvīṣ-* remains difficult.

pari-bādḥ- (feminine) “a torturer, tormentor:”

bhindhí visvā āpa dvīṣah / páribādho jahí mṛdhaḥ (8.45.40) “Smash all the *haters* (feminine)! Kill the *tormentors*, (all those) *despising* (us)!;” this is an interesting example since all the three accusatives belong to the root-stems under discussion. The first is modified by an adjective in the feminine. Their semantics may be defined as the semi-personified treatment of an abstract notion.

níd- (feminine) “mockery,” “invective,” “scorn;” “a mocker,” “a contemptor:” although the majority of passages is nondiagnostic from the formal point of view, a clear correlation between the feminine and the abstract meaning can be detected. Nevertheless, a few rare cases remain obscure, for example; *yuvām sūryam vividáthur yuvām svār / visvā támāmsy ahatam nidás ca* (6.72.1) “You two have found the sun (and also) the sky; you have crushed all (kinds of) darkness (plural) and the *mockers*.” Geldner translated *nidás ca* as “und die Schmäher,” referring to the commentary of *Sāyana*, who thought that the *asuras* were meant; but an abstract meaning is quite conceivable here.

bhid- (adjective) “a breaker, destroyer;” (feminine) “splitting;” “a split,” “a breach:” *bhinát pūro ná bhído ádevir . . .* (1.174.8) “Break, like fortresses, the ungodly (feminine) *breaches* (?)!” (or: “the godless breakers” (?) Geldner has: “Brich die gottlosen Einbrüche (?) wie ihre Burgen;” Renou: “Brise comme des citadelles les brisures ennemies”) [118.17.51]. In Grassmann’s dictionary this *bhid-* is regarded as an agent noun; “Spalter, Verwunder, Zerstörer,” and in the *Great Petersburg Dictionary* it is translated as “Wand.”

bhúj- (feminine) “tasting,” “enjoyment, delight;” concrete: “one who tastes:” the usual one is the abstract meaning, for example: *sá tvām na indra sūrye só apsv / anāgāstvā ā bhaja jivasamsé / māntarām bhujām ā rīriṣo nah . . .* (1.104.6) “Thou, O *Indra*, do apportion us a share in the sun, in the waters, / In blamelessness in the speech of the living! / Do not harm our inner *delight*! . . .”

The following passage is more obscure: *agním ile bhujām yaviṣṭham / śāsā mītrām durdhārītum* (10.20.2) “I invoke *Agni* as the youngest of the (sacrifice) *tasters*, / As a friend that can hardly be restrained with a command;” an abstract meaning of *bhujām* cannot be excluded outright (“as the youngest of [all] delights”); moreover, *mītrām* can also be interpreted in the

same sense ("as friendship . . . that cannot be stopped"). Geldner translates: "den Jüngsten der (Opfer)geniesser," compare his comments ad loc.

mṛdh- (feminine) "fighting," "battle;" "an enemy;" most occurrences are in the plural: *pascā mṛdho āpa bhavantu vīsvās* (10.67.11) "Let all (feminine) the *enemies* be (left) far behind!" (or: "battles?"—but this idea would be foreign to a Vedic Aryan); Geldner has the abstract "Alle Unbilden," but his version does not contain the idea of enmity.

rip- (feminine) "deceit," "a trick;" "a deceiver;" all the dictionaries label it feminine; nevertheless, several passages seem to offer a personified understanding of this abstract notion, for example: *yā indro hārivān nā dabhanti tām rīpo* (7.32.12) "Him who is *Indra*, the owner of the bay (horses), the *deceivers* will not harm."

riṣ- (feminine) "harm" or "a wrecker" (Böhtlingk-Roth, Grassmann): all the contexts are nondiagnostic; the noun occurs mostly in the ablative with verbs meaning "to protect," "to guard;" the passages are rather uniform and admit of both meanings, and there is no formal indication of gender, for example;

*yó no maruto vṛkātāti mártyo
ripúr dadhé vasavo rákṣatā riṣáh
vartáyata tápuṣā cakrīyābhí tām
áva rudrā asáso hantana vādhaḥ* (2.34.9)

"That wily mortal, O *Maruts*, who placed us among wolves,—O *Vasus*, protect us from *harm*! (or: "from the *harmful one*") / Run him over with a red-hot wheel! O *Rudras*, (knock) the deadly weapon out of the accursed (enemy's hand)! Kill (him)!" Geldner's version: "so schützt uns vor Schaden," Renou's: "gardezvous du dommage [l'u'il peut nouscauser]!" [115.10.26]. According to Sāyana, a *rakshas* is meant here.

In addition, *riṣ-* occurs twice in an identical formula in the dative with the verb *dhā-* and a meaning close to that of an infinitive: *mā no 'hīr budhnyò riṣé dhād* . . . (5.41.16; 7.34.17) "Let the Serpent of the Depths not give us up to harm!"

spṛdh- (feminine) "fight(ing);" "an enemy, adversary;"
ābhi spṛdho mithatīr ariṣanyann / amītrasya vyathayā manyūm indra (6.25.2) "Reliable because of these (supports), stir the fighting (feminine) *enemies* (and) the foe's fury, O *Indra*!"

srīdh- (feminine) "one who errs, blunders;"
"a renegade" (Böhtlingk-Roth):

*punānāḥ soma dhārayā-
indo vīsvā āpa srīdhaḥ
jahí rákṣāmsi sukrato* (9.63.28)

"Purifying thyself in the stream, O *Soma*, / (Drive) away all (feminine) the *renegades*, O drop! / Slay the *rakṣases*, O fine-spirited one!;" in this context *srīdhaḥ* should be interpreted as a personified abstract notion because of the *rakṣas*-word in the next clause. However, Geldner suggests: "ver(bann) alle Fehlschläge;" and Renou has: "re(foulant) toutes nocivités" [118.8.37].

The above examples show that for the most part this class of root-stems denotes various abstract forces inimical to the Aryan and also perceived by him as personified incarnations of all kinds of enemies.

Another class of nominal stems with analogous functions in the *Ṛg Veda* consists of verbal stems with the suffix *-ti-*; as Debrunner pointed out, these derivatives have an abstract meaning [65.622], and their original gender was feminine [65.642], for example: *bhaj-* "to apportion, to allot"—*bhakti-* (feminine) "allotment," *san-* "to seize, to grab"—*sāti-* (feminine) "seizure," "booty, loot."

According to Benveniste, in the stems with the *-ti-* suffix the corresponding notion is regarded as something actually achieved, real and objective [55.93]. But in the *Ṛg Veda* there is a tendency, remarked on by some scholars, to personify the abstract notions denoted by the stems in *-ti-*, so that they often function as agent nouns; they either keep their feminine gender or are transferred to the masculine [65.636]. Still, there is a number of contexts wherein the degree of personification of the stems in *-ti-* cannot be established for certain. Some examples:

The root *man-* "to think," "to imagine."
matī- (feminine) "thought," "opinion;" concrete—
"the thinking one," "the understanding one:"

*tūviśuṣma tūvikrato
sácīvo vīsvayā mate
ā paprātha mahitvanā* (8.68.2)

"O (lord) of powerful fury, of powerful mind, / Might, all-comprehending one, (literally "O *thought* about everything") / Thou hast filled (the world) with (thy) greatness!"

ānumati- (feminine) "agreement," "approval;" proper noun of a goddess: *jyók paśyema sūryam uccārantam / ānumate mṛḷāyā naḥ svastī* (10.59.6) "May we see the sun for a long time (to come)! / O *Anumati-Harmony*! Be kind to us for the sake of (our) happiness!"

*sómasya rájño várunasya dhármani
bṛhaspáter ānumatyā u sármani
tāvāhám adyá maghavann úpastutau
dhátar vídhātaḥ kalásāñ abhakṣayam* (10.167.3)

“Following the statutes of *Soma* the King (and) *Varuṇa*, / Under the protection of *Bṛhaspati* and *Anumati*, / Today, O generous one, while praising thee, O creator (and) establisher, I have drunk from the goblets.”

This personified abstract notion is represented here as a goddess, and as such it is used along with other theonyms.

prāmati- (feminine) “care,” “protection;” “a protector:”

Since this noun usually appears in apposition, its lexical meaning remains ambiguous, for example: *tvām ānu prāmatim ā jaganna* (4.16.18) “To thee have we come, to (thy) protection” (or: “to the protector”); *yajñō mānuḥ prāmatir naḥ pitā hī kam* (10.100.5) “Sacrifice (is) *Manu*, for it is our protection (or: “protector”) and father;” Geldner: “denn es ist unsere Vorsehung und Vater.”

durmatī- (feminine) “hostility,” “envy;” “an evil-wisher,” “envier:”

vīṣā sūṣmeṇa bādhatē vī durmatīr / ādēdisānaḥ saryahēva surūdhah (9.70.5) “The bull in fury pursues the envious people (feminine), / Like an archer, aiming at (his) prey;” Geldner and Renou [118.9.20] offer the same interpretation.

abhīmāti-, (feminine) “pursuit,” “attack;” “pursuer,” “attacker:”

agne sāhasva pītanā abhīmātīr āpāsya (3.24.1) “O *Agni*, win the battles, drive away the pursuers (feminine);” Geldner: “treibe die Nachsteller fort;” Renou: “repousse les pensées agressives” [118.12.65].

ūpamāti- (feminine) “appeal for help;”

“one who can be approached for help,” “friendly:”

*ā no agne vayovīdham
rayīm pāvaka sāmsyam
rāsvā ca na upamāte puruspīham
sūnītī svāyaśastaram* (8.60.11)

“Bring us, O *Agni*, the strength-increasing wealth, O purifying one, which is praiseworthy, and give us, O friendly one, the much-desired (wealth), that is self-shining under (thy) beautiful guidance!”

The root *man-* is most productive in the *Rg Veda* both in number and in the variety of such *-ti-* stem derivatives.

bhū- “to be,” “to become.”

Its *-ti-* derivatives with various prefixes function as abstract nouns (feminine) and as adjectives, i.e., the agent noun of the quality-bearer is treated as an adjective.

abhībhūti- (feminine) “superiority;” adjective “superior,” “extremely powerful:” *utā smāsya panayanti jānā / jūtīm kṛṣṭiprō abhībhūtim asōḥ* (4.38.9) “And more: people praise his / Swiftness, the superiority of a speedy (horse), filling the lands”—with abstract meaning; *tāvéd idām*

abhītas cekite vāsu / ātaḥ saṃgṛbhyābhībhūta ā bhara (1.53.3) “For it is thy wealth that is so eye-catching on all sides! / Taking of it, bring (something) here, O superior one!” (or: “O superiority / incarnate /”)—both interpretations are admissible; *tāsmīn mimāthām abhībhūtyō jah* (4.41.4) “Upon it you two shall measure (your) superior (neuter) power!”—an adjective.

prābhūti- (feminine) “power,” “possession,” “might;” “ruler;” “powerful:” *agne rāyo nftamasya prābhūtau / bhūyāma te suṣtūtyas ca vāsvah* (3.18.3) (literally: “O *Agni*, let us be fine extollers of thy goods, possessing the bravest wealth!”—with an abstract meaning; *asmā ū sū prābhūtaye / vārunaya marūdbhyō / rca vidūṣtarebhyah . . .* (8.41.1) “I want to sing beautiful praise to this lord *Varuṇa* (or: “to *Varuṇa* the power”) (and) to the *Maruts*, the wisest ones . . .”—meaning unclear. Geldner in his translation treats *prābhūtaye* as an infinitive “das es ihm genüge” (which is unconvincing), but adds in the commentary that an adjectival meaning is also possible. Renou translates: “A ce (dieu) *Varuṇa* le dominateur” [118.5.72], and specifies in his commentary: “prābhūti ‘domination (incarnée)’” [118.7.28].

vībhūti- “all-embracing,” “mighty,” “strong:” only the adjectival meaning is attested in the *Rg Veda*: *mahām ānūnam tavāsam vībhūtim / matsarāso jarhṣanta prasāham* (6.17.4) “The great, the perfect, the strong, the all-embracing one (*Indra*) / Let the inebriating drinks arouse (him), the victorious one.” It occurs in later texts as an abstract noun.

In all other cases verbal roots have only a couple of derivatives in *-ti-*; they refer to abstract notions with various degrees of personification. On the formal side they are represented by uncompounded words with and without prefixes, as well as by compounds.

Compound words are a problem apart. Stems in *-ti-*, appearing as the final elements of compounds, can acquire adjectival meanings, but since the compound as a whole belongs to the *bahuvrīhi*-class, this position cannot be regarded as diagnostic. The same applies to the so-called “pseudo-compounds” with an initial *a-*, *su-* or *du-*. Nevertheless, the following list of stems in *-ti-* with personified abstract meanings contains a number of compounds, since their *-ti-* stem semantics admits of different interpretations.

as- “to be.”

abhiṣṭi- (feminine) “help,” “assistance,” “support:”

*ā yām pṛṇānti divī sādmarhiṣah
samudrām nā subhvāḥ svā abhiṣṭayah
tām vṛtrahātye ānu lasthur ūtāyah
sūsmā indram avātā āhrutapsavaḥ* (1.52.4)

“(He) whom (those) seated on the sacrificial straw(-mat) in heaven fill / as rivers (fill) the ocean,—(his) own beneficent *assistances*, / (his) *supports* at *Vṛtra*’s slaying, followed behind him / Behind *Indra*,—they the invincible, the unbent ones;” in this passage the two abstract feminines *abhīṣṭayaḥ* “assistances” and *ūtāyaḥ* “supports” are portrayed as separate entities that act quite independently of *Indra*, so that they seem to be to a certain degree personified.

av- “to help,”

ūtī- (feminine) “to help,” “support;” “a helper.” Vide supra.

iṣ- “to move,” “to send,” “to impel,” “to encourage.”

iṣṭī- (feminine) “search,” “desire,” “demand;” “an object of desire:”

ādabdhebbhis tāva gopābhir iṣṭe / ’smākam pāhi triṣadhastha sūrīn (6.8.7)
“Through thy protectors, suffering no deceit, O *desirable one*, / Protect our patrons, O (thou) dwelling in three abodes!;” following Renou, we see a vocative case in *iṣṭe* (and not a syncopated instrumental case plural based on *iṣṭébbhir*, as Geldner believed). Renou translates: “ô (dieu, objet de notre recherche” [118.13.42].

kar-/kir- “to remember,” “to praise,”

sukīrtī- (feminine) “fine praise,” “good fame,” “beautifully extolled:”
sukīrtīm bhikṣe vāruṇasya bhūreḥ (2.28.1) “I beg good fame of the abundant *Varuṇa*;” *préṣṭham vo útithim grñṣe ’gnīm . . . ásad yáthā no vāruṇaḥ sukīrtīr* (1.186.3) “I shall sing your dearest guest—*Agni* . . . so that he should be *Varuṇa* for us, the *beautifully extolled one*. . . .”

cīti- (feminine) “comprehension,” “reason,” “thought”—both abstract and personified: *cītim ácittim cinavad ví vidvān* (4.2.11) “May he—as a wise man—distinguish between *comprehension* and *incomprehension*,”—the abstract meaning is quite evident;

ví yó vīrūtsu ródhan mahitvā-

utá prajā utá prasūṣv antáh

cītir apām dáme viṣvāyuh

sádmeva dhīrāḥ sammāya cakruḥ (1.67.9-10)

“(The one) who grows in plants thanks to his greatness, / And in the progeny and within (those who) have conceived / (The one who is) the *reason* of the waters, (who stays) at home for all (his) time,— / Having measured (it), as experts (measure) a dwelling, they built (a hearth for *Agni*)”—the meaning remains unclear, but some kind of personification seems likely. Geldner translated; “der Geist der Wasser,” but Renou: “(lui qui est) la pensée-active des eaux” [118.12.15]. Grassmann suggested for *cīti-* in this passage the meaning “der Verständige, Einsichtige.”

tar-/tir-/tur- “to cross (over).”

prátūrti- (feminine) “a breakthrough,” “a rush forward;” “a precipitating one:” *tvám índra prátūrtiṣv / abhī vísvā asi spṛdhaḥ* (8.99.5) “O *Indra*, thou art superior to all opponents in (thy) *rushes forward*;” *imā asya prátūrtayaḥ / padām juṣanta yád divi* (8.13.29) “These (tribes) of his, *rushing forward* (feminine), / Chose the spot which is in heaven;” the word “tribes” (*viśaḥ* feminine) is supplied from the preceding verse, but Geldner prefers another translation: “diese seine Kampf-truppen,” that is, the *Maruts*’ troops that are the subject of the verse; in his commentary he suggests an alternative interpretation: the word can be an adjective referring to the noun *viśaḥ* from stanza 28;

suprátūrti- (adjective) “easily rushing forward:”

sákhāyas tvā vavrmahe

devām mártāsa útāye

apām nāpātam subhāgam sudīditim

suprátūrtim anehāsam (3.9.1)

“We, (thy) friends, have chosen thee, / The god, (we) the mortals, for (our) aid, / The offspring (masculine) of the waters, the happy, the charmingly bright (one), / The (god) easily *rushing forward*, the innocuous one;” the stem *suprátūrti-* appears in the *Ṛg Veda* only as an adjective. The same applies to *sudīditi-* (root *ḍi-* “to shine, glisten”).

dā- “to bind:”

áditi- (feminine) “unboundness,” “guiltlessness, innocence,” “endlessness,” nomen proprium proper noun of a goddess; adjective “limitless,” “endless:” *ā sarvātātīm áditim vṛñmahe* (10.100.1-11) “We beg for ourselves perfect bliss (and) *innocence*.” Geldner has: “Wir erbitten Vollkommenheit von der *Aditi*,” but in the commentary he concedes that *áditi-* can be an abstract here. Both Neisser [111.21] and Renou see here an abstract notion, compare “Nous demandonspar-choix l’intégrité (des biens, en sorte qu’il n’y ait) point d’attache (avec le mal)” [118.5.63]; *ádite mitra vāruṇotā mṛṣa / yád vo vayām cakrāmā kác cid āgaḥ* (2.27.14) “O *Aditi*, *Mitra*, as well as *Varuṇa*, pardon (us), / If we have committed any sin against you!;” *yásmai tvám sudravīṇo dáḍāso / ’nāgāstváṃ adite sarvātātī / . . . prajāvatā rádhasā té syāma* (1.94.15) “O lord of beautiful riches, to whom thou grantest / *Guiltlessness* in full measure, O *boundless one*, / . . . A gift (that) brings progeny,—we would like to be (like) those (ones);” here *áditi-* is an attribute of *Agni* (in other passages it can be applied to *Savitar*, *Soma*, the *Maruts* and some other gods). But this interpretation has been contested: Geldner sees here the name of the goddess, supplying in his translation: “Wen du auch, reich an Gut, (Wie) *Aditi* Schuldlosigkeit in vollem Masse

gewähren wirst . . . ,” but in the commentary he admits that the adjective is also conceivable. Renou translates: “ô (*Agni* agissant ainsi a l’instar d’ *Aditi*,” and comments: “It seems likely that *adite* is used here instead of *aditir iva*, in other words, it is a vocative of assimilation” [118.12.25,96]. Both Grassmann and Neisser saw here an adjective.

dī- “to glitter,” “to glare.”

sudītī- (feminine) “beautiful brilliance;” “glittering beautifully;” *sudītī sūno sahaso didīhi* (7.1.21) “Glitter with a beautiful glitter, O son of power!;” *tām citrāyāmaṃ hārikeṣam īmahe / sudītīm agnīm suvitāya nāvyaṣe* (3.2.13) “To this bright-pathed, golden-haired, *beautifully shining Agni* do we turn for a new success.”

sudāditi- the same, see above.

dhī- “to think,” “to ponder.”

dhīti- (feminine) “a thought,” “meditation,” “a prayer:”

gūhā satīr ūpa tmānā

prā yāc chōcanta dhītāyaḥ

kānvā rtāsya dhārayā (8.6.8)

“When secret *thoughts* begin to blaze by themselves, / The Kaṇvas (blaze) with a stream of Truth;” the notion rendered by *dhītāyaḥ* is half-personified here and is seen as separate from the poets who normally send them up to the gods.

nī- “to lead.”

sunīti-, *sūnīti-* (feminine) “good leadership,” “excellent guidance;” “one who guides excellently,” “a god leader:”

yā ānayat parāvātaḥ

sūnīti turvāsaṃ yādum

īndraḥ sā no yūvā sākhā (6.45.1)

“(He) Who has led here from afar Turvaśa and Yadu with (his) *good guidance*, he is *Indra*, our young friend;” *īndra . . . bhāva sūnītir utā vāmānītiḥ* (6.47.7) “O *Indra . . . be* (for us) a *good leader* and (even) an excellent leader!” Some other compounds with *-nīti-* as the last element (compare *vāmānīti-*) function in the same way.

yuj- “to yoke.”

svāyukti- adjective “one who yokes oneself in;” *yuvām bhujyūm bhurāmānaṃ vibhir gātām / svāyuktibhir . . .* (1.119.4) “To Bhujyu who was floundering (in the sea) you went on (the backs) of *self-yoked* birds.” This stem is exclusively adjectival in the *R̥g Veda*.

rā- “to give,” “to donate.”

rātī- (feminine) “a gift,” “a boon;” “a giver,” “a well-wisher:” *sāsantu ryā ārātayo / bódhantu sūra rātāyah* (1.29.4) “Let those ill-wishers sleep! Let the *well-wishers* keep awake, O hero!;” the personified meaning of this word is sparsely attested.

ārāti- (feminine) “ill-will,” “enmity,” “trouble;” “an ill-wisher;” “an enemy,” “a demon:” *eṣā syā sómo matībhiḥ punāno / 'tyo ná vājī tārātīd ārātīḥ* (9.96.15) “This very *Soma*, purified by prayers, / outruns the *enemies* like a victorious racer;” Geldner understands it in a more concrete manner: “entgeht . . . den Feinden,” while Renou renders it as an abstract notion: “tra-verse les inimitiés” [118.9.45].

The former application is much more common in the *R̥g Veda* (compare the reverse with *rātī-*) so that *ārāti-* can become a name for a class of evil spirits that personify the qualities of niggardliness and ill-will. For example: *ātrā pūramdhir ajahād ārātīr / máde sómasya mūrā amūrah* (4.26.7) “Then Puramdhi left the *Arātis* (accusative plural feminine) behind, / The wise one, *Soma*-drunk, (left) the unwise.” Here Puramdhi is an unclear mythic figure that personifies abundance. In this context both names must evidently stand in opposition, conforming to their semantics.

varj- “to turn,” “to derive,” “to extract,” etc.

svrktī- (feminine) “a laudatory speech;” “one who is beautifully praised:” *vīsr̥ṣṭadhenā bharate svrktīr / iyām īndram jōhuvati manīṣā* (7.24.2) “Like a released stream this *speech of praise* is rising, / (This) prayer, loudly invoking *Indra*;” *purō vo mandrām divyām svrktīm / prayatī yajñé agnīm adhvare dadhidhvam* (6.10.1) “The cheerful, heavenly, *beautifully-praised Agni*—set (him) in front of you at the time of the sacrificial rite.”

sams- “to declare solemnly,” “to extol.”

āsasti- (feminine) “a curse,” “hate;” “an imprecator,” “a hater:”

yām yuvām dāsvadhvarāya devā

rayīm dhatthó vāsumantam purukṣum

asmé sā indrāvaruṇāv āpi syāt

prā yó bhanākti vanūsām āsastiḥ (6.68.6)

“The wealth, O gods, consisting of goods, abundant in cattle, which you two (usually) grant to him who performs the honoring rite, / O *Indra*-and-*Varuṇa*, let it be exclusively ours, (the wealth) that destroys the *curses* of the envious ones!” The rest of the contexts are nondiagnostic and admit of both abstract and concrete interpretations. For example: *sā paūmsyebhūr abhibhūr āsastīr* (1.100.10) “He suppresses the *cursers* (feminine) (or: the *curses*) through (his) virile powers.” Geldner’s translation is intentionally ambiguous: “Er bringt mit seinen Manneskräften die Lästerzungen

schweigen." Renou's rendering: "Lui, (il) domine les (gens) aux mauvaises paroles, grâce à ses actes-mâles" [118.17.34]. But the corresponding nominal root-stem has an adjectival meaning in the *Ṛg Veda*—*asas-* "cursing," "hating."

About two thirds of the stems in *-ti* that have a concrete or personified meaning are derivatives formed with the help of adverbial prefixes, adjectival prefixes (*su-*, *dur-*) or the privative *a-*. We therefore observe among them a rather high percentage of "pseudo-compounds" of the *karmadhāraya* and *bahuvrīhi* type. The appearance of the *-ti*-stems as final elements of compounds consisting of two equally-semanticized nominal stems, such as *āsvam-iṣṭi-* "desirous of a horse," *havyā-dāti-* "accepting/bringing offerings," etc., supports the adjectival meaning of these stems.

There are some obscurities in the gender distribution of stems in *-as*, which are obviously connected with the peculiarities of the Vedic "model of the universe." According to a well-known rule, *-as-* stems with the accent on the root-vowel and with an abstract meaning (most often action nouns) belong to the neuter; oxytonic stems are agent nouns [3.113-4]. But actually very few oxytonic stems in *-as* are attested in the *Ṛg Veda*, and there are only isolated cases of minimal pairs where the difference in meaning is related to the position of the accent, as in *āpas-* "work;" *apās-* "active."

What concerns us here is not the degree of retention of the original relationship between the position of the accent and the *-as*-stems semantics,⁵⁴ but rather, the manner in which some stems of this class relate to their denotates. The problem was first raised and discussed by Gondain in connection with *Agni*'s epithet *sūnūḥ sāhasaḥ* "son of power" [86]. He was quite justified in questioning the opinion held by such authorities as Grassmann, Roth, and Geldner, that the noun *sāhas-* (neuter) "power, strength" could also be used as an adjective "strong." Gonda believes that they interpreted the word as an adjective in phrases where it is actually used in apposition: this problem has already been discussed here in connection with the stems in *-ti*. The same can be said about another word for "strength"—*ōjas-* (neuter). In contexts such as *yūyām devāḥ prāmatir yūyām ōjo* (2.29.2) "You, O gods, are encouragement, you are strength," abstract notions are clearly personified.

One can also note a similar semi-personified, or rather concrete perception of abstract notions expressed by the nouns *dvēsas-* (neuter) "hate," "hostility;" "a hate," "an enemy," and *dākṣas-* (neuter) "strength," "skill;" "strong," "skilful." Probably the most instructive example can be seen in the minimal pair *rākṣas-* (neuter): *rakṣās-* adjective. The semantics of the second member of the opposition is quite unambiguous: *rakṣās-* means "harmful," "the harmful one." But since the word *rākṣas-* is it is not

exclusively used to render the abstract idea of "harm, damage," but can also be personified, and in that case it becomes synonymous with *rakṣās-*.

Word-composition gives support to the adjectival meaning of this stem-class as well (compare supra). For example: *cētas-* (neuter) "brilliance," "wisdom," but the derivatives are adjectives: *prācetas-* "wise," "attentive," *vīcetas-* "brilliant," "sagacious," *sūcetas-* "benevolent," *suprācetas-* "very wise."

Such a "personal" treatment of an abstract idea can be met with in some other stem-classes, too. Compare the stem *dāmān-*, noted by Gonda, with an accent that was originally typical of agent nouns; its basic meaning was the abstract "generosity," "liberal giving," and the narrower, "personified" meaning was "giver" (6.44.2).

In another paper Gonda suggested that *brāhman* "was the name for a fundamental upholding force which was thought of as immovable, solid, and supporting" [84.32]. The bibliography of the term *brāhman* has become quite extensive by this time. The semantics of this word concerns us here only as far as it touches upon the problem of the interrelationship of stylistic, grammatical, and semantic factors. Although the *Ṛg Veda* offers a formally marked opposition of two stems (the position of the accent): *brāhman-* (neuter) "a prayer," "a sacred word," "a magic charm," "inspiration" vs. *brahmān-* (masculine) "an implorer," "an incantator," also the name of a class of priests—the semantic interpretation of the neuter stems remains far from certain. In several passages *brāhman-* is regarded as an independent force, which the gods receive from the poets who sing their praises, or which can be obtained by drinking *Soma*, with which help heroic deeds are accomplished. For example, *ādḥākṛṇoḥ prathamām vīryam mahād / yād asyāgre brāhmanā sūśmam atrayaḥ* (2.17.3) "Then thou hast performed the first great feat: / (That one) when, in the beginning, thou hast aroused (thy) fury by means of his sacred word" (to *Indra*), where "his" refers to the "poet-singer;" *ūd gā ājad ābhinaḍ brāhmanā valām* (2.24.3) "He drove out the cows, he split Vala by means of an incantation" (to *Brahmaṇaspati*). It is also a kind of substance which the initiated can—by means of their wisdom—"set in motion" for their own ends (this is a clearly magical concept), for example, . . . *prathamajā brāhmaṇo vīśvam id viduḥ / dyumnāvad brāhma kusikāsa ērira* . . . (3.29.15) " . . . the first-born ones know everything of the sacred speech. / The people of the *Kusika*-clan set in motion the brilliant sacred speech." This view of an autonomous abstract *brāhman-* in the *Ṛg Veda* is confirmed in the subsequent development of its meaning: through the stage of a semi-personified notion it evolved into the proper name of the supreme deity of Hinduism.

A special case of gender manifestation is represented by the noun

vṛtrá- in the *Rg Veda* (based on the verb *var-* “to obstruct,” “to stop,” “to envelop”), which is masculine in the singular and neuter in the plural (compare Böhtlingk, Grassmann), with the respective meanings of “an enemy (masculine);” the proper name of the dragon slain by *Indra* (masculine); and “obstruction,” “barrier” (neuter). Its semantic invariant is “force of resistance,” and in various Vedic contexts this invariant is represented as personified to various degree. There are some clear passages wherein the character of the denotate can be regarded as certain, for example, *vṛtréna yád áhinā bíbhrad áyudhā / samásthithā yudhāye sámśam āvide* (10.113.3) “When, bearing (thy) arms, thou camest against the dragon *Vṛtra* in order to fight (him), in order to gain glory, . . .” (a hymn to *Indra*): here *vṛtrá-* is obviously the proper name of *Indra*’s adversary. But there are other passages where *vṛtra-* can be either a proper name or a common noun. For example, consider Renou’s translations of the first stanza in 3.37: *vātrahatyāya sāvase / . . . / Indra tvā vartayāmasi* “Pour la force apte à briser les résistances . . . / ô *Indra*, nous t’orientons vers ici;” then stanza 5: *Indram vṛtrāya hántave . . . úpa bruve* “Je m’adresse à *Indra* . . . pour qu’il tue *Vṛtra* . . .,” as well as in stanza 6: . . . *tvām imahe . . . Indra vṛtrāya hántave . . .* “ . . . nous t’implorons, . . . ô *Indra*, pour tuer *Vṛtra*” [118.17.80]. Geldner’s versions are: stanza 1: “zur Übermacht, die die Feinde erschlägt,” stanza 5: “das er den *Vṛtra* (Feind) erschlage,” stanza 6: “den *Vṛtra* (Feind) zu erschlagen.” The worshipper can be seen as asking *Indra* for the repetition of his fundamental cosmogonic exploit—the killing of the dragon *Vṛtra*—and thus the establishing of order in the universe—or this may be just a case of killing a (personal) enemy.

The semantic peculiarities of this noun are related to certain anomalies in the expression of its gender and number. The dictionaries refer to *vṛtrá-* in the singular as masculine, and as neuter in the plural. But the neuter singular also occurs in a collective sense, for example,

*píbā sómam abhí yám ugra tārda
urvám gávyam máhi grṇāná Indra
ví yó dhr̥ṣṇo vādhiṣo vajrahasta
vísṡvā vṛtrám amitr̥tyā sāvobhih* (6.17.1)

“Drink *Soma*, O terrible one, thanks to which (*Soma*) thou shalt bore through the cow-pen, O *Indra*, mightily praised one, / (Thou), O daring one, with the thundering cudgel in hand, who with (thine own) powers shalt smash all hostile (accusative plural neuter) obstacles (accusative singular)!” (or: “thou shalt kill any insidious enemy”). There is also the difficulty that the second line uses the wording of the *Vala* myth, but in the third and fourth lines the vocabulary is that of the dragon-slaying (*Vṛtra*) myth, and this is

duly noted by Geldner in his commentary.⁵⁵

The neuter plural of *vṛtrá-* does not in itself correspond to an abstract meaning. Many passages suggest a very concrete sense as in, for example, *agnír vṛtrāni jañghanad / dravinasyúr vipanyáyā* (6.16.34) “May *Agni* utterly destroy the enemies (accusative plural neuter), / Seeking (their) wealth, with (great) success!”

Thus there are grounds to believe that some anomalies in gender distribution within a certain group of abstract nouns in the *Rg Veda* reflect peculiarities in the reference of these nouns, peculiarities which, in their turn, seem to be conditioned by specific traits of this “model of the universe.”

This tendency to a partial or complete personification of some abstract nouns has resulted in their transformation into proper names in the *Rg Veda*. The correlation between a proper name and an appellative noun in this text is rather complex, and its proper interpretation requires a brief outline of the mythopoetic locus of the proper name in the *Rg Veda*.

The views of the *Ṛṣis* with regard to name were perfectly “realistic:” they considered the name (*nāman-* neuter) to be a reflection of the essence of its bearer; if a thing or a person has different names, each of them corresponds to a definite quality that the name-bearer possesses.⁵⁶ Moreover, the *Ṛṣis* regard the proper name as the very essence of the denotate; the two aspects were inseparable. Only something with a name could be said to exist, and until there is a name, there cannot exist a corresponding object or person. This status of the name—in the Vedic model of the universe—results in the sacralization of every operation concerning it. It may be said that the name as such was sacred during the Vedic period. In nonritual spheres this property probably appears considerably later.

One of the fundamental operations with names, as it appears in the text, was precisely “naming:” *nāma dhā-* literally “to put/set a name,” “to fix a name.” In the broad context of the *Rg Veda* this operation acquires cosmogonic value since “fixing a name” meant “creating an object.”⁵⁷ For instance, *dādāhīti putró varam páram pitúr / nāma tr̥tíyam ádhi rocané diváh* (1.155.3) “The son fixes (his) father’s (name) here and yonder, / The third name (he sets) in the bright part of the sky.” The passage deals with the three strides of *Viṣṇu*—the son whose father was the Sky. *Viṣṇu*, in making his strides, created the universe, and fixing names to cosmic elements in this context is equivalent to his strides.⁵⁸

Renou has remarked on the intimate semantic ties between *nāman-* and the noun *dhāman-*, derived from the root *dhā-*. He says, “In fact, both terms complement one another; in this case, *nāman-* represents the global and abstract aspect of the same notion whose multiple and accidental side is represented by *dhāman-*” [115.1.21]. Later on the role of *dhāman-* was

taken by *rūpa-*; this development was reflected in the concept rendered by the compound *nāmarūpa-* “name-and-form.”

The phrase *nāma + dhā-* has another meaning in the *Rg Veda* besides that of “naming,” viz. “to strengthen,” for the Vedic Ṛṣis believed that naming was equivalent to endowing someone with a certain substance. In this connection, the following can be cited:

bhūri nāma vādamāno dadhāti
piṭā vaso yādi tāj joṣāyase
kuvīd devāsya sāhasā cakānāh
sumnām agnīr vanate vāvṛdhānāh (5.3.10)

“The father, gives (thee) many names, glorifying (thee), O *Vasu*, if thou enjoyest it. / Will not *Agni*—invigorated (and) happy in (his) strength—gain (for us) the god’s favor?” *Agni*’s father in this case is the sacrificing priest, for he has given birth to the god and invigorates him by giving him names.

In the middle voice, then, *nāma + dhā-* means “to acquire a name” and “to be strengthened, invigorated,” for example, *dādāhāno nāma mahō vācobhir / vāpur dṛṣāye venyō vy āvaḥ* (6.44.8) “Acquiring—thanks to the (poets’) speeches—a great name (for himself), / The beautiful one displayed (his) splendor for contemplation (about *Soma*).

The phrase *nāma bhar-* “to bear/carry a name” means “to possess (or control) the qualities of the name-bearer,” for example, *bībharti cārv indrasya nāma / yēna vīsvāni vṛtrā jaghāna* (9.109.14) “He carries the dear name of *Indra*, / With whose help he destroyed all (his) enemies” (about *Soma*); or

parō yāt tvām paramā ājāniṣṭhāh
parāvātī srútyam nāma bībhart
ātas cid indrād abhayanta devā
vīsvā apō ajayad dāsāpatniḥ (5.30.5)

“When, higher (than all), thou were born as the highest one, / Carrying into the distance (thy) name, worthy of fame, / The gods at once started fearing *Indra*. / He conquered all the waters ruled by the *Dāsa*.”

In this way a figure of mythology can bear its own proper name and the name of some other person, and the latter’s functions are transferred to the former. It has been observed by several scholars that a proper name in the *Rg Veda* can be regarded as a myth or a plot encoded in a certain way.

It should be stressed that the verb *bhar-* (as well as *dhā-*) is frequently used in descriptions of the cosmogonic activities of the Vedic gods. Thus the oft-cited passage in 1.185.1 tells of Heaven and Earth: *vīsvantmánā bībhṛto yād dha nāma* “The two themselves bear whatever (has) a name.” “They

bear,” that is, they comprise, thus creating the organised universe, since “whatever (has) a name” denotes all objects and elements contained in the cosmos. It is no accident that the same verb *bhar* is the predicate where the subject is *Vāc*, the proper name of the Sacred Speech: . . . *ahām mitrāvāruṇobhā bibharmy / ahām indrāgnī ahām asvīnobhā* //11// *ahām sómam āhanāsam bibharmy / ahām tvāṣṭāram utā pūṣānam bhāgam* / . . . (10.125.1c-d, 2a-b) “I carry both *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, both *Indra* and *Agni*, and both of the *Asvins*. / I carry the raging *Soma*, I (carry) *Tvaṣṭar*, *Pūṣan* and *Bhaga*.”

To utter or invoke the name of a deity: *nāma hū-*, *nāma vac-* meant for the Vedic Ṛṣis a communion with the inner essence of the deity [118.4.79, 118]. The very utterance of someone’s name had to induce the name-owner to act according to the name’s nature. This magical attitude toward the name resulted, in particular, in the frequent use of divine names as appeals; on the linguistic side it is rendered by vocatives, which capriciously the flow of the Vedic poet’s narration, thus creating a very special correlation between the descriptive and the appellative functions of language (more on this below). The proclamation of a divine name in the *Rg Veda* should probably be seen as a variant of the more general magic procedure of the “Declaration of Truth,” to which Old Indian culture attributed wide-ranging creative properties.

Usually, the name of a deity is proclaimed aloud and in public, but there is also another way: a mental rendition of the name, the concentration of the poet’s mental effort around it; as has been observed by Renou, the latter device is encoded by the phrase *nāma man-*, literally “to think a name.” One is reminded—in this connection—of the mental sacrifice that was alleged to be as efficacious as a real one in the opinion of the Vedic Aryans.

Finally, the phrase *nāma grabh-* “to seize a name” is common in Vedic charms, where it denotes the full domination of the “name-seizer” over the person whose name “has been captured,” for example, *navānām navatīnām / viśāsya rōpuṣṭām / sārvasām agrabham nāma* / . . . (1.191.13) “Of the ninety nine / destroyers (feminine) of poison, / Of all (of them) I have seized (their) name.”

This short list of the principal predicates whose object is *nāman-* gives a very general idea of the role of this word in the Vedic “model of the universe.” In the Ṛṣi’s mind, a name always touched upon a mystery; the energy nucleus of the name was its intrinsic “naming” force which was at the same time a creative force. The sacred act of name-proclaiming was like tearing down a veil covering the inner essence of the name, and “to know the name” was equal to gaining access to the mystery.

Among attributive constructions expressed by concord the phrase

gúhyam nāma “a secret name” frequently occurs; it points to the true nature of the denotate that can be made manifest by means of some kind of magic procedure that is tantamount to acquisition of knowledge. These ideas are aptly illustrated by the two initial stanzas of 4.58 (a hymn in praise of ghee):

*samuḍrād ūrmír mádhumāñ úd ārad
úpāñsúnā sám amṛtatvám ānaḥ
ghṛtásya nāma gúhyam yád āsti
jihvā devānām amṛtasya nābhīḥ* (1)

*vayam nāma prá bravāmā ghṛtásya-
asmín yajñé dhārayāmā námobhīḥ
úpa brahmā śṛṇavac chasyāmānaḥ
cātuḥśṛṅgo vanīd gaurá etát* (2)

“The mead-wave arose out of the ocean. / (Mixed) with *Soma*, it acquired the qualities of the *amṛta*. / That is the secret name of ghee: / Tongue of the gods, navel of immortality // . (2) We will proclaim the name of ghee-fat. / In this sacrifice we will make (it) stay (here) by bowing. / Let the brahman hear (it), when it is being pronounced. / The four-horned gaur-ox has emitted it.”

The ghee-fat is seen here in a mystic way: not only is it the clarified butter being poured into the fire, but it is also identified with *Soma* (the navel of immortality) and with poetic speech (—the tongue of the gods). The latter two definitions are interrelated, for *Soma* is known to stimulate poetic inspiration. At the same time, *Soma* is a gaur-ox, since both the juice and the animal are of brown-yellowish color. And thus the knowledge of the fat’s “secret names”—which is the privilege of the brahman-priest—really means the understanding of its true, though hidden, nature.

The concept of “secret names” conforms with the general Vedic teaching that true supreme knowledge is concealed from the human mind; what is accessible to mortals is only its lesser part. Speculations of this sort are reflected, for instance, in the riddle-hymn 1.164.45:

*catvāri vāk párimitā padāni
tāni vidur brāhmaṇā yé manīṣiṇaḥ
gúhā trīṇi nihitā nēṅgayanti
turíyaḥ vācō manuṣyā vadanti*

“Speech is measured into four parts. / The Brahmins who are wise know them. / Three (quarters), which are secretly put away, they do not activate. / The fourth (quarter) of speech (is what) men speak.”

Words, too, can be secret (1.72.6; 10.53.10), and the phrase *gúhyāni padā*, “secret words,” is almost synonymous with *gúhyā nāmāni*, secret

names.” Secret words are also filled with creative force, for example, *vidvāmsaḥ padā gúhyāni kartana / yéna devāso amṛtatvám ānaśuḥ* (10.53.10) “Use secret words as experts (do), / by which means the gods have achieved immortality.”

After these general remarks about the *Ṛṣis*’s views concerning proper names, let us determine their range of application in the *Rg Veda*. Admittedly, this is a highly complex problem, since one is not able to draw a clear line between a common and a proper noun in the usage of this text [29.220]. In Gardiner’s widely-accepted opinion, the weaker the semantic motivation of a noun, the more properties of a proper name it possesses. Such names—mainly theonyms—are extremely rare in the *Rg Veda*: *indra-*, *marút-*, *váruna-*. But generally speaking, such a lack of motivation from a modern scholar’s standpoint should not be identified with the *Ṛṣi*’s standpoint, for whom quite different etymological links were important. The rest of the proper names in the *Rg Veda* are actually common nouns, more or less widely used in the former function. There are not absolute formal or semantic criteria for distinguishing them, so that grave problems of interpretation arise in numerous cases.

The *Ṛṣis* used to play with proper names in their hymns. In theory, two processes of name-playing should be possible: 1) transforming common nouns into proper names, and 2) transforming proper names into nouns. The former possibility is most frequently used, as it is the most appropriate one for the Vedic “model of the universe” with its inherent tendency for the complete, or at least partial personification of various abstract powers and ideas. The poet quite often “indulges in brinkmanship:” the degree of personified or abstract perception constantly vacillates and shifts, and it becomes impossible to determine with certainty if a deity’s name is intended, or just an abstract notion. Such an ambiguous position of a name would always be connected with a *hic et nunc* situation, as in the following stanza dealing with the *Maruts*:

*āpathayo vípathayó-
'ntaspathā ānupathāḥ
etēbhir máhyaḥ nāmabhir
yajñám viṣṭārā ohate* (5.52.10)

“(Those) “walking toward the path,” “walking off the path,” / “Walking in the middle of the path,” “walking along the path”— / Under these names they grant me the sacrifice, after scattering widely around.”

The poet would test the names for most various properties. They could be quite accidental, as in the instance quoted above, or they could function as conventional epithets and appear in many contexts as regular proper

names. This process developed along the following lines: an attribute or an apposition to a deity's proper name → theonym. Such epithets/proper names cannot be regarded as mere verbal ornamentation; Gonda, after a thorough study of their role in the *R̥g Veda* [79], correctly concluded that they have rather important functions: they usually appeal to a single characteristic trait of a deity that seems most important at the moment in order to provoke its manifestation. An epithet's motivation is not always conditioned by its actual context, and this circumstance rather confirms its transformation into a deity's proper name, like *jātāvedas-* literally "the knower of (all) creatures," or *vaiśvānarā-* "belonging to all men" (Grassmann, but according to Gonda—"related to him who is in complete possession of vital force"), when applied to *Agni*; *maghāvan-* "generous" or *vṛtrahān-* "Vṛtra's slayer" in the case of *Indra*, etc. Nevertheless, boundaries between appellative epithets and proper names are not always fixed, and a standing epithet that regularly replaces a deity's proper name can be sometimes applied to another god as, for instance, *Agni* (not *Indra*!) *vṛtrahān-* in 1.59.6; 6.16.14.

Vedic style is fond of chains of theonyms: lists, epithets of a particular god, and especially appeals to him in the vocative, as in:

*yām trāyadhva idām-idaṃ
dévāso yāṃ ca nāyatha
tāsmā agne vāruṇa mītrāryaman
mārutah śārma yachata* (7.59.1)

"(Him) whom you protect, O gods, whom you guide hither and thither, / To him, O *Agni*, *Varuṇa*, *Mitra*, *Aryaman*, (and) *Maruts*, grant (your) protection!;"

*úšo vājena vājini prācetā
stómaṃ juśasva gr̥ṇato maghoni
purāñī devi yuvatīḥ pūramdhir
ānu vratām carasi viśvavāre* (3.61.1)

"O *Uśas*, O rewarding with reward, O understanding one, / Enjoy the poet's praise-song, O generous one! / O goddess, ancient (and yet ever) young like *Puram̥dhi*, / Thou followest the (divine) vow, O possessor of all goods!."

When modern scholars translate and interpret the hymns, the choice between a common noun and a proper name frequently becomes all-important, since it determines the key to understanding a passage or a hymn, or perhaps the whole collection. A dual interpretation is typical of such important words as *īḷā-* (feminine) "a libation" and proper name of a goddess: *nīrṛti-* (feminine) "destruction," "abyss," and proper name of a goddess; *pārvata-*

"knotty," "protruding," "a hill," "a mountain," and a (personified) proper name, as well as many others.

Previously, there was a lively debate concerning the names of the *Āditya*-gods (the sons of the goddess *Aditi*—"Nonboundedness"). Except for *Vāruṇa-*, all of them function both as proper names and common nouns: *mītrā-* (masculine) "a friend" and a theonym; (neuter) "friendship," "friendly contract;" *aryamān-* (masculine) "a companion," "a match-maker," "a best-man;" god's name; *bhāga-* (masculine) "a giver, bestower;" "a lucky lot," "luck, happiness;" god's name; *āṃśa-* (masculine) "a portion, share," and a theonym; *dākṣa-* "skilful," "skill," "ability;" a god's name. The etymology of *vāruṇa-* has not been established with certainty.⁵⁹ Although the *Ādityas* are traditionally classified as celestial gods, more than thirty years ago Paul Thieme proposed to regard them as personified abstract notions, so that in every Vedic passage *vāruṇa-* should be rendered as "True Speech" (on the basis of his tentative etymology), *mītrā-* as "Agreement, Contract," *aryamān-* as "Hospitality," and so forth [141]. His extreme position has not found acceptance among scholars, but the possibility of presenting the problem in this way is in itself important.

The play with proper names in *R̥g Veda* is often connected with the problem of reference. When a number of theonyms can also function as common nouns, denoting concrete objects or cosmic elements (such as *agni-* (masculine) "fire" and theonym; *sūrya-* (masculine) "sun" and theonym; *sóma-* (masculine) "a certain plant [possibly "fly-agaric"]" and theonym), there is always room for ambiguity. And this ambiguity is fully exploited by the authors—although we should never exclude the possibility of semantic syncretism in those cases where we just see different meanings. When these mythological figures act as deities they show few anthropomorphic traits. We know for certain that *Agni* has a wife, *Agnayī*, that *Sūrya* is *Uśas*'s lover and has a daughter, that *Soma* was the bridegroom of *Savitār*'s daughter, and that their marriage-feast serves as a model for humans; but all such traits and motifs pass almost unnoticed among the descriptions of natural phenomena: the flames of the sacrificial fire, the rays of the blazing sun, the juice of the plant, the source of the divine drink of immortality. Hence the high degree of ambiguity in their treatment, which is yet another peculiarity of the style of the *R̥g Veda*. This linguistic problem is just one particular move in the *R̥ṣi*'s play, based on the context's reference to more than a single level.

Bibliography

Bibliographical Abbreviations

ВДИ-Вестник древней истории. М.

ВЯ-Вопросы языкознания. М.

ABORI-Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.

BSLP-Bulletin de las Société de linguistique de Paris.

BSO(A)S-Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies. London
Institution (University of London).

ÉVP-Renou L. Études védiques et pāṇinéennes. T. 1-17. Paris, 1955-1969.

HOS-Harvard Oriental Series.

IF-Indogermanische Forschungen.

IJ-Indo-Iranian Journal. Leiden.

JA-Journal asiatique. Paris.

JOAS-Journal of the American Oriental Society. New York/New Haven.

KZ-Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der
indogermanischen Sprachen.

MSS-Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft.

ZDMG-Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Leipzig,
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WZKM-Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.

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