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M DCCC XXIX

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RGVEDA  
X, 129, 5, AND VERSES OF AN ALLIED NATURE<sup>1</sup>

It appears that a complete and convincing interpretation of *Rgveda*, x, 129, 5, has not been found so far. The verse has been either regarded as absurd and obscure, and, consequently, given up as an insoluble puzzle, or it has been simply translated with a meagre explanation, of the correctness of which, in most cases, the commentators themselves have not been sure at all. Whitney, in his comments on *Rgveda*, x, 129, while referring to this verse, says: "But the next verse is still more unintelligible, no one has ever succeeded in putting any sense into it, and it seems so unconnected with the rest of the hymn that its absence is heartily to be wished."<sup>2</sup> Bloomfield, after having translated the first four verses of the hymn, observes: "The hymn continues with a mystical fifth stanza, which is obscure, and in any case unimportant."<sup>3</sup> More recently Professor Keith, after having explained the significance of the first four verses, calls the fifth "a puzzle."<sup>4</sup> Deussen, Scherman, Ludwig, Oldenberg, Geldner, Hillebrandt, Grassmann, and Bergaigne have translated the verse and offered an explanation, which I shall consider presently.

The verse in question is as follows:—

*Tiraścīno vitāto raśmir eṣām adhaḥ svīd āsīd<sup>3</sup> upari svīd  
āsīd,<sup>3</sup>  
Retodhā āsan mahimānā āsant svadhā avastāt prayatiḥ  
parastāt.*

Before I offer any translation of the above verse, it will be proper to discuss the meaning of such important words in it

<sup>1</sup> I want to acknowledge my thanks to Dr. E. J. Thomas, of the University Library, Cambridge, and Professor F. W. Thomas, of the Oxford University, for having given me an opportunity to discuss the contents of this article with them before it is published in its present form. I am also very much obliged to Dr. E. J. Thomas for his valuable assistance in referring to the German and the French authors during the preparation of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, xi (1911), cix.

<sup>3</sup> *Religion of the Veda*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion and Phil. of the Veda*, ii, p. 436.

as *raśmiḥ*, *eṣām*, *retodhāḥ*, *mahimānaḥ*, *svadhā*, and *prayatiḥ*. It is only by a consistent interpretation of all these terms that a correct rendering of the whole verse can be found. That the language of the verse is metaphorical has been admitted by all the scholars. The question is: "What is the exact metaphor?" Various suggestions have been offered. According to Geldner, who follows Sāyaṇa's commentary on a parallel passage in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, *raśmiḥ* signifies "the inner eye of the highest Ātman", which, like the rays of the sun, spread over the universe.<sup>1</sup> Deussen,<sup>2</sup> and Scherman<sup>3</sup> take the word to mean "the inner eye of the sages", and so, according to them, the verse refers to an effort on the part of the sages to understand the universe. According to Oldenberg and Bergaigne, the word means "the reins of a chariot", and therefore the verse contains the metaphor of a car. Hillebrandt has suggested that *raśmiḥ* signifies an architect's cord, and hence the metaphor employed is that of a building. Ludwig simply translates the word as "cord". Now, while the word *raśmiḥ* has been thus translated variously by the scholars, unfortunately none of them has shown in detail how the metaphors suggested by them are justifiable consistently with the use of such other important words in the verse as *retodhāḥ*, *mahimānaḥ*, *svadhā*, and *prayatiḥ*, and with the general import of the cosmogonic hymn to which it belongs.

After a very careful comparative study of all the words used in the verse, I venture to suggest that it may be best interpreted in accordance with the many verses in the *Rgveda*, which describe the universe as a sacrifice, or as warp and woof, or, again, as both.<sup>4</sup> A study of such verses will show that in some of them there is to be found a double metaphor, that is to say, while the universe is described as a sacrifice, the

<sup>1</sup> *Der Rigveda in Auswahl*, ii, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesch. der Phil.*, i, 124, 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil. Hymnen*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Rgveda*, i, 164, 5, 50; x, 90, especially 15 and 16; x, 114, 6-8; x, 130, 1 and 2; also *Atharva*, 1, 5; x, 8, 37 and 38; xiii, 6 and 7.

sacrifice, in its turn, is described as warp and woof. Consequently, the language of these verses is ambiguous, and contains what in logic would be called analogous terms—words with different and yet similar meanings, so as to be applicable to the various conceptions contained in the metaphors. Illustrations of these will be given presently, but, in order to understand the metaphorical language completely, it is necessary first to see the details of the imagery implied in the metaphors. Let us consider how a sacrificial performance begins and then how it is carried on. It will appear that the first cause of a sacrifice is a desire—*kāma*—on the part of the sacrificer to achieve, by its means, some object, and that this is usually the obtaining of progeny—*prajā*.<sup>1</sup> The next step is to employ the services of competent priests, who prepare the sacrificial altar in accordance with the prescribed measurements and collect the requisite materials. All the arrangements being complete, the performance of the sacrifice begins, and the following items constitute the whole function: (i) the sacrificial altar, and the area around it; (ii) the sacrificers; (iii) the oblation, the articles to be offered; (iv) the fathers, or manes, and gods, who are supposed to be present as recipients of the oblations; (v) the act of offering, which consists of the movements of the hand in picking up the oblations and throwing them into fire by stretching it forward, and also the chanting of the Vedic hymns accompanied with the movements of the hand indicative of the accents in recitation. Now while the metaphor or sacrifice is used to describe the creation and the working of the universe, as we shall see presently, the metaphor of a loom is sometimes employed to describe both the sacrifice and the universe. This metaphor is applicable to sacrifice because of the common idea of preparing a ground for work, outlines, both of the sacrificial area and the warp and woof, formed by the stretching of a

Cf. Bhagavadgītā, iii, 10 :—

*Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatīḥ,  
Anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo 'stviṣṭakāmadhuk*

cord or thread, which are to be filled up as the work progresses, and also because of the similar physical movements, forward and backward, both in the performance of a sacrifice and the working of a loom. Those who have performed a sacrifice, or have seen it performed in the traditional manner, know how the hand of the sacrificer moves forward and backward both in throwing oblation into the fire and in chanting the Vedic hymns. That is why the *Rg.* and the *Sāma* verses have sometimes been spoken of as shuttles. For example, in *Rgveda*, x, 130, 1, we find the description of a sacrifice prepared by the spreading of threads by a hundred divine priests: *Yo yajño viśvatas tantubhis tata ekaśatam devakarmebhir āyataḥ*, and in it the fathers are said to weave forward and backward: *ime vayanī pitaro ya āyayuh pra vayāpavayetyāsate tate*. Further, in the second verse of the same hymn it is said that the *Sāma* hymns were made the shuttles for the purpose of weaving cloth in the form of a sacrifice: *sāmāni cakrus tasarāni otave*, on which Sāyaṇa comments: *otave vayanāya yajñākhyam vastram otum tasarāni tiryak sarāni tiraścīna-sūtrāni cakruh*.<sup>1</sup> This favourite metaphor of warp and woof, as found in such cosmogonic hymns of the Vedas, has found its way right through the Upaniṣads<sup>2</sup> into the semi-philosophical literature of Indian vernaculars, into popular ballads sung by itinerant Indian mendicants, and by women at work in fields or at the grinding stones.

Now when the metaphor of a sacrifice, or of warp and woof, is employed to describe the creation and the working of the universe, the real explanation of the verses containing such an imagery lies in exactly determining the various factors involved in the cosmic sacrifice, or the cosmic loom. The words themselves, for example, even in the verse under discussion, are familiar enough; it is their significance which presents a difficulty. The questions to be answered are: Who are *kavayak*, who are described as stretching a cord or

<sup>1</sup> Sāyaṇa, in his commentary, accepts the other meaning of shuttles also.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛh.* iii, 8; iv, 2, 4; *Chānd.* vii, 25; *Mund.* ii, 2, 11.

threads? What is a cord, or threads, which is said to be stretched or spread out; and what do these threads represent when they are mentioned as seven in number? What is the oblation, and what is the act of offering?

While keeping the above questions in view, I would now take up *Rġveda*, x, 129, 5, and i, 164, 5, and show that it is the above-mentioned metaphors which they contain. With regard to the first of these, it is to be noted that it is a verse which belongs to a distinctly cosmogonic hymn. The fact that in the first four verses of the hymn there is no apparent indication of the metaphor of sacrifice, or of warp and woof, is probably the reason why the presence of it in this verse has not been suspected by the commentators. However, it will appear that this metaphorical conception, which is so intimately and frequently associated with the cosmogonic ideas in the Vedas, has not been absent from the mind of the author of this verse, and it is in this fifth verse that it actually finds an expression. In the first place, the name of the seer, which very often forms an index to the theme of a hymn, is significant. It is Prajāpati Parameṣṭhin, the Great Sacrificer, the Lord of Creatures. The idea of sacrifice, and with it the idea of creation, is present in the very name of the seer of the hymn. Further, every single important word of the verse, which fortunately has its parallel in other hymns, clearly shows that this verse is not one all by itself, but that it is akin in meaning to other verses, which distinctly contain the metaphor of a sacrifice, or of warp and woof. In the preceding verse we find a mention of desire—*kāma*—as the first creative impulse,<sup>1</sup> and in the present one the actual creation of the universe, as the result of that *kāma*, is described. The pronoun *eṣām* in the verse naturally refers to *kavayaḥ* in the preceding one, and means sages or priests. The word *kavi* has been often used in similar hymns for those who stretch a cord or thread. For example, in *Rġveda*, i, 164, 5, it is said that the *kavis* spread out seven threads for warp and woof—*sapta tantūn vitannire*

<sup>1</sup> *kāmas tad agre samavartata adhi manaso retāḥ prathamam yad āsīt.*

*kavayo otavā ū.* In *Rġveda*, x, 114, 6, we again find the *kavis* as having prepared (measured) the sacrifice: *yajñam vimāya kavayo manīṣā.* Similarly, in the verse under consideration we have *tiraścīno vitata raśmir eṣām*, and, the word *kavayaḥ* having been used in the preceding verse, there is not the slightest doubt that the pronoun *eṣām* refers to the priests, who are mentioned here in connection with the preparation of sacrifice, just as they are in the texts quoted above. Now the fact that their cord is said to be stretched crosswise both below and above shows that the reference is to the measuring and the making of the outlines of the sacrificial area, just as the stretching of a cord or threads does in some other verses, for example, in x, 130, 1: *yo yajño viśvatas tantubhis tataḥ*, and in *Atharva*, xiii, 6: *tatra tantum parameṣṭhī tatān.* The other alternative meanings of *raśmiḥ*, for instance, “the ray of the inner eye,” as Geldner, Deussen, and Scherman have suggested; or, again, as “the reins of a chariot”, as Oldenberg and Bergaigne have interpreted, do not evidently suit the context, for the other words in the verse, as we shall see presently, conclusively show that it is the metaphor of a sacrifice that has been employed here. The fact that the *raśmiḥ* is said to be stretched crosswise, and that the verse contains a reference to above and below, renders it impossible that the ray of the eye is meant, for a ray of the eye cast crosswise would not see the contrast of above and below. Similarly, there is not the slightest trace in the verse of the idea of a chariot, which is usually mentioned when it is meant. The idea of an architect’s cord, as Hillebrandt has suggested, would not be out of place in this particular verse, but it is to be remembered that the metaphor employed is that of the preparation of a sacrificial altar, and not that of a building, and that the outlines marked by the stretching of the cord present the appearance of warp and woof, and thus the metaphor of a loom is also implied. What sense would *retodhāḥ*, *mahimānaḥ*, *svadhā*, and *prayatiḥ* make if the metaphor of a building is supposed to be present here?

On the other hand, it will be presently seen that these terms admit of quite a consistent interpretation in accordance with the metaphor of a sacrifice. Having said in the first line of the verse that the priests prepared the sacrificial altar by stretching their cord for marking the outlines, it is stated in the next line that fathers (*retodhāh*) and gods (*mahimānaḥ*) were present there, as they are believed to be at a sacrifice. That *retodhāh* means "impregnators" or "fathers" no one would question. The word *mahimānaḥ* has been used in several other verses of the *Rġveda*,<sup>1</sup> and it either means "mighty forces" in the abstract, or "gods" in the concrete. However, its use in *Rġveda*, x, 114, 7, distinctly in connection with the idea of sacrifice, is significant for our purpose. The text is: *caturdaśa anye mahimāno 'sya tam dhīrāḥ vācā pranayanti sapta*, which is thus interpreted by Sāyaṇa: *asya yajñarūpasya paramātmāno 'nye caturdaśa saṅkhyākāḥ mahimāno vibhūtayāḥ bhavanti*, etc. That *asya* here refers to sacrifice is beyond doubt, for we have the very word *yajña* in the immediately preceding verse: *yajñam vimāya kavayo manīṣā* (x, 114, 7, 6), where the other words also are equally interesting and suggestive for their parallelism in language and meaning. In *Rġveda*, i, 164, 50, we find *mahimānaḥ*, evidently in the sense of gods: *te ha nākam mahimānaḥ sacanta*, and this has been repeated in *Rġveda*, x, 90, 16, where, again, the metaphor of a sacrifice is distinctly present. So these references establish beyond doubt that the word *mahimānaḥ* has significance in connection with the idea of a sacrifice, and that it means gods; for even when it has an abstract meaning the large number, which is mentioned in connection with it, strongly suggests that it is the gods that are meant. A mention of the presence of fathers and gods is the most natural thing in the description of a sacrifice, and the same we find here. Next follows *svadhā avastāt, prayatiḥ parastāt*, which phrases have presented the greatest difficulty to the commentators, and it is only vague

<sup>1</sup> For example, i, 164, 50; x, 90, 16; x, 114, 7 and 8.

translations of the words that have been given, the greatest pity being that even Sāyaṇa, who has rightly interpreted the words in connection with sacrificial conceptions elsewhere, has missed the exact metaphor here, although he sees the sense of passivity in *svadhā*, and that of "activity" in *prayatiḥ*, when he interprets them as "the objects to be enjoyed" (*bhogyāḥ*) and "the enjoyers" (*bhoktāraḥ*) respectively. Now *svadhā*, which has been used elsewhere also, and is quite a familiar word in connection with a sacrifice, usually means either oblation, especially that of Soma, or the utterance at a sacrifice called *svadhākāra*. In *Rġveda*, ix, 113, 10, we have *svadhā ca yatra triptīśca*, where Sāyaṇa translates *svadhā* as *annam, svadhākāreṇa vā dattam annam*. So there is no difficulty in interpreting the word, in the present verse also, in the sense of oblation. The other word is *prayatiḥ*, which is used in two other verses of the *Rġveda*, i, 109, 2, and i, 126, 5, and means "offering", which word I choose for translating it in order to express the sense of activity or action implied in it, and to distinguish it from *svadhā*, which has the sense of passivity. Thus, while *svadhā* would mean "the objects offered", or "to be offered", *prayatiḥ* would signify "the act of offering". In *Rġveda*, i, 109, 2, we have *athā somasya prayatī yvabhyām indrāgnī stomam janayāmi navyam*, where *prayatiḥ* is used in the dual number, and has been translated by Sāyaṇa as "the act of offering", *somasya prayatī abhiśutasya somasya pradānena*. This use of *prayatiḥ* in the two verses would lend support to the view that the word, as used in the verse under consideration, is derived from the root *yat* and not from *yam* as Oldenberg would have it. Thus the fourth part of the verse means that the oblation was below, that is to say, it was placed upon the ground, and the act of offering was above, that is to say, it was carried on above (the sacrificial ground). This also explains the meaning of "stretching forth" or "effort" implied in the word *prayatiḥ*, which has been noticed by some scholars<sup>1</sup> but has remained

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Whitney, *JAOS.* xi (1911), cix.

unexplained so far. With regard to the meaning of *avastāt* and *parastāt* there cannot be any difference of opinion, and so they need not be discussed here.

The meaning of the verse as a whole, in its metaphorical sense, would thus be that the priests prepared the sacrificial altar by stretching their cord crosswise, both below and above ; that fathers and gods were present there ; and that while the oblation was placed on the sacrificial ground, the act of offering was carried on above.<sup>1</sup> This, it will be found, makes a complete description of a sacrificial performance.

The next thing to be considered is the cosmogonic significance of the metaphor. Who are the kavis in the cosmic sacrifice ? What does the stretching of the cord stand for ? What are *svadhā* and *prayatiḥ* with reference to the universe ?

The first point is about the identity of the kavis, who, here, and in *Rġveda*, i, 164, 5, are said to spread a cord and threads, respectively. In this particular verse we find a mention of above and below in connection with the stretching of the cord, and in the other seven threads are said to have been stretched by the kavis for warp and woof. The number of kavis is not mentioned here. Now, by a very careful and comparative study of these and the other verses, where there is a reference to kavis, I have come to the conclusion that the word, as used in these verses, denotes the Ṛbhus. I do not know of any other alternative interpretation, and so I shall simply give reasons in support of my own. *Firstly*, the Ṛbhus have been distinctly referred to as kavis in *Atharva*, vi, 47, 6: *idam tṛtīyam savanam kavīnām ṛtena ye camasam airayanta*, where Sāyana rightly comments: *tṛtīyam savanākhyam karma kavīnam krāntadarśanānām ṛbhūṇām svabhūtam ta eva indrādībhīḥ sahītās tasya savanasya adhidevatāḥ*. In *Rġveda*, iv, 35, 4, their work is referred to as that of kavis: *kim mayah sviccamasa eṣa āsa yam kāvyena caturo vicakra*. The fact that

<sup>1</sup> The prose order of the verse will be as follows: *Eṣām tiraścīno vitato raśmīḥ adhaḥ svid āsīd, upari svid āsīd ; retodhaḥ āsan, mahimānaḥ āsan ; svadhā avastāt, prayatiḥ parastāt*.

the Ṛbhus are regarded as skilful workmen rightly entitles them to the title of *kavi*, and we find that it has actually been used for them in the above verses. *Secondly*, in *Rġveda*, iv, 34, 9, the Ṛbhus are described as dividing the universe into the heaven and the earth: *ye ṛdhag rodasī*, which, according to Sāyana, means *ye ca rodasī dyāvāpṛthivyāvṛdhak pṛthak cakruh*, "those who separated the heaven and the earth," and this conception accords so well with the description of the above and below in the verse under consideration. Evidently the reference to above and below signifies the division of the world into the heaven and the earth. *Thirdly*, the Ṛbhus have also been called the fashioners of a sacrifice in *Rġveda*, iii, 54, 12, *adhvaram ataṣṭha*, which, according to Sāyana, means *ṛvijah imam asmadīyam adhvaram ataṣṭha akurvan*, and thus it will appear that the name *kavayah*, as applied to the Ṛbhus, would be suitable both with reference to the preparing of a sacrifice and the dividing of the earth and the heaven.

The next question is the cosmological significance of the stretching of a cord or threads, *raśmīḥ* or *tantuḥ*, the tantus being sometimes mentioned as seven in number, as in *Rġveda*, i, 164, 5. It is clear that in the metaphors both of sacrifice and warp and woof the idea meant to be expressed by the stretching of a cord and threads is the preparation of outlines, which are to be filled up as the work progresses. The question is: What do these outlines mean with reference to the universe ? The explanation of this metaphor occurred to me as I was reading that little dialogue between Gārgī and Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, in which she asks him a question in words, which forthwith remind one of such hymns of the *Rġveda* as we have been considering here. She asks: *yad ūrdhvam Yājñavalkya divo yadavāk pṛthivyā yadantarā dyāvā pṛthivī ime yad bhūtam ca bhavacca bhavis-yaccetyācakṣate kasmīns tadotam ca protam ceti*, "O, Yājñavalkya, that which is above the sky, that which is beneath the earth, that which is between the two, the sky and the earth, these which the people call the past, the present,

and the future, across what is that woven warp and woof? ” Yājñavalkya says in answer that it is space across which all this is woven warp and woof; and on being asked further as to across what space is woven, in its turn, he says that it is woven across the Imperishable—*akṣara*. Now these questions and answers clearly show that it is the divisions of time and space that form the warp and woof of the world, and these ultimately depend upon the self, which is the uniting factor. The seven threads which are mentioned as stretched for warp and woof, would thus appear to signify these same distinctions, viz. the three divisions of place: above, middle, and below; and the three divisions of time: past, present and future; and space; the distinctions of time being also evidently conceived in terms of spatial imagery. This very conception is to be found distinctly also in *Atharva*, x, 8, 37 and 38, the language of which is so suggestive and parallel to the texts of the verses that we have been considering, and to that of the dialogue, that I would be justified in quoting them here *in toto*. The verses are as follows:—

*Yo vidyāt sūtram vitatam yasminn otāḥ prajā imāḥ,  
Sūtram sūtrasya yo vidyāt sa vidyāt Brāhmaṇam mahat.  
Vedāham sūtram vitatam yasminn otāḥ prajā imāḥ,  
Sūtram sūtrasyāham veda atho yad Brāhmaṇam mahat.*

Translation:—

“One who would know the stretched thread across which these creatures are woven; one who would know the thread of this thread, it is he who would know the great Brāhmaṇa.”

“I know the stretched thread across which these creatures are woven, I know the thread of this thread, hence (I know) that which is great Brāhmaṇa.”

Thus it will be seen that the stretching of the thread represents the warp and woof of the universe, and this, in its turn, signifies the divisions of time and space, in which all the beings live, move, and have their being. In *Rġveda*, i, 164, 5, the seven threads of warp and woof refer to all these

distinctions, and in *Rġveda*, x, 129, 5, the stretching of the cord evidently refers to the divisions of space, the metaphor being employed only partially in order to suit the other metaphor of sacrifice, where only the dimensions of space are relevant.

The first line of the verse will therefore mean that space was divided into the upper and the lower regions—the heaven and the earth.<sup>1</sup>

The words *retodhāḥ* and *mahimānaḥ*, as has been shown, mean fathers and gods respectively; and this meaning will hold good with reference to both a sacrifice and the universe. It may be noted, however, that the word *retodhāḥ* has been several times used in the *Rġveda* in the sense of rain, *parjanyaḥ*,<sup>2</sup> which has been compared for its productive energy to a bull. The meaning, however, of a generating agency remains unchanged. So it is said in the verse that there were fathers and gods.

Lastly, there is said to be *svadhā* below and *prayatiḥ* above. In the cosmological sense, *svadhā* would stand for the products of nature, especially water and other juices corresponding to the Soma drink in a sacrifice, which the word usually signifies; and *prayatiḥ* for the atmospheric activity of the heavenly bodies. In *Rġveda*, iii, 22, 3, and iii, 55, 6, *Agni* has been addressed as the sun in the upper regions (*parastāt*), and the same conception is repeated in *Śatapatha*, vii, 1, 23, where it is said: *agne yat te divi varca iti, ādityo vā śya divi varcaḥ*, “O, Agni, what splendour is thine in the heaven—his splendour in the heaven doubtless is the sun.” In *Śatapatha*, vii, 1, 22, we have the following significant passage: “This is the Agni wherein Indra taketh the Soma juice, for the Gārhapatya hearth is this (terrestrial) world, and the Soma juice is the waters: Indra thus took up the waters in this world;—into his belly, craving it,—for the belly is the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*, ii, p. 436.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. v, 69, 2, and vii, 103, 6.

centre.”<sup>1</sup> In *Śatapatha*, vii, 1, 24, also we find a mention of the waters approaching the fire. The idea in all such passages seems to be that like the Soma juice drunk up by Indra, the waters and juices on the earth are absorbed up by the heat of the sun. The return of the same to the earth in the form of rain would complete the act of cosmic sacrifice, but I have not been able to trace definitely an expression of this last conception in any of the hymns, although we know that the sending down of waters is not outside the sphere of Indra’s activities. In this connection the text of the *Śatapatha* quoted above is very suggestive, for it says that the Gārhapatya hearth is this terrestrial world, and the Soma juice is the waters, and that Indra took up the waters in this world.

The cosmological meaning of the whole verse will, therefore, be that the world was divided into the heaven and the earth; there were fathers and gods; the nature was below, and the atmospheric forces were above.

As regards Deussen’s suggestion that, in the first line of the verse, a mention of the stretching of the cord indicates a perception by the seers of the division of reality into the phenomenal (which is above), and the real (which is below)—a distinction so well-known in the philosophy of the German philosopher Kant—I would say that it is extremely improbable that this notion was present in the mind of the author of the verse, for it is neither consistent with the context of the next line of the verse, nor with that of this particular hymn, nor, again, with the usual conceptions of cosmogony as found in the other hymns of the Vedas.

Sāyaṇa’s explanation is no more convincing. He takes *raśmih* to mean the created universe, *kāryavargah*, and says that it was spread out so quickly like the rays of the rising sun that it could not be determined which portion of the universe was created first, and hence the query: “Was it

<sup>1</sup> Eggeling’s translation (*SBE.*).

in the middle, below, or above?”<sup>1</sup> *Eṣām* he explains as *avidyā-kāma-karmaṇām*, “of those whose action was prompted by ignorance and desire.” Further, according to him, *retodhāh* means “souls, the enjoyers”, and *mahimānaḥ* the “objects to be enjoyed”. *Svadhā*, according to him, signifies eatable things, *annam*, it being symbolic of the objects to be enjoyed; and these are called inferior (*avastāt*), as distinguished from the enjoyers, *prayatiḥ*, who are superior (*parastāt*). Now, on reading Sāyaṇa’s commentary, one cannot help wondering how he could possibly translate the above-mentioned words in the way he has done. It is evident that while commenting upon this verse he has not taken into consideration the parallel use of the various words in the other verses, and has been carried away by the conceptions of the enjoyer and the enjoyed as they are to be prominently found in the later philosophical literature. The translation of *avastāt* as “inferior” and of *parastāt* as “superior” will be seen to be altogether out of place here, as certainly there is no indication in the verse, or in the hymn, that the notion of such a contrast could have been present in the mind of its author.

JWALA PRASAD.

#### VIRGILIUS CORDUBENSIS

“He who knows something ought to reveal it. Knowledge kept out of sight is of no value.”—VIRGILIUS CORDUBENSIS.

Virgilius Cordubensis is the name of a philosopher and necromancer of Cordova, whose work, *Philosophia*, is claimed to have been translated from Arabic into Latin at Toledo in the year 1290.<sup>2</sup> Nothing is known of this author outside the above work, and very little attention has been accorded

<sup>1</sup> It might be noted here that the word *svid* used by itself does not always imply a query. It also means “verily” or “indeed”.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the *Philosophia* reads: “Istum librum composuit Virgilius Philosophus Cordubensis in Arabico, et fuit translatus de Arabico in Latinum in civitate Toletana, A.D. 1290.”