Karin Preisendanz

Soul, Body and Person in Ancient India

I.

Ever since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when Western scholars turned to the study of ancient India and made accessible an increasing number of aspects of its rich cultural tradition, the Western intellectual world has been fascinated foremost by the religious and philosophical traditions of South Asia. Not that the strange beliefs and customs of the “heathens” of the East Indies had not attracted the attention of European travellers and especially missionaries before, who described back home what—through the lens of their specific pre-conceptions and hermeneutic presuppositions—they had seen and learnt in these foreign lands, thus contributing to the creation of an image of India as a remote land of wonders and miracles and as the intriguing Other of their own religious and cultural tradition. However, it was only when institutionalized academic scholarship in so-called Oriental Studies in Europe began towards the end of the eighteenth century that Indian culture was systematically explored and interpreted on the basis of the original sources and with a claim to scholarly method, soundness and objectivity, and the results made known by the Orientalists to a wider intellectually curious and receptive audience. Continuing the primary interest of their predecessors, the travellers and missionaries, and following the historical approach generally taken in academia at that time, many Orientalists of this formative period focussed on Sanskrit sources which they perceived to be of relevance to the history of religion in ancient India. As the close connection between religion and philosophy in Indian culture was realized early on, there was also increasing concern with sources pertinent to the history of Indian philosophy. Already Sir William Jones, appointed in 1783 as puisne judge of the Supreme Court at Fort Williams, Calcutta, and renowned founder of the Asiatic Society there in 1784, voiced his great appreciation of Indian philosophy in his famous discourses delivered at Calcutta, stating in one of them that the six philosophical schools known at the time “comprise all the metaphysics of the old Academy, the Stoa, the Lyceum; nor is it possible to read the Vedanta ... without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the Sages of India.”1 The first translation from the Sanskrit into English of a cardinal religio-philosophical treatise, the Bhagavadgītā, claimed to be the first book ever directly translated from Sanskrit into English, was prepared by one of James’ close associates in the Asiatic Society, Sir Charles Willkins, who came to Bengal as a clerk of the East India Company and then estab-

1 Cf. Ramaswami Sastri 1922: 10.
lished himself in the trading town of Hooghly as a printer, publisher and versatile scholar.²

When Wilkins’ translation was published in 1785 from London by the East India Company at the recommendation of the Governor-General Warren Hastings, the treatise – actually a didactical religio-philosophical epic poem – was highly praised by leading European minds and soon translated into other European languages, first into Latin by August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1823),³ instigating a long sequence of translations and interpretations which continues even today. This immensely popular and influential treatise presents itself as a battlefield dialogue between God Kṛṣṇa and the despondent prince Arjuna, written in the devotional spirit of a poetic pantheism with monistic elements and at the same time testifying to the dualistic ontology of matter and consciousness of the Sāṅkhya philosophy which must have been well established at the time. Against this religio-philosophical background, the Bhagavadgītā combines ethical teachings of practical, everyday relevance with theological and soteriological teachings, laying out the various paths to salvation and ultimate liberation from repeated rebirth for the individual soul, variously called the Self (ātman), the person (puruṣa), “the knower of the field” (kṣetrajña), and the embodied one (dehin), literally: “the one characterized by a body.”

An impact comparable to that of the publication of Wilkins’ translation of the Bhagavadgītā, which forms part of the Indian epic Mahābhārata, was achieved by the publication of a collection of ancient Indian religio-philosophical treatises called Upaniṣads which were made available at the very beginning of the nineteenth century in a Latin translation by the French scholar and traveller Abraham Anquetil Duperron under the title Ou spécケット. Although being only a secondary translation because it was based on a Persian translation from the original Sanskrit by Dara Shukoh, the unfortunate brother of the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb, the Ou spécケット caught the attention of many influential philosophers and historians of philosophy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Anquetil Duperron appealed to the philosophers of his time, especially the Continental Idealist philosophers, to look upon the Upaniṣads and Indian philosophy not only as the relics of some remote and foreign Eastern past, but to study them as philosophy and within the history of philosophy, with the same respect as one studies the Classical Greek philosophers, and with a comparative approach.⁴

Owing to this appeal, especially the philosophers of German Romanticism and in their wake philosophers such as Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling and – most conspicuously – Arthur Schopenhauer brought the teachings of the Upaniṣads into the scope of European intellectual history. Schopenhauer, who – as is well known – called his reading of the Upaniṣads the “soulace” of his life, predicting it to be also the solace of his death, was deeply intrigued by the monistic teachings of the Upaniṣads and their search for the one single principle that brings forth, essentially underlies and in this way unites all diverse phenomena of this world. These phenomena include foremost the individual Self (ātman), the person (puruṣa) and the soul (jīva). Among these, the Self (ātman) is identified according to some Upaniṣadic teachings with a unitary and foundational absolute principle called brahman, a conception which greatly impressed thinkers like Schopenhauer who took brahman to be something like a “world-soul” with which the individual soul reunites once recognition of the ultimate identity of ātman and brahman has been achieved; for Schopenhauer specifically, brahman approximated his concept of cosmic volition which is the basis and source of all spatial and temporal diversification including the individual soul, although the resulting diversity exists merely as a representation of this omnipotent volition.

II.

This brief introduction with emphasis on the early reception of Indian religio-philosophical works and their ideas in the West should have made clear that the notion of the soul played an important role in this context, together with related notions like that of the Self and the person, and that a number of different Sanskrit terms were relevant in this context. At the same time, it will have become obvious that especially in this context Indian religion and philosophy meet and intermingle. The concept of the soul became an important philosophical issue in the various philosophical traditions of the Indian classical period that developed or were systematized in the first centuries of the common era; nevertheless, the origin of this notion is in the religious sphere of human thinking and culture, meaning that it should be found in all cultures in which religion finds expression. According to a decidedly anti-ethnocentric and extremely open definition of “soul” by Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, we should understand by the term “soul” “anything which reveals itself to the religious human being (in him/herself and in others) as the power or might of physical and hyper-physical (...) life.”⁵ As Hasenfratz adds immediately after this (slightly abbreviated) definition, the obvious fact that this “power of life” may manifest itself in manifold form leads to the consequence that a variety of “souls” may be conceived of for an individual being, jointly constituting his/her life, and be distinguished according to function, form and relation to the individual, even though functions and “souls” are

not necessarily in a one-to-one relationship. A variety of notions of "souls" in
different cultures and at different stages of cultural development necessarily fol-
lows from such a broad definition of "soul," dependent on diverging perceptions
of these functions, forms and relations, or, in other words, dependent on the re-
spective anthropologies or conceptions of (wo)man.

Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that the word "soul" belongs to
those words which are employed in everyday usage as a matter of fact and in a
number of contexts, even though the speaker may normally not have a clear no-
tion about the precise referents of these words. It seems that such clear notions
are not required by the speaker him/herself in this case; moreover, precise defini-
tions of the respective referents of "soul" do not appear to be necessary here for
the successful functioning of verbal communication. As Antony Flew in de-
pendence on Gilbert Kyle, has stated this further means that we obviously pre-
suppose that we possess something called "soul" and only then, maybe, ask our-
selves of what nature this "soul" might be, instead of first determining a precise
referred and meaning for the word "soul" and then asking ourselves to which
things or events in our world it may be applied in this very sense. This observa-
tion made by contemporary philosophers may be partially explained against the
background of the variety in which Hasenfratz's "power of life" may reveal itself
to the individual, not only as determined and codified within a given culture at a
certain historical stage, but also as perceived by the individual him/herself.

III.

The ancient period of Indian thought, which forms the immediate and mediate
background not only of the religio-philosophical works mentioned above (cf. I.),
but also of the later religious traditions and the classical philosophical traditions,
presents itself as especially rich in concepts to be subsumed under and relating to
"soul" in the broad sense adopted here. This richness has more than one cause.

(1) First, there is the historical depth and sheer volume of predominantly reli-
gious literature in ancient India which may reach back to approximately 1200
BCE, starting with the religious poetry of the hymns collected in the Rigveda
and other subsequent literary collections (sangita) called the Vedas. These collec-
tions are followed, in some cases paralleled, by the Brahmanas, extensive trea-
tises which document a highly developed speculative-proto-philosophical ritual
science. The Brähmanas are succeeded, from the point of view of literary history,
will employ it only in a modified way to indicate the specific notion under discussion, or simply use the Sanskrit term.

IV.

To begin with, I would like to take up the notion of the so-called "vital soul" known from different cultures which relates to that "power of life" which is thought to be responsible for the body's being alive as manifested foremost in the vital physical functions. In distinction to the psyché or "free soul," also imagined as an "excursion-soul," "image-soul," "dream-soul," or "shadow-soul," that represents the individual personality unbound by the body and may – foremost (but not exclusively) under special circumstances such as dreaming and deep sleep, swooning or states of ecstasy – temporarily leave the living body and only then become active, this "functional soul" or "vital soul" is also called "body-soul." Foremost among the vital functions is, naturally, breathing; other important vital functions guaranteed by the presence of the "vital soul" include the regulation and maintenance of the right body temperature, the involuntary opening and closing of the eyes, and the healing of wounds and broken bones. If the capacity of the "vital soul" to perform its functions is impeded, the person faints; in the case of more serious impediment, there follows disease, and eventually death may occur as the most dire consequence on account of this special "power

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10 Cf. Arbach 1926 and 1927a as well as 1927b and 1928.
11 On the various terms referring to notions of "soul" in general in earliest Vedic poetry cf. especially the learned exposition by Hermann Oldenberg in his *Die Religion des Veda* (four editions, first edition Stuttgart/Berlin 1894), section 4 ("Seelenglauben und Totenkultus") which also illuminates the larger cultural context and is still worthwhile reading.
12 Cf. also Bodewitz's decision to use the term "soul" as a collective term denoting a variety of conceptions concerning personality and life in opposition to the body which without this so-called soul does not function (Bodewitz 1991: 36).
13 Its presence thus means consciousness in the sense that only then mental activity takes place. On the concept of the "free soul" (psyche) cf. Arbach 1926, especially 92–107 and 121–162, on that of a "free soul" in Vedic literature cf. Arbach 1927a: 20–29 and passim, especially 105ff. and 1927b: 345–357.
14 On the "body-soul"(s) cf. Arbach 1926: 166–172, 180–183 and 185–190; based on his ideas cf. the distinction in Bremmer 1983: 9f. and 21ff., especially in connection with Homer. This concept of a basic "dualism" of the soul was proposed first by Wilhelm Wundt and adopted by Arbach, according to Bodewitz 1991: 32, although the latter does not refer prominently to the former. Cf. also the (very abbreviated) critical exposition of Arbach's theses in Bodewitz 1991: 32–35 and 38. Concerning this criticism, Bodewitz does not seem to have realized that Arbach indeed assumed a function of *asa* (cf. below) as a "free soul," next to that of a "vital soul" in the sense of the basic vital force, in Arbach 1927a. Bodewitz's own position, which is not formulated in a very pregnant manner (cf. also n. 39 below), thus does not seem to be essentially different from Arbach's more defined position, at least as long as the former does not explain the relationship, also from a historical point of view, between the two referents of this term suggested by himself. Does the disagreement lie in the choice of (or emphasis on?) either of the two in the interpretation of specific passages, or does it rather concern the combination of these two aspects in the notion of *asa* at a specific historical period, as clearly postulated by Arbach (cf. also below, pp. 144–145)?
of life” leaving the body altogether.15 The connection between life and breathing can be observed most immediately; this may have been responsible for the frequent more specific conceptualization of the “vital soul” as a “breath-soul,” i.e., an entity which is identical with breath or imagined as being based on it and which is itself of a subtle, breath-like material nature. For the archaic religious traditions e.g., of ancient Israel and Rome, we can assume such a conceptualization behind the original notions of nefesh and anima because both words are derived from verbal roots meaning “to blow, to breathe.”16

In the earliest Indian religious poetry, in the collections of the Rgveda as well as of the Atharvaveda, we hear of an entity called asu, sometimes modified as āvah āsavah, literally: the “living asu,”17 which may refer to such a “vital soul” or “body-soul.” The context is generally that of disease and the loss or restoration of life (“de-animation” and re-animation), and of the events and situation after death.18 In the latter context, the rather graphic term aswānti, literally: “the leading away of asu,” relates to the fate after death when asu is taken away to some other place by the personified funeral fire.19 In the same context, two frightening canine messengers of Death (Yama) that appear when a person dies are mentioned; they are characterized as “robers of asu” and at the same time implored to return asu, “for viewing, for the sun.”20 According to the indigenous understanding and the etymology suggested for the term in traditional scholarship in and on India, similar to the word anima the word asu has to be derived from a

verbal root meaning “to breathe,”21 which would suggest that the term originally refers to a breath-like “vital soul.”22 However, two more recent linguistic explanations suggest different derivations resulting in quite different interpretations which have not yet been commonly accepted. In the following, I would like to present and briefly discuss them.

The first explanation, by the Indo-Europeanist Bernfried Schlerath, goes back to an early etymology which was suggested by the Iranianist Bartholomae, but generally disregarded in Indian studies, and assumes a derivation from the very common verbal root meaning “to exist”;23 Schlerath postulates that asu should therefore mean “(unspecified) life” and “(individual) existence” (also after death and in the other world).24 However, from the point of view of a scholar of the history of religion and philosophy, such a meaning, or rather, such meanings, if applied to the relevant passages, are problematic because in most occurrences asu obviously denotes something very concrete, and not at all abstract, be it an abstract potency or a state.25 Admittedly, the transition from a postulated original notion of abstract “(unspecified) life” to that of a concrete, individualized “vital force” and thus to the notion of a “vital soul,” although not intended by Schlerath himself, would be conceivable,26 just as when we say “There was no more life in him,” or when we speak metaphorically of “much life” being in some object of artistic expression, such as in a painting. However, no matter whether the term asu would refer to abstract “life” or a concrete, individualized “vital force,” the modification of the noun asu, with the adjective jīva, undoubtedly meaning “living” or “alive,” would not make much sense; in the first case, it is hard to imagine how an abstract notion such as (unspecified) life could be specified as “living,” in the second case the specification would be redundant without the simultaneous assumption of some “life,” that is, “vital force,” which is not living or alive, for which there is no evidence in the sources. Furthermore, an even...
more crucial problem involved in Schlerath's derivation and interpretation is posed by the fact that the underlying noun derived from "to exist," such as "existence," which has to be presupposed and also specifically figured in this etymological interpretation, cannot simply be equated with "(unspecified) life" as claimed in the present context. We rather refer to the specific mode or circumstances of an individual human existence or to an individual course of life when we use the word "existence" interchangeably with "life," as in phrases like "Hers was a miserable existence," meaning "She led a miserable life," or "He believes in existence after death" (cf. Schlerath's specification of "existence") meaning "He believes in life after death." Moreover, such a specified "life" or "existence" can certainly not be led away or robbed after the death of an individual, to point out just one incoherence resulting from the equation of "existence" with "life," not to mention the problems arising from the unjustified equation of "existence" with "unspecified life." Such innumerable problems would arise in many of the relevant contexts if one assumed an alternative meaning of "existence" in the sense of "continuance of being or life," "liveliness," "subsistence," as in sentences like "The existence of many farmers was at stake."

A further, very recent and challenging hypothesis on asu by another Indo-Europeanist, Heiner Eichner, postulates a connection with a verbal root meaning "to produce/procreate/beget," which has otherwise been lost in the Vedic language. According to Eichner's historical reconstruction based on ancient Hitite source materials, the term asu should refer in an active, transitive sense to "the one who procreates," that is, the head of a family clan, and at the same time in a passive sense to "that which is procreated," namely, life, specifically in the form of descendants. From the passive meaning of "procreated" in the sense of "procreated [life]" Eichner moves on to derive the meaning of "procreative power which has been transmitted through the process of procreation," and postulates the concept of what he calls a "sexual soul" expressed with the word asu. This "sexual soul," which he assumes to be a notion common not only among the ancient Indians, but also among other ancient Indo-European people such as the Romans, is passed on from father to son, guarantees the continued existence of a family clan, and after death unites with the ancestors in the other world.

forming a thread of life while it is living or alive (jiva). Some aspects of Eichner's interesting hypothesis would undeniably fit with certain components of the ancient Indian cult of the dead, inasmuch as the assumed "sexual soul" would be found as a manifestation of the "power of life," to again use Hasenfratz's brief characterization of "soul," only in males who alone are entitled and required to perform funeral rites and other rituals concerning the ancestors. At the same time, however, this would imply that the references to asu, more of which will be presented below, would have to be understood as applying only to such contexts in which male persons are involved, which would result in a surprisingly strong manifestation - amounting to almost absurd exclusiveness - of the generally patriarchal character of ancient Indian society even in contexts of human life and daily experience, such as disease, imminent death and death itself, which one would expect to be addressed without gender specification. Apart from this problematic consequence relating to the early history of Indian culture or its proto-history, it is difficult to understand how a passive word-formation with the basic meaning "procreated, engendered" could assume the active meaning of "procreative power." Such a development of meaning could only be explained by the assumption that the word "procreated" was metaphorically applied to one or even the foremost object of procreation, namely, life, to be understood in the already addressed extended sense of concrete vital force; as a next step, this usage would have had to have been restricted conventionally to this single special meaning and the latter further narrowed down to refer to the specifically male vital force only.

In view of the problems involved with these two etymological understandings of the term asu which have been suggested in recent historical linguistics as alternatives to the conservative connection of this "power of life" with breathing, I would like to disregard etymology here and rather concentrate on the refer-

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28 Cf. also the criticism of Schlerath's hypothesis by Bodewitz, even though it is based on different considerations and a different interpretation of asu than the one given by me below (cf. Bodewitz 1991: 43-45).
29 The root is reconstructed as *ā́h.su.
30 Although this is not explicated as such by Eichner, he seems to presuppose that the procreative power of a man is constantly being renewed so that it can be "passed on" repeatedly to his several sons; this would imply a multitude of asu-s for a single male individual, all belonging to the same kind, but created at different times and passed on to different receptacles. Or does Eichner imagine the "passing on" of procreative power in an abstract, non-physical way which would imply that it is possible without diminution or loss, just as, e.g., knowledge or a skill can be passed on to another person without any diminution or loss for the one who gives? However, at the end of life, asu is claimed by Eichner to pass
31 Some aspects of Eichner's interesting hypothesis would undeniably fit with certain components of the ancient Indian cult of the dead, inasmuch as the assumed "sexual soul" would be found as a manifestation of the "power of life," to again use Hasenfratz's brief characterization of "soul," only in males who alone are entitled and required to perform funeral rites and other rituals concerning the ancestors. At the same time, however, this would imply that the references to asu, more of which will be presented below, would have to be understood as applying only to such contexts in which male persons are involved, which would result in a surprisingly strong manifestation - amounting to almost absurd exclusiveness - of the generally patriarchal character of ancient Indian society even in contexts of human life and daily experience, such as disease, imminent death and death itself, which one would expect to be addressed without gender specification. Apart from this problematic consequence relating to the early history of Indian culture or its proto-history, it is difficult to understand how a passive word-formation with the basic meaning "procreated, engendered" could assume the active meaning of "procreative power." Such a development of meaning could only be explained by the assumption that the word "procreated" was metaphorically applied to one or even the foremost object of procreation, namely, life, to be understood in the already addressed extended sense of concrete vital force; as a next step, this usage would have had to have been restricted conventionally to this single special meaning and the latter further narrowed down to refer to the specifically male vital force only.
32 It may be assumed that the supposedly original concept of asu as "procreated (life)" in the sense of a "sexual soul" in Indo-Iranian culture was not current any longer in the Vedic period and that the term as documented in the Indian sources had obtained a different meaning.
33 This would be especially problematic if according to Eichner's hypothesis this reproductive power is not really engendered or produced, but passed on from father to son(s) in the process of procreation just like an abstract potency (cf. n. 30 above).
34 Cf. also the critical remarks on the main or exclusive reliance on etymology in determining the meaning of terms in the context of religious beliefs, specifically that of the term psyche, in Arbman 1926: 194.
ences themselves in their contexts which point towards the notion of a "vital soul"; because the "vital soul" is inter alia and most manifestly responsible for breathing, it could have been conceived as a subtle wind-like entity, regardless of any supporting etymology, and equated with "breath" in later works of the Vedic period. This understanding of asw as originally a "vital soul" has been propounded foremost by Arbman who at the same time assumes that this notion was merged with the notion of a "free soul" in the course of the development of a unitary concept of "soul" during the Vedic period. Indeed, some passages suggest that the term asw (also) refers to the "free soul" or "psyche-soul" because of the close connection with personal individuality. Although he rejects a dualism of "vital soul" and "psyche-soul," even if it resulted in monism, H.W. Bodewitz also argues that asw was conceived to function as a "free soul" according to some of these passages, whereas relating to other passages he states, following Schlerath, that the term asw refers unexceptionally to "life," or "some sort of body-soul."

To illustrate the ambiguity and hopefully provide some clarification, I would like to take a look especially at some important passages involving asw in the Atharva Veda. This work, which may postdate the collection of hymns in the Rg Veda by a few hundred years, is a collection of hymns, invocations and prayers addressed to various gods and godlike powers in this world, of conjurations and supplications, maledictions and benedictions, healing "spells" and formulae of atonement, and prominently displays a magical character based on patterns of analogical thinking: Especially the latter contents - the conjurations, supplications, and so on - reflect this magical component of ancient South Asian culture and in this way preserve a precious amount of archaic popular beliefs and attitudes, even though transmitted in the form given to the collection by priestly authors, editors and compilers.  

asw is mentioned, e.g., in a prayer concerned with the healing of a person (purusa) who has fallen sick or with the rescue of such a person in the face of death:

(1) "This person should remain here with his/her asw, in the share of the sun, in the open space of That which is without death."

The word purusa, literally: "man," is also used in a gender-neutral sense for a human being and therefore can safely be translated here as "person," relating obviously to the individual complex bundle of changing physical and psychical components which nevertheless remains identifiable through time and by means of a name. This person's association with asw is instrumental for his/her dwelling here in this world, conceived as an open, free space filled with light where human life becomes possible and can flourish. "That which is without death" thus does not refer to personal immortality here, but rather to the specific early Vedic notion of immortality as the full living out on this earth of the human life-span (ayus) of one hundred years. The juxtaposition of life ("here," "the share of the sun," "the open space of That which is without death") and death ("there," "darkness," "the closed space where there is death") implied in this passage suggests a function of asw as "vital soul" or "body-soul": if the asw is not "here" any longer, i.e., the body is abandoned by the "vital soul," the person (purusa) will also not be "here" any longer, i.e., his/her body will be without life and consciousness and will decay. On the other hand, the close connection (expressed as a possessive relation) to the person could also indicate that here functions of a "psyche-soul" or "free soul," which I would also like to call "individuating soul).

35 Cf. below, p. 144-145.
39 Cf. Bodewitz 1991: 43 and 45-46; I must admit that I could not detect a clear statement of Bodewitz's own position on asw in Bodewitz 1991. It may be that he assumes various concepts connected with the term, e.g., asw as "life," "vital soul" and "free soul," which existed simultaneously in separate cultural milieus (cf. Bodewitz 1991: 40) or in different historical periods; however, in view of his rejection of the concept of a multitude of "souls" it is equally possible that he considers these concepts to have jointly formed some original synthetical notion, which should be distinguished from the consideration of a development of these concepts (especially of asw as "vital soul" and "free soul") towards a unitary concept of a "soul" (cf. Bodewitz 1991: 42). Oberlies' brief exposition on (Rg) Vedic concepts of the "soul" which relies inter alia on Oberlies 1991, especially as regards the interpretation of the term asw, suggests that he understood Bodewitz in the sense of the latter position (cf. Oberlies 1998: 504-505, notably 505: "Diese Lebenskraft [sic. asw] bildet also das Kontinuum zwischen diesseitigem und jenseitigem Leben und zeigt somit deutlich Charakteristika einer "Freiscele")." Even though - contrary to Bodewitz (cf. especially 1991: 33-36) and following Arbman - he confirms the concept of a plural number of "souls" (Oberlies, loc. cit.).

41 Cf. AV 8.1.1; cf. also Oldenberg 1916: 528. Corresponding to Oldenberg's understanding of asw as the "vital soul" Arbman (1927b: 351) translates the word asw here as "Leben(schauch)." On the other hand, he assumes that the "free soul" (psyche) is addressed here as the sick person him/herself (cf. Arbman 1927a: 55 and 84). These - at first sight contradictory - statements may reflect his understanding of the term asw as referring in the course of its development ultimately to a unitary concept of "soul" (cf. below, pp. 144-145), as documented in this and similar passages.
42 Cf. Bodewitz 1996: 30 (with references to secondary literature).
43 All these counter-positive implications would refer to the general "other world" or realm of the dead in Vedic belief; cf. below p. 156.
44 Cf. also Arbman 1927a: 15.
to describe the function of this "power of life" more precisely, are involved in the concept of *asw; this would imply that the person could leave "here," i.e., this life and world, together with his/her *asw, and continue to exist elsewhere, i.e., in the realm of the dead, together with it. Here (if not already under the previous alternative interpretation), however, the question poses itself as to whether it would at all have been considered that the *person in the precise sense outlined above departs this world and continues to exist elsewhere. In view of what we know about the concept of the other world in Vedic thought, it is much more likely that the person as *his/her *asw (in the sense of the "free," "individuating soul" identical with the spiritual person) is the entity which—should it not "remain here"—"passes away," i.e., passes on, unless one would assume a further unnamed "power of life" here which could take over this role. The terminology of this piece of evidence may thus be presented as follows:

(1) *asw: *purusā (person, associated with *asw "here," maybe also "there").

Another Atharvavedic passage related to extending the life of a seriously ill person says:

(2) "Stay here! Do not go! Do not follow the forefathers; I firmly fasten your *asw."

Here, different from the previous passage (1) where the sick person is addressed indirectly as "this person," the diseased is addressed directly and his/her relation to *asw expressed by the genitive form (in the singular number) of the personal pronoun used for the second person (literally: "of yours"). This direct address (without explicitly naming the addressee) is paralleled in a slightly re-worked version of a verse contained in an important Rigvedic cremation hymn (*RV 10.16.3, cf. analysis [8] below) which, together with other verses of this hymn, has been utilized in a cremation hymn of the *Atharvaveda (AV 18.2.7)

(3) "Here (let there be) [i] your *asw, here [ii] your *prāṇa, here [iii] your full life-span, here [iv] your mind."

In another healing "spell" of the *Atharvaveda, found in the same prayer as passage (1), the sick person is addressed with the following words:

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In this passage we can clearly see that [i] *asw is distinguished from [ii] *prāṇa ("breath"). The term *prāṇa foremost refers to concrete physical breath; however, the context of enumeration of vital forces suggests that it here refers to more than mere physical breath or a vital faculty (respiration), i.e., to the notion of a "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul." Such a notion is implied elsewhere in the *Atharvaveda, e.g., in AV 7.3.1.1 where God Indra is implored to aid in the removal of enemies: whoever hates those who utter the prayer should fall...

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45 Cf. already Weber 1895: 814 and 846.
46 On addressing the dead person = psychē ("free soul") with "you" cf. Aramb 1927a: 75–80, 82, 89 and 92.
47 For this interpretation cf. Aramb 1927a: 15 and 85; the implied contradiction has to be viewed in the light of what has been suggested in n. 41 above.
48 Cf. AV 8.1.3. Cf. also Scherl 1968: 148 and the translations in Oldenberg 1916: 528 and Aramb 1927b: 351. Cf. also Aramb 1927a: 55 where Aramb presumably equates the "free soul" with the referent of "you."
50 Cf. also Aramb 1928: 200, n. 1; more on *prāṇa cf. below V.
down into the realm of death; who is hated by them should be abandoned by "breath" (prāna). The appearance of this notion of a "vital soul" next to that of āsu in the above passage would imply that āsu was not imagined as a vital force, that is, the "vital soul," in this context, but as a "free soul" heading the vital forces present in and bound to the body in the enumeration; alternatively, a differentiation of the concept of "vital soul" is conceivable, involving a specialized "vital soul" of breath-like nature and function ("breathing-soul") called prāna, and a "vital soul" of a more general nature called āsu responsible for the maintenance of the body temperature, involuntary bodily movements (such as the opening and closing of the eye), the healing of wounds and breaks, etc. In the above passage, āsu is also distinguished from a further vital force called [iii] ādīus, the already mentioned full life-span of an individual (cf. above p. 131), which here is obviously understood as some subtle material potency that can be located in the body. Ādīus could thus be interpreted as a further "power of life," namely, a specialized "vital soul of longevity" whose function lies in providing longevity inasmuch as in its presence the potential for enjoyment of the full human life-span can be realized. The fourth vital force addressed in the passage is [iv] manas, translated by me as "mind," a term which etymologically derived from a verbal root meaning "to think" and used throughout the later periods of Indian religion and philosophy in multiple senses and under different ontological presuppositions specific to the respective traditions. Here and elsewhere, especially in the Rgveda where the notion of manas plays a much more prominent role than the notion of āsu and where additional information about it is provided, the potency of thinking is normally referred to with the term. This potency is again conceived as a subtle material entity; it resides in the heart or in its vicinity and is responsible for the cognitive and other psychical functions, such as emotional, volitional- affective and intentional acts. As it resides in the body and expresses the "power of life" in a very distinctive way, manas would be still another specialized "body-soul": no other entity in the conceptual world of the Vedic people at that time could have contended with the manas for this special vital function in the body of a living human being. I suggest to term this last-mentioned specialized "body-" or "vital soul" "mental soul." 60

The distinction between āsu and prāna in the above passage (3) as well as the differentiation from manas could be responsible for Bodewitz's assumption that the term āsu in passages concerned with ill and dying persons in general refers to a "free soul." This would affirm the interpretation of the juxtaposition of āsu and prāna following the first alternative suggested above; thus, passage (3) would first refer to the individuating "free soul" (āsu), then to three specialized "vital souls." However, Bodewitz's brief argumentation for this position is problematic because not only the "free soul," as pointed out by him, but also the "vital soul" will leave the body at the time of death. As indicated under the second alternative suggested above, both terms may therefore refer to "vital souls" differentiated according to their functions. Under this interpretation four different "vital souls" are enumerated in this passage, starting with a general, basic or central "vital soul" (āsu) and continuing with three specialized "vital souls."

One further aspect has to be considered in the attempt to solve the problem of passage (3). At least in the present context of the rescue of a person from imminent death, manas seems to be especially closely related to the person and individuation because further on in the prayer manas is especially invoked not to go "there," not to vanish (i.e., from "this world"), while the person (purusha) who "has" this manas is at the same time exhorted not to turn his/her attention from the living and follow the forefathers - the gods are called upon to protect him/her "here." Also in the prayer from which passage (2) has been taken (AV 5.30) the "complete manas" is singled out and brought in close connection with the person (purusha) in a later verse:

4) "Stay here, O person, with the complete mind; do not follow the two messengers of Yama, [rather] go to the strongholds of the living."

60 Arburn's designation as "ego-soul" for this type of "body-soul" which he elevates to the "mental subject" itself and in his historical reconstruction promotes to the role of a conscious "free soul" is not felicitous as it may imply the prominent function of self-consciousness which is not evident in connection with the usage of the term manas; cf. Arburn 1926: 170-172 on the "ego-soul" and more extensively Arburn 1927a: 158-175. In Arburn 1927a: 180, n. 1, however, he seems to distance himself from this implication as he states more carefully that the (developed) idea of manas, as a reflex of self-consciousness, comes close to the Upaniṣadic notion of the átman as the "I" in the sense of the subject and centre of all psychical experience and activity. In a similar vein Hasenfratz (1999: 734), who categorically distinguishes between the "body-soul" (= "vital soul") and the "ego-soul," specifies that the "ego-soul" (i.e., its various functions) constitutes human self-consciousness in the waking state.


62 On addressing the dead person = manas (just like the dead person = the psyché, cf. above, n. 50) with "you" cf. Arburn 1927a: 169 and 371-172 (with n. 2).

63 Cf. AV 8.17; cf. also Oldenberg 1916: 528 and Arburn 1927a: 55 (equating "free soul" and "person") and 169 (equating manas and "free soul").

64 Cf. AV 5.30.6; cf. also Arburn 1927b: 352 and 381.

55 On the distinction between a general "vital soul" and "specialized" "body-souls" (i.e., vital qualities, functions and processes conceived as entities on their own), cf. Arburn 1926: 170. Concerning passage (3), however, Arburn assumes that āsu and prāna have the same function as "vital souls" (cf. Arburn 1927a: 15, n. 2) which is doubtful without further explanation. The assumption as such can be explained by Arburn's position that the term manas in this prayer refers to the "free soul" (cf. also below, p. 137) and the resulting necessity to avoid the inadmissible duplication of the "free soul" in the present context.

56 Cf. Arburn 1926: 192 on aśīt leaving the body with the psyché.

57 Vman.

58 On the understanding of manas as the "soul" in general cf. below, pp. 137-138.

A summarized formulation of this passage would look similar to that of passage (1) discussed above in connection with *asru:

(4) *manas* : *purusha* (person, associated with *manas* “here,” maybe also “there”).

Passages (3) and (4) may be interpreted as evidence for a special concept of *manas* emerging in the two prayers concerned, i.e., it was not considered as a specialized “body-soul” responsible for the vital function of thinking, etc., which functions when the “free soul” is present in the body, but as a “free soul” itself which in this case would also support this function, i.e., always be what is conscious in (wo)man, not only after but also before death. Thus, *asru* in the two prayers should be understood to refer to the “vital soul,” in the case of the second prayer (*AV 8.1*) (passages [1] and [3] above) to a general “vital soul” next to the two specialized “body-souls” responsible for breathing and longevity (*prāṇa, āyus*). In this second prayer a later verse would consequently address a further group of three vital forces, namely, the “breathing-soul,” an “energy-soul,” and the general “vital soul”:

(5) “Breath (*prāṇa*) [and] strength (*bala*) should not leave you; we call after your *asru*.”

Here, however, the problem arises that this would imply that the general “vital soul,” being called after, could leave the body for a while and return to it from a considerable distance, which would go against the concept of a “body-soul” in the strict sense. Different from energy and even breathing which may seem to have stopped completely in a very sick person but can be observed to return or be restored to the still living body, the vital force as such should always remain inside the body or leave it only very briefly, staying right next to it (cf. also below); once it has really left and could thus be “called after,” it probably cannot be restored to the dead body. Even though it could be assumed that the verse in

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65 For this position cf. especially Oldenberg 1916: 527–530 and Armbian 1927a: 166–175; cf. also n. 108 below on Renou’s translation of the word *manas* as “soul.” The passage *AV* 18.2.23 taken by itself may demand such an interpretation, i.e., the *manas* of the addressed person and the person him/herself may be one and the same, even though the passage is not entirely clear to me: “Your *manas* should go to those who/which are its, (i.e., actually yours?) own (row) (?); now, run towards the Fathers!” (cf. Weber 1895: 852, Oldenberg 1916: 528, n. 1, and Armbian 1927a: 170, n. 1); on the plural expression *ādir* referring to “own [men],” that is, related members of high nobility in Vedic society, cf. Rau 1957: 72–73. Cf. further n. 108 below.

66 On Armbian’s different attempt at a solution of passage (3) cf. n. 55 above.

67 Cf. *AV 8.1.15;* cf. also Oldenberg 1916: 528 and Schlerath 1968: 148 who understands that “unspecified life” is called after, whatever that may mean.

68 Cf. also Armbian 1927a: 25–26. Of course, there are exceptions to this. In cultures where preservation of the body after death (mummification) is the common practice, further activity of the “vital soul” with interaction with the body may be believed to be possible, e.g., as was the case in ancient Egypt (cf. Hasenfratz 1999: 735). Cf. also n. 87 below.

69 For this position cf. especially Oldenberg 1916: 527–530 and Armbian 1927a: 166–175; cf. also n. 108 below on Renou’s translation of the word *manas* as “soul.” The passage *AV* 18.2.23 taken by itself may demand such an interpretation, i.e., the *manas* of the addressed person and the person him/herself may be one and the same, even though the passage is not entirely clear to me: “Your *manas* should go to those who/which are its, (i.e., actually yours?) own (row) (?); now, run towards the Fathers!” (cf. Weber 1895: 852, Oldenberg 1916: 528, n. 1, and Armbian 1927a: 170, n. 1); on the plural expression *ādir* referring to “own [men],” that is, related members of high nobility in Vedic society, cf. Rau 1957: 72–73. Cf. further n. 108 below.

70 Pace Armbian 1927a: 15.

71 Cf. (possibly) already Oldenberg 1916: 529–530, although based on an understanding of *asru* which would correspond to that of a “vital soul.” Cf. in general also Armbian 1926: 120.

72 Cf. RV 10.58, part of the group of hymns connected with the Subandhu-story (cf. n. 96 below).

73 Cf. also Oldenberg 1916: 527 and Maurer 1986: 265. Oberlies (1998: 503, n. 211) sees the situation differently, without discussing the relevant passages in more detail he states that references to *manas* leaving the body are metaphorical only.


75 That is, passage (1) (*AV 8.1.1*), passage (3) (*AV 8.1.3*), *AV 8.1.7* (cf. p. 135 above), passage (4) (*AV 5.30.6*), and *AV 18.2.23* (cf. n. 65 above).

76 Cf. Armbian 1927a: 166–175.

Arbman furthermore seems to consider the notion of *manas* in the early Vedic sources *in general* as that of the "mental subject" itself. However, this decidedly categorical distinction from especially the "eye" (*cakṣus*) appears to be a definite over-interpretation in the case of a large number of passages adduced by Arbman himself. The frequent usage of the instrumental case of the word *manas* would be difficult to reconcile with the implied primary notion of a "subject."79 Arbman's determination of *manas* as the "conscious principle"80 (with "principle" to be taken in a concrete, substantial sense) is more appropriate in this light. One can also agree with his interpretation of the term *manas* as referring to the "mental part" of (wo)man; however, this being the "mental part" does not in all contexts amount to being the person or the Self, as claimed by Arbman.81 In some contexts, the distinction of *manas* from the strongly evidenced "free soul" *ātman*82 would be blurred under such an interpretation unless one would restrict or modify the meaning of "person" or "Self" to the personality or Self during those periods in life in which one is conscious and the "free soul" inactive. Similarly, one would have to specify that *manas* in these contexts represents (or is the conscious personality (not "person")) during life,83 together with its emotional, volitional-affective, inclinational, facultative and ethical-moral aspects.84

In the case of the first prayer (*AV 5.30*) (passage [4]), problems comparable to the ones addressed above do not arise, but it, too, should be examined as a whole, under the presupposition that the various notions expressed in it are part of a meaningful composition. Elsewhere in this prayer, breath (*prāṇa*), the mind (*manas*), the "eye" (*cakṣus*) and strength (*bala*) are called to the body of the patient,85 and God Agni invoked to join "him" (i.e., the "person") with three of these vital forces, *manas* not being mentioned in this connection.86 They all could disappear from the body of a sick person in the clutches of death, but return to it; as mentioned above, even breathing could seemingly stop in such a situation when *prāṇa* in the sense of a specialized "breathing-soul" or even of the

"vital soul" as such, conceived as a "breath-soul," has left the body — however, for very brief periods only and remaining close by;87 this may be why in an earlier verse of the prayer the two special protectors of *prāṇa*, obviously counterparts of the two well-known canine "robbers of *ātman*", are entertained to stay with the patient day and night.88 The grouping of *manas* among other vital forces and faculties here seems to indicate that it should count as one of them and therefore be a "body-soul"; thus, there would be no question of the "person" going to the other world with or as his/her *manas* in the sense of a conscious "free soul," as may be suggested, e.g., by passage (4) above if read independently. This latter passage may rather stress that the living "person" should stay here, and be in full possession of his/her cognitive powers. For the interpretation of *ātman* in the first verse of the prayer (cf. passage [2] above), the additional references to "powers of life" in the prayer are thus not decisive; however, the fact that *ātman* is mentioned in the very beginning as that which has to be bound, namely, to the "person" "here," and does not appear in the later context of the vital forces and faculties such as breath, etc., suggests that it occupies a prominent and decisive position which may indeed be that of the "free soul."

Even though he does not offer in-depth analyses of the relevant passages, Bodewitz's thesis that *ātman* is basically to be considered as a "free soul"89 can thus also be supported. The main evidence adduced by him are the already addressed terms *asūtrap* and *asunīti* (cf. p. 126 above). It would be more meaningful indeed if it were the "free soul" of a human being, and not his/her "vital soul," that is robbed by the two canine messengers of Yama, the king of the dead, or by the evil sorcerers mentioned in a Rgvedic prayer.89 The event of the "leading away-of

79 Cf. also Arbman 1926: 186–187 and 190 for special situations in which the "vital soul" leaves the body.
80 Cf. *AV 5.30.10*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
82 Cf. *AV 5.30.13*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
83 Cf. *AV 5.30.13*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
84 Cf. *AV 5.30.13*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
85 Cf. *AV 5.30.13*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
86 Cf. *AV 5.30.13*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
87 Cf. also Arbman 1926: 186–187 and 190 for special situations in which the "vital soul" leaves the body.
88 Cf. *AV 5.30.10*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."
89 Cf. *AV 5.30.10*. The mention of these special protectors indicates some distinction and suggests that *prāṇa* may indeed be the "vital soul" conceived as a "breath-soul" here, i.e., the "vital soul" as such, not just a specialized "breathing-soul."

the asu" (asuttiti) after death would also assume a much more dramatic, personally dooming character for the person who has passed away if his/her "free soul" would be meant in these passages,89 rather than the "vital soul" which does not possess individualized personal features.90 Furthermore, the request that the verbal root vitṛ⁶⁴ with the meaning "to refresh/comfort oneself with, enjoy, be satisfied" (cf. also Weber 1895: 850 on asuṭṭīp in AV 18.2.13) (cf. Werba 1997: 192), as opposed to vitṛ⁵⁰ "to steal, rob," which may result from an early semantic specification of vitṛ⁶⁴ (cf. Werba 1997: 427; on the lack of evidence for a verb vitṛ⁵⁰ apart from the compounds asuṭṭīp and paduṭṭīp ["stealing castle"], cf. Aramb 1927a: 59-60, n. 2). O'Flaherty's second alternative involves a problematic understanding of asu as "life" in the sense of a specific life-style ("high life of luxury ... bought with their undeserved fees"). Her first alternative amounts to Renou's interpretation of the occurrence of the expression in this cosmopolitan hymn ("glutted with the life ... stolen from the sacrificial beast"); similarly Aramb 1927a: 58 on asuṭṭīp in RV 10.14.12: the canine servants of Yama fill themselves up with "concrete life," are greedy for "life" in the sense of concrete vital strength, of "satisfy their desire for life" in a "more general sense" (Aramb 1927a: 59). Alternatively, Aramb suggests that the two dogs are greedy for the (free) "souls" of the dead, grabbing them and tearing them apart; this would be the ancient belief that is at the basis of later beliefs in hellish monsters (cf. Aramb 1927a: 58-59): the improbability of both suggestions in view of other Vedic passages on the two dogs and later materials is demonstrated by Bodewitz (cf. Bodewitz 1991: 44) who refers to Schlerath's similar interpretation of asuṭṭīp said of the canine messengers of Yama: there are no indications that the two dogs were imagined to kill or destroy (i.e., by devouring them) the asuṭṭīp of the dead. However, how else could they "satisfy their desire for life"? According to Aramb, the two alternatives (i.e., asu as equated with concrete or general life in [wo]man or understood as the/a "free soul" in the expression asuṭṭīp) may also be applied to an interpretation of the expression asuṭṭīp under the assumption of a meaning "to steal" for vitṛ (i.e., vitṛ⁶⁴, as opposed to a different verbal root with this meaning), this assumption being possible if one takes vitṛ to mean "to satisfy one's desire for something" (cf. Aramb 1927a: 59-60) — which latter point I consider rather doubtful. Both alternatives as to the understanding of the term asu in the expression asuṭṭīp are in a way found or implied in Maurer 1986: Maurer translates the compound asuṭṭīp in RV 10.14.12 as "life-stealing," which he explains "because they [i.e., the two dogs of Yama] seek out the souls of the deceased" (cf. Maurer 1986: 250 with note 12 on p. 252). — On "robbing" someone's psyche cf. Aramb 1926: 193.

91 Cf. also Aramb 1927a: 33f.

92 Similarly Aramb 1927a: 56. For a rejection of the position that the word asu in the compound asuṭṭīp refers to life as a state (as later on assumed, e.g., by Schlerath, cf. n. 104) cf. Aramb 1927a: 29-33, for Aramb's rejection of an understanding of asu as "vital force" in this context (see, e.g., Horsch 1971: 112) cf. Aramb 1927a: 33. — It is interesting to note that although elsewhere the word asu is translated by Lommel as "life" or "vital force" ("Leben," "Lebenskraft"), in the context of asuṭṭīp he assumes a general meaning of "soul" (cf. Lommel 1955: 107). — Further passages in Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Ashtavakraveda which contain the expression asuṭṭīp are discussed in Aramb 1927a: 36-54.

93 The request that the asuṭṭīp of men should not go to Yama (AV 18.3.62; cf. also Weber 1896: 274; Oldenberg 1916: 528; Aramb 1927: 15, n. 3; Schlerath 1968: 148; Oberleis 1998: 505, n. 220, who translates the term asu as "Lebenskraft" although he adds the passage, together with the following one, to argue for asu as a "free soul") also points at a concept of individualized entities, as does the statement that Yama's messenger (the personified funeral fire?) has made the asuṭṭīp go to the Fathers (AV 18.2.27); cf. Weber 1895: 854, Oldenberg, loc. cit., Aramb 1927a: 51 and 56-57, and Schlerath, loc. cit., who abandons his interpretation of the term asu as referring to "unspecified life" in this rather pregnant context and instead speaks here — much more meaningfully — of representations of the individual; Oberleis 1998: 505. In the latter passage, reference is made to the remote past, not to the present situation of a funeral in which the plural number would not make sense (for another plural occurrence of the word asu cf. below p. 144 on AV 8.2.26); Renou (1942: 78), who presupposes the notion of "vital breath" or a "vital soul" here ("soulfe de vie"), has disregarded the plural number. In view of the mentioned passages, the expression "one whose asu has gone" (gattavā) as well may be understood as an abbreviation for "one whose individualising 'free soul' has gone to the Fathers" (cf. RV 10.18.8). Renou (1965: 64) paraphrases as "le défunt," whereas in Renou 1942: 76 he clarifies his interpretation of the word asu as referring to breath: "dont le soufle est parti" (cf. also n. 103 below), similar to O'Flaherty's "whose life's breath has gone" (1981: 52); in Lommel's free translation (1955: 109) "Sein Leben ist dahin," an abstract notion of "life" may again be involved (cf. also Dange 1995-1996: 22).

94 Pace Aramb 1927a: 16, 58 and 63.

95 "The One to whom leading the away of the 'free souls' (i.e., dead) pertains"; cf. Aramb 1927a: 33-34, with n. 2 on p. 34. Cf. also Aramb 1927a: 47 and 52.

96 Cf. RV 10.59.5-6 (cf. also Tuxen according to Aramb 1927a: 151 and 157; Aramb 1927a: 157; Bodewitz 1991: 45). The supplication is supposed to have taken place after asu has been restored to Subandhu. Cf. the story about Subandhu in the Jaiminītya-Brāhmaṇa (5.167-169) referred to by Bodewitz (1991: 44) which forms the background of RV 10.57-60, the Guṇapya-hymns (cf. Oerdel 1887: 41-45; cf. also 1986: 263 on "The Spirit"). Subandhu's asu is taken away by sorcerers and later restored to him, something which is difficult to imagine if asu would be the "vital soul" here (pace Horsch 1971: 130 who takes asu to be the vital breath here) — the victim is not lifeless while he is without his asu but rather "out of his mind" or unconscious, as in deep sleep. Cf. also Aramb 1927a: 29-29 on asu in the Subandhu-story according to the Guṇapya-hymns of the Ṛgveda; cf. however Aramb's subsequent addition of the meaning of (concrete) life-force (i.e., "vital soul") to this meaning of the term asu in the present context (Aramb 1927a: 63). On Tuxen's interpretation of these hymns and his understanding of the term manas as abstract "consciousness" in this context, cf. Aramb 1927a: 148-151. Cf. also pp. 137-138 above on Aramb's own interpretation of the term manas. The employment of the term manas, next to asu, to refer to the a's "free soul" seems indeed demonstrable in RV 10.57-60 (cf. Aramb 1927a: 166-169 and 170-171; cf. also Maurer 1986: 265 on RV 10.58) although for the reasons given above I hesitate to transfer this concept to all other usages of the
in the immediately following verse, Earth and God Soma are requested to return asu and the (bodily?) Self (sātu) respectively. This suggests that here too asu is to be understood as the individuating “free soul,” rather than the “vital soul” as which is referred to with its specializations in the preceding where prāna is listed together with the other three major vital forces.

The notion of asu – so closely connected with “de-” and “re-animation” and the afterlife – can thus be shown to have most probably been basically that of a “free soul,” and as such a “soul” it could indeed have been imagined as wind- or air-term in Vedic literature (as obviously intended by Arambh). On the use of some verses of RV 10.57, in which manas is called back from the other world (RV 10.57.3–5), in a modified form to relate to the manas-s of the persons involved in a ritual addressing the Fathers (within the upāsanas-rituals preceding the establishment of the sacrificial fire according to the Brahmāpura-Savaitās) cf. Krick 1982: 80.


78 The latter alternative is adopted by Armbahn (1927a: 15).

79 As explained above (p. 136), the short-term departure of the “breathing soul” prāna from within the body to a place nearby was obviously considered possible during life, i.e., it was not fatal, although certainly dangerous. Thus, the request that it may be returned is not necessarily meaningless.

Further evidence for the interpretation of asu as the “free soul” is provided by AV 5.1.7 (adduced also in Schlerath 1968: 148): it is difficult to imagine that the expression asu which is without death (amṛtā∞) in the otherwise very obscure verse refers to the impersonal “vital soul” as manifest in this body (pace Armbahn 1927a: 15, n. 1), and not to the “free soul.” Cf. also RV 1.113.16 (adduced in Schlerath 1968: 147) where the living asu is said to have come to those awakened by Dawn; this could refer to the return of the “free soul” after death sleep. Because the “free soul” is imagined to be “alive” (cf., e.g., Armbahn 1926: 135 and 172) the qualification jīva is certainly meaningful for it, too. Alternatively, however, Dawn herself could be metaphorically imagined as the living asu inasmuch as she fulfills the same vitalizing function for all creatures who have been wakened by her as the individual “vital soul” fulfills for a living being (cf., e.g., Oldenberg 1916: 526; Armbahn 1927a: 16 and Krick 1982: 292, n. 740 “Lebenskraft”); in a more abstract sense Lommel 1955: 32: “neue Lebensfrische” for jīva asu; Renou 1942: 29 “[l’Esprit de vie]” may point at the notion of a conscious soul also responsible for vital functions; cf. also Oberlies 1998: 504, n. 216, who takes jīva to mean “vitalizing,” not “living,” on account of the immediate context. – For the sake of completeness, some remaining passages of the Rigveda have to be addressed in which Schlerath takes the term asu to refer to the “localization” of “existence,” especially of existence in the other world; he thus postulates a “local re-interpretation” of the term meaning “the other world,” similar to the Old Iranian (Avestan) evidence (cf. Schlerath 1968: 148–149; cf. also earlier interpretations, reported in Armbahn 1927a: 65, of the term asu as referring to “Geisterleben” = “Geisterreich,” “Geisterwelt,” in this context, and Maurer 1986: 254: “spirit-world”). However, regardless whether the equation of “existence” and “unspecified life” is legitimate (cf. above pp. 127–128), the development of the term to refer to a very specific location of existence of beings which is not the primary one, namely, the other world, seems rather problematic; cf. also Lommel’s translation of the word asu with “(anderes) Leben” in one of the relevant verses, namely, RV 10.15.1 (Lommel 1955: 111). In this difficult verse (cf. also Armbahn 1927a: 65–71 and 1928: 232, and Danze 1995–1996: 24) the Fathers who are requested to ascend (from the realm of the dead in the underworld) are qualified as “having gone to asu” without having fallen prey to danger; this could be understood as referring to the “going to [one’s own] asu” in the sense of (re-)gaining one’s individual personality, of becoming oneself (again) after a dangerous passage or a period of dormancy (cf. RV 10.12.1 on the re-animation of the sacrificial fire where the noun asu is qualified by “own” [true-]). Oldenberg (1916: 529) offers a different interpretation for the passage RV 10.15.1 (cf. also the presentation in Armbahn 1927a: 65–66): he assumes that here asu, as the vital potency in the function of the psyche, is imagined to precede manas, as the mental potency in the function of the psyche, on the way to the other world and that the two, which otherwise stick to each other, re-unite there (It has to be pointed out that Oldenberg’s notion of the psyche [“free soul”] is not the one brought out in such strong relief by Armbahn and applied in the present contribution, but rather a unitary concept of “soul.”) Oberlies (1998: 505, n. 221) seems to follow this interpretation by defining (not translating!) the idiom “to go to/in [one’s] asu” as “come to new life” (similarly Armbahn 1927a: 16, with n. 2, on the expression in RV 10.12.1). This has to be distinguished from Tuxen’s understanding of the term asu as “eternal life” in this context, referring to asu in the sense of “the universal, all-comprehensive aspect of life” and as having a “collective character” (cf. Armbahn 1927a: 18 and 65); Krick’s translation “zum Leben gelangen” (Krick 1982: 75) may point at a similar interpretation. Inspired by the commentators on this idiom who understand it (in RV 10.15.1 and in similar contexts) in the concrete sense of “attaining a wind-like subtle body” (cf. also Geldner and Caland as referred to by Armbahn) endowed with organs and capabilities similar to that of the material body, Armbahn (Armbahn 1927a: 67–71) renders the idiom as “becoming spirit” (“die, welche Geist geworden sind”) although he seems to be aware of the problem that this does not fit all too well with the literal meaning. asu would thus be a neutral term for “spirit” (“Geist”), a notion which, Armbahn claims, is at the basis of the two notions of the (personal) psyche and the (impersonal) life-breadth (?) (“Geist” in German can refer to a ghost, but not to breath). Finally, also Oldenberg’s rendering of the relevant phrase in RV 10.12.1 ("zu seinem Geistesdasein gehend") is difficult to understand in context (cf. Oldenberg 1917: 44).


101 Cf. RV 2.22.4 (cf. also Tuxen according to Armbahn 1927a: 17 and Schlerath 1968: 147).

102 Cf. RV 10.12.1. This hymn, called the hymn on or about the golden germ, has been treated many times. Most interpreters assign a vitalizing function to asu in this context; cf., e.g., the annotated translations in Brown 1965: 32–33 (asu = “life spirit,” possibly implying consciousness, as in Strauss’, Lüders’ and Krick’s rendering “Lebensgeist” [cf. Strauss 1925: 27, Lüders 1951: 122 and Krick 1982: 293]) and Maurer 1986: 267–270 (“life-essence”). Cf. also Lommel 1955: 119 (“Lebenskraft”) and Renou 1942: 120 (more abstract: “principe de vie”). Thème may presuppose the above-mentioned etymological connection of the word
have existed parallel to the first and may even have been combined with it by some Vedic poets and magical healers. Arman hypothesizes a development in which 

asv, originally only a "vital soul," was conceived in the wider sense of a "free soul" already in Rgvedic times;\(^{109}\) according to this hypothesis asv would be both, concrete life in (wo)man and her/his psyche,\(^{110}\) i.e., the concrete vital essence / vital force and thus the physical principle during life, and the "free soul," which becomes active during sleep and after death.\(^{111}\) However, as long as passages are not available in which these distinct functions of such an entity named asv are unambiguously expressed or implied jointly, this intellectual approximation to a unitary notion of "soul,"\(^{112}\) or overcoming of the "dualism" of "soul," which is assigned to the tenth book of the Rgveda by Arman,\(^{113}\) must remain hypothetical, especially because the distinction between prâna and asv as well as bâmân (cf. below, p. 160) would be difficult to explain and because both notions of asv as "vital soul" and "free soul" are also found separately in later Vedic literature.\(^{114}\) A reference to asv, e.g., in the Kausâtaki-Upanîṣad,\(^{115}\) clearly points at the concept of a "free soul" insomuch as the absence of asv results in "confusion," i.e., swooning,\(^{116}\) not death. However, the parallel passage in the Brhadâranyaka-Upanîṣad\(^{117}\) would rather suggest that asv was conceived as a "vital soul," i.e., "body-soul," because of the closely related reference to the full life-span (àyus).

term asv is obviously referring to the "free soul" (cf. n. 20 and n. 93 above), whereas in verse 23 manas seems to be the relevant term. Alternatively, specific mention of the "vital soul" may indeed be missing here, but part of its function referred to with the mention of the sap or vital juices (nasa). This would imply that asv refers to the "free soul," associated especially with the mind, i.e., the "mental soul" (manas) (cf. above p. 136); thus a consistent understanding of this term in the hymn would be possible if another meaning for the term manas in verse 23 could be determined. – Among the passages adduced by Arman for the usage of the term asv as referring to the "vital soul" AV 10.41 can be considered as unambiguously in favour of such an interpretation (cf. Arman 1927a: 15, n. 1).

\(^{106}\) As mentioned above (cf. n. 104).

\(^{107}\) From the context of the translation "soul."
Following this discussion of 

special reference to the Atharva

The term could even refer to the vital

if one considers that in later Vedic literature the fluctuating
group of specialized vital forces develops into a rather standard group of five
esential vital faculties comprising respiration (prāna) — the most vital among
them —, thinking (manas), speech (sūc), sight (cakṣus) and hearing (śrotra) (literally: "ear"). The two latter faculties are correlated with the sun and the directional
quarters in microcosmic–macrocosmic correspondence: they arise out of
Puruṣa’s sight and hearing, respectively. The poet’s description thus results in
the following relationships:

(6) manas (thinking / "mental soul" / thinking) > moon
prāna ("vital soul" / "breathing-soul" / respiration) > wind
cakṣus (sight / "perceptive soul"/7 sight) > sun
śrotra (hearing) > directional quarters

Already in the ritualistic treatises, the Brāhmaṇas, and especially in the subsequent
Upaniṣads, the four vital faculties prāna, manas, cakṣus and śrotra, sometimes
supplemented by speech and other additional faculties, become an important
issue because (wo)man with her/his psycho–physical organism is moving
more and more into the focus of interest of the priestly thinkers and early
philosophers. For example, in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa, in an extensive
and broadly conceived list of thirteen constituent elements of (wo)man which also includes
some bodily limbs and numerous other physical components, we find
prāna as an indwelling vital faculty next to the faculties of speech, sight, thinking
and hearing in the following correlations:

119 Cf. also Horsch 1971: 113, who — speaking in a very general manner about this pneumatic
soul ("Hauchseele") — considers this notion to be of comparatively late date. Bodewitz
(1991: 40) assigns the notion of prāna to the priestly circles whose concepts prepared the
way for the philosophical speculations of the Upanishads, in cultural contrast to the
notion of asū (as a "free soul," not in the sense of "life" also considered by him) which
Bodewitz associates with shamanistic practices as documented in the Atharvaveda.
Admittedly, the speculations on different prāṇa-s are of a priestly flavour; however, the
simple notion of a "vital soul" identified with breath is certainly also part of popular, non-learned
culture (cf. also Arbman 1927a: 7). — In the case of prāna, the etymological derivation from
the verbal root van, meaning "to breathe," is not disputed.
120 Cf. RV 10.90.13.
121 This interpretation is implied in the translations of Renou 1956: 99 ("souffle," to be understood
as "souffle de vie," cf. n. 103) and O’Flaherty (1981: 31, "vital breath"); cf. also Arbman 1927a:
14 ("Lebenshauch"). Lommel’s rendering as "Geist" reflects the understanding of prāṇa as a "unitary" soul
(Lommel 1955: 115).
122 Cf. AV 11.4 (translated in Renou 1956: 175–180; although not identified, verses 5–6 are rendered
in Oldenberg 1915: 53; cf. also Bodewitz 1992: 51 and Zysk 1993: 200); cf. also AV 5.30.10 and
7.3.11 where prāna possibly fulfills the function of the "vital soul" as such,
conceived as a "breath-soul.

123 Cf. AV 8.1.3 (passage [3]), 8.1.15 (passage [5]), 5.30.13–14 (cf. p. 138 above) and RV
10.59.5–6 (cf. p. 141 above). Cf. also AV 8.2.3 where prāna, cakṣus and manas are listed as
vital forces, followed by the limbs.
"Atemkraft" (cf., however, Oberlies 1998: 382 where "Atem" indicates an interpretation as
physical breath). Maurer’s rendition as "breath" shows that he understood the term to refer
125 Bodewitz uses the term "vital powers" with respect to the five entities mentioned in RV
10.90.13 (cf. Bodewitz 1992: 51) with the intention to refer to the vital faculties, as
becomes clear later on in Bodewitz 1992.
126 Cf. the corresponding fourfold (exclusive of speech) quarter of brahmaṇ in Chandogya-
Upaniṣad (CB/Up) (ed. V.P. Limaye and R.D. Vedaker, Pune 1958) 4.8.3. The correlation
of prāṇa with the wind and cakṣus with the sun occurs also in AV 8.2.3 (cf. nn. 85 and 123
above); cf. also Zysk 1993: 200).
127 Cf. n. 85 above.
[ed. Bhim Dev, Hoshiarpur 1980] 11.6). [I] [rest] in that which is without death. That which is without death [rests] in brahmaṇ." Because of the context of vital
fire
wind
sun
moon
directional quarters

speech
respiration (prāna)
sight (caksus)
thinking (manas)
hearing (śrōtra).

As a group, the vital faculties are frequently called prāna-s, evidently after the chief, most essentially “vital” and maybe also most physically manifest member of the group. In some teachings of the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads which possibly reach back to the older concept of prāna as “breath-soul” (cf. above), prāna—owing to its essential importance for life—acquires the function of a “vital soul” that constitutes the essence of (wo)man, in continuation of the ancient individuating function of the “free soul,” and of the universe at the same time. Generally, in the course of reflections on the plural prāna-s, the notion of subtle sense faculties was developed that superseded the just-mentioned development of the notion of prāna, and finally, in the philosophical traditions of the classical period, the notion of prāna was excluded from the context of metaphysics and psychology, and relegated to the realm of speculations on the functions of various bodily winds; this more physiological notion of prāṇa was part of the medical tradition from early on. In non-scholarly works and idioms, however, the plural expression “prāna-s” remains to be used in the sense of concrete “life.”

faculties I disagree with Bodewitz who interprets prāna in this context as the (breath-like) “life-soul” [i.e., “vital soul”] or soul in general; cf. Bodewitz 1986: 343 (cf. also his implicit reference in Bodewitz 1991: 47). This disagreement extends also to the related passage Śāṅkhuśyaṇa-Āraṇyaka 11.6 added by Bodewitz as evidence for the notion of such a “life-soul”; there prāṇa, together with apāna and udāna, two additional types of respiratory faculty (“backward” and “upward” “breathing,” cf. on these: Bodewitz 1986: 333–334 and 337–341), figures between speech (i.e., the faculty of speech) (śvāc) on the one hand, and sight, thinking and hearing on the other which clearly points at the context of vital faculties.

On the preeminence of prāna in general cf. Bodewitz 1992 and Zysk 1993: 205, on the groups of four, five, six, seven, nine and ten prāna-s in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads cf. Arbman 1972a: 4–7 and Bodewitz 1986–87. Arbman assumes a different historical development and reason for the plural designation prāṇa-s here, namely, a differentiation of the “vital soul” prāṇa into several entities according to its various functions in different body-parts (1972a: 7–9).

130 Cf. also Bodewitz 1992: 52 on prāṇa as “representative of the Ātman concept,” and p. 55 on prāṇa as the “soul” of the deceased.


132 For references to the different types of breath and the bodily winds, which include prāṇa, in Vedic sources cf. Bodewitz 1986 and Zysk 1993: 199–206.

133 Cf., e.g., Arbman 1972a: 4 and 8. Cf. the similar usage of the plural expression “asu-s” mentioned in n. 107 above.

134 Cf. Deussen 1897 (translation into English in 1980). Earlier translations of individual Upaniṣads, also from one European language into another, are listed in Renard 1995.

135 Cf. Müller 1879, 1884.

136 Cf. n. 21 above.

137 The derivation from Van has been unambiguously rejected already in Mayrhofer 1956, s.v. Ātman. Cf. also Bodewitz 1991: 48.


VI.

The two terms asu and prāna, although of great significance in the psychology of the ancient period, did not persist in the context of the subsequent development of the concept of “soul” in classical Indian philosophy where the term Ātman (to which I have already referred in the introduction cf. pp. 120–121) became most prominent. It is this term that has been connected in the West with the Indian religio-philosophical notion of a “soul” ever since the middle of the eighteenth century and became a household word for Western philosophers and historians of religion at the very latest with the publication of Paul Deussen’s famous Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie (General History of Philosophy)—with its substantial volumes on Indian philosophy—and his translation into German of sixty Upaniṣads in 1897, dedicated to the “manes / spiritual ancestors of Arthur Schopenhauer.” In his translations, Deussen left the word Ātman untranslated, and otherwise referred to Ātman as “das Selbst,” just like Friedrich Max Müller in his earlier, equally well-known English translation of the oldest Upaniṣads, chose “the Self” as translation equivalent. In this, both translators, and other translators of individual Upaniṣads, base themselves on the fact that in the classical Sanskrit language the word Ātman is used in everyday language to refer to one’s own psycho-physical complex, in contrast with what is not oneself, that is, the Other, and that the word therefore also has the function of a reflexive pronoun.

As in the case of asu, the etymology of the word Ātman, which is assumed to be related to German “Atem,” in Old German “ätum” and Old Saxo “ad-hom,” meaning “breath,” has not yet been clarified. An early, still much quoted etymology connects the word with the verbal root meaning “to breathe” that is traditionally considered to be at the base of the word Ātman. Such an etymology would again provide a parallel, e.g., to the Latin anima, but cannot be maintained any longer from the linguistic point of view. From the point of view of the history of ancient Indian religion and philosophy, however, another derivation which was suggested in early days of scholarship on India would be equally suitable, namely from a verbal root meaning “to move back and forth, to wander.” Even though he does not consider such an etymology, the Dutch historian of religion Jan Heestereman stresses the aspect of the brisk movement of breath which takes place continuously and its resulting aspect of having an unsteady, changeable nature; these aspects of breath, he assumes, explain the fact that many
words for “soul” point at notions connected with the pneumatic sphere, as he calls it.\(^{140}\) The background of this assumption is Heesterman’s own, not expressly stated understanding of the Vedic *ātman* as a “soul” in the sense of the individual human Self and thus individualized intrinsic human nature. This understanding of his is coupled with the supposition that in archaic thinking the “soul” is not uniform but multiform and divided by nature; the latter aspect explains, according to Heesterman, the many different Vedic notions of “soul.” The “soul,” he claims in this connection, was conceived as something substantial and at the same time as a continuously changing process, being in constant flux in more than one sense.\(^ {141}\) The pertinent linguistic derivation is still considered valid from the point of view of advanced Indo-European linguistics represented by contemporary scholars like Eichner who in his explanation of the word *ātman* in the meaning of “breath” assumes another relevant nuance of the underlying reconstructed Indo-European root, namely, “to return periodically.”\(^ {142}\) However, Eichner does not comment upon the possible relevance of such an assumption for our understanding of the special aspects involved in the ancient notion of *ātman* as a kind of “soul.”

Another relatively recent solution to the etymological problem has been suggested by a distinguished linguist and scholar of Vedic religion, the late Paul Thieme, who bases his hypothesis on the easily observable difference in the speed of the movement of wind and breath respectively, and assumes a verbal root meaning “to sneeze, to move silently” to account for the word *ātman* as originally referring to breath.\(^ {143}\)

Whatever the linguistic-historical truth may be, both hypotheses agree with the observation that in its oldest usage the word *ātman* refers to breath as a concrete wind-like entity\(^ {144}\) and that this usage involves already in the *Ṛgveda* a more abstract conceptuality taking into consideration the vital aspect of breath.\(^ {145}\) In the macrocosmic realm, for example, the divine powers Sun and Rain are each called *ātman* of the mobile and the immobile, presumably implying an understanding of Sun and Rain respectively as the source of all life and thus as a cosmic vital power.\(^ {146}\) In the microcosmic realm, this macrocosmic vital power, conceived as some more abstract principle, manifests itself in individuated form as the specific life that indwells animate beings or certain important events, such as the ritual, which were considered to be animate.\(^ {147}\) There is textual evidence that life in this sense of individual vital force, again termed *ātman*, can be possessed and transferred by those in whom it dwells, and that it can be increased as well as diminished.\(^ {148}\) Finally, there are contexts which are sometimes not easily distinguished from the previously mentioned ones in which the term *ātman* may refer to what could be designated as a subtle, breath-like “vital soul.” Just as in the case of the related notions that have already been addressed in this contribution, namely, *āsnu, śivas* and *prāṇa*, no cognitive or other psychical functions are ascribed to this *ātman*,\(^ {149}\) in striking contrast to the conceptuality of *ātman* in the later religious and philosophical traditions where consciousness is the most important characteristic of *ātman* or even its very nature. In the ancient period, *ātman* in the last-mentioned sense seems to be merely responsible for the body’s being alive.

This *ātman* is addressed in a well-known, very complex hymn of the *Ṛgveda*, transmitted in the tenth and last cycle of hymns in this collection.\(^ {150}\) It must have been used on the occasion of the cremation of the dead and refers to several, not necessarily disparate notions about the fate of a recently deceased person in the

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141 Cf. Heesterman 1995: 29–31. It may be added, highly speculatively, that some transitive/causative derivation of the word *ātman* from a verbal root “to move back and forth” would open up the possibility to see in the original concept of *ātman* a reference to one of the vital functions manifesting the “power of life” inside a body that I have not yet addressed, namely, the controlled moving and manoeuvring of a body; there is an old, though certainly not universal equation in Indian culture between the mobile and the animate, as opposed to the stationary and the inanimate.
142 Cf. Eichner 2002: 141, who reconstructs a verbal root *vṛṣṭ(ā)n*.
143 Cf. Mayrhofer 1988, s.v. *ātman*. Mayrhofer rejects all previous suggestions and considers Thieme’s solution as the only acceptable one.
145 Cf. Arbman 1972a: 10 for further passages. Similarly, the divine power Wind is said to be the *ātman*, the vital power, of the Gods in *RV* 10.168.4. Again, Geldner translates with “Seele,” whereas Thieme interprets the term in a concrete way, translating as “Atmen” (cf. Thieme 1964: 59; cf. also Willman-Grabowska 1929–1930: 12–13, O’Flaherty 1981: 176 and Maurer 1986: 215); cp. also Oberlies loc. cit. (cf. n. 146 above). Arbman (1972a: 10) sees the passage as testimony for the air/wind-like nature of the "vital soul" *ātman* which is for him practically identical with *prāṇa*.
146 For this interpretation of *ātman* as concrete individual “[power/force] of life” I include those passages which are adduced by Willman-Grabowska (1929–1930: 13) to document a usage of the term *ātman* referring to the “principe essentiel et intérieur qui fait que l’objet donné est ce qu’il est...”
147 This has already been observed in Strauss 1925: 39.
process of being cremated. The centrally relevant third verse may be analysed as follows:

\[(8) \text{caksu} (\text{ sight / “perceptive soul”}) \rightarrow \text{sun} (\text{macrocosmic element})\]
\[\text{ātman} (\text{“vital soul” / “breathing-soul”}) \rightarrow \text{wind} (\text{macrocosmic element})\]
\[?? (\text{“free soul”?) } \rightarrow \text{heaven} (\text{upper world layer})\]
\[?? (\text{“free soul”?) } \rightarrow \text{earth} (\text{lower world layer})\]
\[?? (\text{“free soul”?) } \rightarrow \text{waters} (\text{macrocosmic realm /element})\]
\[\text{compact bodily parts / bones (sarrīṇa) } \rightarrow \text{plants} (\text{macrocosmic constituent})\]

To explain, first, the caksu of the dead person, that is, his/her sight, i.e., vital faculty of seeing (or: his/her “perceptive soul”),\(^{131}\) which is presumably not functioning any longer but considered to be still present in or near the corpse, is enjoined to go to the sun, in accordance with the ancient – almost universal – correlation of this subtle material sense faculty (or specialized “soul”) with the most brilliant and illuminating heavenly body; this correlation grounded in the analogy between the “lamp” of the microcosm and that of the macrocosm is also encountered in the Rgvedic hymn about Purusa.\(^{130}\) Then the ātman of the dead person is dispatched to the wind, a clear indication of the fact that this microcosmic entity was conceived to be wind-like and thus probably breath-like.\(^{154}\) It may be considered that the word ātman refers here merely to concrete breath.\(^{155}\) This is improbable, however, because in contrast to the invisible vital faculty of sight (or: “perceptive soul”) breath, i.e., concrete breath, should somehow be perceptible to be indirectly addressed here so that the injunction becomes meaningful; this is clearly not the case any more when the corpse has been laid out on the funeral pyre. Furthermore, concrete breath would not fit well in the triad encountered here, comprising [1] sight (or: the “perceptive “soul”), that is, the most prominent among the sensory vital faculties (or: forces) (subsequently conceived as a

\(^{131}\) Cf. RV 10.16.3.
\(^{132}\) Cf. n. 85 above.
\(^{133}\) Cf. RV 10.90.13 (analysis [6]), treated above, pp. 146–147.
\(^{134}\) For the reworking of this verse in AV 18.2.7 cf. p. 132 above. There seems to be a vague reference to RV 10.16.3 in Taittirīyā-Samhitā 3.1.4c (ed. Albrecht Weber, in Indische Studien 11 [1871]), in connection with the animal sacrifice (cf. also Krick 1982: 289, n. 727); here, ātman has been replaced with prāṇā. In 3.1.4h, the prāṇā of the sacrificer is mentioned in accordance with this terminology.
\(^{154}\) Horsch (1968: 470) assumes that the word ātman here simply refers to breath itself; cf. also Weber 1895: 846, Horsch 1971: 112, and e.g., Lommel 1955: 108, Krick 1982: 48, Maurer 1986: 259, Dange 1995–1996: 26 and Oberlies 1998: 382, n. 218 (cf., however, n. 157 below). Oldenberg (1917: 524) does not translate the word ātman in his rendering of the present verse, but his explanation in Oldenberg 1915: 52 suggests that he considers the term to refer to concrete breath here, as opposed to the following development of the term discussed by him.


\(^{156}\) The role of the “eye” would in this case be that of a prominent vital faculty. Given the context, it seems less probable that ātman was conceived merely as a specialized “vital soul,” namely, the “breathing-soul,” here, together with the “eye” as another such “soul,” i.e., the “perceptive soul.” – Oberlies’ translation of the word ātman as “Atemkraft” (1998: 501; cf. also p. 503) suggests that he changed his mind (cf. 1998: 382, n. 218) and interpreted ātman in this context as the vital faculty of respiration.

\(^{140}\) I interpret the injunctive statement relating to the waters as a poetic variation of the preceding twofold injunction relating to heaven and earth, i.e., I understand pratis in the sense of “placed, enjoined” (cf. also Geldner 1951–1957: vol. 3, 148, Horsch 1971: 112 and Maurer 1986: 259) with an allusion to the derived meaning “adequate, fitting, agreeable.” It would be difficult to explain why an ordinance or determination implied by the injunctive statement and maybe referred to by the word dharman should be modally or causally effective with regard to the future place of residence of the deceased person, and at the same time his/her liking or personal preference be decisive (cf. Lommel 1955: 108). Or should one understand this ordinance in the sense of a natural order of things (cf. the paraphrase in O’Flaherty 1981: 49: “if that is your fate”) which is of such a character that the specific aspects within this larger framework which relate to oneself on the one hand and one’s personal liking on the other hand would be (pre)supposed to harmonize? This latter understanding of the term dharman would probably go together with the interpretation of the term in this passage by Böhltlingk and Roth (1861, s.v. dharman 2): “(nach dem innern Gesetz einer Sache usw.) naturgemäß.”

\(^{159}\) O’Flaherty’s statements are terminologically slightly confused here as she speaks at the same time of the body dispersing or disintegrating into heaven, earth and the waters and of
To sum up the resulting hypothetical picture of the notions involved in analysis (8): After death, the “eye,” i.e., sight, the central vital faculty of seeing (or: the specialized “perceptive soul”), the breath-like “vital soul” called ātman (or: the specialized “breathing-soul”), and the solid bodily element of (wo)man, return to those natural elements from which they have arisen: the “eye” to the sun, breath-like ātman to the wind, and the compact bodily parts or bones to the plants; the latter can be conceived as the origin or source of the former if one considers that the substance or essence which nourishes and builds up the solid bodily element of (wo)man is extracted from edible plants, directly or indirectly in the case of the consumption of meat and animal products. The unnamed individuating “free soul,” which I suggest is the addressee of the second person imperative statements in the verse under analysis, an entity constituting the essentially independent individual, has become completely “free” now, restrained merely by some order of things or determination (?) (dharman) which is not further explicated. Given the limits of the present contribution it is not possible to elaborate on the difficult term (dharman) and on possible interpretations of its precise meaning in the present context. It can merely be pointed out that according to one possible direction of interpretation dharman regulates the fate of the “free soul” after death with respect to its cosmic place of residence: heaven and earth, mentioned in the verse, are the two worlds, or rather, world layers, of the ancient Vedic cosmology, which are in the course of the development of cosmological concepts supplemented by a third layer, the so-called intermediate space located between them. The waters mentioned here also refer to a specific macrocosmic realm, namely, the primordial cosmic waters from which the world as we know it arose in the beginning; these waters are still present today in the form of the heavenly ocean and are also surging beneath the (flat) earth: every night the sun submerges in these waters and thus earth plunges back, as it were, into the primordial dark and unfathomable watery chaos.

The “dead man” himself or the “soul of the dead man” going into these three worlds (or of “one’s” choosing of one or the other of the mentioned worlds) (cf. O’Flaherty 1981: 47). On speaking about the dead person in the sense of his/her “free soul” cf. Arbib 1926: 107f.

160 Cf. also Arbib 1926: 144, 156–157, 161–162, 178, 181 and 184–190 about the annihilation of the “body-soul(s)” together with the body. Bodewitz’s suggestion that the term ātman already refers to the self of man here (a role which according to Bodewitz is consequently also taken by prāṇa because of the parallel with RV 10.90.13) (cf. Bodewitz 1992: 51) is therefore problematic. – The fact that the “eye” and the ātman return to their source (cf. also Arbib 1926: 161, 179, 182 and 198 on the return to its origin of the “body-soul”) seems to rule out the belief that the “free soul” and the “body-souls” reunite after death (on this possibility cf. Arbib 1926: 157–158).

161 Cf. n. 158 above on some considerations.

162 Cf. Bodewitz 1982 on the various stages of Vedic cosmogony and especially the role of the waters.

under the presupposition that “we” are our “souls,” that is, our now continuously conscious individuating “free souls,” the notion of such a “power of life” only implied in the passage underlying analysis (8) would here respond to and express the human hope for survival, that is, the continuation of some personal and conscious life after death.

VII.

A precise analysis of the historically most relevant verse in the Rgvedic cremation hymn 10.16 (analysis [8]), with the purpose of clarifying the notion of ātman in this context, brings with it a closer look at the involved notion(s) about life after death and the varieties of this notion in ancient India, a topic already touched upon in the discussion of some of the Atharvavedic prayers and closely connected with notions of “powers of life,” including ideas about their relationship with the body and the elusive person. As Flew suggests, the supposedly universal hope for survival after death may even be considered as a major motivation behind the assumption of an immortal “soul.” I have already alluded to the fact that the cremation hymn RV 10.16 as a whole may combine various conceptions of the afterlife. One of them is the archaic notion of immortality as reconstitution: in the case of especially meritorious persons, e.g., if the dead person belonged to the small elite of especially praiseworthy sacrificers or heroic warriors, it was believed that the deceased would be transferred to heaven, to enjoy all kinds of physical pleasures there together with the gods or his/her equally meritorious forefathers. One may take verse 3 of hymn 10.16 (cf. analysis 8), to allude to this so-called reconstitution variant of immortality because elsewhere in the hymn there is evidence for this belief. The enjoyment of heavenly pleasures may have been imagined to take place by means of the present body in reconstituted form or even by means of the same uncathed body which has only seemingly been harmed by the funeral fire on the one hand the cre-

163 That is, not only during dreams and – presumably – during deep sleep or swooning.

164 It is impossible to decide whether the poet-priest intended to address the “free soul” termed ātman here or whether he believed in some other “free soul” going under a different name (e.g., manas), or whether he had already a “unitary” “soul” in mind, no matter what it may have been called.


168 RV 10.16.5 (cf. also Arbib 1927a: 36) refers to this rare, but nevertheless hoped-for situation.

mation fire is requested to heal the damage afflicted to the corpse by beasts of prey, on the other hand it is implored not to burn the body, not even to scorch the skin together with the solid body underneath. The hymn also refers to the ritual substitutes that are cremated along with the corpse in the form of sacrificial animals or their most tasty parts and in this way offered to the funeral fire. Certainly, the burning of the body must have been clearly observed, but it is reinterpreted here as an act of “cooking,” that is, as the positive act of causing the body to attain a “well-done” state, in the sense of a mature, complete and purified state, ready to be handed over to the forefathers. However, regarding the passage of analysis (8) this interpretation is problematic as one would have to assume that the constituent elements of the dead person that were dispatched to the sun, the wind and the plants respectively would have to be extracted from these locations to allow for a complete reconstitution of the body for the purpose of enjoying physical pleasures in heaven. Furthermore, the passage also mentions earth and the waters as two further cosmic destinies that have to be considered. The verse thus seems to express alternative and very much different fates after death, one of them being a reconstituted bodily existence in heaven, another a new bodily existence on this earth, and still another continued existence with a different body in the heavenly waters. The second notion can be inferred from the ancient texts in two forms. One of them is the belief that a deceased male assumes renewed physical existence in his own family-line, normally (and preferably) as his own grandson, a belief well-known from other cultures and manifest in the custom of naming the grandson, and not the son, after the grandfather, although usually not before the latter’s death ("terrestrial immortality"). Further, there was the belief that the ancestors returned to this world after some time, to dwell in the vicinity of the taboos of their descendants in the bodily form of birds. In both cases reconstitution of the very same body would certainly not be meaningful. This also holds good if the reference to “earth” in analysis (8) would be a reference to the old Indo-European idea of a dark subterranean realm where the “common” dead are bound to go to after death. Allusions to this general realm of the dead can be found plentifully elsewhere in Vedic literature, which makes the latter assumption more probable than the two alternatives mentioned above; this would entail the idea that the “dead” dwell in this realm in the form of their “free souls,” maybe accompanied by their “mental souls” (manas), i.e., experience existence as some kind of shadow-beings of themselves when compared to their former personalities, and in any case not in their reconstituted bodily form. Finally, also in the case of the third notion, namely “going to the waters,” which may refer to continued existence on or rather as heavenly bodies, especially the stars, located within the cosmic waters, reconstitution of the earthly body with all its vital forces does not make much sense. It may very well be that the “eye,” ātman and compact bodily parts of the deceased person were imagined to return to their sources forever in the case of continued existence in or rather under the earth (i.e., in the subterranean realm of the dead) and in the (heavenly) waters which is based on the continuation of the respective “free soul.” In the case of continued existence in heaven with a reconstituted body, however, which – as the hoped-for and preferred fate after death – forms the main concern of the hymn with its many references to the body of the dead person, the after-death allocation of the compact bodily parts to the macrocosmic element of plants would not apply. As regards the initial two allocations of constituents of the person to the wind and the sun, it is conceivable that they also apply to this variant of afterlife because a “vital soul” (or “breathing-soul”) (ātman) and a vital faculty of sight (or “perceptive soul”) could have been imagined to be newly created from these macrocosmic elements after the body has been reconstituted in or has miraculously been transferred in purified form to the heavenly realm. The two newly formed constituents would then join this body and perform their functions in it, for the benefit of the “free soul” which has reached there by the

172. Cf. RV 10.16.4 and 7; cf. also Oldenberg 1917: 577–578 and 587.  

178. Cf. above p. 136. On the complete lack of life and consciousness, or at least the lack of their presence in the full sense, in the “free soul” cf. Arbman 1926: 189 and 201–202, on the endowment of the “free soul” with life and intellectual capacity, and the development of a unitary notion of a “soul” cf. pp. 202–204 and 206–211.  
181. The return to the plants may be a reference to the customary burial of the bones after cremation, itself a reference to the subterranean realm of the dead (and possibly to the earlier practice of burial), and at the same time reflect the awareness of the organic transformation of the compact bodily parts into new living plant-matter (cf. also Horsch 1971: 116, n. 18b).
path of the gods and especially meritorious ancestors. However, it could also be the case that for the bodies of ancestors transferred to heaven such worldly “body-souls” were not considered necessary or that the issue just did not come up in the reflections on bodily heavenly existence after death.\(^{182}\)

Under the above interpretation the passage analyzed in (8), although not referring to three variants or possibilities of afterlife based on one coherent concept, would nevertheless show consistency as regards the subject or entity which is addressed in it with the second person imperative forms.\(^{183}\)

To conclude this rather detailed discussion of the important verse \textit{RV} 10.16.3 (analysis (8)), even though I certainly cannot claim to have solved all the problems involved in its interpretation, on its own as well as in context, I think that the interpretation of \textit{ātman} as the/a pneumatic “vital soul,” next to an implied individuating “free soul” which is not named explicitly, can stand at least as a hypothesis.

VIII.

In the \textit{Atharvaveda} we find evidence not only for a distinction between \textit{āsī}, as the “free soul,” and \textit{prāṇa}, as the pneumatic “vital soul” or specialized “breathing-soul,” but furthermore a distinction between \textit{ātman} and \textit{prāṇa}, \textit{e.g.}, in a two-verse incantation\(^ {184}\) whose specific function is unfortunately not clear. The subsequent hymn which is directed at desire (\textit{kāma}) as a cosmic power could indicate that the two verses express some analogical love spell or represent a formula used in connection with successful courtship or the union with a desired person. In the first verse, the “whole I” is differentiated into “my \textit{ātman},” “my sight,” and “my hearing,” and finally into three kinds of respiration, “breathing forwards” (\textit{i.e.}, outwards), “breathing backwards” (\textit{i.e.}, inwards) and “breathing in between”\(^{185}\).

\textit{I}:  

my \textit{ātman} (“vital soul”)  
my sight (\textit{cakṣus})  
my hearing (\textit{śrotra})

\textit{my forward respiration (prāṇa)}  
\textit{my backward respiration (apāṇa)}  
\textit{my in-between respiration (vyāna)} = the whole “I.”

It has to be stressed that “I,” which according to the majority of later Brahminical philosophers,\(^ {186}\) just as in the context of the Platonic notion of “soul,” cannot refer to the body and must therefore refer to some non-physical “soul” or “power of life,”\(^ {187}\) it is obviously employed by the author of this verse to refer not to a single entity, but to a collection of several material and subtle material entities. This complex referent could be subsumed under the notion of “individualized life,” approaching a more differentiated idea of a person that comprises \textit{ātman} as the “vital soul” and five essential vital faculties of a subtle material nature. The special context may be responsible for the fact that neither the “free soul” nor the mental vital faculty (\textit{manas}) is mentioned here.

A clear distinction between \textit{ātman} and \textit{prāṇa} is also made in an Atharvavedic prayer for protection directed at the three “worlds” heaven, earth and intermediate space, as becomes evident from the introductory invocations and the macrocosmic correspondences essential to the prayer.\(^ {188}\) The praying person entrusts him/herself to Heaven and Earth,\(^ {189}\) equating his/her “eye” (\textit{cakṣus}) with the sun (which belongs to heaven), his/her \textit{prāṇa} with the wind (connected with the intermediate space in which wind moves back and forth), his/her \textit{ātman} (directly) with the intermediate space, and his/her solid body (\textit{śarīra}) with the earth. After these identifications, the word \textit{ātman} is used again in an obviously different sense, in the concluding phrase “I lay down the \textit{ātman} for Heaven and Earth, for protection.”\(^ {190}\)

(10)  

\begin{align*}
\textit{“eye”} & \quad - \quad \text{sun} & \quad \text{(heaven)} \\
\textit{prāṇa} & \quad - \quad \text{wind} & \quad \text{(intermediate space)} \\
\textit{ātman} & \quad - \quad \text{intermediate space} & \quad \text{(intermediate space)} \\
\text{solid body} & \quad - \quad \text{earth} & \quad \text{(earth)}
\end{align*}

\textit{ātman} : heaven and earth

Like the expression “(the whole) ‘I’” in the Atharvavedic love spell (\textit{government}) added above (analysis [9]), the term \textit{ātman} in the conclusion probably refers to the total

\textbf{References:}


\(^{183}\) Space does not allow discussion of another interpretation of the passage analyzed in (8), namely, the ultimate dispersal and dissolution of the person in the various macrocosmic elements, constituents and realms.

\(^{184}\) Cf. \textit{AV} 19.51.1–2.

\(^{185}\) On this interpretation of the three types of breath(ing) cf. Bodewitz 1986: 333–334 and 337–341. The occurrence in the triad makes it very improbable that \textit{prāṇa} refers to the/a “vital soul” here; the mention of \textit{prāṇa} as a vital faculty, together with two other types of respiration, furthermore implies that also “eye” and “ear” are understood here as (sensory) vital faculties. On the whole verse (\textit{AV} 19.51.1) cf. also Heesterman 1995: 30.

\(^{186}\) Cf. Preisenzanz 1994: 235–237 and 298, with further references.


\(^{189}\) Although intermediate space is also invoked in \textit{AV} 5.9.3 and mentioned in 5.9.7, the praying person entrusts him/herself only to Heaven and Earth, understood as a divine parental couple who grants protection (5.9.7) and the full life-span (\textit{āyujīt, āyupatīt}) (cf. 5.9.8); the empty intermediate space between them obviously possesses only a faint character, or even no special character at all, and is not personified.

\(^{190}\) Cf. \textit{AV} 5.9.7. Weber (1898: 198) suggests that this verse is an evening prayer, followed by a morning prayer in the following verse (\textit{AV} 5.9.8).
tality of the listed entities, from the “eye” to the solid body, i.e., to the psychophysical whole of the praying person,\(^{191}\) his/her Self; thus the usage of the word \(\text{ātman}\) as a reflexive pronoun and therefore the meaning “myself” may also resound in this passage. What, then, about \(\text{ātman}\) in the equation part of the prayer? Because the whole person (\(\text{ātman}\)) when submitted for protection, should also include the individuating “free soul,”\(^{192}\) it could very well be that the term \(\text{ātman}\) refers to this entity here, whereas \(\text{prāṇa}\) and \(\text{cakṣus}\) refer to two specialized “body-souls,” the “breathing-soul” and the “perceptive soul,” or \(\text{prāṇa}\) to the breath-like “vital soul” in general and \(\text{cakṣus}\) to sight, the most important sensory vital faculty. Although a different terminology would be used, the entities involved, including the solid body, would thus be those referred to explicitly and implicitly in the third verse of the cremation hymn RV 10.16 (analysis [8]) (cf. above pp. 151ff.). This interpretation implies that here too – on the evidence of the equation of \(\text{ātman}\) with intermediate space, and not with wind – the “free soul” (named \(\text{ātman}\)) is not imagined as breath-like and of a subtle physical nature any longer, as opposed to \(\text{prāṇa}\). Furthermore, although the relation of wind and \(\text{prāṇa}\) to intermediate space relates \(\text{prāṇa}\) to \(\text{ātman}\), the correlation of the latter directly with empty intermediate space points at its conception as something almost immaterial or non-substantial as compared to \(\text{prāṇa}\).\(^{193}\)

This “de-substantialization” can also be observed elsewhere, in an Atharvavedic prayer for rescue or help directed to several god-like powers.\(^{194}\) The following entities are entreated to return to the praying person(s), a process which presumably involves divine intervention:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{prāṇa} \\
\text{ātman} \\
“\text{eye}” \\
\text{asū}.
\end{align*}
\]

Here, \(\text{ātman}\) is distinguished not only from \(\text{prāṇa}\),\(^{195}\) but also from \(\text{asū}\); the “eye” (\(\text{cakṣus}\)) completes the enumeration of the most essential non-physical components of the praying person.\(^{196}\) The additional differentiation of \(\text{ātman}\) from \(\text{asū}\) may point at an even more abstract notion of \(\text{ātman}\) which is divorced not only from that of a pneumatic “vital soul” or specialized “breathing-soul,” but also somehow from the ancient notion of a subtle material “free soul.” Considering the usages of \(\text{ātman}\) in the Atharvaveda which come close to that of a reflexive pronoun (cf. above p. 160), one could speculate that it is the now more clearly conceived individuating aspect of the “free soul” which becomes associated with this separately conceived \(\text{ātman}\) (i.e., Self), possibly even together with the aspect of thinking or consciousness as manifest during all conscious states because \(\text{manas}\) is not mentioned here. This would leave \(\text{asū}\) with the main functions of a “dream-soul” (possibly as a conscious agent observed by another conscious agent, the \(\text{ātman}\)) and of a representative of the person during all unconscious states as well as after death, fulfilling the latter function as a conscious agent, just as in the dream-situation, or even as the sole continuation of the former person in this state. This passage referring to the psychical components of a person could thus be interpreted as follows:

\(11^\prime\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{“vital soul” / “breathing-soul” (\text{prāṇa})} \\
\text{(conscious?) Self (?) \text{ātman}} \\
\text{“eye” = sight / “perceptive soul” (\text{cakṣus})} \\
\text{“free soul” (\text{asū}).}
\end{align*}
\]

It cannot be completely ruled out, of course, that with \(\text{ātman}\) and \(\text{asū}\) the “vital soul” and the individuating “free soul” are meant here, together with the two vital faculties respiration and sight.\(^{197}\)

IX.

In the speculative–proto-philosophical treatises of ritual science, the Brāhmaṇas, as well as in the Aranyakas, treatises that may have been composed in the secluded forest by those who had retreated from the world and traditional orthodox religious practices and that were meant to be taught and studied there, the microcosmic–macrocosmic correlations relating to the deceased person in the Rgvedic cremation hymn discussed above (analysis [8]) are transferred to the animal organism. This becomes evident in a formula which is used during the \(\text{paśūnabha}\), the animal sacrifice. Just as in the passage of analysis (11) \(\text{ātman}\) is distinguished from \(\text{asū}\) as well a from \(\text{prāṇa}\). According to a Brāhmaṇa-passage

\[\text{191 Cf. also Willman–Grabowska 1929–1930: 17 on the usage of the word \(\text{ātman}\) in AV 11.8.31. Horsch (1968: 470) may have had this or a similar passage in mind when he speaks of the employment of the word \(\text{ātman}\) to denote the person as a “more or less substantial entity.”}
\[\text{192 This would especially be the case if Weber is right in interpreting the prayer as an evening prayer (cf. n. 190) because during dreams and deep sleep the “free soul” leaves the body.}
\[\text{193 Arbman (cf. Arbman 1927a: 81) supposes such a development only for later times. – Oberlies (1998: 502–503) refers to AV 5.9.7 in connection with the microcosmic–macrocosmic correlations in the hymn about Puruṣa (RV 10.90.13, analysis [6]) and refers also to RV 10.16.3 (analysis [8]), but does not attempt to unravel the details, similar to Arbman 1927a: 10, n. 2.}
\[\text{195 Similar to the case of some other special situations, one would have to assume here that the “vital soul” or “breathing-soul” may leave the body briefly; cf. above p. 136.}
\[\text{196 The solid body as the physical component next to the four psychical components may be alluded to in the second half of the verse, by means of God Vaiśvānara’s epithet \(\text{tanāpā}\) if the word \(\text{tanā}\) just as the word \(\text{ātman}\) in its second occurrence in AV 5.9.7 (analysis [10]), refers to the psycho-physical totality of a person – the physical component would just not be addressed separately here, different from the situation in 5.9.7.}
\[\text{197 Arbman seems to assume an emphatic repetition here and assigns the same role as “support of life” to \(\text{asū}, \text{prāṇa} \text{and \(\text{ātman}\)) in this passage (cf. Arbman 1927a: 15, n. 2).}
the priest responsible for the strangulation of the sacrificial animal is first enjoined to let the “eye” of his victim go to the sun, then to release its prāṇa into the wind, its “ear” into the directional quarters, its asu into the intermediate space, and finally its compact body (sārāṇa) to the earth:198

(12)  

| “eye” | → | sun |
| prāṇa | → | wind |
| “ear” | → | directional quarters |
| asu | → | intermediate space |
| compact body | → | earth |

As Oldenberg has already noted,199 the place occupied by ātman in RV 10.16.3 (analysis [8]) is here taken by prāṇa, whereas the place occupied by ātman in the Atharvavedic prayer for protection added above (AV 5.9.7; analysis [10]) is taken by asu. These correlations confirm the above suggestions for the meaning of the terms ātman and prāṇa in these two contexts, and may indicate that here the term asu, inasmuch as its referent is empty with connected empty intermediate space, was understood as referring to the individualizing “free soul” as a more advanced, immaterial or abstract concept – as already suggested for the term ātman in the prayer for protection (analysis [10]) – or, although this is less probable, even in the sense of a conscious200 Self as speculatively proposed for the term ātman in the Atharvavedic prayer for rescue treated above (analysis [11]).201 prāṇa may still fulfill the role of the “vital soul” here, although the co-occurrence with two vital faculties could indicate that this role is already giving way to that of the vital faculty of respiration in this passage202 and being transferred to asu whose vital functions, next to the function of indvidualization, have been pointed out above (cf. pp. 143–144). A tentative analysis of the formula used during the animal sacrifice would thus look as follows:

(12)’  

| “eye” (sight) | → | sun |
| prāṇa ("vital soul" / respiration) | → | wind |
| “ear” (hearing) | → | quarters |
| asu ("free soul" / vital conscious Self?) | → | intermediate space |

The two passages just looked at would in this way imply an increasingly unitary notion of the “power of life.”

The interpretation of asu in analysis (12) receives some support from the fact that the corresponding sacrificial formula which is used during the actual animal sacrifice does not repeat the introductory scenario described in the passage of analysis (12) in all its details. In one of its variations, found in an Āranyaka belonging to the Yajurveda, the formula correlates the ātman (instead of asu) of the animal with intermediate space:203

(12)’  

| “eye” | → | sun |
| prāṇa | → | wind |
| back | → | heaven |
| ātman | → | intermediate space |
| limbs | → | sacrifice |
| solid bodily parts | → | earth |

Sight is said to go to the sun, the “vital soul” or faculty of respiration to the wind, the back to heaven, and ātman to intermediate space; with its limbs the sacrificial victim obtains the sacrifice, with its solid bodily parts the earth. According to another version of the formula in a ritual hand-book, the macrocosmic elements and the constituent elements of the animal are equated in a slightly diverging order, and again the microcosmic constituent related to intermediate space is ātman, not asu:204

(14)  

| sight | → | sun |
| prāṇa | → | wind |
| ātman | → | intermediate space |
| limbs | → | sacrifice |
| back | → | heaven |
| compact body | → | earth |


204 Sāmkhya-Sūtrasattāra 10.17.4 (ed. A. Hillebrand, vol. 1, Calcutta 1888). Caland (1953: 283) translates the word ātman as “body” (cf. also n. 209 below); however, the close connection with the passage analyzed in (12) and with asu, the special relationship to intermediate space and the present sequence of the equations speak against such an interpretation.

205 In the formula which follows upon this formula in the ritual according to the Kātyāyana-Sūtrasattāra (6.1.16) and the Satapatha-Brahmana (11.7.2.6) ātman is also correlated with intermediate space. However, there the term could refer to the trunk, i.e., the central core part of the body (cf. Eggeling 1885: 122), as opposed to the limbs, owing to its dissociation from terms relating to vital faculties and grouping with body-terms:

| back | → | heaven |
| ātman (torse) | → | intermediate space |
| limbs | → | sacrifice |
| solid bodily parts | → | earth |
As evident already in the Atharvavedic passage of analysis (10) discussed above, the original wind-like “vital soul” ātman has as a “free soul” undoubtedly lost its subtle physical character in the speculations of the Brāhmaṇas and Aranyakas and become conceptually divorced from the material and perceptible world, again symbolized by its essential connection with the empty intermediate space.206 Its vital function was assumed by the more materially conceived prāṇa, in the sense of the “vital soul” or the specialized “breathing-soul” (cf. analysis [10] and, for ātman as the Self, analysis [11]). Once prāṇa was “demoted” and considered as the vital faculty of respiration, comparable to the faculties of seeing, hearing, etc., some notion of a basic vital function would have again been connected with ātman (cf. analyses [13] and [14], similarly for asu in the passage of analysis [12]), even though as a less prominent function that was of less interest to the early priestly philosophers than others of its functions.207 The central function of ātman seems to be that of the Self, as suggested above in the interpretations of the passages analyzed in (11) and (13), in conjunction with the passage of analysis (12) possibly relating to asu as the Self. This is to be viewed and understood in connection with another Vedic usage of the term ātman, namely, to refer to the body in the special sense of its “core” or “essence,” i.e., the trunk, as opposed to the limbs. Such a meaning of the word ātman is possibly evidenced already in a singular passage in the Rgveda,208 and can certainly be observed in the Brāhmaṇas209; it cannot be ruled out that in the case of the so-called saddbotra-formula in the two added variants (analyses [13] and [14]) this meaning is alluded to or vaguely associated owing to the mention of the limbs and the back, especially in the triad in analysis (13) because of the suggestive top-down order of the physical constituents back–trunk (?)-limbs. Such a special usage of the term ātman can be understood as derived from the developed usage of the term in the Brāhmaṇas as it can be assumed for the passages analyzed in (13) and (14) (and maybe already for the passage of analysis [11]), namely to refer to that which primarily constitutes the individual living being, be it god, human or animal: his/her its Self, true and real being, essence, or core.210 In other words, I would like to suggest that the extended special usage of the word ātman to refer to the trunk of the body was possible because – by way of its assuming the individuating function of the “free soul” asu – the ātman, although originally just a “vital soul,” was associated with the rather abstract individuated core of a living being and thus conceived as his/her its central identifying component or essence and (eventually?)211 also as responsible for life; if this idea is transferred to the physical realm, the trunk could indeed be conceived as the core or essence of the body, as constituting its ātman.

On the term ātman referring to the trunk or even the whole body in the Brāhmaṇas see n. 209 below.

206 Cf. similarly also, e.g., ChUp 3.14.2 where ātman is said to be (open) space (dēkāātman); cf. Strauss 1925: 45, with further reference to ŚPB 10.6.3.

207 It cannot be completely ruled out, of course, that the vital function was never excluded from the concept of ātman, but was retained in the sense of a basic function, and that therefore even older passages that mention prāṇa next to ātman have to be understood as referring to prāṇa in the sense of a mere vital faculty.

208 Cf. Willman-Grabowska 1929–1930: 14 and Geldner’s translation (Geldner 1951–1957: vol. 3, 390). In the case of the passage Rv 10.163.5–6 an alternative interpretation is conceivable, namely, that the word ātman refers here to the psycho-physical totality of the person: after consumption, understood as a demonic force, has been removed from various parts of the body (cf. the preceding verses), it is now said in conclusion to be removed from the whole person (ātman) (cf. also the remark in Arambn 1972a: 13, n. 2). This could be understood to mean that the disease is removed not only from the whole body, i.e., the named physical constituents of the person, but inclusively and so to say prophylactically also from his/her non-physical personal constituents that were not mentioned before because consumption is manifest only physically. Regarding the passage Rv 9.113.1 aduced by Willman-Grabowska in this connection, I agree with her conjecture that it is more probable that here the “soul” (“Tâme,” to be specified as “vital soul”; cf. also Renou 1956: 51 and Thieme 1964: 44) or the “complete being” (“Père entier”; cf. also Armbn 1972a: 13, n. 2: “das Selbst, die eigene Person ... ohne Unterscheidung von Körper und Seele,” and Horsch 1968: 470: “die Person als mehr oder weniger substantielle Einheit”) is referred to (possibly also the individual vital power, cf. above p. 151). Geldner (1951–1957: vol. 3, 119) and O’Flaherty (1981: 133) render ātman as a reflexive pronoun here, a function which the word does not yet generally have in the Rgveda (cf. Debrunner–Wackernagel 1929–1930: 489–490, referring to altogether three such usages, and Burrow 1973: 269).


211 This may be the meaning of the word ātman which caused Bodewitz to consider this Sanskrit term as representing in some contexts “a generic concept like the English word ‘soul’” (cf. Bodewitz 1991: 36). – On the more archaic, even though already slightly modified notion of ātman (and purusā) (cf. below p. 167) as the “free soul” that leaves the body during sleep (a topic not addressed in older Vedic literature) cf. Armbn 1972a: 85–88.
manas, was established at this stage; in choosing this term, the early Upanishadic philosophers took recourse to an old term that relates to the true and adequate verbal formulation of the awe-inspiring real nature of this world by the Rgvedic poet-priests;213 Schopenhauer's fascination with and adaptive interpretation of this identification in the context of his own philosophy has been referred to above (cf. 1.). A further remarkable and important aspect of ātman that becomes prominent in the teachings of the Upanishads is its conscious nature,214 that is, the function of consciousness and cognition which was earlier ascribed to manas as the “mental soul,” a conscious “free soul,”215 or the mind – next to sensory vital faculties and the vital faculty of respiration –, has now become an important, almost foundational aspect of the ātman of living beings, which foremost include humans, but to a certain extent also animals. This can be seen as a clear step towards the development of a unitary notion of a “soul” termed ātman.215 An interesting Aranyakas-passage216 specifies that in (smaller) plants and trees, which are devoid of the vital faculty of respiration (prāṇa), an ātman is present, albeit underdeveloped inasmuch as it lacks consciousness; their ātman is called rasa, literally: “juice,” referring to their vital essence or specific “vital soul” that manifests the “power of life” in them too, although not to themselves (at least not in the sense of becoming intellectually manifest) but to us intellectually conscious creatures – who have the obligation to respect this order of life accordingly, I would like to add. In creatures possessing prāṇa,217 however, the ātman is more developed because it becomes manifest as consciousness (citā). Here again, a distinction of degree is made: compared to the ātman of animals the ātman in (wo)man (purusa) is more developed; there it reveals itself by way of intellectual understanding (prajñāna): only (wo)man verbalizes and “sees” (i.e., conceptualizes?) what has been cognized, knows about what belongs to the morrow, knows about the world and That which is not the world, and desires That which is without death by means of what is mortal. This passage demonstrates in an impressive manner that the notion of ātman in Indian philosophy – quite different from the mainstream of Western thought on the “soul” – extends to non-human and even vegetal creatures, and not only in the early period under examination here. The early thinker who composed the added Aranyakas-passage would not sympathize, e.g., with those who want to prove the existence of an ātman / a “soul” on the basis of arguments such as the universal desire for immortality.218

Many other aspects of the human ātman are considered and discussed by the thinkers and early philosophers of the Upanishads, and old, more archaic notions reappear in the course of their speculations, such as the notion of purusa, as a “technical” term specifically referring to a manikin-like “free soul” dwelling in the pupil of the eye or the heart,219 which is now used in a more sophisticated way to refer to a vital, conscious, active and individualizing “unitary” “soul” in (wo)man.220 It is the term purusa which according to Arambhai refers originally and exclusively to the “free soul” in ancient Indian culture.221 The adjective jīva (“living”), previously used as a qualification of asu (cf. above pp. 127 and 143), reappears as a qualification of ātman, the individual essence of a human being, in the famous teaching of Chāndogya-Upanishad 6.11222 where the word jīva also functions by itself as a noun referring to some kind of “unitary” “soul” that attends to the functions of earlier “body-souls,” especially the vital functions of breathing and thinking/consciousness, as well as to the functions of a “free

218 Cf. Flew 1967: 149, with reference to the Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man by the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart (1753-1828).

219 On this idea cf. in general Arambhai 1926: 126 and 145, relating to Indian culture Arambhai 1927a: 69, 119-120, 135 and 144; on the miniature, often thumb-sized purusa which is considered identical with the deceased person (i.e., as his/her “free soul,” cf. n. 221 below), also in later popular belief, cf. Arambhai 1927a: 79.

220 Cf. e.g., BrĀUp 2.3.1, 3 and 5-6 (on 3 cf. Arambhai 1927a: 135, 136 and 138, on Sū. op. cit., p. 119; on 6 cf. Strauss 1925: 59 and Arambhai 1927a: 145); see further BrĀUp 4.4.4-5 according to the Madhyandina recension (cf. Schmithausen 1995: 53-54). In the ritualistic context cf. especially ŚPū 10.5.2.7 (on 10.5.2 in general cf. Arambhai 1927a: 135 and Bodewitz 1996: 43). The cosmogony of BrĀUp 1.4 which is based on a primordial purusa-like ātman (in the sense of a complete living organism) should probably be separated from this complex and rather be related in the widest sense to the hymn about Purusa and its cosmogony in the Rgveda. Cf. also Kaṭha-Upanishad 4.12 (with Wellmer 1955: 129-130 and 6.17 (cf. also Arambhai 1927a: 107); the latter passage is identified as an element of compilation by Wellmer (1953: 198) which, however, does not reduce its value. For further passages in this Upanishad that concern the localization of the inner Self (also called ātman and “the Ancient” [prāṇa]) in the heart, cf. Wellmer 1953: 103.

214 Cf. Arambhai 1927a: 134-148. Relying mainly on Upanishadic passages, Arambhai introduces the element of functioning inside the body and even governing it in connection with this notion of purusa (identified with ātman). However, this seems to contradict his earlier very decided statements in Arambhai 1926 (cf. n. 45 above) and 1927a, unless the notion of the “free soul” had – in his opinion – already been expanded in the passages referred to. This may be indicated by Arambhai’s concluding words on this complex in Arambhai 1927a: 148: – The treatment of the concept of purusa and the discussion of Arambhai’s hypothesis are outside the scope of the present contribution.

216 Cf. ChUp 6.11.1.
soul.” In the religio-philosophical tradition of the Jains jīva ("that which is alive") becomes the main technical term for the "soul" roughly in this latter sense from the time of their canonical scriptures, whose core goes back to the fourth century BCE.

The reflections on ātman, puruṣa and jīva are now almost inseparably connected with the question about life after death and numerous ideas about the mode and causality of repeated birth for living beings, foremost for human creatures. However, even a sketch of this fascinating and highly complex topic in its ancient developmental phase is definitely outside the scope of the present contribution. I would merely like to mention that in the development of teachings about repeated birth which soon included ethical considerations and consequences – as opposed to the assumption of an automatic process similar to a law of Nature – the notion of the conscious and active, individual and eternal ātman, puruṣa or jīva becomes connected with the aspect of moral retribution, also in the classical philosophical traditions, regardless of their diverging metaphysical presuppositions. In the classical period of Indian philosophy this aspect, more precisely, the assumption that only a conscious, individual and permanent (i.e., eternal) ātman that is responsible for its own actions can guarantee that good and bad actions bring about right/just consequences, is utilized argumentatively in proving the existence of such an ātman. Especially in the Brahminical philosophical traditions of Vaiśeṣika (philosophy of nature), Nyāya ("logic") and Mīmāṃsā (the comprehensive ritual science that in classical times developed its own philosophy in the context of Vedic hermeneutics) this and other aspects of the ātman touched upon above were thus argumentatively resorted to in the classical and early medieval periods, and additional arguments of different types developed, especially in the context of the heated philosophical controversy about the existence of an ātman conducted with Buddhist opponents. Their diametrically opposed positions in this question are addressed by Birgit Kellner in her contribution to the present volume.

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223 Cf. ChUp 6.11.2 and 3. A very early preference to, or rather predecessor of this unitary notion of a "soul" called jīva may be found in RV 1.164.30e (cf. the translation in Geldner 1951–1957: vol. 1, 233; cf. also Bodewitz 1991: 46 and Dange 1995–1996: 26) where it is said that the jīva (m.) of the a dead person wanders at will / independently (jīvo mṛtyuṣyacarasi traddhāṁ), a phrase which may be compared to the one in RV 10.16.5b. The referent of jīva is clearly something rather concrete here which makes a translation of the word as "life" (cf., e.g., O’Flaherty 1981: 79) problematic.

224 Cf. especially Oecke 1984.
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