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LIGHT IS LIFE, DARK IS DEATH: AN ANCIENT GREEK AND INDO-EUROPEAN METAPHOR*

In human language the message is expressed either literally or metaphorically or in both ways. On the plane of literal expression there is usually a simple one-to-one relation between the significiant and the signifier, that is between form and meaning, whereas on the plane of metaphorical expression such a direct relation is not always apparent. While a lexical item tends to have only one meaning in the literal use, in metaphorical uses it exhibits an extension of its basic meaning and crosses over into contiguous semantic areas, frequently into areas with no direct association between the original meaning and the new meaning. However, semantic contiguity is a crucial element in the construction and the workings of metaphor. A special type of metaphor is euphemism, the practice of using extended meanings of words or phrases in order to avoid direct use and mention of socially and culturally undesired or prohibited language. Death is one such semantic field where metaphorical, and in particular euphemistic language is widely applied and attested.

In many ancient Indo-European languages there is a great number of metaphorical and euphemistic expressions referring to the phenomenon of death and dying. Many of these metaphors are the result of tabus, and others have various origins in the different imageries that the Indo-European peoples head built around the idea of death, the concept of afterlife, and related beliefs. Some of these expressions appear late as the result of different influences on the individual languages and cu-

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ltures of the Indo-European continuum, others began with the development of certain philosophical trends, and others must have appeared with the advent of Christianity. While one could argue that many such metaphors belong to the sphere of cultural universals, yet we can still attribute some of them to Indo-European per se.

As a whole, for Indo-European the following major categories of metaphors and euphemisms of death are encountered, with many subcategories, subtypes, and subsidiaries, some of which are very old and important with pan-Indo-European attestation: (a) life as a thread and death as the breaking of the thread (see Giannakis 1998b, 1999), (b) death as removal from light, (c) death as eternal sleep, (d) death as a move to a permanent home, hence the parallelism of the tomb as an inn or a home, (e) the metaphor of the journey or going away (on which see Giannakis 1998a); depending on the concepts and beliefs of the individual group, the destination of the soul of the dead is the sky or some other place. (f) Related to the preceding is the belief in some traditions that the dead has left this world in order to join the «fathers», i.e. the ancestors, seen in Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, and elsewhere. (g) Hittite attests a unique euphemism for dying in the expression «when someone became a god», used for the deceased king. This idea of the apotheosis of the dead king is reflected in the apotheosis of the emperor in the Roman tradition, and, with a variation, in other Indo-European cultures with the concept of the deification of heroes as well as the hero worship. These are only a few—perhaps the major metaphors for death—but the list can easily be enlarged by many more, less known but equally important and interesting expressions, some of proto-Indo-European provenience and relevance, some others characteristic of only a geographical area or a single branch.

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Light in general and sun-light in particular enjoy some of the most prominent and most powerful symbolisms in many cultures. Sun is the heavenly light that man sees from the very beginning, indeed it is the stuff of life, what keeps life on earth, and what dispells all sorts of dangers, threats, fears, and misconceptions. In Indo-European the sun and sun-light occupies prime position, the highest seat in the pantheon and religious imagery, an idea which is reflected in the name of the prime god Zeus (e.g. Gk. Ζεύς, Skt. dyaus, Lat. Iu(p)piter, etc., all from IE *dyeus 'heavenly light, day light'). Many myths and many
types of symbolism are associated with the sun and the heavenly light, many praises have been devoted to this primary natural phenomenon, and its magic and power have been immortalized in literature, art, and philosophy. It is, therefore, understandable to find close associations of light with life and life-source, and its lack with death, absence of life, and misfortune. Life, like truth, shines in the bright sun-light, while the opposite finds expression in darkness, in misty and foggy environments.

«The sun’s light does serve as a diurnal boundary of sorts, but not simply as a divider between day and night without further implication» (Foley 1991: 154). Light is a cosmic power, but also the power of life. «φῶς ist das Tageslicht als die Helligkeit, in der man sich bewegt, in der sich die Welt artikuliert, in der sie übersehbar und verständlich wird, in der die Unterscheidung zwischen hier und dort, zwischen diesem und jenem möglich ist, in der man schreiten und greifen kann» (Bultmann 1948: 13).

The mythopoetic language of the ancient Indo-Europeans has utilized this image of the sun’s light in the best possible way, and the metaphor of light as life and that of death as removal from light is among the most descriptive and most powerful. Thus, this metaphor for death is common and easy to understand: life is conceived as equivalent to light, its opposite, i.e. death, is darkness. To see the light of the sun equals to being alive and is in a way the «metonymic equivalent of life» (Foley 1991: 152), whereas in the Odyssey (11, 93) the blind prophet Teiresias wonders why Odysseus left the sunlight in order to journey to the world of Hades.

The conception of darkness may vary in degree of density or in the specifics of the imagery. Thus, we have the death of a man as deep darkness, or seen as a cloud or mist that casts a veil of darkness over his eyes. This cloud of mist or darkness that envelops the dying man may be seen symbolically in beliefs that Death had his head wrapped

1. In a slightly different image, the interplay between the eyes, seeing, and death (=non-seeing) is attested in many occasions in Greek myth and literature, e.g. in Sophocles’ Ajax, where Athena beclouds the eyes of the hero she wants to destroy. From the Indo-European root *drek- ‘to see’ derive a number of terms that have some associations with death, e.g. Gk. δράκων, OIrish -dris ‘monster’ as in muirdris, etc. The figure of the Gorgon from the Greek tradition is another example in case; the mere sight of the Gorgon was believed to have destructive and petrifying powers.
with a dark cloud, or later images of Death keeping his head covered with a black cloth. In Greek this is referred to as "Αιδος κυνέη 'the dog-skin cover of Hades', which, according to the Shield of Herakles (227), was νυκτός ζώφον αλινών ἔχουσα, and which the Scholia explain as περικεφαλής δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν νέφος ήγουν ἀορασία, that is a cloud making Death «invisible» ¹. This is a point upon which scholars based theories about the etymology of the Greek word "Αιδης, from the root *woid- 'see' with the negative prefix *n-, but this etymology has been successfully refuted by Thieme 1952: 35 ff., who etymologizes the word as a reflex of IE *sm-wid- with literal meaning 'the place of meeting, of getting together'. Tibullus (I, 1, 70) conceived the death-god thus with a wrapping around his head: *tenebris Mors adoperta caput 'death covered by the head with darkness'.

Homer seems to identify the wrapping of darkness about the head of the dead with a μοίρα, namely that of death, as in II. 12. 116ff., μνυμοίρα δυσώνυμος ἀμφεκλύψειν ἐγχεί 'Idomenios 'the ill-named destiny had covered about him with the spear of Idomeneus'. This kind of μοίρα binds the doomed (another interesting linguistic feature of the «language of death» in IE) or covers the eyes, as in II. 5.82ff., τον δὲ κατ’ ἔσσε / ἔλλαβε πορφύρος θάνατος καί μοίρα κραταιή 'and the dark colored death and powerful destiny seized both his eyes'. The examples can be easily multiplied, for instance, II. 16.333ff., 20.476ff., and elsewhere². Let us take one more example from Homer: in Odyssey 20.351-2, Theoklymenos addresses the suitors with the following ominous words:

ά δειλοί, τί κακόν τόδε πάσχετε; νυκτί μέν ἑλύαται κεφαλαὶ τε πρόσωπα τε νέρθε τε γούνα

Poor wretches, what evil has come on you? Your heads and faces and the knees underneath you are shrouded in night and darkness.

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¹ A number of animals, but in particular the dog enjoy special position in the system of symbolism in ancient Indo-European culture in connection to death. A classic example of this is the polycephalous dog - like keeper of the entrance to the underworld, known by the names Κέρβερος in Greece, Sabala and Sygma in India, etc. (see Schlerath 1954).

² The belief that the dead can also cause harm or even death to others who see his face may be reflected in the tabu that requires that the body of the dead, especially the face, be covered; as is known, this is a prevalent idea even today in many cultural traditions.
Here the metaphor of darkness and night for death is clear. Euripides (Phoen. 1453) offers the same picture of death as darkness. As he sees his death approaching, Polyniceus utters his last words to his mother and his sister saying, ἡδὴ γὰρ με περιβάλλει σκότος 'now darkness surrounds me', meaning of course 'I am dying'. This is a common metaphor for describing the very moment of dying. Nothing is more normal for the dying than lose the ability to see the light: he has just gone to the world of darkness.

In Homer alone we find, among others, the following euphemistic and metaphorical expressions associating death with darkness or removal from light:

- darkness covered his eyes (II. 4.461)
- dark night covered his eyes (II. 5.659)
- hated darkness seized him (II. 5.47)
- to leave the light of the sun (II. 18.11)
- the dark cloud of death encompassed them (Od. 4.180).

To kill, therefore, a man was to veil him with black darkness, as in II. 5.659 (and elsewhere), τὸν δὲ κατ’ οφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννή νυξ ἐκάλυψε 'and him dark night covered by his eyes'; II. 6.11, τὸν δὲ σκότος δοσε κάλυψεν 'darkness covered his eyes'; Aesch. Sept. 403, εἰ γὰρ θανόντι νυξ ἐπ’ ὀμμασι πέσοι 'if when I die night falls on my eyes', and we have an equation life = light, death = darkness. We will return to the idea of COVERing with regard to death and dying in Greek and Indo-European a little later.

In many occasions, the dying speaks of the sweetness of life by means of light (sweet life = sweet light), as opposed to the bitterness of darkness (= death), as in Eur. Alc. 722, φίλον τὸ φέγγος τοῦτο τοῦ θεοῦ, φίλον 'dear is this light of the god, dear!'; Iph. Aul. 1218ff., ἡδὴ γὰρ τὸ φῶς ἑκύσσειν 'to see the sweet light'; and a little later (1250ff.), τὸ φῶς τὸς ἀνθρώπων ἔδιστον βλέπειν, τὰ νέφα δὲ οὐδὲν 'this light for men to see is sweetest, but not that of the underworld', and in 1281ff., κούκέτι μοι φῶς/ οὐδ’ ἀκλίου τὸς φέγγος 'Life is no longer mine, nor the dayspring's splendor' [Ch. R. Walker, transl.]; ibid. 1506ff.:
The same is found in epigrams, seen among others in the next epigram:
ούδέν γλυκερώτερον αύγα 'nothing is sweeter than bright light' (Kaibel, Epigr. 560, 7).

One characteristic feature of the world of the dead is the complete lack of any senses by the dead, who cannot enjoy the benefits of nature: οὐτ' αύγης 'Οὐρανίου θεοῦ τέρτον οὐτ' ἀνέμοια 'they did not enjoy the light of the Sun-god nor the winds' (Il. 8.480 - 1; cf. also 555 - 9) 1. The place of Hades lacks the sweet light of life but is replete with «hateful darkness» (στυγερός ... σκότος) of Il. 5. 47, a syntagma that on the semantic level is matched by the similar syntagma from Vedic Sanskrit tamah ... ájustam 'darkness one cannot enjoy, thus, hateful darkness' (RV 7.75.1). Compare also Lukian. dial. mort. 27, 9, ἡδύγαρ ἦν τὸ φῶς, καὶ τὸ τεθνάναι δεινὸν καὶ φευκτὸν 'for the light was sweet, and death terrible and something one should flee from', where there is a virtual identification of light with life, by means of the direct opposition between φῶς and τεθνάναι. Other examples: Soph. El. 1224, 1354 ὁ φιλτατὸν φῶς, like φιλτατὸν ἡμαρ in Philoctetes 530; cf. also the greeting to the morning sun χαίρε φίλον φῶς (Zenob. 6, 42) or χαίρε ψέγγος ἡμιο (Aristoph. Daidalos fr. 9), etc.

In ancient Indo-European languages, there is a close connection between «vision» and «knowledge», an idea best exemplified in the meaning of the IE root *woid— 'know' (e.g. Gk. οἶδα, Skt. sde, Gmc. wissen, Mod. Eng. wisdom, wise, etc.) but also 'see' (as in Gk. Φιλτατον, Lat. vidēre, etc.). However, in a heroic society like the ancient Indo-European society, the qualities of «seeing» and «knowing» acquired added significance, since they are sine qua non qualities for the survival of the hero. Thus, in Il. 16. 645ff. the life of the fighting men depends on light and clear sight, and this is precisely what Aias is asking from Zeus:

1. For a good treatment of αύγη / αύγα and the concept of light and vision in Homer, along with rich bibliography, see Constantinidou 1993.
Zeũ pάτερ, ἀλλὰ σὺ ῥώσαι ὑπ᾽ ἥφας υἱὰς Ἀχαίων, ποτήρων δ᾽ αἴθρην, δός δ᾽ ὑφθαλμοῖν ἰδέσθαι· ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ἀλκεσθεν, ἐπεὶ νῦ τοι εὐκαίν ὁὕτως

Father Zeus, draw free from the mist the sons of the Achaians, make bright the air, and give sight back to our eyes; in shining daylight destroy us, if to destroy us be now your pleasure (Lattimore).

This idea may also provide a partial explanation for the virtual identification of «life with the ability to see the sunlight» in the tautological collocation of «live and see the light» seen in the following instances:

ζώειν καί ὑρον φάος ἥλιοιο (Π. 24. 558)
ζώει καί ὑρον φάος ἥλιοιο (Π. 18. 61, 442; Od. 4. 833, etc.)
ζῶντα καὶ βλάπτοντα (Aesch. Ag. 677)
βλάπτοντα καιροτέντα (Soph. Philoct. 883 and 1349; Aias 962)
κεκ διόν καὶ κτι κρῆ νεροῦ δεξακύκλου (Π. 1. 88, Od. 16. 439)

or the next one (Aesch. Pers. 299ff.):

«ξέρξης μὲν αὐτὸς ζῆ τε καὶ βλάπτει φάος».
«καὶ γοτίς μὲν εἰπας δόμασιν φάος μέγα
καὶ λευκὸν ἥματ ὑπεκτο δὲ μελέλωμι»
—Xerxes himself lives and sees the light
—What you uttered brings a great light into our house,
and bright day after night wrapped in gloom!

All these expressions point to a flexibility in the specific phrasing of this idea, but it is of no religious significance; it is simply a poetic device which has become very popular and very productive due, perhaps, to its descriptive power.

Light is warmth and thus maintains life. The source of light is the sun but also other stars. This may lead to the identification of man’s life with a star, and the lifespan with the period between the rise and the setting of the star, especially the sun’s course in the sky. This metaphor can also be built with other stars and bright objects 1.

1. The light/dark = life/death corelation is cognitively encoded in another metaphor, namely that of «death-as-sleep», where the following associative juxtapositions are observed: to be alive = to see the light = to be awake ~ to be dead = not seeing the light = to be asleep.
which represent warmth, light, and life, as in the following epigram from Plato who addresses his friend Aster (quoted from Alexiou 1974: 187): 1

"Αστήρ πριν μὲν ἐλαμπτει ἐνι ζωοῖς,
νῦν δὲ θανῶν λάμπεις "Εστηρος ἐν φθινόνοις
Before you were shining among the living as a morning [star, but now
that you are dead you are shining among the dead as an eve-
ning star.

It was, then, fitting to set the deceased in the context of ocean and earth, sun and moon, and the seasons (cf. Kaibel 261). For instance, the idea that the souls of the dead go to the moon and remain close to it is a common idea found in a wide area of Eurasian cultures from India westwards. This lunar symbolism in Roman funerary art is seen in the signs of the crescent and the star, and their origin seems to be the Near East (Cumont 1942: 176 - 252). On the linguistic level, besides many other expressions discussed earlier, we can see the astral theory reflected in the following expression from a Latin funerary inscription (CIL vi 29954): sol me rapuit 'the sun snatched me', to which compare also the statement in Hermogenes that Christ’s body was left on the sun.

The verb φωτίζειν in Greek is not simply 'illumine', but 'to fill with light and to bring to light, i.e. make imperishable'. Similarly the nouns φῶς and ζωή, 'light' and 'life' respectively, are often found in combination; they denote the divine power of life. Quintus Smyrnaeus (III. 563 - 64) uses the collocation of three synonymous terms to empha-

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1. Modern Greek provides a strong parallel to this idea, especially in Ritsos’ famous Funeral Lament, e.g. II, 2, where the dead young man is compared to the sun, ἡλιος τῆς βαρβαρωσίας, 'sun in the harsh winter'; in XVII, 1 - 2 this image becomes even stronger, as the death-stricken mother in her despair sees with her son’s death the death of the entire world, even of the sun:

Βασιλέως αστέρι μου, βασιλέω δίη ἡ πλάσι,
και ὁ ἥλιος, κούστρο ὀλύμπιο, τὸ φέγγος τοῦ ἔχει χάσει
Τοῦ sank, my star, the whole world has sunk,
and the sun, like a black ball, has lost its brightness.

Cf. also VI, 16, for the parallelism between life, light and warmth: και τώρα ἄνοιξ·
η εἰσόθαι τὸ φέγγος κ’ ἡ φωτιά μας.

Along similar lines we can see also the statement by Romeo in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (I. ii. 2 - 4):

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon.
size Briseis’ grief over Achilles’ death, «the sacred day», «the light 
of the sun», and «the sweet life»: ...έττει σύ μοι ίερδν ήμαρ/καί φάος 
ήελίοιο ττέλες καί μείλιχος αιών ‘for you were my sacred day [= life], and 
the light of the sun [= life], and sweet life’.

This identification of light with life is carried out also on other 
levels and with other qualifications. Thus, light is seen as the savior 
of the essence of life, as in Π. 17. 615 (and elsewhere: 6. 6, 8. 282, 11. 
797, 16. 39 and 95, 18. 102, 21. 537ff), καί τω μεν φάος ήλιον, ήπων δὲ 
νηλικεις ήμαρ ‘and for him he came as a light of deliverance, and warded 
off the pitiless day of doom’, in Pindar (Ol. 2, 58ff. and 10, 22ff), and 
439 and 1063; Soph. Aias 709ff, Electra 1354ff., and elsewhere).

The equation of life with light and death with darkness is not only 
a Greek feature; it is also found in other Indo-European traditions, 
such as India, Iran, ancient Anatolia, etc. Thus, in the Old Indic texts 
of the Vedas this is a common phenomenon, as in the example from the 
Rig Veda (10. 14. 12cd) τάν ἀςάμβhya μάνις δρσύα λυρίγα / πώναρ δάταμ 
ασύν αδύνα βεδράμ ‘May they restore to us the beautiful life that 
we may see the sun-light’, where the expression ‘to see the light’ = ‘be 
avlive’. As the hymn is a prayer to Υάμα (the keeper of the dead) and 
the context is funerary, the expression ‘to see the light’ may refer to 
the transfer of the deceased to the blissful world of the blessed dead, 
i.e. the πίταρας. This, of course, is a specifically Indic idea, but despite 
different imageries, in a way even here the expression can be said 
to make reference to «being alive», in another world or level of exi­
stance.

Similarly in RV 1. 116.25: pásyann asnuván dírrghán áyuḥ 
‘[May I] enjoying lengthened life, still seeing [enter old age]’, or 
7.66.16: τάκ cáksuh . . . pásyema sarádah sátám jívema sárádáh 
sátám ‘A hundred autumns may we see the bright Eye (viz. the Sun), 
...a hundred autumns may we live!’. But, as Durante also notes 
(1976: 117), the most common and formulaic expression, usually occu­
pying the end of the line, is svár (= suryam) dṛṣe- ‘see the sun’, as 
in RV 1.23.21, whereas the same idea is encapsulated in the compound 
adjective svardrk, which among the other meanings, also means in a 
few cases ‘living’ (i.e., seeing the sun ) with reference to people (see 
also RV 2.24.4, 7.58.2, 7.83.2, 9.76.4). For a discussion of this ad­
jective see Renou 1966: 1 - 2.
In India, this idea is capitalized in the mythologization of the heavenly light in the form of the Dawn (*Usas*, Gk. 'Hēōs, Lat. *aurora*, etc.) with her revitalizing power. Life begins or is reaffirmed by the continuous and secure reappearance of the Dawn. As Gonda (1975: 164) states, «Her daily reappearance means continuation of life». As in Greek, in Vedic too life is identified with the ability to see the sun's light, as in RV 6. 52. 5ab (the relevant phrase is underlined): *visvadānim sumānasah siyāma / pāsyema nu suriyam uccārantam* 'Through all our days may we be of good mind, and look upon the sun when he arises'; RV 4. 25. 4ab: *tāsmā agnīr bhāratāh sārma yamsaj / jiyōk pascāt suriyam uccārantam* «To him shall Agni Bharata give shelter; long shall he look upon the Sun uprising...» (Griffith). Similarly RV 1. 164. 13 and 14. The *Usas* is the messenger of the new day, dispeller of fear and anxiety, bringer of life, again from the Rig Veda 1. 113. 16:

> úd irdhuvam jīvō āsur na ṛgād
> āpa prāgati tāma ā jyōtir eti
> ḍrāṅk pāṇthām yātave suriyāya
> āgamamā yātra pratirānta āyuh

*Rise! the spirit of life has come to us. Darkness has gone far away, light approaches. She has left for the Sun a path to travel. We have come to where men prolong their life-span."

In st. 11 of the same hymn, seeing the bright light of the Dawn equals being alive. Thus, in 11cd: *asmābhīr ū nū prātiçkṣiyābhūt / ō té yanti yē aparīṣu pāsyān* «We, the living, now behold her brightness and they come nigh who shall hereafter see her» (Griffith). However, seen in a more realistic way, every new day brings man closer to his death, and the *Usas* assumes a negative role, the reminding of the withering of life, e.g. RV 1. 92. 10:

> pūnāḥ punar jāyamānasya prārṇī
> samānām varnam abhi sūmbāmānāḥ
> svaghnīva kṛtār vijā śāminānāh
> mārtasyā devī jārayantī āyuh

*Ancient of days, again and again born newly, decking her beauty with the self-same raiment. The Goddess wastes away the life of mortals, like a skilled hunter cutting birds in pieces (Griffith) (or like a skilled player of dice the bad throw - Geldner)."

RV 10. 59. 5:
ásuníte máno asmásu dhāraya
jivātave sú prá tīrā na ṣyuh
[rārandhi nah sūriyasya samdṛṣi]
gṛtēna tvāṃ tanūvam vārdhāyasva

O Asuniti, keep the soul within us, and make the days we have
to live yet longer. Grant that we still may look upon the sunlight:
strengthen thy body with the oil we bring thee (Griffith).

Dawn is invoked to dispell darkness, keep away evils, and renew life;
she is also invoked for continuance of life, as some of the quoted passa-
ges clearly show, as well as for the existence of the family. The very
presence or existence of the Dawn is proof of the maintainance of order
in life and nature, the preservation of the cycles of days, seasons and
years, and of the stability of the universe (see Gonda 1975: 165).

Similar expressions are attested in the Avestan texts: Y. 43. 16
astuuaat aṣaṃ xiiit uṣṭanā aojṇhuvat xanag darsebī ‘May corporeal
truth be available, strong with vitality, in the view of the sun’ (Humbach 1991: 156); Y. 50.2  tờﳚiς aṣa poruṣa huuara pišiasu ‘one who
lives decently with truth among the many who block the sun (light’),
(Humbach ad. loc.), but Durante (1976: 117) interprets it as follows:
«colui che vive rettamente secondo verità tra i molti che vedono il sole
[i pii o semplicemente i viventi?]”. We should note, however, that in
Iran the idea of light has entered the dual ethical system of light vs.
darkness and has acquired religious significance which is not Indo-Eu-
ropean ¹.

Light equals safety and security, and this creates a personified
image of light as something one should respect and fear. This leads
to beliefs that persist even today in many cultures that one does not
do certain things facing the sun, e.g. urinating, as in Hes. W & D 727,
μηδ’ ἀν’ ἥλιον τετραμέμνος ὅρθας ὄμιχετήν ‘one sghould not urinate facing
the sun’. But strangely enough there is no cult of Sun (or Moon) or any

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1. Insler (1975: 304) rejects the interpretation of the passage as meaning
‘among the many seeing the sun’, on linguistic grounds: (i) «the root «to see» in
Iranian is only spas- never *pas-; . . . (ii) hvara is monosyllabic here, whereas hvar/n-
‘sun’ is always disyllabic in the Gathas». He thus associates pisyaŋt- with Vedic
pisunna- ‘liar, betrayer’ and translates «as he lives honestly in harmony with truth
among the many who secretly betray (us?)», whereas Kellens & Pirart, under the
weight of too many obscure lexical items of the hemistich, opt for no solution
stars at all in the Greek tradition; this is common in eastern religions and in Egypt.

In early Greek literature, all descriptions of Hades have one thing in common, namely that the Underworld is portrayed as a sunless kingdom, and Hades as ruling in the windy darkness (ζόφον ἦρφεντα, II. 15. 191); Death is black, the opposite of the sunlight, cf. Hes. W & D 154 - 155: θάνατος δὲ ... ἐλε μέλας, λαμπρὸν δ' ἐλιπον φάος ἡλιον 'black death seized them and they left the shining light of the sun'. Similarly, we find designations like ἀνάλιος σκοτός 'sunless residence' (Eur. Alc. 437), and compare Aesch. Choeph. 51ff.:

ἀνήλιοι βροτοστυγεῖς
dύσφοι καλύπτουσι δῆμους
dεσποτῶν θανάτοις

Darkness, unillumined of the sun and loathed of men, enshrouds the house now that its lord has been done to death (Smyth).

Death is, therefore, darkness and cloud, and associations with δύσφος, γνόφος, ζόφος, νέφος, νήφας, ψέφας, ψέφος are quite regular. All these terms are in essence reduced to one word; the variation of the initial consonant is due to tabus associated with darkness. Similar phenomena are seen in other languages as well, e.g. OHG demar, OS thimm, Skt. tāmas (with initial -t-), but ON dimmr 'dark', AS dim(m), Old Swedish dimbar (*dh-), where the *dh variation is already Indo-European (Havers 1946: 124). Havers also refers to Specht's interpretation of Slavic senu stenu, tenu, all meaning 'shadow', with variation of the initial sounds due to tabu and the association of the words to the soul of the dead. Vermeule (1979: 41) puts it very characteristically in the following manner: «one does not die, one darkens». Along these lines we see the semantic development of the classical Greek verb σκοτώω, 'send to darkness', into Modern Greek σκοτώνω, 'kill'. The metaphor of death / killing as darkness is still alive. The verb σκοτώω forms the semantic antonym to φωτίζω 'bring to light', and as the latter can also refer to the fact of life, it, too, makes such reference to its opposite, death. With both verbs the reference is to light, its presence or absence thereof. Similarly, the verb ἀφανίζω 'make disappear' (lit. 'remove from light'), and the adjective ἀφανῆς 'unseen, disappeared' express the same idea of removal from light as being killed or disappeared. The adjective ἀφανής is also an adjective that qualifies the netherworld: Ταρτάρου
Light is Life, Dark is Death

το θέος... Φανής (Pindar fr. 207), as well as Persephone: ἦ Ἀφανής θεά (Soph. Oed. Col. 1556); also Aesch. Sept. 859 - 60.

One possible reason for the portrayal of death in the Greek tradition as dark and misty is that Hades is a place both distant (ἐς πείρητα γαίης), thus out of sight, hence dark, and deep down under the earth's crust (see also Vermeule 1979: 33).¹ This sets the kingdom of the dead apart from that of the living which is by definition the bright world of the sunlight. Cf. this idea expressed in e.g. Aesch. Pers. 261, καῦντες δ' ἀέλπτως νόστιμον βλέπω φάος "and now, beyond hope, I have come home into the daylight"; Eur. Iph. Aul. 1281 - 2, κοινκέτε μοι φῶς / οὐδέ ἀέλιον τόδε φέγγος ‘No longer for me the day, the bright sun’. The odd interplay between light and darkness as uttered by Aias is reflected in Soph. Aias 394 - 5, ἱώ σκότος, ἐμόν φάος, ἔρεβος ὁ φαεννοτάτον ‘Oh darkness, my light! Oh brightest darkness’! (on which see the interesting analysis by Gasti 1998)².

A similar conception of life as light and death as darkness is seen in Latin literature, although this may be due to a large degree to Greek influence. Thus, we have in Ovid. Trist. 5, 9, 37, dumque - quod o breve sit! - lumen vitale videbo ‘So long as I see the light of life — which may be short’. Cicero (Tusc. 1, 12) expresses the idea of death as darkness: omnis denique miser, qui hac luce careant ‘all indeed are unhappy, who are deprived of this light’ (cf. also Lucretius Rer. Nat. 3, 1011).

As in Homer, in Vergil too the underworld is depicted as a gloomy place (Aen. 6, 268): ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram ‘dark they moved on in desolate night through the gloom’. One should also note here the archaic use of the Latin verb interficio, in connection with the collocation «light-and-life», as in Plaut. Truc. 518, qui me interfecisti paene vita et lumine ‘you who almost put me through (i.e. put me out) from my life and light’.

The metaphor of death as removal from light is quite common in epitaphs. Sometimes complete lack of senses and sensory engagement,

¹. This distant and far-removed spot of the earth, the πείρητα, is to my mind the same as the land of the dead, an idea dealt with elsewhere (Giannakis forthcoming).

². The word ἔρεβος is a designation for the darkness of the underworld; compare also the etymologically related words Vedic rajas ‘darkness’, Goth. rigis ‘id.’, Arm. erek ‘evening’, from *regwos. The Greek and Armenian words show the usual prothetic vowel e- (from an IE laryngeal h₁-, but according to Mayrhofer 1986: 126, n. 115, this is doubtful).
especially of seeing (the light) or hearing, is clear reference to the «com­plete nothingness that death brings» (Lattimore 1962: 162). See the following indicative examples: οὔτε γάρ εἴσοροι λαμπρὸν φῶς οὔτε ἔσα­κωσ 'For neither do I see the bright light, nor do I hear anything' (EG 298, 3, from Teos). In some cases this is simply a euphemism for 'to die' as in Ἦτις έλιπε φῶς έννέα καὶ δέκ' ἐτῶν 'who died (lit. 'left the light') nine and ten years old' (IG 7, 2451, 4, from Thebes), and many others 1.

In an inscription from Chios (EG 231, 3) we find a comparison of life to a torch-race: λαμπάδα γάρ ζωὰς μὲ δραμεῖν μόνον ήθελε δαίμον 'the divinity wished me to run the torch-race alone'. The same is also seen in the following funerary inscription (MAMA I. 88): τὸν καλὸν ἐνθάξε κούρον ἐχει τέλος. 'Ω Φθόνε [νεικάς] ἐξβεσες ἀπομένων λαμβάδα καλλοσύνης 'death keeps here the beautiful young boy. O Jealousy, [you cause a strife] you have extinguished from those who touch a torch of beauty!'. Compare Plato's (Leg. 776b) καθάπερ λαμπάδα τὸν βίον παραδιδόντας άλλοις 'like a torch-race handing life over from the ones to the others'. The image of life as a race seems to be based on an idea similar to that of the thread of life: they both run their course, and when it is over death is in full charge.

Along the lines of these associations an interesting and extremely important feature is the usage of various terms that are based on the IE root *kel- 'cover'. Among such terms we get, especially in Germanic, words denoting hell and related terminology: Go halya, ON hel, OSax. hell, OHG hella, Mod. Germ. Hölle; and cf. also the verb huljan 'hide', and in Go. and OHG helan, ASax. helan, OE heal, Olcel. hel 'goddess of death', MHG holde 'spirit (of the dead)'. In Greek this root gives the verb καλύπτω 'cover, hide', and the name Καλυψώ, the goddess that holds Odysseus prisoner on her island. Another term from Greek is the noun κέλυφος (which shows the normal grade of the root), a noun that refers to a hollow, a sheath, a case, or a shell; also κολές, and with epic lengthening κούλες (*κολείς); cf. further Lat. oculum, oculo, OIr. celid 'conceal, hide', Cymr. celu 'id.', argelu 'id'. The name Καλυψώ is based on an aorist (or desiderative, so Meillet 1919: 384) stem καλυψ-
of the verb καλύπτω. Feminines in -ο in Greek are commonly formed on verbal stems, but very frequently they are formations of a popular type (cf. Chantraine 1979: 115 - 17), e.g. Πειθώ: πείθομαι, Πεφραδώ: πεφραδον, φράξω, Κλωθώ: κλώθω, Κλειώ: κλείω (epic), κλέω (Attic), πευ-θώ: πευθομαι, κερδώ: κέρδος, κερδαίνω, ήχώ: ήχη, ταχή, φειδώ: φειδομαι, etc. (cf. Güntert 1919: 29).

- Güntert (1919) in his detailed study of the etymology, meaning and Indo-European origin of Calypso, despite the many speculative points, concludes that Calypso is a death goddess, and that the myth of Odysseus with the goddess represents a belief with wider Indo-European perspectives. He also offers some parallel expressions from Greek literature which support this thesis. The verb καλύπτω is used in some peculiar collocations expressing the idea of death by means of the metaphor of removal from or lack of light (all examples come from the Iliad):

4. 461, 503, τόν δὲ σκότος οὔσε κάλυψεν 'darkness covered his eyes'
5. 310, ἄμφι δὲ οὔσε κέλαινη νύξ ἐκάλυψεν 'black night covered both eyes'
5. 553, τέλος θανάτου κάλυψεν 'the end of death covered (him)'
13. 580, τόν δὲ κατ' οφθαλμῶν έρεβεννή νύξ ἐκάλυψεν 'black night covered him over the eyes (= 5. 659)
14. 438 - 39, τῶ δὲ οὐσε, νύξ ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα 'dark night covered his two eyes'.
16. 350, θανάτου δὲ μέλαιν νέφος ἀμφεκάλυψεν 'the dark cloud of death covered him over'.

Other collocations of the verb καλύπτω with different nouns denoting the means or place are also found, especially with earth, grave, etc. Such expressions constitute euphemisms of dying, as are the following:

Pind. Nem. 8. 65, ἕγω δὲ ἀστοῖς ἀδῶν καὶ χθονὶ καλύψαιμι 'Being pleasing to my citizens may I cover my limbs with earth (i.e. die)!

Aesch. Prom. 582, τυρί <με> φλέξον ἢ χθονί καλύψον 'burn me with fire or cover me with earth'

Soph. Antig. 28, τάφῳ καλύψαι 'to cover in a grave'


1. For a discussion of τέλος, κόχλος, and other related terms in Indo-European, see Giannakis 1998c.
Such collocations of καλύπτω with γαία, τάφος, χθών, etc. are quite common also later in (funerary) inscriptions. The association with death, dying, and removing from life suggests that there is a special connection also of the goddess Calypso with death.

In post-Homeric literature we find the «rhyming» verb κρύπτω 'hide', used in contexts similar to those of καλύπτω (Güntert 1919: 32 - 33). Support for the synonymous status of the two verbs may come from the following inscription (cf. Kaibel, Epigr. Gr.): Nos. 208, 4 συνυπός ἄμφεκάλυψε 'Ἄιδης 'the gloomy/Hades covered (me) from every side'; No. 497, 5 μοίρα δὲ ἔχε μὲ πέδω Άσκριώ κρύψασα 'Moira holds me having concealed me with a fetter from Ascra'. A third synonym is the verb κεύθω, found mainly in funerary inscriptions. This verb is perhaps etymologically related to such words as Olcel. skauder 'sheath', Go. skauda-raip 'shoe-strap', and cf. also Gk. σκότος 'skin, hide; leather thong' (from IE *squeu-t-/*squeu-dh-), with s-mobile. On the other hand, we have words like OE hydan, Eng. hide, Skt. kuhara 'cavern', just like the Homeric κεύθων (Il. 13. 28), κεύθαν 'innermost part, recess', κεύθας 'a lower part', cf. óπω κεύθεις γαίης (Il. 22. 482, Od. 24. 204), κεύθας νεκρῶν (Soph. Ant. 818), κεύθω 'cover, enclose, hide, conceal', and cf. the gloss in Suidas κεύθηνες 'οἱ καταχθόνιοι. Cf. Chantraine DELG s.v. κεύθω, Mayrhofer KEWA s.v. kuhara-, and Pokorny 1959: 951 ff. Perhaps to the above can be added the name of the islands Κύθηρα (Güntert 1919: 187 - 88). One remarkable phonetic feature of all these terms is that they all contain the vowel U which has been claimed to have special significance for sacred vocabulary (see, among others, Havers 1947, and Specht 1949).

In fact, Güntert (1919: 35) insists that the association of καλύπτω with death and burying the dead (lit. cover the dead) must be the primary meaning in archaic Greek and even Indo-European. Thus, according to him, Hell represents the interior of the earth where
all dead creatures are concealed. This, however, requires inhumation as a burial practice, which is true for Indo-European, although other practices may have been equally used, especially that of cremation. The latter of course, being a much more complex process than inhumation and requiring a certain level of pyrotechnology, seems to have developed later than inhumation, and perhaps in the context of some shift in social and/or religious beliefs. However, based on the available archaeological and linguistic evidence we can certainly say that both inhumation and cremation are very old burial customs of the Indo-Europeans.1

From Latin we have some evidence for similar usages of the verb *condere*, in various collocations with the meaning «to cover the dead with s.th.», as in the following expressions: *reliquias ossaque terra condere; condere corpora defunctorum in lapide sarcophago; in se-pulcro condere; tumulo condere; humo condere*. The participle *conditi* (in the plural) acquires then the «pregnant» meaning «dead», especially in funerary inscriptions. Cf. Arnob. *nat.* 1, 46: *prodire ab aggeribus conditos* (cf. Güntert 1919: 129 - 30).

It is possible to see an etymological (as well as a functional) connection between Greek Καλυψώ and the Thracian god Zalmoxis. Zalmoxis has unmistakable associations with the Underworld, as Herodotus (4, 94) attests: ούτε άποθνήσκειν έωυτούς νομίζουσι ίέναι τε τον άπολλύ-μενον παρά Ζάλμοξιν δαίμονα. οί δέ αύτών τον αύτόν τούτον όνομάζουσι Γεβελείς 'neither do they believe themselves to die, but that the deceased goes to god Zalmoxis. And some of them call this one Gebeleizis'. The name Ζάλμοξις is thus based on the root *kel-* with affrication of the initial *k*. Cf. also Thrac. ζαλμός 'skin, hide; cover', to which Skt. *sarnian-*, and Lith. *šdūmas* 'cover' are cognates.

Güntert (1919: 139) believes that he can identify a figure of Calypso in the Sanskrit word *vaunrā-* 'opening, pit, abyss', from the root *br* 'cover'. The idea of covering, hiding, enclosing, and the like, seems to form a powerful image for the mythopoea of the ancient Indo-Europeans. In ancient India, perhaps the best known myth is the slaying of Vṛtra by Indra. Vṛtra is the serpent that prevents the waters from

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1. There are also other expressions where some other combination is used, as in II. 5. 696, ὁν δ' ἐπι τ ψυχή, κατά δ' ἀφθαλμέν ἄκην' ἄθρω 'the psuche left him, and upon the eyes a mist fell', 5. 47, στυγερός δ' ἔρα μν αὐτος εἴλεν 'hateful darkness seized him', and similar expressions.
flowing, inhibiting thus any kind of growth and creating misery and death. The name Vrtra derives from the root *vr*. And still another term that derives from the same root is *vala* ‘enclosure’ (of the cows that Indra lets free), personified as *Vala* the legendary guardian of cows, whom Indra rent when he robbed Pani of his cows (cf. Macdonnell 1898: 158ff.). Considering the special associations of water with the dead, as well as the special association of the abode of the dead with the pasture of cows, this myth may represent some version of a proto-myth, of which the myth of the Calypso might be still another version.

In RV 10. 18. 11 earth is requested to cover the dead body as a mother wraps her child with her skirt:

\[
\text{uc chva} \text{na} \text{casva prthivi m} \text{\=a ni b} \text{\=adhath} \text{\=a}
\text{s} \text{\=u} \text{\=p} \text{\=r} \text{\=ya} \text{\=n} \text{\=dsmai bh} \text{\=a} \text{\=va s} \text{\=u} \text{\=p} \text{\=ava} \text{\=ncan} \text{\=a}
\text{m} \text{\=a} \text{\=t} \text{\=a} \text{\=putr} \text{\=am y} \text{\=a} \text{\=th} \text{\=a s} \text{\=ic} \text{\=a}
\text{abhy} \text{\=enam bh} \text{\=u} \text{\=ma} \text{\=urnuhi}
\]

Heave thyself, Earth, nor press thee downward heavily: afford him easy access, gently tending him. Cover him, as a mother wraps her skirt about her child, O Earth (Griffith).

However, the image of Earth as mother to whom all living creatures finally return upon death is a universal of human culture, but still presents culture-specific features that are worth investigating, particularly the linguistic expression of this image.

The fascination of the Indo-Europeans with the idea of covering or enclosing is widely attested in the individual branches, with some expected variations, but with the same basic tenet everywhere: the enclosure poses a threat to life, a god or hero will stage a battle, finally breaking the constrictions of the enclosure, setting life in motion again. This is the most fundamental liberating act that a god or hero ever undertook in any such etiological myth, although this could be seen as one of the oldest and perhaps most universal folktales.¹

The picture of the world of the dead that we obtain from ancient India is not quite the same as that of Greece or Rome, where we saw the association of death with darkness. The connection of light with eternal life(=death) is well documented in Indic literature. Here, as in

¹ There is in much of the above statements a heliocentric philosophy, something that becomes more evident later in postclassical Greek and Roman beliefs (see Usener 1948: 186).
other traditions, light symbolizes life, divine power and immortality. But, unlike Greece or Rome, in India the 'place of light' (*svarga loka) is the place of the dead and of continuous bliss, where «the purified sacrificer will, in boneless state, that is after death, go» (Gonda 1966: 81).1 This place of light can be reached only after death, as seen, among other passages, in AV 4. 34. 2:

> anasthah pūtah pavanena suddhāh sucyah sucimiti yanti lokam naism sism prahati jātavedāh svarge lōke bahu strainamesām Boneless, purified, cleansed with the purifier, bright, they go to a bright world; Jatavedas burns not away their virile member; in the heavenly world much women-folk is theirs (Whitney).

However, in some cases there is evidence of the belief that darkness equals death in India too, especially death seen in a negative perspective. This is the case for instance in AV 8. 2. 9 pārāyāmi tvā rā-jasa ut tvā mṛtyor api param 'I pass you across the darkness, I have rescued you from death (lit. passed you across from death)'. The added significance of this passage is the usage (twice) of the verb pr *cross*, which derives from IE *per-*/*por-/*per-, a root that gives other terms relating to death and dying, like Gk. πεπρωμένη, πόρος, πείρας, etc. (see Giannakis 1996: 139ff., and forthcoming). AV 8. 1 and 8. 2 are incantations for exemption from the various dangers of death. In 8. 2. 10 the path of darkness is terrible and leads to danger and destruction, and the bright path is the safe one:

> yāt te niyānam rajasām mṛtyo anavadharsyam patha imam tasmād rāksanto brāhmaṃvai vārma krnmasi Do not follow this path: it is terrible! I speak of that by which thou hast not hitherto gone. Darkness is this, o man, do not enter it! Danger is beyond, security here for thee (Bloomfield).

Also, as Arbmann (1927: 209, n. 1) says, in AV 9. 2. 17 the use of the expression «far from this world» is a synonym of the otherworld, and darkness is still another designation of the world of death:

1. The notion of hell contrasts to this world of light, it is *nāraka loka*, the world below, the abode of the female goblins and sorceresses (cf. AV 2. 14. 3; 5. 19. 3). Alexiou (1974: 241-42, n. 51) mentions the Rumanian lament *Tradatir* (Rose Tree), towards the end of which we find a series of instructions to the dead for his journey to the next world. When the dead comes to a crossroads, the instruction is given: «Be careful which path you take. Do not turn off to the left, for that's the dark road... Turn off to the right, for that's the bright road...».
With the weapon with which the god drove forth the Asuras, with which Indra led the Dasyus to the nethermost darkness, with that do thou, O Kāma, drive forth far away from this world those who are my enemies! (Bloomfield).

In the same hymn, st. 10, the metaphorical expression «blind darkness, i.e. deep darkness» (andhā tamāmsi) is used adding a bit of flavor to the kind of dark place one wants his enemies to be cast into, on which see also SB. 1. 2. 4. 16 «bind him (viz. the enemy) in the blind darkness (andhe tamasi)», when he says «in the most distant end of the earth».

In the same vein, we have the Hittite verb kest-, kist-, gist-, which means 'to be extinguished, die out, perish'. The primary application of the verb, like that of its Greek cognate ἀβεννυμι, is for putting out fire. Since fire was thought to be alive, the metaphorical extension of the use of the verb to apply to the loss of life is easy to understand1. As fire is an important element of family and social life in all societies, we can assume that the association of the notions of life and fire is very old and perhaps cross-cultural. In Indo-European per se we have attestation of this idea in several languages. Besides Greek and Hittite, we have the Gothic cognates qistjan and compounds fra-qistjan and us-qistjan that translate Gk. ἀπολέσαι «destroy», as well as forms of a *fra-qistnan 'ἀπολήται, perish, be destroyed'. In Germanic there is a semantic development into «torment» in addition to «destroy», as in OGHquist 'torment'. The Greek form points to an initial s- in the root *(s)gʷes-, something that is scarcely present in other languages, unless the Greek word is from an original ἐκ-ἀβεννυμι (so Prellwitz s.v.).

Meanings similar to Greek are also seen in Balto-Slavic: Lith. gestu, gesaū, gesti 'to be extinguished, to go out', OCS ugasiti 'extinguish', ugasnoti and ugasati 'to be extinguished' (see Pokorny 1959: 479 - 80). With the Hittite verb, of course, we need to explain the initial k- from *gʷ-. It seems that in Hittite we have the operation of a rule according to which a labiovelar stop becomes delabialized in the

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1. Cf. the expression of Modern English «to kill the fire», i.e. to extinguish the fire.
Light is Life, Dark is Death

The LIGHT/DARK opposition is widely used in Indo-European in an extended way for referring to life and death, respectively. In some branches, particularly in Greek, we observe the virtual identification of light with life and its opposite dark with death. Dunkel (1993) discusses this motif for Greek, Indic, and Hittite. The basic equation is of the type: «seeing/ looking at the sun» = «being/staying alive», and its opposite equates with death. Thus, as we saw earlier, we have in Homer expressions like ζώειν καὶ όραν φάος ἡλίοιο 'to live and see the sun's light' (II, 24. 558; cf. also 18. 61, Od. 4. 540, 833, etc.), δηρὶν ἑτ᾽ ὅρφοι ἀκμηρών φάος ἡλίοιο 'to long see the bright sunlight', or from Aeschylus (Ag. 677) ζώοτα καὶ βλέποντα 'being alive and able to see'.

Indic texts give similar contexts and meanings, e.g. RV 4. 25.4b jyok pasyaṁ suryam uccárantam 'he will long watch the rising sun'; 9. 4. 6b jyok pasyema suryam «may we long watch the sun!». Similarly 10. 37. 7cd, and 8cd².

In Hittite the adverbial that expresses the duration (δηρὶν or jyok) is taken over by the frequentative form uški- 'to watch' of the verb au(-) 'to see', as in KUB XXIV 5 Rs. 7-8 (after Dunkel 1993: 107 - the relevant phrase is underlined):

nu=wa=za apuš da ammuk=ma=wa arha tarni
nu=wa dUTU AN-E IGI.HI.A-it ušgallu
Now take those for yourself, but let me free.
Let me see (durative) the sun of heaven with my eye[s].

We see the same in a prayer of Mursilis, where the idea of staying alive is expressed by the durative form of the verb. The text comes from KBo IV 8 II 10 - 11:

Ti - anz=a§ nu dUTU SAME IGI.HI.A-it uškizzi
She is living. She watches the sun of heaven with her eyes and id. 18 - 19:

1. Melchert (1994: 120) also acknowledges that «the problem of */g/ vs. */gw/ in the PIE root «be extinguished» is quite real, but is not confined to Hittite».

2. The word jyok, from *dyok, is related to dyaus, like Lat. diū, but with many questions on its morphology (see Mayrhofer, KEWA and EWA1 s.v.).
Because she is living, she watches the sun of heaven with her eyes.

The fact that this notion is attested in three different branches, along with the traditional phraseology used, points to Proto-Indo-European age of the concept.

Light is the sacred source of life and warmth; what brings joy, and what uncovers the hidden, the source of truth and knowledge. The sun «sees» everything and everybody; he is the celestial overseer of all. His presence implies life, as he scatters the darkness of death; it also implies truth, as it scatters the clouds of darkness that conceal truth. Those who see the light are alive, and partake of life's joys. To see the light means also to see things as they are, to understand the world, and to experience the physical surroundings. Light and sight go together in the same way that sight and knowledge go together.

In a twisted way, this association is seen on the mythopoetic plane in the myth of Oedipus, as well as in the stories of the blind bards, prophets, seers, and other famous people who lacked physical sight but enjoyed amply spiritual insight and knowledge.

As is also noted by Durante (1976: 116 - 17), the association of life with light, and more specifically the metaphor «see the (sun)light» = «to be alive» is not just a literary doublet for life; it denotes not only a biological condition, but «quella pienezza della vitalità psicofisica che si realizza alla luce del sole». It is, though, a metaphor that is limited to the Greco-Arian and Anatolian area where, with the exception of Iran, it has remained a purely literary (poetic) device expressing the fact of life, and has no religious significance. This idea is encapsulated in the semantic proto-formula with the following abstract structure:

[SEE or WATCH] + [(SUN-)LIGHT]
[durative adv. or frequentative verb].
Conclusion. An important integral part of the poetic language and the language of folk traditions is the ability of poet to use allusion, i.e. various kinds of metaphors in referring to different ideas, events, facts, etc. This allusive language is used in abundance in references to the idea of death and dying. This of course happens for very good reasons: one does not wish to refer directly and explicitly to the event of death, but a conscious effort is being made to use other, indirect and implicit, allusive and descriptive means for expressing this idea.

The study of metaphorical language of ancient Indo-European has the potential of revealing important aspects of the cultural, social, religious, and mythopoetic beliefs of the peoples who spoke these languages. Many of these beliefs undoubtedly are language-specific or later creations, reflecting peculiarities of the different realia in the individual dialects. But there are many others which the comparative study can project back to common proto-types already present in the pre-dialectal period of Proto-Indo-European. It seems that much of what has been discussed in this paper has a common origin, constituting thus a very old layer of metaphors. But at the same time, the local and language-specific flavor is unmistakeably recognizable. What is important for our purposes is the general outlines and the underlying features of the whole scheme which can be reduced to a few such proto-types and from which the peculiarities in the individual branches can be derived or explained.

A word of caution of course is in order here. Cultural reconstruction and reconstruction of institutional life are not quite the same as linguistic reconstruction, although the methodologies are similar. Linguistic reconstruction operates with strict rules and well-defined procedures, but in the case of cultural material such rigidity of detail is impossible. The ideal situation is when the linguistic and the semantically-cultural elements of the comparison in various languages agree. In other words, when we can make exact etymological equations that carry the same or similar semantic load in different languages, then the reconstruction of a proto-model or proto-idea is relatively easy. But very frequently this is not the case. Thus we must allow a greater flexibility in the handling of the data: the basis of the reconstruction can be semantically contiguous items (but with no etymological connection) which in the individual languages express the same basic concept.
Another point that comparatists must develop an attentive ear to is the power of mytho-poesis in creating homophonous or near-homophonous terms for the same idea, or a multitude of synonyms or near-synonyms. Mythopoiesis operates on a level different from that of «pure» etymology. The boundaries between roots, phonemes, morphemes, and things of this order, are greatly blurred; freedom of moving between and across such boundaries is rather expected, if not the rule, in creating new terminology, or contaminating proto-paradigms in building new ones. Mythopoiesis of course is glossopoesis, in the literal sense of the word. The task of the comparative linguist, who studies the mythopoetic language is to investigate means, ways and methodologies in order to understand this operation of human language. Etymology is close to the general orientation of such a task, but it needs to allow more of the «folk etymology stuff» in its operation, in other words etymology must find a way to balance the rigidity of its method that produced extraordinary results, on the one hand, and the flexibility of its rules, on the other, so that more of the cultural aspects of the language enter the game. I think that the model for such work is already well-known to Indo-Europeanists, and this is the achievement of works like Schrader 1917 - 23, 1929, Benveniste 1969, Buck 1949, and now see also Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1994, esp. pp. 377ff., Watkins 1995, and Mallory & Adams 1997.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Light is life, dark is death: an ancient Greek and Indo-European metaphor

Η μελέτη ασχολείται με το γνωστό μοτίβο "φῶς = ζωή" και "σκότος = θάνατος," όπως μαρτυρείται στα κείμενα της αρχαίας ελληνικής και άλλων αρχαίων ινδοευρωπαϊκών γλώσσων. Με βάση τα δεδομένα από πολλές συγγενείς γλώσσες, υποστηρίζεται ότι οι παραπάνω εξισώσεις συνιστούν μια παλαιά παραδοσιακή μεταφορά, η οποία χρησιμοποιείται για να υποδηλώσει της ζωής και του θανάτου αντίστοιχα. Στο πλαίσιο αυτό, εξετάζονται και άλλες συναφείς έννοιες τόσο από ιστορική όσο και από συγκριτική πλευρά.