

CREATION AND EMANATION: ZOROASTRIAN REFLECTIONS ON THE COSMOGONIC MYTH

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The first part of the *Bundahišn*¹ which describes the creation of the world in its different phases and aspects is a composite account. Besides the basic cosmogonic narrative, there are extensive passages that reflect the pondering of Zoroastrian theologians on particular aspects of creation. The 9th or 10th century compiler of the *Bundahišn* had access to a variety of traditions which he found in the *zand*-texts of the Sasanian Avesta, and probably in oral tradition too. Leaving much material aside, he reworked his sources and tried to combine them into a coherent whole. The result he achieved was far from a smooth literary text; the conglomerate character of the composition is still transparent.² To give a survey of the contents and to facilitate references, the principal structuring of the materials as found in the first part of the *Bundahišn* itself is here reproduced with the corresponding division into chapters and paragraphs in the edition of Anklesaria 1956³:

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| 1. <i>pad wēh-dēn owōn paydāg kū</i> | chapter I, 1-32 |
| "In the good religion it is thus revealed" | |
| 2. <i>dām-dahišnīh ī mēnōgīhā gōwam ud pas gētāhīha</i> | chapter I, 33-59 |
| "I will describe the spiritual creation and then the material" | |
| 3. <i>abar dām dahišnīh ī gētāhīhā</i> | chapter I a |
| "Concerning the material creation" | |
| 4. <i>abar frāz brēhēnišn rōšnān</i> | chapter II |
| "Concerning the fashioning forth of the luminaries" | |
| 5. <i>abar čīm ī dahišnīh dām ō ardīkkarīh</i> | chapter III |
| "Concerning the reason of making creation for doing battle" | |

No special heading pertaining to the content is found for the first section, only a reference to sacred tradition. The section deals with

¹ Chapters I-III; Anklesaria 1908 p. 2 line 11 to p. 39 line 11. References to chapters and paragraphs follow the division in Anklesaria 1956. When citing passages of the Pahlavi text, pages and lines in the edition of Anklesaria 1908 is also indicated.

² This was emphasized by Nyberg 1931:193.

³ Cf. also MacKenzie 1990.

the primordial confrontations of Ohrmazd and Ahreman leading to the creation of the world in the *mēnōg*-state by Ohrmazd and to the counter-creation of Ahreman. The second section is mainly concerned with different aspects of the *mēnōg*-creation, although the passage describing the creation of the *Aməša Spəntas* together with other deities and the primordial elements and beings (I, 53–54) seems to confuse the *mēnōg* and *gētīg* creations. The last part of the heading refers to the contents of the next section, which resumes the narrative interrupted by I, 33–59. Here, in the third section (chapter I,a), the material creation, including the primordial beings is described. A detailed account of the creation and function of the stars, the sun and the moon is given in the fourth section (chapter II). In section five (chapter III), various aspects concerning the creation of the Bounteous Immortals (*amahraspandān*) are treated, particularly in relation to the coming aggression of Ahreman.⁴

The focus of the present study is on certain passages in the Bundahišn, which are found in the second section.⁵ The text of this section is preserved solely in the manuscripts TD₁, DH and TD₂, representing what is conventionally called "Iranian or Greater Bundahišn."⁶ There is no basic narrative underlying the text as in the first part, in which the primordial confrontations of Ohrmazd and Ahreman are related, but some parts may have belonged to the original cosmogonic myth. The section appears as a conglomerate of diverse fragments loosely knit together.⁷ A large part can be regarded as reflections on the main cosmogonic myth, in which the terminology and view-points of the sources used still appear. A striking feature of some of these theological fragments is the tendency to group secondary divine entities or principles in series of what seems to be successive creations and emanations, as was noted first by H. S. Nyberg and then by R.C. Zaehner.⁸ In the transcriptions of the Pahlavi text, the indented lines represent the parts of the text that are here interpreted as glosses or comments.

Bundahišn I, 39.

The first passage to be studied occurs in I, 39 (Anklesaria 1908 p. 9 lines 2–11):

1. *pas az zamān ī akanārag[īhā] zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy frāz dād*

⁴ The final stage of the creation process which follows upon the irruption of the Evil Spirit in the world, is described in chapter VI, A–J (Anklesaria 1956 pp. 70–87) corresponding to chapter 3 of the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*.

⁵ chapter I, 33–59, Anklesaria 1908 p. 8 line 2 to p. 16 line 13, which corresponds to paragraphs 17–38 in the edition and translation of Zaehner 1972.

⁶ An attempt at elucidating the relationship between the six independent manuscripts of the Bundahišn is found in Hultgård 1990.

⁷ Nyberg 1931:193, Zaehner 1972:105, Hultgård 1990: 185.

⁸ Nyberg 1931:194–220, Zaehner 1972:108.

2. *ast kē zamān ī kanāragōmand gōwēd*
3. *az zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy asazišnih frāz dād*
4. *kū čiš ōhrmazd nē sazēd*
5. *az asazišnih ārwārīh-rawišnih paydāg būd*
6. *kū dēwān xwārag nē rasēd*
7. *az ārwārīh [īrīh]-rawišnih mēnōg abē-wardišnih paydāg būd*
8. *ān mēnōg kū čiš ī ōhrmazd az ān ī pad bundahišn dād nē wardēd*
9. *az mēnōg abē-wardišnih bowandag-kāmag ī dām gēhān paydāg būd*
10. *frārōn dām dahišnih ud hamdādestānōmandīh*

Line 1: *zamān ī 1] zamān* DH, TD2. *akanāragīhā* 'k'lknyh' TD1; + *ud* TD2. *zamān ī 2] zamān* TD2. *dād* add. *brehēnīd* super linea DH, in textu ante *dād* TD2. Line 2: *zamān ī 1] zamān* DH, TD2; add. 'k'lknyh' TD 1. Line 3: *dād*] *būd* TD 1. Line 5: *asazišnih*] add. *ud* DH, TD 2. *ārwārīh-rawišnih*] *ārwārīh* DH, TD 2. *būd*] *bawēd* DH, TD2. Line 7: *abē-*] 'bwd- or 'bnd- DH, TD2. *abē-wardišnih*] *wardišnih* DH wlcšnyh TD 2. Line 8: *az*] om. DH, TD 2. Line 9: *az*] *ud az* DH. *kāmag ī*] *kāmag* TD2, the scribe of TD1 corrects unclear writing of *kāmag* with 'mk y above line.

“Then he (*scil.* Ohrmazd) created Time of Long Dominion from Unlimited Time,
 –someone calls it Limited Time–
 from Time of Long Dominion he created Imperishability,
 –what belongs to Ohrmazd will not pass away–
 from Imperishability Happiness became manifest
 –happiness will not come to the demons–
 from Happiness Incorruptible *Mēnōg* became manifest
 –this *mēnōg* (assures that) what belongs to Ohrmazd, (deriving) from that which he created at the primordial creation, will not be corrupted–
 from Incorruptible Spirit Perfect Will for Material Creation became manifest
 –a truthful creation and a manifestation of concord.”

REMARKS ON THE TEXT: Line 5–7: the usual interpretation of 'hw'lyh as *a-xwārīh*, in the meaning of “discomfort, uneasiness” (Zaehner 1972:315 and 466), “damnation” (Nyberg 1929: 213); “manque de bonheur” (Molé 1959 a: 435, 1959 b: 319) is not convincing in the context of a series of divine entities all having a positive connotation. The element 'hw'lyh can be interpreted either as *ārwārīh* analysed as the pre-formative element

ā- and *xwārīh* in the sense of “ease, happiness,” or as *a-xwārīh* in which the second element should be connected with Phl. *xwār* in the meaning of “contemptible, abject” (Nyberg 1974: 220; MacKenzie 1971:95) and with the New Persian *xwārī* “meanness, baseness, distress” (Steingass pp. 479–480). The word *āxwārīh* seems to be unattested elsewhere, as is also *a-xwārīh* in the sense of “non-abjectness, non-distress.” If the second alternative *a-xwārīh* “non-distress” is chosen, the gloss has to be translated differently: “distress of the demons will not come.” I am aware of the difficulties involved in these tentative explanations, but they are proposed to confront the traditional interpretation which in my opinion is not convincing with respect to the context. The interpretation *āxwārīh* is here preferred in accordance with that of B. T. Anklesaria who already before 1935 had arrived to the translation of ’hw’lyh lwbšnyh with “progress of prosperity.”⁹ The element *-rawišnīh* renders here the Avestan ending *-tāt* of abstract nouns (see Nyberg 1974:168); compare Phl. Yasna 31,6 *passim*, where *aməratāt* is rendered by *amarg-rawišnīh*. In line 7 the element *yryh* or *gryh* is difficult to explain. It may be considered a scribal corruption of the text, as I have proposed.¹⁰ The interpretations of Nyberg¹¹ and Zaehner¹² reading *brēh* introduce an element to the text which destroys the coherence of the passage.

Bundahišn I, 44–46

A second passage which also seems to describe successive creations of primordial entities by the supreme deity follows in I, 44–46:¹³

1. *Ohrmazd az ān ī xwēš-xwadīh, az stī-rōšnīh, kerb ī dāmān ī xwēš frāz brēhēnīd*
2. *pad ātaxš kerb ī rōšn spēd ud gird frāz paydāg*
3. *az stī ī ān mēnōg kē petyārag ī andar har dō dām ā-š be barēd*
4. *ast tuwān ast zamān*
5. *ā-š kerb ī way-wēh frāz brēhēnīd čiyōn way abāyist*
6. *ast kē way ī dagrand-xwadāy gōwēd*
7. *u-š dām pad ayārīh way ī dagrand-xwadāy frāz brēhēnīd*
8. *čē ka-š dām-iz dād, way-iz abzār-ē ī-š pad kār andar abāyist.*

⁹ Anklesaria 1956:13 and Preface p. 2.

¹⁰ Hultgård 1990.

¹¹ Nyberg 1929.

¹² Zaehner 1972:297.

¹³ Anklesaria 1908 p. 11 line 2 to line 7.

Line 1: *stī*] gyt'h TD 2. *dāmān ī xweš*] *dāmān ī xwešān xweš* TD 1 but the scribe has put deletion marks above *xwešān*. Line 2: add. *ā-š* ante *pad* DH, TD 2. *pad ātaxš*] super linea DH. *rōšn*] *rōšnih* TD 2, add *ī* TD 1. *ud*] om. DH, TD 2. Line 3: *stī ī*] om. DH, TD 2. *ast tuwān*] *tuwān* TD 1. *be*] om. DH, TD 2. *barēd*] written YBLWN-x1 in the MSS is here interpreted as the present form. Line 4: *way-weh*] *way ī weh* TD 2. *abāyist*] *abāyēd* sed super linea *abāyist* TD 1. Line 5: *ī*] om. DH, TD 2. *xwadāy*] *xwt'k* DH, TD 2. *gōwēd*] *frāz gōwēd*. DH, TD 2. Line 6: *u-š*] *ā-š* DH, TD 2. *-xwadāy*] *xwt'k* DH, TD 2. *dām*] *z'm* TD 2. Line 7: *way-iz*] 'b-c DH, TD 2, sed add. w super linea ante 'b-c DH; corrupt for w'y-c of TD 1. *abāyist*] *abāyēd* DH, TD 2.

“From his own Self, from the Essence of light, Ohrmazd fashioned forth the Form of his own creatures, in the Form of fire, bright, white and round, shining afar. From the essence of the Spirit who will remove misfortune in the two creations—he is Power, he is Time—he then fashioned forth the Form of the good Vay because he needed Vay—someone calls him Vay of Long Dominion—and with the aid of Vay of Long Dominion he fashioned forth the creation. For when he created the creation, Vay was a means which he needed for his work.”

REMARKS ON THE TEXT: Line 2. *frāz paydāg* renders most probably an Avestan *frā-dərəsrā* “shining forth” as in Phl.Yasna 57:27.¹⁴

Bundahišn I, 50

The third text which brings cosmogonic reflections similar to the passages above appears in *Bundahišn* I, 50, which represents another type of successive creations or emanations taken from a different source:

1. *ōhrmazd az stī-rōšnih rāst gōwišnih < frāz brēhēnīd >*
2. *az rāst-gōwišnih abzōnīgih ī dādār paydāg būd dām dahišnih*
3. *čē-š *āsrō-kerpa az asar-rōšnih frāz brēhēnīd*
4. *dām-iz hamāg andar āsrō-kerpa be dād*
5. *āsrō-kerpa zamān-sazišn judāg būd*
6. *az āsrō-kerpa ahunawar frāz būd*
7. *mēnōg ī yaθā-ahu-vairyō kē-š bē dahišnih ud frazām ī dām az-iš paydāg*
8. *ast dēn čiyōn dēn abāg dām-dahišnih dādīhist*
9. *az ahunawar mēnōg sāl frāz būd*

¹⁴ cf. also Zaehner 1972:300 and the translation “étincelant” of Molé 1959b:319.

10. *kē andar gumēzišn nūn nēm-rōšn nēm-tārīg,*
 11. *sē sad šast panj rōz-šabān, kē brīn ī zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy*

Line 1: < *frāz brēhēnīd* >] om. MSS. - *rōšnīh*] add. *ud* TD 2. Line 2: *az*] *ud az* DH, TD 2. *būd*] *bawēd* DH, TD 2. *ī*] om. TD 1. Line 3: **āsrō-kerpa*] 'sl klpk TD 1 'slkpy DH, TD 2. *asar*] add. *ī* DH, TD 2. Line 4: *dām-iz*] *ud dām-iz* DH, add. *ī* TD 2. *āsrō-kerpa*] 'slk klpk DH asl klpk TD 2. Line 5: *āsrō-kerpa*] 'slk klpk DH, TD 2. *sazišn*] sycšn TD 1. Line 6: *āsrō-kerpa*] 'slk klpk DH, TD 2. Line 7: *menōg ī*] *menōg* DH. *yaθa ahu vairyō*] yt'y'hwkylywk TD 1, yt' 'hwklywk DH, yt' 'hw wylywk TD 2. *paydāg*] *paydāgīh* DH, TD 2. Line 10: *andar*] super linea DH. Line 11: *-xwadāy*] written hwt'k in the MSS.

“From the Essence of light Ohrmazd < fashioned forth > True Speech, from True Speech Bountifulness of the Creator became manifest—in creating the creation—, for He (Ohrmazd) fashioned forth the Form of Fire from Endless Light. He created the entire creation within the Form of Fire, the Form of Fire was separated from the passing of Time,

From the Form of Fire the Ahunawar was brought forth, the Spirit of *yaθā-ahu-vairyō* through which the creation and the end were revealed; it is the Religion, since the Religion was created together with the creation.

From the Ahunawar the Spiritual Year was brought forth, which now in the mixed state is half light and half dark, three hundred and sixty-five days, which is a delimitation of the Time of Long Dominion.”

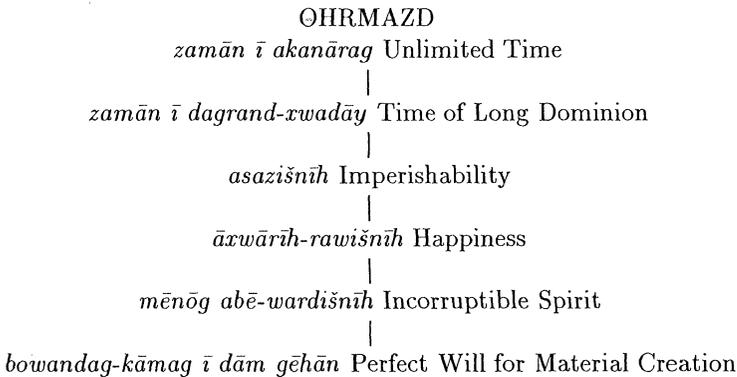
REMARKS ON THE TEXT. Line 1: since the sentence requires a verb, *frāz brēhēnīd* has been added (cf. line 3); so also Nyberg 1929 (*frāč tāšit*), Zaehner 1972 (*frāč dāt*), Anklesaria 1956 (in the translation) and Molé 1959b (in the translation). Line 3: **āsrō-kerpa*; the emendation is based on the correct writing 'slwk klpk of TD 1 in lines 4, 5 and 6. As convincingly shown by Duchesne-Guillemin 1964, *āsrō-kerpa* “form of fire” is derived from the Avestan *āθrō kəhrp-* and functions as a parallel expression to *ātaxš kerb*.

Analysis and interpretation

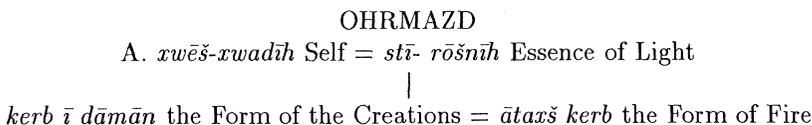
The passages presented above appear to describe early stages in the cosmogonic process, when divine entities come into being either through creation directly by the supreme deity or by emanation from a higher principle.¹⁵ The distinctive idea is that one entity owes its origin to another in a successive series, be it through creation or emanation. There is

¹⁵ It is not just a question of demonstrating the implications of the idea “Time of Long Dominion,” as Molé 1959b:435 concluded.

a difference between creation and emanation in that Ohrmazd is responsible for the fashioning forth of each entity said to be created, although he uses one to produce the other, whereas in case of emanation one entity proceeds from the other almost as in a self-generating process. The same idea of successive creation and emanation is also expressed in the description of Ahreman's counter-production of daevic entities in I, 47-49. Furthermore it should be noted that the classical entities of Zoroastrianism, the *Aməša Spəntas*, do not figure in the passages treated. The first passage (I,39) is preceded by the mention in I,37-38 telling how Ohrmazd created Time (*zamān*) in order to nullify the aggression of the Evil Spirit (*agār*). Ohrmazd includes in his essence or totality Unlimited Time (cf. Bundahišn I, 1-2) which serves as the primordial element starting the chain of creations and emanations. Then follows a series of entities in which the first two ones are created (*frāz brēhēnīd* and *frāz dād* respectively) and the other ones become manifest (*paydāg būd*). The process may be illustrated by the following scheme, where the vertical lines indicate the order of appearance:



In the second passage (I,44-46), there is also successive creation but with less entities involved. In addition, the text is obscure as to the connection between the elements or entities; it seems as if two parallel fragments have been juxtaposed in which the different terminology indicates that two variant traditions have been used. The Self and the Essence of Light belong with Ohrmazd and are probably synonymous; anyway they should not be considered as separate hypostases. The relationship between elements and entities in the two juxtaposed fragments may be interpreted as follows:



B. *stī ī ān mēnōg kē...* Essence of the Spirit who... = *tuwān* Power =
zamān Time

|
kerb ī way-wēh the Form of Vay the Good = *way ī dagrand-xwadāy*
 Vay of Long Dominion

In the third passage (I, 50) the first series of creation and emanation is soon interrupted and instead a new series which also runs through three entities begins. Again two parallel statements on the initial stage of the creation process seem to have been juxtaposed and expressed in a scheme of creation and emanation. Thus we get:

OHRMAZD

A. *stī-rōšnīh* Essence of Light

|
rāst-gōwišnīh True Speech

|
abzōnīgīh ī dādār Bountifulness of the Creator

OHRMAZD

B. *asar-rōšnīh* Endless Light

|
ahunawar Ahuna Vairya

|
mēnōg sāl the Spiritual Year

As far as literary and stylistic characteristics are concerned, we find that in the first passage (Bd. I,39) the basic text (lines 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9) is accompanied by glosses, so that for each successive creation and emanation, a comment is added. In line 2 the purpose of the comment is to introduce a variant term taken from another source. In the other cases the intercalated remarks have the function of elucidating the meaning of the basic text.¹⁶ As a whole the passage conveys the impression of a "classical" *zand*-text of the type to be found in the Pahlavi Vidēvdād and in much of Dēnkard book VII. Setting the glosses aside, we obtain a well structured cosmogonic text with a hymnic character. In Bundahišn I, 44-46, which is composed of two parallel statements (A and B), the style is more didactic, and the parts of the text explaining the basic cosmogonic idea are closely interwoven with the main text, except for line 5 which constitutes a typical *zand*-gloss (*ast kē...*), stating that Vay the Good, is another name for Vay of Long Dominion. As for the third passage (I,50-51), remarks clarifying or supplementing the main

¹⁶ Zaehner (1972:108) regarded these glosses "as Mazdean accretions 'explaining' a Zervanite text."

text seem to dominate the second part, although they are not cast in the typical *zand* form with glosses being introduced by *kū* or *ast kē*. The clear *zand* form of the first passage (I, 39) and the presence of some words rendering Avestan terms (*ārwārih-rawišnih* in I, 39; *frāz paydāg* in I, 44 and *āsrō-kerpa* in I, 50) suggest that the composers worked with Avestan traditions. Nyberg and Zaehner regarded the section I,33–59 as Zurvanic, and Nyberg proposed to distinguish at least two principal schemes of Zurvanic *mēnōg*-creation.¹⁷ Zaehner tried to restore one scheme of emanations, in which they proceed dialectically in the form of triads, the first being Zurvān, Ohrmazd and Ahreman followed by the successive emanations of Zurvanic, Ohrmazdean and Ahremanian entities ending with the “ideal Year.”¹⁸ But this can only be done in sorting out entities from all three passages presented here and combining them with daevic entities. However, in the text of Bundahišn no such scheme is clearly set out in any particular passage. The three passages treated here are all concerned with creation and emanation of entities belonging to the realm of Ohrmazd and the manifestations of the evil power are described in a separate scheme. In addition, the reconstruction proposed by Zaehner plays down the heterogenous character of the section, since the three passages represent different sources and plausibly also different theological schools.

The entities mentioned in these theological reflections on the early cosmogonic process are of two kinds. In the first place, we find primordial elements that are part of or closely connected to the supreme deity, forming his essence or cosmic biotope, as it were: Unlimited Time, the Self, Essence of Light, Endless Light, Essence of the Spirit who will remove misfortune, and Power. Some of these entities occur already in the Younger Avesta as personified divine elements or beings.

Unlimited Time, *-zrvan-akarana-*, is mentioned together with other *yazatas* in Yasna 72:10, Nyāišn 1:8 and in Vidēvdād 19:13 and 16, where the Pahlavi version renders it by *zamān akanārag*. In the Pahlavi accounts of the cosmogony¹⁹ Unlimited Time, sometimes only called Time, oscillates between the state of an independent deity and an aspect or element of Ohrmazd.

The entity Endless Light, *asar rōšnih*, continues the Avestan concept *anayra raocā* (always in the plural) “the endless lights”²⁰, in the Pahlavi Vidēvdād translated by *anagr rōšnih*. There is continuity in concept, even if a later tradition makes a distinction between *asar rōšnih* as the place (*gāh*) of Ohrmazd and *anagr rōšn* as the paradise Garōdmān (Bd.

¹⁷ Nyberg 1931: 194.

¹⁸ Zaehner 1972:108–111. Nyberg 1931:40 speaks about an antithetic arrangement of entities.

¹⁹ *Bundahišn* I; *Zādspram* 1; *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.

²⁰ Vd. 2:40, 11:1, 2 and 10, 19:31; Yt. 12:35, 13:57.

III, 7). The Avestan expression denotes the cosmic light (Vd. 2:40)²¹ which is also regarded as penetrating to the earth as suggested by the context of Vidēvdād 11:1, 2 and 10. According to Hādōxt Nask 2:15, Endless Light will be the place of the righteous soul after death: *tūrīm gāma frabarəṭ yō narš ašaonō uruua anaγraēšuuā raocōhuua* (note the locative plural.). This entity is also the genius of the 30th day of the calendar (Y. 16:6, S. 1: 30 and 2:30). In the second group we find the entities that are linked in chains of creation or emanation. They are clearly thought of as personified abstractions or hypostases — be they created by the supreme deity or proceeded from another entity. The entity Time of Long Dominion, *zamān ī dagrand-xwadāy*, which occurs in I, 39 and I, 50, renders the Avestan *zrvan-darəγō.xʷ adāta-*. This entity is mentioned in Nyāišn 1:8 and Yasna 72:10 in a doxological enumeration of divine entities, but its function is only elucidated in the Pahlavi texts. The different terms used to denote this entity underline its importance and indicate at the same time the existence of different variants of the basic creation myth. In the passages treated here the gloss in I, 39 (line 2) gives the name *zamān ī kanāragōmand* “Limited Time,” and in the second passage (I, 44–46, lines 4–7) two other designations occur: *kerb ī way-wēh*, the “Form of Vay the Good” and, as the gloss tells us, *way ī dagrand-xwadāy* “Vay of Long Dominion.” The deity Vay (Avestan Vayu), representing both Space and Time²², was thus more prominent in some versions of the cosmogonic myth. Irrespective of the different terms used, this entity is intimately bound up with the cosmogonic process and the history of the world, being the necessary instrument for the creation of the material world and constituting the frame in which world history is set.²³

The entity *rāst-gōwišnīh* “True Speech” coming as the first one in the third passage of primordial creations and emanations (Bd. I, 50–51) seems to be of particular significance. True Speech is mentioned in the context of the creation of the Amahraspand in Bundahišn I, 53 where the order of creation of the divine entities is stated. After the six and with Ohrmazd as the all-embracing seventh entity, priority is given to True Speech as the eighth *haštom rāst-gōwišnīh* (I, 53) over such divine beings as Srōš and Mihr. Furthermore, True Speech is one of the divine entities that figures prominently in the great eschatological battle mentioned in Bundahišn XXXIV, 27 and Wizidagihā ī Zādspram XXXV, 37–38. At the side of Ohrmazd and the Bounteous Immortals, who choose each his

²¹ The Avestan expression seems also to include the light of the stars, as suggested by Mawet 1982:288.

²² On the character of Vay as a deity of space and time, see Nyberg 1931: 197–208, Zaehner 1972: 80–91.

²³ For the function of Time of Long Dominion in the creation process, see Zaehner 1972: 106–111.

own adversary, True Speech will fight against False Speech, *drō-gōwišnīh*. The idea of the ultimate battle against evil is already present in Avestan tradition. According to Yašt 19:95–96 this battle will take the form of individual duels between the chief opponents, and here we find that False Speech will be vanquished by True Speech (*ərəžuurdō vāxsš*).

Strikingly enough, the six Bounteous Immortals, the *Aməša Spəntas*, are not included in the series of successive creations and emanations of higher primordial entities and the relationship between these entities and the *Aməša Spəntas* is not clearly stated in the text. The entities, being part of the essence of Ohrmazd or constituting his immediate cosmic surrounding, like Unlimited Time (cf. Bd. I, 42) and Endless Light, are apparently prior to the *Aməša Spəntas*, but this is not obvious as far as the the other higher entities mentioned in the cosmogonic passages of Bundahišn are concerned. As a matter of fact one of these entities *rāst-gōwišnīh*, True Speech, is said to have been created after the six *Aməša Spəntas* (Bd. I, 53; cf. above). The expression “we worship the first truly created beings” in Yasna 16:3 refers most probably to the *Aməša Spəntas* who are enumerated in the following passage.²⁴ From the account given by Plutarch, who uses earlier sources, it appears that the six *Aməša Spəntas* were the divine beings created in the very beginning: καὶ ὁ μὲν (sc. Ohrmazd) ἔξ θεοῦς ἐποίησε, τὸν μὲν πρῶτον εὐνοίας... and that in a second phase twenty-four other deities were fashioned forth.²⁵ Clearly, the creation of the *Aməša Spəntas* was included in the basic cosmogonic narrative and this part of the myth has been preserved in a somewhat disintegrated form in I, 35 and 53, that is within the section of juxtaposed fragments (Bd. I, 33–59) interrupting the basic narrative (Bd. I, 1–32 and Ia, 1–21). Here it should be noted that it may sometimes be difficult to discern from the text of the Bundahišn what originally belonged to the basic myth, and what can be considered theological reflections or supplementary remarks taken from other versions of the myth. As for the passages under discussion (I, 39; 44–46 and 50), they are regarded here as interpretative elements referring to the emergence of higher primordial entities.

As for the dating of the theological creation-emanation passages, they must be posterior to the emergence of the dualistic creation myth, if they represent reflections on that myth, as is here suggested. On the testimony of Plutarch who refers to Theopompos of the early 4th century B.C.E., the basic myth can be put back at least to the late Achaemenian period, which agrees with the fact that the new form of dualistic theology opposing Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu at the same cosmic level is clearly present already in the Vidēvdād. Corresponding to the

²⁴ Lommel 1930:31 and Narten 1982:9.

²⁵ *De Iside et Osiride* 47.

true nature of myth, the basic cosmogonic narrative circulated in different versions, although a common structure is always present.²⁶ Already Plutarch's text in *De Iside et Osiride* (46–47) reveals the existence of two variants of the cosmogonic myth²⁷, and the accounts of the Pahlavi compilers reflect various written and oral sources. According to the basic myth, the supreme deity himself creates the divine entities and the different elements of the world, and the creation work follows a determined order. This idea of a personal creation underlies practically all variants of the creation myth that are known to us, from the testimony of Plutarch to the various accounts in the Pahlavi books, and contrasts with the strong tendency to the emanation-thinking characteristic of the Bundahišn passages in I, 33–59. The type of cosmogonic thought that describes successive appearances of one entity out of another in a series has only a few parallels in Zoroastrian creation accounts. In Bundahišn Ia:2 it is said that Ohrmazd fashioned fire from Endless Light, from fire wind, from wind water, from water the all-solid earth.²⁸ But this represents the material *gētīg*-creation and not the first divine entities. The closest parallel that I am aware of is the text in Denkard III, 365, edited and translated by Shaul Shaked,²⁹ which purports to describe the manifestation (*paydāgīh*) of the "powers" (*abzār*) with which Ohrmazd accomplished the creation.

The creation account in the Selections of Zādspram chapter 1 which runs parallel to the first section of the cosmogonic narrative in the Bundahišn (cf. above) does not bring out the idea of successive creations and emanations. The only entities mentioned are Time (*zamān*) in I, 9 whom Ohrmazd calls for help to counteract Ahreman. In I, 27 it is said that Ohrmazd fashioned forth the creation (*dām frāz brēhēnīd*) with the help of *spīhr* "Firmament" and *zurwān* "Time." The cosmogonic account in the Pahlavi Rivāyat chapter 46 seems to begin with the creation from *mēnōg* into *getīg*.³⁰ Although the main part of the narrative is devoted to material creation, there are passages which may refer to the begin-

²⁶ See for this Hultgård 1995:81–83. Some variants recorded by Arabic writers, in the first place al-Shahrastānī, point to a greater diversity of cosmogonic ideas than found in the Pahlavi books, as has been emphasized by Shaked 1994:19–22.

²⁷ See Hultgård 1995: 96–98. The heterogenous character of Plutarch's account in chapters 46–47 of *De Iside et Osiride* has long been noticed, but less attention has been paid to the fact that two variants of the creation myth can be disclosed in the text of Plutarch.

²⁸ This is, however, partly contradicted by what is told in Ia:7–8: "Second from the substance of the sky he created water. . . third from water he created the earth. . ." Gignoux 1992:50 finds an echo of Hellenistic alchemical and Manichaean speculations in Bundahišn Ia:2.

²⁹ Shaked 1971:104–107. The passage was also treated by Zaehner 1955:371–374 albeit "with reluctance since there is much in the middle section that still remains obscure."

³⁰ Williams II p. 204.

nings of *mēnōg* creation. We find an attempt of theological reflexion along the line of successive creation in the statement that the ember of fire (*xwarg ī ātaxš*) was created from Endless Light and from it all creations were made (PR 46,3).

Parallel traditions in the religions of the Hellenistic-Roman world.

The Bundahišn texts analysed here present a particular type of cosmogonic thinking of which the passage in Bd I, 39 is the most illuminating example. This raises the question of similar phenomena in other religious traditions with which the Iranians came into contact. In my view, the closest parallels are to be found in the cosmogonic traditions of the Hellenistic-Roman world. There was a wide variety of such traditions propagated by different religious groups all over the eastern Mediterranean area from the 4th century B.C.E up to Late Antiquity. Some of these traditions will be briefly presented for the purpose of comparison with Iranian cosmogonies.

There is little doubt as to the great impact of Plato's *Timaios* on cosmogonic thought and terminology of later periods. Although not presented in the most lucid and coherent fashion, the creation of the universe in its first stage (treated essentially in 28a—34c) presents a set of higher entities whose appearance can be seen as successive. On account of its influence on Hellenistic thought, the essential points of the emergence of primordial divine entities will be briefly stated. The universe has a Creator (ποιήτης), also denoted δημιουργός "Artisan," and a Father (πατήρ). This supreme being who is also called God (ὁ θεός) has looked at an eternal model (παράδειγμα αἰδίου) when fashioning an image (εἰχών) of it. Having put the Mind (νοῦς) in the Soul (ψυχή) and then the soul into the Body (σῶμα) of this primordial image he fashioned forth (συντεταίνατο) the universe. The universe came into existence as a living being with a mind and soul through the providence of God (ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ πρόνοια). God shaped the Body of the world by first taking Fire and Earth, then also Water and Air. The world was created in the most perfect form being spherical (σφαιροειδής) and circular (κυκλοτερής). Although not explicitly arranged by Plato as a series of manifestations there appears nevertheless the idea of a successive creation or emergence of higher primordial entities: the Supreme Being and the Eternal Model of the Universe sets the cosmogonic process in motion through Divine Providence, first with cosmic Mind, then follows cosmic Soul, cosmic Body and finally Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

The ideas contained in Plato's *Timaios* were transmitted and re-interpreted in the Middle and Neo Platonic schools, but also influenced

the cosmogonic thinking of many other religious movements. The encounter with different religions in the Greco-Roman world also helped to produce new forms of creation myths. The cosmogonic thought of Plotinus is characterized by the idea of emanation.³¹ From The One, the Mind manifests itself as the first thinking and acting entity by a sort of overflowing of the divine essence. Out of the Mind, the Soul appears and in it the Logos emerges as the Power which can develop into images and forms and so the world comes into being as a dwelling-place for the Soul.

In the *Poimandres*, which represents the type of Hellenistic mysticism linked to Hermes Trismegistos, the god reveals the cosmogonic process to the mystic in a vision: first there is Light, but Darkness emerges below and is then transformed into Watery Nature. Out of the Light, a Holy Word (ἅγιος λόγος) appears and out of Watery Nature there emerge Fire and Air, but Water and Earth remain behind mixed with one another. The interpretation of the vision states that Light is the Mind (νοῦς), the supreme deity (ὁ θεός), and the Word is his Son. Mind also brought forth (ἀπεκύησε) the second Mind, the Demiurge. The Demiurge fashioned forth (ἔδημιούργησε) the seven governors. It is also said that the elements of nature (στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως) came into being by an act of imitation of the beautiful, archetypal cosmos through the Will of God (βουλή θεοῦ) who received into herself the Logos.

For Philo of Alexandria, God is intimately bound up with his mode of appearance in the world which takes the form of successive emanations of divine entities beginning with the Logos, followed by a first pair of Powers (δυνάμεις) and then a second pair. This can be seen from several passages, e.g. in his allegoric interpretation of Exodus 25:22. There is thus a hierarchy of five higher entities who emanated in a descending scale from the supreme deity, the absolute being (ὁ ὄν).

In gnostic circles we meet with many variants of cosmogonic thought, but most of them are characterized by the teaching of successive emanations that also imply a gradual alienation from the supreme divinity. Hellenistic in origin, the idea of self-generating divine principles expressed with a particular vocabulary (αὐτογέννητος, αὐτοπάτωρ, αὐτογόνως etc.) also enjoyed a wide popularity among the Gnostics of the 2nd and 3rd centuries.³²

The Secret Book according to John (Apocryphon of John), which in its basic form dates to the early 2nd century B.C.E.³³, offers an emanation-system of higher primordial entities that has been considered the classic Gnostic system. It has also been summarized by Ireneus

³¹ This is emphasized by Ludin Jansen 1985:179.

³² On these self-generating principles, see Whittaker 1980.

³³ Cf. Tardieu 1984.

(I, 29,1-2). The true God, the Father of all, invisible Spirit, forms the monad. His realm consists of uncontaminated immeasurable light. From the source of the Spirit-Father the living waters of light come forth. The Spirit-Father looks at them and understands that it is his own image which he beholds in the shining waters. And the notion he had of himself produced something which appeared in his presence in the brilliance of its light. She is Barbelo, Perfect Power, Pronoia ("forethought") and Virgin Spirit. Barbelo made a request of the Spirit-Father that it be given Prognosis ("prior acquaintance"). The Spirit-Father consented and Prognosis became manifest. Again Barbelo made a request that it be given Incorruptibility which then became manifest. Similarly Barbelo requests Eternal Life which becomes manifest, then Truth. Barbelo and the other four manifestations are called the five eons of the Father. It is not stated, however, in which way and from whom the four eons requested by Barbelo appear. Probably they owe their origin to the Father as the expressions "eons of the Father" suggest. The Father consents and then the entity merely appears. The series of entities brought into being by the requests of Barbelo do not appear one out of the other. There is only a succession in the order of their appearance. Then a new process of emanation starts and an entity called the Son and the Monogenes comes into being. He is begotten from Barbelo in the way that the Spirit-Father looks at her and being surrounded by his light, she conceives the Son. He in turn makes a request that it be given a coactor and the Spirit-Father consents and the Mind ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) appears. All those mentioned have been produced in silence and by an act of thinking. But the Monogenes wishes to do something "verbally" and so his Will was produced and after the Will the Word came into being. Two additional processes of emanation of entities are then described. Out of the light of the Monogenes and out of Incorruptibility, four Luminaries appear, and, secondly, from Prognosis, Mind, the Desire of the invisible Spirit and the Son, the Perfect Man is brought forth. This intricate system of divine manifestations does not constitute one chain of emanations without interruption, but includes four different series which nevertheless are chronologically related to each other.

Conclusions

The study of such cosmogonic series needs to be made on the basis of more extensive materials from the Hellenistic-Roman religions. Further analysis of relevant passages in the Pahlavi texts is required for comparison with the Iranian tradition. The main intention of the preliminary comparison made here is to stimulate further discussion on this particular topic. We observe interesting concordances in thought and terminology

between the cosmogonic traditions of the Graeco-Roman world on the one hand, and the *Bundahišn* passages on the other. First, there is the existence of a supreme deity from whom series of successive entities come into being mainly through emanation. These entities are mostly abstract notions expressing different aspects of the supreme God. Some of them show closer affinities: the entity of Incorruptibility in the Apocryphon of John corresponds to the Incorruptible Spirit, the *mēnōg abē-wardišnīh*, of *Bundahišn* I, 39. In *Poimandres* the divine principle "Will of God" giving rise to the elements of nature (τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως) comes close in terminology and function to the entity "Perfect Will to create the material world"³⁴ *bowandag kāmāg ī dām gēhān* in the *Bundahišn* (I, 39). The terms frequently found in Hellenistic cosmogonic texts for emanation, in particular ἐφάνη, correspond to the expressions used in the *Bundahišn* passages to denote the same phenomenon: in I, 39 we find *paydāg būd* "became manifest," for the appearance of three entities (see the text above). In the third passage (I, 50), we have *paydāg būd* for the emanation of the "Bountifulness of the Creator" out of "True Speech," and for the other two emanations the expression *frāz būd* "was brought forth" is used.

The problem of influence is not easily solved; some suggestions will be made here. In Iranian tradition the tendency to form abstract notions "to play the part of divine entities" as formulated by Shaul Shaked³⁴, is present already in the Gāthās and continues to be very prominent in the Iranian religion of subsequent periods. On this particular point there is no reason to assume Hellenistic influence, but the idea of emanation of higher entities whose successive appearance is arranged in series may have come to Zoroastrian priests through contacts with the Hellenistic-Roman world. If the *Bundahišn*-passages discussed here originated in the Sasanian period, cultural influences from Late Antiquity are quite plausible.³⁵ The encounter of Zoroastrians with Hellenistic and Gnostic cosmogonic traditions may well have inspired or promoted theological reflections on their own inherited creation myth. The *Bundahišn* passages on successive creations and emanations of divine entities seem to be one expression of that cultural and religious encounter.

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³⁴ Shaked 1994: 9.

³⁵ This is emphasized by Shaked 1987 as well as by Gignoux 1987 and 1992.

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