

ARTICLE

A New Dawn for Philosophy? The Case for En Hedu'Anna of Mesopotamia

Mary Ellen Waithe

Department of Philosophy and Comparative Religion, Cleveland State University,
Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Email: Professorwaithe131@gmail.com

(Received 13 December 2024; accepted 13 December 2024)

Abstract

This article is the text of a Plenary Session lecture presented at the World Congress of Philosophy, Rome, 2024. In it I argue that archaeological evidence shows that the first written philosophy originated not in Greece, India, or China as is commonly believed, but, in Sumer, Mesopotamia, approximately 2600 BCE. The author, En Hedu'Anna, was a woman. I describe four writings by her, distinguish her views from then-prevailing Mesopotamian views about a variety of philosophic concepts and topics. I discuss her contributions to cosmology, scientific method, philosophy of religion, and principles of justice, amongst others. I relate her views on the just treatment of prisoners of war, transgenderism, and other seemingly contemporary philosophical issues. Lastly, I summarize evidence for what today would be called her *Curriculum Vitae* and her Impact Factor.

In this article I entertain the question whether recorded philosophy began not in India, Greece or China, but Mesopotamia. Here, I present a small part of the case for considering En Hedu'Anna to represent the dawn of philosophy. Not Western Philosophy, not Eastern Philosophy, but philosophy *simpliciter*. I confine my comments to En Hedu'Anna's philosophy of religion, the metaphysics it entailed, and her insightful philosophical innovations to cosmology and astronomy. Together, they sketch a unified theory, parts of each forming the support for the others.

Introduction

En Hedu'Anna was the daughter of King Sargon who had taken military control of much of Assyria, including Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was inhabited by many feuding tribes, roughly occupying Akkadia in the north and Sumer in the south. Sargon put his daughter Hedu'Anna in charge of Sumer, appointing her En-priestess of all Sumer with her seat of power at the ziggurat/temple cities of Ur and Uruk, situated

approximately 50 miles apart at the Persian Gulf¹. The feuding tribes of Akkadia and Sumer often shared one cultural belief: in the panoply of deities. Sargon personally worshipped the goddess Inanna. En Hedu'Anna was High Priestess, Chief Astronomer, and Chief Civil Authority of Sumer, residing at the temple-city of Ur, and wielding vast power over all of Sumer.

En Hedu'Anna's signed cuneiform writings disclose several philosophical innovations that are easily identifiable when we consider her works as a unified ensemble. Following some basic biographical information, I offer brief summaries of her writings and then turn to examining their philosophic import. Over the course of En Hedu'Anna's writings, the details come together to give us a cosmology, a philosophy of religion, and more. Lacking any previous example of written philosophy, En Hedu'Anna does not present her theories in an obviously systematic way. Her style is closer to those of later philosophers such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.

*In Nin-me-hus-a*²

The plot is that Mount Ebih is an anthropomorphic paradise-wannabe with a superiority complex. It is put in its place by the goddess Inanna³ who demands its respect. Ebih refuses to prostrate itself before her. Ebih is no match for Inanna who, with each refusal to obey her, ups the ante by inflicting increasingly painful conditions on Mount Ebih. She gradually transforms the mountain from a near-paradise to a wasteland.

In this work, En Hedu'Anna writes a quasi-historical, quasi-journalistic account of 'events'. All is fake news: our philosopher's point is that cosmic laws of nature are neither all-good nor all-bad for Sumerians. Mount Ebih's aim to become a paradise is an attempt to evade cosmic law. The lion does not lay down with the lamb. A group of seven deities, the Anunna⁴, enforce that law. The goddess Inanna is a member of the Anunna. The Anunna deities are subject to the cosmic law and cannot change it.

The deities of the Anunna are

1. An, god of the sky: he personifies what today we would call those laws of physics that govern the earth's upper atmosphere.
2. Enlil, god of wind, storms, floods, air, earth: he personifies what today we would identify as those laws of the cosmos that govern meteorology – the relationship of earthly weather systems to each other.
3. Enki, god of wisdom, magic, creation, and of the subterranean freshwater ocean upon which the earth rests: he personifies what today we would identify as the laws of logic, of metaphysical possibility and paradox.
4. Ninhursag/Mami: goddess of the mountains who created and guided the Sumerian race, the 'black haired people'. She personifies what today we might

¹Sethanne Howard, Emerita Historian of Astronomy at the US Naval Observatory notes: 'In its heyday Ur was a coastal city on the rim of the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf. As the most important port on the Persian Gulf, it was the gateway to Mesopotamia. All imports via the sea with their accompanying wealth had to pass through Ur' (Howard 2017: 24).

²Sources relied upon: ETCSL t.1.3.2; 'Inanna and Ebih', Meador De Shong (2000: 91-102).

³Sometimes as 'Inana'.

⁴Sometimes as 'Anunna', 'Annuna', etc.

consider to be quasi-evolutionary rules: the growth of mountains, emergence of an advanced race of humans, Sumerians.

5. Nanna, the Moon God, is the god of insight, tides, menstruation: he personifies what today we might identify as insight into the nature and limits of regularity and predictability as these pertain to the law of the cosmos.
6. Erishkugag is Queen of the Underworld: her domain is the land of those dead who merit punishment for their earthly transgressions. She personifies normative qualities that today we might identify as justified retribution and revenge, as well as the post-mortem enforcement of the moral law, which is understood to be natural, divine cosmic law.
7. Inanna is the goddess of love, fecundity, sexuality, prostitution, war. She is the enforcer of divine justice for the living. She personifies the normatively paradoxical dichotomies, love and hate (Howard 2017: 27).

*In-Nin-Sa-gur-Ra*⁵

This second work by En Hedu'Anna tells her readers that

The Anunna-gods crawl before her [Inanna's] lofty word ...
 The gods of the land are panic-stricken by her heavy roar.
 At her uproar the Anunna-gods tremble like a solitary reed,
 At her shrieking they hide all together ...

(Sjöberg 1975: 163, l. 5, material in square brackets mine)

Here, En Hedu'Anna tells us how vicious Inanna can be. The goddess rants and raves, scaring the wits out of the other deities. They lack her strength, her courage. They are much nicer.

En Hedu'Anna's message in *In-Nin-Sa-gur-Ra* is that Inanna's great-grandfather, the god An, feared Inanna after witnessing how she destroyed Mount Ebih. He capitulated to his fear and allowed her to take his place as Chairperson on the Anunna. Traditionally, the Anunna had acted as a cosmically divine board of directors, so to speak. They had approved or disapproved each other deities' intended actions. The other deities of the Anunna now also fear Inanna's violence:

Inana, your victory is terrifying ...

The Anuna gods bow down in prostration, they abase themselves⁶

Inanna is not interested in chairing a committee that rules by consensus. She reorganizes the Anunna and turns it into her advisory board. She treats the other deities as her administrators. Those other gods now report to her and need her approval to act.

⁵This is the title given by the University of Oxford, Oriental Institute Studies, Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL), t.4.07.3. Other titles of this work include 'in-nin sa-gur-ra: A Hymn to the Goddess Inanna by the en-Priestess Enheduanna' (Sjöberg 1975), 'Lady of Largest Heart' (Meador De Shong 2000), etc.,

⁶ETCSL, t.4.07.3, 100-110.

The deities have each retained some power,
 but not their most important power,
 power over one of the mysterious ‘seven great ME’⁷
 En Hedü’Anna reorganizes the Anunna so that those deities,
 in fear, cede their great ME to Inanna. (Sjöberg 1975: 163, l. 4)

Sjöberg quotes from *In-Nin-Sa-gu-Ra*: ‘She [Inanna] is the august leader among the great gods. She makes their verdicts final’ (ibid., material in square brackets mine).

The other six deities now are reduced to what Hindus might call ‘sants’ and Christians might call ‘patron saints’ who intercede with the goddess on behalf of some person or cause, and who act as Inanna commands them to act. The Anunna may reach a decision on some matter, but it is up to Inanna whether to make their verdicts final. She might approve or veto them.

Our author, En Hedü’Anna, has the deity, An, abdicate to his great-granddaughter, Inanna, ‘the august royal rites and the great divine rites’:

Great An feared your [Inanna’s] precinct and was frightened of your dwelling-place.

He let you take a seat in the dwelling-place of great An and then feared you no more, saying: ‘I will hand over to you the august royal rites and the great divine rites’⁸.

An has conferred upon Inanna the rites through which humans and divinities demonstrate their recognition and respect for the authority of civil law, and, of natural, or cosmic, law. En Hedü’Anna’s description of ‘rites’ applies to two previously indistinct kinds of ME. Her expression: ‘the august royal rites’ refers to practices and procedures that individuals might lawfully take towards one another insofar as both live under the rule of (King Sargon’s) government. They are rites, that is, behavioral expression of the norms of etiquette, ethics, and civil law. Analogously, En Hedü’Anna’s mention of ‘great divine rites’ refers to the practices and procedures observed by Sumerians toward laws decreed by heaven: the cosmic or natural law. These include the laws of nature that Mount Ebih attempted to violate. Said ritual practices confirm that everyone and everything necessarily yields to natural, cosmic laws. The rites celebrate the predictability of natural laws. Rites also involve celebration of the orderliness that predictability brings to Mesopotamian society. En Hedü’Anna argues by analogy that the august royal rites and the great divine rites are conjoint descriptors of the relevant characteristics, qualities, and potential of the Sumerian world⁹. En Hedü’Anna weaves her argument craftily: principles of morality and of science are the purview of a single deity, Inanna. Ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion mutually support one another. I would argue that En Hedü’Anna has hybridized the ME so that laws of nature and laws of morality each originate from the same divine source.

⁷Pronounced ‘May’.

⁸ETCSL t.4.07.3, 100-108.

⁹Here I offer only a general description of what En Hedü’Anna indicates are the MEs.

These same lines of cuneiform are read as a euphemism by the Oxford group: 'You ride on seven great beasts as you come forth from heaven'¹⁰. Inanna rides on seven great beasts. She and they come forth from heaven as a team. I would argue that the terms 'seven great beasts', 'seven great ME', and 'august royal rites and august divine rites', are synonymous metaphors for the 'seven great ME'. At this point her readers have not been told what the ME are.

Nin-ME Sara

*Nin-ME Sara*¹¹, En Hedü'Anna's third work, introduces significant improvements upon traditional Mesopotamian cosmology. In this section I first describe Mesopotamian cosmology as it was understood at En Hedü'Anna's time. Following that, I describe the significant developments introduced by our philosopher.

Traditional Mesopotamian cosmology

In the beginning, there was a multi-layered dome. The highest region of the dome is Heaven, the abode of the astral bodies. The dome's edge met the edge of the primordial cosmic ocean. The ocean was a thick, flat watery disc. Out of the ocean and floating on it was the disc, Earth. From the Earth emerged a mountain, Mount Ebih, where Heaven and Earth met. The Morning Star could be seen at the Eastern horizon, the Evening Star at the Western Horizon. Sumerian astronomers named the diurnal and the nocturnal bodies 'Inanna', the goddess of love¹². Although identically named, the two appearances were conceptualized to be two distinct bodies. Below the Earth, Inanna's sister, Ereskigal, Goddess of the Underworld, ordered miscreant decedents to enter the underworld which she administered. There was no possibility of return (Lambert 2018: 294). Beneath the underworld was a freshwater ocean.

En Hedü'Anna's Cosmology becomes the Science of Astronomy

The 'Morning Star' and the 'Evening Star' are known to contemporary astronomical science as the planet Venus, whose name is synonymous with 'the goddess of love'. The then-traditional cosmological view that these were two distinct astral bodies was re-conceptualized by En Hedü'Anna. The text of 'The Exaltation of Inana' (Inana B) supports the hypothesis that, during a solar eclipse, En Hedü'Anna was able to observe that the two 'stars' were in fact a single object, visible at the Eastern horizon, at Zenith, and at the Western Horizon, but not visible simultaneously at any two of these elevations¹³.

G.E. Kurtik of the Institute for History of Science & Technology of Moscow reminds us that '[o]riginally, Inanna was adored in Mesopotamia only as a local goddess of the city of Uruk ... the identification of Inanna with Venus [took] place at a later time' (Kurtik 1999: 501-502). The 'later time' to which Kurtik refers was when, during a solar eclipse, En Hedü'Anna observed Inanna/Venus at one horizon, then at Zenith, and

¹⁰ETCSL, *ibid.*

¹¹ETCSL (t.4.07.2, 99-108) labels this work 'Inana B'. Pritchard (1969) titles this work 'Hymnal Prayer of Enheduanna ... Adoration ... at Ur'.

¹²Analogously, in Catholicism, there are many churches named 'Saint Peter', without implying that the names refer to different saints named 'Peter'.

¹³ETCSL t.4.07.2, 109-121.

then, at the opposite horizon. She concluded that the three ‘stars’ are not stars at all, but a different kind of astral body, what will be called a ‘planet’. In order to reach such a conclusion seems to require that En Hedu’Anna framed at least three philosophically significant concepts.

Two Applications of ‘Occam’s Razor’ – Difference in Number, Difference in Kind: En Hedu’Anna realized that empirical observations might not always be what they appear to be. She was intellectually open to taking additional data into account. Doing so she could hypothesize and then confirm that three apparent objects were a single object normally viewed nocturnally, diurnally, and occasionally viewed at zenith. The simplest explanation that accounted for all the data is the hypothesis that there are not two (or three) objects, but one. Millennia before Occam, En Hedu’Anna put his razor to work: the hypothesis that requires the fewest assumptions, the simplest hypothesis, is usually the best. In the Venusian example, the simplest hypothesis is that there is a difference in number: one object was viewed at three different times and elevations.

En Hedu’Anna concluded that the two apparent wandering stars, the so-called morning and evening stars, were not stars. They were a different kind of astral body. Indeed, ‘it’ was not a ‘they’. ‘It’ was a single, non-stellar astral object. Employing Occam’s razor at the level of hypothesis-formation is a separate contribution to philosophy than is applying a specific hypothesis to a particular data set. Brown and Zólyomi note that philosophically and therefore scientifically, En Hedu’Anna’s insight amounted to more than hypothesizing a difference in number. Importantly, she hypothesized a difference in kind: ‘The separate sightings, morning and evening, were of one, non-stellar astral body, now called a planet’ (Brown & Zólyomi 2001).

Concept of Constellation: Prior to the installation of En Hedu’Anna as Chief Astronomer at Ur and Urkuk, Mesopotamian astronomers empirically confirmed that certain stars appeared to move as a group, in unison with other stars. Over the course of the year astral groups would change their heavenly placement. However, individual stars in those groups did not change their arrangement vis-à-vis other stars in that group. The observed movement of Inanna/Venus was different from the observed movement of groups of stars. It also was different from the motions of other ‘wandering stars’.

Inanna came to be identified with Venus in the middle of the third millennium BC (which is indicated by some seal pictures) ... We can come to the conclusion that the process of constellation recognition in Mesopotamia started no earlier than the middle of the third millennium BC. (Kurtik 1999: 12.)

A second conclusion follows from Kurtik’s conclusion. As I have argued above, three significant astronomical concepts were developed by En Hedu’Anna. The first concept was that Morning Star and Evening Star were the same object. The second concept was the said object, whether called Inanna or Venus, is a different kind of astral object than a star. We call that ‘different kind of object’ a planet. The third concept was that a constellation was a different kind of astral object than single star. That all three of these concepts arose during En Hedu’Anna’s years as Chief Astronomer at Ur (i.e., the ‘middle of the third millennium BC’) strongly supports the conclusion that these ideas were developed by her. From the perspective of philosophy of science, these mark

significant progress¹⁴. The science of astronomy now distinguishes between the concepts ‘star’, ‘constellation’, and ‘planet’. Although Mesopotamian astronomers before her could see the planets Mars, Mercury, and Jupiter (and perhaps others), those bodies were not identified by them as non-stellar objects. Although Mesopotamian astronomers were renown for maintaining detailed records of their observations, there is no evidence that those distinctions were mentioned in cuneiform astronomical records prior to the En-ship of Hedu’Anna.

Nin-ME Sara also gives us a historical report of En Hedu’Anna’s expulsion from Ur by Lugalanne, the defeated rival of her father King Sargon who recaptures Ur. Upon En Hedu’Anna’s return from elsewhere, Lugalanne, who had recaptured Ur, banishes our author to the wilderness. In this work, En Hedu’Anna merges the factual and fictional narratives of the first two writings to reveal Inanna’s true role as goddess. In her plea to be restored to her rightful position at Ur, En Hedu’Anna acknowledges that she has somehow displeased Inanna. She does not specify what her transgression was. She praises Inanna’s qualities. In this work a very powerful fourth philosophical innovation becomes apparent. It is En Hedu’Anna’s significant contribution to philosophy of religion.

Philosophy of Religion: En Hedu’Anna’s recitation of Inanna’s powers give us the following insights to her philosophy of religion, in particular, the features of deity.

- Inanna alone has knowledge of the nature and structure of the earth, its sun, moon and the visible star-like planets. She is omniscient.
- Only Inanna controls An’s ability to render judgment on people’s destinies. She is all wise, sagacious, of perfect judgment, perfectly just. She is all good.
- Inanna alone exercises the seven great powers – the seven *ME*. She alone has complete dominion over the known universe and over the Anunna and its deities’ greatest powers. She alone authorizes the other deities’ exercise of their remaining lesser powers. She is omnipotent.
- Inanna extends from ‘horizon to zenith to horizon’, i.e., through all occupied space: all that is under the dome. She is omnipresent.

In sum, Inanna is the Supreme Being¹⁵. Writing philosophical fiction in the guise of religious fact, En Hedu’Anna gives convincing detail to her description of Inanna’s assumption of divine powers. I will return to this point after reminding readers of the historical context of En Hedu’Anna’s concept of a Supreme Being. In writings that date to circa 2300 BCE, En Hedu’Anna identifies Inanna as Supreme Being. Two men, Abraham and Moses, both of whom lived much later, wrongly have been credited with

¹⁴I do not assume that En Hedu’Anna personally accomplished all that is here attributed to her. However, just as the discoveries and inventions of the laboratories of Pasteur, Volta, and others may have originated with a member of their laboratory staff, the discoveries and inventions are attributed to the scientist heading those laboratories. Similarly, astronomers working in En Hedu’Anna’s observatories may have originated some discoveries that are attributed to En Hedu’Anna, the senior astronomer responsible for the work of that observatory.

¹⁵Unlike later Judeo-Christian-Islamic conceptions of a Supreme Being, Inanna is neither *sui-generis*, nor Creator of the universe. Like those later traditions, Inanna as Supreme Being can be violent.

introducing the idea of a supreme being. Abraham's historicity is widely disputed, but he is believed to have been born at Ur¹⁶, around the year 2100 BCE. His parents, residing in Ur of Sumer certainly would have been familiar with the by then-prevailing view that the goddess Inanna is the supreme being¹⁷. Moses' birth traditionally is given as 1526 BCE. His delivery of the Ten Commandments' announcement that 'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no gods before me' is not the earliest written statement of the existence of a supreme being. Seven centuries before Moses, En Hedu'Anna had introduced this concept. This powerful, influential idea will later form the core of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Unlike those monotheistic religious traditions, En Hedu'Anna's Supreme Being is a female!

The Temple Hymns

42 poems are dedicated to 36 different temples/ziggurats in Sumer. The contents praise the architecture of the temple city, the people under its civic control and protection, the inhabitants' occupations, crops produced, etc. Each poem shows a level of detail that confirms that EnHedu'Anna visited each temple. Each 'hymn' would have been presented orally by En Hedu'Anna at public ceremonies honouring her visit, and then performed by the temple's gala singers at subsequent ceremonies. The Temple Hymns provide a source of at least three types of information. They disclose (a) En Hedu'Anna's lecture circuit, (b) that the collection of 'hymns' was a 'State of the Empire' report to her father, King Sargon, and (c) En Hedu'Anna's job description.

Lecture Circuit

Her home temples, one at Ur and two at Urkik, are approximately 50 miles/80.5 km apart. Most of the other temples she visited are much further away from her home base. The hymns commemorate En Hedu'Anna's temple visits over a six-year period¹⁸. She presented a poem at each of the thirty-six temples which were spread across ten large, geographic regions¹⁹. She travelled by barge (not business class!). Her busy travel itinerary enabled Lugalanne to take advantage of her extended absences and regain military control of Ur.

State of the Empire Report to Sargon

The 42 poems evidence the fact that En Hedu'Anna functioned as civil governor of all of Sumer, and also as the region's religious leader. The details presented in each poem gave Sargon the information he would need to make decisions regarding defense and the possibility of insurrection if those whom he had conquered were to consolidate

¹⁶Ur of Sumer is not to be confused with Ur of Chaldea to the far north of Mesopotamia. Abraham was born in the former and as an adult traveled to and for some time resided in the latter, Ur of the Chaldeans.

¹⁷The view was widely disseminated through the scribal academies situated throughout Sumer.

¹⁸I have calculated the period of her travels from 2285 BCE, the year of her installation at Ur, to the death of her father, Sargon in 2279 BCE. Upon En Hedu'Anna's death she was succeeded by 'Sargon's great granddaughter, En Menanna'. The colophon and the historical record (Collins 1994) date Sargon's death to the year 2279.

¹⁹Here, I follow the organizational schema introduced by Betty Meador De Shong (2009: 28ff).

their forces and revolt against En Hedu'Anna's control (including their taxes paid in crops).

Curriculum Vitae

Were we to attempt to construct En Hedu'Anna's *Curriculum Vitae* we would list these 'hymns' as professional presentations/lectures. They contain little material of philosophical interest. However, they do reveal how En Hedu'Anna conceptualizes her role as a philosopher/princess/priestess/poet. Her 'hymns' reassure each audience that although her father may have taken their temple-city by military force, she is their devoted civic and religious leader. She knows and cares about them. She praises them by praising their ziggurat, the divinity to which it is dedicated, their craftsmanship, their produce. She cares enough to write a hymn to them, a hymn that will be sung repeatedly by their gala-singers.

En Hedu'Anna's Job Description

At the end of the Temple Hymns is a colophon to her father, Sargon. In it En Hedu'Anna describes the work of a woman philosopher in Sumer. She says:

To the true woman who possesses exceeding wisdom,
 soothingand opening the mouth,
 always consulting a tablet of lapis lazuli,
 giving advice to all lands,
 the true woman, the holy potash plant,
 born of the stylus reed,
 applies the measure to heaven
 and places the measuring rope upon the earth
 – to Nisaba be praise!²⁰

A gloss on these lines yields the following: A woman's truest calling is to possess exceeding wisdom: to be a philosopher. In part, her role is to calm the fears of conquered tribes. To do so, she makes prudent use of her rhetorical skills by speaking before the assembled communities, convincing them that their conquerors respect and value them. It is En Hedu'Anna who negotiates treaties. It is she who renders judicious decisions regarding trade contracts, property disputes, as well as stocking the public warehouses of the ziggurat with common foodshares and those crops received as taxes. In the above-quoted excerpt from the colophon, she reminds us that the philosopher fulfils her roles wisely, by acting within the constraints of the written law of the land. Important laws and decrees were inscribed on tablets of lapis lazuli, which was rare, expensive, and imported from Afghanistan (Winter 1999). Such a pricy medium evidenced the content and intent of the positive law: the requirements of civil laws and royal proclamations.

The woman philosopher gives advice (but not commands) to all lands: to all the disparate tribes of Sumer who have in common little more than shared reverence for a panoply of deities, and their dependence upon the agricultural richness of the fertile

²⁰ETCSL t.4.080.1, 539.

crescent formed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The ‘true woman who possesses exceeding wisdom’ understands the value to Sumerian society of the ‘holy potash plant’. She knows that its medicinal uses for saponification competed with its demand as crop fertilizer. It was her decision as to the quantity that should be set aside for each use, stored in the ziggurat’s vast storehouse of seeds, barley, beer, and other items needed by the public whom she ruled and served.

A woman philosopher is one ‘born of the stylus reed’. She is born to write. She ‘applies the measure to heaven’ using her advanced mathematical knowledge including solid geometry and trigonometry. The mastery of mathematics assures that she is correctly performing complex calculations. Her adept mathematical mind enables her to predict various astronomical events. She also understands geography, including the skill and principles of surveying land to establish legally enforceable boundaries of individual agrarian tenancy as well as territorial metes and bounds of land pertaining to every temple-city (except Babylon) in Sumer. In fulfilment of her role of civic authority, ‘she places the measuring rope upon the earth’.

Lastly, in the Temple Hymns colophon, En Hedu’Anna praises Nisaba, the goddess of writing, for enabling the ‘true woman who possesses exceeding wisdom’ to exercise these and other high-level intellectual skills.

Impact Factor

If we were to evaluate En Hedu’Anna’s philosophical contributions in the same way as we evaluate the CVs of contemporary scholars, we might assess her ‘Impact Factor’, her intellectual legacy. In part, her legacy is that:

- She originated ideas that later thinkers consider to be significant, although some of her ideas have been misattributed to those thinkers.
- Her works have been preserved by and taught at many academies of higher learning throughout Sumer and Akkadia as evidenced by two Ballbaes that laud her work.
- Her writings were ‘republished’ for centuries following her lifetime.
- She recognized ‘Morning Star’ and ‘Evening Star’ as a single entity.
- She distinguished planet from star.
- She clarified the concept ‘constellation’.
- She advanced important philosophical concepts including the idea of a Supreme Being who, paradoxically, is just and benevolent, but also angry, destructive, punishing.
- Inanna worship later spread to Egypt, Greece, Rome, where she is called Ishtar, Aphrodite, Hera, Venus – all ‘goddesses of love’.
- Mapping of planet Venus: The Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa, 7th century BCE recognized Venus as a planet, dated its positions from 1626 BCE through ~800 BCE.
- Works taught in India’s Sangam academies circa 200 BCE (Leitz 2019: 66).
- Tamil language adoption of her terminology in *Tolkappiyam*, the official etymological dictionary of Tamil language (ibid.).
- Works rediscovered, texts established, translated into modern languages. 20th century.

Conclusion

En Hedu'Anna's writings mark a new dawn in the history of philosophy occurring more than a thousand years before the era of the pre-Socratics. I have argued that the earliest philosopher was not grey-bearded, but was the world's first-known author, En Hedu'Anna²¹.

References

- Brown D and Zólyomi G** (2001), "'Daylight Converts to Night-Time". An Astrological-Astronomical Reference in Sumerian Literary Context', *Iraq* 63: 149-154.
- Collins P** (1994) 'The Sumerian Goddess Inanna (3400-2200 BC)', *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 5:103-118.
- [ETCSL] **Black JA, Cunningham G, Ebeling J, Flückiger-Hawker E, Robson E, Taylor J and Zólyomi G** (1998-2006) *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>). Oxford: Faculty of Oriental Studies, The University of Oxford.
- Howard S** (2017) 'En Hedu'Anna, first woman inscience', *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, 103(2): 21-33.
- Kurtik G** (1999) 'The Identification of Inanna with the Planet Venus: A Criterion for the Time Determination of the Recognition of Constellations in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Astronomical & Astrophysical Transactions* 17(6): 501-513.
- Lambert W** (2018) 'A New Babylonian Descent to the Netherworld', in T Abusch, J Huehnergard & P Steinkeller (eds) *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*. Leiden: Brill, p. 289-300.
- Leitz A** (2019) *Sumerian Temple Hymns - The Ancestor of the Tamil Sangam Poems*. Fellbach: Vedicreligion Institute for Vedic Research and Publications.
- Meador DeShong B**, ed. (2000) *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Meador DeShong B** (2009) *Princess, Priestess, Poet: The Sumerian Temple Hymns of Enheduanna*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Pritchard J** (1969) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. w Supplement. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- Sjöberg AW** (1975) 'in-nin šà-gur₄-ra. A Hymn to the Goddess Inanna by the en-Priestess Enheduanna'. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*, 65(2):161-253.
- Waithe ME** (2023) 'En Hedu'Anna of Mesopotamia. Circa 2300 BCE', in ME Waithe, and T Boos Dykeman (eds) *Women Philosophers from Non-western Traditions: The First Four Thousand Years*, p. 19-51. Cham: Springer.
- Winter IJ** (1999) 'The Aesthetic Value of Lapis Lazuli in Mesopotamia', in A Caubet (ed.) *Cornaline et pierres précieuses: la Méditerranée, de l'Antiquité à l'Islam. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel, les 24 et 25 novembre 1995*. Paris: la Documentation française, p. 43-58.

²¹Portions of this paper rely upon previously-published material, see Waithe 2023.