

The Appearance and the Being

On Pre-philosophical Terminology in Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonic Texts of the New Kingdom

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Abstract—The problem of the Genesis in philosophy is one of the fundamental themes of modern historical-philosophical science. The article deals with the problem of reflection of ontological categories in the cosmogonic sources of the New Kingdom. Based on the analysis of the use of nouns *xprw* (forms of development), (appearances) and *wnnt* (being) demonstrates the nature of the formation of “speculative theology” in the sources of the Theban religious thought of the New Kingdom. The question of the basic characteristics of pre-philosophical categories in their distinction from the traditional myth is also discussed in the article.

Keywords—pre-philosophy; myth; creation; being; speculative theology; ancient Egyptian thought

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the main characteristics of all pre-philosophical categories is their polysemy. Referring to cosmogonic myths, it is the first in the history of human thought regarding the attempt to introduce in its problem field questions of ontology. In ancient Egyptian thought, the most noteworthy solar myth is Heliopolitan, the oldest and most prestigious line of the Egyptian cosmogonic myth [1]. One of the most striking examples of this myth is the monologue of the Sun-God Khepri from the so-called «Book of knowledge of the creations of Re and the overthrow of Apep» ((Pap. Bremner-Rhind (BM 10188)). This text is known for copies of the Ptolemaic era (4th century BC) but clearly refers to a much earlier time, perhaps even to the Old Kingdom (25th-24th centuries BC). It is also an important theoretical source of early Greek philosophy, in particular, the cosmology of Thales of Miletus. Describing the first stages of creation, Khepri says: Ink pw xpr m #pri #pr.i xpr xprw #pr xprw nbw m-xt xpr.i ASa xprw m pr m r.i («I was the one who appeared as Khepri (=Emerging). After I appeared, appeared the forms of development. All forms of development appeared after I appeared. Many forms of development came out of my mouth» [2].

II. FROM ARCHAIC MYTH TO “SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY”

With this early and very naturalistic interpretation of the process of creation, it sharply contrasts the model set out in the sources of the Theban theology of the New

Kingdom era (15th-14th centuries BC). First, we refer to it's two hymns to Amun - the so-called Cairo (Pap. Boulaq 17 = P. Kairo CG 58038) hymn and Leiden (Pap. Leiden I 350) hymn. Their major feature is the rejection of the traditional mythological narrative when referring to the subject of creation. There is no critical relationship to the archaic myth, as in early Greek natural philosophy, but this myth has already become the subject of reflection. However, we see in these texts a much more abstract vocabulary that does not correspond to the traditional criteria of cosmogonic myth. Describing Amun as the Creator, they are not limited to the standard for all traditional myths' ideology about the identity of the nature of the world and the nature of deity. The most important characteristics of Amun as Creator outside the natural world to the intelligible world is that it is also a kind of religious metaphysics in one of the earliest of its historical forms.

If we use the terminology of Greek philosophy, all of the later traditions are already metaphysical. Best of all, it expresses a famous fragment of Leiden hymn dedicated to immanence and transcendence in nature of Amun [3]. The idea of ontological divorce between the Creator and the world is not just one of the many other Egyptian cosmogonic myths. In the Theban «speculative theology», Amun is «the Creator of all that exists» [4]. This formula, of course, includes not only nature, but also intelligible world beyond the human «life time» (aHaw).

The rejection of cosmogonic narrative gives the speculative theology of the new status that is fundamentally different from the traditional myth. Now the myth is deprived of its most important cultural function, the justification of the present and the future through the image of the sacred past «Golden age». In the primitive myth, the creation as a process is inextricably linked with the natural world. This is illustrated, for example, by the image of the Nun in Heliopolitan cosmogony: Khepri before the creation is an integral part of this primordial ocean. Thus, the nature of the Creator is identical to the nature of his creations (xprw). In the case of Amun in the Theban «speculative theology», there is an ontological difference between them. However, it is important to note that Amun's transcendence does not deny the reality of the existence of the natural world:

it just shows its subordinate nature in relation to the intelligible world.

III. RELIGIOUS METAPHYSICS AND THE ARCHAIC MYTH

But is it possible to talk about this religious metaphysics as a clear sign of the crisis of primitive myth? With regard to Heliopolis solar myth of the Old Kingdom era – sure. But with regard to the mythological world-view in general – of course, not. Theban «speculative theology» of Amun did not become final by overcoming traditional mythological worldview. The main symptom of this – the lack of widespread critical analysts of the traditional myth, which we can detect, for example, in early Greek philosophy. However, this example shows that even at such early stages of development pre-philosophical thoughts in her vocabulary includes many categories, which will later become objects for proper philosophical reflection. This, in particular, the categories «single» and «plurality», who then became fundamental to the whole of the ancient philosophical tradition beginning with Thales of Miletus and ending late Neoplatonism. Theban «speculative theology» in XV century BC was first introduced in relation to Amun the title of a «single» (wa waw) as a Creator. Therefore, this metaphysics is religious in form, but pre-philosophical in content. The title of «single» mean in this case is not just the uniqueness of Amun as the Creator, but intelligible character of his nature.

IV. THE BEING AS A CATEGORY OF THEBAN «SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY»

From the point of view of the mentioned above, the use in the Theban sources of «speculative theology» the noun «being» (wnnt) is important. It is unknown in earlier cosmological sources and is found for the first time in the text of the Cairo hymn to Amun, dating from the first half of the 15th century BC. Its use emphasizes the failure of «speculative theology» from the traditional naturalism, and the distinction between the nature of the Creator and the created world. Here, there is no such sharp opposition between them, as in medieval European philosophy, for example, in the ontology of Augustine. Therefore, it is correct to speak about the presence in Theban «speculative theology» as a particular dialectic of uniqueness of existence and multiplicity of becoming that is illustrated by nouns wnnt and xprw. That's why the title of Amun «the single» is not just a symbol of his uniqueness as «the king of the gods» and «God-king», but a single transcendent source of all the variety of things; at the same time, he also endowed some pantheistic traits in the spirit of the formula of Heraclitus «the All as the One» (Markovich 26 = 50 DK). Hence, pantheism in the «speculative theology» is not contrary to the idea of uniqueness and transcendence of Amun as Creator.

V. CONCLUSION

The role of speculative theology in the process of the Genesis of philosophy is extremely high. This equally applies to the Greek tradition, where it acquired a

pronounced critical attitude to the traditional myth and to Egypt, where this has not happened. The most important achievement of Theban speculative theology of the New Kingdom era was the fact that the archaic myth first becomes the object of pre-philosophical reflection. The original Theban religious metaphysics of «speculative theology» is one of the earliest cases of pre-philosophical thought (XV-XIII centuries BC), which makes the first step towards the separation of pre-philosophy and archaic myth.

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