

THE ANCIENT MIND ON THE NATURE OF UNIVERSE THROUGH SOME LINGUISTIC OBSERVATIONS¹

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Abstract

The paper deals with topics in Greek and Indian grammatical traditions which, in both cases, have to do not only with grammar in the modern sense but also with cosmological issues.

Keywords: letters, elements, *arkhē*, principles, grammar, grammarians, language, linguistics, *logos*, cosmology, creation, chaos and cosmos, (cosmic) order, *vāc*, word, speech, “divine origin” of language and of writing, name-giving, law-giver, Indo-European, pronunciation, conservatism, ceremonialism, Laryngeal Theory.

*“How much does one really understand by merely following one’s own reasoning only?”
(The Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari, Kāṇḍa II 484)*

The idea for this paper goes back to a time when I was working on my dissertation dealing with historical phonology (published as Katonis 2010a). In ancient texts ‘letters’ are now called γράμματα (*grammata*), say ‘letters proper’, now στοιχεῖα (*stoikheia*), i.e., ‘elements’. With regard to the elements, I quite often met the remark that things both take their origin and end up in them. This was not clear: simple things as *letters* and philosophical implications, indeed, *cosmological considerations* came together: what was this? In parallel, in the classical age, ἀρχή (*arkhē*, literally ‘the beginning’, later ‘first principle’, ‘element’) became synonymous with στοιχεῖον (*stoikheion*), as the Aristotle follower Xenophon teaches us.

This is a strange synonymy: ἀρχή with στοιχεῖον, and στοιχεῖον with γράμματα. But then, it is logical that γράμματα became related to the first principles: it is in this sense that 1st c. B.C. grammarian Dionysius Halicarnasseus teaches us that “human voice” (φωνή, *phōnē*) has its first beginnings (ἀρχαί, *arkhai*) in what we call *stoikheia* (elements) and *grammata* (letters).

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1. This is a revised and essentially expanded version of a paper read at the International Conference on Greek Studies: An Asian Perspective, 25th-28th February 2014, JNU, New Delhi.

Grammata, inasmuch as they are shown with γραμμαί (i.e., 'strokes', 'lines'), and *stoikheia* inasmuch as each voice takes its birth and dissolution in these. It follows that a στοιχεῖον is also *a simple sound of speech* (see LSJ 1647 s.v. στοιχεῖον. Latin *elementum* (which gives the English word 'element'), again, although the etymology is not perfectly convincing, is explained from the concept of 'letters'. If not from the sequence *l, m, n, t*, coming perhaps from a *boustrophedon* writing of the alphabet, then perhaps from **elephantum*, meaning 'ivory letter'. Or is the word borrowed from Etruscan which was once, a cultured language for Latin, indeed for whole Italy? In any case, in a few minutes, from simple letters we arrived at a cosmological dimension. What is happening?² One has the impression that the classical world was imbued from and operating with inherited very ancient and unquestioned cultural patterns which they did not understand themselves always properly.

Aristotle's astonishing treatise, the *Metaphysics*, cannot be evaluated here in detail. Enough to say that Aristotle, too, discusses *stoikheia* several times, and as is to be expected, he begins with a survey of the early thinkers like Empedocles, Anaxagoras and others. Empedocles' idea, in Aristotle's interpretation, is remarkable: the Universe (τὸ πᾶν, *to Pān*) is divided into *elements*

2. Cf. LEW I: 397-398 where also Horace is quoted writing on *elementa prima* (Hor. Sat. 1, 1, 26). Horace remarks (quoted according H. Rushton Fairclough's edition, Loeb 1966): "even as teachers sometimes give cookies to children to coax them into learning their ABC?" (p. 7), which, in original runs as (lines 25-26): "ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi | doctores, *elementa* velint ut discere *prima*: | [...]" (p. 6). Rolfe remarks in his commentary to *elementa prima*: "their letters" (1976: 166). The classic commentary by Kiessling - Heinze (1967: 7-8) remarks that *elementa* stands for 'letters' as the probable primary meaning, like in *Epodes* 1 20, 17 ("pueros *elementa* docentem", but as soon as Horace adds "prima", he must have had on mind the figurative usage, i.e., "*principia*". I wonder if this unexplained Latin word has anything to do with Hebrew *emet* meaning 'truth'. The Hebrew word is artificial. It does not represent three consonants of the alphabet (first-middle-last) only but also consists of the concluding letters of three words in the *Genesis* referring to God's work. The famous passage (*Genesis* 2:3) runs, according to the King James Bible (KJB), as follows: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made". The three Hebrew words in question are "*bara* (the word concludes in Aleph, the first letter of the alphabet) *Elohim* (m: the 14th letter) and *la'aso* (t: the 28th letter), which can be rendered as 'God created to do'. To be noted also that *bara* is the second word the *Genesis* begins with, in connection with God: *bereshit bara Elohim ...* 'In the beginning *created* God ...'. The underlying concept might be that *truth encompasses all* (see Appendix). *Truth - Elementa prima - Stoikheia-Grammata (Sounds-Letters)*: the issue calls for further studying.

through conflict (νεῖκος, *neikos*), say disruptive, centrifugal forces; when, however, through friendship (φιλία, *philia*), say centripetal forces, everything goes together into One, then it is again necessary to distinguish (διακρίνεσθαι, *diakrīnesthai*) the parts of everything. Now, διακρίνω (*diakrīnō*), the active verb form, both means 'to distinguish', 'to separate', and 'to divide' (*Metaph.* 985a 20-29). Whatever the philosophical implications before and after Aristotle were, with regard to the present discussion, we face the cosmological magnitude just mentioned, and also a not less important dimension, that of the dialectics, so much discussed in the last two centuries, whereas this intellectual investigation had its roots in Plato's method, founded on Socrates, consisting in exchanging ideas and opinions. Although *Advaita* is considered an Indian spiritual achievement (the unity of a Supreme spirit and human spirit as One, developed by Sankaracharya, see Garrett 1996: 11), Greek thinking is on numerous points similar and I am inclined to assume that there might underlie a common layer. Most certainly, the concept of the One of which Aristotle was the main proponent in Greece, is not something that Aristotle formulated for the first time. It is perhaps only modern dialectics that has its roots in Greek thinking. How much falls to the share of each, Indian, Greek and Indo-European, I would leave this question open in the present discussion.

Linguists, still today, are puzzled by language origins. Not infrequently, they declare that the origin of language is not a linguistic issue but a philosophical one. In this regard, although there is progress, modern explanations are often just a little less insufficient than were the ancient ones. Indeed, it is also a question, how insufficient, and in which sense, ancient explanations are. Explanatory attempts have always been numerous, and in some cases, suggestions in such far-off areas as Greece and India show similarities to which a common layer must underlie. Strikingly, the ancient opinions which imply both philosophical and mythological (cosmological) considerations find modern parallels in interpreting exactly the same dimensions where cosmic and linguistic expansion show a similar shape, and structural conformity might be more than a chance correspondence in form.³ It is the, at first sight, remote lines this paper tries to work along: ancient traditions on language, heavily bound to mythology and primordial learning, with modern linguistic analysis added. As a final solution is not aimed at, it will be a satisfaction if the present paper can contribute something positive to an old issue still open.

I suggest, first, to discuss *language*, as supposed by the ancients to have been given by a god or by a god-inspired man as an argument to explain linguistic conservatism, secondly the mythopoetic name-giving formula called *nāmādhéya* or *nāmakarana* in India, being also a ceremony,

3. See the Nanopoulos - Babiniotis talks published in an impressive book in 2010 to which I'll return below.

as reflecting both “creation” and naming things and persons⁴; then, with linguistic arguments added, I’ll have a look at the question of “letters” which were believed to have sounds.

The issues open up, beside philosophical problems, also theological depths.⁵ Thus, so that we take an example, such an important grammarian as 1st c. B.C. Dionysius Halicarnasseus cannot really be understood without a philosophical framework; in his case, a controversy of principles with the Stoics (representatives of a School of Hellenistic Philosophy founded in the early 3rd c. B.C.), lead by Chrysippus (Head of the School in 232 B.C., who developed Stoic logic in particular), is operative, which included such subtle terminological issues as *synthesis* vs *syntaxis* (see Wiater 2011, e.g., pp. 238 ff.), where, it is argued, *synthesis* means “how the different parts of the speech have to be composed in order to make an attractive and beautiful text”. An older acceptance of *synthesis*, and more important for us, may be that “assemblage of letters” attributed to Prometheus (in Greek mythology, son of the Titan Iapetos) Tarn Steiner discusses (1994: 116). Prometheus lists among his benefactions to men his discovery of writing (literally “γραμμάτων [...] συνθέσεις”, i.e., ‘putting letters together’) “wherewith to hold all things in memory”. This is recalled by Aeschylus in his play *Prometheus Bound*, in a long speech delivered by Prometheus himself where some other related concepts like signs and interpretations are also cited (A. Pr. 436-506).⁶ What is important for us is that Prometheus, clearly, represents an older generation of divine beings,⁷ and through this tradition the concept is transmitted that “letters”, “speech” and the like preexisted well before the “upstart gods” (*ib.* l. 439) came. His complaint is “Behold what I, a god, endure evil from the gods” (l. 92).

Whereas modern language sciences explore linguistic facts and try to understand their nature, i.e., they are *descriptive* and *explanatory*, traditional grammar has always had a teaching tenor, and a concern of *how* something should be realized or understood rather than how it was actually being understood or spoken or written. This was a feature which may have had to do with, beside a respect for tradition, the overall conservatism in ancient thinking.

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4. See Lochtefeld (2001: 457) with a photograph of *Nāmakarana Samskara* (name-giving) as it happens today.
 5. Lumpe’s long survey on elements (1959) begins with a linguistic discussion citing Plato on “στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντός” (‘elements of everything’) and Aristotle on “φωνῆς στοιχεῖα” (‘elements of voice’, col. 1074), and then passes to the “Indo-Mediterranean foundations” (col. 1076) where Brahmanic India, Jainism, Buddhism, and also Chinese systems are being discussed.
 6. The edition used is that by H. Weir Smyth, *Aeschylus* I., Loeb, 1963, pp. 254-259.
 7. Cf. Gantz (1993: 152 ff., 158 ff.) where the older Hesiodic and the newer Aeschylean traditions are compared and discussed.

Accordingly, the grammarian Dionysius Thrax (D.T., 2nd c. B.C.), the author of the first modern European grammar, made it clear that this discipline was concerned with *written* (as sanctioned by tradition, I would add) linguistic forms leaving real spoken language aside (cf. GG I, I. p. 5, Uhlig).⁸

It appears, then, that even the concept “grammar” (cf. γράμμα, ‘letter’) originates from the *written* dimension of human language,⁹ and, moreover, the discipline of the “letters” was approached as a kind of “art”. How to explain, then, the strange dual condition of clinging to spoken language (i.e., oral tradition) on the one hand and to the “letters” as a reference point on the other, not ignoring either that the descriptions are sometimes contradictory and that the terminology is not always consistent? What were “letters” and “elements” indeed?¹⁰

Far from Greece, but not very differently in its practice, Indian phonetics was concerned with the need of the *ritual importance* of speech: the need to preserve sacred texts and ritually potent utterances in the oral tradition of Sanskrit (Rocher 1997: 141). Phonetics in Ancient India was called *śikṣā*. Strictly speaking this was one of the two main categories, less specific and therefore more suitable when speaking of the Indian influence on Western phonetics (Allen 1953: 3-5; cf. also pp. IX-X). The subjects of the *śikṣā*¹¹ are identified with such categories as ‘sound-unit’, ‘tone’, ‘quantity’, ‘degree of buccal closure’, etc. (Allen *ib.*, p. 5[3]). Literally this word means ‘the study’ (‘a desire to know’),¹² and this is well understandable if we think of the attempt to preserve the sacred texts not only through their words but also through their

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8. For philological abbreviations not explained in the References, the use in Classical Philology, as marked in the Liddell - Scott - Jones Lexicon (LSJ), is relevant.
 9. D.T. may have given the summary of an age-long controversy. Cf. to this insight the philosophical dimensions on which, as a rule, the grammatical observations were based (e.g., Long 2000: 477).
 10. Like the Greek word *grammatikē* (based on *grammata*) gave, through French mediation, the English word “grammar”, equally the Greek *stoikheia* survives in English in *stoichiometry*, the branch of science that deals with the application of the laws of definite proportions and of conservation of matter and also of energy to chemical reactions and processes. *Stoikheia*, however, is better continued in Russian *стихия* and related forms to which I will return.
 11. To be precise, originally *śikṣā*, and later *śikṣā*. Its categories were fundamental for all further linguistic studies as was its pure interest in sounds rather than letters (Scharfe 1977: 78).
 12. See on this Ghosh (1991: XXV) who gives a survey of interpretations of this name. In any case, *śikṣā* was a *Vedāṅga*, i.e., an aid to the Veda on how to pronounce the Vedic texts properly for ritual purposes. *Vedāṅga*, by the way, is a compound: *veda* + *aṅga* (‘limb’).

correct pronunciation.¹³ A full immersion into the Indian tradition is not possible, it is, however, necessary to remark that this tradition has remarkable affinities with what is called classical in the western one in a frame that is called Comparative Philology.¹⁴

Tarn Steiner (1994: 122), in a convincing discussion, makes clear that the *grammata*, despite partial synonymy, were not *stoicheia*, introducing also the atomist equation between letters and atomic matter (*ib.*, fn. 91). The second insight is especially impressing if we consider that Indian thinking, too, calculated upon “sound-atoms” that we can read, among others, in Gaurinath Sastri (1959: 52-53). Sastri refers to the Jaina system of thought which assumes that words or sounds are possessed of tactile properties, say “sound-atoms” or atomic constitution, and the concept is

13. Garrett (1996: 694) gives a good explanation of what *śikṣā* is: it belongs to a corpus of six explanatory works the object of which are to teach how to read and understand correctly the Vedic texts, and how to apply them correctly to sacrificial purposes. *Śikṣā* is the science of proper pronunciation which explains the nature of letters, accent and pronunciation as ascribed to Pāṇini. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend the workshop (five lectures) given by Prof. Kapil Kapoor, an expert in Indian thought on language and linguistics, Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, at JNU in February 2017. In the hand-out to his 2nd lecture (20.2.2017), the importance of oral language compositions is dealt with. Orality yielded, among others, the 4 Vedas to which 6 auxiliary sciences were added (keeping his orthography): *Shiksha* (phonetics), *Nirukta* (etymology), *Vyakarana* (grammar), *Chanda* (metre), *Kalpa* (performance modes), *Jyotish* ([applied] astronomy). Lecture and hand-out go into more details which need not to be reproduced here. In his lecture on 22.2.2017, and in the respective hand-out, he gave his own system of linguistics and phonetics literature (to be noticed: it is certain that there had been engagement in language and in linguistics issues before Pāṇini), and what he especially emphasized was that *sounds* were considered in India material substances to which, in a next step, the *nirukta* or etymology, i.e., meanings were added (this sounds very modern), and through this procedure we arrive at *words* which, we know, were the carrier of the material world, and through that we come to the central notion of *orality* and *knowledge* that was nothing sacred or devotional but practical. With regard to chronology, Prof. Kapoor suggested that Pāṇini lived in the 7th cent. B.C., and consequently, put pre-Pāṇinian Yāska into the 8th cent. B.C. (22.2.2017).
14. The aim of this paper is not to go further than India and the Indo-European (IE) dimension. One may consider, however, that Chinese thinking, too, arrived at examining the “Rectification of names” that reminds of the Hermogenes-Cratylus controversy as given by Plato; more linguistically, the coexistence of the arbitrariness and iconicity, and of social and biological perspectives. See Lien (1994) on the linguistic thoughts of Xun Zi (4th-3rd c. B.C.), and, more generally, Allen 1948: 37(I).

further referred to by the 5th c. A.D. Indian grammarian Bhartṛhari (Sastri 1959: 52-53).¹⁵

The power of *vāc* (language, speech) has intrigued Indian thinkers from the earliest times. *Words* were not merely the poet's tools, and not only the magic keys by which the officiating priest opened the door to prosperity and heavenly bliss. Often Speech was seen as a *casual* force behind even the gods and the universe. At an early date, Speech was visualized as the Cosmic Cow and the cow's steps (*pada*) were first taken as the lines of the verse.¹⁶ An advanced analysis saw in her steps the single words, and the usually four lines of a verse were henceforth called the 'feet' or *pāda* (Scharfe 1977: 77). I wonder if the notion for metric "foot" known in classical tradition as *ποῦς* (*pōs*, or popularly: *pūs*) in Greek and *pēs* in Latin, goes as far back as to this cosmic explanation or is as much on the ground as Martin suggests ("called so because in antiquity the feet gave the time in the soldiers' marching", 1974: 324), or if there is something common. West, one of the best experts, would leave the question open. I might argue that the

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15. Prof. Kapoor, in his third lecture (22.2.2017), spoke in detail about phonetics, Bhartṛhari and sounds. He underlined that *sounds* are considered a *substance* in Indian tradition which means that once you produced a sound, it does not disappear; you just don't hear it. This, further, helps to understand why *word* (language), from which the *world* is constructed, is so important. In this sense, "we construct our world"! Understanding *vowels* and *consonants* seems to be *similar* in Indian and Greek thinking. In both traditions, "consonants" had "no sound", i.e., "they couldn't be pronounced". For this, a "vowel", in Greek a "φωνῆεν" or "φωνᾶεν" (lit. 'sounding [element]') was necessary and they were pronounced together, this is why consonants were "co-sonants", i.e., "σύμφωνα", a term which gave Latin "consonans". A "K", e.g., then, in the alphabet was not "k" but "ka" (in Greek "κα"). Moreover, the "sounds of the letters", as was remarked in the 4th lecture (24.2.2017) were, like in Greek tradition, the same as the "sound in music". This striking similarity can hardly be an independent similarity in the two traditions. "In India, everything is filled with sound", as was added in a talk after the lecture.
16. Discussing why a *cow*, and exactly a *milch-cow* (German *Milchkuh*), and what the cow's relationship to language was, but *not* the cow's steps, goes beyond the scope of this paper. Is this, perhaps, a mother-archetype (see Jung 2005: 81 and elsewhere), connected with language in a natural way? See, further, Mallory - Adams (2006: 140) on the "long-standing association of Indo-European peoples and their cattle", Mallory (1989: 137-138) on the "cattle cycle", especially on "the sacrifice of both a man and an ox (or bull) from whose parts the world was created" (p. 138), and Strauß (1972: 99-105) on the same problem, with more emphasis on *language*. Several Germanic parallels on the Cosmic Cow like the *Audumbla* (with name-parallels) add more details to the problem. See also Adams - Mallory 1997. In the last section of this paper I return to the question of "line" and "stoikheion".

common concept, despite the differences in details, seems to be more convincing. At least for the Graeco-Aryan world, the terminology suggests the existence of a technical language (cf. West 2007: 59-60).

In the Rigveda *Brahman* (the Absolute, “all the enigmas of the universe”) is equated with *language* (*vāk*).¹⁷ More exactly, *vāk-* would appear in compounds, and for lemma one usually posits *vāc*. *Vāk-* stands, naturally, in etymological relationship with Latin *vōx* (‘voice’, ‘sound’). Patañjali, Pāṇini’s commentator, says: “we are the upholders of the authority of the world” (Rath 2004: 45).¹⁸ To understand this importance of “voice” outside India, one may have recourse to the *logos* (λόγος) in the Gospel according to John. Since this *logos*-concept has its roots in the neoplatonic doctrine, Weber (1865: 473) asks himself if Alexandrian neoplatonism - Alexandria being one of the neoplatonic centers - was influenced by the Indian thought.¹⁹ For both *vāc*

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17. On some details in concern, and on the connection of *Brahmā* and *Saraswatī*, see Khokar - Saraswati (2005: 25-26). Doniger draws the attention to the fact that some females in the *Rig Veda* are personified. She interprets *vāc* as “Speech”. Though not for *vāc*, she underlines the fact that for gods birth from nonexistence, and two births mutually, each of them producing the other one, was assumed (2015: 126-127). For another case cf. Thapar (2016: 96).
 18. Rath also discusses concepts like “goals” and “Śruti” interpreted as ‘revelation’ (p. 41). The word *śruti* - originally not more than ‘hearing’, ‘listening’ - is to be connected to the Latin and Greek verbs meaning ‘hear’ (Monier-Williams 2005: 1101; Beekes 2010: 719; *śrudhi* corresponds to Gk κλύθι ‘hear’, ‘listen’, belonging to κλύω ‘hear’, ‘understand’, ‘listen’), and Latin *clueō* (‘be famous’, ‘be called’). For a difference between *śabda* (a ‘word’ in the mind of the speaker) and *śruti* (different audible words) cf. Houben (1995: 68). Every further semantic change or nuances in meaning are to be reduced to this semantic base; even *ślōka-*, the familiar metre in versification (cf. KEWA III 372-374, EWAia II 666-667, explained: Morgenroth 1977, pp. 216-217[329]), belongs, etymologically, here. Kapoor (22.2.2017) connects *śruti* (hearing) with *imāge construction*. To the concept of *Brahman* see Williams (2003: 89-90).
 19. For the identification of *logos* and *sphoṭa*, cf. Sastri 1959: 102-103(1), also 85 ff. and 291 (Index), and Scharfe (1977: 172). For the somewhat strange etymology of the word (‘split’, ‘burst’) cf. KEWA III 543 (s.v. “sphuṭāti”) and EWAia II 779 (sphoṭ). G.-J. Pinault, the eminent Indo-Europeanist and Sanskritist, in a discussion in the Philologische Bibliothek of the Freie Universität in Berlin (8.09.2013), remarked that *sphoṭa* was the ‘spoken word’, and - with regard to the etymology - the technical meaning was relatively late, it was not yet there in Vedic. To the concept, see also Houben (1995: 7[12].33.160.236) and Davis (1978: 88-92, and elsewhere).

and *logos*, he finds an intermediate stage between the prime matter or principle (*Urmaterie*, *Urprinzip*) and the personal existence (p. 465) which, he thinks, could help to understand the rather enigmatic beginning of the gospel, whereas *vāc*, and consequently also *logos*, would be considered also a means during the (cosmogonic) creating act.

This reminds of Elizarenkova's remark that "fixing a name (cf. *nāmadhēya*) meant creating an object" (1995: 99). We already discussed the Indo-European primeval layer and, perhaps, we understand now the New Testament passage better. The Gospel according to John begins with these remarks: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] And the Word became flesh and lived among us [...]" The average Christian believer, I assume, thinks simply of Jesus Christ who was born, and lived with them until he took upon himself the sins of fallen humanity and sacrificed himself. Let's not forget that the original language of the New Testament is Greek.

However, there are passages also in the Old Testament: "The LORD'S word made the heavens, | all the host of heaven was made at his command" (Psalm 33, 6), "For he spoke, and it was;" (*ib.* 9) - cited according to the *New English Bible*, 1970, p. 635)²⁰ - so, even in a Christian perspective, the whole complex must be older. Schmidt (1918: 5ff.), who also draws attention to Weber's discussions in the *Indische Forschungen* and to *Vāc*, is rather convincing with what he writes on the *Schöpfungsgeschichte* (history of creation) and on the "word of God": "Gott sprach und es ward" ('God spoke and it came into being'). I might suggest that this is probably an archetypal image for the whole humanity. One only feels corroborated oneself when reading that the IE verbal root **dʰeh₁*- (the common ancestor to Greek *tithēmi*, Sanskrit *dādḥāmi*, and Latin *faciō*, which, by the way, in the classical language means 'to make'!), beside 'put', etc. meant

20. To this, in the Old Testament the following correspond: "τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν" (Psalm 32,6, Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* II, 1935, p. 31; according to the *New English Bible* [New Revised Standard Version, ©1989]: "By the word of the Lord the Heavens were made, | and all their host by the breath of his mouth" [Psalm 33,6]); "ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶπεν, καὶ ἐγενήθησαν" (Psalm 32,9, *ib.*). The difference between the two passage numbers is due to the fact that the Greek text has one psalm more. The English translation is, indeed, not really suitable to render the problems of the present discussion. The words "εἶπεν, καὶ ἐγενήθησαν" / 'said' or 'spoke' 'and they were born' / are especially significant. (Traditionally, Psalms 1-41 and 51-72 are attributed to King David, having lived between approximately 1015 and 975, who was also a warrior and a poet, and was regarded, further, one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ). For the numbering of the Psalms see, e.g., R. Francisco in *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico UTET*, XVI (Torino 1971), p. 559).

also 'speak'. The dictionary of IE verbs explains this in the following manner: the (semantic) coincidence would be 'stelle hiermit fest' (= 'I establish') → 'verkünde' (= 'I pronounce') (LIV 137[1]).²¹

Is the real start in creation conceivable? With our present knowledge, it isn't. The "origin" appears to us relative. The New Testament "ἐν ἀρχῇ" ('in the beginning') is an elusive concept as is the obviously older Jewish tradition: the *Torah*, the foundational narrative of the Jewish people, their call into being by God, their trials and tribulations teaches us *what* already was existing before the world was created - and one of these was the *Torah* itself.²²

Thus, it appears that the "beginning" was not absolute in mankind's spiritual tradition.²³ We can add that Indian thinking does not really sympathize with creation. Instead, revelation in the course of time conceived as cyclic (Khokar - Saraswati 2005: 8.19) is favored. The beginnings in this sense are as elusive as those of our universe.

I would be reluctant to extend my interest to exact sciences, a field where I am not at home, were it not about a world-wide leading astrophysicist D. Nanopoulos, and G. Babiniotis, the leading linguist in Greece.²⁴ In a recent challenging talk in Athens sponsored by the Onassis-Foundation, followed by an amazing book (Nanopoulos - Babiniotis 2010) they not only find

21. On the importance of "verkünde" cf. Tichy 1994: 83-84.

22. Cf. Präexistenz der Thora. bPes 54 a Bar: "Sieben Dinge wurden geschaffen, bevor die Welt geschaffen wurde, nämlich die Thora, die Buße, der Garten Eden, die Gehenna, der Thron der Herrlichkeit, das Heiligtum, der Name des Messias" [etc.] (G. Kittel s.v. λέγω, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, IV, 1942: 139₁₄).

23. On *Logos*, cf. Löhr (2010) who gives a survey on its creating force, both in non-Christian and Christian tradition. It is impressing that theological thinking on God arrived at the concept of "the One" (τὸ Ἐν) with Clemens Alexandrinus (col. 380) which, of course, reminds of Aristotle's system of the Universe. Surely, the concept of "the One" was one of the reasons Aristotle was in great esteem by the Christian Church.

24. Dimitris Nanopoulos (University of Texas A&M), born in Greece, is one of the leading astrophysicists of our time and one of the most regularly cited scientists in the world, cited more than 35,800 times over across a number of separate branches of science, proponent, among others, of the Flipped SU(5) Theory and of Superstrings. Being engaged, beside questions concerning the origins of the Universe, also in quantum-inspired models of brain function, in his talks with Babiniotis in Athens, he gave an idea (Nanopoulos - Babiniotis 2010: 77-78) on how linguists could tackle the language origins issue experimentally, to which Babiniotis reacted (p. 80) positively. (See *ib.*, pp. 203-205 for more details).

parallels between cosmogony and glottogenesis (“birth of language”) but prove, for this writer at least (see Katonis 2014: 48), that questions of creation of a *similar* shape, can, according to our present knowledge, only be conceived as gradual, and remain in any case, despite the fact that we know more and more all the time, unsolved. In Nanopoulos’ thinking, although the expanding universe began its existence from a particle smaller than a quark or an electron, still creation *ex nihilo* is *not* to be reckoned with. Quantum theory, adapted to brain processes, is a candidate to give explanations to glottogenesis.

With regard to *logos* and *vāc*, it is then clear that the concept is ancient and pre-Christian.²⁵ Beside the aforementioned instances on God and his Word, there are several other passages in the Bible; one among them is especially striking: “He (the Son of God) reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Heb 1:3, cited according to RSV, the Revised Standard Version of the English Bible) - the parallel with Patañjali, whatever their relation, is striking.

Let us remark provisionally that two, originally independent traditions seem to have coexisted of which the oral one must have been more respectable. *Torah*, itself, by the way postulates a “Torah that is written” and a “Torah that is spoken”.²⁶ *Duality* and the concept of the *One*, whether Empedocles, Aristotle or Sankaracharya, or whoever else - I cannot help but having the impression of a dialectics, and pushing it back into pre-Greek - pre-Indian level. The IE spiritual thinking certainly was not as “prosaic” as some scholars are inclined to assume. The same forward-backward movement, whatever its importance and interpretation, is to be seen in the Ait. Up. I,4, and II,4 passages to be quoted below.

So that I come again to India, according to the Aitareya Upaniṣad, *Puruṣa*, the primordial giant was hatched from an egg by Ātman, the Self. From the mouth of the giant the speech came out, and from the speech the fire: “de sa bouche (surgit) la parole, et de la parole, le feu” (Ait. Up.

25. Traditionally, the image “Christ Anapeson” (‘the Reclining One’) is identified with *Logos* (Word), however the respective article by N.P. Ševčenko in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, 1991: 439, does not discuss this belief. If correct, then this is a late identification. Löhr (2010: 432) remarks that indicating Christ as *Logos* “interacts with labels-as δύναμις (‘power’, ‘strength’), σοφία (‘prudence’, ‘wisdom’), εἰκόν (‘likeness’, ‘image’, ‘notion’)” (col. 432).

26. A similar *duality* in Indian Tradition was underlined by Kapil Kapoor several times in his 2017 lectures.

I,4; Silburn 1950: 28).²⁷ The Puruṣa-hymn (RV X 90, the *Puruṣasūkta*) is not as explicit as that, however the birth of the *brahmans* is assigned to his *mouth*, and, also the four castes (the three others being *rājanya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdrā*) are nowhere so clearly explained as here (Michel 2008: 288 to 12).²⁸ Whereas the Puruṣa-hymn is rather late (Michel 2008: 286), it is generally agreed that the Upaniṣad text belongs to the oldest ones of its kind (see, e.g., Silburn 1950: 18.20).

The explanation of the entangled Puruṣa-complex may remain a topic for more attempts at a full explication. Romila Thapar has to add the following: “Creation is attributed to Indra, to the separation of earth and sky, to primeval Man [...], to the golden embryo, *hiranyagarbha* [...]. It is also said that Time begets heaven and earth [...]. The reiteration of the centrality of time comes about through the performance of seasonal rituals. This emerges from [...] the notion of a cyclic return each year” (2016: 139). I remind here that Indian thinking does not sympathize with “creation” ...

Ranabir Chakravarti insists on the late interpolation of the Puruṣa- passage: “The *Ṛigveda* offers the earliest known account of the origin of the four *varṇas*, [...]. The famous *Purushasūkta* in the *Ṛigveda* (X.90) narrates that the mouth, arms and the thighs of the Great Primeval Being (*Puruṣa*) respectively became the *brāhmaṇa*, the *rājanya* and the *vaiśya*, while from | the feet were born the *śūdra*. The well-known division of the traditional Indian society into four *varṇas* or sharply hierarchized, unequal, endogamous groups is thus encountered first here. [...] First, the *Purushasūkta* is clearly a late hymn, figuring in the interpolated section of the *Ṛigveda* and therefore the *Purushasūkta* evidence is difficult to relate to the situation prevailing in the *Rigvedic* times. [...] In fact, the *Ṛigveda* more frequently speaks of only two *varṇas*: the *āryavarna* and the *dāsa* or *dasyu varṇa*, between whom a hostile relation is often said to have existed. The *dāsa/dasyu varṇa* is often described as of dark-skin (*krishṇatvāch*), of an

27. Cf. the German translation by Deussen (Michel 2007: 51): “spaltete sich sein Mund wie ein Ei, aus dem Munde entsprang die Rede, aus der Rede *Agni*,” (see also the commentary on p. 48). II,4 depicts the reverse course: “Alors le feu devenu parole entra dans la bouche” etc. (ib., p. 29). In German: “Agni als Rede in seinen Mund einging”, etc. (Michel 2007: 52). The *Ait. Up.* is a kind of commentary to RV 10,90, the hymn about Puruṣa, the Primordial Man. Paragraphs 9-14 of the hymn describe his parts that correspond to the parts and elements of Nature but the description is not as explicit as in the *Ait. Up.* (cf. Michel 2008: 286-288).

28. For the original see Aufrecht 1968 II: 388, 12. The etymology of the name *Puruṣa* (*pū-* ‘human being’ + *vṛṣa-* ‘bull’, cf. Adams-Mallory 1997: 138) explains why he was sacrificed. It has been suggested that the primeval myth of the PIE community involved the sacrifice of both a human and a bovine (ox or cow). *pū-* and *vṛṣa-* were combined into a single name. See also Mallory’s article “Stelae” in the same encyclopedia (pp. 544-546), and the *Puruṣa*-interpretation on p. 544.

unintelligible speech (*mridhravāch*) and also without speech (*anāsa*; [...]" (2016: 70-71). I suggest that one must keep apart, as far as this is possible, history as reconstructed by different means, and mythology, a very ancient attempt at explaining Man and his surrounding world.

The relationship of Puruṣa, Prajāpati ('the Lord of Beings'), and the RV passage is perhaps best explained by Basham. According to him, there is no clearly defined creator-god in the RV. By the end of the RV period, however, such a god had developed: Prajāpati, later called *Brahmā*, the masculine form of the neuter *brahman*. He was thought of as a primeval man (*puruṣa*), who existed before the foundation of the universe. The man was sacrificed, presumably to himself, by the gods, who apparently were his children. (Cf. to this: in the *Edda* the god Wodan, in order to obtain magic power, is sacrificed by himself to himself). From the body of the divine victim the universe was produced. The great Hymn of the Primeval Man, as Basham expresses himself, "bristles with obscurity, but its purport is quite clear" (1954: 240).

The remaining tradition about Prajāpati does not "bristle with less obscurity", however, Romila Thapar contributes one more detail: "The great god Prajāpati performed a sacrificial ritual in the presence of Varuṇa. On beholding the goddess of speech, Vāc, the semen of the two gods fell on the fire. From the flames arose Bhṛgu, and from the embers Ṇgirasa [...]. This myth may have been a later invention, although the fire and the *soma* cults are common to the *Avesta* and the |*Rgveda* [...]" (2016: 317-318). In some other instances, Prajāpati, in one way or another, plays a role in fertility acts (Doniger 2015: 154.157.161.400).

I think that the *common cult* weighs more than the possibility of a later invention. The *rājā* was, by the way the representative of the god Prajāpati and could therefore rule over people (*ib.* p. 110). Obviously, myth was not able to offer a solution to the questions of coming into being, as no other intellectual construct by Man is, but as soon as *Homo sapiens* puts the question, the puzzle of creation is there and changes from time to time.²⁹

29. Khokar - Saraswati (2005: 48) add: "Creation began with the Word. Brahma and Saraswati created the premier sound *AUM* - and then all else came into being." Cf. to all this the chapter "The solitary Twin" by West (2007: 356-359), where Puruṣa's sacrifice is discussed in the broader Indo-European context of cosmogonic myth. The legend of Romulus and Remus (the twins who acted in the foundation of Rome), structurally, might represent the same motive. Prajāpati's (the very first of the Gods) gradual rise and many entities from the Highest Being to the sacrifice may shed some light on the Indian concept on *language*: among many others he became *mind* or *spirit* (*manas*) and sacred *speech* (*vāc*, the Vedic Mantras). Having become speech he was equal to all (Gonda 1986: 117; see also 175-176). One cannot help remembering, whether there is a connection or not, Hebrew *emet* discussed above. On Prajāpati see also Doniger (1975: 25 ff.).

Name giving and *naming-creating* is not only an interconnection which links the Indo-European languages as well as the separate languages and their historical predecessors (if available) but the importance of the institution is reflected also in mythology, literature and social anthropology. We can even go as far back as psychology implying the Jungian *collective unconscious*. A sick individual may be given another name, and, thereby *another soul*; then the bad demons no longer recognize him - the healing process may be completed (Jung 2005: 129).

On the evidence of Indic tradition, mainly the Rig Veda, the names are “made” and then “put” on the object which is often a child. This is reflected, e.g., in Sanskrit *nāma dhā-*, *nāmadhēya*. This fundamental operation with names is discussed by Elizarenkova who renders the phrase with ‘put/set/fix a name’. She gives contexts according to which the operation acquires a cosmogonic value since “fixing a name meant a creating an object”! Quoting Renou, she also remarks the intimate semantic ties between *nāman* and *dhāman-* (‘seat’, ‘residence’ of a godhead, of divine force, see EWAiA I 784), the last deriving from the root *dhā-*. Renou sees here, she writes, in the first, “the global and abstract aspect of the same notion whose multiple and accidental side is represented” by the second (Elizarenkova 1995: 99-100). West, too, underlines that “put” both means ‘set in place’ and ‘create’ (2007: 28). I would add that, as often, this is also a play on words, not in a bad sense but as a magical perception, even if it is a mistake, misinterpreted by folk-etymology. Several other remarks by Elizarenkova can be read on the following pages.³⁰ To be remarked that the formula is, overwhelmingly, “to put a name”, and the verb ‘to give’ is much less frequent. Latin “nomen indo”, is really not ‘to give’ but ‘to give in’, ‘to put into’, ‘to insert’, which, again, clearly suggests that this was something more than simply ‘giving’.³¹ The proverb *Nomen est omen* (‘a name is an omen, a token’) is international, and must have its roots in this concept.

It appears that *nāmadhēya* is a, ‘a name’, b, a ‘title’, c, ‘the ceremony of giving a name to a child’ (Monier-Williams 2005: 536, quoting Mn. II, 123).

Especially in the *Rig-Veda* we find: “Bṛhaspati! Das war der Redę erster Anfang, als sie

30. With regard to “put”, one is inclined to recognize the same underlying concept when meeting Greek phrases like ‘to put a fate’, μοῖραν ἐπιτιθέναι (cf. Onians 1951: 378 ff.).

31. Latin *dō*, in this usage, may well not belong to the verb *dāre* (‘give’) but to the verb ‘put’ (see LEW I 362 and de Vaan 2008: 175-176). “Indō” (‘put into’) in this case, reveals an archaic animistic way of thinking. On the evidence by etymological dictionaries of English, the ultimate origin of the verb “put” is unknown. Such a thing happens usually when the concept is very old and the respective word may come from a pre-IE layer.

damit hervortraten, die Namengebung zu vollziehen" (RV X, 71, 1).³² Geldner remarks: "Die leitenden Gedanken [des Hymnus] sind: 1, Die sakrale Sprache ist eine Erfindung der alten Weisen [...], die das, was im Inneren schlummerte, hervorholten, sichteten und zur heiligen | Rede ausbildeten" (*ib.* pp. 248-249). To Bṛhaspati: "Die indische Überlieferung hat den in 10,71,1 und 72,2 erwähnten Gott Bṛhaspati zum Ṛṣi der [Lieder] Gruppe gemacht" (*ib.* p. 248). Graßmann defines Bṛhaspati as follows: "bṛhas-pāti, m., *Herr des Gebetes* [bṛhas G. von bṛh], Bezeichnung eines Gottes, und mit bráhmanas páti wechselnd. Er ist der Erreger und Förderer der Andacht. - Vgl. *indrā-bṛhaspāti*" (1996: 914).³³

Bṛhaspati ('the Lord of Sacred Speech') was originally an epithet of Indra, then an independent deity, the preceptor of the gods.³⁴ In last instance, he descended from Brahmā the

32. Quoted according to Geldner 1951: 249 and Michel 2008: 248-249.

33. "Bṛhaspate prathamam vācō ágraṃ yát prairata nāmadhēyaṃ dádhānāḥ" (RV X 71,1 [897,1], Aufrecht 1955: 364; cf. also X 82,3 [908,3], Aufrecht *ib.*, p. 373). Geldner translates X 82,3 [908,3] as follows: "Der unser Vater, der Erzeuger ist, der der Ordnung, der alle Arten und Geschöpfe kennt, der der alleinige Namengeber der Götter ist, zu ihm kommen die anderen Geschöpfe, um ihn zu befragen" (*ib.* p. 265; Michel, *ib.* p. 265). A more recent study (Elizarenkova 1995: 108-109) has Sacred Speech "veiled in a mystery that is almost impenetrable". RV X 71,1 is translated as follows: "O Bṛhaspati, the beginning of Speech (was born), | When they set themselves in motion, giving names (to things)." She remarks the role of the fire, too: "The mediating function of Speech is closely linked with that of *Agni*, the god of sacrificial fire. It is frequently mentioned in the hymns, for example, in 1.173.3" (p. 109; also *ib.*, p. 216). This is, by the way, the hymn to "Knowledge" as Elizarenkova reminds us. The famous passage, according to R.T.H. Griffith's English translation (2nd ed., Kotagiri [Nilgiri] 1896) goes as follows: [10-071 HYMN LXXI. Jnanam. 1 WHEN-men, Brhaspati, giving names to objects, sent out Vak's first and earliest utterances, | All that was excellent and spotless, treasured within them, was disclosed through their affection. | 2 Where, like men cleansing corn-flour in a cribble, the wise in spirit have created language, | Friends see and recognize the marks of friendship: their speech retains the blessed sign imprinted. | (etc.). Quite late, from the 6th cent. AD, Bṛhaspati became popular also in terms of cycles of time, and can be equalled to Jupiter (Thapar 2016: 302).

34. Although the engaging comparison between the Greek Titan *Prometheus* and Indic *Pramathi* (an epithet to *Agni*) made by A. Kuhn in 1855 has been abandoned, still I would remind that Prometheus, a "benefactor of the human race" seems to have been an *epithet* first to a name of a god that became forgotten, preserved only in the 5th c. A.D. Alexandrian Hesychius-Lexicon. West (2007: 273) gives all the newer interpretations according to which the old "Fire-Catcher"'s name still can be related linguistically to Vedic *math-*, and be reinterpreted as "Sharpwit".

Creator as son of Angiras.³⁵ Once again, mythology profusely avails itself of and recreates events. See more on this complicated semantic and functional shift in Doniger, beginning the survey with Prajāpati and the Aitareya Brāhmana (1975: 30.72.74 etc., to p. 341 included). In another book (2015: 122), Doniger discusses that “intoxication, though not addiction, is a central theme of the Veda, since the sacrificial offering of the hallucinogenic juice of the soma plant was an element of several important Vedic rituals.” The poets who “saw” the *poems* were inspired by the “fiery” (!) plant that is being brought down from heaven: soma is born in the mountains or in heaven. In variants, in the Indo-European corpus, *fire* is held within a reed as in the Greek myth of Prometheus; and brought down by a firebird (жар-птица) in Russian mythology.³⁶ I cannot help reminding that “Prometheus”, whatever he was previously as a linguistic means, and whatever his relationship with Indian linguistic facts is, has, or *can* have, to do with the root signifying ‘mind’ (hence the verb *μανθάνω* ‘to learn’ with the root *μαθ-*, i.e., *math-*) and means ‘the Fore-thinking One (DELG 940, Beekes 2010: 1237).

Heaven/Mountain - fire - (fire)bird - “fiery” soma - “seeing” the poems - “making” the words (since the “poets” were ‘makers’, cf. Gk *ποιεῖν* ‘to make’!) - this complex must have belonged to a primeval Indo-European layer, and is also one of the many proofs that in IE antiquity, literature and an elaborated folk-poetry must have existed. Beyond that, is “poets”, the ‘makers’, an IE concept sprung from the belief that words create the world? Kapoor did not mention this but he concluded his lectures with more remarks on the importance of *language* and *poetic truth*: “we construct our reality” (26.2.2027).

On names, in *Manu’s Laws* we read the following: “In the beginning he [i.e., Lord, the Creator of the Universe] *made* the individual *names* and | individual innate activities and individual conditions of all things precisely in accordance with the words of the Veda”; i.e., the pre-existence of the Veda is postulated, exactly like that of the Hebrew Tora; and in another passage we read: “To people who do not understand the greeting when a *name* is *given* [...]” (Mn. I 21 and II 123, italicising ours).³⁷ “Creation”, obviously, cannot be tackled as something absolute. This is so even in mythology.

35. His unusually beautiful wife was abducted by Soma or Candra which led to a war between Soma and Indra, and their followers (cf. Williams 2003: 91).

36. Soma was the drink or nectar of immortality (*amrita*), fought over by gods and demons, but eventually brought from heaven by an eagle (*syena*), later said to have been Garuda (vehicle of the god Sūrya) as Williams explains (2003: 271). The structural similarity with the Greek version in mythology and the Prometheus-legend is striking.

37. Cf. to the Vedic tradition, Monier-Williams (2005: 536). Olivelle translates the passages using other words but the two renderings are essentially the same (2005: 88 and 101). I have not found remarks either in Wendy Doniger or in Olivelle commenting on the present issue, whereas Bühler remarks to II 123: “I.e. to those who either are unacquainted with grammar or with the Dharmasāstra [...]” (1886: 52[123]).

With regard to the Greeks, here is a name-giving ceremony described in the 19th Book of Homer's *Odyssey*. The name "Odysseus" is being assigned by Autolykos³⁸, Odysseus' grandfather, whereby the child is being put solemnly on his knees. This is explained in line 401: "Eurycleia laid the child upon his knees", etc.³⁹ Eurycleia addresses Autolykos who then answers:

"Autolykus, find yourself a name now to give to your child's own child; be sure he has long been prayed for.⁴⁰ | Then Autolykus answered her, and said: «My daughter's husband and my daughter, give him the name I shall tell you. Inasmuch as I have come here as one that has willed pain to many, both men and women, over the fruitful earth, therefore let the name by which the child is named be Odysseus [...]»".⁴¹

On the role of the knees have written formerly, among others, Benveniste, Cahen and

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38. Autolykos is usually interpreted as a proper name. This may be incorrect. Name and meaning bring us to a very old IE ceremony reflected in many ways in different related languages. "Animals" (literally and figuratively) were part of the ancient IE society with "wolves" (= 'wolf-warriors') regarded as members of elite or shock-troops, and charged, besides fighting, with a number of tasks, among them even *founding*. See on this Katonis 2010. "Putting a name" was usually the duty of a father. I would suggest to interpret "Autolykos", literally 'the wolf himself', as 'chief' or 'first werewolf'; "wolf" intended in the sense above. There are many parallels to this concept in Greek: "autotheos" ('very god'), "autoippos" ('ideal horse'), "autokrator" (originally: 'one's own master', '(a young man) having come of age', later 'plenipotentiary', and finally, 'emperor') (see explanations s.vv. in LSJ).
39. The English rendering omits the rather important epithet "dear"³⁵. The original runs as follows (here the epithet and the word *knee* underlined): "Τόν ῥα οἱ Εὐρύκλεια φίλοις ἐπὶ γούνασι θῆκε [...]" (l. 401).
40. As the Murray - Dimock edition remarks (1995: 269), Eurycleia's "long prayed for" (πολυάρητος) was itself a not uncommon Greek name, Polyareū̄s. And Autolykus' own name suggests "wolfish" as explained ('wolf', again, is not infrequent in names!).
41. "Ἀυτόλυκ', αὐτὸς νῦν ὄνομ' εὔρεο ὅττι κε θῆαι | παιδὸς παιδί φίλω· πολυάρητος δέ τοί ἐστιν." | Τὴν δ' αὖτ' Ἀυτόλυκος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε· (405) | «Γαμβρὸς ἐμὸς θυγάτηρ τε, τίθεσθ' ὄνομ' ὅττι κεν εἶπω· | πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσάμενος τόδ' ἰκάνω, | ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναῖξιν ἀνά χθόνα πλουβότειραν· τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄνομ' ἔστω ἐπώνυμον· [...]" (Od. 19, 403-409, A.T. Murray - G.E. Dimock, LCL, Homer II, 1995, pp. 262-265). That this explanation does not correspond to the linguistic reality, the idea reflecting a false etymology of the name (i.e., "Odysseus" does not derive from the middle voice verb ὀδύσσομαι 'be angry'), need not preoccupy us in this context.

Meillet. The first (1927) interprets Irish, Soghdian and other expressions which contain the word “knee” in similar contexts and concludes that putting a child on the knees of the father equalled with his acknowledgement as a legal heir; Meillet’s remarks (1927) on Latin *genuinus*, Greek *γνήσιος* (both ‘authentic’) with additional data corroborates the above observations, and so does Cahen (1927) adding several Germanic details. In this way, as etymology shows, Latin *genū* and Greek γόνυ (both ‘knee’), and *genus* and γένος (both ‘generation’) are obviously related, with the Sanskrit equivalent added. We also know that knees were often used euphemistically for the genitals (Adams 1997).⁴²

Let’s recall Dionysius Halicarnasseus’ remarks in exact rendering: “There are in human and articulate speech a number of first- | beginnings admitting no further division which we call elements and letters: «letters» (γράμματα) because they are denoted by certain lines (γραμμαί) and «elements» (στοιχεῖα) because every sound made by the voice originates in these,⁴³ as is ultimately resolvable into them” (Translation by Rhys Roberts 1910: pp. 137 and 139).⁴⁴

With this, I arrived at the third section of this paper: do, according to the ancients’ concept, “letters” have sounds? And how to evaluate the *stoikheia-grammata* problem?

Plato, one of the finest 5th c. B.C. writers, author of several dialogues, remarks the following: “Surely, my meaning, Protarchus, is made clear | in the letters of the alphabet, which

42. As late as present day German *Kind* (‘child’), is related. To the Odyssey passage, cf. the conservative Russian with the word *koleno* (колeно), meaning, still today, both ‘knee’ and ‘generation’, with the derivative *pokolenie* (поколение) ‘generation’. The important thing is not only that the word is akin to Greek γόνυ and γένος, and to Latin *genū* and *genus* respectively (the ultimate etymon for all these will be the - understandably - ‘to turn [around]’, but the role of the knee in name-giving. ‘Knee’ is in Sanskrit *jānu*, and to this are related *jānukā* ‘bearing’, *jāta* ‘son’, ‘birth’, and similar.

43. In a passage in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (II, 1,1), the hedonist Aristippos’ answer to Socrates shows that ἀρχή (‘beginning’) and στοιχεῖον, by that time, were synonymous. Cf. also Burkert 1959, e.g. p. 176(1).

44. “Ἀρχαὶ μὲν οὖν εἰσι τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φωνῆς καὶ | ἐνάρθρου μηκέτι δεχόμενα διαίρεσιν, ἃ καλοῦμεν | στοιχεῖα καὶ γράμματα· γράμματα μὲν ὅτι γραμμαῖς | τισὶ σημαίνεται, στοιχεῖα δὲ ὅτι πᾶσα φωνὴ τὴν γέ- | νεσιν ἐκ τούτων λαμβάνει πρώτων καὶ τὴν διάλυσιν | εἰς ταῦτα ποιεῖται” (D.H., Συνθ. [=De Compositione] XIV, UR, p. 48). The old standard text edition of D.H. is now reprinted: the volume in question is *Dionysii Halicarnasei quae exstant* Vol. VI. *Opusculorum* Volumen Secundum, Ediderunt Hermannus Usener et Ludovicus Radermacher. Editio stereotypa Editionis Prioris (MCMIV-MCMXXIX). Stutgardiae et Lipsiae in Aedibus B.G. Teubneri MCMXCVII /1997/.

you were taught as a child; so learn it from them. [...] Sound which passes through the mouth of each and all of us, is one, and yet again it is infinite in number” (Pl. Phlb. 17A-B).⁴⁵

In this passage, mentioning school practice, Plato informs us, that *letters have sounds* even though the aim of the dialogue is other than giving that information. His thoughts are similar in the *Sophist* where he argues that *grammar serves to combine letters*⁴⁶ whereas the same job is done with *sounds* in *music* (Soph. 253A).

Surprising as it may be to the modern reader, the same concept is put forward in another dialogue: “Let us again make use of letters to explain what this means. [...] The way some god or god-inspired man discovered that vocal sound is unlimited, as tradition in Egypt claims for a certain deity called Theuth. He was the first to discover that the vowels in that unlimited variety are not one but several [...] until he had found out the number for each one of them, and then he gave all of them together the name «letter» [...] considered that the one link that somehow unifies them all and called it the art of literacy”.⁴⁷

What do “ἐπεφθέγγατο” and “προσειπών”, that are, in a simplification, rendered with the verb form “called” (“called it the art of literacy”) mean exactly?⁴⁸

According to the Liddell - Scott Lexicon (LSJ 670), the middle voice verb “ἐπιφθέγγομαι” has meanings like: ‘utter after’ or ‘in accordance’, ‘attach a name’, ‘predicate a quality of’; and later more generally ‘name’, ‘call’, ‘quote’, ‘pronounce’. *To attach a name*, certainly deserves our attention. Even more so another use: “ἐπιφθέγγομαι φωνὰς ἐπὶ τῇ καθιερώσει”. This refers

45. “Σαφὲς μὲν, ὦ Πρώταρχε, ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς | γράμμασιν ὃ λέγω, καὶ λάμβανε αὐτὸ ἐν τούτοις οἷσπερ καὶ πεπαιδευσαί. [...] Φωνὴ μὲν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ πού μία διὰ τοῦ στόματος ἰοῦσα, καὶ ἄπειρος αὖ πλήθει, πάντων τε καὶ ἐκάστου” (Pl. Phlb. 17A-B, translated by W.R.M. Lamb, LCL 1962, pp. 220.222).

46. We may remember Prometheus’ words in the Aeschylaeian play on “putting letters together” (*supra*).

47. Phlb. 18B-D. (Translation by Dorothea Frede, in: Cooper - Hutchinson 1997: 406; omissions by the present author). “Πάλιν δὲ ἐν τοῖς γράμμασι τὸ νῦν λεγόμενον λάβωμεν. [...] Ἐπειδὴ φωνὴν ἄπειρον κατενόησεν εἴτε τις θεὸς εἴτε καὶ θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, ὡς λόγος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Θεῦθ τινα τοῦτον γενέσθαι λέγων, ὃς πρῶτος τὰ φωνήεντα ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ κατενόησεν [...] ἕως ἀριθμὸν αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ καὶ ξύμπτῳ στοιχεῖον ἐπωνόμασε: [...] τοῦτον τὸν δεσμὸν αὖ λογισάμενος [...] γραμματικὴν τέχνην ἐπεφθέγγατο προσειπών” (Phlb. 18B-D, W.R.M. Lamb. LCL 1962, pp. 224-226; cf. A. Diès, Budé 1941, p. 12).

48. Cf. Pl. Cra. 383a: “φωνῆς μόριον ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι” (rendered, in the Budé edition, as ‘en le désignant par une parcelle de leur langue’). Elsewhere “φθεγγομαι” is linked with “ἀληθῆ” (‘true [words]’), and “ψοφεῖν” (‘to sound’, ‘to make a noise’, ‘to rattle’) with the opposite “ψευδῆ” (430a)!

to a *dedication* in Plutarch's *Publicola* and could be - in a first interpretation - rendered as 'to speak sounds in a dedication'.

"Προσευτών" is a *participium aoristi* and may belong to the entry form προσλέγω 'say in addition'. Λέγω, however, is a suppletive verb, having in aorist (for simplicity: past tense) εἶπον. This gives, with the preverb πρόσ (here προσ-) added, the participle προσευτών. Lexicographical tradition, however, puts usually the entry form προσαγορεύω or προσφωνέω. This need not engage our attention here. In any case it shows that aorist (originally a verbal aspect called *injunctive*), remains more important in the Greek verbal system than "present tense" (or more correctly: *praesens imperfectum*).

"Προσεῖπον" is frequent in the epic language, used, e.g., in phrases like "looking at him in anger ...", or simply, 'to speak to one', 'to address (a speech to)', 'to accost' and similar.

Both verbs definitely give the impression of a ceremonialism. The second, akin to *epos* (ἔπος), is widespread and old in Indo-European. Εἶπον ('I/they said') corresponds to Skt. *āvocam* ('I spoke'), and related ἔπος corresponds to *vācas* ('speech', cf. Adams - Mallory 1997: 535). Εἶπον, together with *āvocam*, goes back to a common Indo-European form from which the Greek verb, by dissimilation, yielded *eweik^wom, and further *(F)ειπον > ξειπον > εἶπον (GEW I 464, DELG 362, Beekes 2010: 389). The use of an ancient element, with the verbal prefix προσ- ('to') is not improper in the given context.

The first verb, the etymology of which is problematic, akin to φθόγγος (*phthongos*)⁴⁹

49. There could exist a stem φθεγ- with regular ablaut and nasalization, as Beekes (2010: 1569) remarks but the IE connections are not certain. Plato uses the verb φθέγγομαι, e.g., in the *Laws* VII (800a and c, as "φθεγγέσθω" and "φθέγγοιτο"), in two similar contexts. The first is rendered by R.G. Bury in the Loeb edition (1926) as 'shall utter', the second rendering uses the word 'voice' as subject to the verb 'bring upon'. In Book II (664a), it is the *lawgiver* (νομοθέτης, 663e) who must ensure that the whole community uses *always the same language*, and the verb for this is, again, "φθέγγοιτο". Is this the *language* spoken, the *opinion* (as Schöpsdau 1994: 50 suggests) or *both*? If the latter, the existence of the couple *ὀνοματοθέτης/νομοθέτης* seems to be more justified. One could ask oneself perhaps two more important questions to which I do not venture an answer here: why is this verb deponent (the middle voice expresses always something subjective)?, and how to evaluate the fact that the verb is possibly non-IE? The etymological dictionaries are cautious, some connections with Slavic and Lithuanian forms have been considered but are uncertain, and the LIV and the EIEC do not list it. The best, one can suggest is a consideration - more persuasive semantically than phonologically - which connects the concepts of "shine, glow, glitter, glimmer, twinkle; ring, (re)sound, (re)echo, resonate, linger in one's mind/memory" (cf. GEW II 1012 s.v. φθέγγομαι) and LIV 512 (s.v. ?*[s]b^heng-). To such unexpected couples, the case of Greek "ἀργός" ('shining', 'white', 'glistening'; 'swift(-footed)') could be reminded where the semantics has been established satisfactorily. (The adjective is not to be confused with "ἄργός" 'idle', 'lazy', where the α is long).

and other derivatives which are widely used in grammatical contexts, plead, in our feeling, moreover, for a teleology, something, not infrequent in antique literary tradition. Προσφωνέω or προσαγορεύω, the parallel lexical entries for προσεῖπον, mean, 'to call', 'to address' and similar. More precisely, προσαγορεύω implies *greeting* and *calling by name*. Both verbs seem to be attested in present tense form, what is not unimportant, in Aeschylus (an early author who lived between 525-456 B.C., see LSJ: 1499 and 1531).

Can we assume that, even if "ὀνοματοθέτης"/"νομοθέτης" ('name-giver', 'law-giver') are somewhat unhappily attested in Greek when compared with Latin and Sanskrit, the same "governing" concept was underlying?⁵⁰ Sanskrit *dhárman-* ('law', 'order', 'firm support' and similar could, semantically and linguistically, be a good parallel, yet Mayrhofer expresses some doubts, cf. EWAiA I 778-780). Ultimately, the word corroborates the assumption that these were contents "communicated" from a space above the human sphere.⁵¹ Diehl argues that φθέγγεσθαι, φθογγή, φθόγγος "retain their basic meaning as «sound» and «language»" (1940: 93).

Theuth (Thoth) "the first to discover that the vowels [...] are not one but several [and the one to have given] the name «letter» [...]" was the Egyptian Hermes. Plato may have thought that the cradle of civilization was once in Egypt. Hermes was, in the Graeco-Roman world (*Mercurius* in Latin) the *epitermios* divinity, the great *mediator* between *anything*, and so between the

50. Kapil Kapoor, in his second lecture (20.2.2017), spoke with consistence on "legislators" in Plato. He did not hint at a possible problem in the textual transmission. This problem does exist but still, in the general spirit of Plato, there arise no special difficulties if we keep the term "νομοθέτης" and "legislator". See the following footnote.

51. Des Places gives a survey of "νόμος", "νομοθέτης" and "ὀνοματοθέτης" in Plato and suggests a partial synonymy. It is especially transparent that "νομοθέτης" equals "ὀνοματοθέτης" in *Cra.* 389a5, because the preceding passage (389a2) has "ὀνοματουργοῦ" translated as "name-maker" by H.N. Fowler in the Loeb edition (cf. des Places 1964: 363 and 384). Also, in the familiar φύσει-θέσει dilemma - the main concern of Plato's *Cratylus* -, "νόμῳ" may replace "θέσει" (des Places *ib.*, p. 363). Could then "νόμος" equal 'law', 'language' and 'tune'? Cf. Astius ([1836], II, 1956: 390-392.453) for a similar presentation of the same terms used by Plato. A further support can be extracted from Polomé - Mallory (1997: 245) where the root *dhéh₁- is discussed under "Law" (cf. Gk θέσις, θέμις, Lat. con-diti-ō, Skt. -dhiti-, German Tat, English deed, etc. To Sanskrit °dhiti- 'Schicht', 'Lage', cf. EWAiA I 784, s.v. *dhā*). Thus, the root means 'to set', 'to establish', and what is, then, "set", "established", is *law*. The distribution indicates Proto-Indo-European (PIE) status, as does also with "name" (to which see p. 390).

gods and humans, too. He is also referred to as the interpreter or deviser of speech.⁵² Theuth's contribution was, in this interpretation, *discovering* the script. Script, too, was considered *sacred* and had, consequently, also a god (Frede 1997: 150-151).⁵³ To Frede's discussion we add that the first concept seems - beyond what she explains - to be more practical, the second more philosophical. There have been attempts both by grammarians and modern scholars to trace a semantic difference yet, in the work of the most important authors, the two terms are synonymous in grammar, and the difference, if any, certainly is *not that* between 'sound' and 'letter' (Burkert 1959: 169.173).

The stoikheion-problem, despite the numerous attempts at its interpretation, cannot be regarded as solved (cf. Beekes 2010: 1396). What I would argue is that *order* or the *ordered* nature of things with this word seems to be assured. The *stoikheia*, then, might be the resultants of an ancient generalizing mental operation, and, accordingly, their limits may lie along the borders of early philosophical thinking, or better even, politico-ideological thinking, which relies on, and partly is identical with, philosophical interpretations. The importance of *order*, repeatedly recognized, is perhaps best realized by Benveniste who discusses it under the concept of *thémis* and gives it the distinctive indication of "extremely important".⁵⁴ "We have here one of

52. To this, cf. the interesting discussion by Diez de Velasco (1993, e.g. pp. 22-23). To the deviser of speech cf. Allen (1948: 37[;4]).

53. For Indic and other parallels cf. Thumb - Hauschild. The name of the *devanāgarī* script is traditionally considered to mean "the script of the city of the gods [= of Sky]" (1958: 188-189), and even the Brāhma script (*Brāhmī lipi*) that preceded *devanāgarī* was considered as invented by the God Brahmā (Monier-Williams 2005: XXVI). Plato repeats Theuth's achievements in his Phaedrus. Th. was, further, regarded, among others, as the founder of astronomy and mathematics (cf. 274 b-c). It is striking, that the *Devanāgarī* script, which succeeded *Brāhmī lipi*, was created - as stated by a relatively late construct - by Sarasvatī, the wife of Brahmā (cf. Basham 1954: 316).

54. Θέμις/θέμις (Themis/themis) means in Greek, as a noun, *that which is laid down or established, law* (not as fixed by statute, but) *as established by custom*. The word, further, means also 'custom', 'justice', 'right' and similar (LSJ 789). As a proper noun, it designated a female Titan, the goddess of justice, law and order. She bore, once a spouse of Zeus, the three Fates (Μοῖραι). Before Apollo, the oracle in Delphi belonged to her (Becher 1979: 567). I think, the parallel with Prometheus is clear. Etymologically, the word belongs, very probably, to the derivatives of the root *dheh₁-. Beekes, as often, would not exclude pre-Greek origin (2010: 539), and this, in a historical perspective, does not cause unsurmountable interpretational difficulties for our purposes. Chantraine, on the other hand, is more traditional and more exhaustive (DELG 428). I suggest that *Themis* is more incorporated in the IE world and thinking than is not.

the cardinal notions of the legal world of the Indo-Europeans to say nothing of their religious and moral ideas: this is the concept or 'Order' which governs also the orderliness of the universe, the movement of the stars, the regularity of the seasons and | the years; and further the relations of gods and men, and finally the relations of men to one another. Nothing which concerns man or the world falls outside the realm or 'Order'. It is thus the foundation, both religious and moral, of every society. Without this principle everything would revert to chaos" (1973: 379-380). *Stoikheia* as *letters* would not go back to IE level; Benveniste does not discuss them but the limit, if we consider the largely attested concept that language and script came from the divine sphere, may hardly have been emerging literacy. He then enumerates a number of related words with Greek *ἀραρίσκω* ('to fit together'), and Latin *ars* ('art') among them. We find Sanskrit *ṛta*, naturally, in the first place. To be added that Latin *ars* meant originally 'natural disposition', 'qualification', and 'talent' (*ib.*). Benveniste then concludes writing "Everywhere the same notion is still perceptible: order, arrangement, the close mutual adaptation of the part of a whole to one another, even though the derivatives have undergone different semantic specialization in the different languages. We thus have for Indo-European a general concept which embraces, by numerous lexical variants, the religious, legal, and technical aspects of 'order'. But within each domain distinctive terms were found necessary. This is why 'law' was given more precise expressions which must be studied each in their proper sphere."⁵⁵ The explanation for the doubleness of *stoikheia* - *grammata*, I might argue, can be sought in the duality "order"

55. Cf. McEvelley 2002: 24 (on the concern with "universal order" and "unifying principles behind apparent diversity"), and Adams 1997a: 362 on *ṛtām* ('fixed rule, divine law; sacred or pious action') whereas the stem *ṛtá-* means 'afflicted with; right, proper'. On the meaning, see also Miller 1985: 38-47. The concept both contains a dynamic and a static side that are not always equally stressed with their three connotations: activity - order - law. Since grammatically the word is a *participium perfectum*, the best interpretation is perhaps "something gone over correctly" or "the settled or ordered course of going". The structure of the universe is rendered by this many faceted concept which comprises all possible levels: *natural*, *socio-ethical*, and *religio-sacrificial* (Miller *ib.*). The word itself, of course, is to be reduced to **h₂er-*, and is cognate with Greek *ἀρμός* ('joint', 'groove'), *ἀραρίσκω* ('to join', 'to put together', 'to fix', 'to fit with'), *ἀρμονία* ('joint', 'union', 'cramp', 'clasp'; 'treaty', 'harmony', 'proportion'), etc. It is interesting to realize that the concept of "system" (Greek *σύστημα*) is similar: its dictionary definition is 'whole compounded of several parts or members', 'system'. In Aristotle's *De generatione animalium* it designates 'the composite whole of soul and body', and in a letter by Epicure it is τὸ ὅλον τοῦ σώματος ('to whole of the body', LSJ 1735). Doesn't this remind of the Primeval Man?

postulates according to Benveniste and the ideological - later - philosophical thinking. Polomé, who proposes an IE **h₂értus*, remarks: “the underlying meaning would appear to be ‘fitting’ which had already developed metaphysical connotations in Indo-Iranian ‘cosmic order, fitting in time and space’, i.e., cosmos must be kept in harmony by rituals and sacrifices which adjust the relationships between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Such an underlying concept may have already existed within PIE” (Polomé - Mallory 1997a). More a case for India, yet, perhaps, not unrelated, in charge of *ṛtá-* stand *Mitrá* (the dual form for ‘Mitra and the other one’) or as a *devata dvandva*⁵⁶ *Mitrá-Varuṇā*. It is Varuṇa properly, who is charged with the maintenance of the forces of cosmos (Adams - Mallory 1997a).

Mitra was one of the twelve *āḍityas* who were born to Kaśyapa-prajāpati, a procreator; himself a sun god. In the Rigveda his name is often associated with Varuna. Also glorified as the god of night and as ruling the earth and sky, together with Varuna (Williams 2003: 215).

Varuna, on the other hand, was one of the oldest Vedic deities. He may have been part of the first triad of gods known in Vedic period - along with Mitra and Aryaman. Still in Vedic period, they were replaced by Agni, Indra, and Sūrya. Varuna was both an *asura* (demon) and a *deva* (god), leading to the notion that as an ancient lord of justice (*rita*) and truth (*satya*), he had a violent streak. Later, when Indra took over the rulership of heaven, Varuna became the god of oceans, who rode on a *makara*, his fish or water monster vehicle. He was presented as the father of Brahmā, who created the whole world, and also of the Vasishtha, one of the *sapta-rishis*, the seven Rishis (William 2015: 294).⁵⁷

These changes in functions and positions offer puzzles, there is however an extra-Indian factor which seems to be situated between the Indo-European and the Indian antiquity, and in any case is closer to Sanskrit than to Iranian, and the changes might be reflecting the moving tribes as

56. *Devātā dvandva*, a compound whose members are two (or more) members of deities (Monier-Williams 2005: 495).

57. Without diving into the mythical prehistory and into complicated explanations, one is inclined to think that this three-step change in mythology is a parallel to the picture Greek mythological prehistory offers: the hall-marks for the three ancestral epochs are Uranos - Kronos - Zeus. The three chief gods, it is supposed that belonged to 1, Pre-IE, 2, IE (but pre-Greek) and 3, Greek prehistory, even if “Uranos” is more IE-like than Kronos. The linguistic comparison according to which Uranos - Varuna is possible but not sure, whereas that between Zeus - Dyauḥ- is sure, is another issue. Linguistic shapes and social functions need not necessarily go in parallel. We should not forget Rome, which, culturally has not offered many innovations but in mythology, on the contrary, preserved precious ancient IE traits. The *structural* yield is worth thinking of it.

they changed place and, together with that, social duties and roles. It is about the Mitanni gods appearing in the Boghaz Keui Treaty with the king of the Hittites. The gods were Vedic gods (Indra, Varuna, Mitra, and the Nasatyas). The treaty is datable around 1380 BC, and there is an agreement among linguists that the language of the Veda cannot be much earlier than this date (Trautmann 2015: XXXVI).

Along the mythological dimension, philosophical approaches were rather frequent. Beekes also remarks that the singular for στοιχεῖα is secondary. We could think of an interchange of more concrete and more abstract meanings. Once *language, letters, speech, sounds*, etc. were supposed to have to do in whichever way with the divine sphere (cf. McEvelley 2002: 58), assuming a constant recurring movement between the earthly and the divine worlds are to be taken for granted. It is typical that whereas grammarians write that the elements are the first beginnings and the ultimate goal into which everything dissolves [...] meaning *letters*, the same is said in philosophy. This is maintained, e.g., in Stephanus' lexicon: "proprie de quatuor mundi elementis et principiis, ex quibus omnia oriuntur et prodeunt" (TGL VIII: 789, s.v. Στοιχεῖον). With regard to the grammarians, the lexicon is not as detailed as it should be but clearly, στοιχεῖα, *elementa*, are regarded more abstract and more general (*ib. cc.* 790-791). The lexicon deals with the word and its derivatives in nine columns (788-796). Similarly, the Suida-lexicon writes both about "τάξις" ('order') and the four elements in a philosophical sense (*s.vv.* Στοιχεῖον and Στοῖχος respectively, *Suid.* IV, Adler 1935, p. 446; see p. 435 on στίχος, στοιχος being 'τάξις' and στίχος being both 'τάξις' and 'line'). *EM* (728_{6,11}), again, writes on τάξις in a military context (*s.v.* Στιχάει). What Indian thinkers offer is often comparable to, and also criticizable in a similar manner, with Greek grammatical approaches.

The following remarks seem important and I suggest that there may be some sort of clue to understand *stoikheia* and *elementa* properly. "The *Rig Veda* has a kind of polytheism, but one that already has in it the first seeds of what will flower, in the philosophical texts called the Upanishads, into monism (which assumes that all living things are elements of a single, universal substance). A much quoted line proclaims this singular multiplicity, in a context that is clearly theological rather than philosophical: «They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and it is the heavenly bird that flies. The wise speak of what is One in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Matarishvan» (1.164.46). This is a tolerant, hierarchical sort of devotional polytheism: The worshiper acknowledges the existence, and goodness, of gods other than the god that he or she is addressing at the moment. This creative tension between monism and polytheism extends through the history of Hinduism" (Doniger 2015: 128).

Varuna, who frequently appears with Mitra in a dvandva-couple, is important for this investigation in his Vedic aspect.

What would interest a linguist, often, and largely gets lost, or to use a term inspired by the texts themselves, “dissolves in philosophical considerations”. Sastri’s book (1959), promising by its title, is written in a somewhat inflated language, presupposes, to be sure, the knowledge of Indian thought, but the only important thing to learn is that the language issue is of paramount importance. Word or Speech are shown as the “eternal” and “absolute” principle (cf., e.g., p. 24), i.e., it precedes creation, but one is not really instructed on either physiological aspects or on - so that we paraphrase John 1.14 - how the λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (on how ‘the Word became flesh’). The concept about the atomic constitution in the Jaina system of thought, however, may convey us further. The assumption that word or sound are possessed of tactile properties like other material substances is a feature that deserves our attention.

At this point, one more look at “elements” will be useful. That this concept is much broader than just covering what “letters” are is clear. How Latin “elementa” came to correspond to Greek “stoikheia” is not clear. Hebrew and other data permit of speculations about a very ancient, even pre-IE world and way of thinking that was inherited.

Semantically, Greek “stoikheion” is even broader than the two concepts we encounter in Latin, and through it in other languages. There is a clear ablaut-system to be mentioned below, and to be ascribable to the IE level which consists of the forms “stikh-” (στικχ-), “steikh-” (στεικχ-) and “stoikh-” (στοικχ-). In later Greek, the diphthongs [ei] and [oi] coincided in [i]. This fact is not relevant in IE level but may interest us with regard to later semantics.

“Στοιχείο” in Modern Greek, means roughly the same thing as *element* means in various languages: ‘the constituents of the physical world’ or ‘ideological’ or ‘cultural constituents’ of whatever. In book printing, the word can mean also ‘letters’ or ‘fonts’. Babiniotis (2002: 1657) summarizes all meanings. Στείχω (‘to step’, ‘to walk’) is not used in Modern Greek but some other related forms are: στίχος (outcome of the zero grade) meaning ‘verse’ or ‘line’, στοιχίημα (medieval formation of the noun with o (ablaut) grade represented in classical στοιχος ‘line’, ‘row’) meaning ‘bet’, ‘stake’, ‘wager’, and more importantly, modern στοιχειό (form with barytonesis and synizesis) meaning ‘ghost’, ‘phantom’, ‘spook’, ‘elf’, ‘goblin’ and the like. Unfortunately, the semantic development is not explained in his etymological dictionary either. It is added only that the word means ‘demon’ or ‘devil in folk superstition’ (2011: 1337).

In international scholarship, understandably, everything non-classical comes second. This means that medieval and later Greek tradition and language are not so minutely studied. Yet, in Medieval and in Modern Greek, for historical reasons, folklore is important. Purely linguistically, the language is equally important for linguistic science as is the classical language. Modern Greek folklore, quite often, gives a clue to a puzzle posed in classical studies. Consequently, I refer to medieval studies which still have much to do, to find something in superstitions that

can be a link and possibly an addendum to the unsolved problem of the old *stoukheion* question. Here is something I found and which is suggested as an interim contribution. Medieval Russia was deeply influenced by Byzantine Greek culture and religion. It is also known that after the fall of Constantinople (1453) Moscow and Russia considered themselves successor of Byzantium. Their religion is the orthodox Christianity, and the Old Church Slavonian and the Russian language have many Greek loanwords. "Stoukheion" is found in Russian as стихия. The Vasmer - Trubachev etymological dictionary (1987: 761) thinks that it comes from Greek στοιχεῖον. However, it is more probable that it was taken from the Greek plural στοιχεῖα which, it is known, was more frequent than the singular, and was reinterpreted in Russian as singular. The meaning of the word is, like in other languages, 'element', whatever it means. A sound change oi > i, for this late period is natural. There is another word in Russian, "стих" meaning 'verse', 'line', 'stroke'. According to the dictionary, it came from (related) Greek "στίχος" having the same meaning even in Modern Greek. This explanation is very probable. "Стих", however, has also another meaning: 'frame of mind', 'mood', 'sudden desire' or 'inclination'. Surprisingly, the authoritative Vasmer - Trubachev dictionary ignores this meaning. It is the much older Preobrazhensky dictionary (1910-1914: 387) that lists it and thinks that it must come from the meaning of 'line', 'stroke'. How this happened is not explained. Still, usages like 'inclination', 'desire', 'mood' seem to bring us somehow near the "elementary" forces, emotions we can attach to the "elements" conceived in an everyday sense, and perhaps not only in everyday sense.

Finally, here are more linguistic considerations added. Etymologically, *γράμμα* goes back to a root meaning to 'designate', 'indicate' (cf. German *Kerbe*, *kerben*, 'notch', 'score', noun and verb) being a derivative of *γράφω* ('write'), and *στοιχεῖον* to the verb *στείχω*, secondarily *στοιχέω* ('to step', 'to proceed', cf. German *Steg*, *steigen*).

"Στοιχεῖον" and related are more important. In the following, I'll try to outline a scheme with possible inferences with regard to semantics. Since this paper is a tentative approach to understanding the semantics according to which "letters had a sound", I'll offer it as a tentative answer leaving space for future thinking.

If we start from the principle dictionaries use, we have for a verb *στείχω* ('to step', 'to walk'), for a noun *στοῖχος* (the same as *στίχος*, 'line', 'row', 'verse', to which *στοιχεῖον* is secondary), and one more verb form *ἔστιχον*, belonging to *στείχω*. All this, with the ablaut grades, gives:

στείχω	-	i.e. steikhō	: ei
στοῖχος	-	i.e. stoukhos	: oi
ἔστιχον	-	i.e. estikhon	: i

Στείχω is *praesens imperfectum ind. act. 1st pers. sing.* (“present tense” for simplicity), a form, in terms of the ablaut theory, with e-grade. Στοῖχος is a noun having, in ablaut terms, an o-grade, and ἔστιχον is an aorist, put simply “past tense”, but it is not as simple as that. Aorist, originally an aspect in the Greek verbal system, is *basic* both in verb and noun morphology. Indeed, in Greek, nouns very often show the same grade as show aorists in the verbal system. In ablaut terms, this is called zero-grade (“zero” in the sense that in this case there is no “e” alternating with “o”). As a noun, to this στίχος (stikhos) corresponds. In reality, the system is richer, comprising however cases which are all reducible to an e/o/∅ system as explained by Beekes (1995: 99-102) for example. The theory goes back to Ferdinand de Saussure who launched it in 1878.⁵⁸ Cases he analyzed, with a familiar example, are like this. On the basis of λείπω ‘to leave’, ‘to be absent’ and similar we have:

- λείπω - leípō (praesens imperfectum) : ei
 λέλοιπα - leloipa (praesens perfectum) : oi
 ἔλιπον - elipon (aoristos or aorist) : i

With three more examples added for the case of short vowels, and with a similar system for the long vowels and for reducing them to the same scheme. The impressing proto-IE system is best represented in Greek. In Sanskrit we find some forms having -r-, e.g., *riréca* (= λέλοιπα) (cf. Beekes 2010: 845).

Saussure suggested “sonantic elements” (*coefficients sonantiques*) for cases where an unknown sound had been hypothesized. For a couple of decades his construct remained unproved but it was justified by the discovery of the Hittite language, and today the theory, influenced by Hittite phonology, is called “Laryngeal Theory”. Accordingly, modern linguistics uses the “h” symbol for “laryngeals” (which may well have been also pharyngeals).⁵⁹

58. The present writer offered a similar analysis on the word “οἶκος” (‘house[hold]’, ‘dwelling’ and its derivatives in an attempt to match morphological data with semantical ones, published as Katonis 2006. The Greek noun had an original initial digamma (Foῖκος = woikos), and is related to Sanskrit “viś”.

59. EIEC (p. XX) remarks: “laryngeal = a-sound produced in or near the larynx, e.g., English *h*. In this encyclopedia, PIE laryngeals whose exact pronunciation is unknown (indeed not everyone believes that they were all phonetically laryngeal) are designated as h_1 , h_2 , h_3 , h_4 , h_5 (when either h_2 or h_4) or h_x when the nature of the particular laryngeal is unknown”. Other works may use a different laryngeal system. Most works operate with 3 laryngeals to which they add a “vocalic coloration” except for h_1 .

The consequences have been far reaching, and it is certainly the most important single discovery in the whole history of Indo-European linguistics. The whole complex is much more intricate because it became clear that not all “coefficients” can be imagined as vowels, and their place is not always the one Saussure hypothesised.⁶⁰ What is suggested in the present paper tentatively is that the zero-grade forms already implied the concept of ‘line’ or ‘row’, and to this further $e \sim o$ (i.e., $ei \sim oi$) derivatives belong which bring us to the concepts of “steps” and beyond. Clearly, then, “stoikheion” is something broader than “gramma”. A ‘line’ developed into a ‘step’, the ‘step’ into a “first step” (ἀρχή), and out of philosophical implications through medieval superstitions, we arrive - somewhat distressingly - at goblins and elves. “Steps” where from, where to? *Lines* developed into *steps* or even *in steps*, or *steps* developed into *lines* or even *in lines*? Remember the Cosmic Cow and her *padas*. In terms of the Laryngeal Theory, it is the zero-grade; in terms of derivational morphology and semantics, it is the aorist, which provides us with the primary forms. In this case, this is “*stikhos*”, and *stikhos* means ‘line’.

To sum up, “stoikheia” seem to have had “demonic” power - and for the linguist still much work has to be done. At this point I prefer to give ground for future thinking.

With regard to further analysis, as soon as we are able to learn in tradition more about Ancient Greek education, we see again and again, the cosmic implications appear.⁶¹ The Platonic passage above may be conceived as understanding Theuth’s contribution containing a structured classification system of sounds and corresponding letters (Frede 1997: 154-155), just as the pupils were supposed to learn an “ordered set of elements”. The word $\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\chi\omega$ has its relatives in Ancient Indian (cf. KEWA III 514-515, EWAiA II 761, and Monnier-Williams 2005: 1258) but more implications than the military ones do not seem to be present. Sanskrit *stegh-* means ‘to step (up)’, ‘to stride’, ‘to ascend’, etc. Would the military dimension be a mark where we can look for an appropriate semantic link? Or, is it as down-to-earth a concept as a hunting term

60. A good introduction to the theory is provided by Fr.O. Lindeman (1997) from Oslo University, based on his earlier *Einführung* published in Berlin in 1970.

61. Cf. Burkert 1959: 168. For the etymologies, cf., e.g., DELG 235-236.1049, and Beekes 2010: 1396. Although ultimately the two groups go back to concepts like ‘scratch, cut, carve’, and ‘step (up), climb’ respectively (cf. also EIEC 143.228.488), there might be something more behind what DELG and Marrou (1950: 210) hint at in this connection. As a minimum, one should refer to the fact that the letters were first taught orally, and that the “cosmic” symbolism (music and numbers included) was there from the first moment. Is it a mere arbitrariness when Weber (1876: 27), writing on *śikṣā*, “Lautlehre”, “Metrik” and “astronomische Berechnungen” (phonetics, metrics and astronomical calculations) connects with one another?

("jägerssprachlich") - according to Knobloch (EWAiA II 761)? Or, what *we* would prefer, as sublime as the verbal semantics of Old Church Slavonian *po-stignŭ*, actual Russian постигнуть, 'to reach', 'to meet' (cf. KEWA III 514)? The semantics of Russian "постигнуть мысл" ('to grasp the meaning of something') might be thought-provoking.⁶²

What remains at this point for a summary, is that "letters", both in India and Greece, were "pronounced". Pupils learned in ancient Athens the alphabet, for Α, Β, Γ as an example, as described by Burkert and others, by pronouncing them in the following manner: "ἄλφα, βῆτα βα, γάμμα γα", etc. The forms "βα" and "γα" deserve attention. In a way, they "recalled" the "letters" into being. Such was also the way reading texts. There is a contradiction which seems to find its explanation in school practice: it said that vowels were "sounding" (they were "φωνήεντα" or "φωναίεντα"), "consonants had no sounds", more exactly, they were "co-sounding" ("σύμφωνα"). Greek "φωνῆεν" and "σύμφωνον" gave the Latin translations *vocālis* and *consonāns*, and hence the related grammatical terms in European tradition. This is not more than an inconsequence to be explained with school-practice, not the only one with regard to grammatical thought. We need not be too rigorous; linguistic science did not exist in Antiquity. Indeed, it did not exist in the contemporary sense until Sir William Jones' famous Annual Report in Calcutta in 1786. His Report is regarded to be the official birth of modern linguistics.

Writing, certainly, does not go back as far as the IE level: language constitutes a sign system that is primarily spoken. Its fixing with symbols happened much later in history. If language came, as it were, from a god or a god-like human, it was quite natural for the ancients to assume that the means to fix it came also from the supernatural sphere. India and Greece share this very ancient concept.

Appendix

The Jewish sages sometimes say "the seal of God is truth," since the final letters of the three

62. We will definitely disagree with either as a correct analysis of the important *mediae* /β δ γ/ stating them as "tonlose" under "stimmlose" (!) or as Frede's result interpreting Theut's contribution (of course, in Plato's presentation, ib. p. 154). Frede gives a list of "mittlere" (= 'mediae') with question mark as "stimmhafte" (= 'voiced') without question mark but containing letters like /σ θ χ/, and others. The ancients, with the exception of the Indians, did not realize voice normally, even European tradition was late to discover it (Allen 1987: 28.30; cf. Allen 1953: 33ff.). See the dissertation by this writer dedicated to similar phonological issues (Katonis 2010a). There is no point in checking if Frede interpreted Theuth correctly. Her (their?) system is confused and unsuitable for a linguistic analysis, and should not be reckoned with. More important are there the general remarks.

words that conclude the account of creation - *bara Elohim la'asot* ("God created to do" [Genesis 2:3]) - spell *emet*:



Cf. to this the Hebrew Alphabet:

28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
ת	ש	ש	ק	ר	ז	ק	פ	ע	ס	נ	ן	מ	ם	ל	כ	ך	י	ט	ז	ח	ו	ה	ה	ו	ג	ר	א

1: Aleph, the first letter of the Alphabet

14: Final Mem, the 14th letter, in the middle of the Alphabet

28: Tav, the last letter of the Alphabet

(Source: "Emet - Truth"; Hebrew for Christians. © John J. Parsons. Retrieved online 18.2.2017)

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