SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT: INDRA AND NAMUCI

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Τὸ θαυμάζειν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἡ αὕτη (Plato, *Theatetus* 155 D):
Διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφός πώς ἐστιν· ὁ γὰρ μῦθος σύγκειται ἐκ θαυμασίων
(Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982 B).

καὶ εἶπε μοι ὁ ἄγγελος, Διατὶ ἐθαύμασας; ἐγὼ ἐρῶ σοι τὸ μυστήριον (Revelation, XVII. 6)
Śirṣaṇvate svāhā! Aśirṣakāya svāhā! (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, VII. 5. 12.1).[1]

THE late Professor Kittredge, in his *Gawain and the Green Knight* (1916) was more interested in the literary history of the motives than in their mythological significance. His vast learning enabled him to bring together a great body of parallels, from which he makes it evident that the fundamental motive of the Challenge derives from a remote antiquity beyond the reach of literary history: still, he has overlooked a source older than any of those that he cites, and one that, furthermore, throws a strong light upon the meaning of the story.

Of the two parts of the myth it is mainly with the 'Challenge' that we are concerned. What happens is that an uncouth stranger (the Green Knight) appears at Arthur's court on New Years Day, when all are seated at table; but it is the 'custom' not to eat until some marvel has been seen or heard. The stranger rides into Arthur's hall; and challenges any knight to cut off his head upon condition that he shall submit to the same forfeit a year later. Gawain takes up the Challenge and beheads the stranger, who walks off, with the head in his hand; it speaks, calling upon Gawain to keep his word. So Gawain does; the Green Knight spares his life and becomes his friend. The myth in its European setting is of Celtic essence. There are many parallels. The Early English version is a masterpiece of English literature.

By way of introduction let us consider the Green Knight's severed head that speaks, and the parallels in which a severed head is described as moving of itself, or rather 'rolling,' as well as speaking (K. 147–194),[2] and also the Sioux myth in which the 'severed head of the Monster rebounded and continues to rebound to this day in the form of the sun' (K. 161): and observe that in the Vedic tradition

[1] 'Hail unto him that hath his head! Hail unto him whose head is off!'

[2] To avoid repetitions I cite Professor Kittredge's book as K.; my 'Angel and Titan' (*JAOS.* 55.373–410) as AT., my 'Sunkiss' (*ibid.*, 60.46–67) as S., 'Ātmayajña, self-sacrifice' (*HJAS.* 6.358–398) as A., and *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (1942), as SpA.; and J. L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), as RR. The following abbreviations are of Indian texts: RV. is *Rgveda Saṁhitā*; TS., *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*; AV., *Atharva Veda Saṁhitā*; VS., *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*; AB., *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*; KB., *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*; TB., *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*; ŚB., *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*; PB., *Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa*; JB., *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*; JUB., *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*; AA., *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*; ŚA., *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*; TA., *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*; BU., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*; CU., *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*; MU., *Maitri Upaniṣad*; Bh.P., *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*; J., *Jātaka.*

'Custom' in these contexts implies conformity to what is taken to be the law of nature; what is 'customary' is 'in order,' 'regular,' Skr. *dharmatas.*

also, Indra severs the Titan Namuci's head, which 'rolls[1] after him,' bitterly reproaching him, and that this head, too, becomes the Sun (AT. 375), as does Ahi-Vṛtra's (AT.393), Prajāpati's in PB. VI. 5.1, and Makha-Viṣṇu's in ŚB. XIV. 1.1.9. Again, K. (189) remarks of the pursuing heads, in various parallel versions, that they 'roll or bound along the ground,' often with cannibalistic intent,[2] that it is not always easy to see any essential difference between these heads or skulls 'and the "rolling rock" so familiar in North American Indian folklore'; while the severed head is described in the Indian texts as a 'bright revolving rock' (RV. V. 30.8), the Sun, 'an iridescent rock set up amindst the sky' (TS. IV. 6.3.4.; ŚB. IX. 2.3.14), and hence the prayer to Indra, 'Set thou the Rock of the Sky arolling, prepare thy Soma-sharpened (weapon), smite thou the demons with thy stony (bolt)' (RV. VII. 104.9; AT. 375), — in other words, 'Behead Namuci, let there be light.' Again, in a Cheyenne myth a magician hero decapitates himself with a bowstring (K.161); while in one Indian form of the story, the decapitation of Makha-Viṣṇu, hero and magician, is brought about by a bow of which the string is cut (AT.377, 378). These correspondences are already sufficient to suggest that we have to do with significant equivalents.

Now this Namuci ('Holdfast'), a Pharaoh who will not let his people go, nor release the Waters (cf. Ezekiel, 29, 3), is known by many other names as Ahi ('Serpent,' Dragon), Vṛtra ('Enveloper,' or 'Roller'),[3] Śuṣṇa (Sirocco, Drought), Makha (Fury), Viśvarūpa (Omniform, Protean) and is explicitly or implicitly identified[4] with Soma, Viṣṇu, Varuṇa, Brahma, Ātman, Agni and Prajāpati in their sacrificial aspects as the source from which all things come forth. These are the forms of the arch-Titan (*asura*) whom the heroic God (*deva*) Indra[5] fights

[1] The implications of Skr. *vṛt* (turn, roll, move, -vert), with its various prefixes, are that the rolling forth is an extroversion (*pravṛtti*), and that the restoration of the head is an introversion (*nivṛtti*); cf. AT. 374. What we should call a 'creation myth' is in Sanskrit *bhāva-vṛtta*, a 'turning, or revolution, of nature' by which the 'wheel of becoming' (*bhava-cakra* = ὁ τροχὸς τῆς γενέσεως in James 3.6) is set agoing (*pra-vṛt*) by the Cakra-vartin from within its hub.

[2] The Sun is often identified with Death, who devours his children as well as generates them (PB. XXI. 2.1, cf. parallels in S. 47), and could easily be described, from the Indian point of view, as a 'cannibal.' The word rendered above by 'rock' is *aśman*, for which the St Petersburg Dictionary gives also the meaning 'Esser,' implying a derivation from *aś*, to eat.

[3] The Monster created by Tvaṣṭṛ was 'Vrtra' either because he 'enveloped these worlds' (√*vṛt*) or because he 'whirled' (√*vṛ*), and was Ahi in that he came into being footless, i.e., a snake (ŚB. I. 6.3.9, TS. II. 4.12.2).

[4] For example, 'Now Soma was Vṛtra . . . his head rolled off' (ŚB. IV. 4.3.4), 'Prajāpati, the Sacrifice, is King Soma' (ŚB. XII. 6.1.1); 'Him being Soma, he sacrifices as Viṣṇu . . . here, what by this name is Viṣṇu is to be eaten (drunk) in that name of Soma' (KB. VIII. 2), — which is as if one said, 'Here what by this name is Bacchus is to be devoured in that name of Dionysius,' or 'Here what by this name is "wine" is to be drunk by that name of "Christ",' for Soma is the life sap that flowed when Vṛtra was decapitated (ŚB. XIV, 1, 2, 19, etc.).

[5] Hardly to be distinguished from the Hydra-slaying Herakles (AT. 392, note 24). See further E. Siecke, *Indra's Drachenkampf* (Berlin, 1905); L. von Schroeder, 'Herakles und Indra,' *K. Akad. Wiss. in Wien, Phil-Hist Kl.*, 58 Bd., 3 and 4 Abh. (Vienna, 1914); and G. Rachel Levy, 'The Oriental Origin of Herakles,' *JHS.* 54, 1934. Levy refers to the 'Akkadian . . . God of Vegetation . . . in his snake form' (p. 41). It is true that Soma is usually thought of as ruddy, tawny or golden rather than green, but that refers to the extract rather than the plant, and has to do with the assimilation of

on behalf of his followers, alone or with their aid; but who is also often represented as willingly surrendering himself to the Gods, to be dismembered in order that they may live (PB. VII. 2.1, ŚB. XI. 1.8.2., MU. II. 6 etc.) The temporally everlasting opposition of the Gods and Titans, in which the human sacrificer participates, is the basic theme of the Vedic tradition; but it must not be overlooked that the opponents are really brothers, or that Namuci was Indra's bosom friend and boon companion before the battle, or that in the Early English story, conversely, Gawain becomes the Green Knight's friend and honored guest when all is over.[1]

In the creation myth of RV. X. 90, the primordial Person (*puruṣa*) is divided up so that (verse 14) 'Sky from his head evolved (lit. 'rolled together'), and from his feet the Earth.' This subdivision of the primordial Man has been often and justly compared to that of the giant Ymir, 'from whose flesh the Earth was shapen, and Heaven from his skull' (*Grimnismål*, 40). So, too, in the Babylonian myth, Marduk bisects Tiāmat, and makes Heaven of her upper part. Otherwise stated, this is Prajāpati's assumption of his 'world form,' in which the Sky is his head and the Earth his feet (*Maitri Upaniṣad*, VI. 6),[2] a conception of the body of God that is reflected in the universal (e.g. Indian and American Indian) architectural symbolism, in which the house is a representation of the macrocosm and at the same time of the human microcosm, its domed roof being on the one hand the vault above us, and on the other to our own skull-cap, and the luffer or oculus of the dome to the Sun (-door) on the one hand and on the other to the bregmatic fontanel, Skr. *brahmarandhra*.[3]

K. (165) remarks that 'it is very common for denizens of the other World to be regarded as ophidian' and (195) concludes that 'the general class of monsters who play fast and loose with their heads were, in the original conception, though

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Soma to the Sun and to the conception of the juice as a liquid fire (cf. 'eau-de-vie' as 'fire-water'), and as a plant or tree Soma must have been green. In ŚA. XI Brahma is as it were 'a great green tree' (the Tree of Life). K. might also have mentioned Khwājā Khizr in his list of green beings; the Khwājā is green himself, and the earth grows green under his feet at every step; cf. *Ars Islamica*, I (1934), 174, 175.

[1] In the total form of the original story it may be assumed that the two opponents were friends, fought, and were reconciled. That is, indeed, precisely the relationship of God to Satan — often called the 'Serpent' — as completely stated only in those traditions, notably the Islamic, in which an ultimate apokatastasis of the fallen Angel is foreseen. We have elsewhere pointed out the parallel recognizable in any performance of the mystery of St George and the Dragon: the opponents, having been friends, and perhaps even brothers, in the green room (the other world), appear on the stage (of this world) as mortal enemies, but are friends again when they return to the obscurity from which they first emerged. So, in Egyptian mythology, Horus and Seth are both friends and enemies.

[2] It is from this point of view that we have to understand the gigantic stature of the Titan victim. Thus, for example, in an Irish version (K. 11) the 'hideous carl's' enormous size is proper to him just because he is the Cosmic Man or World Giant, that one who, in an often repeated Indian formula, divides himself, or is divided up, to *fill* these worlds, which worlds in this case are represented by the 'Ulstermen's house,' in which it seems that he will set fire to the roof, so tall is he.

[3] See, for example, my 'Symbolism of the Dome,' *IHQ*. XIV, 1938, pp. 1–56, 'Eckstein,' SPECULUM, XIV (1939, 'Svayamātṛṇṇa, Janua Coeli,' in *Zalmoxis*, II (1938), and discussion of the Kingpost in 'The Sunkiss,' *JAOS*. 60, 1940, note 30: Dr. F. G. Speck on the Delaware Indian Big-house, *Pub. Pennsylvania Hist. Comm.*, II (1931).

not in the actual tale that we are investigating, Snakes or Serpent-men.'[1] It is very interesting to find that K. could reach this important and very significant conclusion from the materials available to him, for, to say nothing of Zeus who, like Asklepios, was once a snake[2] — and that must be understood not only historically but also ontologically — or of the Aztec Winged Serpent, or Chinese Dragon — the primordial being out of whom, whether as Vṛtra or Mahābhūta or Brahmayoni or Ātman, all things are brought forth in the beginning, is typically ophidian (A. 390, 391), a proposition that applies as well to the feminine as to the masculine aspects of the divine biunity. As we have elsewhere remarked, 'the bisection of the Serpent may be equated with the diremption of Heaven and Earth' (AT. 378); and if in ŚB. 1. 6.3.17 Indra bisected Vṛtra (*taṁ dvedhān anvabhinat*), it is only to say the same thing in other words and from the point of view of the Person himself, that 'he bisected himself' (*ātmānaṁ dvedhā'pātayat*, BU. 1. 4.3, cf. Many, 1. 32), thus dividing the male and female principles that had been one in his androgynous unity.[3] That division of the man from the woman (for in this way *patiś ca patnī ca ābhavatām, ibid.*) — and observe that the man is the 'head' of the woman, as is Christ of the Church (Eph. 1. 22, 5.23) — is at the same time the schism of the Sacerdotium (*brahma*) from the Regnum (*kṣatra*), Sky from Earth, Knower from Known, and in general of all the pairs of opposite tensions or values that make a mortal world; and a separation of the 'two selves[4] that dwell together in us,' respectively immortal and mortal; and that it is only by the performance of the 'sacred marriage' (*daivaṁ mithunam*) ritually and within you that the broken image of the immanent deity can be made whole again.[5]

We shall not attempt to demonstrate here the ophidian nature of the First Principle,[6] but only remark that it is an established pattern that 'The Serpents,

[1] That is the simple explanation of what L. A. Magnus called an 'unintelligible feature' in the story of Ilyá, who for thirty years 'had neither hands nor feet' (*The Heroic Ballads of Russia*, London, 1921, p. 45), — like Vṛtra and Brahma, described as 'footless and handless,' i.e., as 'serpents,' in RV. x. 30.8 and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1. 2.6.

[2] Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to Greek Religion* (1908), pp. 17–21, and *Themis* (1927), p. 300.

[3] 'Indra bisected him': 'He bisected himself' does not involve a contradiction. It should be clearly understood, and from a Christian point of view will be perfectly intelligible, that the Sacrifice is always a willing victim and the passion self-imposed, at the same time that he is the innocent victim of a passion unjustly imposed upon him; these are only two different ways of regarding one and the same 'event.' So in our various mythical stories we meet with heroes who may either 'play fast and loose' with their own heads, or allow or request others to do this to them.

[4] Cf. Sāyaṇa on PB.v.1.4: 'The "other self," without the head, is the body' (*itaraḥ śirovyatirikta ātmā deha*). As also in Plato, the immortal self has its seat in the head, and the mortal self in the trunk (*Timaeus*, 44 f., etc.).

[5] For all this material see SpA.

[6] See AT., passim; A., p. 390; and 'The Darker Side of Dawn,' *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Publications*, Washington, 1935. Cf. F. M. Th. Boehl, 'aus der Tiefe der Unterwelt kommen das Leben und die Weisheit; und für beide ist die Schlange das Symbol' (*Skizze der Kulturentwicklung Mesopotamiens*, Leiden, 1936), — we must make, however, the reservation that *in principio* (both 'in the beginning' and 'in the last analysis,' cf. AT., note 48) there is no division of an over- from an under-world, God from Titan, Mitra from Varuṇa, Zeus from Hades (cf. Euripides, fr. 912), and that on this level of reference 'chthonic' (Skr. *budhnya*) refers to 'the ground of the Godhead.' So Jeremias, 'Das grossartige Symbol der Schlange, die sich in den eigenen Schwanz beisst, stellt den Äeon dar' (*Der Antichrist in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1930, p. 4).

abandoning their inveterated skins, move on, put off death, and become the Suns' (PB. XXV. 15.4).[1] Soma is a case in point, for we are often reminded that 'Soma was Vṛtra,' or as elsewhere implied, Makha; and so he is said to come forth prancing, 'even as Ahi from his inveterated skin' (RV. IX. 86.44), i.e., 'the black skin that Indra hates' (RV. IX. 73.5), which is represented in an Irish version in which the hideous carl[2] wears 'an old hide next his skin, and a black tawny cloth about him' (K. 11), 'skins' and 'garments' being interchangeable symbols. Throughout the early Indian literature, indeed, this simile of the sloughing of the snake-skin corresponds exactly to what is called in Christianity 'putting off the old man and assuming the new,' in other words, to a disenchantment and a liberation from what St Paul calls the 'body of death.'[3] We can therefore say that, from an Indian point of view, all procession (in the theological sense of the word), is from an ophidian to a footed form. In European folk-lore the formula survives in the well-known type of the 'mermaid' who, when she marries a human being, acquires a soul, and loses her scaly tail, which is replaced by feet.[4] More than one Indian dynasty claims descent from the union of a Man with a *nāgini*.

The beheading of Vṛtra, like that of the Green Knight, and that of Dubthach or Uath mac Imomain in the *Fled Bricrend* (K. 10, 17) is a 'champion feat,'

[1] Hence 'Serpent-lore (*sarpa-vidyā*) is the Veda,' ŚB. XIII. 4.3.9.

[2] That the 'hideous carl' is here, at least potentially, the Sun, is indicated by his great head of hair (i.e., rays) which touches the roof, as if he meant 'to claim the position of light-bearer for the house.' As a representation of the universe, this 'house' is the equivalent of Arthur's hall in the Gawain story, and of the Volsung hall in the Edda, while the 'feast' is the 'feast of life.' Prajāpati, beheaded (PB. VI. 5.1) gave himself up to the Gods to be the Sacrifice, their food (PB. VII. 2.1, ŚB. XI. 1.6.2): Arthur and his knights are the Gods, and their meal is really eucharistic; it cannot be partaken of as such until the Sacrifice has been consummated. It is the beginning of a new 'Year'; the Gods of that Year do not exist, unless *in potentia*, until they have eaten; it is a creation myth. It need hardly be said, in the same connection, that the 'round table (any discussion of which must be based on A. C. L. Brown's *Round Table before Wace*, Boston, 1900), to which, as Malory said, 'all the world, Christian and Heathen, repairs' and at which, as Layamon says 'all are equal, the high and the low,' is also a cosmic symbol, and as much so as the magic cauldron of the same traditions. We see also quite clearly why it is the 'custom' that those who are seated at this table may not eat until a marvel has been seen or heard. Our 'grace before meal' still recognizes its source, for those who do not live by 'bread alone.'

[3] K. 214 observes that decapitation and skinning are interchangeable ways of releasing the enchanted being from the form in which he or she is concealed; the real person emerging from the skin in which it had been hidden. So in the Indian Sacrifice, the purpose is to bring forth out of the old a new person, that of the sacrificer's real Self, and that is compared to the drawing of an arrow from its sheath or a snake from its skin. In the story of Apālā ('The Unprotected,' the Psyche) who becomes Indra's wife, she is thrice skinned, appearing at last in a 'sunskin,' i.e., a golden body of glory (references in my *Darker Side of Dawn*, Washington, 1935, pp. 8, 9). Plato compares the skinning of Marsyas to the destruction of a man in his evil and setting him up again good (*Euthydemus*, 285); Dante, *Paradiso*, I. 19–21 appears to allude to this. Cf. also C. G. Jung, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu den Visionen des Zosimos,' *Eranos Jahrbuch* for 1937 (Zürich, 1938), p. 30 (Abhäutungsmotive). Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1. 20.2 connects the daily renewal of the sun with the sloughing of the snake-skin.

[4] In the same way the 'seal-women' of Gaelic tradition (e.g., Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, IV, 14–17) put off their hairy skins and appear as beautiful human maidens, and marriage with a human being makes this temporary disenchantment permanent. That is what happens to all those who, in the Pauline sense, are 'born again.' The motive can be recognized also in the Indian *vastra-haraṇa* ('theft of garments') in which Krishna steals the clothes of the gopis who, like the seal-women and swan maidens, are bathing nude. Cf. the etymology of the word 'es-cape.'

whereby Indra who had been just 'Indra' becomes Mahendra, 'Indra the Great,' Mahāvīra, 'The Great Hero,' and Maghavat, 'Bountiful' (ŚB, I. 6.4.21, XIV. 1.1, 13, etc.), for Indra is now what Vṛtra was (ŚB. I. 6.3.17).

We have realised already that the decapitation is a disenchantment of the victim, a liberation of the Sun from the darkness by which he had been obscured and eclipsed. But the Sacrificial death is also a making many from one, in which sense the dismemberment is a consummation desired by the victim himself; and that is the release of all the imprisoned principles, 'All this' (universe) that was contained in 'That One' by whom all beings and all things are breathed out or poured forth at his 'death' and whom, as Makha, 'they could not overcome so long as he was one' (TA. V. 1.3). For the separation of Sky and Earth, who were originally one, and that of Day and Night, provide the 'space' and 'time' in which all beings can be born and realise their originally inhibited potentialities, which are now 'released from Varuṇa's bonds,' just as even to this day the late king's prisoners are released from jail at the accession of his successor, who is also in theory (as he was once in practice) the late king's slayer, in what was much rather a sacrifice than a murder. So what Indra gets from Vṛtra is 'that by which he, Vṛtra, is these worlds.' At the same time it is repeatedly emphasized that when Vṛtra is smitten the Waters are set free to run in their appointed courses (RV. and Brāhmaṇas, *passim*). That is to say expressly, although in other words, that the Sacrifice of That One at the same time irrigates and repopulates the Waste Land, or Waste City.[1] That irrigation and repopulation are an essential motive, not indeed in the Gawain, but in parallel versions (K. 52 f., 245 f.),[2] as well as in the Grail versions of the Quest of Life[3] in which emphasis is laid upon a talismanic Source of Plenty that in the Cuchulain version is a magic cauldron, and can be identified with the 'Great Hero' vessel of the Pravargya rite (to be discussed below) and in the last analysis with the Sun (PB. VI. 5.1). It is, indeed, significant that Arthur and his knights — Gods and men — may not *eat* until the champion feat has been performed.

[1] I.e., enlivens the universe as a whole, and at the same time its several parts, ourselves included: 'waste' implying *in potentia*, and 'life' *in actu*.

[2] K. remarks that 'the repeopling of the Waste City is apparently accomplished, not by the surcease of spells [but it seems to the present writer that this is necessarily implied], but merely by the return of the inhabitants from the surrounding forest in which they had been hiding [from what?].' The situation would have been clear if, instead of asking this question, he had said 'where they had been hidden.' The dark 'forest' is the equivalent of the 'cave,' in reality Vṛtra's 'belly' and the 'Brahma-womb' from which all things are produced in 'the,' i.e., at *any* 'beginning.' The contrast of forest and field, of wild and tame animals is frequent in the Vedic sources where, to be brief, the former are Titanic, the latter divine or human. Cf. the evocation of a world of people from the 'forest' and their ultimate return to the forest in *Merlin* (EETS. [1899], II, 309–311, summarised also in *Isis*, XIX [1933], 79). 'Desert' and 'forest' are interchangeable symbols: the Green Knight's name is Bernlak de *Hautdesert*.

[3] Many typical Grail motives, combined with that of a severed head which is restored to the body to which it belongs and, per contra, the enemy's head is severed, will be found in Shaikh Chilli, *Folk-Tales of Hindustan*, Allahabad, 1913 (see pp. 149–152), summarised also in *Ars Islamica*, I (1934), 174, 175. For other Indian Grail material, in particular the Bowl of Plenty, cf. my *Yakṣas*, II (Washington, 1931), 37–47.

It cannot be too clearly realised that we are dealing with a recurring cycle[1] of events; in this connection it is not at all insignificant that in so many cases the story begins and ends with the 'Year'; for whatever may be the order of time, human or aeviternal, in which the 'Year' is reckoned, the period implies a beginning and an end, to be immediately followed by another beginning (cf. AT. 415). At the beginning of any one cycle all things are in possession of the Titans. 'Everything is in Vṛtra' (ŚB. I. 6.3.15, V. 5.5.1), who had appropriated all things before his passion by which they are released (ŚB. I. 6.3.8, XII. 7.3.1, etc.), just as the gold is in Fafnir's keeping before Sigurd takes it from him. On the one hand Vṛtra is drained of his contents and is compared to an empty leather bottle (ŚB. I. 6.3.16), and on the other Prajāpati, who is repeatedly identified with the Sacrifice (victim), 'when he had emanated (or released) all beings, felt himself emptied out, as it were, and was afraid of death: he bethought himself, "How can I get these beings back into myself? How can I put them back into myself? How can I come to be again the Self of all these beings?"' (ŚB. X. 4.2.3). On the one hand, 'Everything was in Vṛtra, namely the Three Vedas' (ŚB. V. 5.5.1), on the other Prajāpati saw that in these Vedas, themselves immortal, are contained all things, both mortal and immortal, and so resolves 'to build up for himself a Self of such sort as to contain the whole of this Threefold Science' (ŚB. X. 4.2.22). It is, in fact, well known that the express purpose of the Sacrifice, as a rite enacted and to be comprehended, is to build up again, at one and the same time the sacrificer's and the deity's Self, whole and complete; and as it was by the performance of the Sacrifice that Prajāpati reintegrated himself, so may the sacrificer reintegrate himself, even today.[2]

The Green Knight, although beheaded, is by no means slain. So, too, when Prajāpati is beheaded, 'he survives this woe,' and because of that the Soma vessel (*droṇa-kalaśa*) is called the 'surviving vessel,' for 'it *is* Prajāpati's head that was struck off' (PB. VI. 5.1–6),[3] and Prajāpati, the Sacrifice, is King Soma

[1] 'Cycle' must not be interpreted 'systematically,' for as Dr Murray Fowler has justly remarked, 'It is not strictly possible to speak of a "cycle," for the act of creation is never complete and never returns upon itself. It may with more accuracy be thought of as a spiral, although that, too, is a vague, half-image. Myth spins out into a tale that is simultaneous and eternal' (*JAOS.* 62.39). It could, indeed, as well be said that the act of creation is always complete and never departs from itself; from this point of view, that of the *via remotionis*, and as in the 'Last Analysis' (*mahā-pralaya*, *ἀνάλυσις*, Götterdämmerung), is reduced to its immutable source, and it can be said of Indra that 'not for a single day has he fought, nor has he any foe, his so-called "battles" are but his "magic"' (ŚV. X. 54.2, ŚB. XI. 1.6.9, 10; cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, VII. 25).

[2] Examples of the labors of a Year undertaken by the Hero may be noted in Gawain, in the performance of the tasks of Herakles, in the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī (ŚB. XI. 5.1 f., etc.), in Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, I. 3056–3065, and in the yearlong sacrificial 'sessions' of the Vedic tradition.

[3] The words 'was struck off' render *udahanyata*, for which Caland has 'was slain off'; the awkwardness of Caland's words very well illustrates the important point that Skr. *han* (with or without prefix) does not necessarily mean 'to slay,' but much rather 'to strike' or 'wound.' So also in TS. II. 1.4.5 where, in Keith's version, it is *after* Indra has 'slain' Vṛtra that Vṛtra ties him up in sixteen coils, and we must understand rather that it is after Indra has 'struck' Vṛtra that this happens. Thus Indra is rather *ὀφιομάχος* than *ὀφιοκτόνος*. That in TS. VI. 4.2.3 Vṛtra 'dies' is exceptional. Cf. ŚB. XI. 1.5.7 where Vṛtra is Evil (*pāpman*), but that Vṛtra is burnt up means that his evil is burnt away.

(ŚB. XII. 6.1.1), who 'was Vṛtra' (ŚB. IV. 4.3.4). Again, when Soma is sacrificed, 'it is not himself, but his evil (his Vṛtra, ŚB. XI. 1.5.7) that is slain' (ŚB. III. 9.4.17, 18); in other words, he is only apparently 'quieted' by his slaughterers (*śamitārā*, 'pacifiers') but really liberated or disenchanted, like so many other enchanted princes who must be beheaded before they can put off the animal forms in which they are concealed. Vṛtra survives as the Sun or Moon and as the appetite within us[1]: that bisection does not necessarily involve extinction is very clear from ŚB. I. 6.3.17 where Vṛtra enjoins upon Indra, 'Do not cast thy bolt at me: only cut me in twain (*vy eva mā kuru*),[2] but let me not come to be *there*'[3] i.e., 'let me not die' ('here' and 'there' referring, as in Greek, to 'this' and "yonder' world). Vṛtra is an 'Undying Worm,' and while one part of him survives as Sun (or Moon), the other remains very much alive within us, as the appetite (TS. II. 4.12.6, ŚB. I. 6.3.17), or 'sensitive (aesthetic) soul,' so often and rightly termed by Rūmī 'the Dragon,' with which every brave man must fight his own battle if he would be, in the theological sense, a 'Victor.'

But if the decapitation of the outlandish and uncanny stranger is not his death, we have so far only hinted at the inevitable denouement,[4] in which the head is replaced and the Victor in the first encounter must submit himself to the immortal Victim. In order to understand the context in which this replacement is effected we must know that the Sacrifice, by which the One is made many, although on the one hand a willing self-sacrifice in that Prajāpati desires to be multiplied and divides himself, insofar as it is performed by the Gods and submitted to by the Victim, willy-nilly, is an original sin, from which the sacrificers themselves shrink, and for which an expiation must be made, sooner or later; and that, as remarked by Dr Murray Fowler, the creation myth 'is equally one of redemption' (*JAOS.* 62.39, c.2).[5] The final purpose of the Sacrifice is therefore not merely to continue the creative process that was 'one upon a time' begun by

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That in ŚB. IV. 4.3.4 it is Vṛtra's head that becomes the *droṇa-kalaśa* is one of the many proofs that Prajāpati, as the Sacrifice, is to be identified with Vṛtra, in the same sense that 'Soma was Vṛtra'; that Soma of whom it is said that not himself, but only his 'evil' is slain (ŚB. III. 9.4.17), that is to say he is not 'slain' (as it might appear) but really 'disenchanted.'

[1] Like Typhon (Seth) for Philo (I. 39, 85, 86, etc.) and Plutarch (*Moralia*, 371 B, C).

[2] The words could mean 'Only transform (*vi-kṛ*) me,' but it is clear from what follows that the literal sense of 'Only do me apart' (and thus 'transform me') is primarily to be understood.

[3] 'Here' and 'there' are used in Skr. as in Greek to denote this world and the other. To be alive is to 'be here,' to die is to 'go there.'

[4] We say 'denoument' advisedly, because there can be no final introversion until 'that knot of Śuṣṇa's that Indra resolves' (RV. X. 61.13) has been untied. In the Livre de Caradoc (K. 26 f., 225 f., cf. E. K. Heller in SPECULUM, XV [1940], 338 f.) the magician Elyafres creates a serpent to be Caradoc's enemy, as the magician Tvaṣṭṛ creates a serpent to be Indra's enemy. Caradoc is himself the hero of a beheading challenge parallel in respects to the challenge of which Cuchullain and Gawain are the heroes. The serpent winds itself about Caradoc's arm, and cannot be undone; it is finally cut to pieces by his brother-in-law. So Vṛtra, created by Tvaṣṭṛ, 'ties up Indra in sixteen coils' (TS. II. 4.1.6, v.4.5.4) and is burnt off by Agni (TS. II. 4.1.6, v. 4.5.4, cf. ŚB. XI. 1.5.8), who is, of course, Indra's brother. Regarding these knots see further my *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (1942), p. 31, and 'Sarpabandha' in *JAOS.* 62, 1942, 341–342.

[5] Just as in Christianity the plan of creation and plan of redemption are inseparably connected.

a decapitation, but also to reverse it, by building up again the divided deity, whole and complete, and therewith the sacrificer himself, identified with the deity and with the Sacrifice itself. We have already seen that is by means of the Sacrifice that Prajāpati restores himself; but, again, that is not a one-sided task, and the deity must also be cured by those who divided him.[1] If the Sacrifice did not involve both an act of disintegration and one of reintegration it could not have served, as it does, 'for the winning of *both* worlds' (TS. VI. 6.4.1, etc.) or for the sacrificer's benefit here and hereafter. In order to pay his debt, as he has sworn to do, the sacrificer must now sacrifice himself and we find it explicit that 'One who is a Comprehensor of the "head of the Sacrifical Horse" (Varuṇa, RV. I. 163.4; Prajāpati, passim) himself becomes "one whose head is fit for sacrifice' ", (*śirṣanvān-medhya*, TS. VII. 5.25.1).[2]

The mythical history of the doctrine of the restoration of the head is complicated by a second decapitation. We can easily see, however, why it is that Indra, who performed the original Sacrifice, both threatens to and actually does cut off the head of the deity, Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa, who reveals to the Aśvins 'how this head of the Sacrifice is put on again' (*yathaitad yajñasya śiras pratidhīyate*, ŚB. XIV. 1.1.18): it is because that restoration is an undoing of all his work and a putting together again of what he had divided, and in this sense his own defeat by the restoration of things as they were[3]: whoever comes to be once more 'within Varuṇa' (a consummation devoutly to be desired, RV. VII. 86.2), is absolutely and finally released, not merely from Varuṇa's 'wrath,' but also from Indra's

[1] 'The Gods said, "It will not suffice us that the Sacrifice has been taken to pieces; come, let us gather it together again." They gathered it together, and said to the Aśvins, "Do ye two heal it" ' (AB. I. 18). It is from the same point of view that the Mongoose, doubtless a type of Indra and the sacrificer, as is the Egyptian Ichneumon of Atum-Ra (see A., p. 393 f.), not only 'cuts Ahi to pieces, but puts him together again' (AV. VI. 139.6).

[2] For cases of actual sacrificial decapitation see J. Ph. Vogel, 'The Head-offering to the Goddess in Pallava Sculpture,' *BSOS.* VI, 1931; those in which the devoted sacrificer is prevented by the deity from consummating the sacrifice, and receives a boon instead, are most nearly related to that of Sir Gawain, who is unquestionably *śīrṣaṇvān-medhya*, and actually offers up his head, but is spared and well treated. Where the sacrifice is actually consummated, but the victim is afterwards brought to life again, it amounts to the same thing: since in both cases the sacrificer has submitted himself. Just as the God Prajāpati (=Green Knight) surrenders himself, so in turn the sacrificer (=Gawain) surrenders himself and is redeemed (ŚB. XI. 1.8). Cf. also H. A. Rose, 'Sacrifices of the Head to the Hindu Goddess,' *Folklore*, XXVII (1926).

The story of Rājā Jagdeo (in Sir Richard Temple's *Legends of the Panjāb*, II, No. XXIX) is that of a hero who overcomes and beheads a demon, and so wins the King's daughter to be his bride; and later cuts off his own head, by way of alms (given to the Goddess of Truth disguised as a mendicant), 'in the name of God,' but is restored to life. It may be noted that while the head and body are separated, care is taken that 'no fly touches his body.' Others who are asked to cut off their heads refuse, saying 'We came into the world to enjoy ourselves, not to cut off our heads.'

In all of the cases studied by Vogel the sacrifice of one's own head is to the Goddess. But I possess a Rajput drawing of the late Kāngrā school depicting the sacrificial suicide of the (13th century) king Hamīr, who is cutting off his own head upon the Lingam in a Śiva temple; cf. the *Journal of Indian Art*, XVII, 1916, pp. 37, 39 and pl. 10, fig. 20.

[3] Cf. PB. XIV. 6.8 where a king Kutsa cuts off the head of his Praepositus Upagu, who offers Soma sacrifices against his orders. Upagu's father restores him to life. It comes to the same thing whenever the King attempts to silence the Priest, whose business it is to see to it that he does no wrong (as is explicit in JB. III. 94): some contemporary applications will be obvious.

dominion under the Sun. Dadhyañc, then, only consents to reveal the 'honey doctrine' (*madhu-vidyā* 'the science of mead,' i.e., Soma), to the Aśvins, and to accept them as his disciples, if they will protect him from Indra; this they do by cutting off his head, and replacing it with that of a horse, so that when Indra beheads him, they may restore his own.[1]

This same Dadhyañc was of such fiery-energy and sacerdotal lustre that whenever any of the Titans saw him from afar they were laid low and lost their heads (*viśīrṣāṇaś śerate*, to be understood quite literally). When he dies and goes to heaven, Indra cannot overcome the Titans by himself and asks 'Is there no part of Dadhyañc remaining here?' (cf. RV. I. 84.14).[2] He is told that there is 'that horse-head (*aśvaśīrṣa*) with which Dadhyañc had taught the honey doctrine to the Aśvins.' Then with the bones of this head Indra smites the Titans[3]: it is of such terrible power that at the mere sight of it the Titans, as if it were Dadhyañc in person, still 'lose their heads'[4] (RV. I. 84.13, Sāyaṇa on *ibid.* 13–15; JB. III. 64, PB. XII. 8.5).[5] Cf. 'Brahma's head' as cosmic weapon, Mbh, I. 123.74 (Pūna ed.).

[1] 'He then received them (as his pupils); and when he had received them, they cut off his head, and put it aside elsewhere; and having fetched the head of a horse, they put it on him: therewith he taught them; and when he had taught them, Indra cut off that head of his; and having fetched his own head, they put it on him again' (ŚB. XIV. 1.1.24). That is in true 'fairy-tale' style; but what are 'fairy-tales' and whence?

[2] There is an indication here of the nature of the philosophy of the cult of relics; like an icon, the relic 'participates' in the nature of the Deus Absconditus (here Dadhyañc), and can be used 'as if' it were the deity in person. It is thus that the Buddha's relics (amongst others, the *uṣṇīṣa*, or scapular prominence) are used as representations of him in his absence and as supports of contemplation. 'The contemplation of an image, the "assimilation" of the iconographically expressed symbols has for a result, an "imitatio dei": it is a mystical technic through which like in a yoga practice, the human condition is exceeded' (Mircea Eliade, *JISOA.* V [1937], 196).

Of such relics, as is well known, the head or skull is the most important, and this has been so from Stone Age times to those of 'poor Yorick.' But it is sometimes overlooked that the decapitation of an enemy or criminal is, strictly speaking, a sacrifice, and the setting up of the head on a spear or post at a city gate is not a further disgrace but an honor paid to the deceased who is 'despatched to the Gods' and 'deified.' It is not only an enemy that may be so treated, but the hero; so we find in the *Mahākapi Jātaka* (J. III. 375) that the Bodhisattva's skull is inlaid with gold and set up on a spear-point at the city gate and treated as a relic (*dhātu*, 'deposit') and provided with a chapel and a cult. The placing of a head or skull on a spear or post is, in fact, only another way of restoring the head to the body or trunk, and involves at the same time an assimilation to the Sun, regarded as a 'sky-supporting post' (JUB. I. 10.10) as a pillar together with its capital supports a roof.

[3] This is closely paralleled in Samson's slaughter of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, from which also healing waters flow for him (*Judges*, 15.15, 19). Samson is a solar hero, and the ass, it would appear, no common donkey. Cf. my note in the *Art Bulletin*, XXIV, 383–384.

[4] We still use this phrase to mean to 'be out of one's wits.' Cf. TB. II. 3.3.1, 'Whoever lives as a fool (*avidvānn avartayate*) has 'lost his head' (*viśīrṣā*) and fares ill in yonder world, but one who lives as a Comprehensor (*vidvān*) 'has a head on his shoulders' (*saśīrṣā*) and comes to be in yonder world free from ill. Similarly, ŚA. 14: 'One who studies not the Veda, him they all call an ignoramus. Cutting off his head, he makes himself a mere trunk'.

[5] The apotropaic power of the terrible head recalls that of the Greek Fratzenmaske and the equivalent Indian Kāla-makara and Chinese Tao Tieh. The Greek Fratzenmaske is originally a solar representation and remains a masculine (bearded) type even when the Gorgon becomes Medusa (f.); the change of sex presenting no great difficulty, for the Dragon is always in some sense feminine to the solar hero, and may be 'killed' in more than one sense (cf. A. p. 361 and $\sqrt{śnath}$, in RV 'to pierce,'

It can now be asked, Who is this Dadhyañc? From what precedes it is clear that he is a Brahman, and in fact the Sacerdotium (*brahma*) without whom Indra as Regnum (*kṣatra*) cannot successfully perform his heroic functions (cf. RV. VIII. 100.1 and ŚB. IV. 1.4.3, 4, 6). That will account at the same time for his friendship with Indra, with whom he cooperates against the Titans, and for his opposition to Indra with respect to the revelation of the secret of salvation. Something more can be deduced from Dadhyañc's patronymics, Ātharvaṇa and Āṅgirasa. 'Ātharvaṇa' (RV. VI. 16.14; and passim) makes him both priest and physician, for the Sons of Atharvan (Agni as Fire-priest; Rudra as super-physician, *bhiṣaktama*, RV. II. 33.4) are both priests and healers, and it would hardly be far-fetched to identify Dadhyañc with that one of the Ātharvaṇas who is called 'the Physician' (*bhiṣaj, Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā* XVI. 3), for he is indeed a surgeon who knows 'how the head of the Sacrifice can be put on again' (*yathaitad yajñasya śiras pratidhīyate*, ŚB. XIV. 1.1.18) and it is clear that the Aśvins who acquired that knowledge from him and are called the 'physicians of the Gods' (*devānām bhiṣajā*) are the pupils of a very great 'medicine man.'[1] They in their turn become the sacrificer's instructors; when they find the Gods ineffectually 'worshipping with a headless (*viśīrṣa*) sacrifice,' they served as priests and 'restored the head of the Sacrifice' (*ŚB.* IV. 1.5.15).[2]

Dadhyañc is also Aṅgirās (RV. I. 139.9) or Āṅgirasa and Praepositus (*Purohita*) of the Gods (PB. XII. 8.6). That is hardly, as Macdonell thought (*Vedic Index*, s.v.), a mistake; if we accept the distinction between Ātharvaṇa and Āṅ-

generally Vṛtra or Śuṣṇa, but in X. 95.4, 5 Urvaśī, sexually). Medusa herself sometimes appears in the form of a centaur, and in the same way the Earth Goddess in India is often thought of as a mare or mare-headed. No full discussion of all this can be attempted here. On the Gorgoneion see Roscher, *Lexikon der Griech. und Röm. Mythologie*; Hampe, *Frühe Griech. Sagenbilder in Böotien*, Athens, 1936, p. 58 f.; and Kaiser Wilhelm II, *Studien zur Gorgo*, Berlin, 1936. The latter (p. 36) remarks: 'In Verbindung mit dem Perseus-Mythos . . . könnte man vielleicht den Sinn unterlegen: Perseus, der Sonnenheld, enthauptet an jedem Morgen die durch die Gorgo symbolisierte Nachtsonne, so dass aus dem kopflose Rumpf die Symbole des Lichts entspringen und als Söhne Poseidon's aus dem Ozean aufsteigen? Der Perseus-Mythos hätte dann die Bedeutung: Stirb und werde!' That is undoubtedly the innermost meaning of the Sacrifice. Mors janua vitae.

[1] On the great significance of the 'Doctor' in Grail ritual see J. L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* [1920], ch. VIII. Gawain's knowledge of herbs is notorious, and 'the character of Healer belongs to him in his *rôle* of Grail winner' (*ibid.*, p. 102). Whoever, in fact, heals the Maimed King (i.e., the immanent and divided deity, who cannot reintegrate himself, TS. V. 5.2.1, the Progenitor, disparted in his offspring, MU. II. 6, etc.) 'plays the *rôle* assigned to the Doctor, that of restoring to life and health the dead, or wounded, representatives of the Spirit of Vegetation' (*ibid.*, p. 104). We have already seen that in the Indian Grail story of Prince Mahbub the Maimed King is headless; the Hero, his son, effects his cure and also beheads the usurper, and thus restores the kingdom (i.e., the Kingdom of Heaven, within you). The Hero, moreover, is (like Perceval, cf. RR. 194) the son of a widow, and reared in ignorance of his birth and destiny.

[2] The Aśvins, 'horsemen,' are iconographically 'horse-faced' like their spiritual father Dadhyañc, and associated with the divine physician Dhanvantari (Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, II. 544), whom we must identify with Dadhyañc and Bhiṣaj Ātharvaṇa. They can be equated with Sky and Earth, etc., and are called priests (RV. II. 39.1, SB. IV. 1.5.15, 16); cf. also SpA., note 24. They are not present at the Sacrifice of Makha-Viṣṇu for the sufficient reason that it is only by this Sacrifice that Sky and Earth and all other pairs are brought into separate existence; so they are not originally either Gods or Titans, but as it were 'Men,' who must be taught.

girasa made by Bloomfield JAOS. XVIII. 180, 181), he can be regarded as the former in that he heals his friends, and as the latter in that he slays his own and Indra's foes. We must not devote too much space to the identity of Dadhyañc here, and shall only say that in his relation to Indra and as High Priest and Praepositus of the Gods Dadhyañc must be equated with or regarded as an aspect of Bṛhaspati. That, too, will account for his magical powers and sinister as well as auspicious character; for Bṛhaspati was a Titan whom Tvaṣṭṛ begat (RV. II. 23.2 and 17), no doubt Viśvarūpa, Tvaṣṭṛ's son who was also the Praepositus of the Gods (TS. II. 5.2.1) and must have come over to their side as did the Titan Uśanas, High Priest and Praepositus, who 'knew what Bṛhaspati knew' and accepting a bribe deserted the Titans and came over to the Gods (JB. I. 125, PB. VI. 5.20). That Dadhyañc was of Titanic origin is further suggested by the fact that a later form of the solar horse-headed deity, known as Hayaśīrṣa ('Horse-headed'), who 'recovers the paths of the Vedas' is 'of Makha's nature' (*makha-mayaḥ*, PhP. II. 7.11); and further, by the fact in ŚB. XIII. 2.8.4, the sacrificial horse[1] is addressed as the 'host-lord of hosts' (*gaṇānāṃ gaṇapati*), originally an epithet of Bṛhaspati or Indra (RV. II. 23.1, X. 112.9) but later of Gaṇeśa, God of Wisdom, who was also beheaded and now wears an elephant's head, with which he dictated the Epic to Vālmīki.

If now, as we infer, and just as 'Soma was Vṛtra,' Dadhyañc had been the Titan whom Indra first beheaded before time began (since the Sun is only brought into actual being by that act), the later decapitation by Indra, after the world has come into being and because the secret of salvation has been disclosed, must be regarded as a reflection in time of Indra's original sin of Brahman-slaying, for which, as we have already observed, an expiation is due. In the Arthurian story Gawain, who sacrifices (as we venture to say) the Green Knight, makes expiation after a year by submitting to a like passion. Let us now see 'how the head of Sacrifice is put on again, how this Sacrifice becomes whole again' (ŚB. XIV. 1.1.18); always bearing in mind that the sacrifice as a human rite is an imitation of what was done by the Gods in the beginning, and that the Sacrificer as such is identified with Indra as Vṛtra-slayer (ŚB. V. 3.2.27 and passim), and that it is for every man to slay his own Dragon and to put it together again.

That is, of course, a 'secret doctrine,' and just as Indra cut off Dadhyañc's head, so is he even now ready to cut off anyone's head[2] who reveals it 'to any or everyone' (ŚB. XIV. 1.1.26).[3] Such secrets, however, are not revealed by a mere

[1] In one account of the horse-sacrifice the head of a horse put on the fire altar with apotropaic effect (*Mahābhārata*, VII. 143.71).

[2] As in the *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāma cuts off the Śūdra's head whom he finds practising Yoga; but that condign punishment is again a Sacrifice, by which the Śūdra is liberated like any other sacrificial victim. It is often said of those who officiate without the necessary qualifications that 'their head will fall off' or that 'Indra will cut off their head' (e.g., ŚB. XIV. 2.2.44; CU. I. 10.10).

[3] Just as 'to the romance writers the Grail was [still] something secret, mysterious, and awful, the exact knowledge of which was reserved to a select few, and which was only to be spoken of with bated breath, and a careful regard to strict accuracy' (RR. 131). But it would have been clear to any Comprehensor (*ya evaṁ vidvān*), as I think it must be to the reader of the present article, that there was 'no incongruity in identifying the mysterious Food-providing Vessel of the Bleheris-Gawain

description of the acts that presuppose them; they can only be communicated to, or rather known by, those who in every sense of the word *participate* in the Sacrifice, and it is for that that a qualification is required; every sacrificer must have been initiated, and beyond that, the 'honey-doctrine' may be taught to one who is intellectually prepared, and has been the master's pupil for a year, only by a master who is himself leading a life of austerity (ŚB. XIV. 1.1.26–31) just as the secret of the Grail may be revealed 'Ne par nul home qui soit nés Si prouvoires n'est ordenés U home qui mainte sainte vie' (Potvin, cited RR. 131).

The restoration of the Head of the Sacrifice is enacted in the Pravargya, a sacrifice so called because in the original act the smitten victim was 'cast away' (*pravṛjyate*).[1] Being a Sacrifice, the Pravargya is identified with the Sun and the Year, Brahmaṇaspati (Bṛhaspati), Brahma and Makha, the Sacrifice and the sacrificer.[2] As an object, the Pravargya, also called Gharma, 'Heat,' and Mahāvīra,[3] 'Great Hero,' and *droṇa-kalaśa* is a cauldron of boiling milk and melted butter; it is of clay, and while it is being made it is repeatedly addressed with the words 'For Makha thee! For Makha's head!,' and when completed with the words 'Makha's head art thou!'.

Now the Adhvaryu, addressing the Brahmā, says 'Be seated unperturbed, we are about to put back (*pratidhāsyāma*)[4] the Head of the Sacrifice.' An Emperor's throne is set up shoulder high, 'for on the shoulders the head is set.' When the Gharma is aglow, they say 'the God (Gharma) hath united with the God Savitṛ (Sun), Agni with Agni'; for both the cauldron and the Sun and Fire are aglow, and so identified *per analogiam*. The vessel is addressed with the words, 'O Lord

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version with the Chalice of the Eucharist, and in ascribing the power of bestowing Spiritual Life to that which certain modern scholars have [rightly] identified as a *Wunsch-Ding*, a Folk-tale Vessel of Plenty' (RR. 132). So far from that, the fact that the identification was made is proof that those who made it knew what they were speaking of. The sooner we realize that the popular mysteries are not essentially, but only accidentally to be distinguished from the Greater Mysteries, the nearer we shall come to an understanding of the nature of both. It is a great mistake to suppose that the folk motives are ever 'pressed into the service' of the higher thought; they can be used in its service, because they spring from the same source and are of the same essence.

[1] All that follows is taken from ŚB. XIV. 1.1 f. (which can easily be consulted in SBE. LIV), viz., 'The Chapter of the Divākīrtyas,' in which it is explained 'how they did restore the Head of the Sacrifice,' as stated in ŚB. IV. 1.5.15. See also AB. I. 18–22 and KB. VIII. 3–7.

Cf. also PB. VI. 7.9 f., where when the continuity of the ritual Himmelfahrt is broken, this is called a decapitation of the Sacrifice, and an expiation is needed, in order that the head may be restored (*pratidhā*).

[2] The Sacrifice is a reintegration at one and the same time of the dismembered deity and of the sacrificer; hence, as is explicit in ŚB. XI. 2.6.1 the 'head of the Sacrifice' is also the sacrificer's head, which, indeed, he redeems by the Sacrifice, just as Sir Gawain redeems his head at the end of the 'Year.'

[3] Mahāvīra ('Great Hero') is the epithet primarily of Makha and secondarily of Indra who overcame him and acquired his character. Later, it is also an epithet of the Buddha, and of the Jaina 'Finder of the Ford.'

[4] Skr. *dhāna* is etymologically 'thesis'; the *prati-dhāna*, accordingly, the 'anti-thesis' of the decapitation, and completes the cycle, of which 'the last end is the same as the first beginning.'

The Adhvaryu uses the plural, because there are really two (cf. ŚB. IV. 2.5.3), just as there are two Aśvins.

of all worlds, O Lord of all thought, O Lord of all speech, O God Gharma, guard thou the Gods, thou art our Father.'[1] The sacrificer and his wife together say 'Thee shall we serve, bestow thou offspring upon us': for indeed 'the Pravargya is male, and she is female.'

The milk and melted butter are now poured into the Gharma; it is lifted and shaken upwards with the words 'Place thou this Sacrifice in the Sky': for 'it is yonder Sun, and he is indeed set in the Skies.' The Brahmā, who has hitherto taken no active part in the rite, now pronounces the consecration, 'for the Brahmā is the best physician among the officiating priests,[2] and thus the sacrificer heals the Sacrifice by means of him who is the best physician among the priests':[3] and Prajāpati it is that thus he heals.' The Aśvins are invited to drink: the sacrificer murmurs, 'The Aśvins drank the Gharma' and 'being himself (identified with) the Sacrifice, he thus heals the Sacrifice by the Sacrifice.' Seven oblations are made 'corresponding in number to "these breaths (*prāṇāḥ*) in the head"; it is these (powers) that he thus bestows upon him.' The sacrificer partakes of the remains of the fluid, saying 'Let us eat of thee, God Gharma.'[4]

[1] It is the universal tradition that the Sun is our real Father, the human father being only the means by which Life is transmitted, and not its source. 'Light is the progenitive power' (TS. VII. 1.1.1, etc.): O lume pregno di gran virtu, . . . quegli ch'è padre d'ogni mortal vita,' Dante, *Paradiso*, XXII, 112 f.); 'Generatio non potest fieri in materia generabili et corruptibili secondum rationes seminales nisi beneficio luminis corporum supercaelestium, quae elongantur a generatione et corruptione, scilicet a sole, luna et stellis' (St Bonaventura, *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, 21). Other parallels, Indian, Egyptian, Greek, Christian, Islamic (notably Rūmi, *Mathnawī*, I. 3775) and American Indian could be cited at length. Aristotle's 'Man and the sun generate man' (*Phys.* 2.2) is well known. Cf. my 'Primitive Mentality' in *Q. J. Mythic Soc.*, XXXI.

What applies to natural generation applies a fortiori to regeneration, where 'Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro non prodest quicquam' (John, 6.63). It is well known that the sacrificer is born again of the Fire (Altar), which is also Agni's birthplace, into which he inseminates himself by symbolic acts; but whatever he does, it is really 'Agni who thus emits him as seed into the womb, where he lords it over that death' (JUB. III. 10.6, cf. JB. I. 17). Similarly now (AB. I. 22), the Gharma, when it has been reintegrated and healed, and as representing the Sun, plays the Father's part: the Gharma is the male organ, and the overflowing milk the seed; and so the sacrificer, being a Comprehensor and sacrificing as such is born again of the Fire as one composed of the Ṛg, Yajus and Sāma Vedas (i.e., of 'everything'), reborn of the Sacerdotium (*brahma*), and as an immortal attains to the Gods ('immortal', meaning of course, that he will not die prematurely here, and that he will be immortal absolutely when he is for the third and last time born again of the funeral Fire, in which he is finally sacrificed, when the time comes, cf. Sp. A. note 35).

[2] In ŚB. IV. 2.5.3 the Pratihartṛ acts as the 'physician.'

[3] The Brahmā, in other words, is the 'Doctor' and corresponds to Dadhyañc, as the Adhvaryu (or two Adhvaryus) represent the Aśvins, and the sacrificer Indra. In Gawain and the Green Knight there is, indeed, no 'Doctor,' and Gawain himself is both the Hero and a healer (of the Maimed King and others), this only means that as solar hero he is both Knight and Healer, as Christ is "King and Priest." Miss Weston (*loc. cit.*, p. 102) clearly saw that Gawain is not a physician in his knightly capacity, but 'in his *rôle* of Grail Winner,' i.e., in his spiritual capacity.

[4] In AB. I. 22, 'May we eat of thee, God Gharma, full of sweetness, full of nourishment, full of strength,'— as from the Grail. "Take, eat; this is my body . . . Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood" (Math. 26. 26–28). It is difficult to see why scholars should have been puzzled by the fact that the Grail is both a 'Feeding Vessel' and the 'Chalice of the Sacred Blood' (RR. 195). Prajāpati is both the Sacrifice and the food of the Gods, i.e., immanent 'powers of the soul.' *Kalaśa*, *κύλιξ*, and 'chalice' are etymologically the same word.

The Head of the Sacrifice is still apart from its trunk. On the last day of the rite they set out the Pravargya on the Northern (=Āhavanīya) Fire-Altar, 'for the Northern Altar is the Sacrifice, and the Pravargya is its Head; and so he restores to the Sacrifice its Head.'[1] He disposes the sacrificial implements there in such a way as to provide the body with flesh, arms, sexual organs and all else down to the feet; and pours milk into the Gharma to represent its food.[2] They sing the Vārṣāhara Sāman (Chant of the Golden Stallion, cf. RV. IX. 2.6). The priests now purify themselves: the sacrificer steps out of the sacrificial precinct, saying 'From out of the darkness we have arisen, beholding the Higher Light,'[3] and walks away 'without looking back': 'in the world of Heaven he thus establishes himself.'[4]

The Pravargya is virtually performed in all other sacrifices in which the Comprehensor participates; it is all things whatsoever. 'It, indeed, is Soma, for Soma is everything, and the Pravargya is everything. . . . The Gods and all beings avail themselves thereof. And, verily, Soma overflows for whoever is a Comprehensor thereof; and, verily, no sacrifice whatsoever is offered that does not include the Pravargya, for one who is a Comprehensor thereof. And verily, whosoever teaches, or partakes of (*bhakṣayati*) this Pravargya enters into That

[1] So also in the regular Agni-cayana, 'The Pravargya is the Head of the Sacrifice, and this built-up Fire-Altar is its body; hence, were he to set it out in any other place than the Fire-Altar, he would be setting it apart from that body, but in that he sets it out on the Fire-Altar he, having put together that body of Agni's, restores the head to it' (ŚB. IX. 2.1.22, 2.3. 49, 3.1.3–6).

[2] Not all of the milk is poured in, 'lest food turn away from the sacrificer'; 'half or more of it' is reserved for him. This explains TS. I. 7.1.4, 5, 'Half they eat, and half they transfer' (√ *mṛj*, as in 'milk') and justifies Sāyaṇa's gloss, *sāmy . . . śirasi siñcanti*, 'half they pour into the head.'

Either to be identified with this Head, or analogous to it, is the 'full dish' (*pūrna pātra*) kept within the Altar precinct to be a source prosperity for the sacrificer (*ibid.* I. 7.5.3). Such 'full vessels' (*pūrṇa pātr-, kalaśa, ghaṭa*) are ubiquitous in Indian art, and are still in ceremonial use, and to be regarded as Grail vessels' (cf. my *Yakṣas*, II [Washington, 1931], Ch. 3 and Pls. 27–33. The Buddha's begging bowl is a Grail: 'fed from that inexhaustible bowl, the whole world will revive.' It comes into the hands of the saintly virgin Maṇimekhalai, who uses it to feed the hungry, and it is 'as if pouring rain had fallen on a desert parched by the heat of the sun' (see S. K. Aiyangar, *Maṇimekhalai in its Historical Setting* [Madras, 1928], pp. 137 f.). See further von Schroeder, 'Die Wurzeln der Sage vom Heiligen Gral,' *Sitz. k. Akad. Wiss., Wien*, Bd. 166, 1910 (2nd ed. 1911) and *Arische Religion*, II (1923), 390, 465, 662, 664.

It has been usual to identify the Grail vessel with the Moon (Soma); but actually the Moon is a *food* that the Sun receives and assimilates, and this food corresponds to what is put into the Buddha's begging bowl which, like the Sun is the Grail *qua* receptacle. In almost all stories of inexhaustible vessels we are told that whatever is put into the vessel becomes inexhaustible, however little it was originally; not that the empty bowl produces it. Cf. the miracle of the loaves and fishes given to Christ, by whom they are, not created, but multiplied.

We also realize from the above considerations why it is that an almsbowl is so often called a 'skull-cup' (*kapāla*), a term also applied to the shards on which offerings are made, and why in fact the almsbowl may be actually made from a skull.

[3] 'From what is not, lead me to that which IS; from darkness to Light; from death to Immortality' BU. I. 3.28).

[4] 'Those who are heavenward-bound look not back' (TS. V. 4.7.1, ŚB. IX. 2.3.7, XIV. 1.3.28): 'Remember Lot's wife' (Luke, 17.32).

Life and That Light. The actual operation is the same as it was at the First Outpouring.'[1]

We saw above that the Soma myth is called a 'secret doctrine.'[2] That is to say that while it could be told as a story, its inner meaning could only be realized by those who are qualified to understand it. This inner meaning and the nature of this qualification can be best elucidated from Ṣūfī sources in which the symbol of the 'rolling head' is called a 'mystery.' In the *Dīwāni Shams-i-Tabrīz* (II. 3)[3] we are told:

> When thou seest in the pathway a severed head,
> Which is rolling towards our field,
> Ask of it, ask of it, the secrets of the heart:
> *For of it thou wilt learn of our hidden mystery.*

Our head is our self, and to cut off one's head is self-abandonment, self-denial, self-naughting; conversely, to 'make' (increase, exalt, value) one's head is to assert one's self. So, then:

> In headless love (*dar bi-sarī 'ishq*)[4] why make your head?[5] (*chi sar mīkunī*), — make not! (XXVII. 16)
> For one head's sake, why should any wash his hands of Thee? (XVIII. 2)

For if we offer up our own, He will give us others:

> I stretched out my neck and said to Him,
> 'Sever the "agent's" head with Dhū'lfiqār':
> The more he plied his sword, the more my head became,
> Till from my neck there sprang a thousand heads! (T. 206.6; p. 320)

*Dh*ū'lfiqār is the sword that was given to 'Alī by Muḥammad, and stands here for death, the 'death,' that is to say, of those who 'die before they die'; it corresponds to the sword of the Word of God that sunders soul from spirit (Heb. IV. 12). The 'agent' is the Ego, subject to the delusion of selfhood (*manam*, 'I am'; *mā va man*, 'We and I'; *ahaṁkāra*, *karto'ham iti*, the notion that 'I am the doer'; Philo's οἴησις; Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*), which must be overcome if we are to know the only 'Real Agent' (*aslī kār*, XXVI. 9) to whom alone belongs the right to say 'I am.' The argument is not *Cogito ergo sum* but *Cogito ergo EST*.[6]

[1] *Sṛṣṭi*, 'outpouring,' 'emanation' ('creation'), when 'All This' that had been in 'That One' was poured out or breathed forth.

[2] Cf. R. S. Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, 1927, Ch. XXVI, 'On the Mysteries of the Grail.'

[3] References to the Ṣūfī texts immediately following are to R. A. Nicholson's *Selected Poems from the Dīwāni Shams-i-Tabrīz*, Cambridge, 1898 (Roman figures referring to the Odes, and T. to the Tabriz edition cited in his notes). Some of my versions are more literal than Nicholson's, who renders, for example, 'make your head' by 'intrude thyself,' which is correct in significance but does not bring out the wording that is so pertinent in the present context.

[4] Nicholson's paraphrase is 'in love's bewilderment.' 'Love,' in these Ṣūfī contexts is, of course that of which Rūmī speaks (*Mathnawī*, II, preamble) in the question 'What is love?' and answer, 'Thou shalt know when thou becomest Me.'

[5] Cf. Hāfiz, 'My head I make not' (Ode 430.6, H. Wilberforce Clarke, *Dīwāni Hāfiz*, 1891, p. 719). For the symbol of decapitation see also Odes 164.3 and 355.6, — 'the stroke of Thy sword is everlasting life.' Similarly in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Rāma decapitates the Śūdra, who was practising yoga.

[6] 'Ego, daz wort ich, ist nieman eigen denne gote alleine in sīner einekeit' (Meister Eckhart,

This is the *vera sentenzia* of 'losing one's head.' It is called a 'secret' and a 'mystery' not because it cannot be stated in words, however enigmatically, but because it must remain incomprehensible to whoever has not taken even the first steps on the way of self-naughting, and never having sacrificed is still 'unborn.'[1] Whoever, like Gawain, searches for the Master Surgeon, to pay his debt, and submits to *this* Headman's axe, will find himself, not without a head, but with another head on his shoulders; just as Gawain, having lain down to die, assuredly stood up again a new man. That is what is enacted in the ritual, in which the sacrificer himself is always identified with the victim, — 'and verily, no sacrifice whatever is offered that is not the Pravargya *for the Comprehensor thereof*. And, verily, whosoever teaches, or participates in (*bhakṣayati*) this Pravargya enters into that Life and that Light. The observance of the rule thereof is the same as it was at the first outpouring' (ŚB. XIV. 3.2.30, 31).

We have now seen that in Indian mythology and ritual are to be found, and in endless variety, the characteristic motives of the Western romances and fairy-tales of the Green Knight and Grail quest types. Stories and motives of other types could be paralleled in unending detail, and the same applies to the doctrines.[2] But we have no intention whatever of suggesting that India was therefore the source of the Western matière. The Ṛgveda itself is a 'late' document; and much that is commonly called Aryan was already Sumerian. Even if we could prove that the Celtic stories were of Indian origin, we should still have to ask, What about the American Indian parallels?[3] We have, in fact, to account for the

Pfeiffer, p. 261)· 'Whoever, other than God, saith "I" is a Shaitān' (Darvesh dictum, cited by H. Wilberforce Clarke, *Diwānî Hāfiz*, 1891, p. 7). 'He IS, by that alone is He to be understood' (*Kaṭha Up.* VI.12), cf. Damascene, *De fid. orth.* I, 'HE WHO IS.'

[1] See my *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 1943, p. 19 and note 98.

[2] For example, the Indian 'rope trick,' described in Jātaka No. 489 is attributed in 'O'Donnell's Kern' (Standish Hayes O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, 1892, II, pp. 321, 322) to Manannan Mac Lir (Varuṇa?), who wanders about the world in outlandish disguises performing 'tricks' (he is also an expert at cutting off heads and putting them on again). In both the Indian and the Irish versions the climber is dismembered and put together again. Those who attack Manannan find that the blow falls upon their own heads, cf. Rūmī, *Mathnawī* II. 759, 'Blows struck at God fall on one's self.'

In Jātaka No. 407 the Bodhisatta makes of himself a bridge by which his followers can cross over from the hither to the farther shore· and so does Bendigeid Vran in the *Mabinogion* (in Lady Guest's version, ed. 1902, p. 36). Rope and Bridge alike imply the 'thread spirit' doctrine, which appears in Plato as the 'one golden cord' to which the human puppet should hold fast (*Laws*, 645 A), in Homer in the golden cord or chain by which Zeus could draw all things to himself (*Iliad*, VIII. 18 f.) and which Plato rightly connected with the Sun (*Theatetus*, 153), in the words 'I will *draw* all men unto me' (John, 12.32, cf. VI. 44 and *Hermes*. Lib. XVI. 5 and 7), and in Dante in the words 'Questi la terra in se stringe ed aduna' (*Paradiso* I. 117). Indian and Platonic equivalents are innumerable, the most notable being that of the mortal and immortal souls that dwell together in us, and that of the chariot symbolism, with all its implications. We do not believe that any literary history can be deduced from such correspondences, but much rather that 'Die Menschheitsbildung ist ein einheitliches Ganzes, und in den verschiedenen Kulturen findet man die Dialekte der einen Geistes-sprache' (Jeremias, in *Altorientalische Geisteskultur*, Vorwort).

[3] American Indian and Indian parallels are closer and more numerous than is generally realized. Cf. my 'Sunkiss,' *JAOS*. 60, and with what is said about the kingposts of the sacrificial hall, F. G. Speck's account of the Delaware Indian Big-House, cited by W. Schmidt, *High Gods in North America* (1933), pp. 75–77. The Symplegades motive is Indian, Greek, Irish, and North and South American.

world-wide distribution of folk-lore motives: and if we are to do that we must, I think, go behind the 'literature' and ask what the folk-lore motives *mean*, and why it is that it has seemed so important that they should be faithfully transmitted,[1] — for millennia, for as Euripides said, 'The myth is not my own, I had it from my mother' (fr. 488). It is not as their source, but with respect to the meaning of the formulae that India can assist us, with its great body of early exegetical literature of the most consistent and convincing sort. There the myth remains the proper language of metaphysics. Moreover in India we are dealing with an unbroken tradition; and proverbially, one has only to ask the right question (in itself already a 'qualification') to receive the right answer. How much may depend on the 'right question' we know from the Grail literature.

We hold with J. L. Weston that 'The Grail story is not *du fond en comble* the product of imagination, literary or popular. At its root lies the record, more or less distorted, of an ancient Ritual, having for its ultimate object the initiation into the secret of the sources of Life, physical and spiritual.' In this, of course, the application is equally to the story of the Green Knight; and for 'an ancient Ritual' should be read 'an ancient Myth and Ritual' — for it is inconceivable that the Ritual, in which the Myth is enacted, should have been the source of the Myth itself, as has sometimes been argued.

The material adduced above, moreover, affords additional proof of the truth of Lord Raglan's dictum, that 'the literature of the folk is not their own production, but comes down to them from above'[2] (*The Hero*, 1936, p. 144). He continues (p. 145): 'The position we have now reached is that the folk-tale is never of popular origin, but is merely one form of the traditional narrative[3]; that the traditional

[1] These are, of course, two ways of putting the same question.

[2] So Andrae, in similar words but with a deeper meaning. 'Ergründet man die Urform, die letzte Herkunft der Formen, so sieht man sie verankert im Höchsten, nicht im Niedrigsten' (*Die ionische Säule, Bauform oder Symbol*, 1933, p. 65).

[3] Similarly René Guénon, 'The very conception of "folklore" as commonly understood, rests on a fundamentally false hypothesis, the supposition, *viz.*, that there really are such things as "popular. creations" or spontaneous inventions of the masses.'

'Of the 3000 (Indian folk-) tales so far reported, at least half can be shown to be derived from literary sources' (W. N. Brown, *JAOS*. 39.4). It is in this last sense only, of course, that Lord Raglan speaks of the folk literature as coming down to them 'from above.'

But what was the 'literature' on which the folk drew? Not what we mean when we speak of 'the Bible as 'literature,' but what we mean when we call the Bible 'the word of God,' or speak of Scripture as *śruti*, 'That which was heard,' i.e., Revelation. In the 'myth-making period' that lies behind our problem, 'literature' was, in the first place primarily *sacerdotal*, and in the second just as much *oral* as the folktales themselves (in India even today, oral transmission is considered of much higher value than book-learning). Thus 'derived from literary sources' is only to say again in other words, 'derived from the myth.'

The Jātakas are often called 'folktales,' taken up by the Buddhists and used by them for edifying ends. When, however, we examine them, we find that their content is preponderatingly mythical, metaphysical and dogmatic; and their formulation often so precise as to make it inconceivable that it should have been hit upon by any profane mentality. To take a single example, pertinent in the present connection because it has to do with a sacrificial decapitation, Jātaka No. 465 describes the Bodhisatta's incarnation as the Devarāja Yakkha of a mighty Sāl tree, that has grown for 60,000 years: the King desires to construct a palace supported by a single column, and no other tree will do;

narrative has no basis either in history or in philosophical speculation, but is derived from the myth'; and that 'the myth is a narrative connected with a rite. He maintains that all traditional narratives are myths, and that 'No popular story teller has ever been known to invent anything,' pointing out that the 'incidents in folk-tales are the same all over the world' (p. 134).[1] But intimate as the connection of the myth with ritual may be, we cannot possibly agree with Lord Raglan (and many other scholars whom he cites), or even understand him, when he derives the myth from the rite[2]; it would be quite as logical or rather illogical, to derive the myth from the iconography, to argue that Brahmā has four heads only because a statue of Brahmā has four; quite as illogical to say that meanings originate in the words that express them.[3] We agree, however, very heartily with Lord Raglan in his dismissal of all historical and naturalistic explanations of the genesis of the myth. The 'primitive science' explanation is, of course, only another form of the 'naturalistic' theory. With respect to the naturalistic explanation, however, we should like to say that the view that 'all myths are sun myths' is *only* ridiculous from a materialistic point of view, that is to say, if we fail to distinguish Helios from Apollo (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 393 D, 400 C, D; Plato, *Laws*, 898 D), the sun that all men see from the Sun whom not all know intellectually (*Atharva Veda* x. 8.14).

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the Bodhisatta is ready to submit to his fate, but asks that his crown may be lopped (*agge ca chindvā*) first, lest it should crush the smaller trees, his offspring around him. That is much more than a pretty story; for there can be no doubt that Brahma is the Yakṣa in the Tree of Life, and that the story goes back to ŚB. xi. 1.8 where 'That Sacrifice of Prajāpati's (decapitated, PB. vi. 5.1, and being divided, or dividing himself for his children's sake, passim) is like a tree with its top broken off' (*agraprašīrṇo vṛkṣaḥ*) and also to the question 'What was the wood and what the tree of which they fashioned Sky and Earth?' (RV. x. 31.7) and answer 'Brahma the wood, Brahma the Tree' (TB. ii. 8.9.6), cf. Gk. ὕλη as 'primary matter.' By the same token, Christ, 'through whom all things were made,' is inevitably a carpenter and the son of a carpenter. Cf. the Indian Tvaṣṭṛ, probably to be identified with the Titan Maya, maker of self-moving 'automata'; and the Chinese Lou Pan, patron deity of carpenters, and maker of wooden automata (for the latter see P. Pelliot in *BÉFEO* ii. 143).

[1] Things that are the same all over the world must be of high antiquity. It is perfectly possible that Cromagnon man already 'had them from his mother.'

[2] Lord Raglan discusses the (ritual) origins of drama, but ignores the 'primitive arts.' But in all these discussions it is important to bear in mind that in the traditional environment that we are considering (still a living reality for Indians and American Indians) not only are dramatic performances and dances, but all other kinds of artistic operation (e.g., building, agriculture, and games) quite strictly speaking, 'rites'; and that, as was justly remarked by Hocart (*Les Castes*, 1938, p. 27) 'chaque occupation est un sacerdoce.' Far too much anthropological thinking is vitiated by the pathetic fallacy, viz., the assumption that 'primitive man' had our 'aesthetic' preoccupations and made our kind of distinction between sacred and profane, significant and useful. It is only the most 'civilized' kind of man that tries to live by 'bread alone.'

[3] If we cannot derive the myth from the rite, it is not therefore necessary, although to be preferred if we must choose between these alternatives, to derive the rite from the myth. 'Rite' and 'myth' may be two ways of describing the same thing· in the same way that a symbol *is*, for the 'mystic participant,' that which it represents. Undoubtedly the rite is a mimesis; but as Aristotle clearly saw, imitation is a participation (*Metaphysics*, i. 6.3). When 'Indra dances his heroic deeds' (RV. v. 33.6) we cannot separate the (mythical) battle from its (dramatic) mimesis; and in the same way the sacrificers who also dance or enact (KB. xvii. 6, JB. ii. 69–70) the myth are *living* it. Cf. also C. Kluckhohn, 'Myths and Rituals, a General Theory,' *Harvard Theological Review*, xxxv (1942).

There is another view, that of the old 'allegorical theory' which forms the basis, for example, of Philo's Biblical exegesis. This was also Creuzer's view, which he put forward in a bulky work, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (3rd. ed., 4 vols., 1831–42), maintaining that the ancient people 'possessed, not indeed a complete philosophy, but a dim and at the same time grandiose conception of certain fundamental religious truths, and in particular of monotheism.[1] These truths their priests set forth in a series of symbols, which remained much the same for all peoples, but were hopelessly misunderstood in later times. To recover the oldest ideas, according to him, we shall do well to take those myths which seem absurdest,[2] and try to interpret them.'

The foregoing is Professor H. J. Rose's summary (in *Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 1933, p. 3). Creuzer was, no doubt, 'uncritical'; but that may only mean that he tried to support a sound theory by false arguments. But Professor Rose has another objection: 'we have no right (he says) to suppose either that the early Cretans had an elaborate solar philosophy or that, if they had one, they would have expressed it in allegories,' or let us say, 'in symbols.' As to this I shall only say that unless one learns to think in symbols one might as well not try to understand the so-called primitive mentality, call it 'prelogical,' and let it go at that. In fact, if we excluded from our theological and metaphysical thinking all those images, symbols and theories that have come down to us from the Stone Age, our means of communication would be almost wholly limited to the field of empirical observation and the statistical predictions (laws of science) that are based on these observations; the world would have lost its *meaning*.

We are, then, necessarily in agreement with Professor Eliade (in *Zalmoxis*, II, 78) that 'la mémoire collective conserve quelquefois certains détails précis d'une "théorie" devenue depuis longtemps inintelligible. . . . des symboles archaiques d'essence purement métaphysique . . . La mémoire populaire conserve surtout les symboles qui se rapportent a des "théories," meme si ces théories ne sont plus comprises.' And speaking of folk art, he points out very truly that its origins are metaphysical, and in fact that 'les symboles primordiaux — qui par degradation, sont devenus de simples motifs décoratifs — ont toujours des sens métaphysiques.' But the popular story-teller does not take liberties with his material, even when he no longer understands it; on the contrary he preserves the forms of the old stories and patterns far better than the literary artist, who is much less scrupulous (K. 242, etc),[3] and hence the descent from myth and ritual to epic, epic to

[1] Cf. W. Schmidt, *Origin and Growth of Religion*, 2nd ed. (London, 1935).

[2] The 'miracles' are, of course, by no means accidents of, but essential to and the most significant part of the traditional narrative. We certainly cannot arrive at its 'original form' by eliminating the 'wonders.' For example, the story of the Buddha's conflicts with Māra (Mṛtyu), and with the 'Ahi-Nāga' in the Fire-Temple are recensions of Indra's conflict with Ahi-Vṛtra and essential to the Hero's 'career,' in both cases.

[3] For 'der Machtkunst sich die Dinge überlegt ansieht und sie im Sinne der Macht oder *den eigenen Geschmack* entsprechend ändert, während der Volkeskunstler völlig unbefangen bei dem bleibt, was überliefert ist' (Strzygowski, *Spüren indogermanischen Glaubens in der bildenden Kunst*, 1936, p. 344): 'Peasant art, however, though younger by millennia as far as actual examples go, preserves, and this is the most noteworthy fact, the true and original meaning and its motives far more faithfully than does the art of the court, or any body representative of the educated class. The single artist there is

romance, and from romance to the realistic novel. The last degradation of the mythical material we owe to those litterateurs who nowadays, without respect for or any real understanding of their subject, compose 'fairy-tales for children,' knowing only how to be humorous, or sentimental, or moralistic. And if it can be said of the folk that they no longer understand the material they have preserved, what shall we say of the folklorist and *his* 'science of fairy-tales'? Only this, I think, that it amounts to little more than a Ph.D. thesis of the sort in which literary attributions are based on statistical computations.

To an acceptance of the view that the traditional narrative and the forms of traditional art in general are precise expressions of metaphysical doctrines (which often could not have been stated or be stated in any other or better way, because the first principles can never be observed empirically) there exists only one fatal objection, to wit, our pride and faith in progress. Once we have overcome the illusion that wisdom was born with us, however, there remains no difficulty whatever in supposing that primitive man was far more than we are a metaphysician; by which we do not mean that he possessed what we now understand by a systematic 'philosophy.' Thus in 1855 an observer who knew the Navahos concluded that they possessed no religion, no traditions and no rites, but were 'steeped in the deepest degradation,' while a much later observer could say that that their 'ceremonials might vie in allegory, symbolism and intricacy of ritual with the ceremonies of any people, ancient or modern,' that they possess 'a pantheon as well stocked with gods and heroes as that of the ancient Greeks' and that 'their rites are very numerous, many of them of nine days' duration, and with each is associated a number of appropriate songs,' and that they 'have building songs, which celebrate every act in the structure of the hut, from "thinking about it" to moving into it and lighting the first fire. They have songs for every important occasion in life, from birth to death . . . . And these songs are composed according to established (often rigid) rules, and abound in poetic figures of speech.'[1] That might have been written, word for word, as a description of the spiritual life of the Vedic Indians. Dr Speck remarks 'That the Delawares produced a religion in the real, almost classical sense, will not, I believe, be strenuously denied even by the propounders of other creeds . . . it might, indeed, have become a great one of the mediaeval type had it been linked with the destinies of a militant aggressive race.'[2] I have myself remarked that the Amerindian sand-

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scarcely aware of any longer, nor does he venerate as the man of the people does, the meaning, cosmical in the main, which tradition has put into his cradle from time immemorial' (Strzygowski, in *JISOA*, v. 1937, p. 56). Hence 'So long as the material of folklore is transmitted, so long is the ground available on which the superstructure of full initiatory understanding can be built' (Coomaraswamy, *Q. J. Mythic Soc.*, xxxi, 1940, p. 76).

[1] These are extracts from citations in G. W. James, *Indian Blankets*, 1934, pp. 184, 185. See further W. Schmidt, *High Gods of North America*, 1933. These volumes demonstrate how not only our estimation but even our knowledge of alien cultures reflects our own mentality rather than theirs. In order to understand such cultures we must learn to think in their terms, not in our own, which are already *pre-judicial*.

[2] F. G. Speck, *A Study of the Delaware Indian Big-House Ceremony*, Publications of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, II (1931), p. 21.

paintings, considered intellectually, are superior in kind to any painting that has been done in Europe or white America within the last several centuries. Strzygowski observes that 'Von den Eskimos hat man gesagt, sie hätten ein viel abstrakteres Bild von der menschlichen Seele als die Cristen: die Ideen mancher sog. primitiven Völker seien wesentlich durchgeistiger as die mancher sog. Kulturvölke. Wir müssten wohl überhaupt in der Religion die Unterscheidung zwischen Natur- und Kulturvölken fallen lassen' (*Spüren indogermanischen Glaubens in der bildenden Kunst*, 1936, p. 344). Bearing in mind, accordingly, that we are speaking not of learning but of an 'ancient wisdom,' one that the modern world has not originated but scornfully rejects ('such knowledge as is not empirical is meaningless to us,' Keith, *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, 1909, p. 42),[1] can there be any real objection made to the supposition that, let us say, neolithic man already knew what St. Augustine called the 'Wisdom uncreate, the same now that it ever was and ever will be'? We have only to ask ourselves whether or not this theory correlates and explains more of the known facts than any other. On what other supposition can we account for the fact that the Philosophia Perennis has left its traces everywhere, as well in popular or savage as in more sophisticated environments? It is a wisdom stemming from a cultural level in which 'the needs of the soul and body were satisfied together';[2] it has been inherited by all humanity; and without it we should still be only 'reasoning and mortal animals.'

In the present article we have endeavored to show, not how *a* meaning can be read *into*, but how *the* meaning can be read *of* the myths of heroes who can 'play fast and loose with their heads.' The result is to support the conclusions reached by that great scholar, J. L. Weston, that 'The Grail [and related] romances repose eventually, not upon a poet's imagination, but upon the ruins of an august and ancient ritual, a ritual which once claimed to be the accredited guardian of the deepest secrets of Life' (RR. 176).

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[1] A point of view that excludes *values*. As remarked by E. M. Manasse 'science is incompatible with any direct perception of value. . . . The realm of values is absolutely different in kind from the realm of rational experience' (*Journal of Philosophy*, XLI, 58).

[2] R. R. Schmidt, *Dawn of the Human Mind* (1936), p. 167.

POSTSCRIPT: The present article is not exhaustive. In particular, I have not dealt with the material collected by Karl Preisendanz in *Akephalos, der kopflose Gott* (Alten Orient, Beiheft 8, Leipzig 1926, pp. 80). Among the most interesting points are (1) the conclusion that 'die kopflose Schlange am griechischen Sternhimmel findet ihre Erklarung im Mythos vom Kampfe des Herakles mit dem Drachen, dem der Heros den Kopf abhaut' and (2) the discussion of Osiris as the headless deity, and identification of his head with the Sun.