Contemplating Eternity: On Time, Death, and Timelessness in Ancient India

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CONTEMPLATING ETERNITY:

ON TIME, DEATH, AND TIMELESSNESS IN ANCIENT INDIA

a dissertation presented

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines ancient South Asian concepts and mythology of time. It journeys from the Ṛgveda to the later texts of the Vedic tradition (Upaniṣads), then to the epics, and on to philosophical tractates of different schools of Indian thought. It reconstructs South Asian mythology of time, establishes its Vedic and Indo–European origins, and shows historical development of the concept of time from an early pre-philosophical period to its mature form in the Hindu mythology and philosophy.

By analyzing data from Vedic and early Brahmanic sources in comparison with Indo-European materials, such as Iranian Zurvanite mythology and thought, I reconstruct early views on time and consider if there existed a unified understanding of time and an early, pre-philosophical, notion of time.

I investigate etymological and conceptual connections between such Vedic terms as the year (*saṃvatsara*, *vatsara*), Cosmic Order/Truth (*ṛta*), and a period/season (*ṛtu*), and conclude that even in the earliest period, i.e., in the Ṛgveda, the concepts that are developed in the later tradition can be found in their preliminary form: an idea of two types of time, or *two times,* — the first is time-eternity, and the second one is transitory, "concrete", or "profane" time; and also — a view that time is the Lord of the universe that regulates and even creates it.

Proceeding, I analyze texts belonging to the late Vedic tradition and then turn my attention to the epics and philosophical works. I establish conceptual and historical connections between early views on time (Vedic period) and those of Hinduism. A special attention is paid to the doctrine of *kālavāda* that depicts time as the Absolute unmanifested reality and power that

creates, regulates, and destroys the universe; to the relation between time and death, and also to the idea of two times: one is eternal, undivided, and unchangeable; the other is empirical, changeable, and divisible. South Asian sources are studied in comparison with a wide range of Indo-European mythological and linguistic materials. This approach is crucial to be able to find the origins of the concepts considered, reconstruct time-related Indo–European myths and motifs, and clarify functions of different mythological characters.

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INTRODUCTION

"What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know"[1]. This passage from Augustine's *Confessions* is the most famous quote reflecting on the nature of time. It implies that, although we can *feel* what time is, its mysterious and inexplicable nature eludes words.

The goal of this work is *to find words* to elucidate how time was envisioned and understood in the intellectual, literary, and mythological tradition of Ancient South Asia and to answer Augustine's question – *what is time?* Specifically – what is time in the cultural context of ancient India? Searching for an answer to this question, I will have to pose and find answers to a multitude of preliminary questions, such as – is there a unified culture-specific understanding of the phenomenon of time? Is there a notion of time? When and how was this notion formed? Are there different theories of time? Do mythological and philosophical views on time differ? Do they change over time? Is time real? Is it represented visually?

This dissertation aims to examine historical development and origins of Ancient South Asian concepts of and mythological views on time as presented in various literary sources, starting from the Ṛgveda to the latest texts of the Vedic tradition (Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads) and then to the epics and philosophical treatises of different schools of Indian thought. It strives to establish conceptual and historical connections between the early views on time (Vedic period) and those of Hinduism; to reconstruct South Asian mythology of time, to discover its origins, and show historical development of the concept of time from an early pre-philosophical period to its mature form in Hindu mythology and philosophy.

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[1] Augustine 2006: 242.

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The need for a work that would research the topic of time in Ancient India/South Asia in a broad historical perspective is dictated by the fact that this topic has never been treated at length systematically and diachronically. There are multiple articles focusing on time in South Asia. There is even a volume "Time in Indian Philosophy" that includes a collection of articles on the subject by different authors dedicated to different topics, however, each of these articles, with only few exceptions, considers the views of a specific period, text, or a particular school of thought. As a result, it appears that every school of thought that treated a problem of time in India existed in the historical vacuum, without any connection with the preceding tradition.

Among major studies that tackle the problem of time in Ancient India, the following important works must be named: first of all, it is an illuminating article by Yaroslav Vassilkov "*Kālavāda* (the doctrine of Cyclical Time) in the Mahābhārata and the concept of Heroic Didactics" that reconstructs the doctrine of time as presented in the Mahābhārata. Vassilkov connects the epic *kālavāda* with certain ideas of the preceding tradition (mostly of the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda) that suggest the cyclic nature of time. Then he discusses the reconstructed time-ideology as a system of thought within the framework of the heroic epics.

Another study that deals with the *kālavāda* doctrine in the *Mahābhārata* but puts it into a different perspective is a monograph "The *Mahābhārata* and the *Yugas*" by Luis Gonzalez-Reimann. Gonzalez-Reimann researches the formation of the system of the four world periods, the *yugas*, in the epic. He concludes that the system took its finite shape in the *Mahābhārata* although its roots can to some extent be traced back to the Vedic period.

A short monograph "Prajāpati and the Year" by Jan Gonda considers all aspects of the cult of Prajāpati as a deity that represents the year. Gonda collects numerous quotes from the

Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, and select Upaniṣads that confirm and explain Prajāpati's connection with the year. He doesn't make any general conclusions regarding the nature of time and does not research the concept of time in these texts.

Anindita Balslev's book "A study of time in Indian philosophy" attempts a systematic review of time concepts in different schools of Indian philosophy – Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain, excluding, however, the view of the grammarians and thus ignoring a philosophical school that pays most attention to the category of time. Having compared concepts of time in several philosophical systems, Balslev distances the philosophical views from the pre-existing religious and mythological representations of time and regards these views as developed without any explicit connection to the tradition.

A work that strives to provide a short but systematic overview of the development of the concept of time-substance through different periods is Stanisław Schayer's "Contributions to the problem of Time in Indian philosophy". Schayer touches upon different stages of development of this understanding of time and, unlike most researchers, sees a direct connection between the old "mythological" views and the formation of the philosophical view.

My own approach in this dissertation can be called synthetic. First of all, my research is primarily based on texts, I will draw on the visual and archaeological sources only occasionally, therefore my methodology is mostly philological, i.e., close reading and analysis of textual sources. The scope of the texts I consider in this thesis is very broad, extending from the Ṛgveda, the earliest text of Ancient India and the earliest example of the Indo-European poetry, to considerably late philosophical treatises, such as Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya.* In chronological terms, I analyze texts covering a period of approximately two

thousand years, therefore a study I am attempting is, in a sense, cross-temporal. The texts I consider are very diverse linguistically, stylistically, mythologically, and functionally. They also belong to different ideological and religious systems: although the Vedic religion can be seen as a predecessor of Brahmanism and Hinduism, they have different views of reality, rather divergent mythologies, distinct approaches to the ritual, and dissimilar ideologies. Moreover, some of the texts, such as the Mahābhārata, are not monolithic and belong simultaneously to different chronological and conceptual strata and therefore include rather complex and sometimes contradictory worldviews. Thus, in order to reconstruct and clarify temporal concepts and views of a particular period, I first try to look at the smallest elements of what can potentially constitute a system: mythological motifs and concepts.

To analyze mythological motifs, I primarily employ methods of comparative mythology and, as needed, supplement them with methods of comparative linguistics. This process starts with comparing parts of textual evidence in order to find and isolate a particular mythological motif. When the sought motif is isolated, I try to determine the frequency of its occurrence in a given text and then, by supplementing my initial finding with other evidence, I formulate the motif in the text in question. Sometimes, in order to clarify the meaning or extent of a motif, I draw on comparative materials, mostly Indo-European. My study therefore is not only cross-temporal but also cross-cultural. To determine the function of a particular mythological character or a specific term, I occasionally resort to etymology and methods of comparative linguistics. For example, to determine the meaning and functions of the Vedic term ṛta, i.e., Cosmic Order and Truth, I research its etymology and then place this term within a specific semantic field, i.e., I consider it as a node in the net of meanings uncovered by etymology. This process, in the case of ṛta, reveals that this word is etymologically

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connected to a plethora of terms that have temporal connotations. Thus, a particular term (*r̥ta)* is placed in a semantic field that can be called "temporal". Next, I research how a specific term (e.g., *r̥ta*) functions in the text: what's its usage? What actions/events/phenomena are denoted by this term? What are the other terms this one is connected with? I.e., I create a second net of meanings: a net of functional connections. In the case of *r̥ta*, I see that its functions do, in fact, conform to its time-related etymology: for example, *r̥ta* organizes the universe and creates a temporal sequence of events. When necessary, I expand my search to comparative materials, for example, a specific character, such as Varuṇa, can be compared to etymologically or functionally related characters from the other Indo-European cultures. This way I can clarify some of the functions, motifs, or even epithets of the character under consideration.

In certain cases, when reading a specific Sanskrit text, I seek the help of traditional commentarial literature in order to understand or clarify certain terms. Despite the fact that in many cases a commentary is not contemporaneous to the text (a time gap can be as much as a thousand years or even more, as in the case of Sāyaṇa's commentary on the R̥gveda), an interpretation of a term or a passage in a commentary can shed light on the traditional understanding of the term/passage in question and also, by completing a diachronic semantic field for the term, help uncover an additional or earlier meaning.

Overall, my synthetic hybrid approach combines textological, linguistic (particularly, etymological), and mythological methodologies that help me systematically research the worldview and mythology of different systems of Indian thought. Such an approach produces a coherent and comprehensive synchronic and diachronic analysis of the ancient Indian views of time.

Chapter I of this thesis examines the views on time in the oldest text of the South Asian tradition, the Ṛgveda. I determine by what means time is denoted in the text and discuss temporal terms and mythological motifs in the RV. I pose a question if there is a concept of time in the Ṛgveda. Then I reconstruct and outline the Ṛgvedic temporal system. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to Varuṇa. Using a combination of philological, linguistic, and comparative-mythological methods, I reconstruct Varuṇa's possible mythological role as a time lord.

Chapter II deals with the later Vedic terms and concepts of time. The first part of the chapter is solely dedicated to time in the Atharvaveda. I research developments and adaptations of the Ṛgvedic ideas, then identify new concepts formed in the Atharvaveda and discuss if these new concepts can be considered resurfaced Indo-European mythologemes. In the second part of the chapter I, proceed to discuss multiple concepts of time found in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. I argue that the Upaniṣadic myths and ideas lay down the foundation for further development during the Epic and philosophical periods.

Chapter III analyzes the views on time in the epics, first of all, the Mahābhārata, and epic-like pre-philosophical works, such as the Yogavasiṣṭha. These views are considered within the framework of the *kālavāda* doctrine – a semi-philosophical school specifically dedicated to time. I reconstruct the core ideas and discuss mythological motifs typical of *kālavāda*. In the second part of the chapter, I briefly summarize time-concepts of different branches of Indian philosophy belonging to the Hindu "orthodox" philosophical schools. Then I analyze at length the concept of time in the Vākyapadīya, linguistic and philosophical treatise composed by Bhartṛhari, and draw a conclusion on the role of the preceding tradition in the formation of Bhartṛhari's concept of time.

All translations of Sanskrit, occasional Avestan, Germanic, and Slavic materials are my own unless otherwise noted. Quotes in modern German and French are left untranslated.

CHAPTER I

TIME IN THE ṚGVEDA

This chapter attempts to reconstruct the earliest perceptions of time in Ancient India as attested in the Ṛgveda, the oldest literary monument of Indian religion and poetry (c. 1300-1000 BCE). As usually is the case with the study of liturgical texts, information that concerns mythology and worldview is fragmentary and, unlike in the philosophical works, is not presented systematically. It is dispersed through different layers and hymns of the Ṛgveda, and cannot be interpreted without being isolated and systematized.

When reconstructing Vedic views on time and trying to establish if there is a *concept* of time in the Ṛgveda, first, it is crucial to determine what words/terms found in the Ṛgveda are used to denote time or time-related notions. Is there a unifying notion to signify time in general or abstract time? Are there terms that can substitute this general notion under certain conditions? What are the words that denote specific temporal units?

In the post-Ṛgvedic tradition (starting from the Atharvaveda), the most prevalent term to signify either abstract or specific time throughout a wide range of Sanskrit texts of different types and genres is *kāla*. This word appears in the Ṛgveda only once, and the hymn where it occurs (RV 10.42.9) is found in the 10th maṇḍala – a comparatively late book of the Ṛgveda that might be considered "a book of additions"[2] to the Ṛgvedic family books – whose style "approaches the style of the poetic Mantra texts of YV, SV, AV"[3], i.e., that of the later texts. As will be shown below (1.1) in the analysis of the aforementioned stanza, the word is used to denote a specific opportune moment or a proper instant rather than time *in abstracto*. Another

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[2] See Witzel 1997: 265.

[3] *Ibid.*

common term typically used in the epics and philosophical texts, especially in the Buddhist and Jain treatises, to signify time – *samaya* – is absent in the Ṛgveda.

Let us consider what terms for various specific time units and temporal notions are actually used in the Ṛgveda and determine their role in the Vedic worldview.

1.1. Specific Time and Temporality in the Ṛgveda

Although the Ṛgveda apparently does not have a term to denote abstract or general notion of time, it definitely finds multiple ways to show its passage and includes several lexemes that designate specific time units. Among such lexemes are the year (*saṃvatsará*, *vatsará*, etc.), denominations of seasons (typically, the following five: autumn – *śarád,* rainy season – *varṣá*, winter, the cold season, – *hemantá*, spring – *vasantá,* summer or hot season – *griṣma*), solar and lunar month (*mā́s*), day (*áhar, usrá,* etc.), night (*aktú, nákta, rā́trī,* etc.), moment – *muhūrtá*, etc. There are also specific designations for various regular natural phenomena that are used to define time, e.g., the dawn, dusk, sunrise, noon, etc., as well as for different states-in-time, such as the past, present, and future. The Ṛgveda also mentions later or future generations, the *yuga*s, e.g., RV 7.87.4d:

> *yugā́ya vípra úparāya śíkṣan ||*

> The inspired [poet] strives for the later generations.

"Generations" or, by expansion of the meaning, "ages" when a particular generation lives, appear to be the term that brings together the objective time as reflected in the RV (i.e., different time periods that represent the sequence and duration of events in the world of natural phenomena), and the so-called personal time, i.e., application of the objective time to

human beings. Personal time is represented in the RV as different stages of life (youth – *yúvan*, old age – *jarā́*, etc.), progress of aging that inevitably connects to another notion related to personal time – death (*mṛtyú*), and human lifespan. The full and ideal lifespan of a human being (*ā́yus* – 'lifespan' or 'age') is considered to be one hundred years, therefore there are multiple passages where humans hope to "obtain" or ask the gods to grant them the full lifespan of a hundred years or, alternatively, a hundred autumns or springs. RV 1.89.9 shows the connection between the full lifespan, old age, and the personal time perception:

> *śatám ín nú śarádo ánti devā yátrā naś cakrā́ jarásaṁ tanū́nām |*
> *putrā́so yátra pitáro bhávanti mā́ no madhyā́ rīriṣatā́yur gántoḥ ||*

> A hundred autumns are ahead now, o gods, where you made old age of the bodies for us, where the sons become the fathers.
> Do not ruin our lifespan in the middle of our course!

Vedic poets clearly saw links between manifestations of the personal time and natural phenomena that mark the "objective" time: the sun, the moon, the dawns, and the stars are envisioned as causing changes in human beings, making them to proceed through all the life stages towards old age and death. In RV 2.2.2cd, the sun influences human generations in the following way: *divá ivéd aratír mā́nuṣā yugā́ kṣápo bhāsi ... ||*– 'You, [Agni,] shine through [the darkness] of the nights like the spoked [wheel][4] of heaven (the sun) through human generations.' Agni, the god of fire, representing in this case the fire of the sun is said to be 'the unaging one [who] ages the other' – *'juryó jaráyann arím* (RV 2.8.2); the dawns are called 'causing old age' ('ageing') – *uṣáso jaráyantīḥ* (RV 1.179.1b). The most famous

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[4] I translate *aratí* 'the spoked [wheel]' following Jamison & Brereton 2014: 403 to emphasize its derivation from *ara* – 'spoke of a wheel'. The wheel in the sky is a typical metaphor for the sun.

stanzas dedicated to this theme describe the power of Uṣas, the dawn, over human life, old age, and generations of people. A widely quoted example is in RV 1.124.2:

> *áminatī daívyāni vratā́ni praminatī́ manuṣyā̀ yugā́ni |*
> *īyúṣīṇām upamā́ śáśvatīnām āyatīnā́m prathamóṣā̀ vy àdyaut ||*

> Not transgressing the divine rules, diminishing human generations, Uṣas, the Dawn, the uppermost of the perpetually-going, the first of the [ever-]returning, shone forth.

Another passage using the same poetic formula – 'diminishing human generations' (*praminatī́ manuṣyā̀ yugā́ni*) – is RV 1.92.10-11 where Uṣas is also described by an epithet *jaráyantī* – 'causing old age' and by another formulaic expression 'diminishing the lifespan of the mortal' – *āminānā́ mártasya <...> ā́yuḥ:*

> *púnaḥ punar jā́yamānā purāṇī́ samānáṁ várṇam abhí śúmbhamānā |*
> *śvaghnī́va kṛtnúr víja āminānā́ mártasya devī́ jaráyanty ā́yuḥ ||*
> *vyūrṇvatī́ divó ántāṁ abodhy ápa svásāram sanutár yuyoti |*
> *praminatī́ manuṣyā̀ yugā́ni yóṣā jārásya cákṣasā ví bhāti ||*

> Ancient [and] constantly being reborn, [always] adorning herself with the same color, diminishing the lifespan of the mortal like *śvaghnin*, [the losing gambler, diminishes] the stake, [is Uṣas,] the goddess ageing [the mortals].
> Waken up, spreading out to the boundaries of heaven, she drives away her sister [the Night]. Diminishing human generations, the maiden shines by the eye of her lover.

Even from this brief enumeration of different temporal terms in the RV, it can be seen that time perceptions of the Vedic people were rather developed. They definitely reflected upon the passage of time and connected it with both natural phenomena and human life and psyche. Proceeding, let us consider several more general terms to analyze their usage and determine the notions they denote.

1.1.1. Kāla

As stated above, the RV has only one occurrence of the word *kāla* that denotes abstract time in the later texts, i.e., in RV 10.42.9:

*utá prahā́m atidī́vyā jayāti kr̥táṃ yác chvaghnī́ vicinóti **kālé** |*
yó devákāmo ná dhánā ruṇaddhi sám ít táṃ rāyā́ sr̥jati svadhā́vān ||

Overplaying the advantage [of his opponent], he should win – like a losing gambler (*śvaghnín*)[5] [who suddenly] divides the perfect score (*kr̥tá*) at the right moment.
The one who desires the gods does not withhold the riches. He is the only one whom the Sovereign (Indra) unites with wealth.[6]

This stanza is rather enigmatic and particularly difficult to translate because it contains several terms that are dice game-related, whose meaning is not fully clear, although some of them do appear in a famous "Gambler's hymn" (RV 10.34). The difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that in this hymn the stanza seems unconnected to the rest of the hymn: the hymn is dedicated

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[5] On *śvaghnín* as a losing gambler and the leader of the Vrātya see Haynes & Witzel: 2016: 3.

[6] The stanza, as well as the whole hymn, has been a subject to different, sometimes opposite, interpretations; there is no agreement in multiple existing translations.
For example, Jamison & Brereton (2014: 1446) provide the following translation:
  "And having overplayed his hand, he will win the jackpot, when the (gambler) with the best throw pulls out the perfect ("hand" of dice) at the right time.
  Whoever has desire for the gods, he does not withhold the stakes; just him does the autonomous one [=Indra] unite with wealth."
Elizarenkova (1999: 168) renders the passage quite differently:
  "И, делая ставку на счастливую игру, он должен победить,
  Как удачливый игрок в должное время раскладывает счастливый бросок.
  Кто стремится к богам, не удерживает богатства. Его самосущий соединяет с богатством."
Geldner (2003: 197) has another variant:
  "Und den Vorsprung (des Gegners) überspielend wird er gewinnen, indem er (wie) der Spieler, wenn er an der Reihe ist, den höchsten Wurf aussucht. Wer gottverlangend ist, der verschließt seine Schätze nicht. Der Eigenmächtige macht ihn des Reichtums teilhaft."
Falk (1986: 126) has yet another dissimilar variant of this passage:
  "Und den Rückstand überspielend soll er gewinnen, wie der *śvaghnín* zur richtigen Zeit *kr̥tá* zerlegt. Wer gottverlangend ist, hält keine Güter zurück. Den versieht der Eigenmächtige mit Reichtum."

to Indra and his deeds as well as to his relationship with the poets and sacrificers. No passage either before or after the stanza in question is in any way related to dice, therefore the stanza appears to be inserted and out of the context. The same stanza with minor differences is found in a gambler's prayer in the Atharvaveda (AVŚ 7.50.6):

utá prahǻm atidǐ́vyā jayāti kṛtám iva śvaghnǐ́ ví cinoti kālé |
yó devákāmo ná dhanam ruṇaddhi sám ít táṃ rāyaḥ sṛjati svadhābhiḥ ||

In this case the stanza completely agrees with the context: the whole hymn AVŚ 7.50.6 is dedicated to the dice game and probably is the source of the verse found in the RV 10.42. Such inclusion is not unusual for the late X[th] maṇḍala of the RV: it is, as stated above (see fn. 2), "a book of additions" that contains hymns created much later than the core corpus of the RV; variants of several hymns of the Xth maṇḍala (including a famous Puruṣasūkta) exist in the AV, as well as in the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. For our discourse here is significant that the only occurrence of the word *kāla* in the RV is found in a very late hymn in a stanza that might be a part of the post-Ṛgvedic "ideology" and reflects the post-Ṛgvedic usage of the lexeme. The meaning of the word therefore can be construed not from the RV itself where the word is a hapax, but from the post-Ṛgvedic context. From the AV on, *kāle,* Loc. Sg. from *kāla*, time, usually means a proper/appointed/opportune moment; appropriate time, etc. In the stanza under consideration, it is an opportune moment for a *śvaghnín* to throw the dice to win ("divide") the perfect score (*kṛtá*).

Moreover, the second *pāda* of this stanza (RV 10.42.9b: *kṛtáṃ yác chvaghnǐ́ vicinóti kālé*) is repeated in the next hymn (RV 10.43.5a) almost verbatim, however, instead of *kālé,* "at the [right] moment/time", first *pāda* of RV 10.43 has *dévane*, "in a game of dice":

kṛtáṃ ná śvaghnǐ́ ví cinoti dévane saṃvárgaṃ yán maghávā sǔ́ryaṃ jáyat |

Like a losing gambler (*śvaghnín*) [who suddenly] divides the perfect score (*kṛta*) in a game of dice – [just] like the bountiful one (Indra) wins the sun [as his] own.

If we compare the two aforementioned *pādas* in the context of the respective hymns, the following can be noticed: RV 10.42 is composed in the *triṣṭubh* meter, and 10.42.9b – *kṛtáṃ yác chvaghnī́ vicinóti kālé* – is consistent with the standard 11-syllabic *triṣṭubh* of this hymn, the whole *pāda*'s metric scheme being: ⏑ – – – –,⏑ ⏑|– ⏑ – –| . The last 4 syllables (*nó-ti-kā-lé* – ⏑ – –) form a trochaic cadence typical for this meter. The word *kālé* in Loc. Sg. is placed at the end of the cadence. Most of the hymn 10.43 is composed in the *jagatī* meter (except vss. 10 and 11 that have *triṣṭubh*). RV 10.43.5a is a 12-syllables *pāda* that generally repeats 10.42.9b but has *na* instead of *yad* (*yac*) and, more importantly, *dévane* instead of *kālé* at the end of the *pāda*. The last 5 syllables of the pada (*nó-ti-dé-va-ne* – ⏑ – ⏑ –) form an iambic cadence characteristic of the *jagatī* meter that ends with *devane* in Loc. Sg.

Metrically, the only difference between the two pādas is the cadence, which comes down to the difference between the two words – *kālé* and *dévane*. Substituting one word in this case transforms one meter (*triṣṭubh*) into another (*jagatī*), so it is likely that here we observe a semantic change for purely metrical reasons. If we consider the meaning of the *pāda*, we can notice that in both cases it is not much related to the rest of the hymn (both hymns are dedicated to the deeds of Indra) and, as discussed above, seems inserted. The position of both words at the end of the cadence, their grammatical form (both in Loc. Sg.), the overall syntactic structure of the *pāda(s),* as well as the *pāda*'s semantic disconnection from the rest of the context, indicates that this *pāda* is likely to be an inserted formula (i.e., a set expression to denote a specific meaning) slightly changed to fit different meters. Despite the substitution of *kālé* by *dévane*, there is no drastic change in the meaning of the formula as

a whole. Thus, paradoxically, the meanings of *kālé* and *dévane* are similar: it is "in [a particular] time" or "in [a particular] game of dice", both words referring to specific events, not to the general and abstract notions. It can therefore be concluded that the word *kālá* in the RV definitely does not define abstract time and cannot be considered a term denoting the notion of time. Rather, it is one of the words used to specify different *elements of temporality* – particular instances, events, and activities. An opportune moment among other moments.

1.1.2. Particular Time and Sacrifice. *Ŗtú* and Temporality

As can be concluded from the late Vedic texts, especially the Brāhmaṇas that contain detailed instructions and explanations of the ritual, time is very much linked to the sacrificial activities, principally to the solemn Vedic rituals that required to be performed during exactly defined time periods. Thus, the correct performance of such rituals – during a specific time of the year; at the very beginning of sunset on a specific day; at new moon, etc.– necessitated rather elaborate calculations of time and awareness of how different time periods could be connected with the movement of the sun, phases of the moon, and so on. A series of rituals could be organized in a year-long sacrificial session following the course of the sun (the sun was compared to a of ship that travels through the ocean making stops at different islands; the rituals, effectually, were these islands) between the winter and summer solstice positions of the sun on the horizon (*mahāvrata* and *viṣuvant*)[7]; in the temporal domain it means that the rituals occur between the time of the two solstices and also that the sun simultaneously travels between two spatial points and two temporal ones. In other words, the way of the sun is both spatial and temporal, therefore the course of the sun is equaled to the passage of time.

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[7] On the path of the sun see, for example, RV 5.81.4, cf. 1.115.3, AB 3.44.

A connection between time and ritual is also reflected in one of the terms that designate a Vedic priest: it is * r̥tvíj*, "the one who sacrifices at the proper moment/season". This word is formed on the basis of a noun *r̥tú*, "season" or rather a "proper moment"[8], and an alternant form of a verbal root *yaj-*, to sacrifice. As will be shown in this chapter, the term *r̥tú* might be an earliest metaphoric way for the R̥gveda to expresses an idea of transitory time: not only it designates a particular temporal unit (season), but also a moment appropriate for an action – first of all, for the sacrifice – and, consequently, a proper sequence of events (specifically, a proper ritual sequence), which arises when particular time is superimposed on an activity, i.e., on a process of a ritual. Although it cannot be considered a unifying notion for all time units (i.e., it cannot be said that, for example, a day is a unit or subdivision of *r̥tú*), the term has a somewhat liquid meaning that signifies proper time in general as well as a proper sequence of events. Let us explore if the usage of this term in the RV supports the above-stated meanings for *r̥tú*.

First of all, it should be noted that in the traditional commentary of the R̥gveda composed by Sāyaṇa (lived in the 14th century AD, at least two and a half millennia after the composition of the R̥gveda), the word *r̥tú* is straightforwardly explicated as *kālá*, time[9], which shows the understanding of the term as preserved in the later tradition. Given the context in which this word is used in the RV, either as a separate lexical unit (sometimes suffixed) or as a part of a compound, this explanation seems plausible: most of all, *r̥tú* denotes a specific time, in particular – time of sacrifice, usually, with some rare exceptions, not a season. A clear

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[8] In Classical Sanskrit *r̥tu* mostly means a season, whereas in the RV the term's usage is broader – see the discussion below in this chapter.

[9] Sāyaṇa 1935-1959, Vol. 1: 962, 969, fwd.

example of *ṛtú* denoting a particular opportune moment in time is found in RV 1.15.1a: *índra sómam píba ṛtúnā* – 'o Indra, drink soma at a [proper] time.' Typically, *ṛtú* in such cases is inflected either in Instr. Sg./Pl. (here in Instr. Sg.) or in Acc. Sg./Pl. and has an adverbial meaning, i.e., '*ṛtúnā*' can literally be translated as 'timely' (or even 'properly timely'). A similar usage of *ṛtú* (this time inflected in Acc. Pl. with the meaning "at the proper moments" or "timely/properly") is seen in RV 10.11.1cd: *víśvaṃ sá veda váruṇo yáthā dhiyā́ sá yajñíyo yajatu yajñíyāṃ ṛtū́n* || – 'He [Agni], like Varuṇa, knows everything, by his [poetic] insight. May he, who is worthy of sacrifice, sacrifice at the proper times for sacrifice'! RV 6.52.10 also exhibits the same pattern and meaning with *ṛtú* inflected in Instr. Pl.:

> *víśve devā́ ṛtāvŕ̥dha ṛtúbhir havanaśrútaḥ |*
> *juṣántāṃ yújyam páyaḥ ||*
>
> May all the gods, increasing through *ṛtá* (Cosmic Order/Truth), hearing
> invocations at the proper moments, be pleased by milk [that is] suitable [for
> them].

Another example of the usage of *ṛtú* as a separate lexical unit is provided in RV 2.38.4cd where it is said that Savitar separates "the times/periods" (*ṛtū́n*): *vy ṛ̀tū́ṃr adardhar arámatiḥ savitā́ devá ā́gāt* || – 'He separated the time [periods] – Savitar, the god, came without delay[10].' In this case *ṛtū́n* should be understood as time periods rather than seasons because the verse and the whole hymn speak about daily arrival of Savitar, the sun, and clearly describe how a daily cycle is arranged. The yearly cycle that would include a separation/arrangement of seasons is not mentioned. Moreover, there is no reason to expect "*vy ṛ̀tū́ṃr adardhar*" to be used out of the context, as can be the case with set expressions, formulas, and metaphors, because it is not a set or typical epithet for Savitar. RV 10.2.3cd has

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[10] *arámatiḥ* can also be translated "[as] proper thought" or "obedient". I suggest that the word conveys a meaning of immediateness and therefore translate it as "without delay."

a similar line dedicated to Agni who, like Savitar, is depicted as someone who arranges the time periods as well as the rituals thus establishing a sacrificial sequence: *agnír vidvā́n sá yajāt séd u hótā só adhvarā́n sá ṛtū́n kalpayāti ||* – 'Agni, the one who knows, may he sacrifice, as he is the hotar! He arranges the rituals [and] times [of sacrifice].' RV 4.53.7a, again dedicated to Savitar, contains another example of the usage of *ṛtú* in plural: *ā́gan devá ṛtúbhir* – 'The god [Savitar] came with [proper] moments.' "Proper moments" can refer to time periods suitable for the sacrificial rituals dedicated to Savitar or simply to the specific daytime when Savitar, the sun, appears in the sky in the beginning of a new day.

A slightly different (although still time-related) meaning of the word *ṛtú* is shown in RV 1.162.19, where *ṛtú* signifies a proper sequence of events or an appropriate order, i.e., a series of the appointed moments in time that organize the ritual and make it regular:

> *ékas tváṣṭur áśvasyā viśastā́ dvā́ yantā́rā bhavatas tátha ṛtúḥ |*
> *yā́ te gā́trāṇām ṛtuthā́ kṛṇómi tā́-tā píṇḍānām prá juhomy agnaú ||*
>
> One [is] a carver of Tvaṣṭar's horse, the two are restrainers – such is the proper order. What I make of your limbs according to the proper sequence – that [amount] of the sacrificial dumplings [*piṇḍas*] I sacrifice to the fire.

The same significance the word *ṛtu* has in RV 1.15.5ab: *brā́hmaṇād indra rā́dhasaḥ píbā sómam ṛtū́mr ánu |* – 'o Indra, from the Brahman(-priest)'s gift, drink soma following the [proper] times/order'. In this stanza the lexeme *ṛtú* in acc. plural is accompanied by a postposition *ánu-* that gives the whole syntagm a meaning of *following* a proper order or sequence.

An adverb *ṛtuthā́* (used in 1.162.19 discussed above)*,* based on a noun *ṛtú,* just like the noun itself usually denotes proper or due time, such as in RV 1.164.44a: *tráyaḥ keśína ṛtuthā́*

ví cakṣate – 'Three long-haired ones appear at [their] proper time[s].' In RV 2.43.01 it also signifies a specific time during the ritual or maybe a regular or suitable action:

> *pradakṣiṇíd abhí gṛṇanti kārávo váyo vádanta ṛtuthā́ śakúntayaḥ |*
> *ubhé vā́cau vadati sāmagā́ iva gāyatráṃ ca traíṣṭubhaṃ cā́nu rājati ||*

[Like] the poets circumambulating [turning to the right], singing praise, the birds speak at the proper time, the birds [of omen].
Both speeches it speaks: like a singer of *sāman*, it masters gāyatrī and triṣṭubh [meters].

Ṛtú can also be used as a part of a compound, typically, *ṛtupā́,* whose meaning can be construed twofold: 1) as a derivative of a verbal root *pā-* of the I[st] class, 'to drink', thus, "the one who drinks [a libation] at the right time"; 2) if the second part of the compound is to be interpreted as a derivative of a different root *pā-* – of the III[d] class, 'to protect' or 'observe' – then the compound's meaning would be "a guardian or the [right] moments/sequence [of the ritual]" or even "the one who observes the [right] time/sequence [of rituals]." At RV 3.20.4ab *ṛtupā́* is used as an epithet of Agni: *agnír netā́ bhága iva kṣitīnā́ṃ daívīnāṃ devá ṛtupā́ ṛtā́vā |* – 'Agni, like Bhaga, [is] a leader of heavenly dominions; the god [who] drinks [libations] at [the proper] time; the one who possesses the Order [*ṛtá*]'. Several other stanzas of the RV also associate the epithet *ṛtupā* with Agni, i.e., RV 5.12.3cd *védā me devá ṛtupā́ ṛtūnā́ṃ nā́hám pátiṃ sanitúr asyá rāyáḥ ||* – 'He knows me, the god who drinks [libation] at [the proper] time (or: "the god who guards/observes the [ritual] time-sequence"), [the one of] the [ritual] time-periods. I do not [know any] lord besides him, his [are] the riches.' In general, Agni is a deity that is most often associated with *ṛtú* and whose epithets can include *ṛtú.* In RV 10.2.1 Agni is described as "knowing the times [of rituals]" (*vidvā́ṃ ṛtū́n*) and called *ṛtupati*, the lord of the [sacrificial] time-periods:

> *piprīhí devā́ṃ uśató yaviṣṭha vidvā́ṃ ṛtū́ṃr ṛtupate yajehá |*

yé daívyā ṛtvíjas tébhir agne tváṃ hótṛṇām asy ā́yajiṣṭhaḥ ||

Please the gods who desire [the sacrifice], o the youngest one! Knowing
the times [of rituals], o lord of the time-periods, make a sacrifice here!
Those divine priests [sacrificing at proper moments] – with them, o Agni, you
are the best [oblation-]procurer among the hotars!

In verses 4 and 5 of this hymn, *ṛtú* is again used in connection with Agni who arranges the
gods according their proper times in the ritual (RV 10.2.4d: *devā́ṃ **ṛtubhiḥ** kalpayāti*) and
sacrifices to the gods at the appointed time (RV 10.2.5d: *devā́ṃ **ṛtuśó** yajāti*).

  Another formation from *ṛtú* that denotes "being in proper time", hence, "regular" or
"proper", is *ṛtvíya.* In the post-Ṛgvedic language, e.g., in AV and TS, this word is primarily
used to define a period after the menses, i.e., the most suitable time for procreation. There are
19 occurrences of this word in the RV, most of the times in the hymns dedicated to Agni or in
connection with Agni. An interesting example is found in RV 3.29.10:

    *ayáṃ te yónir **ṛtvíyo** yáto jātó árocathāḥ |*
    táṃ jānánn agna ā́ sīdā́thā no vardhayā gíraḥ ||

    This is your timely [proper; at its proper time] place, from which you blazed at
    birth. Knowing that, o Agni, sit [here], strengthen our song!

An expression *'ayáṃ te yónir ṛtvíyaḥ'* (also found in multiple post-Ṛgvedic texts, i.e., AVŚ
3.20.1a; AVP.3.34.1a; VS 3.14a; 12.52a; 15.56a; multiple times in TS, MS, KS, JB, ŚB, etc.)
– 'your timely place' shows Agni's position in the time-space continuum, which is at the
center of the fire altar during a 'timely' ritual. It can be said that Agni is situated "at the center
of time and space": according to the Vedic worldview, the ritual *always* is the central event in
the universe and the central moment in time. The stanza describes *yóni* as a place where Agni
was born, therefore the term *'yóni'* can be understood not only as a locus (a typical meaning
of the word in the RV), but also as a source or a womb (a meaning that occurs primarily in the

later texts). RV 10.91.4 also mentions Agni's *yóni*, this time most likely meaning his proper place or a place where he sits at the proper time (*r̥tvíyam*), i.e., the fire altar: *prajānánn agne táva yónim r̥tvíyam íḷāyās padé ghr̥távantam ā́sadaḥ |* – 'The foreseeing one, o Agni, at the proper time you sat at your place filled with ghee in the footprint of libation'. Later in the same hymn, in RV 10.91.6a, there is another occurrence of the word *r̥tvíya* in Acc. Sg.: *tám óṣadhīr dadhire gárbham r̥tvíyaṃ |* – 'The plants bore this [Agni] as an embryo in a due time;' where *r̥tvíyam* means either "in a due time" or a "timely/proper" [embryo]. In RV 10.91.10a (repeated verbatim in RV 2.1.2a) *r̥tvíyam* definitely signifies the appointed time for Agni, who is considered to be a priest of the gods, to perform the duties of Potar (*pótr̥,* "the purifier"), one of the priests of the Soma sacrifice: *távāgne hotrám táva potrám r̥tvíyaṃ… |* – 'Yours, o Agni, is [the function of] Hotar, yours is, at the appointed time, [that of] Potar.' In all the other places in the RV where the word *r̥tvíya* occurs its meaning remains the same: 'at the proper/specific/appointed time.' In RV 10.100.2a those who perform the sacrifice are asked to "bring a [sacrificial] share for granting at the proper time" (*bhárāya sú bharata bhāgám r̥tvíyam*); in RV 10.179.1ab the priests are commanded to "rise up and see Indra's [sacrificial] share in a due time" (*út tiṣṭhatā́va paśyaténdrasya bhāgám r̥tvíyam |*); RV 1.135.3d mentions a "timely share" (*bhāgá r̥tvíyaḥ*) of Vayu; in RV 1.143.1d Hotar "sat down on the earth at a proper moment" (*hótā pr̥thivyā́ṃ ny ásīdad r̥tvíyaḥ ||*); RV 5.75.9b states that "Agni was set [in place] at the right moment" (*ā́gnir adhāyy r̥tvíyaḥ |*); in RV 9.72.4b a drop of Soma is pressed "timely" (*índur r̥tvíyaḥ |* – 'a timely [pressed] drop [of Soma]'), and so on.

The examples considered above strongly suggest that in the RV *ṛtú*, as well as its various derivatives, definitely have temporal connotations[11] and usually do not signify a season or anything related to a season but rather a proper or appointed instant in time as well as a combination of such instances, i.e., a sequence of moments or events. It can be said that *ṛtú* is a term that defines specific and transitory time in the RV – the time that can be perceived and measured in separate increments.

It also should be noted that in the majority of cases when the word *ṛtú* is used in the RV, it is associated with the ritual and the ritual sequence. Additionally, it frequently co-occurs with Agni, the god of the sacrificial fire and therefore a priest of the gods, who is situated – temporally and spatially – at the very center of the ritual. Agni in the form of celestial fire is also a representation of the sunlight and the sun itself. This association with both the sun and the ritual connects Agni to the daily, monthly, and yearly circle of ritualistic activities as well as to the calculations of time necessary to perform such activities. The ritual also regulates and structures human life (life of an individual, as well as that of the whole society): it works as a measure of time and, being repetitive and connected with specific natural phenomena and certain periods of time, reinforces a vision of time as simultaneously transitory (time moves, "goes on", a precise moment needs to be calculated to avoid missing a ritual) and circular (there are multiple cycles of ritual activities; there is a repetition of the time-bound rituals, consequently, there is a repetition, a cycle, of time). The close connection of this transitory time that operates in the human world with Agni is not incidental: in addition to his primary role and position in the sacrifice, among the Vedic deities, Agni is the closest

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[11] Temporal connotations of the lexeme *ṛtú* are also confirmed by its etymology and the scope of its Indo–European cognates discussed in 1.2.

one to the humans and the human world. Present in every ritual, abiding in every dwelling, Agni, whose epithet is *Vaiśvānara*, 'belonging to all people,' is "the lord of *r̥tú*"– i.e., the lord of the ritual sequence and transitory time that functions in the realm of humans.

Therefore, it appears that the RV has a germ of a notion of transitory and yet recurring time, *r̥tú*, that is discrete, i.e., contains separate units or rather moments whose sequence defines and organizes the ritual, and is used as a denomination for the combination of these moments. The lord of this transitory, specific, and recurrent time is Agni who separates the moments of the ritual, arranges the rites and the gods according to the sacrificial sequence, and, in other words, sustains the *already existing* order. But does this order exist in the Vedic system? Is there any power that establishes that order? How does it relate to *r̥tú*? And does it have any connection with time?

1.2. General Time and Eternity in the R̥gveda

As shown in 1.1.2, the word that expresses an idea of temporality as well as a particular moment in time in the R̥gveda is *r̥tú*. Arguably, this term can be considered an origin of the notion of transitory time in the South Asian thought.

<u>1.2.1. The Wheel of the Year and R̥tá</u>

It can be argued that another prominent model of time often encountered in the texts of the post-Vedic tradition, i.e., the epics, *purāṇas*, and philosophical and semi–philosophical works also originates in the R̥gveda. It is a representation of time in the form of a wheel (*kāla-*

cakra – the wheel of time). RV 1.164 (the longest and probably most famous hymn in the RV – the *asyá vāmásya* hymn) paints a striking image of a chariot with a single wheel that "rolls around heaven" (RV 1.164.11b – *várvarti ... pári dyā́m*). The detailed description of the chariot, its attributes, and its wheel begins in RV 1.164.2-3:

> *saptá yuñjanti rátham ékacakram éko áśvo vahati saptánāmā |*
> *trinā́bhi cakrám ajáram anarváṃ yátremā́ víśvā bhúvanā́dhi tasthúḥ || 2 ||*
> *imáṃ rátham ádhi yé saptá tasthúḥ saptácakraṃ saptá vahanty áśvāḥ |*
> *saptá svásāro abhí sáṃ navante yátra gávāṃ níhitā saptá nā́ma || 3 ||*

> 2. The seven harness the one-wheeled chariot. One horse with seven names draws [it]. Undecaying, unobstructable is the wheel with three naves – [the one] where all these beings stand.
> 3. When the seven stand upon this chariot, seven horses draw the seven wheeled [chariot]. Seven sisters exclaim together towards [a place/a chariot?] where seven names of the cows are.

The description continues in RV 1.164.11-14:

> *dvā́daśāraṃ nahí táj járāya várvarti cakrám pári dyā́m ṛtásya |*
> *ā́ putrā́ agne mithunā́so átra saptá śatā́ni viṃśatíś ca tasthuḥ || 11 ||*
> *páñcapādam pitáraṃ dvā́daśākṛtiṃ divá āhuḥ páre árdhe purīṣíṇam |*
> *áthemé anyá úpare vicakṣaṇáṃ saptácakre ṣáḷara āhur árpitam || 12 ||*
> *páñcāre cakré parivártamāne tásminn ā́ tasthur bhúvanāni víśvā |*
> *tásya nā́kṣas tapyate bhū́ribhāraḥ sanā́d evá ná śīryate sánābhiḥ || 13 ||*
> *sánemi cakrám ajáraṃ ví vāvṛta uttānā́yāṃ dáśa yuktā́ vahanti |*
> *sū́ryasya cákṣū rájasaity ā́vṛtaṃ tásminn ā́rpitā bhúvanāni víśvā || 14 ||*

> 11. The twelve-spoked wheel of *ṛtá* rolls around heaven – but never to decay. Seven hundred twenty sons stand upon it in pairs, o Agni!
> 12. They talk about the father [who has] five feet and twelve forms, the one that extends over the upper half of heaven. And these others talk about the bright one in the lower [half] placed in the seven-wheeled [chariot] with six spokes.
> 13. All the beings stand on the ever-rolling five-spoked wheel. Its axle carries a great load but does not [over]heat. With its nave, it does not break despite [its] old [age].
> 14. The undecaying wheel with its felly has turned. Ten [horses?] draw it, harnessed to [its] stretched [yoke].

Concealed[12], the eye of the sun moves through the cloudy sphere. All the beings depend upon it.

And concludes in 1.164.48:

> *dvā́daśa pradháyaś cakrám ékaṃ trī́ṇi nábhyāni ká u tác ciketa |*
> *tásmin sākáṃ triśatā́ na śaṅkávo 'rpitā́ḥ ṣaṣṭír ná calācalā́saḥ || 48 ||*

> One is the wheel, [its] fellies are twelve, [its] naves are three – but who comprehended that?
> The ever-moving – like three hundred spikes, like sixty [more] – [are] fixed together in it.

Analyzing the fragments quoted above, we can extract several significant details about the described chariot and the wheel. The epithets describing the wheel are "undecaying" (or "unaging" – *ajára*) and "unobstractable" (*anarvá*), which shows that the wheel simultaneously exists in two domains: temporal and spatial, and neither of the two has any power over it. The wheel therefore surpasses both empirical space and time. The wheel is both "twelve-spoked" (*dvā́daśāra* – RV 1.164.11) and "five-spoked" (*páñcāra* – RV 1.164.13). It has twelve fellies (*dvā́daśa pradháyaḥ* – RV 1.164.48), three naves (*trī́ṇi nábhyāni* – RV 1.164.2, 48), and three hundred sixty spikes (*triśatā́ ... śaṅkávo ... ṣaṣṭír* – RV 1.164.48). Apart from a number of features of the wheel itself, the hymn depicts certain external things and beings connected with the wheel. It is said that "seven hundred twenty sons" stand on it "in pairs" and speak of their "father [who has] five feet and twelve forms, the one that extends over the upper half of heaven". Certain "others" probably also standing on the wheel "talk about the bright one in the lower [half]" (RV 1.164.12). The wheel supports all living beings (*bhúvanāni víśvā*) who "stand on it" (RV 1.164.2, 13). The wheel is "ever-rolling" and "does

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[12] The sun is said to have a black and a white side (Cf. RV 1.115.5). When it reaches the final point of its journey during a day, it "flips" or turns and then goes to its starting point "concealed", with its black side turned toward the world.

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not break despite [its] old [age]" (RV 1.164.2, 13). Additionally, certain details about the whole chariot are also provided: it is drawn either by "one horse with seven names" (RV 1.164.2) or by seven horses (RV 1.164.3), in which case the chariot is said to have seven wheels. "The seven" harness the chariot and stand upon together with "seven sisters" who "exclaim together" in the direction of "where seven names of the cows are" (RV 1.164.2-3). Interestingly, although the wheel is supposed to be a part of the chariot, they are described as two distinct things (e.g., the wheel where multiple beings stand cannot easily be visualized as connected to the chariot, although the two are clearly connected by metonymy) that have different functions in the hymn and in Vedic cosmology.

The whole hymn 1.164 is widely known as a riddle hymn, an example of the enigmatic *brahmodya* style, that comprises a series of puzzles[13]. The analyzed fragment includes a characteristic feature of the *brahmodya* dialogs, i.e., a direct question: *ká u tác ciketa* – 'but who comprehended that?' The question is posed but not answered in the hymn. It is for the audience, 'insiders' of the tradition to figure out on the basis of allusions, implications, metaphors, and even alliterations how to interpret each element of the wheel and the wheel as a whole.

The symbolism of the wheel and its parts enumerated above can be construed in the following way: the twelve spokes and twelve fellies of the wheel represent the twelve months; the five spokes and five feet of the "heavenly father" are the five seasons of the Vedic

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[13] On RV 1.164 as part of the *brahmodya* discussions see Haug 1875: 460-466.

calendar, as presented in the late Vedic literature[14]; the three naves of the wheel symbolize the three main seasons (four months each), linked to the cycle of solemn Vedic rituals; three hundred sixty spikes that are "ever-moving" are the ever-changing and succeeding each other days of the year (the Vedic year is usually described as having not 365 but 360 days. Incidentally, it is an average number between the days of the solar and the lunar years, therefore it can be a representation of the number of days in the "ideal year"); "seven hundred twenty sons" standing "in pairs" on the chariot can signify days and nights of the year or, alternatively, it is a combination of the days of the solar year (365) and days of the lunar year (355). Both interpretations are supported by the next stanza (1.164.12) where some of the sons standing on the chariot "talk about the father [who has] five feet and twelve forms", i.e., the moon that "extends over the upper half of heaven", and the "others talk about the bright one in the lower [half] placed in the seven-wheeled [chariot] with six spokes", which is clearly the sun. Those talking about the sun might be the days of the year or days of the solar year, and their counterparts talking about the moon can represent the nights or also days of the lunar year. The fact that they are standing "in pairs", of course, is more in accordance with the version of the days and nights, however, the second interpretation is still not impossible.

In any interpretation, the wheel incorporates different constituent parts of the year; its description hints at numerous mythological links between the year and specific elements of the universe; and as a whole, the wheel that "rolls around heaven" epitomizes the year. It travels the path of the sun and is called "the eye of the sun", which is, by metonymy, the sun

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[14] Generally, the *Brāhmaṇa* texts enumerate the following five seasons: *śarád* (autumn)*, varṣá* (period of rains), *hemantá* (the cold season), *vasantá* (spring)*,* and *grіṣma* (summer). Sometimes the sixth season, *śiśira* (the chilly/cool season), is added.

itself, "the bright one in the lower [half]" of heaven. It is also indirectly linked to the moon ("the one that extends over the upper half of heaven").

The wheel that supports and encompasses all living beings thus serving as a foundation of the universe, is eternal and imperishable: being "undecaying" and "unobstractable", it "does not break despite [its] old [age]". It is called "ever-rolling", positioning the year as an infinite cycle.

Finally, the chariot which the wheel is a part of, has multiple features quantified by number seven, i.e., "seven names" of a singular horse, seven horses, seven wheels, "the seven" who harness the chariot, and "seven sisters" exclaiming to "where seven names of the cows are". This description of the chariot as well as the symbolism of number seven are discussed in 2.1.1 of this dissertation where I explore similar imagery in AVŚ 19.53-54 and compare it with RV 1.164. Overall, the chariot seems to signify Vedic sacrifice "harnessed" and driven by the seven Vedic priests. J. Houben interprets the whole hymn as related to the *pravargya* ritual and takes "the seven" as "the seven priests (or the seven primordial seers as priests)"[15]. Thus, the year is represented in this hymn as simultaneously part of and driving power (wheel) of the Vedic sacrifice. Houben also mentions (in the brackets with a question mark) that the "seven-wheeled" chariot is "sacrificial time, deriving from cosmic time; a seven-fold ritual cycle"[16]. I suggest that the chariot in both cases represents the sacrifice that in its ideal and cosmic form is driven by the year and then, harnessed by the seven priests, is indeed divided into the ritual sequence. The singular wheel that is the year is substituted by the seven wheels, i.e., the seven distinct parts of the year associated with different stages of

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[15] Houben 2000: 520.

[16] *Ibid.*: 534.

the ritual. The significance of this substitution and of various links it reveals will be discussed later in this chapter.

From the analysis above it can be seen that this hymn containing multiple enigmas about creation and secret structure of the universe, here exhibits a riddle of a specific kind: the so-called year riddle, i.e., a conundrum whose correct solution is "the year". These riddles are extremely widespread across the Indo-European cultures and beyond. Eastern Slavic folklore provides multiple examples of this kind. A person who is asked to solve the riddle should either identify the year or its constituent parts. The following illustrations are found in the Russian folklore:

> *Вышел старик-годовик, махнул рукавом,*
> *и полетели двенадцать птиц,*
> *у каждой птицы по четыре крыла,*
> *в каждом крыле по семь перьев,*
> *каждое перо с одной стороны черное, с другой белое.*[17]

> The old yearman came out, waved his sleeve,
> And twelve birds flew out.
> Every bird has four wings,
> Every wing has seven feathers,
> Every feather is black on the one side, white on the other.

In this riddle the year is mentioned almost directly as "old yearman", therefore the goal is to determine what the elements of the year are. A similar Russian riddle where the year is not mentioned directly and has to be "deduced" is this:

> *Двенадцать орлов,*
> *пятьдесят две галки,*
> *триста шестьдесят пять скворцов*
> *одно яйцо снесли.*[18]

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[17] Quoted from Filatova-Hellberg 1984: 155.

[18] *Ibid.*

Twelve eagles,
Fifty-two jackdaws,
Three hundred sixty-five starlings –
Laid one egg.

Analogous riddles exist in the folk and epic traditions and literatures of many cultures of different time periods (Iranian-Persian, Ancient Greek, French, Scandinavian, and, among the non-Indo-European cultures, Semitic, etc.), although most of them do not represent the year as a wheel.

The RV has two more occasions where the wheel of the year is likely mentioned. Remarkably, in both cases the description of the wheel is formulated in a riddle-like combination of statements. The first instance is RV 10.27.19, a part of a different famous hymn containing riddles:

> *ápaśyaṁ gråmaṁ váhamānam āråd acakráyā svadháyā vártamānam |*
> *síṣakty aryáḥ prá yugå jánānāṁ sadyáḥ śiśnå praminānó návīyān ||*
>
> I discerned a multitude advancing from afar turning by means of its own wheelless power. [It] goes after the generations of people [belonging to] the other, day by day diminishing [their] phalluses [while always] renewing [itself].

In this stanza we don't see any direct description of the constituent parts of the year. It can be concluded that the year is indeed meant here on the basis of several unobvious hints. First of all, 'the multitude' (*gråma*) is a word that in the Vedic context signifies a gathering of multiple chariots (in the Classical Sanskrit it is a standard designation for a village). This combination of chariots moves by itself, moreover, it is 'turning' (*vártamāna*[19]) without any

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[19] *vártamāna* – a present participle from a verbal root *vr̥t-* (stemming from the IE **u̯er-/u̯ert-*) whose temporal connotations are discussed in detail in 1.3.2. The word itself defines any circular movement or activity, therefore within the context in question it means 'turning' or 'rolling'. It also has a meaning 'present time', which can be another hint that the subject of this riddle is indeed the wheel of the year that by its rolling 'unfolds' the present time.

wheels, as a rolling mass 'advancing from afar' – maybe, just like the wheel of the year in RV 1.164, by the path of the sun in the sky. It renews itself day by day, like the sun and the dawn appear every day anew, while remaining the same. The expression *sadyáḥ* that I translate 'day by day' might be hinting at the days as constituent parts of the year. Then, 'the multitude' 'goes after the generations of people' and diminishes their phalluses. It is similar to the activities of Uṣas, the dawn, who, as can be seen from the above-discussed passages in RV 1.124.2 and RV 1.92.10-11, is closely connected with both the objective and personal time and described as the one 'diminishing human generations' (*praminatī́ manuṣyā̀ yugā́ni*). 'Phalluses' mentioned in this riddle are also likely to mean successive generations procreating each other and their procreative power. Overall, the solution to this riddle appears to be the wheel of the sun which is simultaneously the year possessing the deadly power of time and excreting it upon the generations of human beings.

The second instance probably containing an allusion to the wheel of the year is an even more enigmatic line in the RV 1.155.6ab: *catúrbhiḥ sākáṁ navatíṁ ca nā́mabhiś cakráṁ ná vr̥ttáṁ vyátīm̐r avīvipat |* – 'And by means of four by ninety names – as if a wheel [was] set in rolling [motion] – [he] agitated the horses[20]'. In this case, the suspicious rolling wheel is mentioned along with three hundred sixty ('four by ninety') 'names'. This combination of poetic tropes is probably sufficient for the insiders of the Vedic tradition to think about the wheel of the year.

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[20] Unlike multiple translators of the RV (see Geldner 1951: 214, Elizarenkova 1989: 191, Jamison & Brereton 2014: 333) who interpret *vyati* as 'pair of horses' probably following the interpretation and etymological reasoning in Geldner 1951: 214, fn. 6ab partially based on Sāyaṇa's commentary, I translate it simply as 'horse' not finding the reasoning convincing, although 'pairs of horses' would definitely fit the context of the wheel of the year and can signify 'days and nights.'

Following the steps of the Vedic tradition, the Mahābhārata also contains a year-riddle involving the wheel in 3.133.21-22. This fragment is a *brahmodya*-like dialog between king Janaka and sage Aṣṭāvakra. The king poses a series of questions, and Aṣṭāvakra answers them. One of the riddles concerns the wheel of the year:

> *rājovāca ||*
> *ṣaṇṇābher dvādaśākṣasya caturviṃśatiparvaṇaḥ |*
> *yas triṣaṣṭiśatārasya vedārthaṃ sa paraḥ kaviḥ || 21 ||*
> *aṣṭāvakra uvāca ||*
> *caturviṃśatiparva tvāṃ ṣaṇṇābhi dvādaśapradhi |*
> *tat triṣaṣṭiśatāraṃ vai cakraṃ pātu sadāgati || 22 ||*
>
> The king has said:
> Having six naves, twelve axles, twenty-four joints, three hundred sixty spokes
> – the one who understood the meaning [of this] is the wisest.
> Aṣṭāvakra has said:
> Having twenty-four joints, six naves, twelve axles – may this ever-moving
> wheel of three hundred sixty spokes protect you!

The fact that the wheel of the year is only described in the form of riddles and allusions, implies that this knowledge that concerns the core and fundamental structural principles of the universe was considered secret, inexplicable in any direct terms, and perhaps even dangerous. The year rolling in the sky is deadly for human beings: it shortens their lifespans, destroys their generations, and takes away their ability to procreate. On the other hand, it is also identified with the life-giving sun and with the force that drives the sacrifice. As can be seen from the exchange of Janaka and Aṣṭāvakra, the correct answer to the riddle is, in fact, another riddle, which creates an infinity of possible answers. This is probably the only way to approach what is beyond comprehension: eternity.

Returning to the analyzed fragment of the hymn 1.164, the most striking feature of the quoted stanzas is that the wheel of the year is designated 'the wheel of *r̥tá* (Cosmic Order/Truth)' – *cakrám … r̥tásya* (RV 1.164.11), from which it follows that the year is

directly identified with *r̥tá*. The meaning of *r̥tá* within the Vedic worldview is manyfold; it is also one of the most discussed topics in the Indological scholarship. The concept of *r̥tá* that encompasses a wide range of meanings, without doubt, can be viewed as a cornerstone of the whole Vedic system, including cosmology and ideology, which makes this term particularly difficult to translate. Until H. Lüders proposed to translate *r̥tá* as 'Truth'[21], it was predominantly translated as 'Cosmic Order' or similarly. Its meanings construed on the basis of the usage of this lexeme in the R̥gveda, include, indeed, the order or organizing principle underlying all the cosmic/natural events in the universe; the structure of human society and ritualistic activities; certain rules of behavior that human beings are not supposed to violate. It also signifies the spoken truth, and its opposite (*anr̥tá*) is usually translated 'untruth', although can also be understood as 'disorder'. Etymologically, the word originates from the Indo-European root **ar-* (**h₂er-* with laryngeals)[22], among whose meanings are 'to connect, to build, to order' and 'to fit together'[23]. Its most known cognates are Avestan *aša* – 'truth' and Ancient Greek ἁρμονία – 'harmony', that, as argued in Chaturvedi 2016, "can be understood as [an] abstract concept<...> of order"[24]. Overall, it is extremely difficult to find a proper term to render the concept of *r̥tá* because of the absence of a corresponding notion in the majority of other cultures. According to M. Witzel, "it is only the Old Egyptian *ma'at* (and

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[21] See Lüders 1959, II: 402-406.

[22] Here I list this Indo-European root transliterated in an older way (**ar-*) disregarding laryngeals, as listed at Watkins 2011 and Pokorny 1959. The meaning is given to distinguish between this root from its IE homonyms. Mayrhofer 1992-1996, Vol. I: 107 adds the spelling **h₂er-* in a comment.

[23] Watkins 2011: 5; see also Pokorny 1959, I: 55; Pokorny 2007: 174.

[24] Chaturvedi 2016: 41.

perhaps Sumerian *me*) that convey a similar concept"[25]. Bringing various meanings of *ṛtá* together, Witzel proposes to understand the term as *Wahrheitsverwirklichung*, 'active truth', and suggests "to translate *ṛtá* idiomatically but to add the Sanskrit word in parentheses each time"[26]. In this work, I will mostly leave the term untranslated unless the text clearly exhibits a specific narrow meaning of the word, in which case the word itself will be listed in parentheses.

Below I examine the usage of the lexeme *ṛtá-* in the Ṛgveda in order to higlight its major functions and establish its conceptual connections with other Vedic terms and specific mythological motifs.

First of all, *ṛtá* is as the arranging and regulatory power that orders the universe. As such, it sets the sequence of natural phenomena and determines the way they occur. For example, following the established rules of *ṛtá*, Uṣas, the dawn, appears in the sky every day, as in RV 1.123.9:

> *jānaty áhnaḥ prathamásya nā́ma śukrā́ kṛṣṇā́d ajaniṣṭa śvitīcī́ |*
> *ṛtásya yóṣā ná mināti dhā́māhar-ahar niṣkṛtám ācárantī ||*
>
> Knowing the name of the first day, [Uṣas,] the bright one, light-colored, was born from the dark. [She] does not violate the established rule of *ṛtá* – the [heavenly] maiden every day coming to the appointed place of rendezvous.

The dawn and the sun always follow "the path of *ṛtá*", and *ṛtá* sets their way in the sky, e.g., in RV 1.124.3:

> *eṣā́ divó duhitā́ práty adarśi jyótir vásānā samanā́ purástāt |*
> *ṛtásya pánthām ánv eti sādhú prajānatī́va ná díśo mināti ||*

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[25] Witzel 1996: 172.

[26] *Ibid.*: 173.

> The daughter of heaven appeared [in the sky] clothed in light – in the same way [as ever] in the east.
> She follows the path of *r̥tá* without error. Like the one who knows the track, she does not alternate the directions.

Not only *r̥tá* moves all the celestial bodies and sets their paths, but also it regulates the rivers and causes them to stream without interruption, e.g., in RV 4.3.12:

> *r̥téna devī́r amŕ̥tā ámr̥ktā árṇobhir ā́po mádhumadbhir agne |*
> *vājī́ ná sárgeṣu prastubhānáḥ prá sádam ít srávitave dadhanyuḥ ||*

> Through *r̥tá* the immortal goddesses who cannot be harmed, the waters with their sweet streams, o Agni, like a [race-]horse urged with shouts during the races, run to stream forth forever.

As a parallel to the verse above, the RV 2.28.4b states that "rivers move [according to] Varuṇa's *r̥tá*" – *r̥tám síndhavo váruṇasya yanti |*.

Another major function of *r̥tá* is that it takes part in the creation of the universe, and then controls and holds it together. These functions can be realized through the gods, however, *r̥tá* is still the means of their actions, as can be seen from RV 5.63.7cd where Mitra and Varuṇa "govern the universe by means of *r̥tá* and place the shining chariot [of] the sun in heaven" (*r̥téna víśvam bhúvanaṃ ví rājathaḥ sū́ryam ā́ dhattho diví cítryaṃ rátham ||*).

The same idea with further details is reflected in RV 4.42.4: Varuṇa, "the one who possesses *r̥tá*" (*r̥tā́van*), "made the streaming waters swell… supported heaven in the abode of *r̥tá*… spread out the threefold earth by means of *r̥tá*" (*…apó apinvam ukṣámāṇā dhāráyaṃ dívaṃ sádana r̥tásya | r̥téna … tridhā́tu prathayad vi bhū́ma ||*). In RV 5.1.7 it is said that Agni "stretched the two realms (Heaven and Earth) by means of *r̥tá*" (RV 5.1.7c – *ā́ yás tatā́na ródasī r̥téna*), which signifies both creating and arranging the universe. In one of the versions of a cosmogonic myth the Aṅgirases help Indra to smash the gates of the Vala cave by splitting the rock with their voices. In RV 4.3.11a. we see that their action was made

because of *ṛtá* or maybe even predetermined by *ṛtá*: *ṛtenādriṃ vy àsan bhidántaḥ sám áṅgiraso navanta góbhiḥ | –* 'By *ṛtá* [they] removed the rock splitting it open – the Aṅgirases roared together with the cows'.

Ṛtá is the source of power for the gods. It sustains them and makes them thrive: "the two goddesses [Heaven and Earth], whose sons are gods, increase through *ṛtá*" (RV 1.106.3: *devī́ devaputre ṛtāvṛ́dhā*); "Mitra and Varuṇa grow strong through *ṛtá*" (RV 2.41.4ab: *mitrāvaruṇā ... ṛtāvṛdhā*), also in RV 5.65.2 and elsewhere; other gods are also described as growing strong/increasing through *ṛtá*, i.e., Agni in RV 3.2.1 and other hymns, all gods in RV 6.15.18, 6.50.14, etc. Although the gods, specifically the Ādityas, and most of all – Varuṇa[27], are the guardians or herdsmen of *ṛtá*, RV 1.65.3a says that "the gods follow the rules of *ṛtá*" – *ṛtásya devā́ ánu vratā́ gur.*

Ṛtá brings success and sweetness of life to those human beings who follow it. RV 1.90.6 states:

> *mádhu vā́tā ṛtāyaté |*
> *mádhu kṣaranti síndhavaḥ |*
> *mā́dhvīr naḥ santv óṣadhīḥ ||*
>
> The wind is honey for the one who is true to *ṛtá.*
> The rivers steam honey [for him];
> May the herbs be honey [for us]!

The sacrifices of those people who adhere to *ṛtá* are successful, as we are assured in RV 1.122.9d: "the one who possesses *ṛtá* surely receives that [goal] through [his] offerings" – *ā́pa yád īṃ hótrābhir ṛtā́vā ||.* Sacrificial offerings travel between the gods and humans by the path of *ṛtá.* RV 1.128.2b speaks of Agni who brings oblations to the gods in the following way: "him, who carries the oblation to the goal along the path of *ṛtá,* we awaken with homage

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[27] On Varuṇa and *ṛtá* see 1.2.

and by sacrifice" – *táṁ yajñasā́dham ápi vātayāmasyṛtásya pathā́ námasā havíṣmatā |*. In RV

2.11.12b, Vedic poets say about their poetic illumination: "worshipping in accordance with

ṛtá we would obtain the [poetic] incite" – *dhíyaṁ vanema ṛtayā́ sápantaḥ*.

The following two verses (RV 4.23.9-10) show how the world functions by means of

ṛtá and how *ṛtá* sets proper ways for different objects and events:

> *ṛtásya dṛḷhā́ dharúṇāni santi purū́ṇi candrā́ vápuṣe vápūṁṣi |*
> *ṛténa dīrghám iṣaṇanta pṛ́kṣa ṛténa gā́va ṛtám ā́ viveśuḥ || 9 ||*
> *ṛtáṃ yemāná ṛtám íd vanoty ṛtásya śúṣmas turayā́ u gavyúḥ |*
> *ṛtā́ya pṛthvī́ bahulé gabhīré ṛtā́ya dhenū́ paramé duhāte || 10 ||*

9. Firm are the foundations of *ṛtá*. Plentiful are [its] shining wonders to marvel.
Through *ṛtá* the [abundant] nourishments move a long [way]. Through *ṛtá* the
cows entered [the realm of] *ṛtá*.
10. The one who adheres to *ṛtá* – only he acquires *ṛtá*. Swift is the cow-seeking
vigor of *ṛtá*. For *ṛtá* the two realms (Heaven and Earth) are wide and deep. For
ṛtá they give [their] milk like the two utmost cows.

There are multiple other examples of the usage of *ṛtá* in the RV, therefore the list can

continue, but the major functions of *ṛtá* as presented in the RV can be summarized as follows:

ṛtá predetermines all the natural phenomena, such as sunrise, sunset, and appearance of the

dawns and the moon in the sky; it holds the earth and heaven together and fixes them in their

place; it sets the path of the sun, the course of the rivers, the succession of days, nights, and

years as well as the succession of human generations: it determines when humans are born

and die. *Ṛtá* strengthens the gods and ensures they receive sacrificial offerings from humans,

thus controlling the ritual; it helps humans who adhere to it to overcome obstacles and achieve

prosperity. In other words, *ṛtá* regulates all events in the universe, specifically – it determines

their sequence (i.e., the sun rises before it sets; a man is born, then gets married, then dies,

etc.), it is the foremost power of "active truth" that arranges the space-time continuum.

Now, returning to the identification of *ṛtá* with the year – i.e., with a particular unit of time, it could be fruitful to explore the etymology and various cognates of *ṛtá* and see if it reveals any connection with different other temporal units and terms. As mentioned above, the word *ṛtá* is derived from the Indo–European root **ar-* (resulting in a Sanskrit root *ṛ-* merging but, in fact, different from another root *ṛ-* with a meaning 'to go/move'[28]). Except for numerous Indo-European cognates that signify different kinds of things that connect or hold something together and the rightly organized entities, etc., it can be observed that this root produces a number of temporal terms. Among such terms are, first of all, those found in the Vedic language or Classical Sanskrit. The most significant and straightforwardly temporal term related to *ṛtá* is *ṛtú*[29] – discussed in detail in 1.1.2. As concluded above, *ṛtú* denotes both a suitable moment (i.e., a moment proper to perform a sacrifice) and a sequence of such moments, and therefore defines specific and transitory time in the RV, whereas in the later language and texts it mostly means 'season'. Another significant cognate stemming from the root **ar-* is *ara* whose primary meaning is 'a spoke of a wheel', then also a spoke of a wheel-like Vedic altar, and, as evident from RV 1.164.11, 13, a spoke of the wheel of the year (later in the epics – a spoke of the time-wheel), in RV 1.164 signifying either a month or a season. In the Jain system, this word comes to denote a specific time unit[30].

Then, considering other Indo-European derivates of **ar-* (typically, with an extension *-t*) that have temporal connotations, the following examples from a wide range of languages

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[28] Some researchers consider these roots connected and take the root meaning 'to fix/fit together' a static aspect or actualization of the verb meaning 'to move'. See Toporov 1981: 149; Mayrhofer 1992-1996, Vol. I: 105-107 discusses different possibilities.

[29] See Renou 1950: 436-438.

[30] For meanings, see Monier Williams 1899: 86.

can be mentioned: a direct parallel to Vedic *r̥tú*, Avestan *ratu* – 'a time interval'; Latin

articulus, among whose meanings are 'moment' and 'stage in time'; Latin *artus* – with major

meaning 'narrow', but also – 'moment' and 'limited in time'; Old Greek ἄρτι – 'currently',

ἁρμοῖ – 'recently', and ἁμαρτή – 'simultaneous'; Armenian *ard* – 'now'; Lithuanian *artì* –

'near' in both spatial and temporal sense; possibly from a different stem produced from the

same root: Russian *ровесник (rovesnik)* – 'of the same age'.[31] The list is not exhaustive, many

of these and other lexemes are enumerated and discussed in Toporov 1981.

These parallels by themselves, of course, are not enough to state anything definite

about *r̥tá* and its temporal connotations. However, they place *r̥tá* in a semantic field of the

time-related terms. Mythologically, as can be seen in RV 1.164, *r̥tá* is identified with the year;

its major functions, as explored above, are those of holding the universe together and

confirming it functions properly, which implies arranging all the events temporally and

creating their sequence. The term is etymologically and mythologically related to *r̥tú* – a

particular moment in time and a combination of such moments in a succession of rituals. It is

also related to *ara* – a spoke of the wheel as well as a particular time unit. Represented by the

"undecaying" or "unaging" wheel that "rolls around heaven – but never to decay", *r̥tá* not

only signifies the order or ordering/active truth, but also immortality and eternity. Thus, it can

be said that Vedic *r̥tá*'s connection with the wheel of year, with the ritual sequence and

overall temporality, with multiple Indo-European temporal terms, and with eternity reveals a

new function of this rich notion. It is definitely not the term that defines abstract time,

however, it is some kind of power that *organizes* empirical time. It is eternity – the realm

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[31] Pokorny 2007: 174-178. For a more extensive list and discussion see Toporov 1981: 150-153.

beyond the passing time forever "fixed" in its undecaying singularity. From the realm of eternity unfolds temporality: transitory time that "goes on" – consisting of units and revealing itself as a ritual sequence (e.g., in RV 1.164, a singular wheel of the year is substituted by the seven wheels that represent the ritual sequence: eternity arranges the ritual and presents it in a series of proper moments).

Analysis of the materials above as well as the dichotomy and inherent connection of the two terms – *r̥tá* and *r̥tú* – allows me to conclude that, although we don't find any established notions that might define abstract time in the RV, we are observing a formation of proto-notions. Time, yet to be defined and named within the Vedic tradition, is already divided into *r̥tá* – eternity, giving rise to the idea of infinite time or time-eternity, and *r̥tú* – a moment, a combination of moments, and transitory time-temporality.

1.2.2. The Sun as a Measure of Time

From the analysis of the hymn RV 1.164, it is evident that the chariot and the wheel of the year and that of *r̥tá* rolling in heaven is the chariot/wheel of the sun. The connection of the sun with the year (solar year) and therefore with time in general seems to be obvious: the (apparent) movement of the sun signifies the passage of time and the full circle (two *ayanas* in the Vedic terms: the sun's ways to the north and to the south) represents a year. However, I think it is necessary to show that this association indeed existed in the in the Vedic mind.

First of all, as can be observed in RV 1.164.14, the heavenly wheel described as the year is straightforwardly equaled with the sun or "the eye of the sun": *... cakrám ajáraṃ ... | sū́ryasya cákṣū rájasaity ā́vr̥taṃ... ||* – 'The undecaying wheel … Concealed, the eye of the sun moves through the cloudy sphere'. Parallels of the sun with the wheel and the eye

("heavenly eye") are of the Indo–European origin and can be found in different forms in almost all the Indo-European cultures[32]. The RV also typically compares the sun with the wheel, as, for example, in 1.175.4ab: *muṣāyá sū́ryaṃ kave cakrám ī́śāna ójasā |* – 'Steal the sun-wheel, o poet endowed with strength!' and in RV 4.30.4: *... cakráṃ ... | muṣāyá indra sū́ryam ||* – 'O Indra, steal the sun-wheel!'; also in RV 4.28.2 (as well as in many other cases):

> *tvā́ yujā́ ní khidat sū́ryasyéndraś cakráṃ sáhasā sadyá indo |*
> *ádhi ṣṇúnā bṛhatā́ vártamānam mahó druhó ápa viśvā́yu dhāyi ||*
>
> With you, o drop, as a companion Indra by his might in a moment pressed down the wheel of the sun that was rolling on the lofty back [of the sky]. The full lifespan was taken from a great foe.

There also multiple descriptions of the blazing chariot of the sun that makes its course around heaven, i.e., in RV 5.63.7d Mitra and Varuṇa "place the shining chariot [of] the sun in heaven" (*sū́ryam ā́ dhattho diví cítryaṃ rátham ||*); in RV 5.62.2 the Sun is called the felly that rolls following Mitra and Varuṇa (*mitrāvaruṇā ... ánu vām ékaḥ pavír ā́ vavarta ||* – 'o Mitra and Varuṇa, one felly rolls after you [two]!'). The chariot of the sun that is pulled either by seven horses or by a single horse is mentioned in RV 1.50.8-9, 4.13.3, 5.45.9, 8.63.2 and elsewhere. Therefore, even without the straight equation in RV 1.164.14, we can definitely say that the heavenly wheel as well as the chariot represents the sun, and such parallels are quite typical for the RV. Hence, it is certain that in RV 164.14 there is a homology between the sun and the year, the two are perceived as directly connected.

There are various additional indications that the Ṛgvedic poets understood the sun and the course of the sun (*áyana*) as a measure of time and viewed the sun as something that regulates and epitomizes the passage of time. The RV has several mentions of the sun –

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[32] Cf. the chariot of Hēlios in Greek mythology; the wheel and the eye of the sun in various Slavic mythologies; the chariot and the wheel of the sun in the Nordic/Germanic myths, etc.

usually in the form of Sūrya, the sun deity that traverses the sky during the day and symbolizes all aspects of the sun, or Savitar, primarily associated with the sunset and sunrise – distributing the time-periods. One of the examples cited above is RV 2.38.4cd: *vy r̥t́r̥mr adardhar arámatiḥ savitā́ devá ā́gāt ||* – 'He separated the time [periods] – Savitar, the god, came without delay.' RV 4.53.7a expresses a connection between Savitar and a proper moment of time, *r̥tú*: *ā́gan devá r̥túbhir* – 'The god [Savitar] came with [proper] moments'. It should also be noted that Agni, whose links with *r̥tú* and temporality are explored in 1.1, is thought of as celestial fire, therefore he represents another form of the sun and another means to link the sun with the distribution and regulation of the time-periods.

In RV 1.50.7 Sūrya, the sun, is characterized as a measure for the days and the nights:

> *ví dyā́m eṣi rájas pr̥thv áhā mímāno aktúbhiḥ |*
> *páśyañ jánmāni sūrya ||*
>
> You travel across the sky [and] the wide realm,
> measuring the days by the nights[33], looking upon the living, o Sūrya [the sun]!

The sun is also connected with the personal time: Savitar is said to prolong lifespan of the humans (he grants them "successive lifespans") and bestow ("impel", as he is the Impeller) immortality upon the gods in RV 4.54.2:

> *devébhyo hí prathamáṃ yajñíyebhyo 'mr̥tatváṃ suvási bhāgám uttamám |*
> *ā́d íd dāmā́naṃ savitar vy ùrṇuṣe 'nūcīnā́ jīvitā́ mā́nuṣebhyaḥ ||*
>
> First you impel immortality as the highest share to the gods worthy of sacrifice, o Savitar (the Impeller)! And then you uncover you gift: successive life-spans for the mortals.

---

[33] "by the nights" – *aktúbhiḥ*; another possible translation is "by [your] rays". This double meaning is probably intended as a poetic device.

In 1.110.3a Savitar gives immortality to the Ṛbhus: *tát savitā́ vo 'mṛtatvám ā́suvad …* – 'Then Savitar (the Impeller) impelled you[, o Ṛbhus,] to immortality'. As discussed above, Uṣas, the dawn, whose appearance in the sky precedes the arrival of the sun and who is, of course, very much related to the sun, is connected to the objective and personal time in a similar way: she signifies the rotation of the daily circle; she also changes (mostly "shortens") the lifespan of the humans. In the beginning of night Savitar "impels" all the beings to sleep, thus distinguishing between the day and the night (cf. RV 1.35.2, 4.53.3, 7.45.1), whereas in the morning he impels them to return to their daily activities. As a deity associated with the night, he also encourages the beings to procreate to ensure the production of the new generations.

Therefore the sun is clearly perceived by the Vedic poets as directly connected with the passage of time, alternation of the time-periods and the yearly cycles, human lifespan, emergence of the new generations, and immortality. In the late Vedic texts, an idea that the sun regulates and measures time and represents the year and time in general becomes very prominent. In the RV we can only observe the germ of this understanding.

1.2.3. The Year: The Ultimate Time

As observed in the RV 1.164, the heavenly wheel that embodies time that organizes and orders the universe represents *ṛtá*, the Cosmic Order, the sun, and also the year. It is clear from the hymn that it is not simply a year as a singular unit of time but rather a symbol of the eternal time-circle. The year in the Ṛgveda appears to symbolize something close to time-eternity and to a mythological (not abstract or philosophical) representation of a general

notion of time. This view becomes crystallized in a rarely cited cosmogonic hymn of the Xth

maṇḍala of the RV, i.e., in RV 10.190. Below is this short hymn quoted in full:

> *r̥táṃ ca satyáṃ cābhī̀ddhāt tápasó 'dhy ajāyata |*
> *táto rā́try ajāyata tátaḥ samudró arṇaváḥ || 1 ||*
> *samudrā́d arṇavā́d ádhi saṃvatsaró ajāyata |*
> *ahorātrā́ṇi vidádhad víśvasya miṣató vaśī́ || 2 ||*
> *sūryācandramásau dhātā́ yathāpūrvám akalpayat |*
> *dívaṃ ca pr̥thivī́ṃ cāntárikṣam átho sváḥ || 3 ||*

> 1. R̥tá, [the Cosmic Order,] and truth-reality were born from the kindled heat.
> From that the night was born, from that – the foaming ocean.
> 2. Out of the foaming ocean was born the Year that dispenses days and nights,
> the lord of everything that blinks.
> 3. The Arranger distributed according to the order the sun and the moon,
> heaven and earth, the interspace and sunlight.

The hymn is part of a series of semi-monistic (describing creation from an apparently singular

source) cosmogonic hymns typical for the Xth *maṇḍala* of the RV. In the first verse there is a

description of the primary creation: nothing exists, not even primordial darkness, and then a

singular flame or 'kindled heat' *(tápas)* gives rise to the Cosmic Order *(r̥tá)* and truth-reality

(satyá), the former being the power that organizes the latter. The first result of their

interaction is, interestingly, chaos: the night *(rā́trī)*, that is not simply a time unit, but pitch-

black primordial darkness of the uncreated universe, and then the foaming ocean *(samudró*

arṇaváḥ). Just like the night, the agitated, foaming ocean represents primeval chaos without

life and without order. It is cosmic ocean enveloped by eternal night. Therefore,

paradoxically, as the first step of creation, the order *(r̥tá)* creates chaos – a proto-state to be

shaped and further ordered. *R̥tá,* being born from the 'kindled heat' *(tápas),* also has an origin

point, therefore in this hymn it is poetically reconceptualized as some kind of conditional

eternity and the primary agent of creation.

Then, the year (*saṃvatsará*) appears from the ocean as "the first product out of Cosmic Waters"[34]. The year is said to be the one that 'dispenses days and nights' and 'the Lord of everything that blinks.' Although unlike in RV 1.164 the year is not equated with *r̥tá* in this hymn, it effectuates the same functions, specifically, it orders the chaotic universe by creating the sequence of 'days and nights.' After the temporal sequence is set, the universe transforms and becomes organized, i.e., created. The year therefore is the power and agent of creation, just like *r̥tá* during the previous stage.

In the final stanza of the hymn the process of creation continues. It is said that 'the Arranger' *(dhātŕ̥)* establishes and properly distributes 'the sun and the moon, heaven and earth, interspace (*antárikṣa*) and sunlight.' The word I translate as 'arranger' *(dhātŕ̥),* possible translations can also be 'distributer,' 'establisher,' 'placer,' etc., is not very common in the RV. Overall, it occurs twenty times mostly not as an epithet or name. In the IXth *maṇḍala* dedicated to the *soma* sacrifice, this word signifies each of the seven priests involved in the ritual (e.g., RV 9.10.3, RV 9.113.4). However, in the Xth *maṇḍala* (the latest in the corpus of the RV that has multiple 'abstract' hymns depicting creation from one source of by a singular deity) this term is used as an epithet of the newly introduced into the Vedic worldview 'Creator'. In RV 10.128.7 the praised supreme deity remains unnamed: *dhātā́ dhātr̥̄ṇā́m bhúvanasya yás pátir deváṁ trātā́ram abhimātiṣāhám |* – 'He, the Arranger of arrangers, the lord of the world – [I praise] him, the protector, the conqueror of enemies!' The creator can also be mentioned by name, as in RV 10.184.1 where *dhātŕ̥* is an epithet of Prajāpati, or in RV 10.82.2 where it describes Viśvakarman. In the latter case, another related epithet – *vidhātr̥*,

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[34] Schayer 1938: 5.

the distributer – is used in relation to Viśvakarman. Another case when both epithets are used

is RV 10.167.3 where Indra is called both *dhātṛ* and *vidhātṛ*, 'arranger' and 'distributer.'

In the post-Vedic mythology (in fact, starting from the AV and the *brāhmaṇas* but

taking the full shape in the epics) Dhātṛ, the Arranger, and Vidhātṛ, the Distributer, are the

two deities embodying fate[35]: they spin, 'arrange', and 'distribute' the threads of human

destiny and weave the cloth of empirical time on the loom powered by the wheel of the year

(absolute time), therefore in the later tradition these epithets are directly associated with time

and arranging time. The RV does not explicitly exhibit this connection, however, in RV

10.18.5 we find the following interesting description:

> *yáthā́hāny anupūrvám bhávanti yátha ṛtáva ṛtúbhir yánti sādhú |*
> *yáthā ná pū́rvam áparo jáhāty evā́ dhātar ā́yūṃṣi kalpayaiṣām ||*
>
> Just like the days arise successively one after another, just like the moments
> (*ṛtú*)[36] go right [after other] moments, just like the later does not start [before]
> the earlier –
> Like that, o Arranger (*dhātṛ*), proportion their lifespans!

This stanza belongs to the same X[th] *maṇḍala* as RV 10.190, and therefore is likely to use the

term in a conceptually close sense. The Arranger (*dhātṛ*) in this stanza clearly regulates the

sequence of time units (including human lifespans) and time-states and appears to be in

charge of time. Significantly, time is represented as an unbroken succession of intervals. If we

consider the context in which the term *dhātṛ* is used in RV 10.190, it is plausible that it

signifies the year itself: the ultimate time-unit that regulates all other units and repeats itself

endlessly. With the creation of the year, the universe really comes to being and acquires the

ordered state that is reality. The sequenced and manifested time-space continuum where time

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[35] For details, see Chapter III.

[36] In this context, *ṛtú* can also be translated 'season'.

regulates and distributes space arises from the primordial chaos symbolized by the cosmic waters and eternal impenetrable darkness.

In the later Vedic texts (primarily, in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads) the identification of the year with time-eternity becomes very prominent[37]. In the RV itself we only observe a germ of this idea. Besides the two fragments discussed above, we find several "hints" in the RV that indicate that the year (the usual denomination in the RV is *saṃvatsará*) is in some way connected with immortality. For example, in the hymns dedicated to the Ṛbhus, the semi-divine beings that obtain immortality, the process of becoming immortal takes a year of different activities (both mythological and ritual), i.e., in RV 1.110.4:

> *viṣṭvī́ śámī taraṇitvéna vāgháto mártāsaḥ sánto amṛtatvám ānaśuḥ |*
> *saudhanvanā́ ṛbhávaḥ sū́racakṣasaḥ saṃvatsaré sám apṛcyanta dhītíbhiḥ ||*

> Having exerted themselves in labor with [great] skill, the sacrificers, being mortal, reached immortality. The Ṛbhus, the sun-eyed sons of Sudhanvan, united with [divine] insights in a year.

A similar account is found in RV 4.33.4 where different actions (most likely, a figurative description of the soma ritual) lead the Ṛbhus to immortality:

> *yát saṃvátsam ṛbhávo gā́m árakṣan yát saṃvátsam ṛbhávo mā́ ápiṃśan |*
> *yát saṃvátsam ábharan bhā́so asyās tā́bhiḥ śámībhir amṛtatvám āśuḥ ||*

> When the Ṛbhus guarded the cow for a year,
> When the Ṛbhus carved (or grinded) the meat for a year,
> When [they] carried her dung for a year –
> By these efforts they obtained immortality.

From these passages it can be concluded that obtaining immortality implies a year of specific ritual activities. The year also represents the ultimate time-cycle and measure: everything can be done during a year; there is no other unit of time that would encompass every possible

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[37] The significance of the year in the later Vedic tradition is discussed at length at Chapter II of this dissertation.

ritual action; after a year the sacrificial cycles renew and the whole universe renews as well[38].

Agni's food (a forest, as indicated in the stanza below, and also the oblation that he consumes

during a sacrifice) that he devours grows back again throughout a year in RV 1.140.2:

> *abhí dvijánmā trivŕd ánnam r̥jyate saṃvatsaré vāvr̥dhe jagdhám ī púnaḥ |*
> *anyásyāsā jihváyā jényo vŕṣā ny ànyéna vaníno mr̥ṣṭa vāraṇáḥ ||*

> The twice-born gets the threefold food. What was eaten by him grows back
> again in a year. With the mouth, with the tongue of one [of his forms], he is a
> noble bull. With the other one [he,] an elephant, removes the [forest-]trees.

Overall, in the mythological system of the R̥gveda, in the absence of an abstract term, both the

year and *r̥tá* epitomize the primordial and undivided time-eternity that orders the universe and

establishes a pattern for the transitory time-temporality represented by *r̥tú*. Like *r̥tá*, the year

is identified with the ever-rolling undecaying heavenly wheel and, therefore, with the eternal

cycle and immortality. Appearing from the cosmic waters and conceptually connected with

them, which is also true for *r̥tá*[39]*,* the year is the power that brings the universe to its

structured state from primeval chaos.

1.2.4. Time and Space from the Divine Body: Puruṣa

Puruṣasūkta (RV 10.90), one of the most famous and widely quoted hymns of the

R̥gveda, depicts the sacrifice and division of the body of the cosmic giant Puruṣa (lit., the

Man). This hymn belonging, again, to the latest X[th] *maṇḍala*, is clearly cosmogonic: it shows

creation of the universe and its different constituent parts, physical (e.g., the sun, the moon,

the earth, heaven, etc.) as well as intangible (speech, poetic meters, the four social classes,

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[38] On the yearly renewal of the universe by means of the sacrifice see Kuiper 1970: 117, 119,
etc.

[39] See Lüders (1959), II: 402-406.

etc.). It is arguably the earliest example in the South Asian mythology of a direct juxtaposition of the microcosm (human body) and macrocosm. The purpose and addressee of Puruṣa's sacrifice is not directly stated in the hymn. The sacrifice is apparently performed by the gods, however, they are created from Puruṣa's body as a result of this sacrificial offering.

The hymn begins with the following description of Puruṣa:

sahásraśīrṣā púruṣaḥ sahasrākṣáḥ sahásrapāt |
sá bhū́miṃ viśváto vṛtvā́ty atiṣṭhad daśāṅgulám ||

A thousand heads Puruṣa has, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.
Having covered the earth from all sides, he extended beyond [it] by ten fingers.
(RV 10.90.1)

From this stanza it can immediately be concluded that Puruṣa is envisioned as omniscient and omnipresent, the former being symbolized by his thousand eyes and heads, and the latter – by his thousand feet. 'Thousand' in this case signifies an undivided multitude, an eternal quantity of undistinguished parts. With his thousand feet Puruṣa is present everywhere; with his thousand eyes he is able to see everything; his thousand heads contain all possible thoughts and words. To put it differently, he encompasses everything in the spatial and mental domains. Significantly, not only Puruṣa covers the earth (i.e., the entire physical space) 'from all sides' but also he extends 'beyond [it] by ten fingers,' which again indicates omnipresence and totality of the Cosmic giant and means that he contains something beyond the tangible world of space[40]. Later in the hymn Puruṣa's position in – or rather beyond – space is described further. It is again emphasized that he does not confirm to the spatial boundaries known to humans and encloses some other realms:

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[40] On the 'ten fingers' measuring from the top of Puruṣa's forehead to his mouth see Mus 1968: 548-549; see also a remark in Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1538 stating that the mouth "marks the boundary between the imperceptible world of thought and the perceptible world created by speech."

49

sá jātó áty aricyata paścắd bhū́mim átho puráḥ ||

He surpassed the earth from front and from behind (RV 10.90.5cd)

Thus, the whole space is enclosed as a potential within Puruṣa's body. After the sacrifice, the potential actualizes, and all parts of space and all beings manifest during the process of creation. The hymn depicts how different elements of the universe and different beings appear from various parts and faculties of Puruṣa's body: the sun comes from his eye, the moon is created from his mind, and so forth. The description is rather detailed and establishes a series of associations between the body and bodily functions and the structure and functions of the universe. Puruṣa is the ultimate source of what exists in physical, mental, and social domains: celestial bodies and spatial directions; heaven, earth, and interspace; poetic speech and sacrificial formulae; the gods and other beings, and, famously, the four social classes (*várṇa* in the later texts).

What stretches beyond the spatial, mental, and social domains is time. And in RV 10.90.2 we can observe Puruṣa's association with time:

> *púruṣa evédáṃ sárvaṃ yád bhūtáṃ yác ca bhávyam|*
> *utắmṛtatvásyéśāno yád ánnenātiróhati ||*
>
> Puruṣa alone is all this – what has been and what is to be. And he is lord of immortality, because he overgrows [the universe] by means of food.

Puruṣa is presented here as a singular vessel encompassing the past and the future ('what has been and what is to be'). Simultaneously, it is stated that he is 'the lord of immortality'. Here, within this cosmic being, the two types of time meet: the sacrificial giant contains the transitory time represented in the form of the past and the future, and also, being beyond this empirical time that is nothing but his part, he personalizes eternity. It is implied that as the one who 'overgrows [the universe] by means of food,' Puruṣa is the 'eater' or ruler of the universe

and, as we know from the hymn, also its origin. Within the framework of the Vedic sacrifice, Puruṣa can be viewed as the original ancestor of all living beings, and therefore the stanza may imply that the universe is viewed as the food sacrificed to him (referring to the rituals dedicated to the ancestors in order to feed them in the afterlife) by the generations of people. The ancestors are generally deemed (semi-)immortal as long as their descendants supply them with food by their offerings. Puruṣa is truly immortal because his supply of sacrificial offerings (the entire universe, which is his food) is as limitless as the number of his 'descendants'. This establishes the endless cycle of sacrifice: Puruṣa is the ultimate sacrificial offering that is used to produce the universe, but the universe is also a sacrificial offering to Puruṣa that sustains him as 'the lord of immortality'.

The two distinct types of time are differentiated in this stanza: the first type is observable and transitory time represented by 'what has been and what is to be,' and the second type is immortality, which is, of course, time-eternity.

From RV 10.90.3c it can be understood that Puruṣa contains immortality while encompassing all living beings:

> *pā́do 'sya víśvā bhūtā́ni tripā́d asyāmŕ̥taṃ diví ||*
>
> One quarter of him is all beings.
> Three quarters of him – immortality in heaven.

'All beings' in this stanza symbolize the whole physical world regulated by empirical time establishing the sequence of the past and the future, whereas 'immortality in heaven' is the incomprehensible eternity beyond this world. All this is Puruṣa who therefore is a receptacle of the time-space continuum.

A different time-related motif appears in RV 10.90.6:

yát púruṣeṇa havíṣā devā́ yajñám átanvata |
vasantó asyāsīd ā́jyaṃ grīṣmá idhmáḥ śarád dhavíḥ ||

When the gods put forth the sacrifice with Puruṣa as the offering,
spring was its melted butter, summer was the firewood, autumn was the oblation.

The three major seasons corresponding to the three naves of the wheel of the year in RV 1.164 (i.e., spring, summer, and autumn) are mentioned in this stanza. These seasons, as discussed above, are closely connected with the cycle of the solemn Vedic sacrifice. The stanza enumerates them as the necessary components that are instrumental in the sacrifice of Puruṣa: the melted butter, firewood, and oblation. The seasons as time periods here represent the transitory time that structures and defines the ritual. The stanza also shows that time is an essential means of sacrifice and, provided that the sacrifice of Puruṣa results in the creation of the universe, an agent of creation.

Considering all the time- and space-related materials found in the *Puruṣasūkta*, it can be said that this hymn constitutes a new stage in the development of the views of time and its association with space in the RV. First of all, time and space are clearly presented as inherently connected: pre-existing as an unmanifest potential within the body of the Cosmic giant, they actualize after the sacrifice as the created time-space continuum where space is ordered and regulated by time. Second, time has the two distinct but nevertheless inseparable forms: one is eternity that is not directly involved with the created world where all the beings dwell; the other one is empirical and transitory temporality divided into units (e.g., seasons) and time-states (such as the present and future) that structures the ritual and organizes its sequence. Finally, time is viewed as something crucial for the ritual and, effectively, as the ultimate creative power: without time, the cosmic giant would remain undivided and the

universe wouldn't come into being. Creation, which is clearly envisioned in the *Puruṣasūkta* as a transformation of a singularity into a multitude, is impossible without time.

1.3. Varuṇa, the Time Lord?

1.3.1. Varuṇa and *ṛtá*

A Vedic deity most closely associated with *ṛtá* is, undoubtfully, Varuṇa. This association is clear from many passages in the RV and defines his major function: he is the one who arranges and regulates the universe by means of *ṛtá;* he also protects and enforces *ṛtá* and punishes those who disturb it. RV 2.28.4 speaks of "Varuṇa's *ṛtá*" (*ṛtáṃ …váruṇasya*) that causes rivers to flow:

> *prá sīm ādityó asr̥jad vidhartāṁ ṛtáṃ síndhavo váruṇasya yanti |*
> *ná śrāmyanti na ví mucanty eté váyo ná paptū raghuyā́ párijman ||*
> Āditya [Varuṇa], the arranger (distributer), sent them flowing forward.
>
> Rivers move [according to] Varuṇa's *ṛtá.*
> Neither do they tire, nor do they unharness. Swiftly, like birds, [they] have flown around.

Through *ṛtá* Varuṇa upholds the universe and organizes it, which can be seen, for example, in RV 4.42.3-4:

> *ahám índro váruṇas té mahitvórvī́ gabhīré rájasī suméke |*
> *tváṣṭeva víśvā bhúvanāni vidvā́n sám airayaṃ ródasī dhāráyaṃ ca || 3 ||*
> *ahám apó apinvam ukṣámāṇā dhāráyaṃ dívam sádana ṛtásya |*
> *ṛténa putró áditer ṛtā́votá tridhā́tu prathayad ví bhū́ma || 4 ||*
>
> I, Varuṇa, am Indra. These two wide and deep realms are established [firmly] by [my] greatness. Knowing, like Tvaṣṭar, all beings[41], I joined together[42] and

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[41] "all beings" – *víśvā bhúvanāni*. Another possible translation is "all worlds".

supported heaven and earth.
I made the streaming waters swell; I supported heaven in the abode[43] of *ṛtá.*
The son of Aditi, the one who possesses *ṛtá[44],* spread out the threefold earth by means of *ṛtá.*

Varuṇa and Mitra "govern the universe by means of *ṛtá* and place the shining chariot [of] the sun in heaven" (RV 5.63.7cd: *ṛténa víśvam bhúvanaṃ ví rājathaḥ sū́ryam ā́ dhattho diví cítryaṃ rátham* ||). In RV 10.124.5 it is clear that Varuṇa has the power to separate (or "sift") *ṛtá* from *anṛtá,* its opposite – disorder, untruth. In this verse Indra asks Varuṇa to separate the two and help him govern his kingdom:

> *nírmāyā u tyé ásurā abhūvan tváṃ ca mā varuṇa kāmáyāse |*
> *ṛténa rājann ánṛtaṃ viviñcán máma rāṣṭrásyā́dhipatyam éhi ||*
>
> These Asuras have now become devoid of their magic.
> If you, o Varuṇa, will love me, o king, separating *ṛtá* from *anṛtá,*
> come to the sovereignty of my kingdom[45].

It is worth noting that in a hymn where Agni and Soma are also mentioned and have their own dialogues with Indra, a request to separate *ṛtá* from *anṛtá* goes to Varuṇa. This highlights his principal function and shows that he indeed is a true and foremost master, knower, and upholder of *ṛtá.*

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[42] "joined together"– *sám airayaṃ;* 1Sg. Imperfect from causative of the verbal root *īr-* with a prefix *sam-.* Can also be translated as "set in motion" or "created". This hymn is a verbal contest between Varuṇa and Indra where Varuṇa claims to be Indra and "tries to disguise the difference between himself and Indra" (Kuiper 1979: 22). Therefore, a translation "joined together" seems more plausible, referring to one of Indra's deeds when he pushed the sky up and separated heaven and earth. By separating the two realms, he simultaneously joined them by his body, acting as the cosmic axis, world tree or sacrificial pole.

[43] "abode" – *sádana,* lit. "a seat" or "a place". The seat or abode of *ṛtá* refers to the sky where the sun is.

[44] "the one who possesses *ṛtá*" – *ṛtā́van*; can also be translated as "righteous" or "truthful".

[45] "come to the sovereignty of my kingdom" is a literal translation. The meaning here is "come to rule my kingdom [with me]".

Varuṇa is the one who ensures that *ṛtá* is not violated. He (alone or with Mitra) punishes the offenders by binding them with his noose (*pāśa* – noose, fetter, snare), therefore there are multiple requests to Varuṇa to "release" from his fetter or to different other gods to release from Varuṇa's noose. Varuṇa's noose represents diseases (first of all, dropsy, a water-retaining disease, which emphasizes Varuṇa's connection with the waters) and retribution. RV 7.65.3 mentions these fetters by which Mitra and Varuṇa who cannot be deceived by a cheating mortal bind *ánṛta* (disorder, untruth):

> *tā́ bhū́ripāśāv ánṛtasya sétū duratyétū ripáve mártyāya |*
> *ṛtásya mitrāvaruṇā pathā́ vām apó ná nāvā́ duritā́ tarema ||*
>
> These [two] who have many fetters, the binders of disorder (*ánṛta*), who cannot be overcome by a deceiving mortal – o Mitra and Varuṇa, may we cross the danger by your path of *ṛtá* [as] waters by boat.

In RV 7.88.6-7, where poets ask Varuṇa not to punish them for their transgressions and indirectly request him to release them from his fetter, it is clear that Varuṇa is seen as a severe deity watching over peoples' wrongdoings and punishing even those who are his friends by binding them with his fetter/noose. Here punishing as binding is contrasted with forgiveness as release from the fetter:

> *yá āpír nítyo varuṇa priyáḥ sán tvā́m ā́gāṃsi kṛṇávat sákhā te |*
> *mā́ ta énasvanto yakṣin bhujema yandhí ṣmā vípra stuvaté várūtham || 6 ||*
> *dhruvā́su tvāsú kṣitíṣu kṣiyánto vy àsmát pā́śaṃ váruṇo mumocat |*
> *ávo vanvānā́ áditer upásthād yūyám pāta svastíbhiḥ sádā naḥ || 7 ||*
>
> 6. O Varuṇa, even if a friend of yours, dear to you, your companion, were to commit offences [against] you, may we, the fallible, not taste [your punishment], o Avenger! The wise [poet][46] – ever bestow protection upon the one who praises [you]!

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[46] "The wise [poet]"– *vípra.*

7. Dwelling in these lasting dwellings [we address] you – may Varuṇa loosen his noose from us! – receiving help from Aditi's lap[47]. May you [all gods] always protect us with [your] boons!

As the highest of the Ādityas, Varuṇa is *ṛtásya gopā́*, a protector, or, literally, a herdsman of *ṛtá.* This epithet is not unique to Varuṇa and can be addressed to other deities as well; still it shows that Varuṇa is associated with *ṛtá*. We find it describing Varuṇa alone when he is identified with Soma in RV 9.73.8[48], likely in 10.49.13 that mentions a singular, although unnamed, herdsman of *ṛtá,* and in RV 10.8.5ab when Agni becomes Varuṇa:

bhúvaś cákṣur mahá ṛtásya gopā́ bhúvo váruṇo yád ṛtā́ya véṣi |

You [, o Agni,] become the eye and the herdsman of great *ṛtá*. You become Varuṇa. So you close in on *ṛtá.*

In multiple cases the epithet refers to both Varuṇa with Mitra, i.e., in RV 5.63.1, RV 7.64.2, or to a group where Varuṇa is accompanied by other Ādityas – first of all, by Mitra and Aryaman, as in RV 8.31.13, and also to all the Ādityas, like in RV 6.51.3, likely in RV 1.163.05, etc. Generally, all the Ādityas and the Ādityas as a group function as guardians of *ṛtá*. Apart from the Ādityas, this epithet can also describe such deities as Agni (RV 1.1.8; RV 3.10.2; RV 10.118.7) and Soma (RV 9.48.4), i.e., those that:

1) are primary physical agents in the ritual (Agni as sacrificial fire; Soma as sacrificial drink and a plant); 2) can be identified with Varuṇa, such as Agni that is "Varuṇa when he is born and Mitra when he is kindled"[49], as stated in RV 5.3.1, or Soma who acts as Varuṇa in

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[47] "lap" – *upástha;* can be translated as "womb."

[48] Nominally, it describes Soma, however, Varuṇa is mentioned in the hymn multiple times and it is clear that Soma acts *as Varuṇa*.

[49] MacDonell 1897: 95.

RV 9.73.8 discussed above; 3) possibly – are associated with the sun (Agni as celestial fire) and the moon (celestial Soma).

I add "possibly" to this point, because Soma's connection with the moon in the RV is rather vague and implicit. According to A. MacDonell[50], it can be observed in RV 10.85.5 and RV 1.91.16-18. Both hymns speak about the celestial Soma (found in multiple hymns of the RV[51]) that "swells up" like the waxing moon. RV 10.85 describes a marriage between Soma and Sūryā, the sun-maiden[52]. In RV 10.85.5[53] the word *māsa* that can mean "the moon" but also "a month" is mentioned: *sámānām mā́sa ā́kr̥tiḥ* (RV 10.85.5d), translated by S. Jamison & J. Brereton as "the moon is a model of the years"[54]. However, this phrase can be understood as "a month is a constituent part of the years". S. Jamison and J. Brereton comment:

> "Soma here [is] identified for the first time as the moon, an identification that becomes standard later. The waning and waxing of the moon are referred to in verse 5, and probably cryptically in the first part of verse 4, in the puzzling adjective "those whose regulation is sheltering" (*āchádvidhāna*), using an idiom otherwise used for the regulation of the months and seasons"[55].

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[50] MacDonell 1897: 107.

[51] Discussed in MacDonell 1897: 111.

[52] Which can be seen as a parallel to a widespread Indo-European mythological motif of the marriage between the sun and the moon.

[53] *yát tvā deva prapíbanti táta ā́ pyāyase púnaḥ |*
    vāyúḥ sómasya rakṣitā́ sámānām mā́sa ā́kr̥tiḥ ||

[54] Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1522.

[55] Jamison & Brereton 2014: 1519.

The connection of Soma with the moon becomes quite explicit in the later Vedic tradition and culminates in Classical Hinduism where Soma *is* the moon. Soma means the moon in the Atharvaveda, e.g., AV 7.81.3,4, 11.6.7, etc., and then in ChU 5.10.1 Soma is identified with the moon and said to be food of the gods; the same idea is expressed in various Brāhmaṇas, i.e., AB 7.11, ŚB 1.6.4.5, KauB 7.10; 4.4.

There are a number of other epithets designating Varuṇa that demonstrate his relationship with *ṛtá*. Although these epithets are typical of Varuṇa, they are not exclusive for him and describe other gods as well. One of them is *ṛtā́van* – "the one who possesses *ṛtá*", "true to *ṛtá*"[56]; also: "righteous" or "truthful". It can refer specifically to Varuṇa, like in RV 4.42.4, or jointly to Mitra and Varuṇa (in RV 1.136.4; 1.151.8; 5.65.2; 5.76.4; 8.23.3; 8.25.1,4,7,8), as well as to the Ādityas as a group (RV 2.27.4, etc.). Among the other gods who are frequently described as *ṛtā́van* is Agni (a non-exhaustive list includes RV 2.35.8; 3.13.2; 3.20.4; 4.2.1; 4.5.6; 4.7.7; 7.3.1; 10.2.2, etc.). Additionally, Varuṇa, along with Mitra, is *ṛtájāta* – "born from *ṛtá*" (e.g., RV 7.66.13), *ṛtaspṛ́ś* (e.g., RV 1.2.8) – "connected with/touching *ṛtá*" and *ṛtavṛ́dh* – "the one who grows/strengthens by means of *ṛtá*" (e.g., RV 1.2.8, 1.25.5, 7.66.13). In RV 5.66.1c Varuṇa is called by a unique epithet *ṛtápeśas* – "the one whose form is *ṛtá*" (a variant translation – "the one whose ornament is *ṛtá*").

All the examples and epithets provided above illustrate Varuṇa's multidimensional association with *ṛtá*. This association is very strong and well-attested in the RV by indological scholarship[57]. I intend to show how other attributes as well as mythological and etymological

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[56] As translated in Bergaigne 1973.

[57] See, for example, Hillebrandt 1877 and 1902, Lüders 1951-59, Kuiper 1979, Brereton 1973.

links that characterize Varuṇa further solidify his status as the lord of *ṛtá* and reveal his status as the lord of time.

1.3.2. Varuṇa and *vratá*

In addition to *ṛtá,* there is another significant term found in the RV that Varuṇa is closely related to, that is *vratá*. This notion received a lot of scholarly attention in the field of the Vedic studies; its etymology, meaning, and relationship to different deities has been examined by A. Bergaigne 1883, W.D. Whitney 1885, V.M. Apte 1942, H. Lüders 1951-59, P. Thieme 1957 and 1959, H.-P. Schmidt 1958, Hacker 1973, J. Brereton 1975 and 1981, T. Lubin 2001, and many other scholars.

Let us first consider the application of this word in the RV and its relationship to Varuṇa. Timothy Lubin, slightly adjusting the data given in H.P. Schmidt's tabulations[58], presents the following numbers that show how the usage of the word *vratá* in the RV corresponds to different "divine agents":

> "… some gods are more noted for their vratás than others. Vratás are attributed to most of the gods at some point in the *Ṛg Veda* corpus, but when we can ascertain the divine agent of the vratá – about half of the time – it is most frequently Varuṇa (twenty-four instances, including eight instances jointly with Mitra, and once jointly with Mitra and Savitṛ), Agni (fifteen, plus two jointly), Soma (twelve), Indra (twelve, plus two jointly), Savitṛ (ten), and the "All Gods" (Viśve Devāḥ) (seventeen)".[59]

As can be seen from these figures, Varuṇa is a primary, albeit not the only, agent of the *vratás*. His major functions include exerting the *vratás* (the meaning of the term will be

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[58] Lubin 2001: 568, fn. 16.

[59] *Ibid.*, 568.

discussed below) and watching over their observance, i.e., Varuṇa and the *vratás* are definitely functionally correlated. According to H.-P. Schmidt[60], words *"Varuṇa"* and *"vratá"* are also related etymologically, both stemming from the Indo-European root *$\ast \under{u}er$-/$\underline{u}ere$-/$\underline{u}r\bar{e}$-* "to speak, talk"[61], an etymology for *vratá* first proposed by A. Bezzenberger[62] and then for *vratá* and *Varuṇa* by A. Meillet[63]. P. Thieme also supports this etymology for both *vratá* and *Varuṇa*[64] as well as the meaning of the word *vratá* that, as states H.-P. Schmidt, in all cases in the RV is "Gelübde"[65], i.e., "vow". Schmidt explains that a vow should be understood as "eine Art von promissorischen Eid"[66], i.e., a promissory oath. This view was contested by P. Hacker[67] and J. Brereton[68]. Both accept the etymology of the word but dispute its meaning. J. Brereton at length analyzes semantics and employment of the word *vratá* in the RV and concludes that the meaning "oath/vow" in many cases doesn't fit the context of particular hymns of the RV and AV. He argues that *vratá* is a commandment[69]; "an action which is governed by a commandment and so is considered an expression of the

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[60] Schmidt 1958.

[61] For meaning and cognates, see Pokorny 2007: 3367.

[62] Bezzenberger 1877, 1: 253f.

[63] Meillet 1907: 157f.

[64] Thieme 1959: 150.

[65] Schmidt 1958: 17.

[66] *Ibid.,* 32.

[67] Hacker 1973.

[68] Brereton 1975 and 1981.

[69] Brereton 1975: 81f.

commandment"; and "'authority', the power to command".[70] He also concludes that Varuṇa is a personification of *vratá.* [71]

Both meanings of *vratá* – "vow/oath/promise" proposed by H.-P. Schmidt and "commandment" suggested by J. Brereton – were disputed by Timothy Lubin. He seems to accept (without scrutinizing it) the etymology (IE *ṷer-/ṷere-/ṷrē-*), which he credits to the "current consensus"[72], but rejects the proposed understanding of *vratá.* He also avoids discussing the idea of the etymological relationship between *vratá* and Varuṇa, stating "whether or not we fully accept this etymological argument, or this understanding of Varuṇa's name, it is likely that the Vedic poets made this connection"[73]. Lubin thoroughly analyzes the usage of the word *vratá* in the RV and later Vedic texts, and shows that its application in the corpus of the Ṛgveda is, generally, threefold:

1) *vratás* as divine laws, i.e., *vratás* of the gods that "constitute a manifestation of divine will in the "natural" patterns and processes of phenomena (such as the flow of water) in the observable world. The "way the world is" then is seen as a confirmation of divine agency."[74]

2) *vratás* as ritual observance/activity, i.e., *vratás* of the humans who observe ritual activities following a prescribed set of rules.

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[70] Brereton 1981: 70.

[71] Brereton 1975: 101.

[72] Lubin 2001: 565.

[73] *Ibid.*, 569.

[74] *Ibid.*, 574.

3) *vratá* as a rule or "standard mode of action" in a general sense.[75]

Consequently, having shown the application of the term, Lubin rejects Brereton's translation "commandment" and proposes to translate *vratá* as "rule" or "law" in most cases. He also notes that he prefers "to avoid Brereton's gloss 'commandment', which seems to emphasize unduly the speech component, since the R̥g Veda never alludes to the pronouncing or declaring of a vrata"[76]. *Vratá*, therefore, is something that can be set, followed, or observed (like a rule, law, or ritual/action) rather than said, pronounced or declared (like an oath, vow, or commandment).

While I consider T. Lubin's arguments convincing and the meanings and translations of *vratá* offered by him very plausible, I think that semantics and functions of this term in the Vedic context can be better explained by a different etymology. This etymology was proposed by W.D. Whitney[77] and independently by A. Ludwig[78]; then supported by V.M. Apte[79]: it is a derivation of the word *vratá* from a Sanskrit root *vr̥t-*, "to turn, revolve, roll, move, take place" with a secondary meaning "to pass away (as time)"[80]. This etymology allows to interpret *vratá* as an action; repetitive/ritual activity; any fixed "rule" or "law", i.e., an activity that must take place; things how they are supposed to be. Even the meaning "commandment" as prescribed activity won't be far-fetched, whereas a derivation from an IE *u̯er-/u̯ere-/u̯rē-*

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[75] *Ibid.*, 567.

[76] Lubin 2001: 567, fn. 9.

[77] In Whitney 1885.

[78] Ludwig 1: 6-88, 3: 266.

[79] In Apte 1942.

[80] For meanings see Monier Williams 1899: 1009.

'speak' may only account for such meanings as "oath/vow" or "commandment" but would hardly include any activity-related connotations.

Additionally, W.D. Whitney supports his etymology of *vratá* by making the following syntactic argument:

> "…verbs which take *vratá* as object decidedly favor its interpretation as a word of motion. We do not find them to mean 'obey, submit to, accept,' and the like, but rather 'follow after, pursue, attach one's self to,' and so on (*i, anv-i, anu-car, anu-gā, anu-vṛt, sac*, etc.)."[81]

Whitney illustrates his point with multiple examples of the usage of the word *vratá* with different verbs of movement, such as "*ánu vratám carasi*" (RV 3.61.1), *"vratám agne sacanta"* (RV 7.5.4), etc.[82] He also states that there might be indications of the traditional recognition of the etymological relationship between *vratá* and the root *vṛt-:* several stanzas contain a word play that involves the word *vratá* occurring closely to different derivatives of the root *vṛt-*. As an example, Whitney (although warning that this might not be important and can simply be "accidental collocations, or artificial plays upon words"[83]) partially quotes the following stanza (RV 1.183.3) that indeed has the *vratá/vṛt-* word play:

> *ā́ tiṣṭhataṃ **suvṛ́taṃ** yó rátho vām ánu **vratā́ni vártate** havíṣmān |*
> *yéna narā nāsatyeṣayádhyai **vartír** yāthás tánayāya tmáne ca ||*

> Mount your well-rolling (*suvṛ́taṃ*) chariot – filled with oblations – that rolls (*vártate*) following the laws (*vratā́ni*). By which [chariot], o Nāsatyas, you, [two] men, make [your] round[s] (*vartíḥ*) to invigorate [us] and for the sake of [our] offspring.

An extra point that can be added to Whitney's "appeal to tradition" is that Sāyaṇa consistently

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[81] Whitney 1885: CCXXX.

[82] *Ibid.*

[83] *Ibid.*

glosses *vratāni* as *karmāṇi*[84], i.e., rituals or actions. This explanation definitely does not cover all the possible connotations of the word but accounts for at least some cases. We cannot, of course, completely rely on the traditional interpretation for the understanding and especially etymology of the term. However, in addition to other arguments, these two pieces of evidence are still worthy of consideration since they represent an established point of view as well as a poetic intuition. Overall, based on the semantics and morphological analysis of *vratá,* its deviation from Skt. *vr̥t-* does seem possible.

If Varuṇa's name is etymologically related to *vratá,* as suggested by H.-P. Schmidt[85], then we can assume that the word *varuṇa* also stems from the Sanskrit verbal root *vr̥t-* or rather from its "predecessor", an Indo–European root *u̯er-/u̯er-t-* (also transliterated *wer-/wert-*) – 'to turn, wind'[86]. In general, it denotes any circular, revolving movement or activity. Apart from a variety of derivatives signifying movement, turning, path/way, as well as (significantly for the mythology of time and time-wheel) a plethora of meanings associated with the wheel and a path of the wheel (e.g., Sanskrit *vartman* – 'a track or rut of the wheel, path, course', cf. with *vartis* in RV 1.183.3), it produced a number of words that have temporal connotations, such as Sanskrit *vartamāna* – 'present time' or 'present tense' (also: 'moving, turning, existing'); Old Slavic *vremę* – 'time' (from the Proto-Slavic *u̯ertmen* – 'time' through the form *vertmę*)[87], Khotanese-Sakan (Middle Iranian) *bada-* <*varta-*

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[84] E.g., in his comment to RV 1.183.3: Sāyaṇa 1935-1959, Vol.1: 1081.

[85] See also Mayrhofer 1992-1996, Vol. II: 515.

[86] Pokorny 2007: 3352; Watkins 2011: 102.

[87] Oguibénine 2016: 70.

'time'[88]; Old Norse *urðr* – 'that which has come to pass', i.e., the past, also: fate, name of one of the Norns (fate-goddesses); Old Norse *verðandi* – 'present', 'happening', name of another Norn; Old High German *wurt* – 'fate' and Old English *wyrd* – 'fate, destiny'[89], Latin *anniversarius* – 'returning yearly' as well as Latin set expressions *anno vertente* – 'return/course of the year' and *mensis vertens* – 'current/unfolding month'; Old Slavic *връстъ* – 'series; generation', hence Russian *сверстник [sverstnik]* – 'of the same generation, contemporary'; Old Slavic *връста* 'interval in space or time'; possibly Latin *Vertumnus*, the Roman god of changing seasons and the year. Notably, many words denoting spindle in different Indo-European languages are also derived from this root, e.g., Sanskrit *vartana*, Middle Iranian *fertas*, Welsh *gwerthyd,* Old Slavic *vrĕteno/vrъteno (*u̯erteno),* etc., which is important for the mythological context because, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, spindle in the Indo-European mythology in many cases represents time, year, and fate.

An interesting Sanskrit compound that is worthy of a special mention is *r̥tu-vr̥tti-* 'revolution of the seasons, a year'. This compound – clearly denoting time – contains derivatives from two time-related Indo-European roots: **ar-* and **u̯er-/u̯er-t-*. The presence of such a compound in the language may indicate that there is some kind of "language memory" (something like "cultural memory") of the semantic (albeit not etymological!) connection between the two roots and also of temporal connotations of their derivatives.

Returning to the formation of the word *varuṇa*, the following can be said: the word is

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[88] *Ibid.*

[89] Watkins 2011: 102.

present in the Mitanni treaty (c. 1380 BC)[90] and is likely to originate on the Indo-Aryan level. It can stem from the root *u̯er- in its form without an extension -t, whereas vratá is derived from the form *u̯er-t- that has the extension. The suffix –una[91] is rather rare in Sanskrit, there are no more than 10-15 formations with it (árjuna, karúṇa, -cetúna, táruṇa, dāruṇá, etc.[92]). The suffix is found in both Sanskrit and Avestan language, therefore it is at least Indo-Iranian but, being present in the Mitanni treaty as a part of the word varuṇa, is likely to be Indo-Aryan as well. Generally, the suffix is used to form adjectives on the basis of the verbal roots. Varuṇa therefore can be an Indo-Aryan adjectival formation from the root *u̯er-(t-) (probably with the causative meaning) and can tentatively signify "the one who turns/revolves [things]" or "the one who sets [thing] in [circular] motion".

Further considering Varuṇa and his possible links with time, we can now hypothesize that he is associated with time through his connection with notions derived from the both aforementioned time-related Indo-European roots – *ar- and *u̯er-/u̯er-t-. First of all, Varuṇa is connected with time through his functional association with r̥tá (derived from *ar-). Second, if his very name or at least the designation of his major power (vratá) indeed stem from the root vr̥t- (IE *u̯er-/u̯ert-), it means that his association with time can also be seen on the etymological level.

Let us now analyze Varuṇa's mythological functions in the RV and see if we can find any mythological narratives and motifs that would allow us, so to speak, to place Varuṇa into the temporal domain.

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[90] Witzel 2004: 588-589.

[91] 'n' of the suffix is cerebralized in the word varuṇa due to the normal phonetic changes.

[92] Whitney 1950: 443.

1.3.3. Varuṇa and Time in Vedic Mythology

It is not an easy task to analyze Varuṇa's mythology and determine what his mythological functions are. Unlike Indra, who clearly is a major (or even the main) character in the Vedic mythological narratives, Varuṇa is hardly associated with any coherent stories. Therefore, his mythology needs to be reconstructed through examining separate mythological motifs related to him. Here I present a web of mythological motifs that indicate Varuṇa's association with time and reveal his role as a time-lord.

As discussed above in 1.3.1, Varuṇa's primary function is to uphold *ṛtá* as 1) a Cosmic Order that structures spatial and temporal events and puts them in sequence, and as 2) Truth (the moral law). From the discussion of *ṛtá* in 1.1.-1.2., it can be seen that *ṛtá* is pictured as a wheel and also as a shining chariot that crosses the sky following a fixed path. This wheel as well as the chariot is identified with the sun and with the year. As shown in 1.2.3, the year (and time in general) and the sun are thought of as closely connected. In the worldview of the RV, the sun is a measure of the universe/the earth and an instrument by which the act of measuring is performed (cf. RV 1.50.7: *ví dyā́m eṣi rájas pṛthv áhā mímāno aktúbhiḥ | páśyañ jánmāni sūrya ||* – 'You travel across the sky [and] the wide realm, measuring the days by the nights[93], looking upon the living, o Sūrya [the sun]!'). In RV 5.85.5, Varuṇa measures the earth using the sun as his "yardstick":

> *imā́m ū ṣv àsurásya śrutásya mahī́m māyā́ṃ váruṇasya prá vocam|*
> *mā́neneva tasthivā́m̐ antárikṣe ví yó mamé pṛthivī́ṃ sū́ryeṇa ||*

> I sing this great magic of Varuṇa, the superb illustrious Asura,

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[93] "by the nights" – *aktúbhiḥ*; see fn. 16.

who, standing in the intermediate space,
measured out the earth with the sun like a measure.

Varuṇa therefore is specifically linked in this stanza to the sun's measuring function: the sun is used as a metric of the time-space continuum, and Varuṇa in this case personifies this function.

Although Varuṇa cannot be considered a "sun deity", he exhibits multiple motifs that strongly associate him with the sun. There are several hymns where the sun is called an eye of Varuṇa or that of Mitra and Varuṇa. For example, in RV 1.50.6, a hymn dedicated to Sūrya, the sun, we find the following verse:

yénā pāvaka cákṣasā bhuraṇyántaṃ jánāṁ ánu | tváṃ varuṇa páśyasi ||

O purifying one, [the sun is] the eye by which, o Varuṇa, you look over the restless among the living.

The sun as the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa is mentioned in different hymns, including RV 1.115.1, 7.61.1, 7.63.1 etc. A typical example would be RV 10.37.1a,d:

námo mitrásya váruṇasya cákṣase ... |... divás putrā̆ya sū̆ryāya śaṃsata ||

Bow to the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa… praise to Sūrya [the sun], the son of heaven.

In RV 6.51.1, not only Mitra and Varuṇa's eye is equaled with the sun, but also it is called "the face of *ṛtá*", therefore this verse demonstrates a link of associations: Mitra and Varuṇa's eye with the sun, the sun with *ṛtá*, Mitra and Varuṇa with *ṛtá*:

úd u tyác cákṣur máhi mitráyor ā̆ṁ éti priyáṃ váruṇayor ádabdham |
ṛtásya śúci darśatám ánīkaṃ rukmó ná divá úditā vy àdyaut ||

The great eye goes up – [that] of Mitra, [that] beloved undeceived [eye] of Varuṇa. The shining, dazzling face of *ṛtá* has glowed brightly in the [sun]rise like a [golden] ornament of heaven.

There are multiple other motifs dispersed through the text of the RV that show

Varuṇa's connection with the sun. He (alone or accompanied by Mitra and Aryaman) is the one who makes the path for the sun (RV 1.24.8ab: *urúṃ hí rā́jā váruṇaś cakā́ra sū́ryāya pánthām ánvetavā́ u |* – 'King Varuṇa made a wide path for the sun to follow'; also in RV 7.87.1 and elsewhere) and causes the golden swing of the sun to shine in heaven (RV 7.87.5cd: *gṛ́tso rā́jā váruṇaś cakra etáṃ diví preṅkháṃ hiraṇyáyaṃ śubhé kám ||* – 'Crafty king Varuṇa made this golden swing in heaven for splendor'). Just like the sun, Varuṇa (with or without Mitra) has a chariot that he mounts in heaven (RV 5.61.3) that shines like the sun (RV 1.122.15cd: *rátho vām mitrāvaruṇā dīrghā́psāḥ syū́magabhastiḥ sū́ro nā́dyaut ||* – 'Your chariot with a long front drawn [by ray-like] thongs, o Mitra and Varuṇa, shone like the sun'). Abode or a place where Mitra and Varuṇa sit (*sā́dana*) is in heaven (RV 1.136.2 *dyukṣám sā́danam* – 'celestial sit/abode'). Their dwelling place (*yoni*[94]) is described as golden (RV 5.67.2ab: *ā́ yád yóniṃ hiraṇyáyaṃ váruṇa mítra sádathaḥ |* – 'When you, o Varuṇa, o Mitra, sit at the golden abode…'), and golden-winged is Varuṇa's messenger (RV 10.123.6c – *híraṇyapakṣaṃ váruṇasya dūtám*). The sun enters Varuṇa and Mitra's dwelling (RV 1.152.4) and in a different hymn the sun tells Varuṇa and Mitra if human beings committed any offences (RV 7.60.1-3).

Whereas Varuṇa's relationship to the sun reflected in the motifs discussed above connects him with time indirectly, there is another set of mythological motifs in the RV that shows his direct association with time. In RV 8.42.2, Varuṇa is the herdsman or protector of immortality (*amṛ́ta*) that, as discussed in 1.1 of this dissertation, represents time-eternity:

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[94] *Yoni* in the later language is understood as a womb, however, this meaning is rather rare in the RV (there are singular instances when this meaning can possibly be applied). Besides, in the context of the discussed hymn this connotation is unlikely.

evā́ vandasva váruṇam bṛhántaṃ namasyā́ dhī́ram amŕ̥tasya gopā́m |
sá naḥ śárma trivárūthaṃ ví yaṃsat pātáṃ no dyāvāpŕ̥thivī upásthe ||

Thus praise mighty Varuṇa, make reverence to the wise herdsman of immortality! May he grant us refuge with threefold protection! Protect us in your womb, o Heaven and Earth!

The epithet *amŕ̥tasya gopā́* – herdsman of immortality – is rare in the RV. In RV 6.9.3c it describes Agni *Vaiśvānara* (fire-belonging-to-all-men), as well as a similar epithet – *gopā́ amŕ̥tasya rakṣitā́* – 'herdsman, protector of immortality' in RV 6.7.7d. Agni is also said to be *amŕ̥tasya nā́bhiḥ* – 'the navel of immortality' (RV 3.17.4), so his associations with *amŕ̥ta,* immortality, are clearly very strong: being the navel (center) of immortality, he embodies it. However, these associations are likely to have their root in the ritual and Agni's role as physical fire: a navel (*nā́bhi*) is a term that refers to the fire altar (*védi*)[95] or, more specifically, a hollow in the center of the altar where the fire is situated during a sacrifice. Fire, Agni, being a *vediṣád* – 'sitting on the altar' (RV 1.140.1, 4.40.5), is the center of the sacrifice – 'navel of sacrifices' (*nā́bhiṃ yajñā́nāṃ*; RV 6.7.2), so is the sacrificial butter that is put into the fire during the ritual and also referred to as 'navel of immortality' in RV 4.58.1. The same can be applied to *soma* that embodies immortality as a sacrificial substance "in the center of the ritual" and also as a giving and sustaining immortality drink of the gods (in the mythology of the later Hinduism *soma* as drink of immortality is substituted by *amŕ̥ta*). Unlike Soma and Agni, Varuṇa whose role in the ritual is far less prominent and who does not represent any physical substance or element, never *embodies* immortality (unless he is identified with Agni or Soma, as discussed in this chapter in 1.3.1). He truly is a guardian, a herdsman of immortality (*amŕ̥tasya gopā́*), an external force that puts things and events in order (ensuring

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[95] Elizarenkova 1995: 34.

that *ṛtá* functions properly by imposing his rules, *vratás*), distinguishes between the mortals and immortals by properly arranging them (e.g., in RV 5.72.2b Varuṇa and Mitra 'arrange the [mortal] people properly' – *dhármaṇā yātayájjanā*), differentiates eternity and temporality, and does not allow any confusion in the universe.

Varuṇa's functions as an arranger of time periods can also be expressed quite directly. He "knows twelve months" and their subdivisions (RV 1.25.8), as well as the additional, thirteenth month, that is "born afterwards":

> *véda māsó dhṛtávrato dvā́daśa prajā́vataḥ |*
> *védā yá upajā́yate ||*

> [Varuṇa] whose rules are firm, knows the twelve [months] and their offspring.
> He knows the one born afterwards.

He also (with Mitra and Aryaman) regulates and arranges the year, seasons, months, days, and nights, e.g., RV 7.66.11:

> *ví yé dadhúḥ śarádam mā́sam ā́d áhar yajñám aktúṃ cā́d ṛ́cam |*
> *anāpyáṃ váruṇo mitró aryamā́ kṣatráṃ rā́jāna āśata ||*

> These who apportioned the year[96], the month, and the day, and then the sacrifice, the night, and the hymn[s] – the kings Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman have attained unattainable power.

In RV 8.41.10, Varuṇa divides days and nights, thus creating a day-cycle by his laws/rules:

> *yáḥ śvetā́ṃ ádhinirṇijaś cakré kṛṣṇā́ṃ anu vratā́ |*
> *sá dhā́ma pūrvyám mame yá skambhéna víródasī ajó ná dyā́m ádhārayan*
> *nábhantām anyaké same ||*

> The one who has made the white [days] wearing [shining] garments black [nights] by [his] laws[97] – he measured the ancient abode. The one who held

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[96] "the year" – *śaradam*; can also be understood as "autumn"; in this context translation 'year' (i.e., repetition of autumns/harvest seasons) is more appropriate.

[97] Lit. – "… made white garment-wearers [days] black [nights]". Another possible variant would be "the one who has made the white [days] and black [nights] wear garments". Kuiper

apart heaven and earth by the fulcrum, like Aja [Ekapad] the sky.
May all the others be torn apart!

Despite a certain degree of syntactic obscurity in this verse, it can be derived that Varuṇa (described here as a creator who separates heaven and earth and acts as the world axis and supporter of heaven) has power over "the black and white". "Black and white" clearly refer to days and nights, cf. RV 6.9.1: *áhaś ca kr̥ṣṇám áhar árjunaṃ ca ví vartete rájasī vedyā́bhiḥ | –* 'black day and white day roll manifestly through heaven and earth'. Therefore, Varuṇa regulates the alternation of days and nights by means of and in accordance with his rules or laws, *vratás*. A similar idea is expressed in stanza 3 of the same hymn (RV 8.41.3): Varuṇa controls the nights, holds them in his embrace, and establishes the dawns by *māyā́,* his magical power:

> *sá kṣápaḥ pári ṣasvaje ny ùsró māyáyā dadhe sá víśvam pári darśatáḥ |*
> *tásya vénīr ánu vratám uṣás tisró avardhayan nábhantām anyaké same ||*
>
> He has embraced the nights [and] established the dawns by his magical power.
> The splendid one, he [encompasses] all. Following [his] rule[s], his lovers
> strengthened the three dawns.
> May all the others be torn apart!

The regular arrival of the dawns and the change of the days and nights follow Varuṇa's rules or laws, as exemplified by RV 1.123.7-8; "thirty *yojanas*" here represent the thirty days of a month:

> *ápānyád éty abhy anyád eti víṣurūpe áhanī sám carete |*
> *parikṣitos tamo anyā guhākar adyaud uṣā́ḥ śóśucatā rathena || 7 ||*
> *sadr̥śīr adya sadr̥śīr id u śvo dīrghaṃ sacante varuṇasya dhāma |*
> *anavadyās triṃśataṃ yojanāny ekaikā kratum pari yanti sadyaḥ || 8 ||*
>
> 8. The one goes away, the other comes. The day and the night [=two day-
> halves], the two dissimilar in form, proceed together. Another one concealed

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1979: 72 translates this line: "He who made the white wearers of garments black ones, in accordance with his vows".

the darkness of the two surrounding [spheres]: Uṣas, [the dawn], blazed [in the sky] with her shining chariot.

9. Appearing the same today, appearing also the same tomorrow, they follow the long[-standing] law of Varuṇa. Irreproachable, one by one [they fulfill their] purpose [and] circle thirty *yojanas*[98] in one day.

The sun and the moon are in Varuṇa's control; they are "his" (RV 8.41.9ab *yásya śvetā́ vicakṣaṇā́ tisró bhū́mīr adhikṣitáḥ | trír úttarāṇi paprátur…* – '[Varuṇa,] he who has [two] brightly shining wide-observing ones [that] rule the three earths [and] thrice filled the highest [domains]'.). Varuṇa's laws (*vratā́ni*) also regulate when the moon and the stars appear and disappear, i.e., again, they ensure the rotation of the day and the night, e.g., RV 1.24.10:

> *amī́ yá ṛ́kṣā níhitāsa uccā́ náktaṃ dádṛśre kúha cid díveyuḥ |*
> *ádabdhāni váruṇasya vratā́ni vicā́kaśac candrámā náktam eti ||*
>
> These [stars,] the [celestial] bears placed high [in the sky] are seen at night [but gone] somewhere by day. Unbreakable are Varuṇa's laws: the moon wanders at night beholding [the earth].

It can be said that Varuṇa creates temporality and establishes the time of the phenomenal world. By digging the path for the sun (the path of the chariot of *ṛtá*) he also creates a way for the days to follow, RV 7.87.1:

> *rádat pathó váruṇaḥ sū́ryāya prā́rṇāṃsi samudríyā nadī́nām |*
> *sárgo na sṛṣṭó árvatīr ṛtāyáñ cakā́ra mahī́r avánīr áhabhyaḥ ||*
>
> Varuṇa cut open the paths for the sun, [he made] the streams of the rivers [rush] forth to the sea, like a herd of [streams-race-horses] released running following [the path of] *ṛtá*. He made mighty riverbeds for the days.

In RV 3.61.7 the dawns that signify the passage of time appear in the sky because of the magic power of Mitra and Varuṇa:

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[98] *Yojana* – a measure of distance equal to "one yoke" of horses, i.e., the distance that can be covered by one (unchanged) yoke of horses. In this verse each *yojana* represents a day of a month.

ṛtásya budhná uṣásām iṣaṇyán vṛ́ṣā mahī́ ródasī ā́ viveśa |
mahī́ mitrásya váruṇasya māyā́ candréva bhānúṃ ví dadhe purutrā́ ||

Driving the dawns in the depths of *ṛtá*[99], the bull [of the Sun] entered two great realms [heaven and earth]. Great is the magic of Mitra and Varuṇa: it has spread in many directions like the shining [Dawn spreads] her luster.

Not only Varuṇa exercises the work of time in the natural world, but also he is in charge of human fate (he can, for example, ease or hinder "daily paths" of humans) and their life duration. It is in his power to prolong or shorten the lifespan of humans, therefore one of the usual requests addressed to him is to extend the lifetime, e.g., RV 1.25.12:

sá no viśvā́hā sukrátur ādityáḥ supáthā karat |
prá ṇa ā́yūṃṣi tāriṣat ||

May the wise Āditya [Varuṇa] always make our paths good.
May he extend our lifespans!

Another request would be not to reduce the lifetime, as in 1.24.11cd:

áheḷamāno varuṇehá bodhy úruśaṃsa mā́ na ā́yuḥ prá moṣīḥ ||

Be not angry now, o Varuṇa, praised by many! Do not take away our lifespan!

Being in charge of human lifespan, Varuṇa who, as can be seen from the quote above, is able to take life is very much associated with death and the netherworld, which functionally unites him with different Indo-European deities of fate and time. The association between death and time typical for the Indo–European cultures is preserved in India as well. It can be observed in various texts, most typically in the epics where Yama, a personification of death, is often identified with Kāla, time[100]. Significantly, Varuṇa shares certain functions with Yama, which can be seen in RV 10.14.7:

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[99] 'in the depths of *ṛtá*' – *ṛtásya budhná [=budhne]* – most likely, in the sky.

[100] Details are provided in Chapter III of this dissertation.

préhi préhi pathíbhiḥ pūrvyébhir yátrā naḥ pū́rve pitáraḥ pareyúḥ |
ubhā́ rā́jānā svadháyā mádantā yamám paśyāsi váruṇaṃ ca devám ||

Depart, depart by ancient paths where our forefathers went before us. You will see both kings delighted(intoxicated?) by the *svadhā*(-offering and exclamation) – Yama and the god Varuṇa.

The quoted stanza belongs to a funeral hymn and presents an instruction to a newly dead person who is about to depart to the world of the forefathers following the *pitṛyā́na*, the way of the ancestors. The stanza suggests that the dead who arrives to the "highest heaven" (*paramé vyòman* – RV 10.14.8) meets there both Yama, the lord of the dead, and Varuṇa who is never explicitly described as a death deity in the RV. Moreover, both kings are said to be "delighted by the *svadhā́*" that is a ritual exclamation that accompanies an offering to the ancestors, which means that both Yama and Varuṇa take part and have their share in the sacrifice to the ancestors. Therefore Varuṇa in depicted in this hymn as another king of realm of the dead, parallel to Yama. It is not the only parallel between the two deities in the Vedic tradition: on multiple occasions in the RV Varuṇa is identified with Yama (e.g., RV 1.163.3); Varuṇa's noose (*pā́śa*, sometimes translated as fetter) by which he binds offenders is a counterpart of Yama's foot-fetter (*páḍbīśa*). That can be seen in RV 10.97.16 where Yama's *páḍbīśa* is mentioned directly and Varuṇa's noose is implied by the word *varuṇya* – "that of Varuṇa's":

muñcántu mā śapathyā̀d átho varuṇyàd utá |
átho yamásya páḍbīśāt sárvasmād devakilbiṣā́t ||

May they release me from the curse, and also from Varuṇa's [noose], and from Yama's foot-fetter; from every fault before the gods.

In the later tradition (in Hinduism) where Varuṇa's role is diminished to being simply a deity of the water/ocean, Varuṇa's noose (*pā́śa*) becomes Yama's attribute. Also, in the post–

Ṛgvedic literature, mostly in the AV (both AVŚ and AVP), the noose can be attributed directly to death: there are multiple mentions of "the noose of death" – *mṛtyupāśa* (i.e., AVŚ 8.2.2c, AVŚ 17.1.30b), *mṛtyoḥ pāśa* (i.e., AVP 2.80.5c, AVP 2.37.5, AVŚ 12.4.37d), etc. Notably, one of the most typical epithets for Yama in the epics is *Dharmarāja*, the king of Dharma; in many cases Yama is identified with god Dharma. Because Vedic *ṛtá* as moral law (that acquires a sense of religious duty and loses most of the meanings associated with Cosmic Order) is substituted by Dharma[101] in Hinduism, it can be said that Yama to some extent assumes Varuṇa's function as the lord of *ṛtá*.

There are additional indirect indications of a link between Yama and Varuṇa in the RV. For example, in RV 10.123.6 Varuṇa's messenger is found in Yama's abode (*yoni*):

> *nā́ke suparṇám úpa yát pátantaṃ hṛdā́ vénanto abhy ácakṣata tvā |*
> *híraṇyapakṣaṃ váruṇasya dūtáṃ yamásya yónau śakunám bhuraṇyúm ||*

> When they, longing with their heart, saw you, [an eagle] with beautiful wings flying in the sky, the golden-winged messenger of Varuṇa, the bird quivering in Yama's abode.

A famous hymn where a poet, apparently Vasiṣṭha, when stricken by a horrible disease (presumably, dropsy[102]) asks Varuṇa to not let him go "to the house of clay" (RV 7.89), is another example of Varuṇa's ability to cause death. The house of clay mentioned in the hymn is most likely a grave or the earth where the dead are buried. This interpretation is supported by a sound play in the hymn, especially in the first stanza, RV 7.89.1:

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[101] A Hindu notion Dharma has its roots in the Vedic *dharman*, a term very close to certain connotations of both *ṛtá* and *vratá*. *Dharman* can be translated as 'ordinance, law, decree, established way'. *Vratá* and *dharmán* are Varuṇa's means to uphold and guard *ṛtá*, thus, Yama's association with Dharma can definitely be considered as something that was inherited from Varuṇa's mythology.

[102] See Zysk 1985: 59-61.

> *mó ṣú varuṇa **mṛnmáyaṃ** gṛháṃ rājann aháṃ gamam |*
> ***mṛḷā́** sukṣatra **mṛḷáya** ||*

> O Varuṇa, may I not go to the house of clay, o king! Mercy, o well-ruling one, have mercy!

A series *mṛnmáyaṃ ... mṛḷā́ ... mṛḷáya* plays on the sounds of the root *mṛ-*, to die, as well as on *mṛn/mṛd* – clay.

Varuṇa's connection with death that is not immediately apparent in the RV resurfaces in the later tradition. Different texts straightforwardly identify Varuṇa with death. Examples of such identification are provided by Kuiper (1979) and include passages from the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa that directly calls Varuṇa death[103] (GB 1.1.7: *taṃ varuṇaṃ mṛtyum* – 'that Varuṇa [who is] death'), also Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā that states that Varuṇa is death and therefore causes death[104] (KS 13.2.181.7: *mṛtyur vai varuṇo | mṛtyunai 'vai 'nam grāhayaty |* – '[For] Varuṇa indeed is Death, [so] he causes that [sacrificial ram] be taken by Death'), and others. In the epics, where Varuṇa's role is mainly reduced to that of the deity of the ocean/water, his association with death, ancestors, and the netherworld unexpectedly reemerges in various sources. In the MBh Varuṇa's realm is said to be "where the sun sets"[105], e.g., MBh 3.160.10-11:

> *yaṃ prāpya savitā rājan satyena pratitiṣṭhati |*
> *astaṃ parvatarājānam etam āhur manīṣiṇaḥ ||*
> *etaṃ parvatarājānaṃ samudraṃ ca mahodadhim |*
> *āvasan varuṇo rājā bhūtāni parirakṣati ||*

> The [place,] having reached which Savitṛ [, the sun,] stops [in accordance with] the truth, o king, the wise ones call Asta, the king of the mountains.

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[103] Kuiper 1979: 71.

[104] *Ibid.:* 72.

[105] *Ibid.:* 81.

> Inhabiting that king of the mountains and the ocean, great lord of the waters,
> King Varuṇa protects [all] beings.

This idea corresponds to the Vedic one expressed in a hymn addressed to Mitra and Varuṇa, in RV 5.62.1ab, that shows that Varuṇa's *r̥tá* is concealed in a place where the sun sets:

r̥téna r̥tám ápihitaṃ dhruváṃ vāṃ sū́ryasya yátra vimucánty áśvān |

> By means of Order (*r̥tá*), your firm Order (*r̥tá*) [, o Mitra and Varuṇa,] is hidden where the stallions of the sun are unyoked.

Kuiper (1979), offering other examples of Varuṇa's realm being in the land of the setting sun, establishes that in the epics this place shares many characteristics with the *nāgaloka*, the kingdom of the serpents, as well as with Pātāla, the subterranean abode of the serpents and demons, a mythological capital of the *nāgaloka*.[106] It should be added, that 'the land of the setting sun' (west) is generally associated with the netherworld in many Indo-European cultures; the same can be said about a great mountain (especially "the king of the mountains") that in different Indo-European traditions marks the entrance to the world of the dead.

It is crucial to note that in a famous story of Uttaṅka[107] found in the Mahābhārata that Kuiper quotes to illustrate similarities between Varuṇa's world and the world of the serpents[108], the protagonist (Uttaṅka) goes to the *nāgaloka* through a 'wide great hole' (*vivr̥tam mahābilam*) and sees a loom with a spinning wheel there. The loom and the wheel, as directly explained in the episode, represent time: Uttaṅka sees the wheel of the year, the wheel of time; different parts of the loom, cloth, threads, etc., symbolize various time-units.

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[106] See Kuiper 1979: 82-83.

[107] Mbh 1.3.137 ff.

[108] *Ibid.:* 83.

Significantly, the actions of the wheel-turning and thread-spinning are denoted by the verbal forms of the root *vṛt-*. Near the loom there stand two women that are said to be Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, 'Arranger' and 'Distributer', two deities of fate. This episode is analyzed in detail in Chapter III of this dissertation, therefore, without dwelling on it here, it is necessary only to highlight the part that is relevant for the study of Varuṇa's functions: the wheel of time in this episode is situated in the kingdom of the nagas that, according to Kuiper, is described as indistinguishable from the realm of Varuṇa. The role of the two characters standing near the loom – Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ – and their relationship to Varuṇa will be discussed below in this chapter.

Returning to the mythological motifs that show Varuṇa's connection to the netherworld and death, it should be mentioned that in RV 1.24.7 Varuṇa appears to be upholding the inverted world tree:

> *abudhné rā́jā váruṇo vánasyordhváṃ stū́paṃ dadate pūtádakṣaḥ |*
> *nīcī́nā sthur upári budhná eṣām asmé antár níhitāḥ ketávaḥ syuḥ ||*

> In the bottomless [space] King Varuṇa whose power is pure holds high the top of the tree. Downward [hang its branches], upward is their base. May these rays [of light] be fixed within us!

The position near the bottom of the world tree in the Indo-European mythological system usually is a place of a chthonic serpent-like deity associated with death; the one whom Ivanov and Toporov call the "adversary of the thundergod"[109] – the adversary who, like Slavic Veles, is also a master of magic and poetry (cf. Varuṇa who possesses *māyā́*, magical power; who is called a poet, *vípra* and *kaví* in the RV, *kavi* in the later tradition; and whose opposition with

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[109] See Ivanov & Toporov 1974: 31, 75, etc.

Indra shows in different hymns of the RV[110]). The inverted world tree symbolizes "the other", the inverted world, thus Varuṇa's position holding the bottom of this tree – the tree whose branches grow "downward" – can be an extra indication of him belonging to the netherworld.

As a punisher of wrongdoers, Varuṇa is a judge who determines people' destiny. His undeceivable spies (*spaśaḥ*) search for those who disturb the order and report to Varuṇa; his nooses bind the offenders and strike them with deadly diseases; protecting the order, he causes pain and death. Ultimately, he represents fate and final judgment.

Finally, the following should be added to the list of the time-related motifs in the mythology of Varuṇa: the Year that, as discussed in Chapter 1.2 of this dissertation, represents eternal time that arranges the universe and creates temporality, in RV 10.190 arises from the "foaming ocean" (*samudrā́d arṇavā́d* – RV 10.190.2a), i.e., it originates in the cosmic waters. The ocean/sea is Varuṇa's realm in the later tradition (especially in the epics and purāṇas), however, even in the RV he is closely connected with water[111]: he causes rivers to flow, makes rainy clouds to pour rain, and, significantly, he is linked with the celestial ocean. In RV 8.41.8 Varuṇa is identified with heavenly ocean, he *is* the ocean:

> *sá samudró apīcyàs turó dyā́m iva rohati ní yád āsu yájur dadhé |*
> *sá māyā́ arcínā padā́str̥ṇān nā́kam ā́ruhan nábhantām anyaké same ||*
>
> He [is the] powerful/abundant hidden ocean – [it is] as if [he] ascends to heaven when he has put the *yájus* (sacrificial formula) into them. He scattered magic by [his] ray-foot, he ascended to the sky.
> May all the others be torn apart!

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[110] Kuiper 1979: 56, fn. 183.

[111] For Varuṇa's association with waters in the RV see Lüders 1951-59: vol. 1; for the epics see Kuiper 1979: 77-81.

Thus, it can be said that the Year appearing from the cosmic ocean arises from the realm of Varuṇa. The Year is said to be "putting the days and the nights in order" (*ahorātrā́ṇi vidádhad* – RV 10.190.2c), *vidádhat* being a present active participle form the verbal root *dhā-* prefixed by *vi-* – 'to distribute, arrange, put in order', etc. The same root is the source of the two agent nouns – *dhātr̥* and *vidhātr̥* – denoting the two deities of fate standing near the wheel of the year in the story of Uttaṅka in the Mahābhārata. Derivative forms of this root designate arranging and distributing activities of the undivided time that becomes divided in the process of creation (division of an undivided entity signifies creation). Notably, the same form – *vidádhat* – that describes the acts of the Year in RV 10.190.2c is used in relation to Varuṇa[112]. Although we find this participle in the passages dedicated to both Mitra and Varuṇa, it refers only to *one* of the gods, e.g., in RV 6.62.9ab:

> *yá īṃ rā́jānāv r̥tuthā́ **vidádhad** rájaso mitró váruṇaś cíketat |*

> The one of the two kings – Mitra, Varuṇa – [who] regulates [events] in the proper sequence would observe the sky.

Another place where this participle is used is a wedding hymn RV 10.85.18:

> *pūrvāparáṃ carato māyáyaitaú śíśū krī́ḷantau pári yāto adhvarám |*
> *víśvāny anyó bhúvanābhicáṣṭa r̥túm̐r anyó **vidádhaj** jāyate púnaḥ ||*

> Following one another, these two wander by means of [their] magic power.
> Like two playing children they move [run?] around [the place of] sacrifice.
> One observes all beings, the other, distributing times, is born again [and again].

The stanza preceding the one quoted above (10.85.17) includes a reverence to Sūryā, the daughter of the sun, whose marriage to Soma is the subject of this hymn, and to Mitra and

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[112] Overall, this form is infrequent in the RV and occurs 3 times. Once (RV 10.190.2c), the agent is the Year; in the second case (RV 6.62.9a) it is either Mitra or Varuṇa (although the participle is in singular and therefore refers to only one of them); and in the third case (RV 10.85.18d), in a riddle, there are allusions involving the sun and the moon as well as Mitra and Varuṇa.

Varuṇa; all three are called "mindful of what exists" (*bhūtásya prácetasaḥ*). The verse is clearly a riddle. Having multiple forms in the dual, it can be taken as a continuation of Mitra and Varuṇa's theme, especially because it mentions *māyā́*, the magical power that belongs to the gods and the asuras but is primarily associated with Varuṇa. It is also thematically connected with RV 6.62.9ab: in both stanzas an agent (Mitra or Varuṇa; the sun or the moon) is distributing times/events according to the proper sequence (*r̥tuthā́ vidádhad* vs. *r̥tū́m̐r ... vidádhaj*) as well as observing the sky or beings (*rájaso ... cíketat* vs. *víśvāny ... bhúvanābhicáṣṭa*). As a riddle, this stanza can refer simultaneously to the sun and the moon and to Mitra and Varuṇa, perhaps using and also establishing poetic and mythological connections between the two celestial bodies and the two gods. From the passages analyzed above it can be seen that the activity of distributing/regulating the time-units and establishing sequence of events is performed by the Year, Varuṇa (with Mitra), and by the sun or the moon, both of which, of course, symbolize a solar or a lunar year correspondingly. Additionally, that activity is ascribed to Dhātr̥ and Vidhātr̥, the two deities standing near the wheel of time in the MBh: they represent the organizing power of time and the temporal nature of fate. Varuṇa therefore appears to have functions similar to those of the Year and deities of fate: he is a time distributer and sequence-arranger.

1.3.4. Conclusion

Summarizing the materials considered in this chapter, it could be said that Varuṇa is associated with time in many ways: he is a guardian and observer of *r̥tá* that, as established in Chapters 1.1.–1.2., represents time-eternity. His major regulatory power, *vratá*, as well as his

very name may be derived from an Indo–European root *u̯er-/u̯er-t- that produced a plethora of lexical units with temporal meanings in different languages. Mythology of Varuṇa is filled with time-related motifs: he is explicitly connected with the sun that represents the solar year and is identified with the wheel of ṛtá which is also the wheel of the year; he makes the path for the sun and watches over its movement; his chariot is compared with that of the sun and hence with the chariot of ṛtá. Varuṇa is subtly and implicitly but nevertheless connected with the moon and the lunar year. He "knows" the year and different time units, divides the seasons, days, and nights; he sends the dawns that epitomize the daily passage of time on their path across the sky, establishes the change of day and night, and controls celestial bodies. He prolongs or shortens human lifespan and therefore regulates the personal time; he is the final judge and punisher; he is fate. Being the "herdsman of immortality" (amṛ́ta), Varuṇa guards time-eternity. Just like kāla, time, in the epics, he personifies death and is linked with Yama, the god of death. His realm corresponds to the land of the dead and to the kingdom of the serpents, nāgas, – a place where, according to the MBh, a wheel of time stands. Just like the Year that arises from Varuṇa's cosmic ocean, Varuṇa arranges and distributes events and time-units.

It can be concluded that one of Varuṇa's major mythological functions that could be reconstructed from the traces preserved in the RV is that of a time deity. He controls different aspects of time: undivided time-eternity that permeates and orders the universe, time-temporality containing discrete units, and 'personal time', i.e., lifespan and fate of human beings. Varuṇa's chthonic and death-related features are in full agreement with his functions as a "time lord": in general, time deities and "temporal" folklore characters of the Indo-

European mythological system possess such features and usually are closely connected to death and magic.

As a very complex mythological character, Varuṇa, of course, cannot be reduced to one function, even to as multidimensional as the function of a time lord: not all his characteristics and attributes can be explained within this framework. Besides, some of his features not clearly present in the RV might still be unknown to us and are yet to be revealed by comparative analysis of the Indo-Iranian and Indo-European materials. Nevertheless, I hope this short study helped to shed light upon at least a certain major trait in the mythology of this mysterious and majestic character.

1.4. Time in the Ṛgveda: Conclusion

It can be clearly seen from the materials of the Ṛgveda that the text has no term to define abstract time and consequently we cannot postulate the existence of this concept in the Ṛgvedic worldview. It can nevertheless be said that the Ṛgveda has several proto-notions or preliminary terms that later develop into elaborate ideas and proper concepts. One of these ideas whose germ is found in the Ṛgveda is an idea of the two times, i.e., two kinds of time that are simultaneously distinct and inherently connected. The first type is absolute time-eternity that is not involved with the phenomenal world, although it sets a general pattern that orders all phenomena; and the second type is transitory and observable time-temporality.

The transitory, particular time is represented in the text by multiple specific time-units, however, a general designation for this kind of time is *ṛtú*. *Ṛtú* is specific, particular time that belongs in the human world and is closely associated with sacrifice and the sacrificial

sequence. A deity that is in charge of the profane time in the Ṛgveda is Agni, the god situated at the very center of the Vedic sacrifice and, at the same time, the one who is close to the humans and present in every house during the everyday activities and rituals, a mediator between the gods and the mortals. The second type of time, time-eternity, that establishes the universal order and regulates the ultimate sequence of events, is signified, first of all, by *ṛtá* – Cosmic Order or Truth. Being a cognate of *ṛtú* and stemming from the Indo-European root *ar-*, *ṛtá* in its olden and implicit connotations is definitely time-related. A deity who has the most prominent connection with *ṛtá* and who is in charge of time-eternity is Varuṇa. Unlike Agni, distant from the human world and not quite close to the Vedic sacrifice, a rigorous and unforgiving punisher of the wrongdoers, death personified, Varuṇa enforces the order and supports the universal sequence: the alternation of days and nights, regular arrival of the dawns and the sun, proper course of the rivers, etc.

Time-eternity is also associated with the year and envisioned as an undecaying chariot/wheel of the sun and simultaneously that of *ṛtá*. *Ṛtá*, time-eternity, is immortality as the wheel in the sky, whereas *ṛtú,* temporality, is its reflection on earth, situated in the middle of the wheel-shaped fire altar.

Except for the introduction of an idea of the two times, the Ṛgveda also has the seeds of different other important views on time that become prominent in the later tradition: first of all, it associates time with the sun (to a lesser extent – with the moon) and the movement of the sun. Second, it forms the view that time (described as the year) is the master of the universe who creates it by setting its constituent parts in order and who supports this order by regulating things and events after creation. Finally, a new idea emerges in the later stratum of the Ṛgveda (in the Xth *maṇḍala*): the time-space continuum is described as created from the

sacrificed body of a divine being; time is also portrayed as a means of sacrifice and means of creation.

Finally, it can be said the Ṛgveda being a collection of hymns belonging to the genre of liturgical poetry, does not define concepts or ideas in analytical terms, as a philosophical or scholarly work would. Instead, it uses poetic devices, such as similes and metaphors, as well as a web of subtle "connections" or "identifications" between different objects. It operates on the level of mythological motifs and images but nevertheless gives birth to a series of notions that play a crucial role in the tradition following the Ṛgveda. In other words, in the Ṛgveda we observe these concepts in the making and mythology of time in formation. A proper term *(kāla)* defining abstract time appears in the Atharvaveda, and many of the Ṛgvedic motifs and views become linked with this new designation. The Atharvaveda and then the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads partially preserve and further develop the mythology and perception of time whose origins are in the Ṛgveda. However, as shown in Chapter II, these old Vedic views also receive completely novel interpretations and acquire a variety of new characteristic features.

CHAPTER II

TIME IN THE LATE VEDIC TRADITION

This chapter investigates the views on time in the later Vedic texts, i.e., in those composed after the Ṛgveda. It examines the emergence of the new ideas and transformation of the old ones, reconstructed in Chapter I based on the materials of the Ṛgveda. The corpus of the texts considered in this chapter includes the Atharvaveda, the oldest Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads.

2.1. Time in the Atharvaveda

2.1.1. Kāla in the Atharvaveda

The first significant mention of time *in abstracto* (*kāla*) is found in the Atharvaveda, the youngest of the four Vedas[113] composed during the middle-Vedic period after the appearance of the "black metal", iron, in South Asia, i.e., after 1200/1000 BCE[114]. In the Śaunaka recension of the Atharvaveda (AVŚ) 19.53-54, we find two hymns or rather one extended hymn[115] divided into two parts whose topic is time (*kāla*). This hymn, known as *Kālasūkta* ('the *kāla*/time hymn'), although divided differently, is also included in the Paippalāda edition of the Atharvaveda: part 53.1-6 is found in one manuscript of AVP and

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[113] Being the youngest of the four Vedas, the Atharvaveda is still considered the second oldest Vedic text that, unlike the Sāmaveda and Yajurveda, is principally different from the Ṛgveda.

[114] See Witzel 2001: 6.

[115] See Whitney 1905 (vol. 2): 987.

part 53.7-54.5(-6) in a different one[116]. The hymn is an important milestone in the development of the South Asian understanding of time and deserves to be quoted and translated in full and then analyzed in detail:

AVŚ 19.53

kāló áśvo vahati saptáraśmiḥ sahasrākṣó ajáro bhū́riretāḥ | *tám ā́ rohanti kaváyo vipaścítas tásya cakrā́ bhúvanāni víśvā ||1||*	Time, the steed, drives. [The one with] seven reins[118], a thousand eyes. Unaging, abundant with semen. The inspired poets mount Him. His wheels are all beings (worlds)[119].
saptá cakrā́n vahati kālá eṣá saptā́sya nā́bhīr amŕ̥taṃ nv ákṣaḥ | *sá imā́ víśvā bhúvanāny añjat[117] kāláḥ sá īyate prathamó nú deváḥ ||2||*	This Time drives seven wheels. Seven are his naves. Immortality [*amŕ̥ta*] is His axle. He oils[120] all these beings (worlds). Time, the primary god, advances.
pūrṇáḥ kumbhó 'dhi kālá ā́hitas táṃ vái páśyāmo bahudhā́ nú sántam |	A full jar is placed on Time. What we see is precisely it existing in many forms[121]. It faces all

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[116] Barrett 1926: 34.

[117] *añjat* – in Orlandi 1991: 289. Roth & Whitney 1856: 384 has *arvāṅ* with a variant *anyat* in a footnote. The Paippalāda version in Bhattacharya 1997: 691 has *añjan*; in Barrett 1926: 37 – *añjaṃ*.

[118] *raśmi* – a rein; also a ray or beam of light. In this case probably both meanings are implied.

[119] "all beings (worlds)" – *bhúvanāni víśvā. "Bhúvana"* in the RV typically means "a living being", whereas in the later language the most widespread meaning is "world". In the context of the AV either meaning is possible.

[120] "Oils" – *añjat*, which I take as a participle of the root *añj-:* to smear. I quote the text as in Orlandi 1991: 289 that has an unaccented form. However, a more appropriate variant in this case is an accented one, i.e., *añját,* as one of the variants in Whitney 1905 (vol.2): 987, a Vedic participle listed in Grassmann 1873: 25. It can be taken as a "fixed" Vedic participle in –*at* in atypical Nom. Sg. Masc. Even more appropriately, it should read *añján* in Nom. Sg. Masc., another variant given by Whitney (1905 (vol.2): 987) and also found in the Paippalāda version (see fn. 4 above). Sāyaṇa glosses *añjat* as *añjan* (Sāyaṇa 1895-1898, vol. 4: 507). Overall, the form seems to be problematic. Both variants in Roth & Whitney 1856: 384 (their emendation *arvāṅ* and an alternative reading *anyat*) are syntactically unsatisfactory and do not allow a coherent translation of the verse.

[121] "in many forms" – *bahudhā́,* lit., "manyfoldly".

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sá imā́ víśvā bhúvanāni pratyáṅ kāláṃ tám āhúḥ paramé vyòman ||3||

these beings (worlds); it is called time-in-the-highest-heaven.

sá evá sáṃ bhúvanāny ā́bharat sá evá sáṃ bhúvanāni páry ait |
pitā́ sánn abhavat putrá eṣāṃ tásmād vái nā́nyát páram asti téjaḥ ||4||

This is He who arranged the beings/worlds. This is He who went around/encompassed the beings/worlds. Being [their] father, he became their son. There is no power (*tejas*) higher than Him.

kāló 'mū́ṃ dívam ajanayat kālá imā́ḥ pṛthivī́r utá |
kālé ha bhūtáṃ bhávyaṃ ceṣitáṃ ha ví tiṣṭhate ||5||

Time produced this sky and also these earths. Whatever was and whatever will be, being driven [by Time], stand apart in Time.

kāló bhūtím asṛjata kālé tápati sū́ryaḥ |
kālé ha víśvā bhūtā́ni kālé cákṣur ví paśyati ||6||

Time created the earth. In Time the sun burns. In Time all the beings [are]. In Time the eye appears-looks everywhere.

kālé mánaḥ kālé prāṇáḥ kālé nā́ma samā́hitam |
kāléna sárvā nandanty ā́gatena prajā́ imā́ḥ ||7||

In Time the mind [is]. In Time the breath [is]. In Time the name [is] composed. When Time came, all these creatures rejoiced.

kālé tápaḥ kālé jyéṣṭham kālé bráhma samā́hitam |
kāló ha sárvasyeśváró yáḥ pitā́sīt prajā́pateḥ ||8||

In Time the fervor (*tapas*) [is].
In Time the greatest [is]. In Time Brahman [is] concentrated. Time who was Prajapati's father is indeed the lord of all.

téneṣitáṃ téna jātáṃ tád u tásmin prátiṣṭhitam |
kāló ha bráhma bhūtvā́ bíbharti parameṣṭhínam ||9||

Moved by Him, born by Him – it is truly established in Him. Having become Brahman, Time indeed upholds the highest lord.

kāláḥ prajā́ asṛjata kāló ágre prajā́patim |
svayaṃbhū́ḥ kaśyápaḥ kālā́t tápaḥ kālā́d ajāyata ||10||

Time created the creatures; Time [caused] Prajapati in the beginning. The self-existent Kaśyapa [is] from Time; the fervor (*tapas*) is born from Time.

AVŚ 19.54

kālā́d ā́paḥ sám abhavan
kālā́d bráhma tápo díśaḥ |
kālénód eti sū́ryaḥ
kālé ní viśate púnaḥ ||1||

From Time the waters emerged. From Time the Brahman, the fervor (*tapas*) [, and] directions [came]. By Time the sun rises. In Time it sets down again.

kāléna vā́taḥ pavate kāléna pṛthivī́ mahī́ |

By Time the wind blows. By Time the great earth

dyáur mahī́ kālá ā́hitā ||2||

[is]. The great sky [is] established in Time.

kāló ha bhūtáṃ bhávyaṃ ca putró ajanayat purā́ |
kālā́d ṛ́caḥ sám abhavan yájuḥ kālā́d ajāyata ||3||

Time, [their] son, begot the past and the future in the beginning. From Time the hymns (ṛc) are born. From Time the sacrificial formula is born.

kāló yajñáṃ sám airayad devébhyo bhāgám ákṣitam |
kālé gandharvāpsarásaḥ kālé lokā́ḥ prátiṣṭhitāḥ ||4|

Time created the sacrifice [and] the undecaying share of the gods. In Time the gandharvas and the apsaras are. In Time the worlds are established.

kālé 'yám áṅgirā devó 'tharvā cā́dhi tiṣṭhataḥ |
imáṃ ca lokám paramáṃ ca lokáṃ púṇyāṃś ca lokā́n vídhṛtīś ca púṇyāḥ |
sárvāṃl lokā́n abhijítya bráhmaṇā kāláḥ sá īyate paramó nú deváḥ ||5||

In Time this divine Aṅgiras and Atharvan are established above.
This world, and the highest world, and auspicious worlds, and auspicious regions – having conquered all the worlds by the Brahman, Time, the primary god, advances.

The quoted hymn is an early example of theological monism: time is represented as the highest ("primary" or "the first" – *parama*) god-creator and "the lord of all" whose power extends over everything that exists. It indeed appears to be one hymn divided into two parts rather than two different hymns: AVŚ 19.54 clearly is a continuation of AVŚ 19.53 that develops the same mythological motifs and employs the same style as AVŚ 19.53. A different division of the hymn in the AVP (part 53.1-6 as one hymn and part 53.7-54.5(-6) as another one) additionally confirms that parts 19.53 and 19.54 are unlikely to be two full separate hymns. L. Barrett (1926) in his edition of AVP includes both parts as one hymn – AVP 12.2.[122] Bhattacarya's edition of AVP, however, repeats the structure of AVŚ: it has AVŚ 19.53 as AVP 11.8 and AVŚ 19.54 as AVP 11.9.[123] Also, AVŚ 19.54 ends with the same refrain as AVŚ 19.53.2: *kāláḥ sá īyate paramó nú deváḥ* – 'Time, the primary god, advances'

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[122] Barrett 1926: 37-39.

[123] Bhattacharya 1997: 691-694.

thus concluding the composition with the formula found in its opening. The final verse (or a combination of two verses) of the hymn, AVŚ 19.54.5(-6), that mentions "standing/established above" Aṅgiras and Atharvan – the two legendary priestly clans traditionally assumed to be the creators of the AV, or rather the two types of the Atharvavedic hymns or "fire charms", as put by M. Bloomfield[124], – serves as a conclusion for the whole (combined) hymn. The hymn uses multiple poetic devices typical of the style of the praise-hymns of the Ṛgveda (and less typical for the Atharvaveda), such as alliterations, repetition, and play on the sounds of the divine name (*kāla*). Almost all the forms of the Masc. Sg. paradigm of the word *kāla* are listed (Nom., Acc., Instr., Abl., and Loc.), which creates an effect of omnipresence and multifunctionality of the divine being and of the name that denotes it.

The hymn clearly describes cosmogony. It states that time "arranges" or "brings together" and "goes around" or "encompasses" all beings or worlds; creates the earth (or "the earths", referring to multiple, most likely three, worlds), the sky, the waters (*āpaḥ* in the verse might signify the primordial waters that exist before the creation of the earth), space quarters/directions, as well as the living beings ("the creatures" – *prajāḥ*). Therefore, time is seen as responsible for the creation of the *topos* – space, physical world, including the inhabited space where "the creatures" dwell. Time, significantly, is also said to be the cause of the past ("whatever was" – *bhūtám*) and the future ("whatever will be" – *bhávyam*), which indicates that states-in-time are seen as produced by a unifying power called *kāla* – generalized and abstract time. This power sets the world in motion by creating the sequence of events (alternation of the past and the future) "in the beginning" (*purā*). The past and the

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[124] Bloomfield 1899: 1.

future are also said to be "driven" (*iṣitá*) by time; each of the two "stands apart" (*ví tiṣṭhate*), therefore the past and the future are presented as distinct and separate states but they are still united in time (*kālé*) – *kālé ha bhūtáṃ bhávyaṃ ceṣitáṃ ha ví tiṣṭhate.* Time simultaneously divides various states and units and unites them. Overall, time's activity produces the whole time-space continuum, the *chronotope*. Having created the universe, time initiates and supports its function by establishing a sequence of natural phenomena: "by Time the sun rises; in Time it sets down again... by Time the wind blows... in Time the worlds are established". It also creates all the crucial activities and fundamental elements that are necessary for the universe to function properly, such as the sacrifice (*yajña*), Vedic hymns (*ṛc*) and sacrificial formulas (*yajus*), the fervor (*tapas*, which can be understood as a combination of energy, power, and heat associated with and accumulated by austerity) and "the undecaying share of the gods", i.e., the gods' share in the sacrifice that sustains their immortality. If my understanding of the form *añjat* is correct[125], time "oils all these beings (worlds)". The beings or worlds are said to be the wheels of its chariot, i.e., time literally greases the wheels to ensure that the chariot runs smoothly, and thus the proper order of the universe is maintained. Time is identified with *tejas* ("there is no power (*tejas*) higher than Him") – fiery vital energy or power that can be both creative and destructive and in the later texts, especially in the epics, is closely associated with virility and majesty. Virility as ability to create is also emphasized by the epithet *bhū́riretāḥ* – "abundant with semen". Significantly, the steed of time is described by an epithet "a thousand-eyed" (*sahasrākṣa*). This epithet is used in the RV four times in the first and tenth *maṇḍala*s, i.e., the two latest books of the RV lexically and stylistically closer to the AV then the other eight *maṇḍala*s, and whose

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[125] For an explanation see fn. 120.

fragments are included in different parts of the AV. The epithet most famously refers to Puruṣa in the Puruṣasūkta (RV 10.90). The other cases are used in reference to Indra and Vāyu in RV 1.23.3 and Agni in RV 1.79.12. The fourth case is found in RV 10.161.3[126] in a hymn-incantation against the *yakṣma* disease[127] and describes an oblation. This example shows a curious connection between the epithet and time-periods:

> *sahasrākṣéṇa śatáśāradena śatā́yuṣā haviṣā́hārṣam enam |*
> *śatáṃ yáthemáṃ śarádo náyātī́ndro viśvasya duritásya pārám ||*

> By a thousand-eyed oblation that [bestows] a hundred of autumns [and] a lifespan of a hundred [years][128] I delivered him, so that Indra would lead him through a hundred autumns to the [farthest] shore of all danger.

From this stanza it can be seen that "a thousand-eyed" oblation is somehow connected with "a hundred of autumns". It can cure the disease in question and bestow a full lifespan, i.e., that of one hundred years. It is therefore an oblation that is linked to the objective time and influences the personal time by prolonging a human life.

A similar *bahuvrīhi* epithet with the same meaning (*sahásracakṣas* – 'having a thousand eyes') is used to describe Varuṇa in RV 7.34.10 and Soma or a drop of Soma in RV 9.60.1,2 and 9.65.7. In the Atharvaveda both epithets are found in less than 20 cases in sum, mostly to describe inanimate or abstract things, such as "evil" (AVŚ 6.26.3), curse (AVŚ 6.37.1), net (*ákṣu*; AVŚ 9.3.8), an amulet (AVŚ 10.3.3), a magical herb (AVŚ 4.20.5), and *jaṅgiḍa* plant (AVŚ 19.35.3). The only three cases in the Atharvaveda when a deity is defined

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[126] A lengthier alternate version of this hymn is found in AVŚ 3.11. The quoted stanza is repeated with some minor modifications in AVŚ 3.11.3 and AVŚ 20.96.8.

[127] *yakṣma* – a disease of unknown etiology. Sometimes described as a pulmonary disease or the one that can affect different body parts (eyes, limbs, etc.); possibly tuberculosis.

[128] Alternatively: "a hundred lifespans."

by a word *sahasrākṣa* are an unnamed god in AVŚ 4.20.4, Rudra in AVŚ 11.2.3,7,17, and spies of Varuṇa in AVŚ 4.16.4:

> *utá yó dyā́m atisárpāt parástān ná sá mucyātai váruṇasya rā́jñaḥ |*
> *divá spáśaḥ prá carantīdám asya sahasrākṣā́ áti paśyanti bhū́mim ||*

> Even the one who would crawl far beyond the sky – he won't be released from king Varuṇa. His spies proceed there from the sky. Thousand-eyed, they observe the earth.

Overall, the state of having a thousand eyes definitely signifies the ability to perceive and control everything, i.e., omniscience. Most of the deities defined by this epithet in the RV and AV are somehow associated with time, i.e., Varuṇa, Agni, and Soma; Vāyu as a death-related deity, and later Rudra/Śiva whose connections with time become very prominent in the later tradition. In the epics and especially in the Purāṇas the epithet mostly designates Indra. The fact that this epithet is used to describe Kāla in the AV most likely hints at the mythological relationship between the steed of time and Puruṣa: both are the source of creation that produces time-space continuum; both are all-encompassing and all-perceiving. The connection between the steed of time and Puruṣa who is an oblation in the sacrifice that produces the universe also highlights a different connection: that of the steed of time and a sacrificial horse of the *aśvamedha* ritual. Like Puruṣa, the steed of time is an oblation; it *is* the sacrificial horse.

The first two stanzas of the hymn exhibit multiple parallels with RV 1.164 (the *"asyá vāmásya"* hymn) discussed in Chapter I (1.2.1) of this dissertation. In the considered stanzas of the AVŚ 19.53, time is called *áśva*, a steed or a horse that has seven reins (*raśmí*) and drives a chariot (there is no word "chariot" in the text, however, it is implied) with seven wheels (*cakrá*) and seven naves (*nā́bhī*). The horse is "unaging" or "undecaying" (*ajára*). The

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inspired poets (*kaví*) mount this horse or the chariot that the horse carries; the wheels of the chariot are "all beings" (AVŚ 19.53.1b: *tásya cakrá bhúvanāni víśvā*). Comparably, in RV 1.164, the chariot that represents the sun, the sacrifice, the year, and *r̥tá*, the Cosmic Order, is described as either one-wheeled or seven-wheeled. It is said to be drawn by "one horse with seven names" (RV 1.164.2b: *éko áśvo vahati saptánāmā* – 'One horse with seven names draws [it]'). This chariot is mounted by "the seven" who harness it and by the "seven sisters". All beings stand on the chariot's wheel (RV 1.164.2d: *yátremá víśvā bhúvanádhi tasthúḥ* – '[the wheel] where all these beings stand') that is called "undecaying" (*ajára*) and "unobstructable" (*anarvá*). Juxtaposing the two hymns, it can be seen that in both cases similar mythological and poetic imagery is used. Time is imagined as a horse or a chariot drawn by a horse as well as a wheel of this chariot. The wheel and the chariot in the RV 1.164 are described as an undivided whole: the wheel's characteristics are transferred on the chariot; therefore both represent the same idea. Similarly, in AVŚ 19.53-54 it can be observed that multiple epithets are transferred from the horse on the chariot and vice versa, which shows that time in this hymn is symbolized by a singular complex of the horse and the chariot. One of the parallel features of the two hymns is that multiple things are described as being "seven": in the AVŚ the horse has seven reins; the chariot has seven wheels and seven naves. In the RV the seven harness the chariot and stand upon it; just like in the AVŚ, the chariot is said to have seven wheels; the horse that draws the chariot has seven names (RV 1.164.2b) or, as stated in RV 1.164.3d, the chariot is drawn by seven horses. Additionally, "the seven names of the cows" are mentioned.

According to Sāyaṇa's commentary to the AVŚ, the seven reins are tied to the mouth, neck, and legs of the horse (*raśmayaḥ rajjavo mukhagrīvāpādavabaddhā[ḥ]* – 'Reins are

ropes tied to the mouth, neck, and legs'[129]). Sāyaṇa explains that they represent the six

seasons (two months each) plus the thirteenth month, i.e., an additional lunar month of the

bissextile year (*saptaraśmiḥ | raśmiśabdena ṛtava ucyante | saptartuḥ ekaika*

ṛturmāsadvayātmakaḥ saptamastu trayodaśa māsaḥ | – '"[The one with] seven reins": by the

word rein[s] the seasons are denoted. Seven seasons [are] each season containing two months

and the seventh, [that is] the thirteenth month'[130]). Sāyaṇa gives the same explanation for "the

seven" who harness the one-wheeled chariot in RV 1.164.2a, stating that they are the seasons

and an additional month (*sapta yuñjanti ... athavā māsadvayātmakāḥ ṣaḍ[131] aparaḥ*

adhikamāsātmakaḥ ityevaṃ saptartavo yuñjanti – '"The seven harness"… rather – the six

containing two months [and the one] containing an intercalated month that follows [them],

therefore [it is] the seven seasons [that] harness'[132]). This interpretation is plausible in the

time/year-related context, however, "seven reins" in the RV can be associated with a different

meaning clearly related to the sacrifice. An interesting example is found in RV 2.5.2:

> *ā́ yásmin saptá raśmáyas tatā́ yajñásya netári |*
> *manuṣvád daívyam aṣṭamám pótā víśvaṃ tád invati ||*

> He who the seven reins are stretched out to, the leader of the sacrifice, Potar
> (the purifier), like Manu [drives] the heavenly eighth, drives it all.

The quoted verse is from a hymn dedicated to Agni where he is praised as the ultimate priest

and the leader of the sacrifice. The hymn enumerates seven priests of the Vedic sacrifice

(Hotar, Potar, Brahman, Praśāstar, Neṣṭar, Adhvaryu, and Ṛtvij), and in each stanza Agni

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[129] Sāyaṇa 1895-1898, vol. 4: 505.

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] The text in Sāyaṇa 1935-1959, Vol.1: 979 is unclear; it appears to read *ṣaṭ,* not *ṣaḍ.*

[132] Sāyaṇa 1935-1959, Vol.1: 979.

changes his priestly identity assuming one by one the ritual roles of the seven priests. The sacrifice performed by the seven priests in the stanza above is imagined as a chariot drawn by "the seven reins" that are stretched out to the leader, thus, the seven reins in this case are likely to signify the seven priests. "The leader" is identified with Agni, therefore it is implied that Agni is a horse pulling the seven-reined chariot of the sacrifice, each rein being one of the seven priests. Agni is likened to Manu who "[drives] the heavenly eighth". "The eighth" can signify a rein that Manu holds, as suggested by the translation of T.Ya. Elizarenkova (following Renou)[133], or might represent the patron of the sacrifice who goes to heaven and attains sovereignty, "drives it all". If Agni himself is "the eighth" as well as Manu, then he is seen as the eighth heavenly priest who regulates the sacrifice. However, it is clear that in this passage the reins (seven plus the heavenly one) hardly represent the seasons.

There are several other cases in the RV when the seven reins are mentioned. In RV 1.105.9 (the "Trita in the well" hymn) the seven reins or rays of light are seen in heaven by Trita who sits in a well:

> *amī́ yé saptá raśmáyas tátrā me nā́bhir ā́tatā |*
> *tritás tád vedāptiyáḥ sa jāmitvā́ya rebhati vittám me asyá rodasī ||*
>
> There [are] the seven reins (=rays) – to there my ancestry (=umbilical cord) is stretched. Trita Āptya knows that. He raises voice for the kinship. Attend to my [speech], o Heaven and Earth!

In this case the seven reins that that appear "there", i.e., in the sky, can be interpreted as the seven seers (*saptarṣi*) constellation – the seven bright stars of the Big Dipper, an asterism within the *Ursa Major* constellation. Trita's "ancestry" or rather his umbilical cord (the text has *nā́bhi*, lit. "navel") stretches to the seven seers, which shows Trita's priestly lineage and

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[133] See Elizarenkova 1989: 242.

his status as a Vedic poet. The seven seers are understood as the forefathers of the Vedic poets-seers, the *ŕ̥ṣi*s,[134] and likely as a "divine prototype" for the seven priests of the Vedic sacrifice.

In the other cases in the RV where the syntagm *saptá raśmáyaḥ,* 'seven reins' or 'seven rays of light' is used it can refer to the seven priests or seven seers or can signify the seven rays of the sun, like in RV 8.72.16c: *sū́ryasya saptá raśmíbhiḥ* – 'with the seven rays of the sun'. The seven rays of the sun are also said to be the seven horses of Sūrya, the sun-god, or can be understood as seven reins of the sun-chariot. In other words, we have a net of multiple mythological and poetic associations that are used simultaneously: the chariot in the sky is the sun that has seven horses that are also the rays of the sunlight. At the same time, the chariot represents the sacrifice driven by the seven reins, i.e., led by the seven priests. All these connotations are definitely present in the description of the chariot in RV 1.164: the chariot represents the sun that has seven rays-horses; moreover, it symbolizes the sacrifice "mounted" by the seven, i.e., performed by the seven priests. We also know, as discussed at length in Chapter I, that it is a chariot and the wheel of the year and that of *ŕ̥tá,* therefore the seven wheels, horses, etc., can additionally have temporal connotations suggested by Sāyaṇa: six seasons and an extra lunar month, although such meanings cannot be confirmed from the materials of the RV. A similar complex net of associations is likely to be present in AVŚ 19.53-54: the steed "with the seven reins", as stated in the hymn, is time. However, judging by the imagery used in the hymn, it is also the sun with seven reins/rays of light as well as the sacrifice with the seven priests and Agni (celestial fire that has seven tongues) as a horse

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[134] In RV 4.42.8ab a poet speaks of "our forefathers, the seven seers" – *asmā́kam ... pitáras ... saptá ŕ̥ṣayo*.

pulling the chariot. The chariot is mounted by the "inspired poets", consequently, the seven

reins can also signify the seven poetic meters: the means by which the poets control and

construct reality; the "reins" by which they "drive" the universe, time, the sun, and sacrifice.

This kind of polysemy – a typical feature of the Vedic poetic style – is employed to

emphasize the importance and universality of the praised deity (time in this case). It also

results in producing comprehensive symbols that contain clusters of mythological motifs

associated with a particular character. The very words "time the steed" immediately generate

a plethora of associations: time is seen as connected with the sun and fire, the year and *ṛtá*

from RV 1.164, the sacrifice, sacred poetry, and, of course, with the sacrificial horse. Time

therefore is depicted as a cosmic deity deeply rooted in the Vedic tradition.

Returning to the parallels between the RV 1.164 and AVŚ 19.53-54, both the steed of

time and the wheel/chariot of the year are called "undecaying" or "unaging" (*ajára*). Time's

axle in the AVŚ is said to be immortality (*amṛta*). Thus, both mythological symbols (the

steed/chariot of time and the wheel/chariot of the year) are poetically linked to immortality

that is also eternity, time beyond time. Both symbols also comprise "specific time" – by

association with specific time units and states in time (past, present, and future) in RV 1.164

(see chapter I for details), and by connection with the events and beings of the phenomenal

world as well as with the states in time (past and present) in AVŚ 19.53-54.

Remarkably, AVŚ 19.53-54 has a rather explicit suggestion of time's two forms. The

first form – can be construed as transitory cyclic time, i.e., "temporality" that is actively

involved with the activities of the universe. It encompasses or goes around the worlds or

beings (AV 19.53.4b: *sá evá sáṃ bhúvanāni páry ait* – 'This is He (Time) who went around

the beings/worlds'). Then, the second kind of time is time-eternity, the undivided and static

absolute time beyond the created world, as described in AV 19.53.3: "A full jar is placed on Time. What we see is precisely it existing in many forms. It faces all these beings (worlds); it is called time-in-the-highest-heaven"[135]. The epitome of time-eternity in this stanza is the enigmatic "full jar". The previous stanza of the hymn stating that "immortality [*amṛta*] is His axle" suggests that this jar is filled with *amṛta*, the drink/liquid of immortality. The jar is "placed on Time", therefore it is something higher than time, something from the upper sphere. The stanza directly states that although it is higher than time and "placed" on it, it is nevertheless time in a different form, "time-in-the-highest-heaven". The upper part of heaven is the location of the moon, cf. RV 1.164.12ab, *páñcapādam pitáraṃ dvádaśākṛtiṃ divá āhuḥ páre árdhe purīṣíṇam |* – 'They talk about the father [who has] five feet and twelve forms, the one that extends over the upper half of heaven.' By the time of the Atharvaveda, Soma starts being identified with the moon, i.e., AV 11.6.7cd: *sómo mā devó muñcatu yám āhúś candrámā íti ||* – 'May Soma, the god, release me – the one whom they call the moon'. The moon therefore is understood as a receptacle of soma – the drink of the gods that, just like *amṛta,* is associated with immortality. Thus, it is very likely that the full jar situated in the upper heaven indeed contains *amṛta* – immortality that in the post-Vedic tradition completely substitutes soma as a drink/food of the gods. The full jar that contains immortality represents time-eternity. The jar is described as "full" (*pūrṇa*), which can mean two things: first, it can be interpreted as "filled with"; second, it can mean "complete" or "whole". Likely, in the hymn in question both meanings are implied simultaneously, therefore the jar

1) is filled with immortality and thus represents eternity;

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[135] *pūrṇáḥ kumbhó 'dhi kālá áhitas táṃ vái páśyāmo bahudhá nú sántam |*
sá imá víśvā bhúvanāni pratyáṅ kāláṃ tám āhúḥ paramé vyòman ||3||

2) is full or whole, i.e., undivided.

The state of being undivided in the late- and post-Vedic tradition is usually associated with absolute or primordial entity before creation, whereas the act of division is understood as an act of creation. Whatever is divided belongs in the phenomenal world that changes; anything undivided and indivisible exists in the unchangeable eternity. The idea that division of the unity represents creation has its roots in the Vedic mythology and likely originates in the Indo-European or even Laurasian antiquity.[136] The most known examples from the RV are the creation of the universe, time units, space, divine beings, and social classes from the divided body of the cosmic giant Puruṣa; creation out of a singular primordial entity called "That One" (*tad ekam*) in RV 10.129; as well as the myth of the Golden Embryo (*hiraṇyagarbha*) in RV 10.121 that is described as the only existent thing in the universe that produced all the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. Thus, singularity is a primordial state, whereas multiplicity is a state after creation. The Upaniṣads develop this idea into the notion of the *niṣkala brahman*, the Absolute without parts, contrasting it with the *sakala brahman*, the Absolute with parts, i.e., the Absolute revealed in the created universe and embodied by all the variety of the created forms.

What we see in the analyzed hymn of the Atharvaveda, is that time is clearly presented in two forms: the first form is signified by "a full jar" of *amṛta* that is "placed on Time", so it is beyond time and higher than (empirical) time. It is, nevertheless, time, as explicitly stated in

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[136] There are multiple Indo-European myths about the partition of the body of a cosmic giant (Germanic Ymir, Vedic Puruṣa, Adam in the Slavic "Book of the Dove", etc.), division of a primordial egg, and other myths of similar nature. Non-Indo-European myths of the cosmic giant include a Chinese version about Pangu, a Mesopotamian version where humans are created from the blood of Kingu, one of the gods, etc. For discussion, see Witzel 2013: 117-128.

the hymn: "it is called time-in-the-highest-heaven". It also "faces all these beings (worlds)", i.e., it is not a part of the phenomenal world but still is somehow involved with it, "faces" or is turned towards it (*pratyáñc* in the text). This form of time is undivided ("full"), hence, given the cosmogonic context of the hymn, represents Absolute before and beyond creation. It is "in the highest heaven", which is not just the location of the moon, as discussed above, but also the place of the cosmic waters – primordial ocean from where arises the year in RV 10.190. It is a receptacle of *amṛta,* immortality, – a substance that the epic and purāṇic tradition strongly connects with the cosmic ocean. In other words, the stanza describes time-eternity – singular and therefore not divided into time-units, not involved with the activities of the world. Importantly, the following is said about this time-eternity: "what we see is precisely it existing in many forms". This phrase brings the two types of time together: what "we", i.e., people, can see, of course, belongs to the phenomenal world. Undivided and unattainable time-eternity from "the highest heaven" is presented as divided – "manyfoldly", "in many forms" – in the world as it appears to human beings. This world is a domain of another form of time: the one that "went around the beings/worlds", the empirical one, active and divided into units and therefore able to be seen "in many forms". Remarkably, this verse has almost a Kantian dichotomy of the noumenal and phenomenal and may be considered an example of pre-philosophical way of thinking expressed by poetic and mythological means.

Another interesting feature of this part of the hymn is that some mythological motifs used here in relation to time are connected with the Indo-European mythologem of the World Tree. The hymn depicts, among other things, an axle (said to be "immortality") on which the wheel is put on. It also describes a full containing, as shown above, *amṛta*, on top of the world, in "the highest heaven". The Cosmic Tree, as envisioned in various Indo-European

cultures, is the world's axis that has a drink or source of immortality and life on top. As summarized by Ya. Vassilkov, "this drink of life may be represented by honey (mead), by a fruit (sometimes - fruits, as, e. g. "the golden apples of Idun" in Northern mythology) or a berry; often it is associated with the image of a bird which pecks the fruit or steals it."[137] Vassilkov (1995) emphasizes that the cosmic tree represented in different calendar festivals of the Indo-European peoples (i.e., the "May-tree" in Europe) in many cases was "a pole… with a wheel or wreath hanging in a horizontal position close to the top; and the whole construction… usually crowned with some symbols of life and rejuvenation: a vessel, a basket with fruit and so on."[138] This structure of the world tree (axis – wheel close to the top – drink of life on top) reproduced in the rituals is also confirmed by mythology. For example, in a myth found in the Mahābhārata (MBh 1.29.1-10), Garuḍa, the king of birds, steals the *amṛta* "guarded by the revolving metal wheel, from its receptacle at the top of the world."[139] In the considered hymn of the Atharvaveda, the same structure can be observed: there is an axis ("axle") that holds a wheel; the whole construct is crowned by a vessel containing *amṛta,* the source of immortality. Time here is depicted *as* the world tree, and just like the world tree it arranges and represents the whole universe.

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[137] Vassilkov 1995: 261.

[138] *Ibid.*

[139] *Ibid*.: 262.

2.1.2. The Year and Other Time Units in the Atharvaveda

In addition to introducing time *in abstracto*, the Atharvaveda contains a number of hymns and

incantations where the year and different other time units are mentioned. Generally, the year

in the AV is treated similarly to what is observed in the Ṛgveda, however, any explicit

indications that the year represents time-eternity and primordial power that "governs" all

other time-units disappear – only to appear later, in the Upaniṣads, in a modified form. Most

frequently the Atharvaveda mentions the year as well as seasons, months, days, etc., simply as

specific time units, often in a ritual context. The word *ṛtú* denoting "specific time" in the RV,

in the AV mostly means a season and can be mentioned among the other time units.

There is, however, an occasion when the year has a special place: in AVŚ 3.10.8-10 it

is said to be the husband of *ekāṣṭakā* – the eighth day after the full moon:

> *ā́yám agant saṃvatsaráḥ pátir ekāṣṭake táva |*
> *sā́ na ā́yuṣmatīṃ prajā́ṃ rāyás póṣeṇa sáṃ sṛja ||8||*
> *ṛtū́n yaja ṛtupátīn ārtavā́n utá hāyanā́n |*
> *sámāḥ saṃvatsarā́n mā́sān bhūtásya pátaye yaje ||9||*
> *ṛtúbhyaṣ ṭvārtavébhyo mā́dbhyáḥ saṃvatsarébhyaḥ |*
> *dhātré vidhātré samṛ́dhe bhūtásya pátaye yaje ||10||*
>
> Here came the year, your husband, o *Ekāṣṭakā!* Unite our healthy [and long-living] progeny with abundance of wealth!
> I sacrifice to the seasons, to the lords of the seasons, parts of the seasons, and to the [passing] years, halves of the years, the years, the months. I sacrifice to the lord of the world.
> To you – for the seasons, for the parts of the seasons, for the months, for the years, for Dhātṛ (the Arranger), Vidhātṛ (the Distributer), [and] the Bestower. I sacrifice to the lord of the world.

All the time units and "the lords of the seasons" (who probably are Dhātṛ (the Arranger),

Vidhātṛ (the Distributer), and the Bestower enumerated in the last verse of this excerpt) in this

hymn are the addressees of the sacrifice. The year clearly is the main time unit in this list

because it is called the husband of the primary addressee of this hymn, *ekāṣṭakā*. According to J. Gonda, this relationship between the year and *ekāṣṭakā* can be explained by the fact that *ekāṣṭakā* is a New Year's Day.[140] In the same hymn-incantation (AVŚ 3.10.3a) the night (*rātrī*) is called a reflection or likeness of the year (*saṃvatsara*): *saṃvatsarásya pratimā́ṃ yā́ṃ tvā rā́try upā́smahe |* – 'You, o Night, whom we revere as a likeness of the year' (remarkably, W. Whitney translates *pratimā́* as "model"[141], and T.Ya. Elizarenkova as "prototype"[142] reversing the meaning of the sentence), therefore the year is seen as a paradigm for other time units; cf. AVŚ 14.1.4d: *sámānāṃ mā́sa ā́kṛtiḥ* – 'the month [has] the form of the years (*sámā*)[143]'. The night in this case is likely to be the night of the *ekāṣṭakā* ritual, so it has the same special relationship with the year as the *ekāṣṭakā* itself has. On the other hand, it can be said that the year is represented in this excerpt as a unit like any other because it is enumerated in the list along with all the other time units. It also follows from the hymn that the view that time is connected with Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, the two deities of fate, survives and develops in the AV. It is, however, unclear what the role of the third deity, the Bestower, is.

There are different fragments of the AV where the year and its parts are invoked to enchant a protective amulet, e.g., AVŚ 5.28.13:

> *ṛtúbhiṣ ṭvārtaváir ā́yuṣe várcase tvā |*
> *saṃvatsarásya téjasā téna sáṃhanu kṛṇmasi ||*

> You – by the seasons, by the parts of the seasons; for the [full] age,
> for the vital power; by the fiery energy (*tejas*) of the year – by that we

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[140] Gonda 1984: 41.

[141] Whitney 1905:100.

[142] *"Прообраз"* in Russian. Elizarenkova 2005, Vol.1: 147.

[143] *sámā* can also mean "a half of the year" but it is unlikely in this context.

make you close [your] jaws.

The year is endowed with fiery energy or luster (*tejas*) that transfers the magic of an incantation to the amulet or, as in AVŚ 3.5.8cd, "binds" the amulet: *saṃvatsarásya téjasā téna badhnāmi tvā maṇe* – 'By the fiery energy (*tejas*) of the year I bind you, o amulet!' Not only the year binds the amulet with its energy but also this energy is said to be protective on its own, which can be seen in AVŚ 10.6.18:

> *r̥távas tám abadhnatārtavȧ́s tám abadhnata |*
> *saṃvatsarás tám̐ baddhvȧ́ sárvam̐ bhūtám̐ ví rakṣati ||*

> Seasons bound it. Parts of the year bound it. Having bound it,
> the year protects all that exists.

Protective power of the year or rather that of empirical time can be observed in AVŚ 11.6.17:

> *r̥tū́n brūma r̥tupátīn ārtavȧ́n utá hāyanȧ́n |*
> *sámāḥ saṃvatsarȧ́n mȧ́sām̐s té no muñcantv ámhasaḥ ||*

> We call upon the seasons, the lords of the seasons, parts of the seasons, and the
> [passing] years, halves of the years, the years, the months – may they release
> us from calamity!

Noticeably, the first three padas of the verse contain a standard formula present in full in AVŚ 3.10.8 or in parts in various other hymns. This formula is an enumeration of different time units that can be followed by a variety of other formulas containing specific requests or incantations. In AVŚ 11.6.17d the request is to be released from calamity or distress, *ámhas,* that is a Vedic term for a narrow and dangerous way or a gap associated, first of all, with the path to the world of the dead. The year and empirical time (temporality) therefore are seen as having implicit connection with death and can serve as protection against death and danger.

There are indications that a system later formulated in the Jyotiṣa (i.e., a combination of astronomy and astrology) that includes a series of five year cycles and has five kinds of

years *(samvatsra, id-* or *idāvatsara, parivatsara, anuvatsara,* and *vatsara)* starts developing in the Atharvaveda. AVŚ 6.55.3 lists three types of the year: *idāvatsarā́ya parivatsarā́ya saṃvatsarā́ya kṛṇutā bṛhán námaḥ |* – 'Pay great reverence to the current (*idā-*) year, the whole *(pari-)* year [and] the full (*sam-*) year'. It is unclear what the function of every kind of the year was, however, the three types differ from each other and obviously are a part of one system.

Additionally, the Atharvaveda retains the notion of the wheel of the year. Partial descriptions of this wheel are found in the AV multiple times. These descriptions are not very detailed and contain many "standard" elements similar to those found in the RV, as, for example, in AVŚ 4.35.4, a hymn dedicated to *odana,* special mash or porridge made of grain or boiled rice:

> *yásmān mā́sā nírmitās triṃśádarāḥ saṃvatsaró yásmān nírmito dvā́daśāraḥ |*
> *ahorātrā́ yáṃ pariyánto nā́pús ténaudanénā́ti tarāṇi mṛtyúm ||*

> Of which the thirty-spoked months were made, of which the twelve-spoked year was made – the one that the circling days and nights couldn't obtain – by that *odana* may I overcome death!

Here a day and a month are associated with *ara*, a spoke of the wheel of the year, therefore the months are described as the thirty-spoked and the year as a twelve-spoked wheel. The concept of the wheel of the year/time is clearly well-established in the AV: nothing requires elaboration, two small hints are enough for those involved in the ritual to understand what is meant. A description of not just the year or time but of the whole time-space continuum as a divine chariot is found in AVŚ 8.8. 22-23:

> *díśaś cátasro 'śvataryò devarathásya purodā́śāḥ śaphā́ antárikṣam uddhíḥ |*
> *dyā́vāpṛthivī́ pákṣasī ṛtávo 'bhī́śavo 'ntardeśā́ḥ kimkarā́ vā́k párirathyam ||22||*
> *saṃvatsaró ráthaḥ parivatsaró rathopasthó virā́ḍ īṣā́gnī́ rathamukhám |*
> *índraḥ savyaṣṭhā́ś candrámāḥ sā́rathiḥ ||23||*

The four quarters are the mules of the divine chariot. The oblations are the hoofs, the intermediate space is the seat. Heaven and Earth are the two sides, the seasons are the reins, the intermediate quarters are the servants, speech is the road[144].

The year (*saṃvatsará*) is the chariot, the whole year (*parivatsará*) is the driver's seat[145], *Virā́j* is the pole, Agni is the chariot's front, Indra stands on the left side, the moon is the charioteer.

This passage has certain parallels with the *kāla* hymn discussed above, with the *"asyá vāmásya"* hymn (RV 1.164), and also with an opening passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BĀU 1.1.1) considered in detail in chapter 2.2.1 of this dissertation. The year (*saṃvatsará*) is principal in this description. It is represented by the heavenly chariot driven by the moon, whereas the chariot itself is, of course, conceptualized as the sun, therefore it is the year "in general" – both solar and lunar. The year here is a gravity center for everything else in the universe: all other parts of the space-time continuum surround it and are described in relation to the year. It is the only place in the AV where the year is clearly seen as time-eternity related to the Ṛgvedic *ṛtá*.

Another relevant feature of the treatment of the year, seasons, and time units in the AV is that specific empirical time remains to be connected with Agni, like in the RV. Agni continues his function as a time-lord in charge of the ritual time and temporality. AVŚ 6.36.1-2 says that Agni "brings forth the seasons" and calls him the lord of *ṛtá:*

ṛtā́vānaṃ vaiśvānarám ṛtásya jyótiṣas pátim |
ájasraṃ gharmám īmahe ||1||
sá víśvā práti cākḷpa ṛtū́mr út sṛjate vaśī́ |
yajñásya váya uttirán ||2||

To Agni Vaiśvānara – the one who possesses *ṛtá,* the lord of *ṛtá* [and] light –

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[144] 'Road' – *párirathya*. W. Whitney translates this word as 'rim'.

[145] *Rathopastha* – can mean a seat of the chariot's driver or a hinder or lower part of the chariot.

we pray for everlasting [shining] heat.
He arranged everything. The mighty one, [he] brings forth the seasons. He increases the might of the sacrifice.

AVŚ 2.6.1 also connects Agni with the year, its parts, and the seasons:

sámās tvāgna r̥távo vardhayantu saṃvatsarā́ r̥ṣayo yā́ni satyā́ |
sáṃ divyéna dīdihi rocanéna víśvā ā́ māhi pradíśaś cátasraḥ ||1||

May the year-halves [and] seasons strengthen you, o Agni! The years, the sages – [everything] that is true. Shine [brightly] with heavenly radiance! Traverse all four quarters.

To sum up, it can be said that the year in the AV belongs to the domain of temporality but loses most of the features that make it a substitute for the time-eternity in the RV. Still, the year is considered the main time unit that has the foremost ritual significance, a prototype for all other units. The year is said to possess magical and protective power, it is invoked in the protective incantations, spells that enchant amulets, etc. It is related to Agni who continues to be a deity of temporality and ritual time. The cosmic function of the year remains hidden in the AV, except for the hymns where the wheel of the year is depicted.

2.1.3. Conclusion

In the Atharvaveda, we observe a development of time-related motifs and ideas found in the R̥gveda. It also offers completely novel views on time that laid a foundation for the further elaboration during the later Vedic and Classical periods. Like the R̥gveda, the Atharvaveda distinguishes between the two types of time: non-active undivided time-eternity that is the basis of creation, and divided into units empirical "temporality" actively involved with the phenomenal world. However, unlike the R̥gveda, the Atharvaveda does not disconnect the two forms of time. It introduces a unified term – *kāla* – that is used to denote the abstract time absent in the R̥gveda where the relationship between *r̥tú, r̥tá*, and the year

remains intuitive and unexpressed. The Atharvaveda therefore establishes the *notion* of time. The connection between the two forms of time is expressed in mythological and poetic terms, not in the logical or philosophical ones, thus the newly formed notion belongs to the pre-philosophical realm.

Concurrently, the Atharvaveda introduces an idea that time is the foremost god and a power that creates the universe and sustains its existence: the worlds, forces, events, and beings are produced by time and founded upon it. This idea is new for the Vedic thought but to a certain extent it can be seen as a continuation of the Ṛgvedic understanding of *ṛtá* as a power that supports the universe, literally makes it "fixed", and – effectively – creates it by putting it in order. It also strikingly parallels myths found in the texts of the Zurvanite tradition, a heterodox Zoroastrian sect of ancient Iran: Zurvān[146], a deity that is identical with time, *zamān*, and embodies it is said to be the ultimate creator and the father of the main deity Ohrmazd (Avestan *Ahura Mazdā*) and his evil twin-opponent Ahriman (in the Avesta – *Angra Manyu*, "the dark spirit"), i.e., Zurvān is the father of good and evil and the primary source of creation. Significantly, Zurvān is said to have two forms: infinite and finite. The infinite (*akanārag*) Zurvān "has no origin, yet is the origin of all beings"[147]; the finite form *(kanārakōmand zamn)* appears when the act of creation occurs: "…before creation was [Infinite Time]: that which coincided with the very act of Creator's creation was Finite Time:

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[146] This word stems from the Indo-European root *ĝer-/ĝerǝ-/ĝrē-* – 'to grow old' (see Watkins 2005: 28). It has many cognates in the IE languages, such as Sanskrit root *jr̄-* with the same meaning and its derivate *jarā* – 'old age', in the Classical Indian tradition usually closely associated with time and called a "power of time" by Bhartṛhari in the Vākyapadīya; Old Church Slavonic *zъrěti*, "ripen", hence Russian *зрелый*, 'mature,' etc.

[147] Zaehner 1955: 231.

that which was after creation was action (continuing) till the rehabilitation"[148]. As can be seen from the quoted passage, Zurvān is also associated with action. This association begins when infinite time becomes finite and limited, i.e., eternity transforms into temporality as a result of creation. The same dichotomy is present in the AV 19.53-54 where creation also makes a boundary between the two forms of time: time-eternity "in the highest heaven" is beyond creation; time-temporality is within the created realm and produces "many forms". Later, in the epics and pre-philosophical discourses, time-temporality joined with action is said to generate a multitude of events and objects.

Zurvān is also one of the deities of death, as evident from multiple Pahlavī passages quoted by R. Zaehner: "for Zurvān there is no remedy. From death there is no escape"[149]. Time personified and merciless fate, Zurvān acts as death, for he takes lives and sews the eyes of the dead: "As to him whose eyes Time (*zamān*) has sewn up, his back is sized upon and never rise again; pain comes upon his heart so that it beats no more…"[150]

Finally, Iranian Zurvān is very much connected with cosmic law or order – Pahlavī *dātastān*, which is a later substitution of the Avestan *aša*, an Iranian counterpart of the Vedic *r̥tá.* Greater Bundahišn 1.43 shows Zurvān's/time's relationship with the cosmic law in these terms: "Time is mightier than both creations, – the creation of Ohramazd and that of the

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[148] Translated by Zaehner 1955: 391, from *Dēnkart.*

[149] Translated by Zaehner 1955: 398, from *Pahlavī Texts*.

[150] Translated by Zaehner 1955: 399.

Destructive Spirit. Time understands all action and order (the law[151])… Time understands more than those who understand"[152].

The aforementioned views on Zurvān are not attested in the Avesta in their mature form and likely fully form only during the Sasanian period (224-651 AD). However, the Avesta mentions Zurvān, time, and enumerates him among the other gods on multiple occasions. An idea that Zurvān is a god of death also originates in the Avesta. Vidēvdāt 19.29 clearly relates Zurvān to death by describing him as a deity who creates a path that leads souls of the dead to the Činvat bridge[153]. Vidēvdāt (19.13, 19.16) and Yasna 72.10 mention the Infinite Zurvān (*zruuānahe akaranahe*); remarkably, Yasna 72.10 distinguishes between the two types of Zurvān – the Infinite one and another one called "time with a long dominion" (Yasna 72.10: *zruuānahe akaranahe zruuānahe darəγō-xᵛaδātahe*). The latter refers to the finite time of the phenomenal world bound within its "dominion".

Although the Zurvanite concepts take their shape during a relatively late period and hence cannot be considered a source of the ideas expressed in the Atharvaveda, they might represent a different – although a rather close – development of the common Indo-Iranian worldview. The core of this worldview in its time-related aspects can be formulated as follows: there are two distinct types of time. One is eternity, "boundless time" that is the same as cosmic law and order and precedes creation. Another one is temporality, finite time, that emerges after the act of creation and is a result of the "ordering" activity of eternity; by the act

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[151] "order" or "law" – *dātastān.*

[152] Translated by Zaehner 1955: 315.

[153] Vidēvdāt 19.29: *… paθąm zrvō-dātanąm jasaiti yasča druuaite yasča ašaone činvaṱ-pərətūm mazdaδātąm* – '[The soul of the dead] – of the wicked and of the righteous – proceeds to the path made by Time (Zurvān) to the Činvad bridge made by Mazdā.'

of creation eternity transforms itself into temporality, therefore eternity is perceived as a source of creation. Both types of time are seen as united (like infinite and finite Zurvān or two forms of kāla) or closely related (like *r̥tá* and *r̥tú*). The deity that represents or controls time (any of the two types, or both) is necessarily related to death, action, and cosmic order, like Varuṇa and Agni in the South Asian tradition and Zurvān in the Iranian one.

2.2. Time in the Brāhmanas and Upaniṣads

Deliberations of time and various aspects of time are found in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. The views articulated there are dispersed through multiple texts of different periods and overall are unsystematic. Also, it must be noted that ideas expressed in the early texts are rather distinct from those we find in the late ones. It is clear that the later Upaniṣads, such as the Maitrī-Upaniṣad, are influenced by the views of various Indian systems of thought, including Hindu and Buddhist philosophical and theological schools. Additionally, the earliest Upaniṣads mostly use the word "year" to denote sacred omnipotent time in different creation myths, although they can employ the term *kāla* to express specific time, i.e., a particular period[154]. The year can be considered an epitome of time in the early Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, whereas the later Upaniṣads tend to use the word *kāla,* time.

In this chapter I attempt to systematize the ideas presented in the Brāhmanas and Upaniṣads and find their roots.

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[154] The word *kāla* can also be used to specify a particular stage or even a location during the ritual.

2.2.1. The Year as a Sacrificial Offering

In the opening passage of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BĀU) there is a renowned description of the sacrificial horse whose body parts and physical activities are identified with various segments and phenomena of the universe. As P. Olivelle notes, "the ritual sphere is connected to the bodily, and the bodily sphere to the cosmic"[155]. This passage (BĀU 1.1.1) is one of the key sources for the understanding of time and space in the late Vedic thought. It is quoted in full below:

> *uṣā vā aśvasya medhyasya śiraḥ | sūryaś cakṣur vātaḥ prāṇo vyāttam agnir vaiśvānaraḥ saṃvatsara ātmāśvasya medhyasya | dyauḥ pṛṣṭham antarikṣam udaraṃ pṛthivī pājasyaṃ diśaḥ pārśve avāntaradiśaḥ parśava ṛtavo 'ṅgāni māsāś cārdhamāsāś ca parvāṇy ahorātrāṇi pratiṣṭhā nakṣatrāṇy asthīni nabho māṃsāni | ūvadhyaṃ sikatāḥ sindhavo gudā yakṛc ca klomānaś ca parvatā oṣadhayaś ca vanaspatayaś ca lomāni | udyan pūrvārdho nimlocañ jaghanārdhaḥ | yad vijṛmbhate tad vidyotate | yad vidhūnute tat stanayati | yan mehati tad varṣati | vāg evāsya vāk ||1.1.1 ||*

> The head of the sacrificial horse truly is the Dawn. [Its] eye is the Sun; the breath is the Wind; Agni Vaiśvānara[156] – [the Omnipresent Fire –] is [its] open [mouth]. The body of the sacrificial horse is the Year. [Its] back is the sky; the stomach is the intermediate space; the lower belly is the earth; the sides are the [space-]quarters [and its] ribs are the intermediate quarters; the limbs are the seasons; the joints are the months and fortnights; [its] hoofs are days and nights; the bones are the constellations; [its] fleshy parts are the clouds. The sand is undigested grass [in its bowels]; [its] intestines are the rivers, and the mountains are [its] liver and lungs, and [its] hairs are the plants and forest trees. [Its] front part is the sunrise, [its] rear part is the sunset.
> When [the horse] yawns – then [the lightning] flashes; when it shakes, it thunders; when it urinates, it rains. Its voice indeed is speech.

The passage establishes multiple connections between the microcosm (i.e., the physical body of the horse) and macrocosm by juxtaposing the horse's body with the constituent parts of the

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[155] Olivelle 1998: 25.

[156] Agni Vaiśvānara – lit., "the fire belonging to all men/people". Indicates that Agni, the fire, is present in every house, during every ritual, etc.

universe. The description directly identifies certain body parts of the horse with natural phenomena and elements of spatial organization. Some of these identifications are based on mythological connections, e.g., those of the sun and the horse's eye as well as of the wind and the breath of the horse (we know of multiple mythological motifs in the RV, AV, and the later texts connecting the sun with the eye of heaven or that of a certain deity; the wind with the vital breath of the world, etc.). Other spatial identifications make use of the physical built and position of a standing horse and employ a principle of similarity: for example, the sky, the intermediate space, and the earth are identified with the back, stomach, and lower belly of the horse respectively because the back of the standing horse is on top, like the sky in the tripartite vertical organization of the universe, stomach and the intermediate space are in the middle, and the lower belly and the earth are in the bottom. The same principle is used in identifying the space quarters with the sides and ribs of the horse; the mountains, clouds, and rivers with liver and lungs, fleshy parts, and intestines, etc. The torso of the horse therefore represents the whole tripartite universe. The head as the front, i.e., beginning part of the horse is identified with the dawn that – both as a natural phenomenon and a particular period of time – starts the day. Noticeably, the head is not associated with any component of space.

A juxtaposition of various other parts of the horse's body with divisions of time appears to be organized differently. All parts of the horse's limbs are associated with specific time units: the limbs as a whole are said to be the seasons *(r̥tu)*, the joints are the months and fortnights; the hoofs that support the whole body are the days and nights – probably because a day-night combination is understood as a basic time unit representing the minimal ritual cycle. Thus, the time-units epitomizing transitory time are seen as a means of support and movement of the universe-horse. The front part of the horse is envisioned as sunrise (as the

beginning of the day) and its rear part as sunset (i.e., the end of the day), which in its principle is similar to the identification of the horse's head with the dawn. Finally, the entire body or perhaps a torso *(ātman)*[157] of the sacrificial horse is identified with the year *(saṃvatsara)*. The symbolism of the year will be discussed in detail below. At this point it is, however, clear that the horse in its entirety embodies the time-space continuum: all created space that is moved and supported by time and cannot be separated from time.

Considering the syntactic features of the quote in question, it should be noted that time is not specified in the description of the body of the horse by any grammatical means. The description doesn't use either verbs or forms derived from the verbal roots that can indicate tense or express time. Also, there are no sequential markers – everything described occurs *simultaneously* and *always*. The horse that embodies both time and space, exists beyond any empirical time; its domain is eternity.

The verbs are used in the final part of the passage when different activities of the horse are collocated with natural phenomena of the universe. However, again, these activities are described as occurring *always* in the ever-present tense: the horse that encompasses all space and time is timeless, there is no time beyond the horse. Whenever the horse performs an action (expressed in the text by a relative clause starting with a marker *yad-*), something (expressed by a correlative clause beginning with a marker *tad-*) occurs in the universe:

> **yad** *vijṛmbhate* **tad** *vidyotate* | **yad** *vidhūnute* **tat** *stanayati* |
> **yan** *mehati* **tad** *varṣati* | *vāg evāsya vāk* || BĀU 1.1.1 ||
>
> When [the horse] yawns – then [the lightning] flashes; when it shakes, it thunders; when it urinates, it rains. Its voice indeed is speech.

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[157] *ātman* in this context can be understood as 'body as a whole' or as 'torso/trunk'. A traditional explanation is provided below.

Thus, when the horse is seen as a whole undivided being, it represents eternity and the entire universe with all its processes as a *potential*. When the constituent parts and specific activities of the horse are considered, it embodies the universe as a *realized potential*, i.e., the after-creation universe organized and moved by time-temporality.

How does the year that is identified with the body of the sacrificial horse fit in this picture? In his commentary, Śaṃkara thus explicates this juxtaposition:

> ***saṃvatsara ātmā***, *saṃvatsaro dvādaśamāsastrayodaśamāso vā, ātmāśarīram | kālāvayavānāṃ ca saṃvatsaraḥ śarīraṃ cātmā "madhyaṃ hyaṣāmaṅgānāmātmā" iti śruteḥ |*
>
> ***[Its] body [ātman] is the year****:* the year is of twelve or thirteen months; "Atman" [means] the body. The year is also the body of the divisions of time and [is called] Atman, as [said] in the Śruti: 'For the Atman (body) is the center of these limbs.'

Accordingly, for Śaṃkara whose commentary on the BĀU was created much later than the text itself, *saṃvatsara* and *kāla* are, first of all, almost synonyms (both are unifying notions of all divisions of time), and secondly, the year is the center (body) upon which all other parts-limbs are fixed and altogether represent time. Although Śaṃkara's commentary cannot really reveal how this passage was understood at the time when the BĀU was composed, it definitely represents the traditional comprehension of the passage. As a thinker belonging to the long-standing tradition, Śaṃkara in this case likely reproduces the views that existed before him.

In order to understand the year symbolism in relation to the sacrificial horse, it is crucial to look into the horse sacrifice ritual, i.e., the *aśvamedha*. First of all, an obvious symbolic connection here is that the complete *aśvamedha* ritual – starting with the selection of the horse and ending with its ritual killing, division of its body, and various closing rites –

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lasts a year. A male horse chosen for the ritual is released to roam freely on a territory not belonging to the king who initiates the *aśvamedha.* The horse is accompanied and protected by the king's army and, per description in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, by the armed groups of "a hundred princes 'born in wedlock', a hundred sons of chiefs and heralds, and a hundred sons of attendants and charioteers."[158] A hundred, of course, is an ideal number representing, in particular, the complete human lifespan. The horse roams for a year, and, if the ritual is successful, i.e., the horse is not lost or taken by the king's enemies and the army guarding the horse does not lose any battle, "conquers" for the king the lands it covers, after which it returns (supposedly, by its own will) to be sacrificed. The killing of the horse accompanied by a series of rituals, occurs during the consecration of the king. At this last stage (especially during a symbolic sexual act between the killed horse and the queen), the horse is identified with Varuṇa, "the presiding deity of the horse"[159], thus reviving Varuṇa's old Vedic connections with the year and time. During the ritual year, the sacrificial horse is ascribed certain qualities, specifically, in the course of the *aśvamedha*, "daily offerings were made to Savitar, the horse being associated or identified with the sun and the solar year."[160] Thus, the horse indeed represents the year. Lasting for a year and, like the sacrificial horse, identified with the year, the *aśvamedha* contains several symbolic representations of the year. For example, the following detail that demonstrates the year symbolism in the *aśvamedha* is found in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (TB 3.8.1.1):

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[158] Stutley 1969: 256.

[159] *Ibid.:* 259-260.

[160] *Ibid.:* 257.

dvādaśāratnī raśanā bhavati | dvādaśa māsāḥ saṃvatsaraḥ | saṃvatsaram evā ‘varundhe |

The rope [used to tie the sacrificial horse] is twelve cubits *(aratni)* long. The year is of twelve months. Thus [the Sacrificer] obtains the year.

Hence, the length of the *muñja* grass rope tying the horse epitomizes the year that contains twelve months. Another passage of TB (TB 3.8.3.3) explains how an intercalated month should be taken into account when the rope is prepared. It also directly equals the *aśvamedha* with the year:

tad āhuḥ | dvādaśāratnī raśanā kartavyā trayodaśāratnī riti | ṛṣabho vā eṣa ṛtūnām yat saṃvatsaraḥ | tasya trayodaśo māso viṣṭapam | ṛṣabha eṣa yajñānām yad aśvamedhaḥ |yathā vā ṛṣbhasya viṣṭapam evam etasya viṣṭapam | trayodaśam aratnim raśanāyām upādadhāti | yatha ṛṣabhasya viṣṭapaṃ saṃskaroti tādṛg evā tat ||

[Regarding] this they say [the following]: "The rope should be made twelve cubits long or thirteen cubits long." For the year is the bull among the seasons. The thirteenth month is its hump. The *aśvamedha* is the bull among the sacrifices. It [also] has a hump – just like the bull has a hump. [Therefore the priest] places the thirteenth cubit to the rope. Like the hump of the bull refines it, the same is the case here.

The passage exhibits typical logic of the Brāhamaṇa texts, producing a series of equations and making a conclusion on their basis: the year is the bull (i.e., the best or leader) of the seasons, therefore is has a hump. The hump is the thirteenth month. The *aśvamedha* is also the best among the sacrifices, hence, it is a bull among them, and therefore it must also have a hump because a "refined" bull must have a hump. As a bull, the *aśvamedha* is the same as the year that is also a bull. Conclusion: a hump of the *aśvamedha* is the thirteenth cubit of the rope used to tie a sacrificial horse. This reasoning provides a "theoretical" foundation for the year symbolism of the *aśvamedha* ritual as well as that of the sacrificial horse.

Following the same "brāhmaṇic" reasoning that employs a series of mythological equations or connections *(bandhu)* and traditional phonetic and etymological associations, the

Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa links the sacrificial horse of the *aśvamedha* with the *aśvattha* tree (*ficus religiosa*), with the year, and, finally, with Prajapati – the creator deity that appears in the late RV and becomes prominent during the late Vedic-Brāhmaṇic period. A purpose of such reasoning is to provide an explanation to different elements of the ritual. Specifically, the TB 3.8.12.2 uses the aforementioned connections to explain why the stall where the horse is tied up when it comes back after the eleventh month of the ritual is made of *aśvattha* wood:

> *prajāpatir devebho nilāyata | aśvo rūpaṃ kṛtvā | so 'śvatthe saṃvatsaram atiṣṭhat | tad aśvatthasyā 'śvatthatvam | yad aśvattho vrajo bhavati | sva evai 'naṃ yonau pratiṣṭhāpayati ||*

> Prajāpati hid himself from the gods. Having taken the form of a horse *(aśva)*, he stood *(sthā-)* for a year [under] an *aśvattha* tree. That is [why] the *aśvattha* tree has the nature [and the name] of *aśvattha*[161]. The stall is [made of] *aśvattha* since it is indeed in its own place [the priest] stations [the horse] to rest.

The quoted passage creates a chain of associations between Prajapati, the horse, the *aśvattha* tree, and the year. Each of the elements in this chain in the "brāhmaṇic" reasoning can be used to substitute any other element, i.e., Prajāpati is understood to be the year; the year is the horse, etc. These associations are very persistent in the late Vedic and Classical tradition, so they are used and reused in the texts of different genres and different periods. Each of the elements of this chain can mythologically and symbolically signify the year and time.

Overall, the analysis of various year-related components of the *aśvamedha* clearly shows its multiple conceptual connections with the idea of the year as well as conceptual connections of the year with the sacrificial horse. The *aśvamedha* is also very much associated with an idea of time-space continuum. As a solemn royal ritual associated with

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[161] *aśvattha* in this passage is etymologized as *aśva + stha*, 'a place where a horse stands.' *Aśvatthatva* here can be understood as 'having the nature of *aśvattha*', 'aśvatthaness', or 'having a name of *aśvattha*'.

coronation, *aśvamedha* is supposed to establish and uphold the power of the king. Witzel (1997b) calls it "the *ultimate* royal ritual <…> which establishes the dominance of a powerful king in a circle of surrounding minor ones"[162]. According to the Brāhmaṇa texts, a king who performs one hundred *aśvamedhas* becomes a *cakravartin,* the sovereign of the universe, who obtains an ability to govern the four cardinal directions, i.e., the whole world. During the consecration ritual, the king makes steps into different directions, symbolically conquering a particular direction by each of his steps. Moreover, upon the completion of the *aśvamedha,* the sacrificing king not only wins space but also conquers time: his reign of the four directions is established and he also, as stated in the passage from the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (TB 3.8.1.1) quoted above, "obtains the year", i.e., establishes his rule over time. Therefore the king becomes the lord of time and space, he dominates the time-space continuum represented by the whole *aśvamedha* ritual and, most of all, by the sacrificial horse.

Later in the BĀU (1.1.2), the idea of the horse as space-time continuum is developed further:

> *ahar vā aśvaṃ purastān mahimānvajāyata | tasya pūrve samudre yoniḥ |*
> *rātrir enaṃ paścān mahimānvajāyata | tasyāpare samudre yonir |*
> *etau vā aśvaṃ mahimānāv abhitaḥ sambabhūvatuḥ | hayo bhūtvā devān*
> *avahad vājī gandharvān arvāsurān aśvo manuṣyān |samudra evāsya bandhuḥ*
> *samudro yoniḥ || 1.1.2 ||*

> The day, indeed, was born following the *mahiman* sacrificial cup placed in front of the horse. Its womb is in the Eastern Sea[163]. The night was born following the *mahiman* sacrificial cup placed behind the horse. Its womb is in the Western Sea. The two were produced [as] the two *mahiman* sacrificial cups placed near the sacrificial horse. Having become a racer *(haya)*, it carried the

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[162] Witzel 1997b: 315.

[163] 'in the Eastern Sea' – *pūrve samudre*. This line plays on the meaning of the word *pūrva*, which can also mean "previous" or "preceding", or, in the temporal terms, "the ocean of the past".

gods; a steed *(vājin)* – the gandharvas; a courser *(arvan)* – the asuras; a horse *(aśva)* – the humans. The sea is indeed its kin. The sea is the womb[164].

The passage above continues the description of the sacrificial horse that starts in BĀU 1.1.1 where the sunrise is said to be the front half of the horse and the sunset – its rear half[165]. Along the same lines, BĀU 1.1.2 states that the day and the night are "born following" *(anvajāyata)* the placement of the two sacrificial cups *(mahiman*, lit. "greatness") during the *aśvamedha.* The cup placed in front of the horse is identified with the day; the one placed behind the horse is said to be the night. From the descriptions of the ritual, we know that one of these two sacrificial vessels is made of gold, and the second one is made of silver. The golden vessel is associated with the day and put in front of the horse, the silver one associated with the night and put behind the horse during the ritual[166]. As explained by Mādhavānanda[167], the words *purastāt* ('before', 'in front', and also 'eastward') and *paścāt* ('afterwards', 'behind', and 'westward') in this case have a temporal meaning because one of the vessels is used before killing the horse and the second one – after the killing. According to Dumont (1948)[168], based on the account of the horse sacrifice given in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa, both vessels are used after killing the horse, however, the first one is offered immediately before the oblation of the horse' omentum, and the second one – right after it, therefore the placement of the vessels differs temporally by any account.

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[164] 'womb' – *yoni* as a place of birth in this case. Śaṃkara comments on this passage: *apsu yonirvā aśvaḥ iti śruteḥ prasiddha eva vā samudro yoniḥ ||* – "'The [birth] place of the horse is in the waters' – thus is known from the Vedas (Śruti). [Therefore] the sea is the womb."

[165] *udyan pūrvārdho nimlocañ jaghanārdhaḥ |*

[166] Cf. Müller 1900: 74, fn. 5.

[167] Mādhavānanda 1958: 12, fn. 1.

[168] Dumont 1948: 450.

Overall, it seems that in this context these words have both spatial and temporal connotations: the vessels are placed in front and behind the horse, and also – before and after the killing or before and after the omentum sacrifice. The spots where the vessels are placed during the ritual are called *yoni*. The word *yoni* in the Vedic period meant simply a place or abode; only later it came to mean "womb" more often than not. In the context of the BĀU, the word *yoni* can be interpreted in either meaning or with both connotations simultaneously: a womb and a place, or a womb as a place of birth or abode. Accordingly, it is said about the day-vessel: its womb/yoni/place is in the Eastern sea, – and about the night-vessel: its womb/yoni/place is in the Western sea[169].

The comparison of the golden vessel with the day and the silver vessel with the night is not accidental, but rather traditional in the Indian culture as well as in other Indo-European cultures. Gold has come to represent the sun while silver is typically associated with the moon.[170] Accordingly, day and night are compared with the two ritual vessels (one is, metaphorically speaking, "filled" with day/sunlight, the other one – with moonlight) that are used during the *aśvamedha*, the horse sacrifice. Analogously, gold can be associated with earth and silver with the sky as in, for example, Chandogya Upaniṣad 3.19.1-2 where the primordial egg (developed from the primordial "being" which was the only existing thing when the whole world was "the nonexisting") after lying for a period of a year splits into a golden half and a silver half, whereas "the… silver is this earth, the golden one is the sky":

> *asad evedam agra āsīt | tat sad āsīt | tat samabhavat | tad āṇḍaṃ niravartata |*
> *tat saṃvatsarasya mātrām aśayata | tan nirabhidyata | te āṇḍakapāle rajataṃ*

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[169] *<…> tasya pūrve samudre yoniḥ | <…> | tasyāpare samudre yonir |*

[170] This view is also typical in Indian astrology and alchemy; it is discussed in the Rāmāyaṇa and other texts.

ca suvarṇaṃ cābhavatām || 1 || tad yad rajataṃ seyaṃ pṛthivī | yat suvarṇaṃ sā dyauḥ |

In the beginning this [world] was just the nonexisting. The existing was that. That developed. That became an egg. It lay [there] for the period of a year [and then] it split. The two [halves of] the eggshell became silver and gold. The one that is silver is this earth, the golden one is the sky.

Significantly, "the period of a year" is the time that is needed for an egg to split apart, i.e., for the act of creation to occur. When the egg is split, its fragments become other parts of the world. Thus, we can say that creation occurs as a combination of a primordial being/thing and time, in this case represented as a year.

In the end of the description of the sacrificial horse (BĀU 1.1.2), there is a part that can be considered a mini-hymn that enumerates different names of the horse (a poetic device used in the hymns of the Ṛgveda and later in the *māhātmya* type of literature as well as in various "imitations" of the Vedic hymns found in the epics). The presence of such a "hymn" – an exalted praise of the horse – in the passage dedicated to a sacrificial horse might also be connected with a particular part of the *aśvamedha* ritual when during the preparatory rites the Adhvaryu priest or sometimes the sacrificer whispers the horse's names into its right ear[171]:

> *hayo bhūtvā devān avahad vājī gandharvān arvāsurān aśvo manuṣyān |*
> *samudra evāsya bandhuḥ samudro yoniḥ ||*
>
> Having become [or: being] a racer, it carried the gods; a steed – the gandharvas; a courser – the asuras; a horse – the humans. The sea is indeed its kin. The sea is the womb.[172]

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[171] Dumont 1948: 449.

[172] Śaṃkara comments on this passage: *apsu yonirvā aśvaḥ iti śruteḥ prasiddha eva vā samudro yoniḥ ||* – "'The [birth] place of the horse is in the waters' – thus is known from the Vedas (Śruti). [Therefore] the sea is the womb."

Notably, in this "hymn" the horse is described as timeless, existing in the primordial times. It is conveyed by the usage of gerund (a "timeless" verbal form that can, nevertheless, in combination with other verbal forms, show a sequence of events) and then imperfect that is past indefinite: *hayo* **bhūtvā** (gerund*) devān* **avahad** (imperfect) *vājī gandharvān arvāsurān aśvo manuṣyān.* The action therefore happened in the unknown primordial past or maybe happens always, since it has no beginning and no end.

The concluding part dedicated to the sacrificial horse and the *aśvamedha* (BĀU 1.2.7) offers multiple new conceptual equations and mythological motifs that are relevant to our topic:

> *tam anavarudhyaivāmanyata | taṃ saṃvatsarasya parastād ātmana ālabhata |*
> *paśūn devatābhyaḥ pratyauhat | tasmāt sarvadevatyaṃ prokṣitaṃ prājāpatyam*
> *ālabhante | eṣa vā aśvamedho ya eṣa tapati | tasya saṃvatsara ātmā |*
> *ayam agnir arkaḥ | tasyeme lokā ātmānaḥ | tāv etāv arkāśvamedhau |*
> *so punar ekaiva devatā bhavati mṛtyur eva | apa punarmṛtyuṃ jayati | nainaṃ*
> *mṛtyur āpnoti | mṛtyur asyātmā bhavati | sarvam āyur eti[173] |*
> *etāsāṃ devatānām eko bhavati || 1.2.7 ||*

> He[=death] thought it[=the horse] must not be obstructed at all. At the end of [one] year, he sacrificed it to himself and offered [the other sacrificial] animals to the gods [as a supplementary sacrifice]. Therefore [when people] sacrifice the consecrated [horse] to Prajāpati [they also sacrifice it] to all gods.
> That which shines-emits heat [in the sky] truly is *aśvamedha.* Its body *(atman)* is the year. This fire is the fire of sacrifice [, the sun][174]. These worlds are its body. These two are the fire of sacrifice [=the sun] and the *aśvamedha.* But again, they really become one deity – [that is,] indeed, death. The one [who knows this] wins over the repeated death: death does not snatch him, death becomes his body, [he] reaches the full lifespan; he becomes one of these gods.

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[173] This line (*sarvam āyur eti*) is absent in the Kāṇva Recension of BĀU and only included in the Mādhyandina Recension.

[174] 'The sun' – *arkaḥ.* A word used in the Upaniṣads with many meanings. In this passage it can be interpreted as either the sun or the sacrificial fire. Considering the style of the Upaniṣads, it is likely to imply both meanings simultaneously.

The quoted passage provides a mythological justification ("sacred precedent") for a ritual of the *aśvamedha.* The horse, left "not… obstructed" for a year, is offered to a primordial being by that very primordial being itself. The primordial being is described earlier in the same *adhyāya* of the BĀU (1.2.1) as Death that becomes embodied thus starting the process of creation:

> *naiveha kiṃ canāgra āsīt |*
> *mṛtyunaivedam āvṛtam āsīd aśanāyayā |*
> *aśanāyā hi mṛtyuḥ |*
> *tan mano 'kurutātmanvī syām iti |*
>
> At first, nothing at all existed here. This [= the universe] was covered only by Death [and] by hunger, for hunger indeed is death. He [who is Death then] formed a thought: "May I be embodied."

BĀU 1.2.3 then depicts the division of the primordial being and juxtaposes its body parts with sections of the universe:

> *sa tredhātmānaṃ vyakurutādityaṃ tṛtīyaṃ vāyuṃ tṛtīyam |*
> *sa eṣa prāṇas tredhāvihitaḥ |*
> *tasya prācī dik śiro 'sau cāsau cermau |*
> *athāsya pratīcī dik puccham asau cāsau ca sakthyau |*
> *dakṣiṇā codīcī ca pārśve |*
> *dyauḥ pṛṣṭham antarikṣam udaram iyam uraḥ |*
> *sa eṣo 'psu pratiṣṭhitaḥ |*
>
> He divided his body *(ātman)* into three [parts]. A third [became] the sun, a third – the wind. He also is breath divided threefold. His head is the eastern quarter; his two front legs are this and that [eastern intermediate quarters]. His tail is the western quarter; his two thighs/hind legs are this and that [western intermediate quarters]. His sides are southern and northern [quarters]. [His] back is the sky; his abdomen is the intermediate space; his chest is this [earth]. He rises up in the waters.

Remarkably, this depiction shows a primordial being (death!) not as a human but, considering spatial orientation of the body, rather as an animal that stands on four legs, whose back is up (and thus is associated with the sky) and whose abdomen is down – most likely, a sacrificial

horse described similarly and even on multiple occasions using the same words as the one in BĀU 1.1.1. In other words, the sacrificial horse is envisioned as the embodied primordial being, a source of the universe, and the primary agent of creation. It also follows that the horse offers itself to itself as a sacrifice – just like the Ṛgvedic Puruṣa of whose self-sacrifice to himself we learn from RV 10.90.

Returning to BĀU 1.2.7, the passage completes a series of equations related to the sacrificial horse and the *aśvamedha.* First of all, the primordial being is implicitly equaled to Prajapati, a rather artificial god-creator introduced in the late hymns of the Ṛgveda to personify an idea of a singular source of creation: the primordial being's sacrifice to himself is used as a mythological justification and explanation of the ritual where the horse is sacrificed to Prajāpati. The *aśvamedha* is said to be the sun in the sky and the "body" of *aśvamedha* is thought of as the year, which corresponds to the idea that the body of the sacrificial horse is the year. Interestingly, at the end of the passage it is said of the one who knows what was related in the passage that "death becomes his body" (*mṛtyur asyātmā bhavati*). All these upaniṣadic "*bandhu*-s", "connections", lay out a map of mythological motifs related to time and the year: the year or time as a horse; time as a chariot of the sun; Prajāpati as the *aśvamedha* and as the year, and, finally, time as death (the year as a body of the *aśvamedha* vs. death as the body of a person who knows what was said about the *aśvamedha*).

Considering now the whole foregoing fragment from the BĀU (1.1.1-2; 1.2.3,7), it can be said that it has a lot in common with the Puruṣasūkta, RV 10.90, discussed in detail in Chapter I of this dissertation. Both texts depict creation of the universe from the body of the sacrificed or about to be sacrificed divine primordial being. Both the sacrificial horse and the sacrificed Puruṣa embody and produce the space-time continuum. Both Puruṣa and the horse

contain and create spatial and temporal features. The difference can be seen in that Puruṣa explicitly contains both temporality and eternity, whereas the sacrificial horse only includes elements of temporality. Its body, the year, is the center or a receptacle of all other time units and, in a sense, symbolizes a pinnacle of temporality. Eternity or immortality is only hinted upon by the grammatical structure of the sentences when the horse is described as timeless and eternal and might as a whole symbolize eternity, and also – by an idea expressed in TB 3.8.1.1 and known to those involved in the *aśvamedha*, i.e., that as a result of the ritual the sacrificer "obtains the year" *(saṃvatsaram evā 'varundhe),* which can be seen simply as being successful during an upcoming year but also as having the power over the year and attaining immortality.

It is worthy of a mention that a motif of creation of the universe out of a body of the cosmic giant or a great animal (usually, a bovine) has both Indo–European and non-Indo–European parallels: in Iranian tradition (the Bundahishn text), in Greek (the Orphic hymn to Zeus), in Hebrew tradition (the Book of Enoch, where Adam is the Cosmic Man), in the Germanic lore (the Ymir legend of the Edda), Chinese myth of Pangu, in the Slavic "Book of the Dove" *("Golubinaya kniga"),* in the Old Irish epic Táin Bó Cúalnge, and so on. Most of these myths talk about the creation of various parts of space, natural phenomena, and sometimes the structure of society but do not explicitly mention time, although in the Slavic (particularly, the Old Russian) version of this myth found in the "Book of the Dove" it is stated that "the dark nights are [created] from God's thoughts, the morning dawns – from God's eyes" *("Ночи темные от дум Господних, Зори утренни от очей Господних")*[175], which can be to a certain extent understood as an act of creation of the temporal sequence. In

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[175] Soloschenko & Prokoshin 1991: 35.

the Elder Edda (32) where the creation of the universe out of Ymir's body is described, it is indicated that Ymir existed in the older/primordial age: *Ár var alda þar er Ýmir bygði* – 'Of old was the age when Ymir lived'[176] but otherwise nothing is said about the origin of time. Thus, although the myth itself is undoubtfully of the Indo-European origin, the motif of the creation of time and time-space continuum from the sacrificed cosmic giant or an animal might be a unique South Asian feature related to the preeminent importance of the ritual and the ritual sequence in the South Asian tradition or, alternatively, an element that came from a different Indo-European myth.

The description of the cosmic sacrificial horse and the *aśvamedha* in the BĀU clearly corresponds to the AVŚ 19.53-54, a hymn of the Atharvaveda discussed in chapter 2.1: time as a horse that carries the universe and all beings, supports and generates everything; the one that "created the sacrifice [and] the undecaying share of the gods" (*kāló yajñáṃ sám airayad devébhyo bhāgám ákṣitam |* – AVŚ 19.54.4); where "the gandharvas and the apsaras are"[177] and "the worlds are established" (*kālé gandharvāpsarásaḥ kālé lokáḥ prátiṣṭhitāḥ ||* – AVŚ 19.54.4).

The birth of the sacrificial horse (whose body is the year) from the ocean or sea mentioned in BĀU 1.1.2 (*samudra evāsya bandhuḥ samudro yoniḥ ||* – 'The sea is indeed its kin. The sea is the womb') very much resembles RV 10.190.2 and can be considered a different rendering of the same motif – creation of time or the year out of the cosmic waters:

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[176] Translated by Bellows 1923: 4.

[177] Cf. BĀU 1.1.2 – *hayo bhūtvā devān avahad vājī gandharvān* – 'Having become a racer *(haya)*, it carried the gods; a steed *(vājin)* – the gandharvas.'

> *samudrā́d arṇavā́d ádhi saṃvatsaró ajāyata |*
> *ahorātrā́ṇi vidádhad víśvasya miṣató vaśī́ ||*

> Out of the foaming ocean was born the Year that dispenses days and nights, the lord of everything that blinks.

Summing up, the analyzed passages from the BĀU definitely develop several ideas and mythological motifs found in the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda. A major motif adopted from the RV is creation of time-space continuum from the body of the sacrificed cosmic being and correlating different body parts and activities of that being with various elements and events of the universe as well as with temporal categories. The horse in BĀU embodies phenomenal time and specific time units, and the *aśvamedha* sacrifice represents the ritual sequence. Time, the body of the sacrificial horse, continues to be seen as a crucial part of the ritual and the power that produces the ritual sequence. The horse as an undivided entity might represent eternity.

BĀU also incorporates and further develops the following motif from the Atharvaveda: time, the year, as a horse that carries all beings and creates the universe – a motif connected with a Ṛgvedic image of a chariot of *ṛtá* and, simultaneously, a chariot of the sun pulled by a horse or seven horses.

Unlike the RV and AV, the passages from BĀU quoted above do not explicitly distinguish the two types of time. Time here is presented only in the form of temporality that includes the ritual sequence. However, a different old motif omitted in the AV resurfaces here: although implicitly, but time is connected with death.

2.2.2. A Child of Death

BĀU 1.2 opens with an interesting fragment whose initial part was quoted above in relation to the sacrificial horse. It is a version of the creation myth that involves Death described as the primordial being that starts the process of creation (BĀU 1.2.1):

> *naiveha kiṃ canāgra āsīt |*
> *mṛtyunaivedam āvṛtam āsīd aśanāyayā |*
> *aśanāyā hi mṛtyuḥ |*
> *tan mano 'kurutātmanvī syām iti |*

> At first, nothing at all existed here. This [= the universe] was covered only by Death [and] by hunger, for hunger indeed is death. He [who is Death then] formed a thought: "May I be embodied."

Death then creates the waters, and the foam from the waters becomes solid and turns into the earth. Death embodies, divides its body, and, as explained in the previous chapter (2.2.1), its body is that of the sacrificial horse. Then in BĀU 1.2.4 the narrative takes a sudden turn: it looks like the second round of creation begins or, perhaps, a creation story different from the one that involves the sacrificial horse continues[178]:

> *so 'kāmayata dvitīyo ma ātmā jāyeteti |*
> *sa manasā vācaṃ mithunaṃ samabhavad aśanāyā mṛtyuḥ |*
> *tad yad reta āsīt sa saṃvatsaro 'bhavat |*
> *na ha purā tataḥ saṃvatsara āsa |*
> *tam etāvantaṃ kālam abibhar yāvānt saṃvatsaraḥ |*
> *tam etāvataḥ kālasya parastād asṛjata |*
> *taṃ jātam abhivyādadāt |*
> *sa bhāṇ akarot |*
> *saiva vāg abhavat ||*

> He desired: 'May my second body *(ātman)* be born'. By means of [his] mind he, Hunger [and] Death, copulated with Speech. What was semen became the year. For there had been no year before.
> He carried him for as much as a period of a year, and after that time he emitted [him].

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[178] A version of this creation myth is also present in ŚB. 10.6.5.4.

> [Death] opened his mouth to swallow the [one who was] born. He made a sound "*Bhāṇ!*"[179] That became speech.

This passage depicts the year (i.e., time) produced from an intercourse between the primordial entity (identified simultaneously with Death and Hunger) and Speech. The passage is composed in the enigmatic style typical for the Upaniṣads – it is not very easy to understand what comes first: for example, speech both pre-exists the intercourse with the ultimate being and then is created anew as a side effect of this intercourse. Nevertheless, it is clear that the semen of the primeval being becomes the year and then the year (naturally, carried for the period of the year!) is born as a child of Death.

This short passage can be considered a source of a major idea that later becomes prominent in the pre-philosophical texts (i.e., Yogavasiṣṭha, etc.) and in certain philosophical schools – specifically, the grammarians, the most noticeable example would be Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya. This is the idea that time is a creative power or potency of the supreme being. Time (*kāla)*, as can be seen from AV 19.53-54, has already been presented as a separate creative force – basically, a god-creator. On the other hand, from the late hymns of the RV (Puruṣasūkta, a hymn to the Golden Embryo (*hiraṇyagarbha)* in RV 10.121*,* etc.), myths on the primordial egg/being, as related in the Chandogya Upaniṣad 3.19.1-2, it can be seen that time is something that is needed for creation: the primordial being cannot create, present itself in the manifold of phenomena of the world without it: an egg hatches after a period of a year; Puruṣa is sacrificed by means of the seasons, etc. Nevertheless, the passage quoted above equates the year to the primordial being's semen that, of course, is seen as a creative power.

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[179] '*Bhāṇ!'* – a sound that imitates the noise of breathing, therefore the living breath here is equated to speech.

Thus we can conclude that time is a major power in the act of creation, however, it is neither the primordial being nor the supreme lord.

Time in the quoted passage is also envisioned as related with death. S. Schayer states that "time created as a child of Death is itself Death."[180] An idea that time *is* death is found in several fragments of different Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. In the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 10.4.3.1 the year is directly identified with death and an explanation for such identification is provided:

> *eṣa vai mṛtyur yat saṃvatsaraḥ eṣa hi*
> *martyānāmahorātrābhyāmāyuḥ kṣiṇotyatha*
> *mriyante tasmād eṣa eva mṛtyuḥ*
>
> The year surely is death: he is the one who ends the life of the mortals by means of days and nights, and then they die. Thus he is death indeed.

Analogous identifications of the year with death are found in the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa, e.g., JB 1.246, 2.350, etc. Aitareya-Āraṇyaka 3.2.3 sees the year as the cause of birth and destruction of things and beings; a similar view is expressed in the Maitrī-Upaniṣad 6.15:

> *saṃvatsarāt khalvevemāḥ prajāḥ*
> *prajāyante saṃvatsareṇeha vai jātā vivardhante*
> *saṃvatsare pratyastaṃ yanti |*
>
> These creatures are born from the year. With the year the beings grow here; in the year [they] go to decease.

A view that time is death formed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads reappears during the epic period when *kāla* becomes one of the name-epithets of Yama, god of death, and by itself is seen as an unstoppable force that destroys the living and annihilates the universe at the end of the cosmic cycle. In the Ṛgveda it can be observed that Varuṇa is closely connected with both time and death (see 1.3 of this thesis), as well as, on the Indo-Iranian level, Zurvān,

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[180] See Schayer 1938: 6.

the Zorastrian deity of time and death (see 2.1). However, this passage of the BĀU is the first instance when time's relationship with death is rather explicit. It is depicted as both a power of creation, because death is portrayed as primordial deity that creates the universe and time/the year is death's "semen", and as a potential or force of destruction, because a potency of death is, obviously, the one to *cause* death.

Finally, the year is perceived as both a child and progenitor of Speech, which might be seen as a precursor of Bhartṛhari's philosophy: for Bhartṛhari, time is a creative power of the eternal Word-Brahman (therefore it is something that originates from speech) and simultaneously a force that organizes speech into coherent sentences, thus, speech originates from time.

2.2.3. Two types of Time – two types of *Brahman*

The view that time has two forms – eternity and temporality – does not disappear after the Atharvaveda. One of the later Upaniṣads – Maitrī-Upaniṣad[181] 6.15 thus expresses the view that *Brahman*, the Absolute Ultimate reality, has two forms:

> *dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe kālaś cākālaś cātha yaḥ prāgādityāt so*
> *'kālo 'kalo 'tha ya ādityād yaḥ sa kālaḥ sakalaḥ sakalasya vā*
> *etad rūpaṃ yat saṃvatsaraḥ saṃvatsarāt khalvevemāḥ prajāḥ*
> *prajāyante saṃvatsareṇeha vai jātā vivardhante saṃvatsare pratyastaṃ yanti |*
> Indeed, there are two forms of *Brahman*: Time and Non-Time. Then, the one that is before the Sun is non-Time with no parts. And the one from the Sun is Time with parts. The year is a form of the one with parts. These creatures are born from the year. With the year the beings grow here; in the year [they] go to decease.

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[181] Also known as Maitrāyaṇa-, Maitrāyaṇī- or Maitrāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad.

Before the quoted fragment, in MU 6.3, the idea of the two forms of *Brahman* is presented. We learn that *Brahman* is divided into the embodied *(mūrta)* and non-embodied *(amūrta)*:

> *dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtaṃ cāmūrtaṃ ca | atha yan mūrtaṃ tad asatyam yad amūrtaṃ tat satyam tad brahma taj jyotiḥ yaj jotiḥ sa ādityaḥ*

> Indeed, there are two forms of *Brahman*: embodied and non-embodied. The embodied one is non-truth, the non-embodied one is the truth. It is *Brahman*, it is light. The light is the sun.

The concept as well as the way of expressing it (to the extent that passages from MU look like partial quotes from BĀU) stems from BĀU, a much earlier Upaniṣad than MU, that mentions the two types of Brahman in BĀU 2.3.1-3:

> *dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe |*
> *mūrtaṃ caivāmūrtaṃ ca |*
> *martyaṃ cāmṛtaṃ ca |*
> *sthitaṃ ca yac ca |*
> *sac ca tyaṃ ca || 2.3.1 ||*
> *tad etan mūrtaṃ yad anyad vāyoś cāntarikṣāc ca | etan martyam |*
> *etat sthitam | etat sat <...> || 2.3.2 ||*
> *athāmūrtam | vāyuś cāntarikṣaś ca | etad amṛtam |*
> *etad yat | etat tyam <...> || 2.3.3 ||*

> Indeed, there are two forms of *Brahman*: embodied and non-embodied, mortal and immortal, still (motionless) and moving, existing *(sat)* and That *(tyam)*[182].
> The embodied is the one that is different from the wind (=air) and the intermediate space. It is mortal, it is still, it is existing *(sat)*.
> And the non-embodied [is the one that is] the wind and the intermediate space. It is immortal, it is moving, it is That *(tyam)*.

Another detail relevant for the interpretation of all the quoted passages is that in MU 6.14 we find a statement that discusses time that, just like *Brahman,* is divided into the embodied *(mūrti)* and the non-embodied *(amūrtimat)*:

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[182] *Sat* and *tyam* are the parts of the word *satyam* – "reality" or "the real". *Sat* signifies that which exists, and *tyam* is that which beyond existence, i.e., beyond the phenomenal world.

kālāt sravante bhūtāni kālād vṛddhiṃ prayānti ca |
kale cāstaṃ niyacchanti kālo mūrtir amūrtimān ||

From time spring all the beings, and from time they proceed to grow.
In time they come to their end. Time – the embodied and non-embodied.

In addition to pronouncing the two forms of time, this verse from the MU describes time as a source of creation, existence and destruction of all beings – a view typical for the epics and the *kālavāda* system discussed in Chapter III. The verse may very well be a quote or a partial quote from the epics, considering that MU as a late Upaniṣad likely is contemporary to the epics. This is supported by the fact that the verse is composed in a typical "epic" meter, the *śloka.* However, the final part of the verse – *kālo mūrtir amūrtimān* – is not very much connected with what comes before it and may come from a different source, perhaps added by the MU itself.

On the basis of all passages quoted above, it can be said that the Upaniṣadic framework parallels the two forms of *Brahman* with the two forms of time. The first form of *Brahman* that is immortal, undivided, and non-embodied; called "non-time" and situated "before the sun" (i.e., "in the highest heaven", like the immortal and therefore eternal time of the Atharvaveda), matches the non-embodied time-eternity that possesses the same characteristics. Remarkably, this absolute immortal Brahman is called "the truth" (*satya*) – a notion that is very close to particular connotations of the Vedic *ṛtá*. The second form of *Brahman* that manifests itself in the created phenomenal world; that is embodied, divided, and unfolds "from the sun," has its counterpart in the equally embodied time-temporality represented by the year that contains units, creates and controls all living beings, and constitutes a cycle.

The division between the two types of time is therefore preserved from the Ṛgveda that has *ṛtá* and *ṛtú* and the Atharvaveda that distinguishes phenomenal time and eternity "in-the-highest-heaven" to the Upaniṣads that specify the two types of time as the "embodied" and "non-embodied".

2.2.4. Other perceptions of time

In addition to the views on time analyzed above, the Upaniṣads express different other ideas regarding the year, time, and its units. Some of these ideas definitely influenced temporal views of different schools of Indian philosophy.

In general, the late Vedic texts have two notions that define time in a broad sense: in the earliest *brāhmaṇas* and *upaniṣads* it is primarily the year *(saṃvatsara)*, whereas the later texts mostly use time *(kāla)* as an abstract and unifying notion. The year then is understood as a complete and therefore ideal ritual cycle and a representation of the transitory time. The texts are well aware that the year contains multiple smaller intervals (which is not a novelty and was understood from the RV on) and that all the units are the constituent parts of what is called time.[183] The past, present, and future are also understood as 'times', i.e., *kāla* encompasses them as well. That is evident from the discussion of 'the three times' in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1.1:

> *oṃ ity etad akṣaram idaṃ sarvaṃ tasyopavyākhyānaṃ*
> *bhūtaṃ bhavad bhaviṣyad iti sarvam oṃkāra eva |*
> *yac cānyat trikālātītaṃ tad apy oṃkāra eva ||*
>
> OM! All this [world] is that [imperishable] syllable! [This] explains it:
> the past, the present, the future – all [that] is only OM-sound.

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[183] For various constituent parts of the year and time as presented in the late Vedic texts see BĀU 3.8.3-9, BĀU 3.9.5, BĀU 6.3.15-16, ŚB 5.1.2.9, ChU 4.17.5, MU 6.14, MU 6.33, AitB 2.17.2, AitB 1.1.14, etc.

Any other thing that is outside the three times – is still only OM-sound.

Here it can be seen that 'the three times' are indeed the past, present, and future, and each of them is understood as a specific *kāla*, time. The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.5 also mentions the three times without explaining what they are, simply by stating that Rudra is 'beyond the three times' – *paras trikālād.* What lies beyond or outside the three times, is, of course, the unmanifested ultimate realty, i.e., *Brahman* personified by Rudra in the case of the ŚU. In temporal terms, the 'the three times' represent empirical temporality, and whatever is beyond them is eternity.

A Ṛgvedic idea that time is closely associated with the sun and that the sun is the measure of time finds its embodiment in the Upaniṣads as well. The following passage is found in the Maitrī-Upaniṣad 6.14:

> *sūryo yoniḥ kālasya*
> *tasyaitadrūpaṃ yan nimeṣādikālāt sambhṛtaṃ*
> *dvādaśātmakaṃ vatsaram*
>
> The source of time is the sun.
> That which is produced from time [identical with] the moments, etc., has this form. It is the year containing twelve [months].

If we take an earlier Vedic meaning of the word *yoni,* it can also be translated as 'place' or 'abode', so it can mean that time is either located in the sun or produced from it. In both cases, it is clear that the time whose source is the sun is the transitory time divided into units, and not the undivided time-eternity. It is the embodied time named at the very end of this passage (MU 6.14); the one that is 'from the sun ... with parts' (*ādityād yaḥ sa kālaḥ sakalaḥ* – MU 6.15), associated by the Maitrī-Upaniṣad with the year (that does not represent eternity in the late Upaniṣads) and producing creatures and events in the phenomenal world. It is

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evident from MU 6.16 that the time whose source is the sun is the transitory embodied or formed time that can be experienced by the living beings:

> *vigrahavān eṣa kālaḥ sindhurājaḥ prajānām eṣa tatsthaḥ savitākhyo*
> *yasmād eveme candrarkṣagraha saṃvatsarādayaḥ sūyante*
> *athaibhyaḥ sarvamidamatra vā*

> This formed (*vigrahavat*) time is the ocean of living beings. It is called the sun [Savitr̥, the Impeller] that stays there; the one from which the moon, the stars, the planets, the year, etc., are produced. And from these all this [world] that is here [originates].

Remarkably, the text while referring to the yearly course of the sun adds the following statement: *etasyāgneyam ardham ardhaṃ vāruṇam* – 'a half of it is of Agni, a half is of Varuṇa.' Thus, the year is divided between Agni and Varuṇa, both of whom are very closely associated with time in the R̥gveda and, as shown in Chapter I, represent the two types of time: Agni (a deity of the northern course of the sun during the bright and hot seasons) is in charge of transitory time-temporality and the ritual sequence, whereas Varuṇa's domain is time-eternity (and the southern, i.e., turned in the direction of the world of the dead, course of the sun during the darker rainy period).

The Maitrī-Upaniṣad also suggests that the movement of the sun is a measure of time. After describing the passage and the two courses of the sun, MU 6.14 states:

> *saukṣmyatvād etat pramāṇam anenaiva pramīyate hi kālo*
> *na vinā pramāṇena prameyasyopalabdhiḥ*

> Because of [its] thinness, this is the measure; only by this [movement of the sun] time is measured.
> Without a measure the thing to be measured [can]not [be] perceived.

It can therefore be seen that the only means of measuring and observing time (which is otherwise 'too thin') is observing and measuring the movement of the sun. This view is later adopted by practically every philosophical school and then developed by some of them (e.g.,

the Vaiśeṣika) further into an idea that time is a thin imperceptible substance whose existence

must be inferred (see chapter 3.2.1).

Overall, both types of time are seen in the later *upaniṣads* as related to the sun. The

eternal immeasurable time is viewed as the sun itself, and the phenomenal time comes from

the sun and can be observed and calculated based on the sun's movement.

In the famous dialog of Yājñavalkya with Gargī in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad we

find an intriguing statement about the nature of and the relationship within the time-space

continuum. It is repeated twice in the dialog – first in BĀU 3.8.4 and then in BĀU 3.8.7:

> *yad ūrdhvaṃ gārgi divo yad avāk pṛthivyā yad antarā dyāvāpṛthivī*
> *ime yad bhūtaṃ ca bhavac ca bhaviṣyac cety ācakṣata*
> *ākāśe tad otaṃ ca protaṃ ceti ||*
>
> That which is above the sky, o Gargī, that which is below the earth,
> that which is between the sky and the earth,
> those that are known as the past, the present, and the future–
> are woven outward and onward on space (*ākāśa*).

From this passage as well as from the whole dialog that repeats the same formulae multiple

times, we cannot say exactly what it means. It is, however, clear that 'the past, the present,

and the future' refer to the empirical time that is deemed divided into these states. The other

things enumerated in the passage, e.g., 'that which is above the sky,' etc., are the constituent

parts of the created universe. The whole passage may imply that empirical time is created

from space or by means of space (the idea later adopted by the Sāṃkhya school of thought). It

also establishes the unity of the time-space continuum and likely indicates that the basis of the

whole continuum is space (*ākāśa*). As stated in BĀU 3.8.11, *ākāśa* is 'woven outward and

onward' on the Imperishable (*akṣara*), which is a term that in the Upaniṣads describes the

ultimate reality (*Brahman*) and the sacred syllable OM. Thus, it might follow (not surprisingly

for the upaniṣadic worldview) that the ultimate reality is the foundation of everything or perhaps a loom where all in the universe is made.

Additionally, an expression 'woven outward and onward' (*otaṃ ca protaṃ ca*) can be related to the topic of time if we consider it within the Indo-European framework: in many Indo-European mythologies (including the mythological systems of South Asia) the motif of weaving and spinning is connected with time and fate[184]. Weaving or spinning a thread equals to *creating* time or to an act of shaping/determining fate of a person. In the considered context, weaving can signify creation in general and describe the "interwoven" structure of the universe (the dialog enumerates different elements, worlds, etc., all of which are "woven"), however, temporal connotations are probably still there, so the whole metaphor can suggest that time (in this case, the empirical time) is a thread that weaves the phenomenal world on the loom of *Brahman.*

Finally, the Maitrī-Upaniṣad 1.4 has the following statement indirectly related to time:

> *sarvaṃ cedaṃ kṣayiṣṇu paśyāmo yatheme*
> *daṃśamaśakādayas tṛṇavanaspatayodbhūtapradhvaṃsinaḥ |*

> And all this is perishing – [so] we observe –
> just like these flies, mosquitos, and similar; [just like] the grass and trees.
> [Everything that] arises [then] goes to decay.

Stcherbatsky sees in this passage a precursor of an essential Buddhist idea of the transitory nature of the universe[185] and therefore implies that this is the origin of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness. Although the universe is definitely described here as impermanent and transitory, this passage, provided that the MU is a later Upaniṣad probably concurrent with the

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[184] This motif and its connections with time are considered in detail in Chapter III.

[185] See Stcherbatsky 1995: 46.

epics, is more likely to be influenced by the Buddhist ideas than to be their source or predecessor.

2.2.5. New Time Lords

By the time of formation of the oldest Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, the importance of Varuṇa diminishes and his functions as a deity of time are mostly forgotten. The Atharvavedic Kāla, on the other hand, does not become a separate deity that can personify all the functions of time and remains more of an abstract notion than a mythological figure. Consequently, two new "time lords" are established in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads: the first one is Prajāpati who becomes associated with the year starting from the earliest texts of this category, and the second one is Rudra[186] – a fierce Vedic deity of storm, indomitable wind, and, ultimately, death.

Prajāpati's association with the year is attested in many texts, beginning from the ŚB and BĀU. For example, BĀU 1.5.14 states the following:

> *sa eṣa saṃvatsaraḥ prajāpatiṣ ṣoḍaśakalaḥ |*
> *tasya rātraya eva pañcadaśa kalā |*
> *dhruvaivāsya ṣoḍaśī kalā |*
> *sa rātribhir evā ca pūryate 'pa ca kṣīyate |*
> *so 'māvāsyāṃ rātrim etayā ṣoḍaśyā kalayā sarvam idaṃ prāṇabhṛd*
> *anupraviśya tataḥ prātar jāyate |*
>
> This Prajāpati is the year, [he] has sixteen parts. His fifteen parts are the nights, his sixteenth part is permanent. He waxes and wanes through the nights. Having entered everything that breathes by this sixteenth part on the night of the new moon, he is born [again] in the morning.

In this passage, Prajāpati is identified with the lunar year and with the moon that has sixteen digits. When the moon wanes during the period between the full moon and the new moon

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[186] In the later mythology Rudra's functions are inherited by Śiva who absorbs Vedic Rudra and becomes a new "time lord".

(i.e., for a fortnight), one digit vanishes every night, however, the final, sixteenth digit that is considered to be "permanent" remains, so the moon is "reborn" from it, i.e., it starts waxing on the night of the new moon. Both Prajāpati and the year are envisioned here as an eternal never-ending cycle identified with the moon, which is, as discussed above, a vessel filled with *amṛta* – immortality. Interestingly, in the very next part, i.e., BĀU 1.5.15, a human who understands the true nature of Prajāpati is said to become the year himself: *yo vai sa saṃvatsaraḥ prajāpatiḥ ṣoḍaśakalo 'yam eva sa yo 'yam evaṃvit puruṣaḥ |* – 'A man who truly comprehends this is the year; [he is] Prajāpati of sixteen parts.' This sentence should be understood as a promise of immortality to the person who possesses this secret knowledge: only the one who knows (i.e., possesses) the immortal year can obtain immortality.

ŚB 10.4.2.1 simultaneously identifies Prajāpati with the year, the fire representing the sun, and with the moon: *saṃvatsaro vai prajāpatiragniḥ somo rājā candramāḥ* – 'Prajāpati truly is the year. [He is] Agni, he is king Soma, the moon.' Praśna Upaniṣad 1.9 also equals Prajāpati to the year, however, this time it is clearly the solar year because the two courses of the sun are mentioned: *saṃvatsaro vai prajāpatiḥ | tasyāyane dakṣiṇaṃ cottaraṃ ca |* – 'Prajāpati truly is the year. He has the two courses (*ayana*): the southern and the northern.'

In the Praśna Upaniṣad 1.12-13, Prajāpati is further identified with other time units, i.e., with the month, day, and night, although in this case the months seem to be lunar with dark and white fortnights:

> *māso vai prajāpatiḥ | tasya kṛṣṇapakṣa eva rayiḥ śuklaḥ prāṇaḥ |*
> *tasmād eta ṛṣayaḥ śukla iṣṭaṃ kurvantītara itarasmin || 12 ||*
> *ahorātro vai prajāpatiḥ | tasyāhareva prāṇo rātrireva rayiḥ |*
> *<...>|| 13 ||*

> 12. Prajāpati truly is the month. His dark half (fortnight) is matter, and the white [one] is breath. Because of this, the *ṛṣis* perform the sacrifice during the

white [half], and the others – during the other one.

13. Prajāpati truly is the day and night. Of that, breath is the day; matter is the night.

Associations of Prajāpati with either solar or lunar year and sometimes with their components are widespread in the Brāhmaṇas, e.g., ŚB 5.1.2.9 calls Prajāpati 'the year that has five seasons' (cf. with Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad 2.9: *pañcamukho 'si prajāpatiḥ* – 'you are Prajāpati who has five mouths'). The following account is given in AitB 1.1.14: *saptadaśo vai prajāpatir dvādaśa māsāḥ pañcartavo hemantaśiśirayoḥ samāsena | tāvān saṃvatsaraḥ saṃvatsaraḥ prajāpatiḥ* – 'Prajāpati truly is of seventeen [parts]. [These are] twelve months [and] five seasons, summing from the winter to the cool [season]. This much is the year; Prajāpati is the year.' AitB 2.17.2 states that Prajāpati is both the year and sacrifice, establishing a direct connection between the deity and the sacrificial cycle whose ultimate length is, of course, a year: *trīṇi ca śatāni ṣaṣṭiś cānūcyāni yajñakāmasya | trīṇi ca vai śatāni ṣaṣṭiś ca saṃvatsarasyāhāni tāvān saṃvatsaraḥ saṃvatsaraḥ prajāpatiḥ prajāpatir yajña ||* – 'Three hundred and sixty [verses] should be pronounced by the one who wants to sacrifice. [For] three hundred and sixty days are in the year. This much is the year; Prajāpati is the year; the sacrifice is Prajāpati.' Multiple similar passages are found in TB, AitB, JB, GB, and so on.

This subject is very well researched and there is no need to dwell on it in detail here. An exhaustive discussion that includes all the relevant quotes from the texts – primarily, from the Brāhmaṇas – is found in J. Gonda's book "Prajāpati and the year."[187] The identification of Prajāpati with the year likely has its roots in the ritual role of Prajāpati in the soma sacrifice as well as in the horse sacrifice lasting for a year, and in his function of a god-creator identified with Puruṣa, golden embryo and other mythological characters that are seen as a single source

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[187] See Gonda 1996.

of creation. As noted on multiple occasions, creation in the myths involving these characters

is performed either during the period of a year or by means of the year and other time units.

The year and time, *kāla*, are also seen as creative force or deity, therefore Prajāpati's

identification with the year is not surprising.

Another deity that emerges as a time lord in the later Upaniṣads is Rudra. In the very

beginning of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (ŚU 1.1-2), we find a series of questions about the

true nature of the universe, its regulating power, and the cause of the Ultimate reality –

Brahman:

> *kiṃkāraṇam*[188] *brahma kutaḥ sma jātā jīvāmaḥ kena kva ca saṃpratiṣṭhāḥ*
> *adhiṣṭhitāḥ kena sukhetareṣu vartāmahe brahmavido vyavasthām* || 1 ||
> *kālaḥ svabhāvo niyatir yadṛcchā bhūtāni yoniḥ puruṣeti cintyam* |
>
> What is the cause [of] *Brahman*? Where were we born from? By what [power]
> do we live? And where do we continue? By whom are we regulated, o knowers
> of *Brahman*, [when] we turn around [experiencing] pleasure and other [things
> according to] the state [of things]?
> Should we think [it is] time *(kāla)*, [or] inherent nature, [or] fate, [or] chance,
> [or] the elements, [or] the womb, [or] *Puruṣa*?

All the questions asked in ŚU 1.1, apparently, have a singular answer. ŚU 1.2 provides

multiple variants of the answer, including time as a possible cause of the Ultimate reality (i.e.,

the Ultimate reality itself) and a power that produces and regulates human life. However, in

the very same passage it is stated that even a combination of the enumerated things cannot be

the answer: 'Even a combination of those [is not that] because the Self *(ātman)* exists. But

even the Self is not the master of what causes pleasure and pain' (*saṃyoga eṣāṃ na tv*

ātmabhāvād ātmā hy anīśaḥ sukhaduḥkhahetoḥ || – ŚU 1.2.) Thus, clearly being aware of the

concept that considers time the highest power in the universe, ŚU gives a different answer to

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[188] *kiṃkāraṇam* instead of *kiṃ kāraṇam* as explained in Olivelle 1998: 614.

all the questions posed in the first stanza and points to the power that governs time as well as other things. ŚU 1.3 states that '[there is only] one who stands above all these causes known as time, the Self [, etc.]' – *yaḥ kāraṇāni nikhilāni tāni kālātmayuktāny adhitiṣṭhaty ekaḥ ||*.

In ŚU 1.8, the answer is given directly: *saṃyuktam etat kṣaram akṣaraṃ ca vyaktāvyaktaṃ bharate viśvam īśaḥ |* – 'the Lord holds all this joined together – the perishable and imperishable, revealed [and] unrevealed.' Thus, the Lord *(iśa)* is a singular cause above all causes that controls, in particular, time.[189] In the third *adhyāya* of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad we learn the name of this Lord: it is Rudra who is described as the immeasurable all-encompassing ultimate deity. He emerges in the ŚU as the absolute Lord of the universe and also as a new "time lord". Rudra's epithet in ŚU 6.2 is *kālakāra*[190]*,* the "maker of time":

> *yenāvṛtaṃ nityam idaṃ hi sarvaṃ jñaḥ kālakāro guṇī sarvavidyaḥ |*
> *teneśitaṃ karma vivartate ha pṛthivyāptejo 'nilakhāni cintyam ||*
>
> By whom all this is always encompassed – the wise maker of time, endowed with [all] qualities, the all-knowing one – by his wish the action unrolls – [to be] thought of as the earth, water, fire, air, and space.

Noticeably, the act of creation performed by Rudra as the "maker of time" is said to be "unrolling" (*vivartate*), which is a derivate from the root *vṛt*- analyzed in Chapter I of this dissertation as having many temporal connotations. Being the maker of time, Rudra establishes the temporal order that causes everything in the universe to "unroll" properly. In ŚU 6.16 where the whole *pada* containing the *kālakāra* epithet is repeated, it is said that

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[189] Remarkably, ŚU while discarding and even condemning (in ŚU 6.1 – see chapter 3.1.1) the idea of time as the ultimate force that moves and governs the universe and considering *Brahman* or "Lord" the cause of all things, describes the "wheel of *Brahman*" that is very similar to the Vedic wheel of the year, *ṛtá*, and time – see chapter 2.2.6.

[190] Quoting the text as in Olivelle 1998: 430 and 432 for ŚU 6.2 and 6.16. Different editions have *kālakāla*, which can be translated either as "time of times" or "death/destroyer of time".

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Rudra is *saṃsāra-mokṣa-sthiti-bandha-hetuḥ*, i.e., 'the cause of the binding, staying, and liberation [within the cycle of] *saṃsāra*,' which indicates that he is in charge of the cycle of rebirth that is inherently connected with and structured by the temporal cycle. Rudra therefore is envisioned as the master of the empirical time-temporality. This kind of time is the instrument by which he creates and governs all the processes in the universe. ŚU 6.3 continues to dwell on Rudra's associations with time and his role in the process of creation:

> *tat karma kṛtvā vinivartya bhūyas tattvasya tattvena sametya yogam |*
> *ekena dvābhyāṃ tribhir aṣṭabhir vā kālena caivātmaguṇaiś ca sūkṣmaiḥ ||*
>
> Having completed this work [and] having annihilated it again; having made a union with the reality of the real – by means of the one, the two, the three, or the eight[191], and then by time and by the subtle qualities of *ātman.*

Despite the syntactic difficulties of this verse (i.e., its structure with multiple gerunds without a finite verb and a string of numerals and nouns in instrumental case), it solidifies Rudra's function as creator and maybe also destroyer of the universe. He "works" with major constituent principles of the world and, apparently, structures them by means of time, thus achieving creation. It can be said that time-temporality is Rudra's power, thus, something that belongs to him.

As the ultimate divine being who has time in his possession, Rudra is said to be "beyond the three times". ŚU 6.5-6 gives the following interesting (although still employing the same "impossible syntax" as in ŚU 6.3 and therefore a bit ambiguous) account that further

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[191] Syrkin 1992, III: 283 understands 'the one' as *puruṣa*, 'the two' as *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* or the manifest and unmanifest, 'the three' as the three *guṇas,* and 'the eight' as "the five elements, mind, discriminating intelligence and self-awareness". In other words, these are the major principles of the universe whose interaction produces the manyfold of the created phenomena. This classification is similar to that of the *sāṃkhya* school of philosophy. Olivelle 1998: 627 calls this verse "a mess with an impossible syntax" but generally gives the same interpretation of the numbers while stating that "the meaning of the numbers is unclear, but they most certainly derive from early Sāṃkhya speculation".

elucidates Rudra's functions as "time lord":

ādiḥ sa saṃyoganimittahetuḥ paras trikālād akalo 'pi dṛṣṭaḥ |
taṃ viśvarūpaṃ bhavabhūtam īḍyaṃ devaṃ svacittastham upāsya pūrvam ||
sa vṛkṣakālākṛtibhiḥ paro 'nyo yasmāt prapañcaḥ parivartate 'yaṃ |
dharmāvahaṃ pāpanudaṃ bhageśaṃ jñātvātmastham amṛtaṃ viśvadhāma ||

He who is the beginning, the cause of causality and connection; [who, being] beyond the three times, is seen even though he is without parts.
Having first honored him, the laudable god who dwells in [our] own heart, who has all the forms, who is the origin of all beings, –
Having comprehended him who bears dharma, the lord of [good] share who removes evil, the one abiding in *ātman*, immortality whose abode is the universe, –
He is the one who is supreme and different from those that have the form of time-tree; the one from whom this [manyfold] manifested world unfolds.

The three times that Rudra surpasses in these passages are the past, present, and future, which is, again, a representation of the transitory time divided into units and states. Rudra himself is called 'immortality whose abode is the universe' (*amṛtaṃ viśvadhāma*) who is 'seen even though he is without parts' (*akalo 'pi dṛṣṭaḥ*). Thus, he is eternity – the undivided time without parts that can be seen when it embodies and takes the shape of transitory time. Rudra is also distinct from 'those that have the form of time-tree' (*vṛkṣakālākṛti*). The time-tree is the temporal world tree discussed in detail in chapter 3.1.3.2. Here it represents again different forms of temporality of the manifested phenomenal world and the phenomenal world itself structured by this time-temporality. Rudra is perceived as both the master of temporality and as eternity embodied. A true time lord unifying the two types of time.

ŚU 4.15 also emphasizes that Rudra governs and protects the world at the proper moment and that he overcomes death:

sa eva kāle bhuvanasya goptā viśvādhipaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ |
yasmin yuktā brahmarṣayo devatāś ca tam evaṃ jñātvā
mṛtyupāśāṃś chinatti ||

At the [right] time, he truly is the herder/protector of the world. The overlord of all, hidden in all living beings,
in whom the divine sages and gods are united.
Having comprehended him, one cuts the nooses of death.

Here Rudra again is shown as the master of temporality who knows a proper moment for any action. The word *kāle* in loc. sg. can be interpreted here exactly as *r̥tú* in the RV, i.e., the right time or opportune moment in a sequence of events. On the other hand, it can be understood as the moment of death or destruction, like in the epics, where *kāla* often signifies death. Rudra is also shown as an embodiment and source of immortality because those who know his true nature are said to be able to cut 'the nooses of death.' The mention of the noose of death conceptually connects Rudra with Yama and Varuṇa – the two bearers of the noose who are associated with death and time.

The final example from the ŚU that possibly illustrates Rudra's connection with time is found in ŚU 3.2. Unfortunately, the verse is severely corrupt[192], and there is no guarantee that even the part that appears coherent can be interpreted accurately. However, here is a fragment of the verse that might be useful in the context of the mythology of Rudra:

> *eko hi rudro <…> |*
> *pratyaṅ janāṃs tiṣṭhati <…> antakāle saṃsr̥jya viśvā bhuvanāni gopāḥ ||*
>
> Singular is Rudra… Having brought together all beings, he, the protector, stands [turned] towards people at the time of the end.

This verse might be expressing the same idea as ŚU 4.15: Rudra as a protector of beings at their final moment (*antakāle*) or, possibly, at the destruction of the universe. A certain parallelism and the usage of similar words in both verses (cf. *kāle bhuvanasya goptā* and

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[192] I omit a part of the verse and include a *saṃdhi* emendation by Rau 1964: 44 quoting the text as in Olivelle 1998: 420. For a discussion of corruptions in this verse, see Olivelle 1998: 620-621.

antakāle ... bhuvanāni gopāḥ) might be seen as a confirmation of this interpretation. Olivelle, however, translates *antakāle* as 'at the end of time'[193], and so does Syrkin[194]. The reasons for this translation are unclear, provided that *antakāle* is a genitive *tatpuruṣa* compound whose standard interpretation is *antasya kāle* 'at the time of the end/death,' whereas 'at the end of time' should be *kālānte*, i.e., *kālasya ante*. In the non-amended version of the verse, *antakāle* is preceded by *saṃcukoca,* 3sg. perfect from *sam-kuc-* 'to destroy/withdraw,' which is omitted by Olivelle following Rau 1964: 44. I also consider it a text corruption because it doesn't fit into the sentence syntactically tense-wise. Syrkin translates it though, rendering the whole *pada* as 'having created all worlds, he, the shepherd, withdraws [them] at the end of time.'[195]

Along these lines, if we understand *antakāle* as 'at the end of time,' and would take a hint from the meaning (but not from the actual grammatical form) of the verb *sam-kuc-*, then this verse might indicate that Rudra destroys (but also protects!) all living beings at the end of time, which likely is a formation of an idea of cosmic cycles rather than that of a linear time that ends. It can also follow that at the destruction of the universe (perhaps at the end of a cosmic cycle) Rudra, who is time-eternity, destroys time-temporality together with the phenomenal world, which agrees with the view expressed in MBh 1.1.188 where 'time that burns living creatures down is in turn quenched by Time' (*nirdahantaṃ prajāḥ kālaṃ kālaḥ*

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[193] See Olivelle 1998: 421.

[194] Syrkin 1992, III: 120.

[195] Syrkin 1992, III: 120.

śamayate punaḥ).[196] Although this interpretation is tempting, I think it is grammatically unlikely if not impossible, based on the text with all the variants of emendations we currently have.

To conclude, it can be said that in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad Rudra clearly arises as a new time lord figure. He incorporates time-temporality, by means of which he creates, organizes, and possibly destroys the universe. He also embodies time-eternity that is beyond the empirical world of transitory time. In the mythology of Hinduism that is being developed synchronically with the creation of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, Rudra progresses into the cosmic and all-pervading deity Śiva who, in addition to his other functions, becomes a personification of time and death and whose epithet is Mahākāla – the Great Time.

The emergence of such time lords as Prajāpati and Rudra in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads indicates a new tendency in comprehending time: the idea of two times is still present, however, both types of time are ascribed to the ultimate deity who is also the creator. Time-temporality becomes a creative power of this deity, whereas the deity itself is identified with time-eternity.

2.2.6. The Wheel

A prominent Vedic image – that of the wheel of the year – does not disappear in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, however, in many cases it changes significantly and acquires different meanings.

In the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 2.419 the wheel remains unnamed directly (the word *cakra* is not used) but implied by the usage of the compound *rathanābhi* – 'the nave of the chariot',

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[196] For discussion, see chapter 3.2.1.

which, of course, means the nave *of the wheel* of the chariot. The wheel is compared with the year, exactly like the Vedic wheel:

> *yathā vai rathanābhāv arāḥ pratiṣṭhitā*
> *evaṃ vai saṃvatsare sarve mṛtyavaḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ |*
>
> Just like the spokes are fixed in the nave of the chariot[-wheel], this very way all deaths are fixed in the year.

However, quite differently from the wheel described in the RV, this wheel of the year is represented as the wheel of death, so this passage constitutes one more instance of identification of the year with death in the Brāhmaṇa texts. Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 20.1 gives a more traditional description: the year is said to be the wheel of the gods[197] (*devacakram vā etat pariplavam yat saṃvatsaraḥ | tadamṛtam |* – 'The year is that revolving wheel of the gods. That is immortality'[198]).

In several other passages from the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads (e.g., AitB 5.30.1, KU 1.5.4a, etc.) the wheel is present in a somewhat "reduced" form: the year is not represented as a wheel, however, it is said that its wheels are the day and the night and by these two wheels a sacrificer can traverse the year.

Even in the earliest Upaniṣads, such as BĀU, a substantial modification in the meaning of the wheel is observed. BĀU 2.5.15 compares *Ātman*[199], the Self, with the chariot-

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[197] The wheel of the gods is also mentioned in TS 7.4.11.2. It is not called the wheel of the year but from the context it is clear that it actually is the year: it is said that a person who performs a six-days sacrifice and mounts the wheel of the gods finds a firm foundation in the six seasons (see Gonda 1984: 51).

[198] Cf. with AVŚ 19.53.2: "This Time drives seven wheels. Seven are his naves. Immortality [*amṛta*] is His axle."

[199] *Ātman* – "the Self" that is, according to the doctrine of the Upaniṣads, is one and the same with *Brahman*, the ultimate reality.

wheel (again, not named directly but implied by the usage of two compounds – *rathanābhi*,

'the nave of the chariot', and *rathanemi*, 'the rim of the chariot'):

> *sa vā ayam ātmā sarveṣāṃ adhipatiḥ sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ rājā |*
> *tad yathā rathanābhau ca rathanemau cārāḥ sarve samarpitāḥ |*
> *evam evāsminn ātmani sarvāṇi bhūtāni sarve devāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve prāṇāḥ*
> *sarva eta ātmānaḥ samarpitāḥ ||*

> This very *Ātman* is the ruler of everything and king of all beings. Like all the
> spokes are fixed in the nave and the rim of a chariot[-wheel], this very way all
> beings are fixed in *Ātman* – all the gods, all the worlds, all the breaths, and all
> these bodies *(ātman)*.

The wheel therefore comes to signify the ultimate reality that encompasses all living beings.

This new meaning is not at all unexpected: *Ātman,* as the ultimate Self, is beyond time and

space, it is timeless eternity, whereas the living beings reside in the phenomenal world, i.e., in

the realm of temporality. The wheel of the year in RV 1.164, as was discussed in 1.2.1,

represents both eternity and temporality, and, as *r̥tá* that organizes the universe, is also the

highest reality – at least in the R̥gvedic terms.

In the ŚU the wheel is interpreted differently. ŚU 1.4 describes it as follows:

> *tam ekanemiṃ trivr̥taṃ ṣoḍaśāntaṃ śatārdhāraṃ viṃśatipratyarābhiḥ |*
> *aṣṭakaiḥ ṣaḍbhir viśvarūpaikapāśaṃ trimārgabhedaṃ*
> *dvinimittaikamoham || 1.4 ||*

> It is of one rim, three parts, sixteen tips, fifty spokes with twenty intermediate
> spokes.
> With six [sets of] eight, it is of one noose that has many forms, of three distinct
> forms, with one delusion from two causes.

The numbers of different divisions and features of the wheel in this verse are not the same as

numbers of features and parts of the wheel of the year. These numbers, however, correspond

to the traditional understanding of the structure of the universe in Sāṃkhya: the rim is *prakr̥ti*

or primordial nature; the three parts are the three guṇas or qualities, and so on.[200] The whole wheel is likely to represent the created universe, the world of phenomena, but not the ultimate reality, *Brahman*, considering that one of the features that the wheel has is "one delusion from two causes". However, in ŚU 1.6 the wheel is said to be "the wheel of *Brahman*" (*brahmacakra*):

> *sarvājīve sarvasaṃsthe bṛhante tasmin haṃso bhrāmyate brahmacakre |*
> *pṛthag ātmānaṃ preritāraṃ ca matvā juṣṭas tatas tenāmṛtatvam eti ||*

> In this great wheel of *Brahman* that gives life to all [and] where all abide, the goose moves around. When he differentiates himself from the impeller, delighted by that then he goes to immortality.

The compound *brahmacakra* here can be interpreted as a *tatpuruṣa* – '*Brahman*'s wheel' or as a *karmadhāraya* – 'the wheel that is *Brahman*'. Provided how the wheel is described, the second interpretation is unlikely: the "goose", i.e., in this case, an individual self or soul[201], that circles in the wheel driven by the "impeller", is able to leave the wheel and go to immortality, which means that the wheel itself is not immortality and therefore is not *Brahman*. The goose in the wheel symbolizes *saṃsāra* – a circle of rebirth in the phenomenal, i.e., temporal world that continues until the self is liberated and "goes to immortality", i.e., becomes united with *Brahman* for eternity. This shows that, although the image of the wheel is definitely reinterpreted, all the Vedic mythological motifs and meanings connected with the

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[200] For discussion, see Syrkin 1992, III: 277 and Olivelle 1998: 615-616; for an alternative interpretation, see Johnston 1930: 859-61.

[201] *Haṃsa*, the goose, can also signify God or *Brahman*. A traditional interpretation (found in the MBh and other texts) is that *haṃ-sa* is a sound of human breath (*haṃ* is an inbreath, *sa* is an outbreath). If an individual concentrates on his breath, he can hear "a song of the goose": the syllables rearrange into a line *'ham so* – "I [am] he", which is understood as '*Ātman* is *Brahman*', i.e., as a message of unity of the individual self and the ultimate being.

wheel are still there: the wheel preserves its aspects as a symbol of both eternity and temporality and reemerges during the Epic period as – again! – the wheel of time.

2.2.7. Conclusion

Temporal ideas and mythological motifs found in the Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas can be seen as a continuation and development of what was formulated by the previous tradition, i.e., in the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda. A certain change in the direction is also observed during this period, despite the fact that the Upaniṣadic and Brāhmaṇic views do not represent a coherent system and definitely do not follow one particular direction.

One of the major motifs that continue from the late Ṛgveda to the Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas is that of creation of time-space continuum from the divided body of the sacrificed (primordial being, sacrificial horse, etc.). An important difference in the presentation of time between the Ṛgvedic version of the myth (Puruṣasūkta) and the one found in the Upaniṣads (a description of the sacrificial horse) is that in the Ṛgveda empirical time (in the form of the seasons) is understood as both result and the means of creation (a kind of external power), whereas in the Upaniṣadic passages about the sacrificial horse it is only the product of creation (the body-parts of the horse that become the year, seasons, etc., after the body of the horse is divided) but not its instrument. On the other hand, time, as part of the horse, preexists the sacrifice and hence precedes the act of creation (the ritual is deemed to have cosmic implications: it reenacts creation and *is* the act of creation); transitory time is also depicted as the limbs of the horse and therefore the means of support and movement of the universe. Thus, it can be said that time is still seen as a necessary part of a) the ritual and b) creation.

Moreover, being the body of the sacrificial horse, i.e., its very center, the year/time is perceived as the central and crucial part of the sacrifice and creation.

An idea that time (as the year) is indeed a power/means of creation finds its direct expression in the Upaniṣads as well: the year is said to be semen, i.e., creative potency of the supreme being that is "death and hunger". The year is also created as a result of an intercourse between the supreme being and speech. Therefore it can be said that the year, i.e., time, is 1) a creative potency or energy; 2) this potency of power is produced by and belongs to the supreme being. Unlike *kāla* in the AV, time/year itself is not seen as the supreme being and creator on its own.

Time's association with death becomes much more pronounced in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads than during the early Vedic period. The Upaniṣads see the year as a child of death; in multiple texts the year is directly identified with death. The year is said to be a destroyer of all living beings. This motif is further developed in the epics where, just like Zurvān in Zorastrianism, time becomes death.

Two forms of time – time (temporality) and timelessness (eternity) – reconstructed for the RV and observed in the AV, are preserved in the Upaniṣads and become associated with two forms of *Brahman*: unmanifested *Brahman*-Eternity beyond the created world and manifested *Brahman*-temporality of the phenomenal world.

A Vedic image and mythological motif of the wheel of the year is also preserved during the Brāhmaṇic/Upaniṣadic period but undergoes multiple changes. On the basis of this mythologem a new mythologem or rather an image is constructed: that of the wheel of saṃsāra.

Finally, the new "time lords" are emerging: it is Prajāpati who is identified with the year, and later Rudra, a predecessor of Śiva who becomes the ultimate time lord in Hinduism.

In whole, the views on time observed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads become a foundation for the further development of temporal ideas in the epics, pre-philosophical works, and philosophical discourses of multiple schools.

CHAPTER III

THE EPIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL TIME

Diverse concepts of time dispersed in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads and views found in the RV and AV give rise to a mighty stream of ideas and mythological representations of time during the epic period. In this chapter I analyze how time is envisioned in the epics and pre-philosophical epic-like texts and attempt to summarize or rather to reconstruct a doctrine of *kālavāda* – a teaching specifically dedicated to time whose roots are in the epics. Then I consider further developments of the ideas in certain schools of Indian philosophy, first of all, in Bhartr̥hari's Vakyāpadīya.

3.1. Kālavāda: The Epic Time

3.1.1. What is *kālavāda*? Who are the *kālavādins*?

From multiple (mostly critical) accounts in the oldest Buddhist and Jain literature and several mentions of its followers (or maybe creators) in the epics, we learn, according to Th. Stcherbatsky, about an ancient doctrine or even a philosophical school devoted to time known as *kālavāda*. Stcherbatsky states that the awareness of this system was rather widespread among various schools of thought in Ancient India: quite a few sources not only mention *kālavāda* and its followers, but also suggest the existence of textbooks dedicated to it.[202] Unfortunately, no reliable work exclusively dedicated to this system has survived to our times. Textual excerpts and ideas belonging to the doctrine are dispersed through works of

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[202] See Stcherbatsky 1995, vol. 2: 44-45.

different genres, schools, and periods, therefore, in order to understand the major tenets of *kālavāda,* one needs to reconstruct it on the basis of the surviving fragments. The supposed philosophical doctrine has also been very much neglected by the researchers of Indian philosophy for a simple reason: as put by Ya. Vassilkov, "the sheer bulk of texts relating the main principle of *kālavāda* is contained in the epic, the Mahābhārata."[203] Except for the Māhabhārata, the *kālavāda*-related materials are included in the epic-like didactic texts, usually as a kind of "heterodox teaching" that must be refuted. The most known text of this nature is the Yogavāsiṣṭha – a semi-philosophical treatise (mostly on the Advaita Vedānta) contained within the frame of the Rāmāyaṇa. This text has a rather poetic "refutation of time" that definitely conveys the views of *kālavāda.* Materials belonging to this tradition also (to a lesser extent than in the Mahābhārata) exist in the Rāmāyaṇa and multiple *purāṇa*s.

The *kālavādins* (also called the *kālacintakas* or *kālakaraṇavādins*)[204]*,* i.e., the proponents of this doctrine, are mentioned in different texts sometimes directly (as *kālavādins, kālacintakas*, etc.). Gauḍapāda Kārikā 1.8b names those who belong to this school and thus explains their views:

kālāt prasūtiṃ bhūtānāṃ manyante kālacintakāḥ ||

From time is the origin of [all] beings – [this way] the *kālacintakas* think.

Indirect mentions – i.e., only by a description of their main ideas or rather of the main idea – of the *kālavādins* are also frequent. For example, ŚU 6.1 refers to the unspecified "insightful

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[203] Vassilkov 1999: 17.

[204] *kālavādin* – 'saying time [is the cause]'; *kālacintaka* – 'thinking time [is the cause]' or *kālakaraṇavādins* – 'holding time [as] the cause'.

people" or "poets" (*kavi*) who hold the view that time is the cause of events in the universe as confused or deluded:

> *svabhāvam eke kavayo vadanti kālaṃ tathānye parimuhyamānāḥ |*
> *devasyaiṣa mahimā tu loke yenedaṃ bhrāmyate brahmacakram ||*

> Certain insightful people say [it is] inherent nature; others say [it is] time. [They are] absolutely confused. It is, of course, the greatness of God in the world by which this wheel of *Brahman* revolves.

As seen from the verse, in the view of the "confused," time causes the wheel of *Brahman (brahmacakra)* revolve, which obviously makes a reference to the Vedic wheel of the year that, as discussed in 2.2.6, is reinterpreted in the ŚU. An old view (that of the *kālavādins*) is therefore condemned as a delusion. Interestingly, another "delusion" presented in this stanza is the second doctrine that originates in the epics: it is *svabhāvavāda,* the so-called doctrine of the inherent nature.

In the Bhīṣmaparvan of the Mahābhārata (MBh 6.4.2-3b) we also find a mention of the *kālavādins.* However, they are not condemned, and their teaching is not qualified as "heterodox" or "delusionary". Moreover, Vyāsa, who is, according to the tradition, the author or "compiler" of the Mahābhārata, relates the ideas of this doctrine and even is called a *kālavādin:*

> *punar evābravīd vākyaṃ kālavādī mahātapāḥ |*
> *asaṃśayaṃ pārthivendra kālaḥ saṃkṣipate jagat || 2 ||*
> *sṛjate ca punar lokān neha vidyati śāśvatam |*

> And again [Vyāsa], a great ascetic proclaiming [the doctrine of] time (*kālavādin*) spoke [this] speech:
> "Without doubt, o lord of kings, [is that] time destroys the universe and then creates the worlds again. Nothing exists eternally here."

Therefore the *kālavāda* doctrine appears to be given a rather intriguing place in the Mahābhārata: the fact that these ideas are conveyed through Vyāsa – the mythological author

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and the key figure of the epic, since he is a progenitor of both the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, – suggests that this doctrine or ideology (whose principles are sometimes related by various chthonic characters, such as different asuras, including asura Vṛtra in MBh 12.270; a mouse in MBh 12.136, etc., which might be the remnants of the supposed "heterodoxy" of the teaching) is seen as a central and important one. Another crucial narrator of *kālavāda,* although never called a *kālavādin*, is Kṛṣṇa – the ultimate deity embodied, who without any doubt is a figure of the foremost importance in the Mahābhārata. Not only Kṛṣṇa narrates numerous concepts belonging to the framework of *kālavāda,* but also, during his theophany in the Bhagavadgītā (BhG 11.32/ MBh 6.33.32), he proclaims that he himself truly is *kāla*, time. It can therefore be concluded that the ideas of the *kālavāda* doctrine are principal for the Mahābhārata.

3.1.2. *Kālavāda:* The Core

Let us consider the main features of the *kālavāda* teaching. Because we don't have any particular text specifically dedicated to the doctrine, it needs to be reconstructed from the fragments found in the epics (first of all, the Mahābhārata, although certain infrequent verses are found in the Rāmāyaṇa as well), *purāṇa*s, and epic semi-philosophical texts, such as the Yogavāsiṣṭha.

One of the major tenets of the *kālavāda* is a view that time is the principal force that creates, sustains, and destroys the universe. Being eternal, with no beginning and no end, time pervades everything. Like in the Atharvaveda (AV 19. 53-54), time is considered to be the Highest Lord (*parameśvara, īśvara, īśāna*) and the sole omnipotent creator of the universe: *kālo hi parameśvaraḥ* – 'Time is the Highest Lord,' says MBh 5.110.20d. Multiple corresponding passages that show time's nature as the highest deity are found in the purāṇas

as well. In the Bhāgavatapurāṇa 1.8.28, Kuntī, realizing that Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate deity, says

to him: *manye tvāṃ kālam īśānam anādinidhanaṃ vibhum | samaṃ carantaṃ sarvatra <...>*

|| – 'I understand [now that] you are time, the mighty Lord with no beginning and no end; the

[one who is] unchanging [and] omnipresent.' The Bhāgavatapurāṇa 9.4.53 equals time with

Viṣṇu, the ultimate being and eternal Brahman, by stating that Viṣṇu is *kālātman* – the one

whose nature (*ātman*) is time. This equation is further explored in BhP 10.10.30cd where we

read: *tvam eva kālo bhagavān viṣṇur avyaya īśvaraḥ* – 'You truly are time – the divine eternal

Lord Viṣṇu.'

The idea of time as the creator whose power governs everything "moving and non-

moving" finds the following expression in the MBh 13.1.48-49:

> *ādityaś candramā viṣṇur āpo vāyuḥ śatakratuḥ |*
> *agniḥ khaṃ pṛthivī mitra oṣadhyo vasavas tathā || 48 ||*
> *saritaḥ sāgarāś caiva bhāvābhāvau ca pannaga |*
> *sarve kālena sṛjyante hriyante ca tathā punaḥ || 49 ||*
>
> The sun, the moon, Viṣṇu, the waters, the wind, [and] the one who made a
> hundred sacrifices (Indra[205]); the fire [and] the sky, the earth [and] Mitra, the
> herbs as well as the Vasus, the rivers and the seas, the existing and non-
> existing, o serpent, –
> everything is created by time and then seized [by it] again.

In MBh 12.28.33-34 we see a similar enumeration of the parts of the world that are

called into existence and sustained by time:

> *vāyum ākāśam agniṃ ca candrādityāv ahaḥkṣape |*
> *jyotīṃṣi saritaḥ śailān kaḥ karoti bibharti vā || 33 ||*
> *śītam uṣṇaṃ tathā varṣaṃ kālena parivartate |*
> *evam eva manuṣyāṇāṃ sukhaduḥkhe nararṣabha || 34 ||*
>
> Who makes and supports the wind, space, and fire; the sun and the moon; the
> day and the night; the stars, the rivers, and the mountains?

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[205] Also: a king who performs a hundred of horse sacrifices becomes Indra.

Cold, heat, and rain revolve by [the power of] time. So do human happiness and sorrow, o bull among men!

Noticeably, time is said to make seasons "revolve" or turn around – *parivartate,* a form of a verbal root *vṛt-*, "to turn, revolve, roll," etc., stemming from the Indo-European **u̯er-/u̯er-t-*. This root, as shown in 1.3.2 where it is analyzed in detail, produces multiple words with temporal connotations and is closely related to time in its circular aspect. Forms of this root are frequently used to describe activities of time. Here and elsewhere, it emphasizes a circular nature of time – one of the central features of the *kālavāda* doctrine.

In the Bhagavadgītā (BhG 10.33, i.e., MBh 6.32.33) Kṛṣṇa calls himself "imperishable time" said to be *dhātṛ*, creator or the arranger/orderer of the universe:

aham evākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṃ viśvatomukhaḥ ||

I truly am imperishable Time – the arranger facing in all directions.

Not only time is seen as the creator, but also, being "the arranger", it is a power that orders and controls the universe. All living beings and inanimate objects and substances are within its reach, e.g., in MBh 11.2.7[206]:

yathā vāyus tṛṇāgrāṇi saṃvartayati sarvaśaḥ |
tathā kālavaśaṃ yānti bhūtāni bharatarṣabha ||

Like the wind turns blades of grass everywhere, all living beings are under control of time, o bull among the Bharatas!

Time sets the sun and the moon in motion and regulates their movement, YV 1.23.21:

prerayaṃl līlayārkendū krīḍatīva nabhastale |
nikṣiptalīlāyugalo nije bāla ivāṅgaṇe ||

Like a child playing in the yard throwing a pair [of orbs], [time] effortlessly plays with the sun and the moon driving them on the surface of the sky.

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[206] A variant reading.

Time is omnipresent, it permeates the whole universe; it is also often said to be motionless or "standing", as can be observed in YV 1.23.7 where it is stated: …*sarvam ākramya tiṣṭhati ||* – '...having pervaded everything, [time] abides.'

The most important part of the *kālavāda* view is probably an idea that time is not just the creator and sustainer of the universe but also its destroyer. Moreover, when a "creative side" of time is described, most frequently its opposite, the destructive potency is mentioned as well. MBh, YV, and other texts are teeming with examples picturing time as both creator and destroyer of the living beings, worlds, and objects, as in MBh 13.1.49d quoted above: *sarve kālena sṛjyante hriyante ca tathā punaḥ ||* – 'everything is created by time and then seized [by it] again.' The Yogavasiṣṭha typically describes time as a "devourer" the swallows everything, e.g., in YV 1.23.6cd where time again is shown in its all-encompassing ambivalence – it is said to be the essence of all things but also a destructive power that swallows the universe:

> *kālaḥ kavalitānantaviśvo viśvātmatāṃ gataḥ ||*
>
> Time, having devoured all [the universe] with no remainder, became the essence *(ātman)* of everything.

Different activities of time – creative and destructive – are enumerated in YV 1.23.11:

> *haraty ayaṃ nāśayati karoty atti nihanti ca |*
> *kālas saṃsāranṛtye hi nānārūpair yathā naṭaḥ ||*
>
> It takes away, destroys, creates, devours and kills. Like an actor, time
> takes many roles in the dance of *saṃsāra*.

The Viṣṇupurāṇa (ViP 5.38.55-57) gives a similar description of time, emphasizing its roles as both creator and demolisher of the world and everything within it:

> *kālo bhavāya bhūtānām abhāvāya ca pāṇḍava |*
> *kālamūlam idaṃ jñātvā bhava sthairyadhano 'rjuna || 55 ||*

nadyaḥ samudrā girayaḥ sakalā ca vasuṃdharā |
devā manuṣyāḥ paśavas taravaḥ sasarīsṛpāḥ || 56 ||
sṛṣṭāḥ kālena kālena punar yāsyanti saṃkṣayam |
kālātmakam idaṃ sarvaṃ jñātvā śamam avāpnuhi || 57 ||

Time [is] for the coming into existence of [living] beings, and for [their] destruction, o Pāṇḍava! Having realized that this [world] has its root in time, be rich in strength, Arjuna!
The rivers, oceans, mountains, and the entire earth with all its parts—the gods, people, cattle, trees, [and] snakes—
Created by time, by means of time will go to complete annihilation again. Having realized that all this [world] has time as its inner nature, obtain equanimity.

Time as a destroyer of the universe is presented in a famous quote from the Bhagavadgītā (BhG 11.32, i.e., MBh 6.33.32). Kṛṣṇa who reveals himself as the ultimate deity and shows his all-encompassing cosmic form (*viśvarūpa*) to Arjuna, says:

kālo 'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ |
ṛte 'pi tvā na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye 'vasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ ||

I am Time, the maker of the world's destruction. Having grown old, I am set out[207] to destroy [all] the beings[208] here. Even without you, all these warriors arrayed in opposing armies are not to be.

A clear example of time as the ultimate cause of the final demolition of the universe at the end of Kali-yuga is BhP 11.3.8:

dhātūpaplava āsanne vyaktaṃ dravya-guṇātmakam |
anādi-nidhanaḥ kālo hy avyaktāyāpakarṣati ||

When the dissolution of [all] elements comes,

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[207] 'set out' - *pravṛttaḥ*. A form derived from the root *vṛt-* (a past passive participle) again is used to describe an activity performed by time.

[208] *lokān* in this verse can also be understood as "worlds" as well as "living beings", similar to *bhúvanāni* in AV 19.53-54 that can mean either worlds or creatures. The compound *lokakṣayakṛt*, however, likely means "the maker of the world's destruction" rather than a "destroyer of creatures/beings".

beginningless and endless time reduces [everything] that is manifested and has the nature of substances and [three primordial] qualities (*guṇa*), to its unmanifested state.

According to the MBh, time controls death and old age and, of course, it *is* death and old age. Direct identifications of time, *kāla*, with death, *mṛtyu* or *antaka* (lit., "the Ender"), occur in the MBh multiple times. All three words sometimes are used as epithets describing Yama, the god of death. MBh 1.24.10d portrays Garuḍa[209], the king of birds, using the following simile: *bubhukṣitaḥ kāla ivāntako mahān ||* – 'ravenous like Kāla (Time), the great Ender (*antaka*).' In MBh 3.23.30ab Kṛṣṇa's weapon, a discus, is likened to Yama in the following way: *kṣurāntam amalaṃ cakraṃ kālāntakayamopamam |* – 'a shining discus whose rim is sharp as razor is [lethal] like Yama-the-Ender, [the deadly] Time,' so it is clear that Kāla, Yama, and death (*antaka,* the Ender) are seen as indistinguishable or at least as having the same function.

Two major attributes of Yama – a stick or mace (*daṇḍa*) and noose (*paśa*) – are frequently ascribed to Kāla in the MBh. For example, MBh 9.10.37d-f has the following expression: *... pāṇḍunandanaḥ | kālo daṇḍam ivodyamya gadāpāṇir ayudhyata ||* – 'Like Kāla (Time) having raised his stick, the descendant of Pāṇḍu fought with a mace in his hand'. *Kāladaṇḍa*, the mace/stick of time is mentioned directly in MBh 12.216.1 and elsewhere. On multiple occasions (MBh 8.63.69; 12.220.81; 13.95.51, etc.) we also find a compound *kālapāśa* i.e., a noose of time, e.g., in MBh 12.220.81cd: *niyataṃ kālapāśena baddhaṃ śakra vikatthase ||* – 'O Śakra, you praise excessively [the one who is] subdued bound by Time's noose.' In the Ṛgveda, as explained in 1.3.3, the noose is an attribute of Varuṇa; later it becomes a feature of *Mṛtyu,* death, and then of Yama as a death-deity. This attribute unites the

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[209] *Garuḍa* literally means "devourer", hence the parallel with another devourer, time.

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deities of time and death and, in the case of Kāla, provides an extra confirmation that time is understood as death.

MBh 12.28.43 compares time with the great ocean where death and old age – "two great sharks" – dwell:

> *saṃnimajjaj jagad idaṃ gambhīre kālasāgare |*
> *jarāmṛtyumahāgrāhe na kaś cid avabudhyate ||*

> Nobody knows this world is sinking in the deep ocean of time.
> Two great sharks – Old Age and Death – [are there].

The "deep ocean of time" in this verse is parallel to the cosmic waters (from where the year arises in the RV 10.190) and also represents one of the typical Indo-European motifs: the waters of death that can be associated with the river of the netherworld (e.g., Styx in Greek mythology, Gjǫll in the Norse myths, etc.) or with great ocean. To cross these waters means to go to the netherworld, i.e., to die. In a sense, these are the waters of timelessness: in a characteristic Indo-European motif, the one who crosses these waters loses memory of his life (such motifs are present, for example, in Greek and Slavic myths) and therefore his association with temporality (sequence of events in the phenomenal world) is ceased, he enters the domain of eternity – timelessness.

In the MBh there are multiple passages that describe how time "cooks", "bakes" or "ripens" (*pacati*) living beings and devours everything – all worlds and creatures. As the ultimate cause of all that exists in the world, "time establishes everything, and time cooks it" (MBh 12.217.39cd: *kālaḥ sthāpayate sarvaṃ kālaḥ pacati vai tathā ||*). Time that "cooks/bakes" or "ripens" creatures thus getting them ready to be devoured, acts as death (at the moment of devouring) and, because the process of baking or ripening is gradual, also as "old age". According to Ya. Vassilkov, the baking metaphor might have its roots in the ritual

when "sacrificial cakes (*puroḍasa*) were baked for the gods"[210]. Then, the whole act of baking

and devouring living beings can be interpreted as a sacrifice performed by time to death,

mṛtyu, i.e., by time to itself. On the universal scale, time is seen as a final destroyer of

everything that exists. An interesting example is given in MBh 1.1.188:

> *kālaḥ pacati bhūtāni kālaḥ saṃharati prajāḥ |*
> *nirdahantaṃ prajāḥ kālaṃ kālaḥ śamayate punaḥ ||*
>
> Time bakes beings. Time takes off living creatures.
> Time that burns living creatures down is in turn quenched by Time.

Here we can see that, in addition to the usual motif of "cooking" or "ripening" living beings,

time also extinguishes or pacifies itself, that very time that "burns" and "bakes" everything

that lives. This might be an indication that, like the preceding tradition, the epic *kālavāda*

distinguishes between the two types of time: one that actively acts in the phenomenal world

and performs all acts of destruction, and another one that pacifies the first one, i.e., eternity

that ends the activity and the world of temporality after the final destruction is complete.

Indeed, it can be observed in multiple instances that time within the framework of the

kālavāda doctrine is described in two different ways: first, it is stated that time is static,

eternal, unmovable, and unchangeable. Its motionlessness and stability are emphasized; it

"stands" or "abides" (*tiṣṭhati*), as repeated multiple times in the Yogavasiṣṭha[211]. Its true

nature is undivided and cannot be revealed through time units. Second, there is an active type

of time that is impermanent, changeable, and understood as a combination of components.

The *kālavāda* texts do not introduce additional words to denote two types of time and

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[210] Vassilkov 1999: 22.

[211] In the YV, time is referred to by various forms of the verbal root *sthā-* – 'to stand,' 'to stay,' etc. Time is called "the one that stood" (*sthita*), "stable/stability" (*sthiti*); it is said that time "stands" or "abides" (*tiṣṭhati*).

juxtapose, for example, "eternity" and "temporality", however, they often describe "singular" time as paradoxically possessing the opposite qualities (it moves and "stands", it is one and divided, it is invisible and perceptible, etc.), as can be seen in YV 1.23.16:

> *bhidyate nāvabhgno 'pi dagdho 'pi hi na dahyate |*
> *dṛśyate nāpi dṛśyo 'pi dhūrtacūḍāmaṇirmune ||*

> Isn't [Time] the most cunning deceiver, o sage? It is divided though indivisible, is being burnt though never burns out, is seen though invisible.

A remarkable case of the two types of time is exhibited in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa. On one hand, as shown above, time is understood as Viṣṇu's true nature, *ātman*. It is beginningless, endless, and omnipresent. It is equaled to Viṣṇu himself, and, consequently, is considered to be uncreated, i.e., it does not have any origin. On the other hand, in a passage where the origin of different deities, substances, and emotions from Viṣṇu's face is discussed, in BhP 8.5.42bc we find the following statement about how time comes to be: *bhruvoryamaḥ pakṣmabhavastu kālaḥ prasīdatāṃ naḥ sa mahāvibhūtiḥ ||* – 'Yama [, the god of death, was created] from [Viṣṇu's] eyebrows; and time arose from [his] eyelashes. May the all-powerful Lord be pleased with us!' This sentence shows that, first of all, time is envisioned as closely related to death and Yama as a death deity (they are mentioned together, originating from the eyelashes and eyebrows of the absolute divine being). Second, time clearly is seen as something that belongs to the created, manifested world and has a specific beginning; it is therefore impermanent. This transient time is contrasted with eternity, in this case represented by Viṣṇu himself: for the everlasting uncreated absolute being, all the created time takes no longer than a blink of the eye (thus it originates from Viṣṇu's eyelashes). "A blink of the eye," *nimiṣ(a)* or *nimeṣa*, as well as *kṣaṇa*, is one of the smallest time units in various Classical

texts. It is a brief moment, very much alike to the Vedic *ŗtú,* a basic part that forms a sequence. Again, therefore, the duality of time takes its expression in a mythological narrative depicting creation: in abstract terms, it can be said that the absolute time, eternity, gives rise to the empirical time, temporality. Empirical time has a starting point, which implies that it also has an end. It is symbolized by the smallest time unit, so it can be understood that it is divisible – at least in the realm of the created world. One divine blinking contains *all* empirical time and establishes its model: temporality is a combination of moments; it is finite and constitutes a singular moment on the divine scale.

Significantly, one of the frequently encountered motifs in the epics it that gods don't blink – e.g., in MBh 3.54.22cd-24, in the story of Nala and Damayantī, we find the following description of the five characteristics of the immortals where they are contrasted with prince Nala who is human and mortal:

> *yathoktaṃ cakrire devāḥ sāmarthyaṃ liṅgadhāraṇe || 22 ||*
> *sāpaśyad vibudhān sarvān asvedān stabdhalocanān |*
> *hṛṣitasragrajohīnān sthitān aspṛśataḥ kṣitim || 23 ||*
> *chāyādvitīyo mlānasrag rajaḥsvedasamanvitaḥ |*
> *bhūmiṣṭho naiṣadhaś caiva nimeṣeṇa ca sūcitaḥ || 24 ||*
>
> As was asked [by Damayantī], the gods enabled [her to see] their characteristic marks. She saw all the wise [divine] standing [before her] – having fresh garlands and free from dust, [their feet] not touching the ground, [their bodies] without sweat, [their] eyes not blinking.
> Whereas Naiṣadha (Nala) was standing on the ground casting a shadow, covered with dust and sweat, in a withered garland betraying himself by blinking.

The gods in this passage are characterized as *stabdhalocana* – 'having unblinking eyes,' while Nala exhibits ("betrays") his human nature by blinking (*nimeṣa*). In an episode from the Mahābhārata that includes a famous story of the flood, the fish that saves the protagonist (Manu) when the whole world is destroyed by the flood thus reveals its divine nature to him:

athābravīd animiṣas tān ṛṣīn sahitāṃs tadā | ahaṃ prajāpatir brahmā matparaṃ nādhigamyate || – 'Then the non-blinking [fish] told all the sages: I am Prajāpati, [I am] Brahma. Nobody surpasses me [in the universe]' (MBh 3.185.48). At this crucial moment of revelation, the fish is called 'unblinking' (*animiṣa*), which emphasizes its divinity: only the immortals can exist without blinking. The motif that describes Hindu gods as non-blinking might be conveying a Vedic view that gods do not belong to the human world of temporality, and their realm is immortality and eternity. This motif is preserved despite the new eschatological system developed in the epics and *purāṇas*, according to which gods, except for the great gods of Hinduism, are destroyed at the end of the world period. Overall, the purāṇic materials are in accordance with the general framework of the *kālavāda* doctrine that differentiates between the two types of time.

The dualism of time is further explained in YV 1.23.7:

> *yugavatsarakalpākhyaiḥ kiñcit prakaṭatāṃ gataḥ |*
> *rūpair alakṣyarūpātmā sarvam ākramya tiṣṭhati ||*

> Time is scantly manifested by the forms called *yugas*, years, and *kalpas*. He, whose nature is such that his form is imperceptible, having pervaded everything, abides.

In this case, it is implied that time has a revealed and unrevealed nature. Whatever is perceptible for the humans – i.e., different time units, such as "*yugas*, years, and *kalpas*", does not really reflect the true form of time. This true form cannot be perceived although it permeates everything and abides everywhere. Overall, this verse of the YV quite clearly parallels AV 19.53.3 – a stanza about "time in the highest heaven" that "we" (humans) see only as "existing in many forms", i.e., divided into units, but not in its undivided hidden form represented by a "full jar" of *amṛta*. It also corresponds to the passages from the Upaniṣads,

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specifically, to MU 6.15-16 describing time as two kinds of *brahman*, the one called non-time

"before the sun" without parts and the one "from the sun" categorized as "time with parts".

Consequently, it can be said that *kālavāda* appears to inherit the old view of the two forms of

time stemming, as I tried to show in Chapter I of this thesis, from the Ṛgvedic division of

functions between *r̥tú* and *r̥tá*: time-eternity and time-temporality.

Another view that can be deemed one of the core ideas of *kālavāda* is that time acts

not only as death (i.e., a force that actually kills the living) but also as fate. It is time that

decides human destiny and predetermines every moment of life including, most importantly,

the moment of death. It is said that time kills people before they are killed in reality. Those

animate or inanimate agents that perform the actual act of killing, such as warriors in battle,

natural forces, diseases, etc., are seen as mere instruments of fate. In MBh 6.33.33, after a

famous quote from the Bhagavadgītā cited above (BhG 11.32, i.e., MBh 6.33.32) where

Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be "Time, the maker of the world's destruction", the following

understanding of fate and determination is expressed:

> *tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṃ samr̥ddham |*
> *mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātraṃ bhava savyasācin ||*
>
> Therefore arise [, o Arjuna,] obtain fame! Having conquered your enemies,
> enjoy the kingdom of plenty! These [warriors] have already been slain by me
> long ago. Merely be an instrument, o Ambidextrous one!

The same motif – the warriors who are killed by time/fate before they are actually killed in

battle – also occurs in MBh 3.158.42, 3.225.29, 7.158.57, 12.34.4, 13.1.75, etc. MBh

3.225.29cd calls the Kauravas who are "about to die" in battle "killed by time" (*kālopahatān*):

anyatra kālopahatān anekān samīkṣamāṇas tu kurūn mumūrṣūn || – 'Elsewhere he beholds

many *kurus* [already] killed by time who are about to die [in battle].' MBh 12.217.14 conveys

the view that the act of killing is predetermined or rather happened before its realization because both the killer and the slain are already dead:

> *hataṃ hanti hato hy eva yo naro hanti kaṃ cana |*
> *ubhau tau na vijānīto yaś ca hanti hataś ca yaḥ ||*

> When a man kills someone, he kills [the already] killed, [and he himself is already] killed. Yet neither the one who kills, nor the one who is killed knows this.

This kind of predetermination is considered to be the work of time in this case identified with fate whose effect is inescapable. MBh 12.217.25 suggests that any heroic effort of an individual is pointless because everything is decided and "managed" by time:

> *kālaḥ sarvaṃ samādatte kālaḥ sarvaṃ prayacchati |*
> *kālena vidhṛtaṃ sarvaṃ mā kṛthāḥ śakra pauruṣam ||*

> Time takes everything away – time gives everything.
> By time everything is ordered. [Therefore] do not perform heroic deeds, o Śakra!

YV 1.23.3 expresses a similar idea by emphasizing futility of hopes that are cut off by time:

> *ihāpi vidyate yaiṣā pelavā sukhabhāvanā |*
> *ākhus tantum ivāśeṣaṃ kālas tām api kṛntati ||*

> When there is even the slightest hope of happiness in [this] world, time cuts it entirely, like a mouse [gnaws through] a thread.

Time therefore is understood as a power that produces the predetermined results of actions. A reflection of this fatalistic view can be clearly seen in Kṛṣṇa's teachings in the Bhagavadgītā resulting in the formation of an ideology that Ya. Vassilkov calls "philosophy of heroic fatalism"[212]. Time as fate and predestination is also one of the central factors that drive the whole plot of the Mahābhārata.

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[212] Vassilkov 1999: 29.

Passages containing comparable views are also found in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, although generally this epic poem is much more concerned with *dharma* than with time and fate. Rāmāyaṇa 4.24.5 denies free agency and ascribes all that happens in the world to the work of time that is the ultimate source and essence of any action:

> *na kartā kasya cit kaścin niyoge cāpi neśvaraḥ |*
> *svabhāve vartate lokas tasya kālaḥ parāyaṇam ||*

> [There is] no agent of any [action], and no master causing [any action].
> The world revolves according to its inherent nature.
> Time is its essence.

Next three verses (4.24.6-8) continue a typical "kālavādic" discourse similar to that of the Mahābhārata:

> *na kālaḥ kālam atyeti na kālaḥ parihīyate |*
> *svabhāvaṃ vā samāsādya na kaścid ativartate || 6 ||*
> *na kālasyāsti bandhutvaṃ na hetur na parākramaḥ |*
> *na mitrajñātisaṃbandhaḥ kāraṇaṃ nātmano vaśaḥ || 7 ||*
> *kiṃ tu kāla pariṇāmo draṣṭavyaḥ sādhu paśyatā |*
> *dharmaś cārthaś ca kāmaś ca kālakramasamāhitāḥ || 8 ||*

> [Even] time cannot overstep time. Time cannot be avoided.
> Nothing can inherently overcome its nature.
> Time knows no kinship, nothing causes it, nothing empowers.
> Time has neither friends nor relatives. The cause, it wills itself.
> But by the one who truly sees, it is seen how time unfolds.
> Dharma, prosperity (*artha*), and pleasure (*kāma*)[213] are put in order by the course of time.

Time here is seen as the only force behind all actions, the reason for everything in the universe, governed only by its own will. It controls righteousness, gain, and pleasure in human life the same way it regulates cosmic events in the world that revolves according to its 'inherent nature'. Remarkably, this fragment is included after one of the traditionally most

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[213] *Dharma*, prosperity (*artha*), and pleasure (*kāma*) are the three traditional values in the life of a Hindu.

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interpreted and controversial scenes in the Rāmāyaṇa where Rāma kills Valin, the monkey king, by shooting him in the back. The quoted fragment is Rāma's speech that, apparently, is supposed to console Tārā, Valin's widow, and justify this act that goes against the warrior's *dharma*. Later, in the part that describes Valin's funeral and Tārā's lament (Rāmāyaṇa 4.24.34ab), Tārā exclaims addressing her dead husband: *eṣa tvāṃ rāmarūpeṇa kālaḥ karṣati vānara |* – 'It is time in the form of Rāma overpowers you, o monkey!' Earlier in the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma's act is defended within the "dharmic" discourse, i.e., the epic provides different reasons as of why Rāma does not violate dharma by killing Valin like that (one of the arguments being that Valin is a monkey, therefore Rāma has the right to "hunt" him as an animal). These "dharmic" arguments were constantly questioned by the later tradition of retelling and composing variants of the Rāmāyaṇa. As can be seen from the passages above, Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa in a morally questionable situation when Rāma (who is supposed to be an ideal man, warrior, and the embodiment of royal *dharma*) apparently violates *dharma*, uses non-dharmic arguments of *kālavāda* stating that time and fate surpass *dharma* and all the beings are simply instruments of time. The "kālavādic" discourse can be inserted as an extra means for solving a moral dilemma that cannot be solved satisfactorily within the "dharmic" discourse.

Now we can summarize the core features of the *kālavāda* doctrine. Time is this system is understood as the highest deity, omnipotent and omnipresent, and power that creates the universe, sustains its existence by regulating and ordering it, and then destroys it "in the appointed moment" (*kāle*). It "bakes" or "ripens" living beings and then devours them, acting as old age and death. It is closely related to, shares attributes with, and sometimes completely identified with death in all its hypostases as well as with Yama, king of the dead. It is also

perceived as fate that predetermines succession of human life and the moment and way of death. Finally, it exists in two forms: one is imperceptible, all-pervading, motionless, and undivided; the second is divided into time-units and can be perceived in the form of these units, it is actively engaged with the world of phenomena, and can be "extinguished" or "quenched" by the first one after the final destruction of the universe is complete. The first one is Eternity, the second one is Temporality.

3.1.3. *Kālavāda:* Typical Motifs and Imagery

Except for the conceptual core discussed above, the system of *kālavāda* is characterized by a variety of typical mythological motifs and set imagery. Not only these motifs and imagery poeticize and brighten the doctrine, but also they provide it with several major ideas.

3.1.3.1. The Wheel, the Thread, and the Mouse

Arguably, the most prominent and representative image in the *kālavāda* system is the wheel of time *(kāla-cakra)*. Description of this wheel is found in multiple texts, including the epics, purāṇas, epic-philosophical and properly philosophical works of different schools. In MBh 12.237.32 this wheel is described and named directly:

> *āvartamānam ajaraṃ vivartanaṃ ṣaṇṇemikaṃ dvādaśāraṃ suparva |*
> *yasyedam āsye pariyāti viśvaṃ tat kālacakraṃ nihitaṃ guhāyām ||*
>
> Revolving, undecaying, rolling, having six fellies [and] twelve well-fitted spokes – that in whose mouth all this [world] goes round – the Wheel of Time stands in a secret place.

This wheel represents a year with six seasons and twelve months. The whole description exhibits many parallels with the wheel of the year (the wheel of *ṛta*) in a Vedic riddle hymn

(RV 1.164) and to the wheel(s) of time in the Atharvaveda 19.53-54, and definitely continues the same motif. Like in the RV 1.164, all kinds of revolving activities of the wheel are denoted by different forms of the root *vṛt-*. The same epithet – *ajara*, "undecaying" or "unaging" – is used to describe the wheel in the RV and in the MBh, emphasizing that the wheel is eternal. The wheel, explicitly called "the wheel of time" (*kālacakra*) in this case, constitutes the universal symbol of time combining both temporality (the year including different time units) and eternity. Noticeably, it stands in a "secret place"[214], which brings us to the next episode from the MBh where the wheel is mentioned.

This episode known as the story of Uttaṅka[215] from the MBh 1.3 provides the most detailed description of the wheel. Uttaṅka is sage Gautama's a disciple who descends to the realm of the *nagas* (serpents) in the underworld to find the earrings he needs to present to his teacher's wife as *gurudakṣiṇā* (payment/gift to a teacher). In the realm of the serpents Uttaṅka sees two women weaving a piece of cloth at a loom:

> *athāpaśyat striyau tantre adhiropya paṭaṃ vayantyau ||*
> *tasmiṃś ca tantre kṛṣṇāḥ sitāś ca tantavaḥ |*
> *cakraṃ cāpaśyat ṣaḍbhiḥ kumāraiḥ parivartyamānam ||*
> *puruṣaṃ cāpaśyad darśanīyam |*
> *sa tān sarvāṃs tuṣṭāva ebhir mantravādaślokaiḥ ||* (MBh 1.3.147c-149)

> Then he saw two women at a loom weaving cloth having placed [it on a loom]. And threads in that loom were black and white. And also he saw a wheel turned by six boys and saw a handsome-looking man.

In the next verse where Uttaṅka "praised all of them with the verse-*matnras*", the loom and the wheel are described further:

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[214] Ya. Vassilkov translates *guhāyām* as "in a cave" and states that the wheel is situated "probably in the 'cave of the heart', in the depths of human psyche." (Vassilkov 1999:20.)

[215] This story is considered in Vassilkov 2010: 12-13.

trīṇy arpitāny atra śatāni madhye ṣaṣṭiś ca nityaṃ carati dhruve 'smin |
cakre caturviṃśatiparvayoge ṣaḍ yat kumārāḥ parivartayanti ||
tantraṃ cedaṃ viśvarūpaṃ yuvatyau vayatas tantūn satataṃ vartayantyau |
kṛṣṇān sitāṃś caiva vivartayantyau bhūtāny ajasraṃ bhuvanāni caiva ||
(MBh 1.3.150-151)

Three hundred and sixty [spokes] are fixed in the middle – in this eternal ever-turning wheel furnished with 24 parts (*parvan*s) that is turned by six boys. And two young women [are] weaving [on] this loom always turning around the threads, spinning white and black [threads], [and] worlds, and beings perpetually.

When Uttaṅka comes back to his teacher, he describes what he saw slightly differently (the wheel in his description has twelve spokes, whereas above it is of three hundred and sixty spokes), and asks Gautama to explain the meaning of the scene:

tatra ca mayā dṛṣṭe striyau tantre 'dhiropya paṭaṃ vayantyau | tasmiṃś ca tantre kṛṣṇāḥ sitāś ca tantavaḥ | kiṃ tat | tatra ca mayā cakraṃ dṛṣṭaṃ dvādaśāram | ṣaṭ cainaṃ kumārāḥ parivartayanti | tad api kim | puruṣaś cāpi mayā dṛṣṭaḥ | sa punaḥ kaḥ || (MBh 1.3.167-169)

There I saw two women at a loom weaving cloth having placed [it on the loom]. And threads in that loom were black and white. What is that? And also there I saw a twelve-spoked wheel. It was turned by six boys. And what is that? I also saw a man – who is he?

Gautama responds with the following interpretation:

ye te striyau dhātā vidhātā ca | ye ca te kṛṣṇāḥ sitāś ca tantavas te rātryahanī || dvādaśāraṃ dvādaśa māsāḥ | yad api tac cakraṃ dvādaśāraṃ ṣaṭ kumārāḥ parivartayanti te ṛtavaḥ ṣaṭ saṃvatsaraś cakram | yaḥ puruṣaḥ sa parjanyaḥ ||
(MBh 1.3.172b-173b)

Those two women are Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ. And those black and white threads are nights and days. The twelve spokes are the twelve months. As for the twelve spoke wheel turned by six boys, those are the six seasons *(ṛtu)* [and] the wheel is a year...

Initially the wheel in the episode is described as having three hundred and sixty spokes but then Uttaṅka pictures it as "a twelve-spoked wheel". This discrepancy has its roots in the formulaic style of the epics: different mythopoetic formulae can be used to describe the same

object and then any of them can be inserted to a specific place in the text where a description of this object is needed. Both formulae are typical in the descriptions of the wheel of time or the wheel of the year and generally use the same numbers and characteristic elements of this wheel that can be observed in RV 1.164.

The wheel is situated in a cave in the world of the *nagas*, i.e., in the underworld, which might be the "secret place" referred to in MBh 12.237.32. Unlike in the RV and AV, the wheel of time/year is not rolling in the sky and therefore is not associated with the sun. It is located in a secret subterranean place beyond this world, likely in the world of the dead and chthonic creatures (the *nagas*) or, if we consider the connection of this place with Varuṇa[216], in the timeless abyss of the cosmic waters. Time here is seen as a secret arranger and creator of the universe and also as the cause of its destruction, the devourer "in whose mouth all this [world] goes round". The motif of destruction and explicit relation of the wheel of time with death absent in the RV and AV is one of the possible reasons of the wheel's "relocation". Within the *kālavāda* framework, the motif of the final destruction of the universe by time is definitely at the very center of the whole system. Also, the "secret" location of the wheel, that fact that it is concealed in a cave, reflects the secrecy of the doctrine: the MBh emphasizes on multiple occasions that nobody knows how time governs the universe, just like fighting warriors do not know that they are already "killed by time".

In the discussed episode a motif of the wheel is intertwined with two different Indo-European motifs associated with time – those of weaving and spinning. In this case, both weaving and spinning are present. The loom and the act of weaving are mentioned explicitly,

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[216] See 1.3.3 for a discussion of the connection of this place with Varuṇa and the world of the dead.

and a distaff or a spinning wheel is represented by the ever-rotating wheel of the year that spins threads of days and nights. According to Ya. Vassilkov[217], black and white threads represent different human destinies (good and bad, happiness and unhappiness, etc.) rather than days and nights because the two women at the loom are said to be "spinning… the worlds and beings perpetually." Spinning in this case indicates creating, therefore the two women who are the two deities of fate, Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ, 'Arranger' and 'Distributer', create and distribute destinies of men. Also, following the rotation of the wheel of the year, the two spin the threads of temporality and weave the cloth of time. Their actions make the undivided unmanifested time manifest; their agency produces created from the uncreated.

The motif of weaving and spinning is connected with time and fate in many Indo-European traditions. The ancient Greek *moirai* (and Roman *parcae*) weave, spin and cut the thread of a human life. Old Germanic goddesses of fate, the Norns, wove the threads of fate and determined human destiny and the length of life:

> 'Twas night in the dwelling, and Norns there came,
> Who shaped the life of the lofty one;
> <…>
> Mightily wove they the web of fate,
> <…>
> And there the golden threads they wove,
> And in the moon's hall fast they made them.[218]

Slavic goddess *Mokoš* (and her later Christian "substitute" Saint Paraskevi of Iconium, *св. Параскева Пятница*, Paraskeva the Friday) also weaves and spins, and although many features of her cult are still to be restored fully, it is clear that she was associated with fate,

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[217] Vassilkov 2010: 13.

[218] Bellows 1936: 2.

luck and fertility. The Bulgarian *orisnici (орисницы)* and Serbian *Sreća* also weave and spin the thread of fate. On the other side, according to Russian folk beliefs, evil spirits take possession of a distaff that is not stored away for the night or the one that belongs to someone who broke rules or did not pray before going to bed. It is believed that the *kikimora*-spinner (female hobgoblin, *кикимора*) who hides at night and takes a distaff foretells either death of relatives or some other misfortune. Another time- and death-related character of the Russian folklore that spins and weaves is Baba Yaga[219] – the queen of witches, mistress of animals, and a guardian of the frontier between the world of the living and the world of the dead who orders various temporal units (i.e., the day and the night).

An image of the spindle or distaff is often used in the Slavic tradition to convey the symbolism of time and the year, which can be seen from the following riddle describing the year and its divisions:

> Стоит дом в двенадцать окон,
> В каждом окне по четыре девицы,
> У каждой девицы по семь веретен,
> У каждого веретена разное имя.[220]

> There stands a house with twelve windows,
> In every window – four maidens,
> Every maiden holds seven spindles,
> Every spindle has a different name.

As noted in 1.3.2, the very Old Slavic word denoting spindle *vrěteno/vrъteno (*u̯erteno)* is derived from the same Indo-European verbal root **u̯er-/u̯er-t-* (Sanskrit cognate is *vr̥t-*) as the word *vremę* – 'time' (Proto-Slavic **u̯ertmen*), therefore, as can be seen, this connection is preserved both in the language and in mythology.

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[219] Baba Yaga's relation with time is explored at length in Yanchevskaya, *in press.*

[220] Krinichnaya 2004: 471.

Overall, there are plenty of the Indo-European examples that confirm the relationship between the weaving/spinning and time and fate. The thread by itself also embodies fate and time: in the Vedic tradition, *tantu*, a sacred thread /cord (understood as associated with umbilical cord) symbolizes a succession of family generations and a connection between the living and ancestors, and also – a succession of stages of a ritual. The generations were thought of as connected by *prajātantu* – a thread of progeny.

The time-symbolism of the thread is preserved in the epics and becomes one of the central motifs in *kālavāda*. One of the interesting examples where thread is represented as both fate and *prajātantu* is a story of *Jaratkāru* found in MBh 1.13. In this story *Jaratkāru* is an ascetic who "withheld his semen" (*ūrdhvaretas*) and, consequently, didn't have any offspring:

> *jaratkārur iti khyāta ūrdhvaretā mahān r̥ṣiḥ |*
> *yāyāvarāṇāṃ dharmajñaḥ pravaraḥ saṃśitavrataḥ ||10||*

> He was known as *Jaratkāru*, a great *r̥ṣi* [who] withheld his semen (lived in chastity), the best among the *yāyāvaras* ["wandering sages"], a knower of dharma, the most excellent, firmly adhering to his vows. (MBh 1.13.10)

In his travels *Jaratkāru* encounters a great hole or cave in the earth and finds there his ancestors in the following odd state:

> *aṭamānaḥ kadā cit sa svān dadarśa pitāmahān |*
> *lambamānān mahāgarte pādair ūrdhvair adhomukhān ||11||*
> *tān abravīt sa dr̥ṣṭvaiva jaratkāruḥ pitāmahān |*
> *ke bhavanto 'valambante garte 'smin vā adhomukhāḥ ||12||*
> *vīraṇastambake lagnāḥ sarvataḥ paribhakṣite |*
> *mūṣakena nigūḍhena garte 'smin nityavāsinā ||13||*

> When wandering around, he once saw his ancestors hanging down in a great hollow cave their legs up and heads down.
> Having seen them, *Jaratkāru* said to these ancestors of his: "Who are you, hanging in this hole your heads down? [You, who are] clinging to a clump of

vīraṇa-grass from all directions gnawed by a mouse that always secretly lives in this [hole]?" (MBh 1.13.11-13)

Then the ancestors explain their situation to *Jaratkāru:*

> *yāyāvarā nāma vayam ṛṣayaḥ saṃśitavratāḥ |*
> *saṃtānaprakṣayād brahmann adho gacchāma medinīm ||14||*
> *asmākaṃ saṃtatis tv eko jaratkārur iti śrutaḥ |*
> *mandabhāgyo 'lpabhāgyānāṃ tapa eva samāsthitaḥ ||15||*
> *na sa putrāñ janayituṃ dārān mūḍhaś cikīrṣati |*
> *tena lambāmahe garte saṃtānaprakṣayād iha ||16||*

> O Brahmin, we are the ṛṣis called *yāyāvara.* Firmly adhering to our vows, we are now going to the earth because of the destruction of our lineage.
> *Jaratkāru,* our only offspring who always performs austerity, is the most ill-fated among the unfortunate.
> This fool does not want to take a wife to produce sons. Because of him we hang here, in this hole, because of the destruction of our lineage. (MBh 1.13.14-16)

Jaratkāru says who he is and asks his ancestors what to do to remedy the situation. The ancestors ask him to marry and produce offspring to save them from falling down in the hole. Later in the MBh (MBh 1.41-43) the story of *Jaratkāru* is retold with more details and explanations. In particular, it is said that *Jaratkāru* "saw his ancestors hanging down in a hollow their heads down, clinging to a stem of *vīraṇa*-grass, a singular filament (*tantu*) left of it, and a mouse that lived in the hole and slowly gnawed through that filament" (MBh 1.41.3-4: *sa dadarśa pitṝn garte lambamānān adhomukhān ||3|| ekatantvavaśiṣṭaṃ vai vīraṇastambam āśritān | taṃ ca tantuṃ śanair ākhum ādadānaṃ bilāśrayam ||4||*). The ancestors hanging in the hole are called "deprived of food" (*nirāhārān),* "weak" or "thin" (*kṛśān*), and "miserable" (*dīnān*) (MBh 1,41.5). The ancestors explain to *Jaratkāru* that they are "falling into impure (*aśuci*) hell (*niraya*) because of the destruction of the lineage" (MBh 1.41.13: *asti nas tāta tapasaḥ phalaṃ pravadatāṃ vara | saṃtānaprakṣayād brahman patāmo niraye 'śucau ||*); they say that he is "the only thread of their lineage" (*kulatantu*) (MBh

1.41.21e: *kulatantur hi naḥ śiṣṭas tvam evaikas tapodhana*). Then, finally, in MBh 1.41.22-26

they explain the whole allegory:

> *yaṃ tu paśyasi no brahman vīraṇastambam āśritān |*
> *eṣo 'smākaṃ kulastamba āsīt svakulavardhanaḥ ||22||*
> *yāni paśyasi vai brahman mūlānīhāsya vīrudhaḥ |*
> *ete nas tantavas tāta kālena paribhakṣitāḥ ||23||*
> *yat tv etat paśyasi brahman mūlam asyārdhabhakṣitam |*
> *tatra lambāmahe sarve so 'py ekas tapa āsthitaḥ ||24||*
> *yam ākhuṃ paśyasi brahman kāla eṣa mahābalaḥ <...>||25||*
> *<...> |*
> *chinnamūlān paribhraṣṭān kālopahatacetasaḥ |*
> *narakapratiṣṭhān paśyāsmān yathā duṣkṛtinas tathā ||26||*

> The stem of *vīraṇa*-grass that you see us clinging to, o Brahmin, is a stem of
> our lineage (*kulastamba*) increasing our family.
> The roots of this plant that you see here, o Brahmin, are our threads [of
> lineage, *tantu*] eaten by time.
> This half-eaten root all of us are hanging on that you see, o Brahmin, is the one
> who performs austerity (*Jaratkāru*).
> This mouse that you see, o Brahmin, is time that possesses great power.
> <…>
> Ruined, with our roots cut and our minds damaged by time, we are proceeding
> to hell (*naraka*), like evil-doers.

How should this episode be understood? The motif of sinking or falling into a bottomless pit

(hole, grave, etc.) is rather widespread in various Indo-European traditions, and usually

signifies death or descend to the world of the dead. *Jaratkāru'*s ancestors hanging over a

bottomless pit clinging to a single thread or grass-stem are sinking to the abyss of the final

death or to hell (*niraya, naraka*), as explicitly stated in the story. It happens because their

religious merit (*puṇya*) runs out, so they need sacrificial offering from their descendants to

sustain their existence in the world of the dead. Because nobody performs the rites for the

ancestors, they are described as "deprived of food" (*nirāhārān*), "weak" (*kṛśān*), etc. To

ensure their destiny in the afterlife, they need a direct male descendant able to perform the

proper rites to "feed" his ancestors. The only thing that connects them with the world of the

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living, is the stem of grass they are hanging on. Thus, this stem is indeed their *prajātantu (kulatantu)* – a thread of progeny and simultaneously a thread of fate of the family. A mouse (*mūṣaka, ākhu)* that gnaws through this stem of grass and cutting the lineage is the embodiment of time and death.

Thus, time is represented here by two images/mythological motifs: first as a thread that signifies time-destiny and the succession of generations. Second, as a mouse that chews through this thread, cuts of the succession of generations, and represents time-death.

Mice, as subterranean chthonic animals, are associated with death and the world of the dead in many IE mythologies and folklore traditions. They are considered the harbingers of death; several Slavic traditions consider mice souls of the dead that leave the underworld.[221] A comparison of deadly time with a mouse or rat (*mūṣaka, ākhu)* that gnaws through a thread or stem is not unique for this story but is encountered in different texts. In a passage from the YV quoted above we find the same simile:

> *ihāpi vidyate yaiṣā pelavā sukhabhāvanā |*
> *ākhus tantum ivāśeṣaṃ kālas tām api kṛntati ||*

> When there is even the slightest hope of happiness in [this] world, time cuts it entirely, like a mouse [gnaws through] a thread.

A mythological connection between time and the mouse/rat is also exhibited in other episodes of the MBh. In the Śāntiparvan (in MBh 12.136) there is a well-known story about a wise mouse and a cat. Although the mouse in this episode is not directly likened to time, it is depicted as definitely connected to it. In MBh 12.136.83, the mouse is called "the one who knows [the right/appropriate] time" *(kālajña)* and "the one who knows [the appropriate] time and place" (*deśakālavid*). Moreover, the mouse relates to the cat a doctrine of time that

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[221] Gura 1997: 405.

definitely is part of the *kālavāda* worldview. The status of the mouse as a "time-knower" is constantly emphasized. The mouse persistently repeats how important time is; how one must act at the proper time, etc., e.g., in the following excerpt from MBh 12.136.88c-90:

> *vayam evātra kālajñā na kālaḥ parihāsyate ||*
> *akāle kṛtyam ārabdhaṃ kartuṃ nārthāya kalpate |*
> *tad eva kāla ārabdhaṃ mahate 'rthāya kalpate ||*
> *akālavipramuktān me tvatta eva bhayaṃ bhavet |*
> *tasmāt kālaṃ pratīkṣasva kim iti tvarase sakhe ||*
>
> We indeed are the time-knowers in this respect. Time is not ridiculed [by us]. An action that began at an improper time (*akāle*) does not achieve its result when completed. But [an action that] begins at the proper time (*kāle*) always achieves great result. If [you are] freed at an improper time, I would be afraid of you. Therefore, wait for the proper time – what [is your] hurry, o friend!

Turning to the comparative Indo-European data, it can be noticed that in several Slavic cultures a mouse, besides its association with death, is also connected with the thread, weaving, and spinning: for example, there is an Ukrainian and Belorussian belief that mice spin the threads left unattended during the night and can also spin the uncombed hair.[222] Such motifs are also present in the folklore. In particular, in a Russian folktale "Geese-the-Swans" a mouse offers a girl whom Baba-Yaga makes work for her to spin instead of her, so the girl could run away: "Run away, I will spin instead of you"[223]. According to A.A. Potebnja, a mouse is one of the usual substitutes (or allo-characters) for Baba-Yaga, and in many folktales they are functionally interchangeable. Potebnja also mentions a custom that exists in different Slavic traditions (i.e., Czech, Slovak, Croatian, Ukrainian, and Russian) to ask either a mouse

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[222] Slavyanskaya mifologiya 1994: 270.

[223] *"Я буду прясть за тебя, а ты беги"* (Library of Russian folklore 1989: 283).

or Baba-Yaga to "take" lost baby teeth[224]. A custom to give baby teeth to a "little mouse" that alternates with the Tooth Fairy exists in the other Indo-European cultures as well (teeth are given to *la petite souris* in France and Belgium, to Topolino-the-mouse in Italy, etc.). According to Potebnja, the mouse and Baba-Yaga alternate in several children's games as well.[225]

In the MBh there are several other occasions where a mouse epitomizes time or a specific type of time. One of these occasions will be considered in 3.1.3.2.

Summing up, in the *kālavāda* framework, one of the most typical motifs and images that symbolize time is that of the wheel of time. It is a unified depiction of time that incorporates all its functions and qualities. There are multiple derivatives of the image of the wheel in the *kālavāda*–related texts. It takes different forms, such as the whirlpool or whirlwind of time, or can be represented simply as circular movement. Time is also envisioned as a thread that connects generations and signifies a link between the living and the dead; it also constitutes a symbol of human fate. A related albeit more complex motif – hanging on a thread over a pit or abyss – is also repeatedly used in the MBh and other texts related to the *kālavāda* doctrine to represent time, death, falling to the underworld, and cessation of lineage. Another major motif directly connected with the image of a thread if that of weaving and spinning. This activity – weaving the cloth of time, spinning the threads of fate – is understood as "making time", establishing sequence of events, and creating destiny. Time as a mouse is usually seen as a force cutting the thread of human destiny and ending human life. Like the tread, the mouse is a link between the living and the dead. All the

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[224] Potebnja 2000: 161. Baba-Yaga therefore appears to be the original Tooth fairy.

[225] *Ibid*., 162.

aforementioned motifs have their Indo-European parallels and likely originate in the Indo-European mythological antiquity.

3.1.3.2. The Tree of Time

The Strīparvan of the Mahābhārata includes a famous story known in the scholarship as a 'parable of a hanging man'. There we find another important and complicated mythological motif principal for *kālavāda:* the motif of the tree of time.

The parable of a hanging man is a didactic story about the "forest of *saṃsāra*" told by Vidura to the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The story narrates of a certain Brahmin who was lost in a great forest full of wild animals. The Brahmin is terrified and runs in circles (*vartamānaḥ*)[226] in the forest trying to escape and save himself. Finally, he falls in a well, hidden by creepers and grass, and hangs upside down on a creeper over the well. MBh 11.5.9-12 thus relates this episode:

> *athāpaśyad vanaṃ ghoraṃ samantād vāgurāvṛtam |*
> *bāhubhyāṃ saṃpariṣvaktaṃ striyā paramaghorayā ||*
> *vanamadhye ca tatrābhūd udapānaḥ samāvṛtaḥ |*
> *vallībhis tṛṇachannābhir gūḍhābhir abhisaṃvṛtaḥ ||*
> *papāta sa dvijas tatra nigūḍhe salilāśaye |*
> *vilagnaś cābhavat tasmiṃl latāsaṃtānasaṃkaṭe ||*
> *panasasya yathā jātaṃ vṛntabaddhaṃ mahāphalam |*
> *sa tathā lambate tatra ūrdhvapādo hy adhaḥśirāḥ ||*

> Then he saw a horrible forest fenced by a net from all sides and surrounded by the extended arms of a most horrible woman.
> And in the midst of the forest there was a well – concealed, covered with creepers, hidden, enveloped by grass. There, into that hidden water-receptacle the twice-born fell and became hanging there on a thick intertwined creeper. He hangs there like a great jackfruit on a stalk with his legs up and head down.

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[226] MBh 11.5.3: *kaś cin mahati saṃsāre vartamāno dvijaḥ kila | vanaṃ durgam anuprāpto mahat kravyādasaṃkulam ||*

The Brahmin looks around and in the well and sees that he is surrounded by all kinds of perils: "inside the well he saw a great mighty serpent" (MBh 11.5.9.13b: *kūpamadhye mahānāgam apaśyata mahābalam* ||)[227], then "near the top of the well he saw an enormous elephant of a dark variegated color, with six faces and walking on twelve legs" (MBh 11.5.13c-14b: *kūpavīnāhavelāyām apaśyata mahāgajam* || *ṣaḍvaktraṃ kṛṣṇaśabalaṃ dviṣaṭkapadacāriṇam* |). He was surrounded by "a manifold of horrible, fearful bees born in a beehive and collecting honey [there] previously" (MBh 11.5.15c-f: *nānārūpā madhukarā ghorarūpā bhayāvahāḥ | āsate madhu saṃbhṛtya pūrvam eva niketajāḥ* ||). The Brahmin hanging upside down in a tree (the text clearly mentions the tree where he hangs) drinks the honey that flows down to him, but the honey doesn't quench his thirst. The tree where the Brahmin hangs is "nibbled by the black and white mice" (MBh 11.5.19ab: *kṛṣṇāḥ śvetāś ca taṃ vṛkṣaṃ kuṭṭayanti sma mūṣakāḥ* |). Next part of the text again enumerates all the great dangers (*mahad bhayam*) that surround the Brahmin, i.e., wild carnivorous animals, the horrible woman, the serpent[228] (*nāga)* in the bottom of the well, the elephant with six faces and twelve legs, falling of the tree because of mice, and, finally, the bees. The description ends with a moralistic remark that is supposed to explain the meaning of the situation: besides all the dangers, the Brahmin "thrown into the sea of *saṃsāra*, remained there not abandoning his desire to live and not detached from the worldly objects" (MBh 11.5.22: *evaṃ sa vasate tatra kṣiptaḥ saṃsārasāgare | na caiva jīvitāśāyāṃ nirvedam upagacchati* ||).

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[227] This line is quoted from the Bombay edition of the MBh. It is absent in the critical edition that nevertheless mentions the serpent among the dangers encountered by the Brahmin in one of the following passages. The necessity of inclusion of this passage in the critical edition of the MBh is discussed in Neveleva & Vassilkov 1998: 193, fn. 57.

[228] In this case (MBh 11.5.20c) the serpent is mentioned in the critical edition.

Afterwards, Vudura explains to Dhṛtarāṣṭra that this is a parable that illustrates what happens to a man in *saṃsāra* and elaborates on the allegories. I quote the whole long passage (MBh 11.6.5-12) below because it contains all the constituent parts of the mythological motif under consideration:

> *yat tad ucyati kāntāraṃ mahat saṃsāra eva saḥ |*
> *vanaṃ durgaṃ hi yat tv etat saṃsāragahanaṃ hi tat||*
> *ye ca te kathitā vyālā vyādhayas te prakīrtitāḥ |*
> *yā sā nārī bṛhatkāyā adhitiṣṭhati tatra vai |*
> *tām āhus tu jarāṃ prājñā varṇarūpavināśinīm ||*
> *yas tatra kūpo nṛpate sa tu dehaḥ śarīriṇām |*
> *yas tatra vasate 'dhastān mahāhiḥ kāla eva saḥ |*
> *antakaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ dehināṃ sarvahāry asau ||*
> *kūpamadhye ca yā jātā vallī yatra sa mānavaḥ |*
> *pratāne lambate sā tu jīvitāśā śarīriṇām ||*
> *sa yas tu kūpavīnāhe taṃ vṛkṣaṃ parisarpati |*
> *ṣaḍvaktraḥ kuñjaro rājan sa tu saṃvatsaraḥ smṛtaḥ |*
> *mukhāni ṛtavo māsāḥ pādā dvādaśa kīrtitāḥ ||*
> *ye tu vṛkṣaṃ nikṛntanti mūṣakāḥ satatotthitāḥ |*
> *rātryahāni tu tāny āhur bhūtānāṃ paricintakāḥ |*
> *ye te madhukarās tatra kāmās te parikīrtitāḥ ||*
> *yās tu tā bahuśo dhārāḥ sravanti madhunisravam |*
> *tāṃs tu kāmarasān vidyād yatra majjanti mānavāḥ ||*
> *evaṃ saṃsāracakrasya parivṛttiṃ sma ye viduḥ |*
> *te vai saṃsāracakrasya pāśāṃś chindanti vai budhāḥ ||* (MBh 11.6.5-12)

What is called the great forest truly is *saṃsāra*. An impassable thicket there is the depth of *saṃsāra*. Those called the wild beasts are known as diseases. The woman with a huge body that dwells there is known as Old Age that destroys beauty and luster. What is a well there, o king, that is the body of the embodied ones. A great serpent dwelling there in the bottom is Time (*kāla*), the Ender of all the living beings, the Seizer of all the embodied. A creeper in the middle of the well where this man hangs is desire for life of the embodied ones. An elephant of six faces that comes to the rim of the well-cover, o king, is called the Year. His faces are [six] seasons, his legs are understood as twelve months. The persistent mice that are nibbling down the tree are days and nights, as those explaining these beings say. The bees there are explained as desires. These great flowing streams of honey are to be known as sexual pleasures where men sink [and perish]. But those who know [that such is] the rotation of the wheel of *saṃsāra* surely are wise: they [are able to] cut the nooses of that wheel of *saṃsāra*.

Even from Vidura's explanation that is very much predetermined by the Brahmanic tradition,

we can see that the parable is very rich in temporal imagery, especially with the imagery related to time as death: the serpent that waits for the Brahmin in the bottom of the well is all-devouring time, as explicitly stated in the passage. Just like in the story of *Jaratkāru,* here we again observe a motif of the time-mouse: black and white mice, according to Vidura's explanation, are days and nights. The mice gnaw through the tree where the Brahmin hangs on a creeper, therefore its function is similar to that of the mouse nibbling on a stem of grass in the story of *Jaratkāru:* it is time that cuts off the thread of human life and destiny. Another aspect of time – the year – is depicted as an elephant with six faces-seasons and twelve legs-months. The horrible woman that guards the impenetrable forest is explained as old age (*jarā*) that is understood as a manifestation of time closely connected with death, which is reflected both in mythology and philosophy. For example, Bhartṛhari considers old age or aging one of the inherent powers of time: "Time [has] a power called "aging' (*jarā*)" (VP 3.9.24)[229]

Vidura explains all the other images in this passage as unrelated with time, however, if we approach them from the perspective of comparative mythology, the following can be said: the forest that Vidura explains as *saṃsāra* (and interprets an 'impassable thicket' there, *vanaṃ durgam*, as the 'depth of *saṃsāra*', *saṃsāragahanam*), within the Indo-European mythological tradition can be interpreted as the netherworld or the realm of the dead, etc. According to M. Mencej, roaming in the forest, especially walking there in circles, in mythology and folklore of almost all European cultures represents movement of the soul to the world of the dead, entering the supernatural world, etc.[230] Mencej states that "circular movement is… characteristic of a liminal space between the worlds and is at the same time an

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[229] *jarākhyā kālaśaktir yā śaktyantaravirodhinī |*

[230] Discussed in Mencej 2008: 35-67.

indicator of a passage from this to the other world."[231] She also juxtaposes the circular movement through the forest with spinning of a spindle – activity, mythologically connected with birth and death and deities of birth and death as well as with time and passage of time, as shown in 3.3.1. The Brahmin who moves through the forest of *saṃsāra* is described as *vartamānaḥ* (derived from the Sanskrit root *vṛt-*), which implies circular movement and also, as explained in 1.3.2, etymologically connected with various IE words denoting time (the same word, *vartamāna*, in neuter is also used to denote "present time" in Sanskrit; for the whole range of temporal cognates see 1.3.2).

A well (or a pit) that Vidura calls "he body of the embodied ones" *(dehaḥ śarīriṇām)* in the older stratum of the Indian and Indo-European mythology usually, as states above, symbolizes the entrance to the netherworld: through the well to what seems to be the netherworld falls Trita Āptya in the Vedic and epic myth; *Jaratkāru*'s ancestors that are said to be "falling to hell" are hanging over the well or pit; in many folktales of the Indo-European traditions a hero enters the other world where different demonic, death-related, and magical characters, such as the water goblin, the king of the dead, Old-Woman-the-Winter, etc., dwell. In the Southern Slavic tradition, the *vilas,* female water-spirits, swim in the well during the night; according to the Bulgarian folklore, the souls of the dead ancestors appear from the well at sunset. In various Slavic traditions the well is a place of the fortunetelling rites, as well as certain rituals related to the ancestors and demonic beings. Thus, the well is understood as a place where time does not function ordinarily: in a well one can see the past and the future. A well-known example from the Slavic mythology is found in the Serbian epic songs about Prince Marko (*Марко Краљевић*): the prince, instructed by a *vila*, looks into the well and

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[231] *Ibid.*, 54.

sees there a moment of his death.[232]

A very important motif involving the well is found in the Poetic Edda in the *Völuspá*: Odin sacrifices his eye to Mímir's Well (*Mímisbrunnr*) that is located under one of the three roots of the world tree *Yggdrasil* and in exchange receives prophetic wisdom: after drinking from the well he is able to see the future, all that will happen. Therefore, it can be said that in many Indo-European traditions a well is, so to speak, a portal to "the other world" and also a portal/window to "another time". It is simultaneously a liminal place and also - a liminal state-in-time.

It should be noted that in the considered parable the word *kūpa* should be understood precisely as a well, not simply as a pit or hole (a typical meaning for the Vedic texts), because it is said in the passage that the elephant comes to what is denoted by a compound *kūpa-vīnāha-velāyām*, where *vīnāha* means not simply a rim of a pit/hole but rather a cover or top of a well.

Turning to the analysis of the other elements of the parable, it seems that although the likening of the wild beasts with diseases by itself does not have any temporal aspects, nevertheless the diseases are considered to be the instruments of death and, consequently, the instruments of time-death as well.

A creeper that Vidura explains as 'desire for life of the embodied ones' (*jīvitāśā śarīriṇām*) is in this case life as such and can be interpreted, like in the story of Jaratkāru, as a thread of fate as well as the thread of progeny (*prajātantu*), span and then cut by time.

The only "danger" enumerated in the parable that cannot be directly related to time or death is "the horrible bees" that Vidura explains as desires and the honey that they collected

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[232] See Golenischev-Kutuzov 1963: 101-102; Slavyanskaya Mifologiya: 237.

"previously" streaming down the tree. In the Indo-European perspective, however, there is an echo of a connection of the bees with death and the dead. First of all, it is an old Mediterranean belief that bees are spontaneously born out of corpses of cows or bulls (*bugonia*) and horses.[233] Second, honey is definitely connected with death and the dead and simultaneously with immortality: on one hand, it is the undecaying food of immortality (parallel to *amṛta* or Greek ambrosia), on the other hand, it is the food of the dead. For example, several Slavic traditions have a belief that the souls of the dead can be sustained by honey, therefore dishes with honey are served during the funerary and commemorative rites and various ancestral holidays and festivals.[234] Honey was also used in the funeral rites in Ancient Greece and in other Indo-European cultures. In the Scandinavian mythology honey in the form of mead of poetry, Old Norse *skáldskapar mjaðar* (which is a mix of honey and blood of Kvasir, the wisest of men), is a drink of prophesy, poetic inspiration and immortality.

Additionally, the bees and honey are mythologically connected to the World Tree. In the Norse/Scandinavian mythology, the world tree Yggdrasil is covered with honeydew and its roots feed in the honey springs. In the prose Edda it is said that the dew that falls from Yggdrasil to the earth and to the well Urðarbrunnr is "what people call honeydew, and from it bees feed"[235]. Similarly, the Russian Apocrypha mention twelve springs of honey and milk that come from the root of the world tree.[236] In the Russian ritual songs the bees are said to

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[233] This belief as well as an associated ritual is described by Nicander of Colophon (*Theriaca*, 741), by Virgil (*Georgica*, IV, 284 sqq.), and in various other sources.

[234] Slavyanskaya Mifologiya: 294.

[235] Faulkes 1995: 18-19.

[236] Slavyanskie Drevnosti, vol. 3: 208.

dwell in the "middle realm" of the world tree, e.g.:

> Вырастало деревце да кипарисовое.
> Как в этом деревце да три угодьица:
> по вершине деревца да соловей песни поёт,
> посередь-то деревца да пчёлы яры гнезда вьют.[237]

> There grew a cypress tree.
> There are three realms in this tree.
> On the top of the tree a nightingale sings its songs.
> In the middle of the tree fervent bees make their nests.

An interesting parallel that shows that the bees are envisioned as dwelling in the world tree in this case depicted as a cosmic lotus is found in a poem by an unknown author included in Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* anthology (36.2 or 1194):

> *āpīyamānam asakṛd bhramarāyamāṇair |*
> *ambhodharaiḥ sphuritavīcisahasrapatram |*
> *kṣīrāmburāśim avalokaya śeṣanālam |*
> *ekaṃ jagattrayasaraḥpṛthupuṇḍarīkam ||*

> Behold the Sea of Milk, a cosmic lotus,
> drunk constantly by clouds who visit it like bees;
> its shining waves a thousand petals
> with Śeṣa as its stem and the universe its lake.[238]

Thus, the bees and honey considered within the Indo-European framework, first, can be understood as connected with both death and immortality and therefore with time in its two aspects – temporality and eternity. Second, they can be placed in the middle section of the world tree.

Finally, the figure of Vidura who tells and interprets the parable is also time- or death-

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[237] Pavlovsky 1899: 5.

[238] Translated by D. Ingalls in Ingalls 1965: 338.

related. Vidura is an embodiment of Dharma[239], the god of law and religious duty, and in the epics Dharma is practically identical with Yama, the god of death; both deities have an epithet *dharmarāja*, the king of *dharma*.

Summing up the features of the discussed parable, here again we observe a motif of sinking/falling into a bottomless pit or well and hanging on a thread. In this case it is not simply hanging over the abyss of death but rather hanging in the world tree: the very structure of the tree in the parable exhibits multiple features typical for the Indo-European World Tree. Usually, the world tree has a drink/elixir of immortality and a great bird (frequently an eagle) on top; the middle of the tree, as seen above, can be marked by the presence of the bees; in the bottom of the world tree a great snake is situated. Mice can also be pictured near the roots of the tree. All these elements, except for an eagle/bird on top, are present in the description of the tree in the parable. Also, it is said that the Brahmin while hanging in a tree drinks the honey that flows down to him. This can be seen as a parallel to *Óðinn* who in a similar way hangs in the cosmic tree Yggdrasil and drinks drops of the mead of poetry that run down the tree.

Moreover, the world tree the Brahmin hangs in is not an "ordinary" world tree of the Indo-European cosmography but, in fact, the world tree of time, it is a world tree with temporal organization. This motif of a temporal world tree is found in the MBh multiple times and appears to be typical for the *kālavāda* framework. The first occurrence of the tree or the world axis of time in the South Asian tradition is attested, as shown in 2.1.1, in the AV 19.53-

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[239] There are several mentions of this in the MBh. For example, MBh 15.35.12: *māṇḍavyaśāpād dhi sa vai dharmo viduratāṃ gataḥ |* – "Because of Māṇḍavya's curse, he who is Dharma was incarnated as Vidura" (lit.: "went to Vidura-ness"). Also, in MBh 15.35.21: *yo hi dharmaḥ sa viduro* – "The one who is Dharma he is Vidura," and other places.

54 where time is visualized as the world axis with a distinct structure: there is an axis, then a wheel close to the top, and finally the nectar of immortality on top. Notably, a wheel, in this case called "the wheel of *saṃsāra*", is also mentioned in the parable of a hanging man.

A different "*kālavādic*" text, the YV, also has multiple examples of such "world tree of time," one of these examples occurs in YV 1.23.27:

> *kālo 'yaṃ bhūtamaśakaghuṃghumānāṃ prapātinām |*
> *brahmāṇḍodumbaraughānāṃ bṛhatpādapatāṃ gataḥ ||*

> This Time becomes the great tree[240] [equal to the] multitude of *udumbara* [trees that are also] *brahmāṇḍas* (primordial eggs of Brahma) with myriads humming beings-mosquitos flying [around it].

A motif of the world tree of time definitely has Indo-European origins and in different forms is found in many Indo-European cultures. Multiple examples that visualize time as the world tree appear in Russian folklore, such as the following riddle about the year: *"Стоит дуб, на дубу двенадцать сучьев, на каждом сучке по четыре гнезда"*[241] – 'There stands an oak tree, twelve branches are in the oak tree, every branch has four nests.' A more elaborate variant that distinguishes between the days and nights (i.e., white and black eggs) is this:

> *Стоит дуб, на дубу двенадцать гнезд,*
> *на каждом гнезде по четыре синицы,*
> *у каждой синицы по четырнадцати яиц,*
> *семь беленьких да семь черненьких.*[242]

> There stands an oak tree, there are twelve nests in the oak tree,
> there are four chickadees in every nest,
> Each chickadee has fourteen eggs:
> Seven white and seven black.

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[240] 'Becomes the great tree' – lit.: 'goes into the [state of] great-tree-ness'.

[241] Toporov 2010, vol. 1: 123.

[242] Filatova-Hellberg 1984: 145.

A comparable Russian riddle clearly describes the world axis organized as the year: *"Стоит столб до небес, на нем двенадцать гнезд, в каждом гнезде по четыре яйца, в каждом яйце по семи зародышев"*[243] – 'There stands a pillar sky-high, there are twelve nests on it, there are four eggs in each nest, there are seven embryos in each egg.'

Concluding, we can add another characteristic motif that is typical for the *kālavāda*-related mythology: the tree of time. This motif seems to be associated with the motif of the wheel; sometimes these motifs merge (like in the AV), and the wheel and the tree are seen as identical.

3.1.3.3. The Great Cycle

As can be concluded from the prominence of the time-wheel image in the epics, time is envisioned as circular or cyclic. The model for this cyclic time is the ever-revolving year whose parts, the time-units, rotate endlessly.

Starting from the Brahmanic times and taking its finite shape in the epics and *purāṇas*, a system of new ideas of how the universe functions emerges. The mode of its function is deemed cyclic, which means that the universe undergoes an endless alternation of periods of existence and non-existence. Just like the individual selves (*ātmans*) reincarnate in the cycle of *saṃsāra*, the universe is born, it lasts, and then withdrawn into nothingness again, after which the whole sequence repeats. The cornerstone of this system of cosmic cycles is a notion of *yuga* – literally, 'yoke' that in the RV also means '[human] generation' (e.g., RV 1.92.11, 1.103.4, 1.124.2, 1.139.8, 2.2.2, etc.) and 'a stage of life' (RV 1.158.6), therefore even in the

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[243] Toporov 2010, vol. 1: 123.

RV it comes close to signifying a time unit. In Hinduism, *yuga* is a designation of a world age.

The development and characteristic features of the system of cosmic cycles when the universe is created and destroyed was analyzed comprehensively in great detail by Louis González-Reimann in his seminal book *The Mahābhārata and the Yugas*[244]. Therefore, without dwelling on it at length, for the sake of completeness, here I briefly summarize its main aspects and list the quantitative relationship between its major units, as described in the Mahābhārata and multiple *purāṇas*.

The core cosmic period that shows a progression of the universe through its existence is a period of the four *yugas* or world ages similar to the four ages (golden, silver, bronze, and iron) in Ancient Greek mythology. Such a "combined" period is called *mahāyuga* – a great *yuga*. The yugas are closely connected with *dharma* as moral law and religious duty that dictates proper behavior for all members of society.[245] Their designations – *Kṛta*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali* – are associated with the four throws of a dice in a ritual dice game, whereas *Kṛta* is a perfect score, and *Kali* is the worst possible outcome. Consequently, the *Kṛta yuga* that starts the cosmic cycle, is considered the best of the four *yugas*, when dharma is at its perfect completeness. It means that during this *yuga* people behave properly and follow their *dharma* as ascribed to their social class (*varṇa*) and stage of life (*āśrama*). MBh 3.148.21cd states: *kṛte yuge catuṣpādaś cāturvarṇyasya śāśvataḥ |* – 'During the *Kṛta yuga*, [Dharma] of the four *varṇas* is constantly on four legs'. *Dharma* here is envisioned as a cow whose ideal position is, of course, standing on all four legs. Then, through the succession of

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[244] See González-Reimann 2002.

[245] *varṇāśrama-dharma* – duty and rules for the four social classes and four stages of life.

the yugas from the *Kṛta* to *Kali*, *dharma* is reduced by one forth per yuga. During the *Kali* yuga, *dharma* is at one fourth of the whole: *pādenaikena kaunteya dharmaḥ kaliyuge sthitaḥ |* – 'in *Kali yuga*, Dharma stands [supported] by one leg, o Kaunteya' (MBh 3.148.32c). The Mahābhārata gives detailed and vivid descriptions of what happens to people during the *Kali yuga*. The general attitude is that people become corrupt, immoral, and don't follow their *dharma;* their behavior is portrayed as "reversed" and the whole world is "inverted". A typical depiction of the general state of things "at the end of the yugas" is given in MBh 3.186.24-55. The following excerpt from this long passage exemplifies the invertedness of the world[246] and moral decay of the human society where everything goes in a wrong direction:

> *yajñapratinidhiḥ pārtha dānapratinidhis tathā |*
> *vratapratinidhiś caiva tasmin kāle pravartate || 25 ||*
> *brāhmaṇāḥ śūdrakarmāṇas tathā śūdrā dhanārjakāḥ |*
> *kṣatradharmeṇa vāpy atra vartayanti gate yuge || 26 ||*
> *nivṛttayajñasvādhyāyāḥ piṇḍodakavivarjitāḥ |*
> *brāhmaṇāḥ sarvabhakṣāś ca bhaviṣyanti kalau yuge || 27 ||*
> *ajapā brāhmaṇās tāta śūdrā japaparāyaṇāḥ |*
> *viparīte tadā loke pūrvarūpaṃ kṣayasya tat || 28 ||*

> There is merely pretense of sacrifice, Pārtha, pretense of generosity,
> pretense of vow, when this time begins.
> Brahmins do the work of the śūdras, and the śūdras acquire wealth
> or live by the duty of the kṣatriyas, the yuga having come to an end.
> Brahmins are indifferent to the Vedic sacrifice and recitation of the Vedas.
> They eat everything and stop the rites of the *piṇḍas* and water [to the
> ancestors] during the Kali yuga.
> Brahmins do not recite prayers, o son, [but] the *śūdras* do take resort in
> prayers.
> Then, in the inverted world, this is an omen of destruction.

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[246] Across different Indo-European mythological traditions, the "invertedness" is a typical feature of the world of the dead. The usage of this mythological motif in the context of the destruction of the universe might signify that the realm of death prevails over the world of the living even before the dissolution occurs. Therefore, the world of the living has no escape: it becomes indistinguishable from the world of the dead and must be destroyed. It can be said using the terms of *kālavāda* that all beings at the end of the *Kali yuga* are 'already killed by time'.

alpāyuṣaḥ svalpabalā alpatejaḥparākramāḥ |
alpadehālpasārāś ca tathā satyālpabhāṣiṇaḥ || 32 ||
bahuśūnyā janapadā mṛgavyālāvṛtā diśaḥ |
yugānte samanuprāpte vṛthā ca brahmacāriṇaḥ |
bhovādinas tathā śūdrā brāhmaṇāś cāryavādinaḥ || 33 ||

[People] have short life spans and little strength. [They are] of little energy and without courage; their bodies are small, they are unworthy, seldom they say the truth.
Settlements become empty, and wild animals fill [all] directions.
When the end of the yuga is within reach, [the vow of] celibacy is in vain.
The *śūdras* then say 'hey, you!' [to the brahmins,] and the brahmins say 'o my lord!' [to the *śūdras*].

yugānte manujavyāghra bhavanti bahujantavaḥ |
na tathā ghrāṇayuktāś ca sarvagandhā viśāṃ pate |
rasāś ca manujavyāghra na tathā svāduyoginaḥ || 34 ||
bahuprajā hrasvadehāḥ śīlācāravivarjitāḥ |
mukhebhagāḥ striyo rājan bhaviṣyanti yugakṣaye || 35 ||

At the end of a yuga, o tiger among men, [the world is] teeming with people.
All the smells are not endowed with aromas then, o lord of men!
And, o tiger among men, tastes are devoid of sweetness.
Women will become short-bodied, they bare many children, they are devoid of virtue [and] perverted [lit.: use their mouths as vulva] at the decay of a *yuga*, o king!

tathā ca pṛthivīpāla yo bhaved dharmasaṃyutaḥ |
alpāyuḥ sa hi mantavyo na hi dharmo 'sti kaś cana || 45 ||

The one who would follow his dharma will have a short life, o protector of earth, for there will be no dharma whatsoever to think about.

saptavarṣāṣṭavarṣāś ca striyo garbhadharā nṛpa |
daśadvādaśavarṣāṇāṃ puṃsāṃ putraḥ prajāyate || 52 ||
bhavanti ṣoḍaśe varṣe narāḥ palitinas tathā |
āyuḥkṣayo manuṣyāṇāṃ kṣipram eva prapadyate || 53 ||
kṣīṇe yuge mahārāja taruṇā vṛddhaśīlinaḥ |
taruṇānāṃ ca yac chīlaṃ tad vṛddheṣu prajāyate || 54 ||
viparītās tadā nāryo vañcayitvā rahaḥ patīn |
vyuccaranty api duḥśīlā dāsaiḥ paśubhir eva ca || 55 ||

At the age of seven or eight, women become pregnant, o king!
Men produce offspring at the age of ten or twelve.
At the age of sixteen, people become grey-haired.

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Human life quickly reaches its end.
When the *yuga* is waning, o great king, young people behave like the old ones,
and the conduct of the young becomes customary among the old.
Perverted women have intercourse in secret from their husbands.
Ill-behaved, they commit adultery with slaves and cattle.

The described events take place at the end of the *Kali yuga* that is the last one of a thousand yugas of maybe of a thousand of the *mahāyugas* (MBh 3.186.24c simply states *sahasrānte* – 'at the end of a thousand,' and doesn't stipulate any further, although MBh 3.186.56 specifies it is *yugasahasrānte samprāpte* – 'when the end of a thousand of yugas has arrived'), after which the dissolution of the universe (*pralaya*) begins. MBh 3.186.17-23 gives particular details regarding the structure of a *mahāyuga* and the duration of its different constituent parts. Similar descriptions are found in the other parts of the MBh and in several *purāṇas*. Generally, it is said that the *Kṛta yuga* lasts four thousand years[247] with two transitional periods (*saṃdhi*) for four hundred years before and after the yuga; the *Tretā yuga* – three thousand years with two transitional periods three hundred years each; the *Dvāpara yuga* – two thousand years plus two transitional periods two hundred years each; and, finally, the *Kali yuga* lasts one thousand years with the two transitional periods lasting one hundred years each (the proportion between the duration of the yugas and between their transitional periods being 4:3:2:1). The whole cycle including the four yugas and eight *saṃdhi* periods lasts 12,000 (divine) years[248] and is called a *mahāyuga*. The duration of twelve thousand years is obviously divisible by twelve and is patterned after the year with its twelve months. A *mahāyuga* therefore constitutes a cosmic year, and, as in the Ṛgvedic antiquity, the year still

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[247] Sometimes it is said that the year here represents a year of the gods that lasts 360 human years (see González-Reimann 2002: 6). Thus, a human year equals to one day of the gods. It can be said the year symbolism permeates the whole system.

[248] 4000+2x400+3000+2x300+2000+2x200+1000+2x100=12000.

represents the ultimate time unit and cycle, as well as the absolute time. It is understood that after the *Kali yuga* ends, the cycle begins anew with the *Kṛta yuga*.

In order to accommodate the idea that the world is destroyed not after a particular *Kali yuga* ends but only after an end of a much greater cycle of one thousand yugas or *mahāyugas*, a notion of *kalpa* (aeon) is introduced. A *kalpa* is a period during which the universe goes through a full cycle of its existence, i.e., creation-being-destruction. The universe is destroyed after the last *Kali yuga* at the end of a *kalpa*. Then, different accounts within the Mahābhārata and certain *purāṇas* describe a period called a day of Brahmā (i.e., a period when Brahmā, the creator, is awake and the universe exists, after which follows the night of Brahmā when the creator is asleep and the universe dissolves) in different ways. MBh 12.291.14c states that 'what is called the day of Brahmā is ten times one hundred completed *kalpas*' (*daśakalpaśatāvṛttaṃ tad ahar brāhmam ucyate*), whereas MBh 3.186.23a gives a different account: 'this completion of a thousand [of *yugas*[249]] is called the day of Brahmā' – *etat sahasraparyantam aho brāhmam udāhṛtam*. In certain other accounts, including the *purāṇic* ones, a day of Brahmā equals to one *kalpa*.

Finally, another significant time period in this system is a *manvantara, i.e.*, a time span from a birth of a specific Manu, an ancestor of all humans, until the death of the last generation produced by that Manu. Each *manvantara* is also characterized by a new Indra ruling over a new generation of the gods with the exception of the great gods of Hinduism (i.e., Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā plus Devī, the Goddess). A *manvantara* unit seems to be a way to bring together the cosmic and the personal time, as well as the concept of rebirth: cosmic events are very much connected with the destiny of human generations. Each world cycle is

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[249] I insert '[of yugas]' because the previous verse describes different *yugas*, not the *kalpas*.

inherently linked to its own set of human beings (all of them originating from a particular Manu) and the gods who are born and destroyed along with a specific universe.

Overall, it can be seen that this great cycle is an expansion and rethinking of the Vedic cycle of cosmic and ritual time. The year is still the cornerstone of the whole system and represents the eternal recreation and all-powerful death. In the form of the cosmic cycle, it is as closely associated with *dharma* as it was connected with *r̥tá* in the Vedic times.

3.1.4. Conclusion

During the epic period, there emerges *kālavāda* – a new doctrine of time that incorporates many preexisting views. This doctrine is not a philosophical system but rather a semi-philosophical worldview whose core ideas are expressed in the epics.

Among the main tenets of *kālavāda* is the idea that time is the highest God and highest power in the universe that creates and regulates everything. The roots of this view are most likely in the Atharvaveda where time is represented as omnipotent and omnipresent creator. However, the central and most repeated principle of the *kālavāda* doctrine is the idea that time is the mighty force that annihilates the universe at the end of the cosmic cycle. In this capacity, time is identified with death and multiple deities of death and said to be the one who "bakes" or "ripens" living beings and devours them. Time is also identified with fate whose power is perceived as inescapable.

A major characteristic feature of the doctrine is that it conveys its principles by means of mythological motifs and vivid imagery. The most complex images typically associated with time in *kālavāda* include those of the wheel of time or the year and the time-world tree. Time is also envisioned as a thread, as a mouse that cuts this thread, as whirlpool, and so on.

Among the mythological motifs connected with time are those of hanging on a thread or cord over the abyss; hanging in the world tree; spinning and weaving.

Finally, *kālavāda* preserves the view that persists in the RV, AV, and the late Vedic texts: the view that time exists in two forms that can be described as eternity and temporality. Time-eternity is immutable, undivided, and imperceptible; time-temporality is divided, perceptible and active. Although time-eternity is represented by the eternal undecaying wheel, all cyclic activity is performed by the time-temporality.

3.2. Further Developments. Time in Indian Philosophy.

3.2.1. Time in the six *Darśanas*

The notion of time is not a major focus of any school of Indian philosophy. The sole exception is the philosophical system of Bhartṛhari[250] where this category plays an important or even central role. However, it is still a significant category that was to some extent discussed by almost every philosophical school. My goal in this sub-chapter is not to describe the views of these schools comprehensively, but rather to state their main convictions and see if their views were influenced by the preceding tradition. I will mostly follow Schayer's line of reasoning when describing the arguments of the sides because at Schayer 1938 he examines these arguments thoroughly and presents them systematically.

Most of the so-called "orthodox" schools of Indian philosophy, i.e., the six *darśanas,* considered time a substance, mostly adopting the view of the Vaiśeṣikas. According to the

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[250] Discussed in 3.2.2.

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Vaiśeṣikas (this point of view was also supported by the Mīmāṃsakas and some philosophers of other schools as well), time is one of the nine eternal and imperishable substances (*dravya*). In the beginning of his *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*, Kāṇada, the founder of the Vaiśeṣika school, gives the following comprehensive list of substances:

> *pṛthivy āpas tejo vāyur ākāśaṃ kālo dig ātmā mana iti dravyāṇi |*
>
> Substances (*dravya*) [are]: earth, water, fire, air, ether (*ākāśa*), time, space, the self (*ātman*), [and] intellect[251] (*manas*).
> (VS 1.1.4)

The Vaiśeṣikas considered a substance to be an integrative cause of actions/activities (*karman, kṛyā*) or events. Substances in this system are also understood as substrata and, again, integrative causes, of qualities or attributes (*guṇa*), i.e., qualities and actions are inherently united with and caused by the substances. Kāṇada enumerates qualities and actions in VS 1.1.5-6, including the qualities related to the time substance, i.e., *paratva* and *aparatva* – priority and posteriority. The causal relationship between the substances, activities, and qualities is explained by Kāṇada in VS 1.1.8-14, 17 where he also establishes the notion of substance as an integrative cause of actions and qualities:

> *dravyāṇi dravyāntaram ārabhante |*
> *guṇāś ca guṇāntaram |*
> *karma karmasādhyaṃ na vidyate |*
> *kāryāvirodhi dravyaṃ kāraṇāvirodhi ca |*
> *ubhaytathā guṇaḥ |*
> *kāryavirodhi karma |*
> *kriyāvad guṇavat samavāyikāraṇam iti dravyalakṣaṇam |*
> *<...>*
> *dravyaguṇakarmaṇāṃ dravyaṃ kāraṇaṃ sāmānyam |*
>
> Substances produce other substances. Qualities also [produce] other qualities. [But] action that [can be] brought about by action does not exist. Substance is not in opposition with either cause or effect. Quality [is in opposition] in both

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[251] *manas* can also be translated as 'mind' or 'consciousness'.

cases. Action is in opposition with [its] effect. A characteristic feature of substance [is that it is] endowed with action, endowed with quality, [and is their] integrative (=inherently connected) cause. <...> Substance equally is the cause of substance, quality, and action.

Time, being one of the substances, is therefore understood as a cause of actions and substrate of such qualities as priority and posteriority (*paratva* and *aparatva*). A further elaboration on the features of time as a substance is found in the VS 2.2.6-11:

> *aparasmin paraṃ yugapad ayugapac ciraṃ kṣipram iti kālaliṅgāni |*
> *dravyatvanityatve vāyunā vyākhyāte |*
> *tattvaṃ bhāvena |*
> *kāryaviśeṣeṇa nānātvam |*
> *nityeṣv abhāvād anityeṣu bhāvāt |*
> *kāraṇe kālākhyā |*
>
> [Such expressions as:] 'in posteriority', 'prior', 'simultaneously', 'not simultaneously', 'slowly', 'quickly' – are signs of time.
> Substantiality (*dravyatva*) [and] eternity (*nityatva*) of time is explained by [the same means as in the case of] air. The [unified] essence [of time]– by [the same means as in the case of] existence. Because of [time's] absense in the eternal [substances], because of [its] presence in the non-eternal [substances]— the denomination time [is applied to] the cause.

Then later in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* we observe an additional discussion of time:

> *dikkālāv ākāśaṃ ca kriyāvadbhyo vaidharmyān niṣkriyāṇi |*
>
> Space-time and ether [ākāśa] are inactive because they are different from those performing actions. (VS 5.2.23)
>
> *guṇair dig vyākhyātā | kāraṇena kālaḥ |*
>
> Space is explained by qualities. Time [is explained] by the cause. (VS 5.2.27-28, also in VS 7.1.31-32)

Kāṇada therefore postulates time as an eternal and indivisible (possessing a unified, indivisible nature – *tattva*) substance that can be a cause of other, non-eternal substances as well as that of actions and qualities. He also specifies that time, like space and ether, is "inactive". Time's characteristic signs or logical marks (*liṅga*), such as 'in posteriority', 'prior',

'simultaneously', 'not simultaneously', 'slowly', 'quickly' are also listed. The quoted condensed and, as typical for the *sutra* literature, requiring elaborate commentaries text becomes the core of numerous further discussions of the nature of time by the Vaiśeṣikas as well as by other schools who shared the view of time as one of the substances. The foremost subject of these discussions was a problem of reality of time that, according to the Vaiśeṣikas, while being a substance, cannot be perceived directly. The idea of imperceptibility of time within the Vaiśeṣika framework is related to its understanding as a subtle (*sūkṣma*) substance that, unlike the coarse (*sthūla*) substances (i.e., the material ones, like the earth, etc.), cannot be perceived or observed directly and needs to be inferred. The goal would be to show how to infer this kind of substance and what the basis of this inference is. If a subtle substance cannot be inferred, it means it is not real. Now, the question is – how can one infer time?

The Vaiśeṣikas (specifically, Praśastapāda and other post-Kāṇada philosophers of this school) present the following argument[252]:

First, in order to determine if a substance is real, one must examine its manifestations and, most importantly, activities. Such activities, especially if an imperceptible subtle substance is considered, can be found in the language in the form of set expressions. VS 2.2.6. gives a clear example of temporal activities, stating that "the signs of time" (*kālaliṅgāni*), i.e., the logical marks that constitute a basis for inference, are "[such expressions as:] 'in posteriority', 'prior', 'simultaneously', 'not simultaneously', 'slowly', 'quickly'" (*aparasmin paraṃ yugapad ayugapac ciraṃ kṣipram iti* – VS 2.2.6). There are also other linguistic instruments, such as grammatical markers of tenses and modes, lexical items denoting time

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[252] Summarized on the basis of Schayer 1938: 8-9.

units, i.e., *kṣaṇa* (moment), *ṛtu* (season), etc.[253], and other grammatical forms that show specific temporal relations between actions and entities. For example, different positions in time are denoted by such forms produced from a verbal root *kṛ-* as *kriyate* – 'being done' – present tense passive; *kṛtam* – 'done' – past passive participle; and *kariṣyati* – 'will do' – future tense[254]. Then, because of the existence of terms and grammatical forms of this kind in the daily used language, the reality of time is postulated with a reference to *vyavahāra* – the so-called empirical applicability. It means that a term that is present in the common language and used practically, cannot refer to a non-existent entity. Thus, time is established as real.

Additionally, multiple philosophical schools, when discussing the impermanent nature of all events and entities in the universe, speculate why this impermanence occurs. The causality principles dictate that no effect can occur without a cause, therefore there must be a cause (or causes) of impermanence. Particular effects require specific causes (*asādhāraṇa-kāraṇa*)[255] whose activities are experienced empirically. Specific causes, on the other hand, must have a general cause behind them. This cause, according to the Vaiśeṣikas, is time. Most of the other schools that accept that time is a substance, agree with the Vaiśeṣikas and also hold that time is a subtle substance that needs to be inferred. The only exception from this

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[253] Discussed in Praśastapāda's commentary– *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* 6.2 – on the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra.*

[254] The example *kriyate, kṛtam, kariṣyati* without any translation or elaboration is quoted by Schayer (1938: 8) from Kamalaśīla's Pañjikā to the Tattvasaṃgraha of Śāntarakṣita.

[255] Schayer 1938: 9.

view is Prabhākara, a mīmāṃsaka, who claimed that time can actually be perceived, i.e., grasped by the six senses – *ṣad-indriya-grahya*[256].

Thus, the existence of time as a real imperceptible substance has been postulated by the Vaiśeṣikas, Mīmāṃsakas, and some Vedāntins. Each school discusses characteristic features of time-substance and enumerates its qualities. Bhartṛhari who examines the views of different philosophical schools on time (without naming these schools though) in the beginning of the *Kālasamuddeśa* (Chapter 9, "The full exposition of time") of his *Vākyapadīya*, gives the following summary of generally accepted qualities of time among those who consider it a substance:

> vyāpāravyatirekeṇa kālam eke pracakṣate |
> nityam ekaṃ vibhu dravyaṃ parimāṇaṃ kriyāvatām ||
>
> Certain [schools] consider time a substance (*dravya*): eternal (*nitya*), singular (*eka*), and omnipresent (*vibhu*).
> [Time is] differentiated for activity, it is a measure of [things that] perform actions.
> (VP 3.9.1)

In this stanza Bhartṛhari mentions three major qualities of time-substance: eternity, singularity or oneness (i.e., indivisibility), and omnipresence. Most of the schools treating time as a substance usually add one more quality – the above-discussed subtlety – to this list and generally agree upon the following four characteristic qualities[257]:

1) subtlety *(sūkṣmatva/sūkṣmatā)*;

2) omnipresence *(vibhutva/sarvagatatva)*;

3) eternity *(nityatva)*;

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[256] Schayer 1938: 9.

[257] Listed as in Schayer 1938: 9-10 with minor corrections.

4) singularity/oneness or indivisibility *(ekatva).*

All these qualities are distinctive of the upaniṣadic time-*Brahman* as well as of the omnipresent eternal time of the *kālavāda* system. Interestingly, philosophers of the "time-substance" branches as well as thinkers that understand time differently, including Bhartṛhari, necessarily postulate the indivisibility or oneness of time, despite the fact that *vyavahāra,* empirical applicability, apparently dictates the opposite, because time is definitely experienced as divided into specific units (hours, days, years, etc., – the notions observed and used by people every day). Then there inevitably arises a problem of the "kālavādic" nature: if time is one and indivisible, how can there be specific separate time units?

To remedy this problem most of the schools introduce a concept of *upādhi,* i.e., substitution or contingent condition: time really is one and undivided, however, it *appears* divided by its association with objects. Bhartṛhari conveys this idea in the following way:

> *saṃsargiṇāṃ tu ye bhedā viśeṣās tasya te matāḥ |*
>
> Divisions of what is connected [with time] are considered its own
> particularities.
> (VP 3.9.8ab)

Praśastapāda, commenting on VS 2.2.6 that states that "the [unified] essence [of time is explained] by [the same means as in the case of] existence" *(tattvaṃ bhāvena –* VS 2.2.6), in the *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* 6.2 thus expounds on the *upādhi* principle and its application to time:

> *kālaliṅgāviśeṣād ekatvam siddham | <...>*
> *ekatve 'pi sarvakāryāṇām ārambhakriyābhinirvṛttisthitinirodhopādhibhedān*
> *maṇivat pācakavad vā nānātvopacāra iti || (Pdhs_6.2(64))*
>
> Oneness (*ekatva*) of time is established on the basis of a non-distinct inferential
> mark. <...> Despite the oneness [of time], because of a difference in the
> contingent conditions (or: 'substitutions' – *upādhi*) in the arising, realization of

activities, duration, [and] destruction of all effects, [time] is metaphorically [ascribed] manifoldness, as in the "gem" or "cook" [examples][258].

Time therefore is understood as undivided but metaphorically manyfold. A general conviction is that time is manifested as divided by its association with the motion of the sun and the planets while remaining singular.

These outlooks of the thinkers of different philosophical schools clearly exhibit the influence of the *two times* principle of the *kālavāda* doctrine and of the preceding, i.e., Vedic, views. Two notions of time –the divided and singular– clearly contradict each other. All the philosophical systems nevertheless want to keep time singular and ascribe its divisions to the power of illusion and substitution thus reconciling the traditional mythological views with the newest philosophical ideas.

The aforementioned views of the Vaiśeṣikas were criticized by the Sāṃkhya and Yoga logicians. They did not accept an idea of time as an all-pervading eternal substance and mostly adopted the view that time is a combination of moments, which is close to the Buddhist doctrine of momentarity (*kṣaṇavāda*). Vācaspatimiśra argues that time "cannot originate ... the terminological distinction of the future, etc."[259] and states that time is "redundant" and doesn't exist as a separate entity. Nevertheless, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, while really denying the existence of time-eternity and overall regarding time a non-entity and

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[258] '"Gem" or "cook" [examples]' are referred to in this passage to illustrate the apparent "divided" nature of time. Both examples are well-known and used in various philosophical texts. The "gem example"states that a gem, while remaining the same, reflects the colors of its surroundings and therefore is ascribed different colors that are not its own. The "cook example" states that the same person can be qualified as a cook when he is cooking food and as a sacrificer when he participates in a ritual. Like a person changing occupations or a gem changing colors, time changes its denominations, however, its essence remains unchanged and undivided.

[259] Schayer 1938: 13.

mental construct, still distinguishes between the two times (the *kālavada* views): in their opinion, the so-called eternal time is an "attribute *(guṇaviśeṣa)* of the *prakṛti*" while the transitory time is "reduced to *ākāśa* as the motion of the sun and the planets"[260].

Among the Vedāntins, there is no agreement regarding the nature of time. Śaṃkara states in the commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra that time is illusory because it is an effect of *māyā* (the illusory power) or *avidyā* (ignorance). Therefore, for Śaṃkara the nature of time is the same as the nature of empirical reality, which can be described as temporality. Eternity in this case is *Brahman* itself, therefore, again, there is a dichotomy of "time" and "no time". In contrast, there are other Vedāntic views that postulate that time is a kind of relationship between the ultimate reality, *Brahman*, and *avidyā,* thus placing time beyond the illusory phenomenal world, i.e., somewhere between "eternity" and "temporality". Finally, there is a view referred to in the *Vanamālā* by Acyuta[261] that time is *rūpa-bheda*, an aspect or manifestation of *Brahman,* consequently, it is eternity that manifests as temporality.

Therefore it appears that most of the "orthodox" philosophical systems struggle with the idea of time being simultaneously one/indivisible and divided into intervals, periods and other segments. They introduce various devices and theories to remove the discrepancy, however, they still feel the need to hold this view – that time has two forms but really is one. Additionally, almost every philosophical system mentions that time is a creator or "cause" of the universe. This statement in many cases does not agree with the principles of the philosophical schools in question, however, it is still included into different passages where time is mentioned.

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[260] Schayer 1938: 13.

[261] See Hiriyanna 1992: 542.

In general, it seems that all the aforementioned views are very much influenced by the *kālavāda* doctrine and different early and late Vedic ideas that precede this system. This influence is so strong that somehow no school really goes against it.

We now consider the views held by a major representative of the grammarians, Bhartṛhari, and see if his ideas of time differ from his philosophical surroundings.

3.2.2. Time in Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*

This section presents the concept of time in Bhartṛhari's philosophy systematically. It also traces relevant connections between Bhartṛhari's ideas and those of some other systems of Indian thought. I do not aim at tracking all the allusions, if that is at all possible, nor do I endeavor to enumerate all aspects of Bhartṛhari's account of time. The goal is to give a consistent summary of Bhartṛhari's approach to time, to draw the reader's attention to similar ideas and noteworthy parallels expressed in the epic and philosophical sources, and to try to determine why time in Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language occupies the place it does.

Bhartṛhari gives a definition of time (*kāla*) at the very beginning of his linguistic and philosophical tractate the *Vākyapadīya*. He introduces it and never again states what time actually is. Although time is mentioned on several occasions in books 1 and 2 from philosophical as well as grammatical viewpoints, it is not until chapter 9 (*Kālasamuddeśa*) of book 3 that time is discussed in detail. Let's turn to the first place where time is brought up:

> *anādinidhanaṃ brahma śabdatattvaṃ yad akṣaram |*
> *vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ ||*
> *ekam eva yad āmnātaṃ bhinnaśaktivyapāśrayāt |*
> *apṛthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktveneva vartate ||*
> *adhyāhitakalāṃ yasya kālaśaktim upāśritāḥ |*
> *janmādayo vikārāḥ ṣaḍ bhāvabhedasya yonayaḥ ||*

The [eternal] one [with] no beginning and no end, Brahman whose essence is the Word, the imperishable [sound], unfolds by appearing as objects.
That one the creation of the universe [is] from.
Revealed [in the Scriptures] as one, [it] unfolds as if separated,
because of its association with [its] different powers,
although [those] powers are not separate from it.
Whose time-power, that is [falsely] ascribed parts, causes the six transformations – birth, etc., – [that become] sources of differences in objects.
(VP 1.1-3)

We can immediately infer how important a place time occupies in Bhartṛhari's system. Firstly, it is an essential, inherent power *(śakti)* of eternal, unalterable and imperishable *(akṣara,* a word that also signifies 'phoneme,' 'sound,' or 'syllable') Brahman whose essence is the Word *(śabda)*. Secondly, it is the cause of all existing things.

Later in the *Kālasamuddeśa* the concept of time takes on a more definite shape. Although, as it has been mentioned before, Bhartṛhari still does not say what time is, he describes time's functions and manifestations at length:

pratyavasthaṃ tu kālasya vyāpāro 'tra vyavasthitaḥ |
kāla eva hi viśvātmā vyāpāra iti kathyate ||

Here [in this world] time's action certainly is present in every occurrence. Time, the Spirit of everything, is indeed called 'action.' (VP 3.9.12)

utpattau ca sthitau caiva vināśe cāpi tadvatām |
nimittaṃ kālam evāhur vibhaktenātmanā sthitam ||

In creation, existence, and destruction of those [i.e., of entities that possess these abilities], time [whose] essence is said to remain divided, is the [instrumental] cause. (VP 3.9.3)

viśiṣṭakālasaṃbandhād vṛttilābhaḥ prakalpate |

Because of [its] tie with a particular time, action achieves results. (VP 3.9.9)

jalayantrabhramāveśasadṛśībhiḥ pravṛttibhiḥ |
sa kalāḥ kalayan sarvāḥ kālākhyāṃ labhate vibhuḥ ||

All-pervading [time], acting similarly to [water] turning the water-wheel, drives (*kalayan*) all elements (*kalā*). [Thus] the mighty one obtains the name Kāla (time). (VP 3.9.14)

Hence, speaking metaphorically, time is the engine of the universe, which enables activity and impels and "drives" everything. Its very name – *kāla* – is described as related to its activity as a universal impeller, which is emphasized by a sound play: it is "driving (*kalayan*) all elements (*kalā*)." It is a power that creates, commands, sustains, and destroys all objects. It is also a transforming force and cause:

> *mūrtīnāṃ tena bhinnānām ācayāpacayāḥ pṛthak |*
> *lakṣyante pariṇāmena sarvāsāṃ bhedayoginā ||*
>
> [Time], connected with differences in everything, [causes] growth and decay of different objects [to be] observed distinctly by way of transformation. (VP 3.9.13)

If one poses the following question: by what means does Time exert its power? – the answer is given here:

> *pratibandhābhyanujñābhyāṃ tena viśvaṃ vibhajyate ||*
>
> It divides everything by suspension and permission. (VP 3.9.4)

Suspension (*pratibandha*) and permission (*abhyanujñā*) are, according to Bhartṛhari, two essential powers of time or rather its two functions whose application makes all things and events appear in sequence. It can be described as follows:

- time permits an object to appear, to become existent at a certain moment;

- while the object is under the influence of permission, it continues to exist, it sustains continuity, and its disappearance is prohibited by suspension;

- suspension also prohibits another object – that could have potentially appeared at the same place – from actually appearing;

- eventually the first object falls under suspension completely, i.e., it is prohibited to exist and consequently destructed, and another object appears in its place if, of course, time allows it to appear.

Suspension and permission create both sequences and simultaneity of events. Suspension and permission determine a particular point of existence-in-time for everything. Besides, they predetermine cause-and-effect relationship: causes appear first, then consequences, and the latter are prohibited from springing into existence before the causes, but are permitted afterwards:

> *yadi na pratibadhnīyāt pratibandhaṃ ca notsṛjet |*
> *avasthā vyatikīryeran paurvāparyavinākṛtāḥ ||*

> If [Time] did not impose and remove suspension, conditions would become confused lacking order [of the prior and posterior]. (VP 3.9.5)

In addition to the powers of suspension and permission, the *Kālasamuddeśa* mentions other powers of time:

> *jarākhyā kālaśaktir yā śaktyantaravirodhinī |*
> *sā śaktīḥ pratibadhnāti jāyante ca virodhinaḥ ||*

> Time [has] a power called "aging" (*jarā*) that obstructs other powers. It suspends [another] power, and [thus] obstructions arise. (VP 3.9.24)

> *ekasya śaktayas tisraḥ kālasya samavasthitāḥ |*
> *yatsaṃbandhena bhāvānāṃ darśanādarśane satām ||*

> Unitary Time [has] three powers. By binding with [each of] them, existing objects appear and disappear. (VP 3.9.49)

As Bhartṛhari explains later on, the three powers are past, present and future. Bhartṛhari compares the past and future with darkness, and the present with light, because the present makes things visible whereas the past and future hide them. All of the powers (including *jarā*) could be explained in terms of suspensions (*jarā*, past and future) or

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permission (present). For example, the present is a state of manifestation, and manifesting objects is a function of permission. The future is yet to manifest itself, the past has already manifested itself, but no more. The two primary powers of time work together: to cease or prevent existence is a function of suspension, to allow it is that of permission.

To summarize, time possesses the powers of suspension and permission, which in turn have the powers of past, present and future. All, so to speak, even "narrower" powers stem from the "wider" ones (for example, *jarā* is a "sub-power" of the past).

Another important aspect of the *Kālasamuddeśa* is that it repeatedly (both explicitly and implicitly) mentions that time is one and indivisible. Its apparent divisions are only illusory. It appears divided before the human eye, because the human mind utilizes the notion of time to denote other things. For example, when we call an interval of time a day, we think that we speak about time, whereas, in fact, we speak of the interval between the sunrise and the sunset, i.e. about an interval of the Sun's path. Moreover, Time appears divided because suspension and permission work reciprocally on a multitude of objects being created and destroyed:

> *saṃsargināṃ tu ye bhedā viśeṣās tasya te matāḥ |*
> *sa bhinnas tair vyavasthānāṃ kālo bhedāya kalpate ||*
>
> Divisions of what is connected [with time] are considered its own particularities. Divided by them, time arranges [and differentiates all] conditions. (VP 3.9.8)

We can now build a framework of the concept of time as it is set forth in the *Vākyapadīya*:

- Time is a creative power of *Brahman* (*Śabda-Brahman*, Word-*Brahman*);

- by means of time, the otherwise indivisible and unmanifested *Brahman* takes a multitude of forms and manifestations and allows objects to appear, to sustain their existence, and to be destructed;

- all that happens through the time's powers of suspension and permission, which present myriads of things both sequentially and simultaneously -

- thus allowing *Brahman* to manifest itself;

- past, present and future are sub-powers of suspension and permission;

- time is one and indivisible, but appears divided because features of objects and events that the human mind considers connected with time are ascribed to it directly;

- time appears to be different from *Brahman*, however, it is not.

<u>Conclusions</u>

Although Bhartṛhari does not call time the highest god, he does endow it with the power to create, sustain and demolish every existing object, which leads me to believe that the ancient and "pre-philosophical" views on time expressed in the Ṛgveda, Atharvaveda, Upaniṣads and the *kālavāda* doctrine had undoubtedly left their mark on Bhartṛhari's concept of time. For example, the association between time and motion, especially with the sun's motion, assumes this form in Vākyapadīya: "The division of the sun's progress (*ayana*) ... depends on it [i.e. time]" (VP 3.9.43: *ayanapravibhāgaś ca gatīś ca jyotiṣāṃ dhruvā | nivṛttiprabhavāś caiva bhūtānāṃ tannibandhanāḥ ||* – 'The division of the sun's progress (*ayana*) [into two courses],

the fixed movement of the constellations, and the birth and cessation of beings[262] – [all] depend on it [i.e., time]').

Influence of *kālavāda* can certainly be discerned in the poetic imagery Bhartṛhari uses to describe time. One of these images is found in VP 3.9.14 where how time acts is compared to how water moves the water-wheel (*jalayantra*). In VP 3.9.15, how time operates by means of the powers of suspension and permission (particularly, while suspending the previously permitted activity) is compared to how somebody (probably a hunter or a bird-catcher) restrains a bird with a cord or snare: *pratibaddhāś ca yās tena citrā viśvasya vṛttayaḥ | tāḥ sa evānujānāti yathā tantuḥ śakuntikāḥ ||* – 'Those various activities of all that are bound by it [by means of suspension], time releases [by permission], like the snare a bird.' Time itself is compared to a *sutradhāra* (puppeteer or operator, literally, "the string-holder") of the world's mechanism (VP 3.9.4ab: *tam asya lokayantrasya sūtradhāraṃ pracakṣate |* – 'it is called the puppeteer of this world-machine') and to the all-pervading wind (or breath) that regulates everything that moves (in the case of the breath – it regulates the functions of bodily organs) in VP 3.9.42: *āviśyevānusaṃdhatte yathā gatimatāṃ gatīḥ | vāyus tathaiva kālātmā vidhatte kramarūpatām ||* – 'Like the wind [that,] having entered [an entity], sets in order movements of those that move (=possessed of motion), – time-*ātman* arranges [those that can] form a sequence.' As in *kālavāda*, Bhartṛhari emphasizes that time is indivisible, but divided. Bhartṛhari's idea of time as a creative power of the Word-Brahman corresponds to the passage from BĀU 1.2.4 where time (the Year) is produced as sperm by the ultimate being to

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[262] *bhūtānāṃ* can mean "of beings" or, alternatively, "of the elements" (of the universe). Considering the "cosmic" context of this verse that mentions the course of the sun and movement of the constellations, the latter interpretation seems plausible. It is also supported by Helārāja's commentary on this verse.

copulate with Speech. More importantly, Bhartṛhari incorporates the Upaniṣads' ideas of the two forms of *Brahman*: he stresses that *Brahman*'s powers only appear to be detached from it but are in fact inseparable from it. Time in Bhartṛhari's philosophy plays the role of the revealed, "embodied" *Brahman* (Time-*Brahman* of the Upanishads, or empirical, "fluid" time of *kālavāda*). However the unrevealed Brahman in his system is not "Time-Eternity", but the Word (*śabda*).

I hope that the comparisons above have established substantial connections between Bhartṛhari's concept of time and corresponding ideas of time in other systems of Indian thought, but it is also crucial to remind ourselves at this point that Bhartṛhari does not simply repeat traditional views: he organically integrates them into his philosophy of language. Not only is he a philosopher, but a grammarian par excellence. Speaking about the "manifold reality", which is an actualization of Brahman, Bhartṛhari also speaks about language. Language, according to Bhartṛhari, has several levels, and one of them – the highest, absolute, unrevealed – is Word-*Brahman*. Consequently, creation of objects and words is a transition from the highest (ineffable) level of language to lower, eventually utterable, levels. This is a process of revealing the indivisible Word, a metamorphosis that the absolute Word encompassing all the words and all the meanings goes through to present itself as a sequence of perceptible "separate units" of language. The "separate units" of language correspond to other units, objects, and things of creation whose existence Bhartṛhari does not deny. The units of language must be presented in a sequence, because no meaningful speech can exist without sequence: "conditions would become confused lacking order" (VP 3.9.5), - i.e., without sequence there will be chaos instead of creation. I submit that Bhartṛhari, as a logician, strove to find a philosophical notion that could be, by means of logical reasoning,

unfolded to infer how creation of the universe, the sequential structure of language, and the meaning of the sentence should relate to each other in a congruous way. The metamorphosis originally emanates from Word-*Brahman* and eventually connects us (speakers capable of operating on utterable levels of language) again with *Brahman* through a flash of understanding of the meaning of a sentence. Moreover, he apparently was looking for as few notions as possible. The notion that could fit such a far-reaching mandate is time, because, as Bhartṛhari himself notes on several occasions in the *Vākyapadīya*, a sequence can only exist *in time*. Thus, we can conclude that the place of Time in Bhartṛhari's system as the creative power of *Śabda-Brahman* is determined both historically and logically.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have examined the notion of time in South Asia and followed its developments from the earliest stratum of the literary tradition, i.e., the Ṛgveda, to the epics and select philosophical works.

My journey began with the Ṛgveda, and from my examination of the materials of this literary monument it follows that the text has no designation for a unifying notion of time. The very word that comes to signify time in the later tradition – *kāla* – is encountered in the Ṛgveda only once and did not make any impression on the Ṛgvedic views of time. There is no term to designate abstract time in the Ṛgvdea therefore a notion of time does not really exist in this text. However, from the analysis of the usage, etymological and conceptual connections, and mythological roles of such Vedic lexemes as the year (*saṃvatsara*), World Order or Truth (*ṛtá*), and a period, moment, or season (*ṛtú*), it follows that even in this earliest period we can find certain germs of concepts, i.e., concepts in their preliminary form: unexpressed in logical terms and not solidified into a particular notion, but existing in the form of mythological motifs and implicit functional connections. Among these "germs of concepts" found in the Ṛgveda is the idea of two types of time, or *two times,* — the first is time-eternity, associated with *ṛtá* that orders the universe (thus creates it, because creation is understood as an act of transition from the absence of order into an ordered sequence) and supports it; the second is transitory, "concrete", or "profane" time-temporality conveyed by the word *ṛtú*. It can be concluded from the analysis of the hymns that the Ṛgvedic people were aware of "eternity" and "temporality" and envisioned the two as both connected and distinct. From the study of poetic metaphors and mythological motifs and images related to the

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"temporal" and the "eternal", from their positions and relationships in the text, it can be concluded that some kind of a notion that could unify "eternity" and "temporality" and relate "temporality" to different units and states was emerging, although probably had not solidified enough to be used in the Ṛgveda to designate explicitly a power or a god of Eternity/Temporality; they construed it as connected with the movement of the sun and as a power that regulates the universe.

Despite the absence of a unified term, power or deity do designate and "represent" time, the Ṛgveda has two gods that, according to my reconstructions, can be seen as time-deities. These are Varuṇa that epitomizes time-eternity – absolute order disconnected from the living beings but setting general rules and ensuring that everything functions properly, a guardian of eternity and immortality, and Agni that embodies time-temporality present in every moment of sacrifice and everyday life. Varuṇa also represents time-death, so from the very beginning of the Vedic tradition time and death are interconnected. Varuṇa's functions as a "time-lord" might have roots in the Indo-European mythological strata.

In addition to the emergence of the idea the of two times and the two time-lords, in the Ṛgveda we can observe the formation of a concept of time-space continuum that is seen as the body of the sacrificed cosmic giant, Puruṣa. Moreover, the Ṛgveda is the origin of time being envisioned as cyclical and associated it with the wheel of the year. The year is seen as an ideal time-unit that is a source and "governor" of all other time-units. As the first thing born from the cosmic waters, the year is an epitome of time and, effectively, a creator. Finally, the Ṛgveda notices and emphasizes time's connection with the sun and the movement of the sun.

Many mythological motifs and germs of several concepts observed in the Ṛgveda find their way into the later tradition. In the Atharvaveda, when a unified designation of time

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(*kāla*) is introduced, archaic myths and ideas expressed in the Ṛgveda become associated with this designation, and from that period on an elaborate mythology of time arises that is shaped into various "doctrines of time" in the epics and philosophy.

The Atharvaveda adopts the Ṛgvedic view and distinguishes between the two types of time: undivided time-eternity represented in the Atharvaveda by the "time in the highest heaven", and empirical "temporality" divided into units and acting in the phenomenal world. But now the two types of time become united, both of them are clearly seen as forms of *kāla*. It can be said that the Atharvaveda establishes the *notion* of time. This notion becomes a main designation for time in the whole following tradition.

The Atharvaveda, building on the Ṛgvedic idea that time is a power necessary for creation and perhaps (as the year) even a source of creation, introduces a view that time is the foremost god that creates and supports the universe; the progenitor and foundation of all. These views strikingly correspond to the Iranian Zurvānite doctrine, and so does the concept of two times, time's association with death and fate, etc.

The Atharvaveda adopts the Ṛgvedic image of the wheel and a chariot of time. It also pictures time as a horse that carries the chariot and, interestingly, represents it as the World Tree.

Treatment of time in the late Vedic texts, i.e., the Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas, to a certain extent continues what is seen in the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda. The Upaniṣads pick up the Ṛgvedic apprehension of time-space continuum as a divided body of the sacrificed and develop it further. Time remains to be closely connected with space, and the year is still understood as a representation of time and a pattern for all other time units. Time's conceptual and mythological association with death becomes stronger and much more explicit than in the

Ṛgveda, which brings the Upaniṣadic time closer to the Iranian Zurvān. Time – again, in the form of the year – is depicted as a creative potency or energy of the supreme being; it is a power of creation. A Vedic image and mythological motif of the wheel of the year is also preserved in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. On its basis there starts a development of the concept of the wheel of *saṃsāra*. Possibly, during the same period a system of the world ages, the *yugas*, starts to take shape. There are multiple minor developments that occur during this period, but most importantly, the concept of two times or two forms of time – temporality and eternity – that was observed in the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda is preserved. Two forms of time become associated with two forms of *Brahman*: unmanifested *Brahman*-Eternity without parts and manifested and divided by the act of creation *Brahman*-temporality of the phenomenal world.

Almost all time-related mythological motifs and ideas of the Vedic and late Vedic tradition become incorporated into the doctrine of *kālavāda* during the epic period. Like in the Atharvaveda, time in *kālavāda* is seen as a creator and regulator of the universe. However, an idea that time is death and a deadly force that destroys all the worlds and beings becomes the most prominent principle of the doctrine. Time comes to be seen as both death and fate whose power nobody can overcome. *Kālavāda* also incorporates a newly formed system of the four world periods (*yugas*). This system can be seen as a development of the concept of the year as a model time-unit: the cyclical time where the *yugas* rotate following each other is organized as a super-year. The cycle of rotation of the *yugas* ends (only to start anew after a period of non-existence) in destruction of the universe by all-devouring time.

The view that there are two times or that time is twofold is preserved in *kālavāda* as well. Time is described as both static and moving, divided and indivisible, eternal and temporal.

Except for the conceptual framework, *kālavada* incorporates *all* mythological motifs and imagery that we see in the preceding tradition, including the wheel of time or the year, the world tree of time, time-the-steed, and so on. Moreover, various old Indo-European motifs, either not observed or not explicitly connected with time in the Vedic texts, suddenly resurface in *kālavada:* these are the motifs of spinning and weaving; hanging in the world tree or simply in a tree; hanging on a thread or cord over the abyss, etc. Time is envisioned as a thread, as a mouse that cuts this thread, as whirlpool, as a stage-manager (*sūtradhāra*) of the world and many more.

All major philosophical schools that belong to the Hindu-Brahmanic worldview, in their treatment of time cannot escape the influence of *kālavada* and the preceding tradition. They adopt the view of two times but then introduce various logical devices that would remove this dichotomy. They pronounce time a substance because in *kālavāda* and before it time is seen as motionless and inert but then again need to explain how time can be moving and not moving, singular and undivided. Bhartṛhari throughout his tractate Vākyapadīya repeatedly emphasizes that time is one and only appears to be divided because of its association with the movement of the sun. While using the examples that must illustrate activities of time, philosophers inevitably employ the imagery from *kālavada.*

Such is the tapestry of time weaved by the South Asian tradition. On the basis of my examination of the temporal views as represented in the texts I considered, I can conclude that the South Asian temporal views constitute a rather unified system – a

combination of mythology and conceptual framework – that was developed over centuries originating in the Ṛgveda. Initially, this system emerges as an implicit, intuitive, and purely mythological worldview. Then it acquires concepts and notions and slowly becomes a doctrine. I hope in this work I could trace major developments of this system and show the origins of its most prominent features.

ABBREVIATIONS

AitA	*Aitareya Āraṇyaka*
AitB	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
AV	*Atharvaveda*
AVP	*Atharvaveda Paippalād*a
AVŚ	*Atharvaveda Śaunaka*
BĀU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
BhP	*Bhāgavatapurāṇa*
ChU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
GB	*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*
JB	*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*
KaṭhS	*Kaṭha Saṃhitā*
KaṭhU	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
KauṣU	*Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*
KauṣB	*Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa*
MaitS	*Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā*
MBh	*Mahābhārata*
MU	*Maitrī* (aka *Maitrāyaṇa*, *Maitrāyaṇī* or *Maitrāyaṇīya*) *Upaniṣad*
MDU	*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*
RV	*R̥gveda*
ŚB	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*

ŚU	*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*
TB	*Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*
ViP	*Viṣṇupurāṇa*
VP	*Vākyapadīya*
VS	*Vaiśeṣikasūtra*
YV	*Yogavāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa (Yogavāsiṣṭha)*

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