MIRCEA
ELIADE

IMAGES & SYMBOLS

STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

Arno

Symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or of the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality – the deepest aspects – which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfill a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being. Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man – of man "as he is," before he has come to terms with the conditions of History. Every historical man carries on, within himself, a great deal of prehistoric humanity.

In escaping from his historicity, man does not abdicate his status as a human being or abandon himself to "animality": he recovers the language, and sometimes the experience, of a "lost paradise." Dreams, waking dreams, the images of his nostalgias and of his enthusiasms, etc., are so many forces that may project the historically-conditioned human being into a spiritual world that is infinitely richer than the closed world of his own "historic moment."

It is of the greatest importance to rediscover a whole mythology, if not a theology, still concealed in the most ordinary, everyday life of contemporary man; it will depend upon himself whether he can work his way back to the source and rediscover the profound meanings of all these faded images and damaged myths.

The study of symbolism is not a work of pure and simple erudition, but one that concerns, at least indirectly, the knowledge of man himself: in short, that it has something to say to anyone who is speaking of a new humanism or a new anthropology.

We have seen that myths decay and symbols become secularised, but that they never disappear, even in the most positivist of civilisations, that of the nineteenth century. Symbols and myths come from such depths: they are part and parcel of the human being, and it is impossible that they should not be found again in any and every existential situation of man in the Cosmos.

– From the Foreword

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IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

Studies in
Religious Symbolism

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To the memory of my father
GHÉORGHÉ ELIADE
1870–1951

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study! This was to forget that the life of modern man is swarming with half-forgotten myths, decaying hierophanies and secularised symbols. The progressive de-sacralisation of modern man has altered the content of his spiritual life without breaking the matrices of his imagination: a quantity of mythological litter still lingers in the ill-controlled zones of the mind.

Moreover, the most "noble" part of a modern man's consciousness is less "spiritual" than one is usually inclined to think. A brief analysis would discover that this "noble" or "higher" sphere of consciousness contained a few bookish reminiscences, a number of prejudices of various kinds (religious, moral, social, æsthetic, etc.), some ready-made ideas about the "meaning of life", "ultimate reality" and so forth. But beware of looking further, for what has become of the myth of the Lost Paradise, for instance, or the Image of the perfect Man, the mystery of Woman and of Love, etc.! All these are to be found (but how desecrated, degraded and artificialised!) among many other things in the semi-conscious flux of the most down-to-earth existence—in its waking dreams, its fits of melancholy, in the free play of images when consciousness is "taking time off" (in the street, the underground railway or elsewhere), and in all kinds of distractions and amusements. There it lies hidden, the whole treasury of myths, "laicised" and "modernised". What has happened to the images is what happens, as Freud has shown us, in the case of over-crude allusions to sexual realities—they have changed their "form". In order to survive, the Images take on "familiar" shapes.

They are of no less interest for all that. These degraded images present to us the only possible point of departure for the spiritual renewal of modern man. It is of the greatest importance, we believe, to rediscover a whole mythology, if not a theology, still concealed in the most ordinary, everyday life of contemporary man; it will depend upon himself whether he can work his way back to the source and rediscover the profound meanings of all these faded images and damaged myths. But let no one object

that these relics are of no interest to modern man, that they belong to a "superstitious past" happily liquidated by the nineteenth century . . . or that it is all right for poets, children and the people in the Tube to satiate themselves with nostalgias and images, but for goodness' sake let serious people go on thinking and "making history". Such a separation between the "serious things of life" and "dreams" does not correspond with reality. Modern man is free to despise mythologies and theologies, but that will not prevent his continuing to feed upon decayed myths and degraded images. The most terrible historical crisis of the modern world—the second world war and all that has followed from it—has effectually demonstrated that the extirpation of myths and symbols is illusory. Even in the most desperate of "historical situations" (in the trenches of Stalingrad, in both Nazi and Soviet concentration camps) men and women have sung ballads and listened to stories, even giving up a part of their meagre rations to to obtain them; and these stories were but projections of the myths, these ballads were filled with "nostalgias". All that essential and indescribable part of man that is called *imagination* dwells in realms of symbolism and still lives upon archaic myths and theologies.[6]

It depends, as we said, upon modern man—to "reawaken" the inestimable treasure of images that he bears within him; and to reawaken the images so as to contemplate them in their pristine purity and assimilate their message. Popular wisdom has many a time given expression to the importance of imagination

[6] See the rich and penetrating analyses by Gaston Bachelard in his works on the "imagination of matter"—*La Psychanalyse du Feu, L'Eau et les Rêves, L'Air et les Songes, La Terre et les Rêveries*, 2 vols., Paris, 1939-1948. G. Bachelard bases his views mainly upon poetry and dreams, and secondarily upon folk-lore; but one could easily show how dreams and poetic imagery are continuous with sacred symbolism and archaic mythologies. With regard to the images of Water and the Earth, such as pervade dreams and literature, cf. the chapters on the hierophanies and the aquatic and telluric symbolisms in our *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 188 ff., 239 ff.

for the very health of the individual and for the balance and richness of his inner life. In some modern languages the man who "lacks imagination" is still pitied as a limited, second-rate and unhappy being. The psychologists, C. G. Jung among others of the first rank, have shown us how much the dramas of the modern world proceed from a profound disequilibrium of the psyche, individual as well as collective, brought about largely by a progressive sterilisation of the imagination. To "have imagination" is to enjoy a richness of interior life, an uninterrupted and spontaneous flow of images. But spontaneity does not mean arbitrary invention. Etymologically, "imagination" is related to both *imago*—a representation or imitation—and *imitor*, to imitate or reproduce. And for once, etymology is in accord with both psychological realities and spiritual truth. The imagination *imitates* the exemplary models—the Images—reproduces, reactualises and repeats them without end. To have imagination is to be able to see the world in its totality, for the power and the mission of the Images is to *show* all that remains refractory to the concept: hence the disfavour and failure of the man "without imagination"; he is cut off from the deeper reality of life and from his own soul.

In recalling these principles we were trying to show that the study of symbolism is not a work of pure and simple erudition, but one that concerns, at least indirectly, the knowledge of man himself: in short, that it has something to say to anyone who is speaking of a new humanism or a new anthropology. Doubtless, such a study of the symbolisms will be of real use only when it is carried on in collaboration. Literary æsthetics, psychology and philosophical anthropology ought to take account of the findings of the history of religions, of ethnology and folk-lore. It is primarily with the psychologists and literary critics in mind that we have published this book. The historian of religions is in a better position than anyone else to promote the knowledge of symbols, his documents being at once more comprehensive and more coherent than those at the disposal of the psychologist or the

sidered as a form of knowledge does not depend upon any individual's degree of understanding. Texts and figured monuments provide us with abundant proof that for some, at least, of the individuals of an archaic society the symbolism of the "Centre" was transparent in its totality; the rest of the society remaining content to "participate" in the symbolism. Moreover, it is not easy to draw the limits of such a participation, for it varies in function with an indefinite number of factors. All we can say is that the *actualisation* of a symbol is not automatic; it occurs in relation to the tensions and vicissitudes of the social life, and, finally, with the cosmic rhythms.

But whatever eclipses or aberrations a symbolism may undergo from the very fact that it is *lived*, this does not lessen the validity of its hermeneutics. To take an illustration from another order of realities—in order to understand the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, is it necessary to ask what its millions of readers, distributed all over the globe, have made of that difficult book; or should we not rather ask what Dante himself felt and thought when writing it? In the case of poetic works of a freer kind—I mean those that depend more directly upon "inspiration", such as the productions of German romanticism—we have not even the right to restrict ourselves to what the authors thought about their own creations, if we would interpret the symbolism involved in them. The fact is that in most cases an author does not understand all the meaning of his work. Archaic symbolisms reappear spontaneously, even in the works of "realist" authors who know nothing about such symbols.

Moreover, this controversy over the legitimate limits of the hermeneutic appraisals of symbols is quite unprofitable. We have seen that myths decay and symbols become secularised, but that they never disappear, even in the most positivist of civilisations, that of the nineteenth century. Symbols and myths come from such depths: they are part and parcel of the human being, and it is impossible that they should not be found again in any and every existential situation of man in the Cosmos.

I

Symbolism of the "Centre"

THE PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

Many laymen envy the vocation of the historian of religions. What nobler or more rewarding occupation could there be than to frequent the great mystics of all the religions, to live among symbols and mysteries, to read and understand the myths of all the nations? The layman imagines that a historian of religions must be equally at home with the Greek or the Egyptian mythology, with the authentic teaching of the Buddha, the Taoist mysteries or the secret rites of initiation in archaic societies. Perhaps laymen are not altogether wrong in thinking that the historian of religions is immersed in vast and genuine problems, engaged in the decipherment of the most impressive symbols and the most complex and lofty myths from the immense mass of material that offers itself to him. Yet in fact the situation is quite different. A good many historians of religions are so absorbed in their special studies that they know little more about the Greek or Egyptian mythologies, or the Buddha's teaching, or the Taoist or shamanic techniques, than any amateur who has known how to direct his reading. Most of them are really familiar with only one poor little sector of the immense domain of religious history. And, unhappily, even this modest sector is, more often than not, but superficially exploited by the decipherment, editing and translation of texts, historical monographs or the cataloguing of monuments, etc. Confined to an inevitably limited subject, the historian of religions often has a feeling that he has sacrificed the

fine spiritual career of his youthful dreams to the dull duty of scientific probity.

But the excessive scientific probity of his output has ended by alienating him from the cultured public. Except for quite rare exceptions, the historians of religions are not read outside the restricted circles of their colleagues and disciples. The public no longer reads their books, either because they are too technical or too dull; in short because they awaken no spiritual interest. By force of hearing it repeated—as it was, for instance, by Sir James Frazer throughout some twenty thousand pages—that everything thought, imagined or desired by man in archaic societies, all his myths and rites, all his gods and religious experiences, are nothing but a monstrous accumulation of madnesses, cruelties and superstitions now happily abolished by the progress of mankind—by dint of listening almost always to the same thing, the public has at last let itself be convinced, and has ceased to take any interest in the objective study of religions. A portion, at least, of this public tries to satisfy its legitimate curiosity by reading very bad books—on the mysteries of the Pyramids, the miracles of Yoga, on the "primordial revelations", or Atlantis—in short, interests itself in the frightful literature of the dilettanti, the neo-spiritualists or pseudo-occultists.

To some degree, it is we, the historians of religions, who are responsible for this. We wanted at all costs to present an *objective* history of religions, but we failed to bear in mind that what we were christening *objectivity* followed the fashion of thinking in our times. For nearly a century we have been striving to set up the history of religions as an autonomous discipline, without success: the history of religions is still, as we all know, confused with anthropology, ethnology, sociology, religious psychology and even with orientalism. Desirous to achieve by all means the prestige of a "science", the history of religions has passed through all the crises of the modern scientific mind, one after another. Historians of religions have been successively—and some of them have not ceased to be—positivists, empiricists, rationalists or

historicists. And what is more, none of the fashions which in succession have dominated this study of ours, not one of the global systems put forward in explanation of the religious phenomenon, has been the work of a historian of religions; they have all derived from hypotheses advanced by eminent linguists, anthropologists, sociologists or ethnologists, and have been accepted in their turn by everyone, including the historians of religions!

The situation that one finds today is as follows: a considerable improvement in information, paid for by excessive specialisation and even by sacrificing our own vocation (for the majority of historians of religions have become orientalists, classicists, ethnologists, etc.), and a dependence upon the methods elaborated by modern historiography or sociology (as though the historical study of a ritual or a myth were exactly the same thing as that of a country or of some primitive people). In short, we have neglected this essential fact: that in the title of the "history of religions" the accent ought not to be upon the word *history*, but upon the word *religions*. For although there are numerous ways of practising *history*—from the history of technics to that of human thought—there is only one way of approaching *religion*—namely, to deal with the religious facts. Before making the *history* of anything, one must have a proper understanding of what it *is*, in and for itself. In that connection, I would draw attention to the work of Professor Van der Leeuw, who has done so much for the phenomenology of religion, and whose many and brilliant publications have aroused the educated public to a renewal of interest in the history of religions in general.

In an indirect way, the same interest has been awakened by the discoveries of psychoanalysis and depth-psychology, in the first place by the work of Professor Jung. Indeed, it was soon recognised that the enormous domain of the history of religions provided an inexhaustible supply of terms of comparison with the behaviour of the individual or the collective psyche, as this was studied by psychologists or analysts. As we all know, the use that

psychologists have made of such socio-religious documentation has not always obtained the approval of historians of religions. We shall be examining, in a moment, the objections raised against such comparisons, and indeed they have often been too daring. But it may be said at once that if the historians of religions had only approached the objects of their study from a more spiritual standpoint, if they had tried to gain a deeper insight into archaic religious symbolisms, many psychological or psychoanalytic interpretations, which look all too flimsy to a specialist's eye, would never have been suggested. The psychologists have found excellent materials in our books, but very few explanations of any depth—and they have been tempted to fill up these lacunae by taking over the work of the historians of religions by putting forward general—and too often rash—hypotheses.

In few words, the difficulties that have to be overcome today are these: (a) on the one hand, having decided to compete for the prestige of an objective "scientific" historiography, the history of religions is obliged to face the objections that can be raised against historicism as such; and (b) on the other hand, it is also obliged to take up the challenge lately presented to it by psychology in general—and particularly by depth-psychology, which, now that it is beginning to work directly upon the historico-religious data, is putting forward working hypotheses more promising, more productive, or at any rate more sensational, than those that are current among historians of religion.

To understand these difficulties better, let us come now to the subject of the present study: the symbolism of the "Centre". A historian of religions has the right to ask us: What do you mean by these terms? What symbols are in question? Among which peoples and in what cultures? And he might add: You are not unaware that the epoch of Tylor, of Mannhardt and Frazer is over and done with; it is no longer allowable today to speak of myths and rites "in general", or of a uniformity in primitive man's reactions to Nature. Those generalisations are abstractions, like those of "primitive man" in general. What is concrete is the

religious phenomenon manifested in history and through history. And, from the simple fact that it is manifested in history, it is limited, it is conditioned by history. What meaning, then, for the history of religions could there be in such a formula as, for instance, the ritual approach to immortality? We must first specify what kind of immortality is in question; for we cannot be sure, *a priori*, that humanity as a whole has had, spontaneously, the intuition of immortality or even the desire for it. You speak of the "symbolism of the Centre"—what right have you, as a historian of religions, to do so? Can one so lightly generalise? One ought rather to begin by asking oneself: in which culture, and following upon what historical events, did the religious notion of the "Centre", or that of immortality become crystallised? How are these notions integrated and justified, in the organic system of such and such a culture? How are they distributed, and among which peoples? Only after having answered all these preliminary questions will one have the right to generalise and systematise, to speak in general about the rites of immortality or symbols of the "Centre". If not, one may be contributing to psychology or philosophy, or even theology, but not to the history of religions.

I think all these objections are justified and, inasmuch as I am a historian of religions, I intend to take them into account. But I do not regard them as insurmountable. I know well enough that we are dealing here with religious phenomena and that, by the very fact that they *are* phenomena—that is, manifested or revealed to us—each one is struck, like a medal, by the historical moment in which it was born. There is no "purely" religious fact, outside history and outside time. The noblest religious message, the most universal of mystical experiences, the most universally human behaviour—such, for instance, as religious fear, or ritual, or prayer—is singularised and delimited as soon as it manifests itself. When the Son of God incarnated and became the Christ, he had to speak Aramaic; he could only conduct himself as a Hebrew of his times—and not as a yogi, a Taoist or a shaman. His religious message, however universal it might be, was con-

found "in situation", his situation is not, for all that, always a historical one in the sense of being conditioned solely by the contemporaneous historical moment. The man in his totality is aware of other situations over and above his historical condition; for example, he knows the state of dreaming, or of the waking dream, or of melancholy, or of detachment, or of æsthetic bliss, or of escape, etc.—and none of these states is historical, although they are as authentic and as important for human existence as man's historical existence is. Man is also aware of several temporal rhythms, and not only of historical time—his own time, his historical contemporaneity. He has only to listen to good music, to fall in love, or to pray, and he is out of the historical present, he re-enters the eternal present of love and of religion. Even to open a novel, or attend a dramatic performance, may be enough to transport a man into another rhythm of time—what one might call "condensed time"—which is anyhow not historical time. It has been too lightly assumed that the authenticity of an existence depends solely upon the consciousness of its own historicity. Such historic awareness plays a relatively minor part in human consciousness, to say nothing of the zones of the unconscious which also belong to the make-up of the whole human being. The more a consciousness is awakened, the more it transcends its own historicity: we have only to remind ourselves of the mystics and sages of all times, and primarily those of the Orient.

HISTORY AND ARCHETYPES

But let us leave aside the objections that can be raised against historicism and existentialism, and come back to our problem—that is, to the dilemmas that confront the historian of religions. As we were saying, he too often forgets that he is concerned with archaic and integral human behaviour, and that his business ought not therefore to be reduced to *recording the historical manifestations of that behaviour*; he ought also to be trying to gain deeper insight into its *meanings* and its articulation. To take one example: it is

now known that certain myths and symbols have circulated throughout the world, spread by certain types of culture: this means that those myths and symbols are not, as such, spontaneous discoveries of archaic man, but creations of a well defined cultural complex, elaborated and carried on in certain human societies: such creations have been diffused very far from their original home and have been assimilated by peoples who would not otherwise have known them.

I believe that, after studying as rigorously as possible the relations between certain religious complexes and certain forms of culture, and after verifying the stages of diffusion of these complexes, the *ethnologist* has a right to declare himself satisfied with the results of his researches. But this is not at all the case with the *historian of religions*; for when once the findings of ethnology have been accepted and integrated, the latter has still further problems to raise: for instance, why was it possible for such a myth or such a symbol to become diffused? What did it reveal? Why are certain details—often very important ones—lost during diffusion, whilst others always survive? To sum it up—*what is it that these myths and symbols answer to, that they should have had such a wide diffusion?* These questions cannot be passed over to the psychologists, the sociologists or the philosophers, for none of these are better prepared to resolve them than is the historian of religions.

One has only to take the trouble to study the problem, to find out that, whether obtained by diffusion or spontaneously discovered, myths and rites always disclose a *boundary situation* of man—not only a historical situation. A boundary situation is one which man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe. It is primarily by throwing light upon these boundary situations that the historian of religions fulfils his task and assists in the researches of depth-psychology and even philosophy. This study is possible; moreover, it has already begun. By directing attention to the survival of symbols and mythical themes in the psyche of modern man, by showing that the spontaneous re-

discovery of the archetypes of archaic symbolism is a common occurrence in all human beings, irrespective of race and historical surroundings, depth-psychology has freed the historian of religions from his last hesitations. We will give a few examples, in a moment, of this spontaneous rediscovery of archaic symbolism, and we shall see what these can teach a historian of religions.

But already one can guess what perspectives would open up before the history of religions if only it knew how to profit by all its discoveries together with those of ethnology, sociology and depth-psychology. By envisaging the study of man not only inasmuch as he is a historic being, but also as a living symbol, the history of religions could become (if we may be pardoned the word) a *metapsychoanalysis*. For this would lead to an awakening, and a renewal of consciousness, of the archaic symbols and archetypes, whether still living or now fossilised in the religious traditions of all mankind. We have dared to use the term metapsychoanalysis because what is in question here is a more spiritual technique, applicable mainly to elucidating the theoretical content of the symbols and archetypes, giving transparency and coherence to what is allusive, cryptic or fragmentary. One could equally well call this a new *maieutics*. Just as Socrates, according to the *Theaetetus* (149 a, 161 e), acted on the mind obstetrically, bringing to birth thoughts it did not know it contained, so the history of religions could bring forth a new man, more authentic and more complete: for, through the study of the religious traditions, modern man would not only rediscover a kind of archaic behaviour, he would also become conscious of the spiritual riches implied in such behaviour.

This maieutics effected with the aid of religious symbolism would also help to rescue modern man from his cultural provincialism and, above all, from his historical and existentialist relativism. For, as we shall see, man is opposing himself to history even when he sets out to make history, and even when he pretends to be nothing but "history". And in so far as man surpasses his historic moment and gives free course to his desire to relive

the archetypes, he realises himself as a whole and universal being. In so far as he opposes himself to history, modern man rediscovers the archetypal positions. Even his sleep, even his orgiastic tendencies are charged with spiritual significance. By the simple fact that, at the heart of his being, he rediscovers the cosmic rhythms —the alternations of day and night, for instance, or of winter and summer—he comes to a more complete knowledge of his own destiny and significance.

Still with the aid of the history of religions, man might recover the symbolism of his body, which is an anthropocosmos. What the various techniques of the imagination, and especially the poetic techniques, have realised in this direction is almost nothing beside what the history of religions might promise. All these things still exist even in modern man; it is only necessary to reactivate them and bring them to the level of consciousness. By regaining awareness of his own anthropocosmic symbolism—which is only one variety of the archaic symbolism—modern man will obtain a new existential dimension, totally unknown to present-day existentialism and historicism: this is an authentic and major mode of being, which defends man from nihilism and historical relativism without thereby taking him out of history. For history itself will one day be able to find its true meaning: that of the epiphany of a glorious and absolute human condition. We have only to recall the value attached to historical existence by Judæo-Christianity, to realise how, and in what sense, history might become "glorious" and even "absolute".

Obviously, one could never pretend that rational study of the history of religions should, or could, be substituted for religious experience itself, still less for the experience of faith. But even for the Christian consciousness, a maieutics effected by means of the archaic symbolism will bear its fruit. Christianity is the inheritor of a very ancient and very complex religious tradition whose structures have survived in the midst of the Church, even though the spiritual values and theological orientation have changed. And in any case, nothing whatever, throughout the Cosmos, that

is a manifestation of glory—to speak in Christian terms—can be a matter of indifference to a believer.

Finally, the study of religions will shed light upon one fact that until now has been insufficiently noted, namely, that there is a logic of the symbol. Certain groups of symbols, at least, prove to be coherent, logically connected with one another;[1] in a word, they can be systematically formulated, translated into rational terms. This internal logic of symbols raises a problem with far-reaching consequences: are certain zones of the individual or collective consciousness dominated by the *logos*, or are we concerned here with manifestations of a "transconscious"? That problem cannot be resolved by depth-psychology alone, for the symbolisms which decipher the latter are for the most part made up of scattered fragments and of the manifestations of a psyche in crisis, if not in a state of pathological regression. To grasp the authentic structures and functions of symbols, one must turn to the inexhaustible indices of the history of religions; and yet even here, one must know how to choose; for our documents are in many cases decadent in form, aberrant, or frankly second-rate. If we want to arrive at an adequate understanding of archaic religious symbolism we are obliged to make a selection, just as, in order to gain some idea of a foreign literature, we must not take at hazard the first ten or the first hundred books to be found in the nearest public library. It is to be hoped that one day the historians of religion will make a hierarchic assessment of their documents according to the value and the condition of each, as do their colleagues, the historians of literature. But here again, we are only at the beginning of things.

THE IMAGE OF THE WORLD

In archaic and traditional societies, the surrounding world is conceived as a microcosm. At the limits of this closed world begins the domain of the unknown, of the formless. On this side

[1] See below, in Chapter III, *the "god who binds", and the symbolism of knots.*

there is ordered—because inhabited and organised—space; on the other, outside this familiar space, there is the unknown and dangerous region of the demons, the ghosts, the dead and of foreigners—in a word, chaos or death or night. This image of an inhabited microcosm, surrounded by desert regions regarded as a chaos or a kingdom of the dead, has survived even in highly evolved civilisations such as those of China, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Indeed, a good many texts liken the enemies who are attacking national territory to ghosts, demons or the powers of chaos. Thus the adversaries of the Pharaoh were looked upon as "sons of ruin, wolves, dogs", etc. The Pharaoh was likened to the God Rē, victor over the dragon Apophis, whilst his enemies were identified with that same mythical dragon. Because they attack, and endanger the equilibrium and the very life of the city (or of any other inhabited and organised territory), enemies are assimilated to demonic powers, trying to reincorporate the microcosm into the state of chaos; that is, to suppress it. The destruction of an established order, the abolition of an archetypal image, was equivalent to a regression into chaos, into the pre-formal, undifferentiated state that preceded the cosmogony. Let us note that the same images are still invoked in our own days when people want to formulate the dangers that menace a certain type of civilisation: there is much talk of "chaos", of "disorder", of the "dark ages" into which "our world" is subsiding. All these expressions, it is felt, signify the abolition of an order, of a Cosmos, of a structure, and the re-immersion in a state that is fluid, amorphous, in the end chaotic.

The conception of the enemy as a demonic being, a veritable incarnation of the powers of evil, has also survived until our days. The psychoanalysis of these mythic images that still animate the modern world will perhaps show us the extent to which we project our own destructive desires upon the "enemy". But that is a problem beyond our competence. What we wish to bring to

See our book *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York-London, 1954, pp. 37 ff.

light is that, for the archaic world in general, the enemies threatening the microcosm were dangerous, not in their capacity as human beings but because they were incarnating the hostile and destructive powers. It is very probable that the defences of inhabited areas and cities began by being magical defences; for these defences—ditches, labyrinths, ramparts, etc.—were set up to prevent the incursions of evil spirits rather than attacks from human beings. Even fairly late in history, in the Middle Ages for instance, the walls of cities were ritually consecrated as a defence against the Devil, sickness and death. Moreover, the archaic symbolism finds no difficulty in assimilating the human enemy to the Devil or to Death. After all, the result of their attacks, whether demonic or military, is always the same: ruin, disintegration and death.

Every microcosm, every inhabited region, has what may be called a "Centre"; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all. It is there, in that Centre, that the sacred manifests itself in its totality, either in the form of elementary hierophanies—as it does among the "primitives" (in the totemic centres, for example, the caves where the *tchuringas* are buried, etc.)—or else in the more evolved form of the direct epiphanies of the gods, as in the traditional civilisations. But we must not envisage this symbolism of the Centre with the geometrical implications that it has to a Western scientific mind. For each one of these microcosms there may be several "centres". As we shall see before long, all the Oriental civilisations—Mesopotamia, India, China, etc.—recognised an unlimited number of "Centres". Moreover, each one of these "Centres" was considered and even literally called the "Centre of the World". The place in question being a "sacred space", consecrated by a hierophany, or ritually constructed, and not a profane, homogeneous, geometrical space, the plurality of "Centres of the Earth" within a single inhabited region presented no difficulty.[3] What we have here is a sacred, mythic geography, the only kind effectually *real*, as opposed to profane geography,

[3] See our *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London, 1958, pp. 367 ff.

the latter being "objective" and, as it were, abstract and non-essential—the theoretical construction of a space and a world that we do not live in, and therefore do not *know*.

In mythical geography, sacred space is the essentially *real space*, for, as it has lately been shown, in the archaic world the myth alone is real. It tells of manifestations of the only indubitable reality—the *sacred*. It is in such space that one has direct contact with the sacred—whether this be materialised in certain objects (*tchuringas*, representations of the divinity, etc.) or manifested in the hiero-cosmic symbols (the Pillar of the World, the Cosmic Tree, etc.). In cultures that have the conception of three cosmic regions—those of Heaven, Earth and Hell—the "centre" constitutes the point of intersection of those regions. It is here that the break-through on to another plane is possible and, at the same time, communication between the three regions. We have reason to believe that this image of three cosmic levels is quite archaic; we meet with it, for instance, among the Semang pygmies of the Malay peninsula: at the centre of their world there stands an enormous rock, Batu-Ribn, and beneath it is Hell. From the Batu-Ribn a tree-trunk formerly reached up towards the sky.[4] Hell, the centre of the earth and the "door" of heaven are all to be found, then, upon the same axis, and it is along this axis that the passage from one cosmic region to another is effected. We might hesitate to believe in the authenticity of this cosmological theory among the Semang pygmies, were we not bound to admit that the same theory already existed in outline in prehistoric times.[5] The Semang say that the trunk of a tree *formerly* connected the summit of the Cosmic Mountain, the Centre of the World, with Heaven. This is an allusion to a mythic theme of extremely wide diffusion: formerly, communication with Heaven and relations with the divinity were easy and "natural"; until, in con-

[4] P. Schebesta, *Les Pygmées* (French translation), Paris, 1940, pp. 156 ff.

[5] Cf., for example, W. Gaerte, "Kosmische Vorstellungen im Bilde prähistorischer Zeit: Erdberg, Himmelsberg, Erdnabel und Weltenströme" in *Anthropos* IX, 1914, pp. 956-979.

sequence of a ritual fault, these communications were broken off, and the gods withdrew to still higher heavens. Only medicine-men, shamans, priests, and heroes, or the sovereign rulers were now able to re-establish communication with Heaven, and that only in a temporary way and for their own use.[6] The myth of a primordial paradise, lost on account of some fault or other, is of extreme importance—but although in some ways it touches upon our subject, we cannot discuss it now.

SYMBOLISM OF THE "CENTRE"

Let us now return to the image of the three cosmic regions connected in a "Centre" along one axis. It is chiefly in the early Oriental civilisations that we meet with this archetypal image. The name of the sanctuaries of Nippur, Larsa and Sippara was *Dur-an-ki*, "link between Heaven and Earth". Babylon had a whole list of names, among others "House of the basis of Heaven and Earth" and "Link between Heaven and Earth". But there was also in Babylon the link between the Earth and the lower regions, for the town had been built upon *bāb-apsū*, the "Gate of *apsū*"; *apsū* meaning the waters of Chaos before the Creation. We find the same tradition among the Hebrews. The Rock of Jerusalem went deep down into the subterranean waters (*tehōm*). It is said in the Mishna that the Temple stood just over the *tehōm* (the Hebrew equivalent for *apsū*). And just as, in Babylon, they had "the Gate of *apsū*", so in Jerusalem the Rock of the Temple covered the "mouth of the *tehōm*". We encounter similar traditions in the Indo-European world. Among the Romans, for example, the *mundus* constitutes the meeting-point between the lower regions and the terrestrial world. The Italic temple was the zone of intersection between the higher (divine) world, the terrestrial world and the subterranean (infernal) world.[7]

Every Oriental city was standing, in effect, at the centre of the

[6] Cf. our *Le Chamanisme et les techniques de l'extase*, Payot, 1951.

[7] Cf. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp. 13 ff.

body", would take us too far. Suffice it to say that the reactivation of the *chakras*—those "wheels" (or circles) which are regarded as so many points of intersection of the cosmic life and the mental life—is homologous with the initiatory penetration into a *mandala*. The awakening of the Kundalini is equivalent to the breaking of the ontological plane; that is, to the plenary realisation of the symbolism of the "Centre".

As we have seen, the *mandala* can be used in support, either at the same time or successively, of a concrete ritual or an act of spiritual concentration or, again, of a technique of mystical physiology. This multivalency, this applicability to multiple although closely comparable planes, is a characteristic of the symbolism of the Centre in general. This is easily understandable, since every human being tends, even unconsciously, towards the Centre, and towards his own centre, where he can find integral reality—sacredness. This desire, so deeply rooted in man, to find himself at the very heart of the real—at the Centre of the World, the place of communication with Heaven—explains the ubiquitous use of "Centres of the World". We have seen above how the habitation of man was assimilated to the Universe, the hearth or the smoke-hole being homologised with the Centre of the World; so that all houses—like all temples, palaces and cities—are situated at one and the same point, the Centre of the Universe.

But is there not a certain contradiction here? A whole array of myths, symbols and rituals emphasises with one accord *the difficulty of obtaining entry into a centre*; while on the other hand another series of myths and rites lays it down that *this centre is accessible*. For example, pilgrimage to the Holy Places is difficult; but any visit whatever to a church is a pilgrimage. The Cosmic Tree is, on the one hand, inaccessible; but on the other, it may be found in any yourt. The way which leads to the "Centre" is sown with obstacles, and yet every city, every temple, every dwelling-place *is already* at the Centre of the Universe. The sufferings and the "trials" undergone by Ulysses are fabulous; nevertheless any

return to hearth and home whatever is equivalent to Ulysses' return to Ithaca.

All this seems to show that man *can live only in a sacred space*, in the "Centre". We observe that one group of traditions attests the desire of man to find himself at the Centre *without any effort*, whilst another group insists upon the *difficulty*, and consequently upon the *merit*, of being able to enter into it. We are not here concerned to trace the history of either of these traditions. The fact that the first-mentioned—the "easy" way which allows of the construction of a Centre even in a man's own house—is found nearly everywhere, invites us to regard it as the more significant. It calls attention to something in the human condition that we may call the *nostalgia for Paradise*. By this we mean the desire to *find oneself always and without effort* in the Centre of the World, at the heart of reality; and by a short cut and in a natural manner to transcend the human condition, and to recover the divine condition—as a Christian would say, the condition before the Fall.[24]

We should not like to terminate this study without having recalled one European myth which, though only indirectly concerned with the symbolism and rites of the Centre, combines and integrates them in a still vaster symbolism. We refer to an episode in the legend of Parsifal and the Fisher King,[25] concerning the mysterious malady that paralysed the old King who held the secret of the Graal. It was not he alone who suffered; everything around him was falling into ruins, crumbling away—the palace, the towers and the gardens. Animals no longer bred, trees bore no more fruit, the springs were drying up. Many doctors had tried to cure the Fisher King, all without the least success. The knights were arriving there day and night, each of them asking first of all for news of the King's health. But one knight—poor, unknown

[24] Cf. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 380 ff., and *Le Chamanisme*, pp. 417, 428 ff.

[25] *Perceval*, Hucher edition, p. 466; Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, Cambridge, 1920, pp. 12 ff. The same mythic motif occurs in the cycle of Sir Gawain (Weston, *ibid.*).

and even slightly ridiculous—took the liberty of disregarding ceremony and politeness: his name was Parsifal. Paying no attention to courtly custom, he made straight for the King and, addressing him without any preamble, asked: "Where is the Graal?" In that very instant, everything is transformed: the King rises from his bed of suffering, the rivers and fountains flow once more, vegetation grows again, and the castle is miraculously restored. Those few words of Parsifal had been enough to regenerate the whole of Nature. But those few words propound the central question, the one question that can arouse not only the Fisher King but the whole Cosmos: Where is the supreme reality, the sacred, the Centre of Life and the source of immortality, where is the Holy Graal? No one had thought, until then, of asking that central question—and the world was perishing because of that metaphysical and religious indifference, because of lack of imagination and absence of desire for reality.

That brief episode of a great European myth reveals to us at least one neglected aspect of the symbolism of the Centre: that there is not only an intimate interconnection between the universal life and the salvation of man; but that *it is enough only to raise the question of salvation*, to pose the central problem; that is, *the* problem—for the life of the cosmos to be for ever renewed. For—as this mythological fragment seems to show—death is often only the result of our indifference to immortality.

II

Indian Symbolisms of Time and Eternity

THE FUNCTION OF THE MYTHS

Indian myths are "myths" before they are "Indian"; that is to say, they form part of a particular category of archaic man's spiritual creations and may, therefore, be compared with any other group of traditional myths. So, before dealing with the Indian mythology of Time, it is advisable briefly to recall the intimate connections between the Myth as such, as an original form of culture, and Time. For besides the specific functions that it fulfils in archaic societies, which we need not dwell upon here, the myth is also important in what it reveals to us about the structure of Time. As is generally admitted today, a myth is an account of events which took place *in principio*, that is, "in the beginning", in a primordial and non-temporal instant, a moment of *sacred time*. This mythic or sacred time is qualitatively different from profane time, from the continuous and irreversible time of our everyday, de-sacralised existence. In narrating a myth, one re-actualises, in some sort, the sacred time in which the events narrated took place. (This, moreover, is why the myths, in traditional societies, are not to be narrated however or whenever one likes; they can be recited only during the sacred seasons, in the bush and at night, or around the fire after or before the rituals, etc.) In a word, the myth is supposed to happen—if one may say so—in a non-temporal time, in an instant without duration, as certain mystics and philosophers conceived of eternity.

This observation is important, for it follows that the narration

of the myths is not without consequences for him who recites and those who listen. From the mere fact of the narration of a myth, profane time is—at least symbolically—abolished: the narrator and his hearers are rapt into sacred and mythical time. We have tried to show elsewhere[1] that the abolition of profane time by the imitation of exemplary models and the re-enactment of mythical events constitutes, as it were, a specific mark of all traditional societies; and that this mark is, of itself, enough to differentiate the archaic world from that of our modern societies. In the traditional societies men endeavoured, consciously and voluntarily, to abolish Time—periodically to efface the past and to regenerate Time—by a series of rituals which, as it were, re-enacted the cosmogony. We need not enter here into developments which would take us too far from our subject. Enough to remind ourselves that the myth takes man out of his own time—his individual, chronological, "historic" time—and projects him, symbolically at least, into the Great Time, into a paradoxical instant which cannot be measured because it does not consist of duration. This is as much as to say that the myth implies a break-away from Time and the surrounding world; it opens up a way into the sacred Great Time.

Merely by listening to a myth, man forgets his profane condition, his "historical situation" as we are accustomed to call it today. It is not absolutely necessary that a man should belong to a historic civilisation before we can say that he is in a "historical situation". The Australian living upon insects and roots is also living in a "historical situation" in the sense that it is a well-delimited one, expressed in a certain ideology and sustained by a certain type of social and economic organisation: specifically, the existence of the Australian very likely represents a variant of the historical situation of paleolithic man. For the expression "a historical situation" need not necessarily imply "history" in the major sense of the word; it implies only the human condition as such; that is, a condition ruled by a certain system of customs.

[1] See the *Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp. 51 ff. and *passim*.

But not only an Australian, an individual belonging to a much more highly evolved civilisation—a Chinese, for instance, or a Hindu, or a peasant of some European country—when he is listening to a myth, forgets, as it were, his particular situation and is projected into another world, into a Universe which is no longer his poor little universe of every day.

It should be remembered that for each of these individuals, for the Australian as well as for the Chinese, the Hindu and the European peasant, the myths are *true* because they are *sacred*, because they tell him about sacred beings and events. Consequently, in reciting or listening to a myth, one resumes contact with the sacred and with reality, and in so doing one transcends the profane condition, the "historical situation". In other words, one goes beyond the temporal condition and the dull self-sufficiency which is the lot of every human being simply because every human being is "ignorant"—in the sense that he is identifying himself, and Reality, with his own particular situation. And ignorance is, first of all, this false identification of Reality with what each one of us *appears to be or to possess.* A politician thinks that the only true reality is political power, a millionaire is convinced that wealth alone is real, a man of learning thinks the same about his studies, his books, laboratories and so forth. The same tendency is equally in evidence among the less civilised, in primitive peoples and savages, but with this difference, that the myths are still alive amongst them, which prevents them from identifying themselves wholly and completely with non-reality. The periodic recitation of the myths breaks through the barriers built up by profane existence. The myth continually reactualises the Great Time, and in so doing raises the listener to a superhuman and supra-historical plane; which, among other things, enables him to approach a Reality that is inaccessible at the level of profane, individual existence.

might even be tempted to add "his historical situation", for Indra happened to be the great warrior Chief of the Gods at a certain historic moment, in a definite phase of the great cosmic drama. What Indra hears from the mouth of Vishnu is *a true story*; the true story of the eternal creation and destruction of worlds, beside which his own history, that of his countless heroic adventures culminating in the victory over Vritra, seems, indeed, to be "false"—its events are without transcendent significance. The *true story* reveals to him the Great Time, mythic time in which is the true source of all beings and of all cosmic events. It is because he can thus transcend his historically conditioned "situation", and succeeds in piercing the veil of illusion created by profane time—that is, by his *own* history—that Indra is cured of his pride and ignorance: in Christian terms he is "saved". And this redemptive function of the myth applies not only to Indra, but also to every human being who listens to his adventure. To transcend profane time and re-enter into mythical Great Time is equivalent to a revelation of ultimate reality—reality that is strictly metaphysical, and can be approached in no other way than through myths and symbols.

This myth has a sequel, to which we shall return. For the moment, let us note that the conception of cyclic and infinite Time, presented in so striking a manner by Vishnu, is the general Indian conception of cosmic cycles. Belief in the periodic creation and destruction of the Universe is found as early as in the *Atharva Veda* (X, 8, 39-40). And as a matter of fact it belongs to the *Weltanschauung* of all archaic societies.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE YUGAS

India, however, has elaborated a doctrine of cosmic cycles by amplifying the number of periodic creations and destructions of the Universe to ever more terrifying proportions. The unit of measurement for the smallest cycle of all is the *yuga*—the "age". A *yuga* is preceded by a "dawn" and followed by a "dusk", which

fill the intervals between the successive "ages". A complete cycle or *mahāyuga* is composed of four "ages" of unequal duration, the longest appearing at the beginning of a cycle and the shortest at the end of it. The names of these *yuga* are borrowed from the names of the "throws" in the game of dice. *Krita yuga* (from the verb *kri*, to "make" or to "accomplish") means the "perfect age"; in dice-play, the throw that turns up the side with four pips is the winning throw. For in the Indian tradition, the number four symbolises totality, plenitude or perfection. The *krita yuga* is the perfect age, and therefore it is also called the *satya yuga*; that is, the "real", true, or authentic age. From every point of view it is the golden age, the beatific epoch ruled by justice, happiness and prosperity. During the *krita yuga* the moral order of the Universe, the *dharma*, is observed in its entirety. What is more, it is observed spontaneously, without constraint, by all beings, for during the *krita yuga* the *dharma* is in some sort identified with human existence. The perfect man of the *krita yuga* incarnates the cosmic norm, and therefore the moral law. He leads an exemplary, archetypal existence. In other, non-Indian traditions, this golden age is equivalent to the primordial, paradisiac epoch.

The succeeding age, the *tretā yuga* or triad, so named after the die with three pips, marks the beginning of a regression. Human beings no longer observe more than three-quarters of the *dharma*. Work, suffering and death are now the lot of mankind. Duty is no longer performed spontaneously, but has to be learnt. The customs proper to the four castes begin to be altered.

With the *dvāpara yuga* (the age symbolised by "two"), only half of the *dharma* survives on earth. Vices and evils increase, human life becomes of still shorter duration. And in *kali yuga*, the "evil age", only a quarter of the *dharma* remains. The term *kali* designates the die marked with one pip only, which is also the "losing throw" (personified, moreover, as an evil spirit): *kali* signifies also "dispute, discord" and, in general, the most evil of any group of beings or objects. In *kali yuga* man and society reach the extreme point of disintegration. According to the *Vishnu*

Purāna (IV, 24) the syndrome of *kali yuga* is marked by the fact that it is the only age in which property alone confers social rank; wealth becomes the only motive of the virtues, passion and lust the only bonds between the married, falsehood and deception the first condition of success in life, sexuality the sole means of enjoyment, while external, merely ritualistic religion is confused with spirituality. For several thousand years, be it understood, we have been living in *kali yuga*.

The figures 4, 3, 2 and 1 denote both the decreasing length of each *yuga* and the progressive diminution of the *dharma* subsisting in it; to which, moreover, corresponds a shortening of the length of human life, accompanied as we saw by a progressive relaxation of morals and a continuous decline of intelligence. Certain Hindu schools like the *Pāncharātra* connect the theory of cycles with a doctrine about the "decline of knowledge" (*jnāna bhramsa*).

The relative duration of each of these four *yugas* may be calculated in different ways, depending upon the values ascribed to the years—whether they are regarded as human years, or as divine "years", each comprising 360 years. To take a few examples: according to certain sources (*Manu* I, 69 *et seq.*, *Mahābhārata* III, 12, 826), the *krita yuga* lasts for 4,000 years, plus 400 years of "dawn" and as many of "dusk"; then come the *tretā yuga* of 3,000 years, the *dvāpara* of 2,000 years and *kali yuga* of 1,000—all, of course, with their corresponding periods of "dawn" and "dusk". A complete cycle, a *mahāyuga*, therefore comprises 12,000 years. The passage from one *yuga* to another takes place during a twilight interval, which marks a decline even within each *yuga*, every one of them terminating in a phase of darkness. As we are approaching the end of the cycle—that is, the fourth and last *yuga*, the darkness deepens. The final *yuga*, that in which we find ourselves now, is also regarded, more than any other, as the "age of darkness"; for, by a play upon words, it has become associated with the goddess Kālī—the "black". Kālī is one of the multiple names of the Great Goddess, of Shakti the spouse of the god Shiva; and this name of the Great Goddess has naturally been

connected with the Sanskrit word *kāla*, "time": Kālī thus becomes not only "the Black", but also the personification of Time.[3] But, etymology apart, the association between *kāla*, "time", the goddess Kālī and *kali yuga* is structurally justifiable: Time is "black" because it is irrational, hard and pitiless; and Kālī, like all the other Great Goddesses, is the mistress of Time, of all the destinies that she forges and fulfils.

A complete cycle, a *mahāyuga*, ends in a "dissolution" or *pralaya*, and this is repeated in a still more radical way at the *mahāpralaya*, or "Great Dissolution", at the end of the thousandth cycle. For later speculation has amplified and multiplied this primordial rhythm of "creation-destruction-creation" *ad infinitum* by projecting the unit of measure—the *yuga*—into vaster and vaster cycles. The 12,000 years of one *mahāyuga* have been counted as "divine years" of 360 years each, which gives a total of 4,320,000 years for a single cosmic cycle. A thousand of such *mahāyugas* constitute one *kalpa* (or "form"); 14 *kalpas* make up one *manvantāra* (so called because each such period is supposed to be governed by a Manu, or mythical ancestor-king). One *kalpa* is equal to one day in the life of Brahmā, and another *kalpa* to one night. A hundred of these "years" of Brahmā, say 311 thousand billion human years, make up the life of the god. But even this considerable length of Brahmā's life does not exhaust the whole of Time, for the gods are not eternal, and the cosmic creations and destructions go on without end.

All we need retain from this cataract of numbers, is the cyclic character of cosmic Time. In fact, what we have here is the repetition to infinity of the same phenomenon (creation-destruction-new creation) prefigured in each *yuga* ("dawn" and "dusk") but completely realised in a *mahāyuga*. The life of Brahmā thus comprises 2,560,000 of these *mahāyugas*, each going through the same stages (*krita*, *tretā*, *dvāpara*, *kali*) and concluding with a *pralaya*, with a *ragnarök* (the "definitive" destruction, or total dissolution

[3] Cf. J. Przyluski, "From the Great Goddess to Kāla", in the *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1938, pp. 267 ff.

of the cosmic Egg takes place in the *mahāpralaya* at the end of each *kalpa*). The *mahāpralaya* implies the regression of all forms and all modes of existence into the original, undifferentiated *prakriti*. On the mythical plane nothing remains but the primordial Ocean, on the surface of which the great god Vishnu sleeps.

Besides the metaphysical depreciation *of human life as history*[4] —which, by and in proportion to its duration, causes an *erosion* of all forms, an exhaustion of their ontological substance—and besides the myth of the *perfection of the beginnings*, a universal tradition which recurs here too (paradise is lost gradually in this case, simply because it is *realised*, because it takes *form* and *duration*) —besides these, what most merits our attention in this orgy of figures is the *eternal repetition* of the fundamental rhythm of the Cosmos: its periodical destruction and re-creation. From this cycle without beginning or end, which is the cosmic manifestation of *māyā*, man can extricate himself only by an act of spiritual freedom (for all Indian soteriological systems are reducible to a previous deliverance from the cosmic illusion, and to spiritual freedom).

The two great heterodoxies, Buddhism and Jainism, accept the same Indian doctrine of cyclic time, in its general outlines, and liken it to a wheel of twelve spokes (an image that occurs earlier in the Vedic texts, in the *Atharva Veda*, X, 8, 4 and *Rig Veda*, I, 164, 115, etc.). Buddhism adopted the *kalpa* (in Pali, *kappa*) as the unit of measurement for the cosmic cycles, dividing it into a variable number of what the texts call "incalculables" (*asaṁ-kheya*, in Pali *asankheyya*). The Pali sources generally mention 4 *asankheyyas* and 100,000 *kappa* (for example *Jātaka* I, p. 2). In the Mahāyāna literature the number of "incalculables" varies between 3, 7 and 33, and they are related to the career of the Bodhisattva in the different Cosmoses. The progressive decadence of man is marked, in the Buddhist tradition, by a constant diminution of the length of human life. Thus, according to the *Dīghanikāya* II, 2-7, during the epoch of the first Buddha, Vipassi, who lived 91 *kappa* ago, the

[4] Further upon all this, see *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp. 112 ff. and *passim*.

of the unreality and vanity of the world. He finds himself in the same situation as Prince Siddhārtha immediately after having abandoned his palace and his wives at Kapilavastu and having entered upon his rigorous mortifications. But it is a question whether a King of the Gods and a husband has the right to draw such conclusions from a metaphysical revelation; whether his renunciation and asceticism might not endanger the equilibrium of the world. And indeed, shortly afterwards, his consort the queen Saci, in despair at having been abandoned, implores the help of their spiritual guide Brihaspati. Taking her by the hand, Brihaspati approaches Indra, and speaks to him at length, not only about the virtues of the contemplative life, but also of the life of action, the life that finds its fulfilment in this world of ours. Indra thus receives a second revelation: he now understands that everyone ought to take his own path to the fulfilment of his vocation, which means, in the last reckoning, doing his duty. And, since Indra's vocation and his duty were to continue to be Indra, he resumes his identity and carries on his heroic adventures, but without pride or delusion now that he understands the vanity of all "situations", even that of a King of Gods . . .

This sequel to the myth restores the balance. What is essential is not always to forsake one's historical situation and strive in vain to rejoin the universal Being—it is to keep steadily in mind the perspectives of Great Time, while continuing to fulfil one's duty in historical time. This is precisely the lesson given by Krishna to Arjuna, in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In India, as elsewhere in the archaic world, the access to Great Time obtained by the periodic recitation of the myths, permits the indefinite continuance of a certain *order*, which is at once metaphysical, social and ethical. This order does not encourage an idolisation of History, for the perspective of mythical time renders any portion of historic time illusory.

As we have just seen, the myth of cyclic and endless Time, destroying as it does the illusions woven by the minor rhythms of time (that is, by historical time) reveals to us the precarious-

gendered all that has been and all that will be" (*Atharva Veda*, XIX, 54, 3). In the *Upanishads*, Brahman, the Universal Spirit, the absolute Being, is conceived both as transcending Time and as the source and foundation of all that manifests itself in Time: "Lord of what has been and what will be, he is both today and tomorrow" (*Kena Upanishad*, IV, 13). And Krishna, showing himself to Arjuna as God of the Cosmos, declares: "I am Time, which in its course destroys the world" (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, XI, 32).

As we know, the *Upanishads* distinguish two aspects of Brahman the Universal Being, "the corporeal and the incorporeal, the mortal and the immortal, the fixed (*sthita*) and the mobile, etc," (*Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, II, 3, 1). This amounts to saying that both the manifest and the non-manifest Universe, as well as the Spirit in its conditioned and non-conditioned modalities, reside in the One, in Brahman who contains all polarities and all opposites. But the *Maitri Upanishad* (VII, 11, 8), when defining the bi-polarity of the universal Being in the domain of Time, distinguishes the "two forms" (*dve rupe*) of Brahman—that is, the aspects of the "two natures" (*dvaitibhāva*) of a single essence (*tad ekam*)—as "Time and Timelessness" (*kālas-cākalas-ca*). In other words, Time and Eternity are two aspects of the same Principle: in Brahman, the *nunc fluens* and the *nunc stans* coincide. The *Maitri Upanishad* goes on to say: "What precedes the Sun is timeless (*akāla*) and undivided (*akala*); but what begins with the Sun is Time that has divisions (*sakala*), and its form is the Year..."

The expression "what precedes the Sun" may be understood, cosmologically, as a reference to the epoch before the Creation—for in the intervals between the *mahāyuga*, or the *kalpa*, in the great Cosmic Nights, there is no duration at all—but it applies above all in the metaphysical and soteriological spheres: that is, it points to the paradoxical situation of the man who obtains illumination, who becomes a *jivan-mukta*, one who is "liberated in this life", and thereby rises above Time in the sense that he no longer participates in duration. Indeed, the *Chāndogya Upanishad* (III, 11) affirms that for the sage, for the enlightened one, the Sun

stands still: "But after elevation into the zenith it (the Sun) will neither rise nor set any more. It will remain alone in the Centre (*ekala eva madhyhe sthātā*). Hence this text: 'There [namely, in the transcendental world of the *brahman*] it has not set, nor did it ever rise . . .' It neither rises nor sets; once for all (*sakrit*) it stands in heaven, for him who knows the doctrine of the *brahman*."

Here, of course, we are given a concrete image of this transcendence: at the zenith—that is, at the summit of the celestial vault, at the "Centre of the World", the place where the rupture of the planes and communication between the three cosmic zones are possible—the Sun (equated with Time) remains motionless for "him who knows"; the *nunc fluens* paradoxically transforms itself into the *nunc stans*. Illumination and understanding achieve the miracle of an escape from Time. This paradoxical instant of enlightenment is compared, in the Vedic and Upanishadic texts, to lightning. Brahman is understood suddenly, like a flash of lightning (*Kena Upanishad*, IV, 4, 5). "In the thunder-flash is the Truth" (*Kausitaki Upanishad*, IV, 2. We know that the same image of lightning for spiritual illumination occurs in Greek metaphysics and in Christian mysticism).

Let us dwell for a moment upon this mythological image of the zenith which is at the same time the Summit of the World and the "Centre" *par excellence*, the infinitesimal point through which passes the Cosmic Axis (*Axis Mundi*). We have shown in the previous chapter how important this symbolism is for archaic thought.[8] A "Centre" represents an ideal point which belongs not to profane geometrical space, but to sacred space; a point in which communication with Heaven or Hell may be realised: in other words, a "Centre" is the paradoxical "place" where the planes intersect, the point at which the sensuous world can be transcended. But by transcending the Universe, the created world, one also transcends time and achieves *stasis*—the eternal non-temporal present.

[8] Cf. above, pp. 41 ff.

That the act of transcending space is one with that of transcending the flux of time is well elucidated by a myth that describes the Nativity of the Buddha. The *Majjhima-Nikāya* (III, p.123) narrates that "as soon as he was born, the Bodhisattva planted his feet flat on the ground and, turning towards the North, took seven steps, sheltered by a white parasol. He contemplated the regions all around and said, with the voice of a bull—: "I am the highest in the world, I am the best in the world, I am the Eldest in the world; this is my last birth: for me, henceforth, there will never be another existence." This mythical incident in the Buddha's nativity is reproduced, with some variations, in the later literature of the Nikāya-Agama, of the Vinaya, and in biographies of the Buddha.[9] The *sapta padāni*, or seven steps, which take the Buddha to the summit of the world also play a part in Buddhist art and iconography. The symbolism of the "seven steps" is fairly transparent.[10] The expression, "I am the highest in the world" (*aggo'ham asmi lokassa*) refers to the Buddha's *transcendence of space*. He has, in effect, reached the "summit of the world" (*lokkagge*), by mounting the seven cosmic storeys that correspond, as we know, to the seven planetary heavens. But by the same token he has also transcended Time, for, in the Indian cosmology, this summit is the point from which the creation began, and accordingly it is the "oldest" part of the world. That is why the Buddha exclaims: "It is I who am the Eldest of the world" (*jettho'ham asmi lokassa*) for, by reaching the top of the cosmos, *Buddha becomes contemporaneous with the commencement of the world.* Having magically abolished time and the creation, he finds himself in the temporal instant which preceded the cosmogony. The law of the irreversibility of cosmic time, so

[9] In a long note to his translation of the *Mahāprajnāpāramitasastra of Nāgārjuna*, M. Etienne Lamotte has assembled and grouped all the most important texts; cf. *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Vol. I, Louvain, 1944, pp. 6 ff.

[10] Cf. Eliade: *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, London, 1960, Chapter VI, section on the "Seven Steps of the Buddha".

terrible to those who are dwelling in illusion, is no longer binding upon the Buddha. For him, time is reversible and can even be anticipated, for the Buddha knows not the past only, but also the future. Not only can he abolish time; it is important to note that he can travel through time backwards (*patiloman* Skr. *pratiloman*) "against the fur", and this will hold good equally for the Buddhist monks and yogis who, before attaining their *Nirvāna* or their *samādhi*, effect a "return backwards" which enables them to know their former lives.

THE "BROKEN EGG"

Besides this image of the Buddha transcending space and time, by traversing the seven cosmic planes right to the "Centre" of the world and simultaneously returning to the a-temporal moment which precedes the creation of the world, there is another image beautifully combining the symbolisms of space and time. Paul Mus, in a remarkable article, has drawn attention to the following text from the *Suttavibhanga*:[11]

"When a hen has laid eggs," says the Buddha, "eight, ten or a dozen; when the hen has sat upon them and kept them warm long enough—then, when one of those chicks, the first one to break the shell with the point of its claw or its beak, comes safely out of the egg, what will they call that chick—the eldest, or the youngest?"—"They will call him the eldest, venerable Gautama, for he is the first-born among them."—"So likewise, O brahman, I alone, among all those who live in ignorance and are as though enclosed and imprisoned in an egg, have burst through this shell of ignorance; I alone in this world have attained to the blessed, the universal dignity of the Buddha. Thus, O brahman, I am the eldest, the noblest among beings."

[11] *Suttavibhanga, Pārājika* I, I, 4; cf. H. Oldenberg, *Le Bouddha* (Trans. A. Foucher), pp. 364-365; Paul Mus, "La Notion de temps réversible dans la mythologie bouddhique", an extract from *l'Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Section des Sciences religieuses, 1938-1939, Melun, 1939, p. 13.

forcibly as does the Buddhist symbolism of breaking out of the egg. We shall encounter more of such archetypal images, when we come to describe certain aspects of the practice of Tantric yoga.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIME IN BUDDHISM

The symbolism of the Seven Steps of the Buddha and of the Cosmic Egg implies the *reversibility of time*, a paradoxical process to which we shall have to return. But first we must present, in its main outlines, the philosophy of time elaborated by Buddhism, especially by the Mahāyāna.[12] For the Buddhist also, time consists of a continuous flux—*samtāna*—and because of this fluidity of time, every "form" that manifests itself in it is not only transient but also ontologically unreal. The philosophers of the Mahāyāna have commented abundantly on what might be called the instantaneity of time; that is, on the fluidity and, in the last analysis, the non-reality of the present instant which is continually transforming itself into the past, into non-being. For the Buddhist philosopher, writes Stcherbatsky, "existence and non-existence are not different appearances of a thing, they are *the thing* itself". As Santaraksita says: "The nature of any thing is its own momentary stasis and destruction".[13] The destruction that Santaraksita speaks of is not empirical destruction like that of a vase breaking when it falls to the ground, but the intrinsic and continuous annihilation of every existing thing involved in Time. It is for this reason that Vasubandhu writes: "Because of immediate destruc-

[12] The elements of this philosophy will be found in the two volumes by Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Leningrad, 1930-32, ("Bibliotheca Buddhica"); and in the rich memoir of Louis de la Vallée-Poussin, "Documents d'Abhidharma: la Controverse du Temps", in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, V, Brussels, 1937, pp. 1-158. See also S. Schayer, *Contributions to the Problem of Time in Indian Philosophy*, Cracow, 1938; and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity*, Ascona, 1947, pp. 30 ff.

[13] *Tattvasamgraha*, p. 137; Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, I, pp. 94 ff.

flow of time, that he has passed out of cosmic time.[15] For him, says the *Samyutta Nikāya* (I, 141), "there is neither past nor future" (*na tassa paccha na purattham atthi*). To the Buddha, all times have become present time (*Visuddhi Magga*, 411); in other words, he has abolished the irreversibility of time.

The total present, the eternal present of the mystics, is stasis or non-duration. Expressed in spatial symbols, the non-durational eternal present is *immobility*. And, in fact, to denote the unconditioned state of the Buddha or of the liberated self (*jivanmukta*), Buddhism—and Yoga too—use expressions relating to immobility or stasis. "He whose thought is stable" (*thita-citto*; *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 157), "he whose spirit is stable" (*thit'atta*, *ibid.* I, 57), "stable", "motionless", etc. Let us not forget that the first and simplest definition of Yoga is that given by Patanjali himself at the beginning of his *Yoga Sutra* (I, 2): "*yogah cittavrittinirodhah*", "Yoga is the suppression of states of consciousness". But suppression is only the final end. The yogi begins by "stopping", by "immobilising" his states of consciousness, his psycho-mental flux. (The most usual meaning of *nirodha* is, moreover, that of "restriction" or "obstruction", as in the acts of "shutting-up", "enclosing", etc.) We will return again to the effects that this stoppage or immobilisation of states of consciousness may have upon the yogis' experience of time.

He "whose thought is stable" and for whom time no longer flows, lives in an eternal present, in the *nunc stans*. The instant, the present moment, the *nunc*, is called *ksana* in Sanskrit and *khana* in Pali.[16] It is by the *ksana*, by the "moment", that time is measured. But this term has also the meaning of "favourable moment", "opportunity", and for the Buddha it is by means of such a "favourable moment" that one can escape from time. The

[15] *Sutta Nipāta*, 373, 860, etc., and other texts collected by Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 ff.

[16] See Louis de la Vallée-Poussin, "Notes sur le 'moment' ou *ksana* des bouddhistes" in the *Rocznik Orientalistczny*, Vol. VIII, 1931, pp. 1-13; and Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 ff.

Buddha advises us "not to lose the moment" for "those who miss the moment will lament." He congratulates the monks who "have seized their moment" (*khano vo patiladdho*) and pities those "for whom the moment is past" (*khanātitā*; *Samyuta Nikāya*, IV, 126). This means that after the long journey in cosmic time, passing through innumerable lives, the illumination is instantaneous (*eka-ksana*). "The instantaneous enlightenment" (*eka-ksanābhisambodhi*) as it is called by the Mahāyānist authors, means that the comprehension of Reality comes *suddenly*, like a *flash of lightning*. The same verbal image of lightning is found in the Upanishadic texts. Any instant whatever, any *ksana* whatever, may become the "favourable moment", the paradoxical instant which suspends duration and throws the Buddhist monk into the *nunc stans*, into an eternal present. This eternal present is no longer a part of time, of duration: it is qualitatively different from our profane "present"—from that precarious present that peeps out faintly between two non-entities, the past and the future, and will cease with our death. The "favourable moment" of enlightenment may be compared with the flash that communicates a revelation, or with the mystical ecstasy which is prolonged, paradoxically, beyond time.

IMAGES AND PARADOXES

All the images by means of which we try to express the paradoxical act of "escaping from time" are equally expressive of *the passage from ignorance to enlightenment* (or, in other words, from "death" to "life", from the conditioned to the unconditioned, etc.). Broadly speaking, they may be grouped into three classes: first, the images that point to the abolition of time, and therefore to enlightenment by *breaking through the planes* (the "broken egg-shell", the lightning, the seven steps of the Buddha, etc.). Secondly, those that represent an *inconceivable situation* (the Sun standing still in the zenith, complete cessation of the flow of states of consciousness, cessation of breathing in the practice of Yoga, etc.), and, thirdly

All these images express the necessity of *transcending the "pairs of opposites"*, of abolishing the polarity that besets the human condition, in order to reach the ultimate reality. As Ananda Coomaraswamy said: "Whoever would transfer from this to the Otherworld, or return, must do so in the uni-dimensioned and timeless 'interval' that divides related but contrary forces, between which, if one is to pass at all, it must be 'instantly' " (*Symplegades*, p. 486).

Indeed, for Indian thought, the human condition is defined by the existence of opposites, and liberation from the human condition is equivalent to a non-conditioned state in which the opposites coincide. We remember how the *Maitri Upanishad*, referring to the manifest and unmanifested aspects of Being, distinguishes the "two forms" of Brahman as "Time and the Timeless". By the sage, Brahman is seen as the exemplary model: deliverance is "an imitation of Brahman". This is to say that for "him who knows" Time and the Timeless lose their tension as opposites: they are no longer distinct one from the other. To illustrate this paradoxical situation attained by the abolition of the "pairs of opposites", Indian thought, like all archaic thinking, makes use of images whose very structure includes contradiction (images of the type of "finding a door in a wall where none is visible").

The coincidence of the opposites is still better illustrated by the image of the "instant" (*ksana*) that changes into a "favourable moment". Apparently *nothing distinguishes any moment of profane time from the timeless instant attained by enlightenment.* Rightly to understand the structure and function of such an image, one must remember the dialectic of the sacred: any object whatever may paradoxically become a hierophany, a receptacle of the sacred, while still participating in its own cosmic environment (a *sacred* stone, e.g., remains nevertheless a *stone* along with

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Homage to George Sarton, New York, 1947, pp. 463, 488; Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, Paris, 1951, pp. 419 ff. and *passim*.

other stones).[19] From this point of view, the image of the "favourable moment" illustrates the paradoxical coincidence of the opposites even more vividly than do the images of contradictory situations of the type of the Sun standing still, etc.

TECHNIQUES OF THE "ESCAPE FROM TIME"

The instantaneous enlightenment, the paradoxical leap out of Time, is obtained at the end of a long discipline which comprises a philosophy as well as a mystical technique. But let us recall a few of the techniques designed to arrest the flow of time. The commonest, the one that is indeed pan-Indian, is *prānāyāma*, the rhythmicisation of breathing. It should be noted that, although its ultimate aim is the transcendence of the human condition, the practice of Yoga begins by restoring and improving that condition, bringing it to an amplitude and majesty that seem unattainable to the profane. We are not, at the moment, thinking of Hatha Yoga, the express purpose of which is to obtain absolute mastery of the human body and psyche. For all forms of Yoga include a preliminary transformation of the profane man—weak, distracted, enslaved by his body and incapable of real mental effort—into a glorious Man with perfect physical health, absolute mastery of his body and of his psycho-mental life, capable of self-concentration, conscious of himself. It is Man thus made perfect that Yoga seeks finally to surpass, not only the profane, everyday man.

In cosmological terms (and to penetrate into Indian thought one must always use this key), it is by starting from *a perfect Cosmos* that Yoga sets out *to transcend the cosmic condition as such*—not by starting from chaos. And the physiology and the psycho-mental life of the profane man are very like a chaos. Yoga practice begins by organising this chaos—let us say, by "cosmicising" it. *Prānāyāma*, by rendering the respiration rhythmic, transforms the

[19] Upon the dialectic of the holy, see Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 7 ff.

yogin, little by little, into a cosmos:[20] breathing is no longer arhythmic, thought ceases to be dispersed, the circulation of the psycho-mental forces is no longer anarchic. But, by working thus upon the respiration, the yogin works directly upon the time that he is living. There is no adept in Yoga who, during these exercises, has not experienced quite another quality of time. In vain have they tried to describe this experience of the time lived during *prānāyāma*: it has been compared to the moment of bliss that comes when listening to good music, to the rapture of love, to the serenity or plenitude of prayer. What seems certain is that, by gradually slowing down the respiratory rhythm, prolonging the inhalations and exhalations more and more, and leaving as long an interval as possible between these two movements, the yogin lives in a time that is different from ours.[21]

[20] Cf. my "Cosmic homology and Yoga" in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, 1937, pp. 188-203. Upon *prānāyāma*, see *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, pp. 53 ff.

[21] It may be, indeed, that this rhythmic breathing has a considerable effect upon the yogin's physiology. I have no competence in this domain; but I have been struck, at Rishikesh and elsewhere in the Himalayas, by the admirable physical state of the yogins, who took hardly any nourishment. At my *kutiar* at Rishikesh one of my neighbours was a *naga*, a naked ascetic who spent almost the whole night practising *prānāyāma*, and who never ate more than a handful of rice. He had the body of a perfect athlete; he showed no sign of under-nourishment or fatigue. I wondered how it was that he was never hungry. "I live only by day," he told me; "during the night, I reduce the number of my respirations to a tenth." I am not too sure that I understand what he meant; but may it not simply be that, the vital duration being measured by the number of inhalations and exhalations, which he reduced to a tenth of the normal number during the night, he was living, in 10 hours of our time, only one tenth as long—namely, one hour? Reckoning by the number of respirations, the day of 24 solar hours was lived, by him, in no more than 12 to 13 breathing-hours: by the same measure, *he was eating a handful of rice, not every 24 hours, but every 12 or 13 hours*. This is only a hypothesis which I do not insist upon. But so far as I know, no one has yet given a satisfactory explanation of the astonishing *youthfulness* of some yogins.

Two points seem specially important about this practice of *prānāyāma*: first, that the yogin begins by "cosmicising" his body and his psycho-mental life; secondly, that by *prānāyāma* the yogin succeeds in putting himself at will into different rhythms of lived time. Patanjali, in his very concise manner, recommends "the control of the moments and of their continuity" (*Yoga Sutra*, III, 52). The later Tantric Yoga treatises give more details about this "control" of time. The *Kālacakra Tantra*, for instance, goes so far as to relate the in-breathing and the out-breathing to the day and the night, and then with the fortnights, the months and the years, and so on, up to the greatest cosmic cycles.[22] This means that the yogin, by his respiratory rhythm, repeats and, in a sense, relives Cosmic Great Time, the periodic creations and destructions of the universes. This exercise has a dual aim: on the one hand, the yogin is brought to identify his own respiratory moments with the rhythms of cosmic time, and in so doing realises the unreality of time. But on the other hand, he obtains the reversibility of the flow of time (*sāra*) in the sense that he returns upon his tracks, he re-lives his previous lives and "burns up" (as the texts put it) the consequences of his previous actions—he annuls these actions, and so escapes from their karmic consequences.

We can discern in such an exercise of *prānāyāma*, the will to relive the rhythms of cosmic Great Time; it is, in one sense, the same experience as that of Nārada that we have recounted above, an experience realised, this time, voluntarily and consciously. The proof that this is so, lies in the assimilation of the two "mystical veins", *ida* and *pingala*, to the Moon and the Sun.[23] As we know,

[22] *Kālacakra Tantra*, quoted by Mario E. Carelli in the preface to his edition of the *Sekoddesatākā of Nadapāda* (*Nāropā*), *being a commentary of the Sekoddesa Section of the Kālacakra Tantra*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Vol. XC, Baroda, 1941, pp. 16 ff.

[23] See the texts collected by P. C. Bagchi, "Some technical terms of the Tantras" in *The Calcutta Oriental Journal*, I, 2, November 1934, pp. 75-88, esp. pp. 82 ff.; and Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 274 ff.

ida and *pingala* are the two channels in which the psycho-vital energy circulates through the human body. The assimilation of these two mystical veins to the Sun and the Moon perfects the operation that we called the "cosmicising" of the yogin. His mystical body becomes a microcosm; his in-breathing corresponds to the course of the Sun, that is, to the Day; his out-breathing to the Moon, that is, to the Night. Thence it is that the yogin's respiratory rhythm becomes perfectly integrated with the rhythm of cosmic Great Time.

But this integration with cosmic Great Time does not abolish Time as such; it is only the rhythms that are changed. The yogin lives a cosmic Time, nevertheless he continues to live in Time. His ultimate aim, however, is to go out of Time; and that is, in effect, what happens when he succeeds in uniting the two currents of psycho-vital energy circulating through *ida* and *pingala*. By a process too difficult to explain in few words, the yogin stops his respiration and, by unifying the two currents, concentrates them and forces them to circulate through the third "vein"—the *sushumnā*, the vein that is in the "centre". And the *sushumnā*, says the *Hathayoga-pradīpikā* (IV, 16-17), "devours Time". This paradoxical unification of the two mystical veins *ida* and *pingala*, the two polar currents, is equated with the union of the Sun and the Moon—that is, with the abolition of the Cosmos and the re-integration of the opposites; which amounts to saying that the yogin transcends both the created Universe and the Time that governs it. We may recall the mythological image of the egg whose shell is broken by the Buddha. The same thing happens to the yogin who "concentrates" his breathing into the *sushumnā*: he breaks the envelope of his microcosm and transcends the conditioned world which exists in Time. A good many yogic and Tantric texts allude to this non-conditioned and non-temporal state in which there is "neither day nor night" and where "there is no more disease or old age"—naïve and approximate formulas for the "escape from Time". To transcend "the day and the night" means *to transcend the opposites*; it corresponds, on the temporal

plane, to the passage through the "strait gate" on the spatial plane. In Tantric Yoga this experience prepares and precipitates the *samādhi*, a state that is usually translated by "ecstasy", but I would prefer to render it by "enstasis". The yogin ultimately becomes a *jivan-mukta*, "liberated in this life". We cannot describe his mode of existence, for it is paradoxical. The *jivan-mukta* is said to live no longer in Time—in our time—but in an eternal present, in the *nunc stans*, to use the term by which Boethius defined eternity.

But the Tantric Yoga process that we have just outlined does not exhaust the Indian techniques of "escape from Time". From a certain point of view, one might even say that Yoga, as such, aims at deliverance from the slavery of Time. Every Yoga technique of concentration or meditation "isolates" the practitioner, withdraws him from the flux of psycho-mental life, and consequently lessens the pressure of Time. Furthermore, the yogin is striving to "destroy the sub-consciousness", to "burn up" the *vāsanās*. "The *vāsanās* have their origin in the memory", writes Vyāsa (in his commentary on the *Yoga Sutra*, IV, 9); and this refers not only to the individual memory, which, for the Hindu, includes both the memories of one's present existence and the karmic residues of one's innumerable past lives. The *vāsanās* represent also the entire collective memory transmitted by language and tradition; they are, in a sense, the "collective unconscious" of Professor Jung.

In striving to modify the subconscious, and ultimately to "purify", "burn up" and "destroy" it,[24] the yogin is seeking to "*free himself from memory*", that is, *to abolish the work of Time*. Nor is this a speciality of Indian disciplines only. A mystic of the eminence of Meister Eckhardt never ceases to repeat that "there

[24] This may appear a vain, if not a dangerous, presumption in the eyes of Western psychologists. While disclaiming any right to intervene in the debate, I would recall, on the one hand, the extraordinary psychological science of the Hindu yogins, and, on the other hand, the ignorance of Western scientists concerning the psychological reality of the yogins' experiences.

is no greater obstacle to Union with God than Time", that Time hinders man from knowing God, etc. And in this connection it is not without interest to recall that the archaic societies periodically "destroy" the world in order to "remake" it, and thereafter to live in a "new" Universe, without "sin"—meaning without "history", without *memory*. A great many periodic rituals are also directed to collective "purging" from sins (by public confessions, the scape-goat ceremony, etc.), in the last analysis to the *abolition of the past*. All this proves, I think, that there is no break in continuity between the man of the archaic societies and the mysticisms attaching to the great historic religions: both are striving with the same strength, though by different means, against *memory* and Time.

But this metaphysical depreciation of Time and this struggle against *memory* do not represent the whole of the attitude of Indian spirituality towards Time and History. Let us remember the teaching of the myths of Indra and of Nārada: Māyā manifests in Time, but Māyā herself is only the creative force, above all the cosmogonic force, of the Absolute Being (Siva or Vishnu), which means that in the final reckoning *the great cosmic Illusion is a hierophany*. This Truth, revealed in the myths by a series of images and narratives, is more systematically expounded in the *Upanishads*[25] and the later philosophies: namely, that the ultimate foundation of things, the *Ground*, is constituted by both Māyā and the Absolute Spirit, by the Illusion and the Reality, by Time and Eternity. By identifying all the "opposites" in the one and only universal Void (*sunya*), certain Mahāyānic philosophers (Nāgārjuna, for example) and above all the various Tantric schools, Buddhist (Vajrayāna) as well as Hindu, have come to similar conclusions. All this is unlikely to surprise anyone who knows how Indian spirituality longs to transcend the opposites and the polar tensions, to unify the Real and reintegrate the primordial One. If Time, seen as Māyā, is itself a manifestation of the Divinity, to live in Time is not in itself a "bad action": "bad action" is *to*

[25] Cf. above, pp. 74 ff.

believe that nothing else exists, nothing outside of Time. One is devoured by Time, not because one lives in Time, but because one believes in its *reality*, and therefore forgets or despises eternity.

This is no unimportant conclusion; all too often we tend to reduce Indian spirituality to its extreme positions, which are highly "specialised" and for that reason inaccessible except to the sages and mystics, forgetting the universal Indian teachings illustrated, above all, by the myths. It is true that the "escape from Time" attained by the *jivan-mukta* amounts to an "enstasis" or ecstasy unattainable by the majority of human beings. But though this "escape from Time" remains the royal road to deliverance (let us remember the symbols of instantaneous illumination, etc.), this does not mean that all those who do not attain to it are irretrievably condemned to ignorance and bondage. As the myths of Indra and Nārada show us, even to make oneself conscious of the ontological unreality of Time, and to "realise" the rhythms of cosmic Great Time, is enough to free oneself from illusion. So, to sum it up, India recognises not only two possible situations with regard to Time—that of the ignorant who live exclusively in duration and illusion, and that of the Sage or the yogin who are striving to "escape from Time"—but also a third, intermediate situation—that of the man who, while continuing to live in his own time (historic time), keeps a way open into the Great Time, never losing consciousness of the unreality of historic time. That situation, exemplified by Indra after his second revelation, is fully elucidated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It is expounded above all in the spiritual literature written by modern Indian masters for the laity. It is not without interest to observe that this Indian position is in a certain sense a continuation of primitive man's attitude towards Time.

III

The "God who Binds" and the Symbolism of Knots

THE TERRIBLE SOVEREIGN

We know the part that is assigned by M. Dumézil to the Terrible Sovereign of the Indo-European mythologies. On the one hand, at the very heart of the function of sovereignty, it is opposed to that of the Sovereign Law-giver (Varuna is opposed to Mitra, Jupiter to Fides); and on the other hand, compared with the warrior-gods who always fight by military means, the Terrible Sovereign has a kind of monopoly of another weapon—magic. "So there are no mythical combats about Varuna, who is nevertheless the most invincible of the gods. His supreme weapon is his '*māyā of Asura*', his magic as Sovereign creator of forms and of marvels, which also enables him to administer the world and keep it in balance. This weapon is, moreover, depicted in most cases in the form of a noose, of a knot, of material or figurative bonds (*pāsā*). The warrior-god, on the contrary, is Indra, a fighting god, wielder of the thunderbolt and the hero of innumerable duels, of perils encountered and victories hard-won." The same opposition can be observed in Greece: whilst Zeus fights and wages difficult wars, "Ouranos does not fight; there is no trace of a struggle in his legend, although he is the most terrible of kings and the least easily dethroned: in his infallible grasp he immobilises—more exactly, he 'binds', he chains up—his eventual rivals in hell." In the Nordic mythologies, "Odin is certainly the governor, the warrior-chief in this world and the next. Yet neither in the prose *Edda* nor in the *Edda* poems does he himself fight. . . . He has a whole series

of magical 'gifts'—that of ubiquity, or at least of instantaneous transport; the art of disguise and the gift of unlimited metamorphosis; lastly and chiefly, the gift of being able to blind, deafen or paralyse his adversaries and deprive their weapons of all efficacy."[1] Finally, in the Roman tradition, the magical proceedings of Jupiter, intervening in battle as an all-powerful sorcerer, are opposed to the normal, purely military measures of Mars:[2] and this opposition, in India, sometimes manifests itself still more clearly. Indra, for example, rescues the victims "bound" by Varuna and "unlooses "them.[3]

As one might expect, M. Dumézil looks for verification of this polarity of "binder" and "loosener" in the more concrete forms of rites and customs. Romulus, "a tyrant as terrible as marvellous, who binds with all-powerful bonds, founder of the wild Luperci and the frantic Curiaces",[4] is the equivalent, upon the "historicised" plane of Roman mythology, to Varuna, to Ouranos and Jupiter. All Romulus's history and the socio-religious institutions he is supposed to have founded can be explained in terms of the archetype of which he is, in a sense, the incarnation—the Indo-European Magician-King, master of the spells that "bind". M. Dumézil reminds us of a text of Plutarch's (*Romulus*, 26) where it is said that certain men always walked in front of Romulus, "men armed with rods for keeping back the crowd, and girded with straps, ready to bind at once those whom he ordered them to bind".[5] The Luperci, a magico-religious

[1] Georges Dumézil, *Mythes et Dieux des Germains*, Paris, 1939, pp. 21 ff., 27 ff.; *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, Paris, 1941, pp. 79 ff.; cf. *Ouranós-Varuna*, Paris, *passim*.
[2] Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*, Paris, 1940, p. 33; *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, pp. 81 ff.
[3] Dumézil, *Flamen-Brahman*, Paris, 1935, pp. 34 ff.; *Mitra-Varuna* pp. 79 ff.
[4] Dumézil, *Horace et les Curiaces*, 1942, p. 68.
[5] *Mitra-Varuna*, p. 72. Again, according to Plutarch (*Rom.* quest. 67), the name itself, *lictores*, is derived from *ligare*, and M. Dumézil sees no reason to "reject the relation that the ancients felt between *lictor* and *ligare*: lictor may have been formed from a verbal root *ligere*, no longer known, which would have been to *ligare* what *dicere* is to *dicare*" (*ibid.* p. 72).

brotherhood founded by Romulus, belonged to the order of the *equites*, and in that capacity they wore a ring on the finger.[6] On the other hand, the *flamen dialis*, representing the austere, juridical, static religion, was allowed neither to ride a horse (*equo dialem flaminem vehi religio est*)[7] nor to "wear a ring unless it were of open-work and hollow" (*item annulo uti, nisi pervio cassoque, fas non est*). "If a man in chains comes in [to the *flamen dialis*] he must be set free: let the shackles be thrown up through the compluvium on to the roof and thrown thence into the street. He [the *flamen*] wears no knot either on his hat, at the belt or elsewhere (*nodum in apice neque in cinctu neque in alia parte ullum habet*). If a man is being led forth to be beaten with rods, and this man throws himself for mercy at the feet of the *flamen*, it is a sacrilege to beat him on that day."[8]

There is no question here of taking up the dossier collected and admirably analysed by M. Dumézil. Our purpose is quite different: we mean to trace, over a still wider field of comparison, the themes of the "god who binds" and of the magic of "binding", by trying to clarify what they mean, and also to define their functions in religious contexts other than that of Indo-European magical sovereignty. I will not pretend to exhaust this enormous material, upon which several monographs have already appeared.[9] What I intend is something of a rather more methodical nature.

[6] *Mitra-Varuna*, p. 16.

[7] Aulus-Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, X, 15.

[8] Aulus-Gellius, *ibid.*, X, 15; cf. Servius, in *Aen.*, III, 607; see J. Heckenbach, *De nuditate sacra sacrisque vinculis*, R.V.V., X, 3, Giessen, 1911, pp. 69 ff.; Dumézil, *Flamen-Brahman*, pp. 66 ff.

[9] One should mention, after the somewhat disappointing book of Heckenbach, Frazer's *Taboo and the perils of the soul*, pp. 296 ff.; I. Scheftelowitz, *Das Schlingen- und Netzmotiv im Glauben und Brauch der Völker*, R.V.V., XII, 2, Giessen, 1912; the same author's *Altpersische Religion und das Judentum*, Giessen, 1920, pp. 92 ff.; and the studies in ethnology and folk-lore mentioned by Dumézil, *Ouranós-Varuna*, p. 52, note 1. Upon the Roman *nexum*, magical knots and the penal law, cf. Henri Decugis, *Les Étapes du droit*, 2nd edn., Paris, 1946, vol. I, pp. 157-178.

Making use, on the one hand, of the rich collections of facts amassed by the ethnologists and the historians of religions, and, on the other, of the results of M. Dumézil's researches in the special domain of the Indo-European magic of sovereignty, I shall inquire, first: In what sense is the notion of the sovereign who "binds" specific to, and characteristic of, the Indo-European religious system? And secondly: What is the magico-religious content of all the myths, rites and superstitions centred upon this motive of "binding"? I am not unaware of the dangers involved in such a project, more especially of the "confusionism" so brilliantly denounced by M. Dumézil.[10] But here my concern will be not so much to explain the Indo-European facts by heteroclite parallels, as to draw up a summary account of the magico-religious "complexes" of the same type and to specify, as far as possible, the relations between the Indo-European symbolism of "binding" and the systems that are morphologically similar to it. We shall then be in a position to judge whether such a comparison may be of interest for the history of religion in general, and of the Indo-European religions in particular.

THE SYMBOLISM OF VARUNA

Like Bergaigne and Güntert before him, M. Dumézil has noted the magic power of Varuna. This god is verily a "past-master of bonds"; and many hymns and ceremonies have no other purpose but to liberate man from the "toils of Varuna".[11] Sāyana, commenting on the text of the *Rig Veda* I, 89, 3, explains the name of Varuna by the fact that he "envelops, which is to say that he imprisons, the wicked in his toils". "O deliver from their bonds those who are bound!" (*Atharva Veda* VI, 121, 4.) The bonds of Varuna are attributed also to Mitra and Varuna together (*Rig Veda* VII, 65, 3: "they have many bonds . . .," etc.) and even to the whole group of the Adityas (*Rig Veda* II, 27, 16: "Your bonds

[10] In his *Naissance de Rome*, 1944, pp. 12 ff.

[11] For examples—*Rig Veda* I, 24, 15; VI, 74, 4; VII, 65, 3; X, 85, 24, etc.

always all-seeing, all-powerful and, at need, "binding" by his "spiritual power"—by magic. But his cosmic aspect is yet more substantial; he is not only, as we saw, a god of Heaven but also a lunar and aquatic god. In Varuna, perhaps from very early times, there was something predominantly "nocturnal" which Bergaigne and, more recently, Ananda Coomaraswamy[21] did not fail to point out. Bergaigne (*loc. cit.*, p. 213) mentions the remark of the commentator of the *Taittirīya Samhitā* (I, 8, 16, 1) that Varuna designates "him who envelops like the darkness". This "nocturnal" side of Varuna is not to be interpreted solely in the ouranian sense of the nocturnal heavens, but also in a wider, truly cosmological and even metaphysical sense. The Night itself *is* virtuality, seed, the non-manifest; and it is just this "nocturnal" modality of Varuna that enabled him to become a god of the Waters (Bergaigne, III, p. 128) and made possible his assimilation to the "demon" Vritra. This is not the place to enter upon the problem of "Vritra-Varuna", and we will do no more than remind ourselves that these two entities have more than one characteristic in common. Even if we ignore the probable etymological relationship between the two names,[22] it is a point of importance that both are found in references to the Waters, and especially to the "contained Waters" ("the great Varuna has hidden the sea . . ." *R.V.* IX, 73, 3); and that Vritra, like Varuna, is sometimes called *māyin*, "magician".[23] From one point of view,

[21] Especially in "The Darker Side of the Dawn", *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, Vol. 94, No. 1, Washington, 1935; and *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, American Oriental Society, New Haven, 1942.

[22] Bergaigne, *op. cit.*, III, p. 115, etc.; Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority* . . . pp. 29 ff.

[23] For example, *R.V.* II, 11, 10; cf. [E. Benveniste—] L. Renou, (*Vritra and Vrithragna*, Paris 1934) who is mistaken in saying that "the magic of Vritra answers to that of Indra and is derived from it". *A priori*, the magic is that of ophidian beings—of whom Vritra is most certainly one—rather than of the hero gods. We will come back later to the magic of Indra.

these various assimilations of Vritra and Varuna, like all the other modalities and functions of Varuna, correspond with and justify one another. The Night (the non-manifest), the Waters (the virtual, the seed), "transcendence" and "non-activity" (all characteristics of the heavenly and sovereign gods) are mythically and at the same time metaphysically related to the "bonds" on the one hand, and on the other to Vritra who has "contained", "arrested" or "imprisoned" the Waters. Upon the cosmic plane Vritra, too, is a "binder". Like all the great myths, that of Vritra is multivalent, and cannot be exhaustively interpreted in one sense alone. We can even say that one of the principal functions of the myth is to unify planes of reality which, to immediate consciousness and even to reflection, seem to be multiple and heterogeneous. Thus, in the myth of Vritra, we find, besides other valencies, that of a return to the non-manifested, an "arrest", a "bondage" which prevents further generation of "forms"—that is, of cosmic Life. It would not, of course, be right to make too much of the connection between Vritra and Varuna. But there is an undeniable structural relationship between the "nocturnal", the "non-active", the magician Varuna who from a distance ensnares the guilty,[24] and the Vritra who "chains up" the Waters. The action of both has the effect of "arresting" life, of bringing on death—upon the individual plane in one case, and the cosmic plane in another.

"BINDING GODS" IN ANCIENT INDIA

Varuna is not the only god of ancient India who "binds". Among those who make use of this magic weapon we find Indra, Yama and Nirrti. For instance, it is said of Indra that he brought a "bond" for Vritra (*R.V.* II, 30, 2) and bound him without cords

[24] We are even tempted to see this means of chastisement as an extension and deepening of what is most typical of Varuna, in the sense that it forces the culprit to a "regression into the virtual, into immobility"—the state which, in a way, Varuna himself represents.

itself, truly *religious* and not magical. The Mesopotamian data that we have already passed in review, for instance, cannot be altogether reduced to a magical interpretation. Among the Hebrews things are still more clear: it is true that the Bible mentions the "cords of death" in, for instance, "the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me" (II *Samuel*, 22, 6, quoting *Psalms*, 18, 5) and again in "the snares of death encompassed me, the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, save my life!" (*Psalm* 116, 3-4.) But the terrible Lord of these snares is Jahveh himself, and the prophets depict him with nets in his hand to punish the guilty: "As they go, I will spread over them my net; I will bring them down like the birds of the air" (*Hosea*, 7, 12); "And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon" (*Ezechiel*, 12, 13; cf. 17, 20): "I will throw my net over you . . . and I will haul you up in my dragnet" (*ibid.*, 32, 3). The profound and authentic religious experience of Job, too, discovers the same image to express the omnipotence of God: "Know then, that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net about me" (*Job*, 19, 6). The Judæo-Christians, who thought it was the devil that "bound" the infirm and diseased (as in *Luke*, 13, 16), nevertheless spoke of the most High God as "master of the bonds". Thus we find, among the same people, a magico-religious multivalency of "bonds"—bonds of death, of illness, of sorcery, and also the bonds of God.[61] "A net is spread over all living beings," wrote Rabbi Aqiba[62]—a felicitous expression, for the vision of life it implies is neither exclusively "magical" nor "religious", but the very situation of man in the world, in all its complexity; to use a terminology now in fashion, it expresses the existential condition.

[61] Consequently, we are entitled to suppose that certain Vedic allusions to the bonds of Varuna are also expressions of a religious experience comparable to that of Job.

[62] *Pirqē Abōt*, 3, 20; Scheftelowitz, p. 11.

In many countries the "thread of life" symbolises human destiny. "The thread of their life [literally, the cord of their tent] is broken!" cries Job (4, 21; cf. 7, 6). Achilles, like all mortals, must "suffer whatever fate may have spun for him with the linen in which his mother bore him" (*Iliad*, 20, 128; cf. 24, 210). The goddesses of fate spin the thread of human life: "There will we leave him to suffer the fate that the sad Spinsters wound on their spindle in the hour when he came out of his mother into the light . . ." (*Odyssey* 7, 198).[63] And there is more to be said of this: the cosmos itself is conceived as a tissue, as a vast "web". In Indian speculation, for instance, the air (*vāyu*) has "woven" the Universe by linking together this world and the other world and all beings, as it were by a thread (*Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, III, 7, 2), just as the breath (*prāna*) has "woven" human life. ("Who has woven the breath within him?" asks the *Atharva Veda*, X, 2, 13.) From all this rather involved symbolism two essential things emerge: first, that in the Cosmos as well as in human life, everything is connected with everything else in an invisible web; and secondly, that certain divinities[64] are the mistresses of these "threads" which constitute, ultimately, a vast cosmic "bondage".

It is rarely that etymology yields us a decisive clue to problems as delicate as those of the "origins" of religion and magic; but it is often instructive. Scheftelowitz and Güntert have shown how in several linguistic families, the words denoting the act of "tying" serve equally well to express that of bewitching: for instance, in Turco-Tatar, *bag*, *baj*, *boj* signify both "sorcery" and "bond, cord";[65] The Greek καταδέω means to "tie strongly"

[63] Cf. *vitae fila*, Ovid, *Heroïdes*, 15, 82. See the chapter on lunar rituals and myths in my *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, pp. 154 ff.

[64] For the most part—but not always—lunar divinities, sometimes chthonico-lunar.

[65] H. Vambéry, *Die Primitive Kultur des turko-tatarischen Volkes*, Leipzig, 1879, p. 246. The notion of freeing from sorcery is conveyed by the expression "to free from the ties": among the Yoruba the word *edi*, "binding", also has the

and also to "bind by a magic charm, by tying a knot" (whence κατάδεσμος, "cord", "to bewitch"; *Inscr. Graec.* III, 3, p. v; Scheftelowitz, p. 17). The Latin *fascinum*, "charm, malefic spell" is related to *fascia*, "band, bandage", and to *fascis*, "bundle"; *ligāre*, "to tie", and *ligātūra*, "act of tying" also mean "to charm" and "charm" (cf. the Rumanian *legatura*, "act of tying" and "to bewitch"). The Sanskrit *yukti*, properly "to harness", "to attach", acquires the sense of "magic means", and the powers of Yoga are sometimes understood as a bewitchment through "binding".[66] All this etymology confirms the idea that the act of binding is essentially magical. What we have here is an extreme "specialisation": to bewitch, to bind by magic, to fascinate, etc. Etymologically, *religio* also denotes a form of "attachment" to the divinity; but it would be imprudent to understand *religio* (as Güntert does on p. 140) in the sense of "sorcery". For, as we have said, religion as well as magic comprises in its very essence the element of "binding", although, of course, with a different intensity and, above all, a contrary orientation.

THE SYMBOLISM OF "LIMIT-SITUATIONS"

There are several other symbolical complexes that are characteristic, in almost the same formulas, of the structure of the Cosmos and the "situation" of man in the world. The Babylonian word *markasu* "link, cord", means, in the mythology, "the cosmic principle that unites all things", and also "the support, the power

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meaning of magic, and the Ewe word *vōsesa*, "amulet", means "untied"; see A. B. Ellis, *Yoruba-speaking peoples*, London, 1894, p. 118.

[66] For example, *Mahābhārata*, XIII, 41, 3 ff., where Vipulā "had subdued the senses (of Ruci) by means of the bonds of Yoga"; see Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, p. 18. Also Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Spiritual Paternity" and "the Puppet-Complex" in *Psychiatry*, VIII, No. 3, August 1945, pp. 25-35, esp. pp. 29 ff.

and the divine law that hold the universe together".[67] Similarly Tchuang-tzü (Chap. VI) speaks of the *Tao* as "the chain of the entire creation",[68] reminding us of the Indian cosmological terminology. On the other hand, the labyrinth is sometimes conceived as a "knot" which has to be "un-tied", and this notion belongs to a metaphysico-ritual unity which comprises the ideas of difficulty, of danger, of death and of initiation.[69] Upon another plane, that of knowledge and wisdom, one meets with similar expressions: people speak of "deliverance" from illusions (which, in India, bear the same name as the magic of Varuna, *māyā*); they seek to "tear away" the veils of unreality, to "untie" the "knots" of existence, etc. This gives one the impression that the situation of man in the world, in whatever perspective it may be viewed, is always expressed by key-words conveying the ideas of "bond-

[67] S. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology*, Boston, 1931, p. 109. Several Babylonian temples are named *markas shamē u irshiti*, "the Link between Heaven and Earth", cf. E. Burrows, "Some cosmological patterns in Babylonian religion" in the volume *Labyrinth*, edited by S. H. Hook, London, 1935 (pp. 45-70) pp. 47-48, n.2. An ancient Sumerian name for the temple is "the *dimgal* of the region"; Burrows, (p. 47, Note 7) proposes to translate this "Great binding post"; *dim* meaning "post", etc. and also "rope"; Probably *dim* = "to bind, thing to bind to or to bind with". The symbolism of "binding" would here be integrated into a greater whole which might be called the "Symbolism of the Centre" (see above, pp. 41ff.).

[68] "The link of all Creation" in Hughes's translation in *Everyman's Library*, p. 193). The character translated by "link" is *hsi* (Giles, 4062), which means "dependence, fastening, link, tie, nexus, chain, lineage, etc. Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "The iconography of Dürer's 'Knots' and of Leonardo's 'concatenation' " in the *Art Quarterly*, Spring 1944, pp. 109-128, Note 19.

[69] Cf. the labyrinths in the form of knots, in the funerary rituals and beliefs at Malekula; A. Bernard Deacon, "Geometrical drawings from Malekula and other Islands of the New Hebrides" in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXVI, 1934, pp. 129-175; and the same author's *Malekula, a vanishing people of the New Hebrides*, London, 1934, esp. pp. 552 ff.; John Layard, "Totenfahrt auf Malekula" in the *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 1937, Zürich, 1938, pp. 242-291; and *Stone Men of Malekula*, London, 1942, pp. 340 ff., 649 ff.

age, shackling, attachment", etc. On the magical plane, a man makes use of amulets of knots to protect himself against the binding spells of the demons and sorcerers; and, on the religious plane, he feels that he is "bound" by God, caught in his "snare"; but death also "binds" him, either concretely (the corpse is "tied up") or metaphorically (the demons "bind" the soul of the deceased). Nay, more—life itself is a "web" (sometimes a magic web of cosmic proportions, *māyā*) or a "thread" on which every mortal life is strung. These various views have certain points in common; in all of them the end and aim of man is to free himself from "bonds". To the mystical initiation of the labyrinth—in the course of which one learns to undo the labyrinthine knot in order to be able to do so when the soul meets with it after death—to this corresponds the philosophic, metaphysical initiation, undertaken to "rend the veil" of ignorance and liberate the soul from the shackles of existence. We know how Indian thought is dominated by the thirst for liberation, and how its most characteristic terminology is all reducible to antithetic formulas such as "chained-liberated", "bound-unbound", "attachment-detachment", etc.[70] The same formulas were current in Greek philosophy; in the cave of Plato, the men are bound by chains which prevent their moving or turning their heads (*Republic*, VII, 514 *et seq.*). The soul, "after its fall, has been captured, it is in chains . . .; it is said to be in a tomb, and in a cave, yet, by turning again towards ideas, it frees itself from its bonds . . ."

This multivalency of the "binding" complex—which we have now observed on the planes of cosmology, magic, religion, initiation, metaphysics and soteriology—is probably due to man's *recognising, in this complex, a sort of archetype of his own situation in the world.* In doing so, he helps to raise a problem in anthropology, a properly philosophical study of which stands to gain much by

[70] See my *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom, passim.* In his article on "The iconography of Dürer's 'knots' . . .", A. K. Coomaraswamy has studied the metaphysical values of knots and their survival in popular art, as well as among certain artists of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

taking account of these documents about certain "limit-situations" of archaic man. For, although contemporary thought prides itself upon having rediscovered the concrete man, it is no less true that its analyses refer mainly to the condition of modern Western man, so that it is biased by its lack of universality, by a kind of "provincialism" tending, in the end, to monotony and sterility.

The "binding" complex raises, moreover, or rather it constitutes, a problem which is of the highest interest to the historian of religions; not only because of the relations it reveals between magic and religion, but above all because it shows us what may be called the proliferation of magico-religious forms and the "physiology" of these forms; we can feel the presence of an archetype of "binding" which is trying to realise itself upon the different planes of magico-religious life (cosmology, mythology, sorcery, etc.) as well as at the different levels of each of these planes (great magic and little magic, for instance, aggressive sorcery and defensive sorcery). In one sense, we might even say that, *as the "terrible sovereign", either historic or historicised, is striving to imitate his divine prototype, the "binding" god, so every sorcerer, too, is imitating the terrible sovereign and his divine prototype.* Morphologically, too, there is no break in continuity between Vritra who "chains up" the Waters, Varuna who "binds" the guilty, the demons who catch the dead in their "net" and the sorcerers who bind the enemy by magic, or unbind the victims of other sorcerers. All these operations are of the same structure. In the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to specify whether their uniformity proceeds from imitation—from "historic" borrowings, in the sense given to this term by the historico-cultural school—or whether it is to be explained by the fact that they all follow from *the very situation of man in the world*—so that they are variants of one and the same archetype realising itself on many planes and in different cultural areas. It seems indubitable, at least in the case of certain patterns such as that of Indo-European magic sovereignty, that we are dealing with mythico-ritual

"unconscious" (of dream, hallucination or waking dream) as well as upon those of the "trans-conscious" and the conscious (æsthetic vision, ritual, mythology and *philosophumena*). And let us emphasise, by the way, that the manifestations of the unconscious and the subconscious present values, and a structure, that are in perfect agreement with those of the conscious manifestations; and that, since the latter are "reasonable", in the sense that their values are logically justifiable, we might speak of a sub- or trans-conscious "logic" which is not always heterogeneous to "normal" logic (meaning thereby classical logic, or that of good sense). Provisionally, then, let us accept the hypothesis that at least a certain zone of the subconscious is ruled by the archetypes which also dominate and organise conscious and transconscious experience. Hence we are entitled to regard the multiple variants of the same complexes of symbols (such as those of "ascension" and of "binding") as endless successions of "forms" which, on the different levels of dream, myth, ritual, theology, mysticism, metaphysics, etc., are trying to "realise" the archetype.

These "forms", it is true, are not all spontaneous; not all of them depend directly upon the ideal archetype; a great many of them are "historical" in the sense that they result from the evolution or the imitation of a previously existing form. Certain variants of "binding" by sorcery are rather disconcertingly simian in this respect. They give one the impression of having been copied, on their own limited plane, from pre-existent "historical forms" of magical sovereignty or funerary mythology. But here we must be careful, for it is very commonly the case that pathological variants of religious complexes also have a superficially simian appearance. What seems more reliable is the tendency of every "historical form" to approximate as nearly as possible to its archetype, even when it has been realised at a secondary or insignificant level: this can be verified everywhere in the religious history of humanity. Any local goddess tends to become *the* Great Goddess; any village anywhere *is* the "Centre of the World", and any wizard whatever pretends, at the height

painted pottery from the south of Russia (Tripolje), analogies which have also been studied by Professor Bogajevsky. This spiral motif also turns up again at numerous points in Europe, America and Asia.[68] We must add, however, that the symbolism of the spiral is somewhat complex, and that its "origin" is still uncertain.[69] We may, provisionally at least, take note of the symbolic polyvalency of the spiral, its close relations with the Moon, with lightning, the waters, fecundity, birth and life beyond the grave. Moreover, the shell, we may remember, is not used exclusively in the service of the dead. It appears in all the essential activities of the life of man and of the collectivity: birth, initiation, marriage, death, agricultural and religious ceremonies, etc.

THE PEARL IN MAGIC AND MEDICINE

The history of the pearl bears further witness to the phenomenon of the degradation of an initial, metaphysical meaning. What was at one time a cosmological symbol, an object rich in beneficent sacred powers, becomes, through the work of time, an element of ornamentation, appreciated only for its æsthetic qualities and its economic value. But from the pearl that was an emblem of absolute *reality* to the pearl of our days that is an "object of value", the change has taken place by several stages. In medicine, for instance, both in the East and the West, the pearl has played an important part. Takkur analyses in detail the medicinal qualities of the pearl, its use against hæmorrhages and jaundice and as a cure for demoniac possession and madness.[70] The Hindu author is, moreover, only continuing a long medical tradition; illustrious physicians, such as Caraka and Suçruta were even then recommending the use of pearl.[71] Narahari, a Kashmiri physician (of

[68] Madeleine Colani, *Haches et Bijoux*, pp. 351 ff.

[69] Cf. the works of Andersson and Hentze.

[70] Kunz and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 209; Jackson, *Shells as evidence of the migrations of early culture*, p. 92.

[71] Kunz, *The Magic of Jewels and Charms*, p. 308.

THE MYTH OF THE PEARL

Archetypal images keep their metaphysical valencies intact in spite of later "concrete" re-valorisations: the commercial value of the pearl in no way abolishes its religious symbolism; this is continually being rediscovered, reintegrated and enriched. Let us recall, indeed, the considerable part played by the pearl in Iranian speculation, in Christianity and in Gnosticism. A tradition of Eastern origin explains the birth of the pearl as the child of lightning penetrating into a mussel;[87] the pearl thus being the result of union between Fire and Water. St Ephrem makes use of this ancient myth to illustrate the Immaculate Conception as well as the spiritual birth of the Christ in the baptism of Fire.[88]

On the other hand, Stig Wikander has shown that the pearl was the supreme Iranian symbol of the Saviour.[89] The identification of the Pearl with the "Saviour saved" rendered a double meaning possible: the Pearl could represent the Christ as well as the human soul. Origen renews the identification of the Christ with the Pearl, and is followed by numerous authors (Edsman, *op. cit.*, pp. 192 ff.). In a text of the pseudo-Macarius, the pearl symbolises on the one hand the Christ as King, and on the other the descendant of the King, the Christian: "The Pearl, great, precious and royal, belonging to the royal diadem, is appropriate only to the king. The king alone may wear this pearl. No one else is allowed to wear a pearl like it. Thus, a man who is not born

[87] Cf. Pauly-Wissova, s.v. *Margaritai*, col. 1692.

[88] H. Usener, "Die Perle. Aus der Geschichte eines Bildes" in the *Theologische Abhandlungen C. von Weizsäcker . . . gewidmet*, Freiburg i. Breisgau, 1892, pp. 201-213; Carl-Martin Edsman, *Le Baptême de feu*, Leipzig-Uppsala, 1940, pp. 190 ff.

[89] Review of Edsman's book in the *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, Vol. 17, 1945, pp. 228-233: cf. Geo. Widengren, *Mesopotamian elements in Manicheism*, Uppsala, 1946, p. 119; *id.*, "Der Iranische Hintergrund der Gnosis" in the *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, IV, 1952 (pp. 97-114), p. 113.

of the royal and divine spirit, and is not one of the sons of God—of whom it is written that: 'as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God'—cannot wear the precious, heavenly pearl, image of the ineffable light which is the Saviour. For he has not become a son of the king. Those who wear and possess the pearl will live and reign with the Christ for all eternity."[90]

In the famous Gnostic scripture, the *Acts of Thomas*, the quest of the pearl symbolises the spiritual drama of the fall of man and his salvation; a Prince from the Orient arrives in Egypt in search of the Pearl, which is guarded by monstrous serpents. To obtain it, the Prince has to pass through a number of initiatory trials; nor can he succeed without the aid of his father, the King of Kings—a Gnostic image for the heavenly Father.[91] The symbolism in this text is rather complicated: the Pearl represents, on the one hand, the fallen soul of man in the world of darkness, and, on the other, the "Saviour saved" himself. The identification of man with the pearl is to be found in a number of Manichæan and Mandæan texts. The Living spirit "snatches the First Man out of the struggle like a pearl drawn out of the sea".[92] St Ephrem compares the mystery of baptism to a pearl which can never be acquired again: "the diver, too, takes the pearl out of the sea. Dive! [be baptised], take from the water the purity hidden in it, the pearl out of which comes the crown of divinity!" (Quoted by Edsman, p. 197.)

Upon another occasion, discussing the subject of ascetics and monks, St Ephrem compares their asceticism to "a second baptism": just as the pearl-diver has to plunge naked into the ocean and make his way among the monsters of the deep, so do

[90] *Homélie* XXIII, 1; text quoted and translated by Edsman, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.
[91] A. Hilgenfeld, "Der Königssohn und die Perle", *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, Vol. 47, 1904, pp. 219-249; R. Reitzenstein, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, Bonn, 1921, pp. 72 ff. (an essential work); Edsman, *op. cit.*, p. 193, Note 4; Widengren, *Der iranische Hintergrund der Gnosis*, pp. 105 ff.
[92] *Kephalaia*, p. 85, cited by Edsman, p. 195.

V

Symbolism and History

BAPTISM, THE DELUGE, AND AQUATIC SYMBOLISM

Among the few groups of symbols we have just presented that belong to the aquatic realm, this last is by far the most vast and complex. We have tried to elucidate its structure in a previous work, to which we refer the reader—*Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 188 ff.—where he will find the essential data from a dossier on the aquatic hierophanies, and with these an analysis evaluating their symbolism. Here we will limit ourselves to a few of its most important features.

The Waters symbolise the entire universe of the virtual; they are the *fons et origo*, the reservoir of all the potentialities of existence; they *precede* every form and *sustain* every creation. The exemplary image of the whole creation is the Island that suddenly "manifests" itself amidst the waves. Conversely, immersion in the waters symbolises a regression into the pre-formal, reintegration into the undifferentiated mode of pre-existence. Emergence repeats the cosmogonic act of formal manifestation; while immersion is equivalent to a dissolution of forms. That is why the symbolism of the Waters includes Death as well as Re-Birth. Contact with water always goes with a regeneration, on the one hand because dissolution is followed by a "new birth", and on the other hand because immersion fertilises and multiplies the potentialities of life. To the aquatic cosmogony correspond—at the anthropological level—the hylogenies, the beliefs according to which mankind is born of the Waters. To the deluge, or to the

periodical submergence of continents (myths of the "Atlantis" type), there corresponds, at the human level, the "second death" of the soul (the "humidity" and *leimon* of Hell, etc.) or the initiatory death by baptism. But, upon the cosmological no less than upon the anthropomorphic plane, immersion in the Waters signifies, not a definitive extinction but a temporary re-entry into the indistinct, followed by a new creation, a new life or a new man, according to whether the nature of the event in question is cosmic, biological or soteriological. From the point of view of structure, the "deluge" is comparable to a "baptism", and the funerary libation to the lustrations of the newly-born, or to the ritual bathings in the Spring that procure health and fertility.

In whatever religious context we find them, the Waters invariably preserve their function: they dissolve or abolish the forms of things, "wash away sins", are at once purifying and regenerative. It is their lot both to precede the Creation and to re-absorb it, incapable as they are of surpassing their own modality—that is, of manifesting themselves in *forms*. The Waters cannot get beyond the state of the virtual, of seeds and of what is latent. Everything that has form manifests itself above the Waters, by detaching itself from them. On the other hand, as soon as it is separated from the waters and has ceased to be potential (virtual), every form comes under the laws of Time and of Life; it acquires limitations, participates in the universal becoming, is subject to history, decays away and is finally emptied of substance unless it be regenerated by periodic immersions in the Waters, repetitions of the "deluge" with its cosmogonic corollary. The purpose of the ritual lustrations and purifications is to gain a flash of realisation of the non-temporal moment (*in illo tempore*) in which the creation took place; they are symbolical repetitions of the birth of worlds or of the "new man".

One point that is essential here, is that the sacredness of the Waters and the structure of the aquatic cosmologies and apocalypses could never have been wholly revealed except through the

symbolism "in general", as it is universally attested by the religions of the non-Christian world, they persist in relating it solely to the Old Testament. According to these authors it is not the general and immediate meaning of the symbol, but its Biblical valorisation that Christian symbolism ought to convey.

This attitude is perfectly understandable. The trend of Biblical and typological studies during the last quarter of a century shows a reaction against the tendency to explain Christianity by means of the mysteries and of syncretic Gnosticism, and also a reaction against the "confusionism" of certain comparativist schools. Christian liturgy and symbology are connected directly with Judaism. Christianity is a historic religion, deeply rooted in another historic religion, that of the Jews. Consequently, in order to explain or better to understand certain sacraments or symbols, one has only to look for their "prefigurations" in the Old Testament. In the historicist perspective of Christianity that is only natural: revelation has had a *history*; the primitive revelation, operative in the dawn of time, still survives among the nations, but it is half-forgotten, mutilated, corrupted; it is to be approached only through the history of Israel; the revelation is fully conserved only in the sacred books of the Old Testament. As we shall see later, Judæo-Christianity tries not to lose contact with sacred history which, unlike the "history" of all other nations, is the only *real* history and the only one with a meaning, for it is God himself who makes it.

Careful above all to attach themselves to a *history* which is at the same time a *revelation*, careful not to be confused with the "initiates" of the various religions and mysteries, the multiple gnosticisms that were swarming around the dying world of antiquity, the Fathers of the Church were obliged to take up the polemical position that they did. To reject all "paganism" was indispensable for the triumph of the message of the Christ. We may wonder whether this polemical attitude is still as strictly necessary in our own day. I am not speaking theologically, for

which I have neither the responsibility nor the competence. But to anyone who does not feel himself accountable for the faith of his fellow men, it seems evident that the Judæo-Christian symbolism of baptism in no way contradicts the universally diffused symbolism of water. Everything reappears in it: Noah and the Flood have their counterparts in numerous traditions where some cataclysm puts an end to a whole "humanity" (or "society") with the exception of a single man who becomes the mythical Ancestor of a new humanity. The "Waters of Death" are the *leitmotif* of various palæo-oriental, Asiatic and Oceanian mythologies. The "Water" is pre-eminently "killing": it dissolves, it abolishes all forms. That is just why it is rich in creative "seeds". Nor is the symbolism of the baptismal nakedness a privileged peculiarity of the Judæo-Christian tradition. Ritual nudity is expressive of integrity and plenitude; "Paradise" implies the absence of "clothing"—that is, of "wear and tear" (an archetypal image of Time). As for the nostalgia for Paradise, it is universal, although its manifestations vary almost indefinitely.[4] All ritual nakedness implies an a-temporal paradigm, a paradisiac image.

The monsters of the abyss reappear in a number of traditions: the Heroes, the Initiates, go down into the depths of the abyss to confront marine monsters; this is a typical ordeal of initiation. Variants indeed abound: sometimes a dragon mounts guard over a "treasure"—a sensible image of the sacred, of absolute reality. The ritual (that is, initiatory) victory over the monstrous guardian is equivalent to the conquest of immortality.[5] For the Christian, baptism is a sacrament because it was instituted by the Christ. But, none the less for that, it repeats the initiatory ritual of the ordeal (i.e., the struggle against the monster), of death and of the symbolic resurrection (the birth of the new man). I am not saying that Judaism or Christianity have "borrowed" such myths or such symbols from the religions of neighbouring peoples—that was not necessary. Judaism had inherited a long religious history and

[4] Cf. also *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 382 ff.

[5] Cf. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 207 ff., 290 ff.

can say of an Image that it is *awaiting* the fulfilment of its meaning.

Proceeding to an analysis of the baptismal Images, the Rev. Fr. Beirnaert recognises "a relation between the dogmatic statements, the symbology of the Christian religion and the archetypes activated by the natural symbols. How, moreover, could the candidates for baptism understand the symbolic images put before them if these did not respond to their obscure expectations?" (*op. cit.*, p. 276). The author is not surprised that "many Catholics should have rediscovered the way of faith through such experiences" (*ibid.*). Of course, continues Fr. Beirnaert, the experience of the archetypes does not encroach upon the experience of the faith: "People may meet together in a common recognition of the relations of religious symbols to the psyche, and still class themselves as believers or as unbelievers. The faith, then, is something other than this recognition [. . .] The act of faith brings about a division of the world of archetypal representations. Henceforth the serpent, the darkness, Satan, designate that which one renounces. One recognises, as the only representations capable of mediating salvation, those that are put forward as such by the historic community" (*ibid.* p. 277).

ARCHETYPAL IMAGES AND CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM

Nevertheless, Fr. Beirnaert recognises that, even if the imagery and symbolism of the Christian sacraments do not direct the believer's mind "primarily to the myths and immanent archetypes, but to the intervention of the divine Power in history, this new meaning must not lead us to deny the permanence of the ancient meaning. By its renewal of the great figures and symbolisations of natural religion, Christianity has also renewed their vitality and their power in the depths of the psyche. The mythic and archetypal dimension remains none the less real for being henceforth subordinate to another. The Christian may well be a man who has ceased to look for his spiritual salvation in myths

and in experience of the immanent archetypes alone; he has not, for all that, abandoned all that the myths and symbolisms mean and do to the psychic man, to the microcosm [. . .] The adoption, by Christ and the Church, of the great images of the sun, the moon, of wood, water, the sea and so forth, amounts to an evangelisation of the effective powers that they denote. The Incarnation must not be reduced to the taking-on of the flesh alone. God has intervened even in the collective unconscious, that it may be saved and fulfilled. The Christ descended into hell. How, then, can this salvation reach into our unconsciousness without speaking its language and making use of its categories?" (Beirnaert, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.)

This text provides some important elucidations of the relations between "immanent" symbols and faith. As we have seen, the problem of faith lies outside our present deliberations. One aspect of it, however, is of interest to us: the Christian faith is dependent on a *historic* revelation: it is the manifestation of God in Time which, in the eyes of a Christian, ensures the validity of the Images and the symbols. We have seen that the "immanent" and universal symbology of water was not abolished nor dismembered in consequence of the local and historical Judæo-Christian interpretations of baptismal symbolism. To put it in a rather simplified way: history does not radically modify the structure of an "immanent" symbolism. History continually adds new meanings to it, but these do not destroy the structure of the symbol. We shall see, later on, what consequences follow from this for the philosophy of history and the morphology of culture: but for the moment, let us look at a few more examples.

We have already discussed (pp. 44 ff.) the symbolism of the Tree of the World. Christianity has utilised, interpreted and amplified this symbol. The Cross, made of the wood of the tree of good and evil, appears in the place of this Cosmic Tree; the Christ himself is described as a Tree (by Origen). A homily of the pseudo-Chrysostom speaks of the Cross as a tree which "rises from the earth to the heavens. A plant immortal, it stands at the

school of Graebner-Schmidt and the other historicist schools represent an undeniable progress. It was important, however, not to let ourselves become fixed in the historico-cultural point of view, and to inquire whether, in addition to its own history, a symbol, a myth or a ritual, might not reveal something of the human condition regarded in its own right as a mode of existence in the universe. That is what I have tried to do here, and in several other recent publications.[15]

Tylor and Frazer, like good positivists, regarded the magico-religious life of archaic humanity as a mass of childish "superstitions", the product of ancestral fears or of "primitive" stupidity. But that value-judgment is in contradiction to the facts. The magico-religious behaviour of archaic humanity reveals an existential awakening of man's consciousness of the Cosmos and of himself. Here, where a Frazer could see nothing but "superstition", a metaphysic was already implicit, even though it was expressed by a pattern of symbols rather than by the interplay of concepts: a metaphysic—that is, a whole and coherent conception of Reality, not a series of instinctive gestures ruled by the same fundamental "reaction of the human animal in confrontation with Nature". Thus when, leaving on one side the "history" that divides them, we compare an Oceanian symbol with a symbol from Northern Asia, we think we are entitled to do so, not because both the one and the other are products of the same "infantile mentality", but because the symbol in itself expresses an awakening to the knowledge of a "limit-situation".

Attempts have been made to explain the "origin" of symbols by sensory impressions, made directly upon the cerebral cortex, by the great cosmic rhythms (the path of the Sun, for instance). It is not our business to discuss that hypothesis. But the problem of "the origin" seems to us to be, in itself, a problem badly stated (see above, p. 119). Symbols cannot be reflections of cosmic rhythms *as natural phenomena*, for a symbol always reveals some-

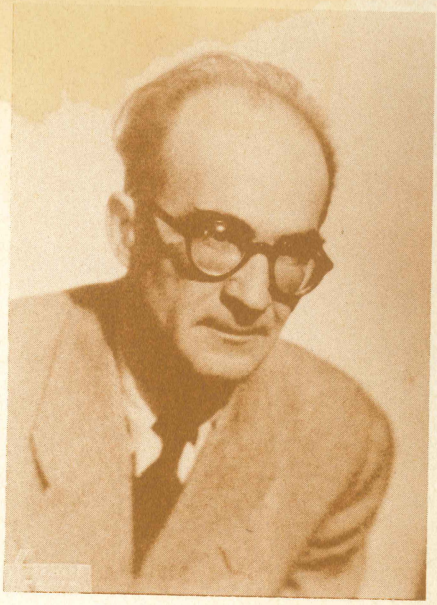
[15] This problem will be fully discussed in the second volume of my *Patterns in Comparative Religion.*

thing *more* than the aspect of cosmic life it is thought to represent. The solar symbolisms and myths, for example, reveal to one also a "nocturnal", "evil" and "funerary" aspect of the Sun, something that is not at first *evident* in the solar phenomenon as such. This—in a sense negative—side, which is not perceived in the Sun *as a cosmic phenomenon*, is constitutive in the solar *symbolism*, which proves that the symbol arises, from the beginning, as a creation of the psyche. This becomes still more evident when we remember that the function of a symbol is precisely that of revealing a whole reality, inaccessible to other means of knowledge: the coincidence of opposites, for instance, which is so abundantly and *simply* expressed by symbols, is not *given* anywhere in the *Cosmos*, nor is it accessible to man's immediate experience, nor to discursive thinking.

Let us beware, however, of supposing that symbolism refers only to "spiritual" realities. For to archaic thinking, such a separation between the "spiritual" and the "material" is without meaning: the two planes are complementary. The fact that a dwelling house is supposed to be at "the Centre of the World" does not make it any the less a convenience which answers to specific needs and is conditioned by the climate, the economic structure of society and the architectural tradition. Recently, the old quarrel has broken out again between the "symbolists" and the "realists" in reference to the religious architecture of ancient Egypt. But the two positions are only apparently irreconcilable: within the horizons of archaic mentality, taking account of "immediate realities" does not in the least mean that one is ignorant or contemptuous of their symbolic implications, or *vice versa*. It must not be thought that the symbolical application annuls the concrete and specific value of an object or an operation. When the spade is called a phallus (as it happens to be in certain Australasian languages) and when the sowing is likened to the sexual act (as it has been almost all over the world), it does not follow that the "primitive" agriculturist is ignorant of the specific purpose of his labour or of the concrete, practical value of that

tool. The symbolism *adds* a new value to an object or an activity without any prejudice whatever to its own immediate value. In application to objects or actions, symbolism renders them "open"; symbolic thinking "breaks open" the immediate reality without any minimising or undervaluing of it: in such a perspective this is not a closed Universe, no object exists for itself in isolation; everything is held together by a compact system of correspondences and likenesses.[16] The man of the archaic societies becomes conscious of himself in an "open world" that is rich in meaning. It remains to be seen whether these "openings" are but so many means of evasion, or whether, on the contrary, they constitute the only possibility of attaining to the true reality of the world.

[16] Rightly to understand the transformation of the world by the symbol, one need only recall the dialectic of hierophany: an object becomes *sacred* while remaining just the same as it is. (See above, p. 84.)



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