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A. V. Lebedev
(RAS Institute of philosophy)

**DEMOCRITUS ON IRANIAN MAGI AND ANCIENT RELIGION:
a quotation from *Avesta* (Yt.1.7) in Democritus fragment 580
Luria (= B 30 DK)**

In this paper a new reconstruction of the text and interpretation of the fragment 580 Luria / B 30 DK is proposed. The author refutes the widespread opinion going back to Reinhardt (1912), according to which the fragment speaks of ancient sages, and argues that those who pray in the open air and call 'Zeus' air, are Iranian magi performing a Zoroastrian ritual. The fragment comes from the 'Small Diakosmos' of Democritus, which expounded the history of civilization and the origin of religion. For the reconstruction of the ancient phase of religion, Democritus uses the principle "as among barbarians now, so among the Greeks in ancient times", which was widespread in the epoch of Sophists. The worship of the elements, preserved by the Persians, the absence of temples and statues, is a relic of the ancient phase of religion, which was replaced in Greece by the worship of anthropomorphic gods, a religion of "fools".

Key words: ancient philosophy, Presocratics, Democritus, Derveni papyrus, Herodotus, atomism, Avesta, Persian magi, Zoroastrianism, origin of religion.

A. В. Лебедев
(Институт философии РАН)

**Демокрит об иранских магах и религии древних:
цитата из «Авесты» (Яшт I, 7) в фр. 580 Luria (= B 30 DK)**

В работе предлагается новая реконструкция текста и интерпретация фрагмента. Опровергается восходящая к Райнхардту (1912) точка зрения, согласно которой в нем говорится о древних мудрецах, и доказывается, что молящиеся под открытым небом и называющие «Зевсом» воздух — иранские маги, совершающие зороастрийский обряд. Фрагмент происходит из «Малого мироустройства» Демокрита, в котором излагалась история цивилизации и происхождение религии. Демокрит использует для реконструкции древней фазы религии распространенный в эпоху софистики принцип «как у варваров сейчас, так у нас в старину». Сохранившееся у персов почитание стихий, отсутствие храмов и статуй, является пережитком древней фазы религии, на смену которой у греков пришла «глупая» вера в антропоморфных богов.

Ключевые слова: античная философия, ранняя греческая философия, атомистика, Демокрит, Папирус из Девени, Геродот, зороастризм, персидские маги, Авеста, происхождение религии.

The fragment of Democritus 580 Luria (= B 30 DK) is quoted twice by Clement of Alexandria, the first time in *Protrepticus* (henceforward “P version”), the second time in *Stromata* Book V (henceforward “S version”).

(P) Clem. Alex., *Protrept.* 68 (Bd. I, 52, 16–20 St.) ὅθεν οὐκ ἀπεικότως ὁ Δημόκριτος “τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγους” φησιν “ἀνατείναντας τὰς χεῖρας ἐνταῦθα ὃν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν οἱ Ἕλληνες, πάντα Δία μυθεῖσθαι καὶ πάντα οὗτος οἶδεν καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται καὶ βασιλεὺς οὗτος τῶν πάντων”¹.

(S) Clem. Alex., *Strom.* V, 102 (Bd. II, 394, 21–25 St.), Ἦδη δὲ ὡς εἶπεῖν ὑπ’ αὐγὰς Δημόκριτος εἶναί τινας ὀλίγους γράφει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἳ δὴ ἀνατείναντες τὰς χεῖρας ἐνταῦθα ὃν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν οἱ Ἕλληνες, πάντα Ζεὺς μυθέεται, καὶ πάνθ’ οὗτος οἶδεν καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται καὶ βασιλεὺς οὗτος τῶν πάντων.

The edition of Diels-Kranz prints as fragment 68 B 30 the following reconstruction of the Greek text of Democritus with a German translation, based on these two versions, restoring the *oratio recta* of the original instead of the *oratio obliqua* of Clement’s quotes that depends on φησίν and γράφει:

τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγοι ἀνατείναντες τὰς χεῖρας ἐνταῦθα, ὃν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν οἱ Ἕλληνες “πάντα, <εἶπαν>, Ζεὺς μυθέεται καὶ πάνθ’ οὗτος οἶδεν καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται καὶ βασιλεὺς οὗτος τῶν πάντων”. “Von den denkenden Menschen erhoben wenige ihre Hände zu dem Orte, den wir Hellenen jetzt Luft nennen, und sprachen dabei: Alles beredet Zeus mit sich (?) und alles weiss und gibt und nimmt er und König ist er über alles insgesamt”.

The insertion of aorist εἶπαν belongs to Reinhardt (1912) and was accepted by Kranz in the 5th edition of DK (1935, the 4th edition of Diels 1922 has φασίν), it is based on the (incorrect) assumption that Democritus refers to the ancient sages. The unusual translation of λογίων as ‘denkenden’ is also based on Reinhardt’s (another incorrect) assumption that these ancient sages in their new monotheistic theology allegedly rose above the ignorant crowd (this is essentially a repetition of Clement’s Christian interpretation). In the edition of Luria (1970), the Greek text follows DK exactly, but the translation is different: “Some of the wisecracks stretching out their hands to this place that we, the Greeks, now call the air, said: “Zeus gives a name to everything, and he knows everything, and

¹ We remove from Stählin’s text of *Protrepticus* three mistaken alterations by Wilamowitz that have been rightly rejected already by Diels in early editions and Kranz in DK.

gives, and takes, and he is the king of everything.” Justifiably criticizing in the commentary to fr.580 Reinhardt’s thesis that Democritus allegedly considered the invention of religion by the ancient sages a high cultural achievement, Luria, however, goes to the other extreme, interpreting the text in a straightforward “atheistic” way and understanding λόγιοι as an ironic mockery of the first theologians (hence *γμηικυ* ‘wiseacres’).

The attempt by Diels and Luria² to find irony in the word λογίων is unconvincing: looking at dozens and dozens of examples of the use of this word in TLG-online, you cannot find a single instance that provides a parallel to such hypothesized meaning: λόγιοι always has a positive connotation of respect, indicating extraordinary knowledge or high authority, and often is employed as a synonym for “wise” in a standard collocation οἱ σοφοὶ καὶ λογίοι “wise and learned”³. It is in such a positive sense that the set phrase λογίων ἀνθρώπων is used by Democritus himself in a genuine autobiographic fragment XIV L./B 299 καὶ λογίων ἀνθρώπων πλείστων ἐπήκουσα “and I have listened to the greatest number of learned men”. The style of this fragment is typical for the Ionian scientific (in this case ethnographic) prose, the style of empirical, objective and impartial “inquiry” (ἱστορίη)⁴. It describes in detail a religious ritual, apparently regularly performed at the present time, not in the past. First comes the indication of place: the ritual is performed in the open air (ὕπ’ αὐγᾶς), then follows the description of the prayer pose (hands lifted up), and then a precise quotation of the words of the prayer or hymn with cult *epikleseis* or sacred names of the supreme god. The “learned men” here are obviously priests of a certain cult: the word λόγιοι was often applied to priests and diviners (*manteis*) as religious experts and carriers of traditional

² For Diels the object of irony was Diogenes of Apollonia, for Luria ancient theologians who invented religion and god.

³ Plut. *De primo frig.* 955B τοὺς οὖν πάλαι σοφοὺς καὶ λογίους ἄμικτα θέσθαι τὰ ἐπίγεια καὶ τὰ οὐράνια χρῆ νομίζειν κτλ. Aristides, *Apol. Fragmenta*, cap.12,9-13, section 5 οἱ σοφοὶ καὶ λογίοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων; Schol. Pind. In O 5, 37a εὐδαιμονήσαντες δὲ καὶ σοφοὶ καὶ λογίοι τοῖς πολίταις ἔδοξαν εἶναι; Schol. Aristoph. *In Nubes*, 94b ψυχῶν σοφῶν ἦτοι ἀνδρῶν σοφῶν καὶ λογίων, etc.

⁴ The monograph of Aristid Dovatour “The scientific and narrative style of Herodotus” (1958) remains an exemplary study not only of language and style, but also of social functioning of texts, of readers’ audience etc., i. e. approaches that are currently important, cf. e. g. Harris 2018: 79–113; Luraghi 2007, etc.

knowledge⁵. The words “we, the Greeks call” imply a contrast or distinction between the designation of atmosphere in the Greek language of Democritus’ time (νῦν), and in the language of the “learned men”. Which means that the language of the learned men is not Greek. Priests that do not speak Greek, are barbarian priests. In Greek texts that address the topic of the “wisdom” of barbarians, Egyptian priests, Persian *magoi* and “Chaldeans” of Babylon (Zoroaster) are mentioned primarily and most often, followed by Indian *gymnosophistai*, Celtic druids and others. In the early Greek tradition on Persian magi⁶, the peculiar and amazing to Greeks feature of their religious worship, is that they have no temples and altars, and that they pray and sacrifice in the open air. Another amazing feature of their religious faith and customs from the Greek point of view is that they have no statues and do not conceive the gods as having a human shape (ἀνθρωποφυέας), instead they worship the elements such as fire, water and winds, and “call ‘Zeus’ the whole circle of heaven” (κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Δία καλέοντες, Herodot. I, 131)⁷. Therefore, it seems virtually certain that the “learned men” in Democritus’ fragment 580Luria/B30DK are genuine Iranian *magoi* performing the same Zoroastrian sacrificial ritual that Herodotus describes in detail in the first book of History (Herod. I, 131–132). But unlike the ‘pious’ Herodotus, who is wary of quoting sacred texts (ἱεροὺς λόγους), either Greek and barbarian, Democritus not only describes the *dromena*, but also quotes precisely the *legomena*. ‘Zeus’, implored by the “learned men”, is no other than ‘Implorable’ Ahura Mazda (‘Wise Lord’), whereas the words of glorification in their prayer find exact matches in the *Avesta*, namely in *Yasht* 1, which contains a list of “20 names” of the supreme god.

⁵ Λόγιοι of priests: Brahmanes: Ael. *De nat. anim.* 16.20; Egyptian priests: Herod.2.3; Phil Iud. *De vita Mosis*, 1.23; Ael. Arist., *In Sarap.*51.8; Tyrrhenian diviners: Plut., *Sulla* 7.3; Greek diviners: Dionys.Geogr., *Per.Bosp.navig.* 24.

⁶ On Iranian magi and Zoroaster in early Greek philosophy see: Kingsley 1995; De Jong 1997; Vasunia 2007; Tuplin 2007; Horkey 2009.

⁷ Herodot. I.131 Πέρσας δὲ οἶδα νόμοισι τοιοῖσδε χρεωμένους. ἀγάλματα μὲν καὶ νηοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς οὐκ ἐν νόμῳ ποιευμένους ἰδρῦεσθαι... ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυέας ἐνόμισαν τοὺς θεοὺς κατὰ περ οἱ Ἕλληνες εἶναι. Οἱ δὲ νομίζουσι Διὶ μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλότατα τῶν ὀρέων ἀναβαίνοντες θυσίας ἔρδειν, τὸν κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Δία καλέοντες.

Ohrmazd Yašt, 7–8⁸

Democritus fr. 580 Luria / B30 DK

Thus said Ahura Mazda: “O pious Zaraθuštra,	Ζεύς μυθέεται
I am by name, ‘He who is to be implored’,	
second, ‘Shepherd’,	
third, ‘Able (?)’,	
fourth, ‘(O) Best Truth’,	πάντα μυθέεται
fifth, ‘(O you who are) Every Good Thing Created’	
by Mazda having its seed in Truth’,	
sixth, that I am ‘Intelligence’,	πάνθ’ οὔτος οἶδεν
seventh, ‘Intelligent’,	
eighth, that I am ‘Insight’,	
ninth, ‘Insightful’,	
tenth, that I am, ‘Beneficence’,	καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται
eleventh, ‘Beneficent’,	
twelfth, ‘Lord’,	βασιλεὺς τῶν πάντων
thirteenth, ‘Most Powerful’	
.....	
Seventeenth, ‘All seeing (?)’	πάνθ’ οὔτος οἶδεν

All *epikleseis* (invocations) of ‘Zeus’ in the prayer of ‘learned men’ have a match in the list of names of Ahura Mazda in *Yasht* 1 of the *Avesta*, and are listed in the same order. Democritus quotes *Avesta* in an abbreviated translation. We have no evidence on the

⁸ The text of *Yasht* 1 is that of Geldner 1896 61–62 as transcribed by Panaiono 2002: 25–26. The English translation is also by Panaiono.

Avest., Yt, 1, 7

<i>āaṭ mraoṭ ahurō mazdā:</i>	Thus said Ahura Mazda: “O pious Zaraθuštra’
<i>fraxštiiia nqma ahmi ašāum zaraθuštra</i>	
<i>bitiiō vaθβiiiō</i>	I am by name ‘He who is to be implored’,
<i>θritiiō auua.tamiiiō</i>	second, ‘Shepherd’,
<i>tūiriia aša vahišta</i>	third, ‘Able’ (?),
<i>puxḍa vīspa vohu</i>	fourth, ‘(O) Best Truth’,
Created	fifth, ‘(O you who are) Every Good Thing
<i>mazdadāta ašaciθra</i>	by Mazda having its seed in Truth’,
<i>xštuuō yaṭ ahmi xratuš</i>	sixth, that I am, ‘Intelligence’,
<i>haptaθō xratumā</i>	seventh, ‘Intelligent’,
<i>aštāmō yaṭ ahmi cistiš</i>	eight, that I am, ‘Insight’
<i>nāumō cistiuuā</i>	ninth, ‘Insightful’,
<i>Avest.</i> , Yt, 1, 8	
<i>dasāmō yaṭ ahmi spānō</i>	tenth, that I am, ‘Beneficence’
<i>aēuuaṇdasō spanaṇuhā</i>	eleventh, ‘Beneficent’,
<i>duuadasō ahurō</i>	twelfth, ‘Lord’,
<i>θridasō sēuuištō</i>	thirteenth, ‘Most Powerful’,
.....
<i>haptadasa vīspa.hiṣas</i>	seventeenth All-Seeing (?)”

existence of Greek translations of the Persian *Avesta* in the second half of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4th. centuries B.C. It seems, therefore, more likely that Democritus employs his own translation of the prayer that he recorded on one of his “exploration” trips (ιστορέων fr. XIV/B299) to Persia or on the territory of Achaemenid Asia Minor. Until now, one could assume Democritus’ knowledge of ancient Egyptian and Middle Eastern languages⁹. The catalog of his writings contains a treatise on the Babylonian *grammata*; certain ancient critics of Democritus accused him of translating the sayings of Ahikar into Greek and inserting them in his own ethical writings¹⁰. Now with even greater reason we can assume that Democritus knew the ancient Persian and Avestan language.

In the genuine autobiographic fragment quoted by Clement (the authenticity of which was wrongly denied by Diels) Democritus tells the story himself.

Clem. *Strom.* I, 15, 69 = B299 DK = XIV Luria ναὶ μὴν καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ [*scil.* γράφει], ἧ̃ι σεμνυνόμενός φησὶν ποῦ ἐπὶ πολυμαθίαι “ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν κατ’ ἐμαυτὸν ἀνθρώπων γῆν πλεῖστην ἐπεπλανησάμην ἱστορέων τὰ μήκιστα καὶ ἀέρας τε καὶ γέας πλείστας εἶδον καὶ λογίων ἀνθρώπων πλείστων ἐπήκουσα καὶ γραμμεῶν συνθέσιος μετὰ ἀποδείξεως οὐδεὶς κώ με παρήλλαξεν οὐδ’ οἱ Αἰγυπτίων καλεόμενοι Ἄρπεδονάπται· σὺν τοῖς δ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἐπ’ ἔτεα ὀκτώ κοτε ἐπὶ ξείνης ἐγενήθην”. ἐπῆλθε γὰρ Βαβυλῶνά τε καὶ Περσίδα καὶ Αἴγυπτον τοῖς τε Αἰγυπτίοις καὶ τοῖς μάγοις καὶ ἱερεῦσι μαθητεύων. “Moreover, he writes about himself [*scil.* that he learnt from barbarians] in a passage in which he is boasting of his much learning: ‘Of all my contemporaries I have travelled on earth more than anyone else, while conducting research in most distant places, and I have seen more climates and lands [than anyone], and I have listened [or learned] from most learned men, and no one has surpassed me in the art of the composition of lines and demonstration, nor even the Egyptian arpentators, as they are called. Together with them, all in all, I have stayed abroad for eight years or so”¹¹.

⁹ See biographical testimonia XIV–XXII Luria.

¹⁰ D. L. 9. 49 = test. CXV L.; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* I.15.69 = test. XIV L.

¹¹ For a persuasive defense of authenticity of fr. B299 DK (= test. XIV Luria) with comprehensive refutation of all Diels’s reasons for regarding it as spurious see Luria’s commentary to test. XIV, p. 389–391 (= pp. 911–916 of the Italian 2007 translation). We only disagree with the unnecessary change of ἀέρας to ἀνέρας: the words ἀέρας καὶ γέας echo Hippocrates’

The concluding remark of Clement (ἐπήλθε ... μαθητεύων) should be taken not as reference to some other evidence or some other sources, but as an explicative commentary (γάρ!) to the fragment he just quoted. Clement quotes *verbatim* only the introduction to Democritus' description of his travels, and adds a summary of what Democritus narrated in detail after this proem with a list of countries Democritus mentioned himself.

The ancient biographical evidence on Democritus' connections with Iranian magi is full of unusual details and peculiar circumstances. We hear not only about his trips to Persia, but also about "family tradition" that connects him with magi straight from his childhood. Allegedly, Xerxes, while passing in the campaign of 480 B.C. the Northern Greece on his way to Athens, stayed in Abdera in the house of Democritus' father who offered him hospitality. In gratitude for this the Persian king sent him magi who became tutors of young Democritus teaching him theology and astronomy¹². There is nothing incredible in the story of Xerxes staying overnight in a house of a rich citizen of Abdera, there may have been magoi in king's retinue as well. Democritus, who was fond of autobiographical notes in his philosophical works, may have mentioned this fact alone, from which a legend of *magoi* as tutors may have been constructed by later biographers. Such family ties of hospitality with the Persian court could provide Democritus with a valuable 'passport' for his research-trips (ἱστορέων, fr.XIV L.) to Persia and a 'recommendation' for Persian *magoi*, as well as a 'transit visa' for traveling to Babylon¹³.

Relying only on the analysis of the text and firmly established facts, we propose the following reading and interpretation of the fragment.

ὑπ' αὐγὰς ... τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ο{λ}ί <μά> γοι ἀνατείναντες τὰς χεῖρας ἐνταῦθα, ὃν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν οἱ Ἕλληνες · πάντα,

Περὶ ἀέρων ὑδάτων τόπων. Democritus means by ἀέρας 'climates'. By claiming that he visited climates no Greek had ever seen, he probably alludes, *inter alia*, to southernmost latitudes like Meroe. The omission of B299 without replying to Luria's objections to Diels in Taylor (1999) and Gemelli (2013) is a regrettable mistake. The fragment 580L./B30 as interpreted in this study provides additional proof of the authenticity of B299.

¹² D. L. 9. 4 = Democr. Test. XI Luria.

¹³ Could Democritus' father and Persian king exchange 'tokens of hospitality'? Could Xerxes give his father a gift with a royal stamp or another proof that it was a royal gift? Any object of this kind, preserved as a family treasure, would open to Democritus all doors in Persia.

<φασίν>, Ζεῦς μυθέεται, καὶ πάνθ' οὔτος οἶδεν καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται καὶ βασιλεὺς οὔτος τῶν πάντων'.

οἱ μάγοι scripsi: ὀλίγοι Clem. | fortasse supplendum οἱ μάγοι <καλεόμενοι> || <φασίν> add. Diels VS4: εἶπαν Reinhardt (1912) 511, acc. DK, fere omnes

“Under the rays of the sun ... the learned men <called> magoi, raising their hands to what we, the Greeks, now call ‘air’, say: «Zeus foretells everything, and he knows everything, and he gives and takes away <everything>, and he is the king of all <beings>».”

We will first discuss the original context and propose a general interpretation of the fragment. After this we will provide a line-by-line commentary to the fragment. In the early editions of *VS* Diels incorrectly considered this text a personal polemic of Democritus with Diogenes from Apollonia (A 8 DK). After the work of Reinhardt (1912), Kranz, Luria and most of the subsequent researchers correctly connected fr. 580 L./B30 (as published in DK) with the Democritus’ theory of the origin of religion¹⁴, at the same time they committed a mistake by identifying the “learned men” with *ancient* sages. The doxographical testimonia on Democritus’ theory at issue fall into two main groups, whose relation has been a subject of controversy. According to the first, ancient humans, amazed and frightened by celestial phenomena (such lightning and thunder, eclipses, phases of the moon etc.), the causes of which they could not understand, attributed them to imaginary beings they called ‘gods’. The second theory explains the origin of the anthropomorphic images of traditional Greek gods, by the atomic ‘ghosts’ (εἶδωλα), that appeared to men in their dreams and in a state of wakefulness. These theories may be contrasted as historical (anthropological) versus psychological, or as a focusing on visible “meteorological” phenomena versus focusing on extrasensory perception. Only the second, but not the first, is inextricably linked with atomism. If the fragment 580L / B30 derives from a context relating to the origin of religion (as we believe it does), it better fits the first, not the second theory; at least, it does not contain any explicit reference or even an allusion to the *eidola* or dreams. However, as we have seen above, the text itself is not a historical narrative, but an anthropological document, and it speaks of Iranian magi contemporary with Democritus, and not of “ancient sages”.

¹⁴ Reinhardt 1912; Diels-Kranz I, 151. *adn.*11; Luria 1970: 556–557; Cole 1967: 202–204; Taylor 1999: 215; Gemelli 2013: 519 ff.; Winiarczyk 2016: 69, n. 98. More skeptical is the position of Henrichs 1975: 103–104 n. 48.

The image of “ancient sages” appeared in the scholarly literature discussing the anthropological (aka meteorological) theory of Democritus for the first time in the article of Carl Reinhardt (1912), it derives from a mistaken interpretation of the phrase λογίων ἀνθρώπων, and the only ‘supporting evidence’ on which it is ‘based’, is the equally mistaken insertion in the text of a verb in historical tense ‘they said’ (εἶπαν), which, in turn, is really based on the same mistaken interpretation of the phrase. The aorist form as such looks suspicious: how could Democritus (a serious scientist) claim that he knew what exactly was once ‘said’ by some unspecified ‘learned men’ in antedeluvian times? How in principle was possible the existence of “learned men” at a time when, according to Democritus, there was no civilization, no writing, no science? In the parallel from Lucretius (V, 1186 ff.), first quoted by Reinhardt and afterwards innumerable times by his followers, a more natural *imperfectum* is used: *perfugium sibi habebant omnia divis tradere*. Lucretius, following Epicurus and Democritus, treats these *ignorant* people with pity and contempt, he does not consider them wise at all. So where is the ‘parallel’? In a similar stance, Prodicus in his theory of the origin of religion and civilization described the life of the primitive men before the invention of *tekhnai* and agriculture as wretched and miserable¹⁵. In the sophistic treatise on the origin of religion, known as Derveni papyrus, which we identify with the *Epochs* (Ἔποραι) of Prodicus of Ceos and date to the decade 430–420 BC, the ritual of Iranian magoi (*PDerv.col.VI*) is presented as a piece of anthropological “evidence” (τεκμήριον)¹⁶,

¹⁵ The verses of Aristophanes *Aves*, 685–687 (= Prodicus fr. 69 Mayhew) contain a parody of the description of miserable condition of primitive men (neglected in DK) in Prodicus’ *Kulturgeschichte Horai*, cf. Mayhew 2011: 171; Lebedev 2019: 519.

¹⁶ On the importance of the underestimated concept of empirical evidence (τεκμήριον) and method of ‘inference from evidence’ (τεκμαίρεσθαι) of early Greek science and medicine see our commentary to the new reading of Alcmaeon fr. B1 in Lebedev 2017₃: 227–229. The Ionian *physikoi* employed this method for the reconstruction of the natural history of the cosmos. The Sophists in their history of culture and civilization (and Democritus in his *Mikros Diakosmos*) have borrowed this method from the Ionian science and employed it for the reconstruction of the previous stages of society, religion and language, looking for archaic ‘survivals’ in barbarian cultures. Aristophanes parodies Prodicus’ use of τεκμαίρεσθαι method for the reconstruction of ancient history in a comic digression on the ‘Persian cock’ in *Aves* 481–492: the upright comb of the Persian cock is a survival and *tekmerion* that proves that he was the first Persian king as

as a survival or a remnant of the ancient religion (after the invention of agriculture) of the ancestors of the Greeks who at that time worshiped the elements and luminaries, rather than the fantastic anthropomorphic images of the gods invented later by the poets¹⁷. The poets (Orpheus) invented not only fantastic images, but also “peculiar” names of the gods (ἴδια ὀνόματα) some of which originally were “common names” with clear simple meaning, like the word ζεύς (zeus) that originally meant ‘air’ and afterwards was misapplied by the ignorant polloi to a fantastic image of a formidable man with a thunderbolt. The “open air” ancient worship of Persian magi proved that in ancient times temples and altars did not exist. In the sophistic history of culture and civilization, which also dealt with the origin of language and religion, for the reconstruction of the “primitive” religion was used contemporary anthropological evidence, the supposed “survivals” of ancient religious ideas and rituals among barbarians according to the principle ἦν δὲ τοιαῦτα τὰ παλαιὰ οἷα περὶ καὶ νῦν ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις “ancients customs (scil. of the Greeks) were like those that exist now among the barbarians”¹⁸, since it was believed that the religion of the barbarians stayed at an earlier stage of development than the Greek and therefore retained archaic elements that have long disappeared from the Greek culture¹⁹.

This method of historical reconstruction of the ancient state of culture and religion from “remnants”, common to Democritus and the Sophists, reveals a striking typological resemblance to the concept of “survivals” in 19th-century anthropology, introduced by Edward Tylor in his *Primitive culture* (1871). Tylor admitted himself that he owed his theory of the origin of religious beliefs

among Persians the right to wear an upright cap is a royal privilege (for details see Lebedev 2019: 577–578).

¹⁷ For a detailed reconstruction of Prodicus’ theory of the origin of religion and language see our study of the Derveni papyrus: Lebedev (2019).

¹⁸ Porphy., *in Iliad*. K 153; Thucyd. I.6.6 πολλὰ δ’ ἂν καὶ ἄλλα τις ἀποδείξειε τὸ παλαιὸν Ἑλληνικὸν ὁμοιότροπα τῷ νῦν βαρβαρικῷ διαιτώμενον; Arist., *Poet.* 1461a 2–3 οἷον τὰ περὶ τῶν ὄπλων, «ἐγχεα δὲ σφιν ὄρθ’ ἐπὶ σαυρωτῆρος»· οὕτω γὰρ τότε ἐνόμιζον, ὥσπερ καὶ νῦν Ἰλλυριοί; Arist. *Polit.* 1257a25 καθάπερ ἔτι πολλὰ ποιεῖ τῶν βαρβαρικῶν ἐθνῶν, κατὰ τὴν ἀλλαγὴν (barter economy is more ancient than monetary, as its survivals among barbarians demonstrate); Diog. Laert. 8.35 ἐπὶ ἓνα οἱ πάλαι τῶν φίλων ἐφοίτων, καθάπερ ἔτι καὶ νῦν οἱ βάρβαροι.

¹⁹ For a detailed reconstruction of Prodicus’ theory of the origin of religion and language see our study of the Derveni papyrus (Lebedev 2019).

from dreams to Democritus²⁰. The common theory of the origin of mythological names of gods, shared by Democritus with Prodicus and the Derveni author (= *Horai* of Prodicus), which explains them as a result of a “language error”, reveals a striking similarity with the theory of myth as a “disease of language” advanced by Max Müller exactly at the same time. The theory of the “disease of language” in Max Müller is, in turn, inextricably linked with the nature-myth school. One may speak not just of ‘similarity’ between the common Sophistic-Democritean theory of mythology on the one hand, and Max Müller’s, on the other, but of their identity: they look like twin brothers. In Prodicus, in the Derveni papyrus and in Democritus, names of the gods were originally simple words denoting natural phenomena whose meaning was later obfuscated due to a ‘language error’ or a ‘disease of language’ as a result of which they were reattached to fantastic images invented by poets²¹. We cannot date Democritus’ fragment under discussion with precision, but it is worth noticing that the date of the Derveni papyrus (430–420 B.C.), established on independent grounds, comes close to the possible time of Democritus’ visit and stay in Athens (late thirties – early twenties). Democritus was a close associate of Protagoras, the teacher of Prodicus. The views of Democritus and Prodicus on the origin of religion are very similar. We have argued for a possible influence of Democritus’ cosmogonic mechanism of ‘squeezing out’ (ἐκθλιψις) of corpuscles, resulting in their ‘popping off’ (θόρνυσθαι), in the cosmogonic passages of the Derveni papyrus (Lebedev 2019: 556–557).

According to a well-argued theory, all later versions of the Greek anthropological and technological history go back to a common source, Democritus (Reinhardt 1912, Cole 1967). We would subscribe to it with some reservations. Democritus may be a very important source of this tradition, but perhaps not the earliest and not the only one. Protagoras was much older than Democritus. Democritus polemicized with Protagoras over his phenomenalism. It

²⁰ The anthropology of Democritus and Tylor is compared by Franek 2013: 66 and Roubekas 2017: 36–37.

²¹ Democritus fr. 508 ὄν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν (scil. Δία). Diogenes of Apollonia A 8, *pace* Diels, depends on Democritus or the Ionian sophists like Prodicus. The myth of the birth of Dionysus in Euripides’ *Bacchae* is based on the confusion of the words ὄμηρος and μέρος αἰθέρος with μηρός. ὄνομα μεταστήσαντες (Eurip. *Bacch.* 296 from Prodicus) can be compared with μεταθέμενος (scil. κοινὰ ἀνόματα) in *Pap. Derv.* col. IV, 5 with comm. in Lebedev 2019: 539 ff.

cannot be assumed that Protagoras' treatises "On the Primeval State" (Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως) and "On the Gods" (Περὶ θεῶν) were written after the Great and Small *Diakosmoi* of Democritus or were inspired by Democritus. The new anthropology of the Sophists and Democritus was a 'child' of the new naturalistic picture of the world, created by the 6th century B.C. scientific revolution in Miletus. The cosmogony of Anaximander ended with zoogony and the origin of man as a biological species. Archelaus in his treatise "On Nature" supplemented the Ionian cosmogony with a history of the origin of civilization and the origin of laws and the state (60 A 1, A 4). A new evolutionary history of the cosmos produced a new history of civilization based on the idea of progress. Once the gods have been eliminated from cosmology, they could not play and role in human history, either. A fragment of Xenophanes proves that the idea of progress unaided by gods goes back to the 6th century²². The Athenian enlightenment of the 5th century may have been preceded by the Ionian enlightenment in the 6th. Anaxagoras and Democritus, as well as Ionian sophists like Protagoras and Prodicus, provided a bridge between the two. The clash between naturalistic evolutionism of the Ionian science and divine creationism of popular religion (creationism in wide sense, including all traditional stories about gods as inventors of various *tekhnai* and benefactors of human race) flared up with renewed vigor in fifth century Athens especially after the *psephisma* of Dioppeithes and religious trials of intellectuals triggered by the plague and calamities of the Peloponnesian war (Rubel 2014: 39–41 plausibly argues for 430 B.C., traditional date 432). In modern Europe after the age of Enlightenment this "ancient quarrel" took again acute form in the 19th century (this time without μώλωπες 'bleeding scars' and death penalties for opponents) due to the explosion of evolutionary theories in biology, cosmology and social sciences. Hence the striking typological similarity (and in some cases, genetic connection) between the anthropology of Sophists and Democritus, on the one hand, and the anthropology of Taylor, or approach to mythology in nature-myth school, on the other. The adherents and the proponents of the new Ionian picture of the world in Athens in the era of Pericles (and later, in the era of the Peloponnesian war)

²² Xenophanes B 18 οὔτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν, / ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον. "It is not true that gods have revealed to mortals everything from the start, but mortals themselves search and find gradually what is better".

were Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Protagoras, Prodicus and the Author of the Derveni Papyrus (Prodicus' *Horai*), and for some time (30-20th or 20th years) Democritus, whose ideas could then become known to the Athenian public. All these thinkers were like-minded, the author of *Dissoi Logoi* combines them all under the general heading of *Anaxagoreioi* and contrasts them with the opponent group of *Pythagoreioi* which no doubt included the Eleatics. The *Pythagoreioi*, like the creationists of the 19th century, denied evolution and counterposed to it the doctrine of the divine *demiourgos*; to the Ionian and sophistic *Kulturgeschichte* and the new anthropology they counterposed the theory of divine benefactions and revelations to human race. Xenophon (*Memorabilia* IV, 3, cf. Lebedev 2019: 579 ff.) ascribes such anti-evolutionist and creationist view of the origin of civilization to Socrates. Plato who always sided with Pythagoreioi, replied to Democritus and Protagoras by reviving the ancient Pythagorean doctrine of creation by divine mind in his *Timaeus*: the philosophical *Gigantomachia* or battle over being described in Plato's *Sophist* continued in the 4th century B. C. and for centuries after until the final victory in late antiquity of the Platonic tradition and the total eclipse of naturalism (together with genuine physical science) for the next 1000 years or so²³.

Reinhardt (1912: 512), attributed the fragment 580L. / D30 to the "Small World-Arrangement" (Μικρὸς Διάκοσμος), Democritus' history of civilization, which stands in the same relation to the "Great World-Arrangement" (Μέγας Διάκοσμος), as the book V of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* to the books I–II. This thesis of Reinhardt is hard to resist, but while accepting it, we will not agree with the attribution of the "Great World-Arrangement" to Leucippus. We agree with Luria, that a "separate tradition" on 'Leucippus' did not exist and that all texts quoted under this name should be ascribed to Democritus. Luria leaves the question of the historical existence of Leucippus open, we follow Epicurus and Hermarchus, who denied the historical existence of Leucippus (D.L.

²³ On the ancient Pythagorean roots of the theological concept of god as 'mind' (νοῦς) see our works on Epicharmus, Lebedev (2017₁) and on Parmenides (Lebedev 2017₂). On divine *demiourgos* in Philolaus and other Pre-Platonic thinkers see our article on idealism Lebedev, 2019₂. The later story of philosophical *Gigantomachia* is masterfully told in the works of Lloyd Gerson. See especially his "Platonism and naturalism" (2020).

10.13)²⁴. According to our hypothesis, “Leucippus” is a fictitious name of an “ancient sage” (a fashionable literary device in the Sophistic age), used as a pseudonym by Democritus, under which his *Megas Diakosmos* circulated in Athens at the time of his visit and later. The end of the 30s – the beginning of the 20s in Athens after the *psephisma* of the diviner Diopieithes (432 B.C.), that outlawed the teaching of the new Ionian astronomy as *asebeia* (denial of *patrioi logoi* about the divinity of heaven), was a time of a “witch hunt”, that is, of prosecution of *Anaxagoreioi*, the first victim of which was Anaxagoras himself. Even the addition of the quasi-divine Mind to the Ionian Vortex in his version of cosmogony did not save Anaxagoras from torture and conviction²⁵. Democritus did not have the protection of Pericles, like Anaxagoras, and in his version of the Vortex cosmogony there was no quasi-divine Nous (reminiscent of Zeus as he “knows everything”, πάντα ἔγνων) that could be cited to judges as a proof that he was not an *atheos*. He was definitely liable to the “charge of impiety” (γραφὴ ἀσεβείας) and faced torture (as alien resident) and death penalty. Therefore, Democritus prudently protected himself from prosecution with a pseudonym. Aristotle and Theophrastus had in their hands an Athenian copy of Democritus *Megas Diakosmos* published under the name of “Leucippus”. But Thrasyllus in his catalogue of the works of Democritus did not doubt the authorship of Democritus, noting that the view of Theophrastus is exceptional (D.L. 9.46). Outside of Athens and in later times *Megas Diakosmos* must have circulated under the real name of Democritus. Epicurus probably brought his copies of Democritus’ works to Athens from Asia Minor, that is why both he and Hermarchus were so sure that “philosopher Leucippus never existed”. In his *Mikros Diakosmos* Democritus expounded his history of civilization, including his theory of the origin of language and religion. The original religion of mankind in this work was presented as a worship of the elements and luminaries with no temples or altars. It is in this context that Democritus cited in support of his theory the anthropological

²⁴ For some additional arguments in support of Epicurus’ evidence see Lebedev 1984: 13–15. Gemelli (2013) rightly eliminates a separate chapter for ‘Leucippus’.

²⁵ According to the new reading by Acosta Mendez of a passage in Philodemus’ *Rhetoric* 4, PHerc. 245, fr. 7 Anaxagoras “after being whipped showed to the judges bleeding scars”, μαστιγωθεὶς μώλωπας ἐπεδείκνυε τοῖς δικασταῖς (DAPR T7 Vassallo). See our commentary on this evidence in Lebedev 2019₁: 561–568.

evidence from the religious practices of barbarians, following the rule “it was in ancient times among the Greeks as it is now among the barbarians”. The case of Zoroastrian *magoi* provided a perfect empirical proof (τεκμήριον) of his thesis. The description of the ritual ‘under the rays of the sun’ with no temple or altar, was followed by an accurate quotation from the *Yasht* 1 of the Iranian Avesta based on Democritus’ own translation from Avestan. The “names” of Ahura Mazda (especially βασιλεύς and πάντα οἶδεν) had unmistakable similarity with the Greek image of Zeus. But these names were applied not to an anthropomorphic divine being. The hands of the *magoi* ‘imploring’ the Persian ‘Zeus’ were stretched not towards a statue, but towards “that place which we, the Greeks, at present call air”. So, the word *zeus* in ancient times meant air, but now (νῦν) it has been reattached to a formidable anthropomorphic being who is in vain feared and implored by the fools (ἄξύνετοι). Democritus speaks with respect about Iranian magi, but one can discern a smile of the “laughing philosopher” over his credulous compatriots.

Commentary to Democritus fr. 580 Luria/B30 DK

ἤδη δὲ ὥς εἰπεῖν ὑπ’ αὐγᾶς εἶναι τινὰς ὀλίγους γράφει] in the *Stromata* version (S) the text of the *Protrepticus* version (P) is preceded by the words ὑπ’ αὐγᾶς ‘under the rays of the sun’. The two quotation have the same reliability status: Clement is one the best sources of verbatim quotations from early Greek philosophers. Therefore, the versions (P) and (S) should be taken as complementary. The words ὥς εἰπεῖν in (S) apparently belong to Clement together with the combination ἤδη δέ. The latter occurs in 62 instances in Clement *teste* TLG, it often introduces an additional point or an example in a series with emphatic meaning²⁶. This fact makes not only redundant, but impossible Münzel’s correction of ἤδη δέ to ἡλίου (ap. DK, adn. ad loc.) But the phrase ὑπ’ αὐγᾶς ‘under the rays of the sun’ occurs in the complete works of Clement elsewhere only two times, one of which is Homeric verse (Strom. 7.4.25.3; Paedag.3.11.63.3). This means that the phrase ὑπ’ αὐγᾶς is not a part of Clement’s regular lexicon, and therefore the chances are that it derives from Democritus. Clement’s ὥς εἰπεῖν ‘so to speak’, according to one possibility, marks a poetic phrase. The vocabulary of the Early Ionian prose and of the Homeric tradition

²⁶ On the emphatic (“reinforcing”) meaning of ἤδη δὲ καί in Aristotle’s *Politics* see the painstaking analysis of Aristid Dovatour (1965: 65 ff.)

have many shared words alien to Attic and *koine*. Even if considered as a paraphrase by Clement rather than a *verbatim* quotation (which is less likely), it still contains a unique and valuable information on Democritus' context: the *logioi* men perform their ritual and invoke Zeus 'under the rains of the sun', i. e. in the open air, and not in a temple or sacred *temenos*. This use of the phrase (not in LSJ) in the sense of 'being uncovered', 'in the open air' should be distinguished from the familiar poetic formula for 'being alive', 'until I see the rays of the sun' etc. (LSJ. s.v.1) that does not fit the context in Democritus²⁷.

The reason Diels did not even consider the possibility of attributing the words ὑπ' αὐγάς to the quotation from Democritus is understandable: Diels regarded the fragment as a polemic of Democritus with Diogenes from Apollonia (which was a mistake), and since Democritus could not say that Diogenes exposed his thesis of the identity of Zeus and air 'under the rays of the sun' Diels disregarded these words as Clement's own worthless addition. This mistake turned into a dogma persisting for more than a century, although the two assumptions of Diels (the polemic with Diogenes and the "ironical" meaning of λόγοι) underlying this error have long been criticized and rejected.

Although the words ὑπ' αὐγάς are read only in (S), in the context of the quote (P) there are indications that they may have been lost in MSS transmission. Right before the quote in the preceding context (P), Clement combines the standard Platonic metaphor of mind as the inner "eye of the soul" and the Christian metaphor of the Logos-Christ as "the inner sun of the soul." If we restore in (P) the words ὑπ' αὐγάς in the same position as in (S), the transition from Clement's context to Democritus's quotation becomes more logical (P): Protr. I, 52,14 St.: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἥλιος ἐπιδείξει ποτ' ἂν τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἀληθῆ, ὁ δὲ λόγος ὁ ὑγιής, ὃς ἐστὶν ἥλιος ψυχῆς, δι' οὗ μόνου ἔνδον ἀνατείλαντος ἐν τῷ βάθει τοῦ νοῦ αὐτῆς **καταυγάζεται** τὸ ὄμμα· ὄθεν οὐκ ἀπεικότως ὁ Δημόκριτος "<ὑπ' αὐγάς> τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγους ..." κτλ. "And the (visible) sun will never show

²⁷ The phrase αὐγαὶ ἡελίοιο or αὐγαί alone can also mean *East*, LSJ, s.v. αὐγή 2. Persian magi could be referred to as the wise men of the East, but the meaning 'in the open air, 'uncovered' is imposed by the association of magi with worship 'in the open air'. In the only another instance of the phrase in Clement (*Paedag.* 3.11.63.3) that condemns cosmetic coloring of hair, he prohibits 'covering' old man's grey hair and admonishes to expose it 'under the rays of the sun': οὐκ ἐπικαλυπτέον, ἀναδεικτέον δὲ ὑπ' αὐγάς κτλ.

the true god, but only the sound Logos, which is the sun of the soul; only when this (= internal) sun rises in the depth of the mind, the eye of the soul is **illuminated-by-rays**, so Democritus aptly said that “**under the rays of the sun** there are few learned men...” etc. Clement turns the anthropological fragment of Democritus into a Christological parable, and the trivial stock phrase ὑπ’ αὐγάς (ἡλίου) ‘under the rays of the sun’ (= in the open air) becomes a symbol of mystical illumination revealing to the ‘few’ pagan sages the true God of Christian monotheism. It is conceivable that by saying ὡς εἰπεῖν ὑπ’ αὐγάς ‘so to speak, under the rays’ Clement points to his own metaphorical reinterpretation of the phrase ‘under the rays’, which in the text of Democritus is employed in the ordinary sense, but the glorification of the one and only god, the giver of all goods, in the prayer of “learned men” (in their *logos*) is still compared with the mystical illumination of the soul by the Christian (‘sound’) Logos.

τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ο {λ} ι <μά> γοι] Clement both times quotes Democritus fr. 580L./B30 in similar contexts: a selection of quotations from Hellenic philosophers and poets who in their search for a true god foreshadowed the one and only creator God and of Logos the Saviour. Both times he quotes Democritus with sympathy, in Protreptic (P) with explicit approval: οὐκ ἀπαικότης is a *litotes* employed for praise. The word ὀλίγοι is read in both versions, the word λόγοι only in (P). This means that Clement used an already corrupted text, so we correct ὀλίγοι to οἱ μάγοι only in our reconstruction of the original text of Democritus, but not in the text of Clement. By ὀλίγοι Clement apparently understood “those few” of the pagans who, in their search for the true god foreshadowed the Christian faith, just as Justin Martyr considered Heraclitus and Socrates to be “Christians before Christ”. Our emendation of ὀλίγοι to οἱ μάγοι is supported by Clement’s context in version (S). In both collections of monotheistic quotes from pagan poets and philosophers, Clement quite probably relied on some pre-existing Hellenic collections of quotes (e.g., Stoic or Platonic) whose purpose was different, i.e. demonstrating that Platonic or Stoic doctrine is supported by a consensus of famous names. Immediately after the quote from Democritus fr. 580L./ B30, Clement refers to the *demiourgos* in Plato’s *Timaeus* and to the eschatology of *Politeia* book X. He identifies the Platonic Er, the son of Armenius, who rose from the dead, with Zoroaster and ‘confirms’ this with a quote from the Pseudo-Zoroaster. (*Strom.* I, 395, 17–24). Thus, in the source of Clement, both the (imaginary)

theology of Democritus in fr. 580L. and the eschatology of Plato's *Republic* may have been presented as doctrines of *Magoi* and Zoroaster, who according to Xanthus of Lydia lived 6000+ years before Xerxes. In post-Hellenistic religious philosophy, the authority of a doctrine depended on its antiquity. It should be emphasized that our interpretation of the Democritus fragment about *logioi* does not depend on the emendation of the word ὀλίγοι into οἱ μάγοι; on the contrary, our emendation follows from our reinterpretation of the whole fragment. This reinterpretation, however, is not conjectural, but is based on evidence: it relies on the commonly neglected part of Democritus' text (ὕπ' αὐγάς), on the use of the phrase λόγοι ἄνθρωποι in Democritus, on the verbal coincidences between the text of the fragment and Yasht 1 of *Avesta* and other considerations in the above analysis.

We cannot exclude the possibility of an alternative explanation: the words ΟΛΙΓΩΝ and ΛΟΓΙΩΝ are anagrams, therefore the word meaning "learned" could be misread as "few", and then, as a result of contamination, the correct and incorrect reading were combined in a strange phrase τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγοι 'few of learned men'. Still, the reading οἱ μάγοι remains preferable and is supported by the 'Zoroastrian' context of Clement's source in (S).

Λόγιοι ἄνθρωποι is a set phrase abundantly illustrated by literary and philosophical texts, including a *verbatim* quotation from Democritus. On the contrary, ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγους or ὀλίγοι is a weird combination (instead of the correct ὀλίγοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων) that never occurs elsewhere in the complete TLG corpus of Greek texts. Even the more normal variant ὀλίγοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων gives only two instances from the authors of the pre-Byzantine time in a complete corpus search in TLG. The reason for this is obvious: standard Greek usage requires ὀλίγοι ἄνθρωποι (innumerable instances!), not ὀλίγοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων. In standard Greek one does not quote 'few people' (ὀλίγους ἀνθρώπους), one quotes 'some people' (ἐνίους or τινάς). Ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγοι is faulty Greek. Neither Democritus, nor any educated classical Greek could ever write or say τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων ὀλίγοι instead of ἐνιοι τῶν λογίων ἀνθρώπων. We conclude that the word ὀλίγοι is undoubtedly a corruption, most probably of οἱ μάγοι, less probably of λόγοι.

ἐνταῦθα, ὃν νῦν ἡέρα καλέομεν οἱ Ἑλληνες] In the fifth century, the identification of the Zeus of the popular religion with air was widespread, mainly among Ionian physiologi and Ionian sophists: Epicharmus B 53, Diogenes of Apollonia A 8, Derveni Papyrus, col. XIX, 2–4 et passim. In Heraclitus and Empedocles,

Zeus is identified not with sublunary air, but with celestial fire or *aither*, whereas air is correlated with Aides. According to the Derveni author (Prodicus' *Horai*), the name of Zeus originally meant 'air' or 'vortex', but subsequently, as a result of a language error or misunderstanding by *hoi polloi*, it was attached to anthropomorphic god portrayed by poets and sculptors. In this connection, Prodicus referred to Persian *magoi* (*PDerv.* Col.VI), and like Democritus regarded their 'open air' worship as a barbarian survival, providing anthropological evidence in support of his theory of original 'natural religion'. We have argued elsewhere that Prodicus may have been familiar with the atomic theory of Democritus and the doctrine of *eidola*. The ancient religion of Persian magi, according to Democritus, preserves the original meaning of the word ZEYΣ among the Greeks: in ancient times it meant 'air' or atmosphere. 'Now we Greeks call' air by another word ἠήρ (ἀήρ). What has been forgotten by the Greeks, is remembered by magi, the guardians of ancient knowledge among the Persians. Imploring the Persian 'Zeus' Ahura Mazda, the *magoi* do not stretch their hands towards an anthropomorphic statue in a temple, but raise in the air. Apart from the lack of temples and altars in Persian religion, the Greeks were particularly amazed by the absence of statues and the ban on depicting God in a human shape. Russell (2001) and Ahmadi (2014) have persuasively demonstrated that the *magoi*, mentioned in column VI of the Derveni Papyrus, are not Greek charlatans, but genuine Iranian *magoi* performing a Zoroastrian ritual. We do not hear in the sources about Prodicus' travels in eastern countries. His lectures were in high demand in various Greek cities, he had no time for such unrewarded trips or for learning Persian language like Democritus. Therefore, he most probably derived his information on Persian magi from literary works of Greeks who either resided or traveled in Persia or Achaemenid Asia Minor. Heraclitus, Xanthus of Lydia and, last but not least, Democritus come into consideration.

πάντα Ζεὺς μυθέεται] The translation and interpretation of μυθέεται have caused headaches for commentators²⁸. Diels-Kranz

²⁸ Gemelli Marciano 2013: 368–369 offers an unfortunate solution of the problem by cutting the quotation from Democritus after μυθεῖσθαι. Even if one retains the *oratio obliqua* Δία μυθεῖσθαι, these words cannot be translated as "Das All mit dem Wort 'Zeus' bezeichnen". The word Ζεὺς (Δία) will still remain the subject of the predicate μυθεῖσθαι, and πάντα will remain a direct object of this verb, i. e. 'Zeus tells everything'. Wilamowitz was trying to achieve something similar by torturing in vain

hesitatingly translate “Zeus beredet mit sich selbst (?)” (DK, II, 151), citing Hom. *Il.* 17. 200. But the verb *μυθέομαι* does not have this meaning without addition of *ποτὶ ὄν θυμόν* ‘to one’s heart’, as has been rightly observed by Luria. Ahura Mazda does not “discuss with himself” anything, he utters the prophetic word of truth. Refuting this mistranslation, Luria moves in the right direction, pointing to the magical character of Zeus’s “words”: he compares it with the biblical cosmogonic word of God (“And God said”) and Homer’s verse about the soothsayer Halitherses, who knows how to “tell what will come true” (*ἐναίσιμα μυθήσασθαι*, *Od.* II, 158): the words of the oracle become deeds (Luria, p. 557 and note 26). Words that come true are words of truth. In Zoroastrianism, the embodiment of truth is the wise Lord Ahura Mazda, and the embodiment of lies is his adversary Ahriman. Democritus’ phrase *πάντα μυθέεται* ‘says all-that-comes true’, adequately conveys the meaning of the fourth name of Ahura Mazda ‘*aša vahišta*’ ‘O Best Truth’ in *Yt.* I, 7, 5.

πάνθ’ οὔτος οἶδεν] ‘and he knows everything’, apparently, a general summary of the meanings of the names 6–7: ‘Intelligence’ (*xratuš*) – ‘Intelligent’ (*xratuma*) and names 8–9 ‘Insight’ (*cistiš*) – ‘Insightful’ (*cistiuuma*). Compare also with the seventeenth name ‘All Seeing’ (*vispa hišas*).

καὶ διδοῖ καὶ ἀφαιρέεται (scil. πάντα)] ‘and he gives and takes everything’ corresponds to the names 10 and 11 ‘Beneficence’ (*spano*) and ‘Beneficent’ (*spananuha*) in the text of *Avesta*. Compare also ‘(O you who are) Every Good Thing Created’ (*vispa vohu*) in the fifth name.

καὶ βασιλεὺς οὔτος τῶν πάντων] ‘and he is the king of all’. Exactly matches the names 12 and 13 ‘Lord’ (*ahuro*) and ‘Most Powerful’ (*seuuišto*).

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the text of *Protrepticus*. The supposed meaning ‘to name, to designate’ of the verb *μυθέομαι* is unattested and unlikely. Therefore, the comparison with Orphic theogony (*ibidem*, p. 519) fails.

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