KEES W. BOLLE

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION

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(SUPPLEMENTS TO *NUMEN*)

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KEES W. BOLLE

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1965

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION

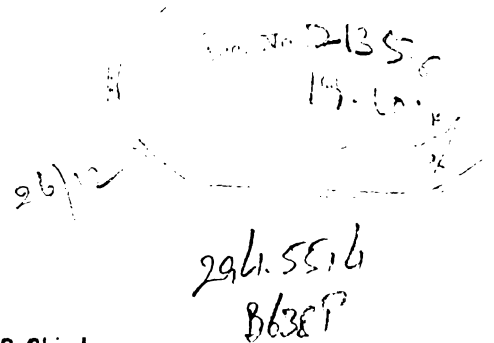
AN ESSAY ON TANTRISM
AND SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

BY

KEES W. BOLLE

WITH A PREFACE BY
MIRCEA ELIADE

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1965



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IN MEMORY
OF MY FATHER
WILLEM ADRIAAN BOLLE

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PREFACE

It is a great privilege for me to introduce a work which I have seen maturing and taking shape over a period of years. I was greatly interested in Kees Bolle's project from the beginning, not only because Tantrism constitutes an important and as yet insufficiently explored field of study, but also because the author intended to complete his analysis of tantric rituals and symbolism with an examination of the tantric elements present in Aurobindo's system of "integral yoga." Ultimately this meant that the author would have to work with both ancient (even "proto-historical") and contemporary documents. His project would comprise both a contribution to the history of Indian religion and, at the same time, an effort to understand the most creative thinker of modern India.

I waited impatiently for the conclusion of the monograph. A two years' sojourn in India allowed Dr. Bolle to integrate the results of his studies on a deeper, more personal level. The two perspectives from which he conducted his research were not kept in isolation. In fact, the problem proved to be the same: the continuity of Indian religious forms. Dr. Bolle writes, "The willingness to accept new elements, the openness characteristic of religious man in India, is the theme of this essay."

I do not intend either to summarize its main conclusion or to emphasize its merits. But I would like to indicate the novelty and the significance of Dr. Bolle's approach. His book is a scholarly book, but it is not written exclusively for Indologists, historians of religion or students of modern Indian philosophy. Dr. Bolle does not approach Indian religions or Aurobindo's "integral yoga" as if they were "objects" of study. He does not hesitate to pose questions to his "sources" or to reflect on the solutions offered by the Indian religious genius for some central problems. For example, in studying the different stages of Tantrism, he does not try to obliterate from his mind everything which is unrelated to India; on the contrary, his understanding of Tantrism prompts him to compare this complex spiritual phenomenon with gnosticism and its role in the Western tradition. "Tantrism shows us a particular type of *gnosis* which grew up in conditionings and circumstances far from those which moulded our common Western traditions; one might expect them to be quite alien

to us. But on the contrary, it seems to me that in Tantrism a thirst for liberating knowledge is recognizable which is of great importance to our understanding of religious structures in our own age and among ourselves." (p. xvi)

This does not imply "comparativism" in the sense in which the term "Comparative Religions" was used two or three generations ago. It simply means that, for the author, the study of the history of religions is not a mere manipulation of "facts"; it also has a cultural and ultimately a spiritual function. One studies the history of religions in order to understand the history of man's existential situations, from prehistoric times to our own day. On the other hand, such an approach must not be confused with the syncretism and the cheap "spiritualism" which inspire all over the world an extremely abundant but naive—in some cases even grotesque—literature. The present work is the product of a scholar, not of a religious idealist.

But it is also the work of a scholar who does not forget that his "documents" are, ultimately, expressions of man's encounter with the holy; thus they are capable of revealing the different meanings and values which human existence has taken on in the course of time. In taking seriously the decision to become a historian of religion, Dr. Bolle could not be satisfied with the results of philological exegesis alone; he submitted his materials to a hermeneutical endeavor. This represents more than a sane methodology; it is the only way to preserve one's own creativity. For exclusive concentration on the *exterior aspects* of a spiritual universe is equivalent in the end to a process of self-alienation.

We do not doubt that "creative hermeneutics" will finally be recognized as the royal road of the history of religions. Only then will its role in culture begin to show itself to be important. This will be due not only to the new values discovered in the effort to understand a "primitive" or exotic religion, or a mode of being foreign to Western traditions—values susceptible of enriching a culture as have *La cité antique* or the *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*—it will be due above all to the fact that the history of religions can open new perspectives to Western thought, to philosophy properly speaking as well as to artistic creation.

In applying a "creative hermeneutic" to an important set of Indian religious values, Dr. Bolle does more than to interpret unfamiliar existential situations for Western man; he equally facilitates an honest and meaningful dialogue between traditional India and the Christian

West. At the end of his book he candidly confesses his personal religious fidelity and his theological presuppositions. Such a *profession de foi* may seem, at least for some readers, somehow inappropriate to a scholarly work. But this candid autobiographical touch contributes to the originality of the book and, as a matter of fact, it is implied throughout in the author's hermeneutics.

Mircea Eliade
University of Chicago

FOREWORD

In spite of the enormous amount of historical scholarship that has been devoted to Indian religions, very few books can be regarded as comprehensive studies of Hinduism. Still fewer have actually made an attempt to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of Hinduism or have claimed to have attained such a high goal.

It goes without saying that the principal reason for this limitation and modesty in Indic studies is to be found in the subject material, Hinduism, itself. Hinduism grew like a huge organism during a long period of time. Hinduism's long organic growth defies all attempts at adequate description in terms of some doctrinal tenets or some forms of worship.

Yet, judging from the existing books on Hinduism, or Indian religions generally, there is a second reason why a general comprehension of the subject is so difficult to acquire. This reason is to be found in the predilections of the majority of Indic scholars themselves. These predilections find their justification only partly in the fact that one is almost forced to concentrate on *some* facets in a field as wide and as multifaceted as that of Indian religious history. Most books on Hinduism with a somewhat general scope show an overwhelming interest in philosophical systems, very frequently in *advaita* thought. The suggestion, mistaken but almost inevitable, to the reader is that he is indeed learning about Hinduism and not just about one or a few philosophies. In that case, the revelation of many a nonphilosophical or different philosophical aspect of Hinduism must come as a shock, if any such aspect is ever to be revealed to him. I am not thinking now of the many booklets on the market which pretend to familiarize the reader with "the beliefs of the Hindus". Few of them will be taken seriously. What I have in mind is rather the whole trend of thorough scholarship which in spite of its eminence leaves as a by-product a one-sided image of Hinduism in the mind of the best generally interested student.

The present essay, indeed, no more than an essay, is of course not meant as a definitive work on the religions of India. I have only tried to find some first orientation in or some gateway to the world of Hinduism by focusing on a crucial religious movement. This type

of endeavour may be more fruitful for an understanding of India's religious history than a seemingly more realistic, but in fact more fragmentary treatment of *one* aspect or *one* specific line of development, philosophical, cultic or otherwise. Focusing on one religious movement which is reflected in a great many aspects seems indeed a natural approach to Indian religiosity. If one were to gain an understanding of a subject as broad as nineteenth century European literature, one could limit oneself to a study of the novel, of drama or of lyrical poetry. Yet, it seems most likely that for a proper perspective one could also give due attention to some particular artistic or cultural movement, such as romanticism, naturalism or symbolism. Or, somewhat closer to our subject, if one set out to understand a complex Western religious phaenomenon such as Protestantism, one could greatly profit by cataloguing the various existing churches, sects, organizations, creeds, etc. Yet, without a knowledge of the variegated movement of the reformation, one would have great difficulty getting beyond the cataloguing stage at any point.

The Indian movement which I have tried to discuss in the center of this essay is Tantrism. This is not to say that other religious movements are of lesser importance. But of no other single movement can it be said that it comprises so much of the "heterogeneous" elements of Hinduism. It exhibits both "primitive" and most "intellectualistic" features. The cultic forms which can be covered by the term Tantric range from the most "orgiastic" to the most "purely mental." On the one hand its ways of thought and symbolisms have been handed down in the most typically Indian "esoteric" traditions which are, at least to some extent, available to us in the writings called Tantras. On the other hand, Tantric thought and symbolism have been preserved also in popular religious customs. Tantric influence pervades Indian art in and since its medieval climaxes. It is predominantly in its Tantric forms that Indian culture spread beyond the borders of India and became a power in the life of a large part of Asia. Although I have limited myself in this essay for the most part to Hinduism, Tantric influences have been at least as strong on Indian forms of religion which are not called Hindu (especially Buddhism and Jainism).

This pervasive power of Tantrism would all by itself justify a study. Yet, the one most obvious reason for a study of Tantrism seems to me the art, particularly the temple art, of India. After all, Hinduism is not "merely a religion;" one cannot cite its creed, because

there is none which can be properly so called. It is not only a religious "organism"; as such it is at the same time a civilization and a culture, which have created marvellous works of sculpture and architecture. Although we have long known about the existence of temple art, evaluations of these works as documents of a living tradition have rarely been given by students of Indian religions. In fact, does not much of Indian sculpture, its openness to the world, its love for the most beautiful and sensual, seem to deny all that is commonly understood as Indian religion by the Westerner? It seems to me that the failure to find an orientation toward Indian art is the most conspicuous weakness of Western books on Hinduism.

I do not deny that an emphasis on Tantrism might mean another one-sided interpretation of Hinduism. Nevertheless, a concentration on Tantrism, in the wide sense which this word should be given, is certainly more promising for an understanding of Indian religious history than a study of Buddhist thought and its influence, of some Hindu philosophical system, or of any other single aspect.

The way to the study of Tantrism as a central subject in Indian history has been well prepared by several authors. Some of these are specialists on Indian art such as A.K. Coomaraswamy and S. Kramrisch. In a sense they have become pioneers because in their concern with their own subject they encountered Tantric elements not just as isolated peculiarities, but as expressions of a pervading religious vitality.

In the present study then I have made an endeavour to understand Tantrism as a particular movement within the larger movement of Indian history. Thus, as a religio-historical study, this endeavour differs from what generally has been done in the treatment of Tantrism. Until now, apart from specific philological essays, studies of Tantrism have been made as a rule from a particular philosophical or psychological point of view. Of course, this essay is not meant to refute or replace such studies. No student of the Tantras could afford to ignore the pioneering work of Arthur Avalon (pseudonym of Sir John Woodroffe), whose studies of Hindu Tantras show a predominantly philosophical interest. Much of significance in Tantric imagery has become known in the West through the writings of C. G. Jung, the great psychologist and psychiatrist.

Also, the present work cannot claim uniqueness in dealing with Tantrism within the framework of the history of religions. Professor Mircea Eliade dealt at length with Tantrism in writing on Indian

religions, especially in his *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*. Some novelty may be found, however, in the presentation here of Tantrism as the main subject.

Tantrism emerged after a long and obscure prehistory, it continued in the course of India's history and found new forms of expression in modern times. To be sure, "Tantrism" is a *given name*; it is not the name of a self-conscious or consciously organized movement. In this respect the difficulties in dealing with Tantrism are not different from those in dealing with other Indian religious movements such as those named "Brahmanism" or "Hinduism." I hope that in the following I have succeeded in showing some of the most typical features of the Tantric movement and their vital importance to Hinduism as a whole and not just to some esoteric devotees of a bygone era. In order to demonstrate the influence of Tantrism also in the most recent history of India, I have discussed the modern Indian thinker and yogin Aurobindo at some length; his yoga system and the philosophical, devotional and ascetic life of the many devotees around him would have been unthinkable without a Tantric background.

There is one final problem, or rather, a series of final problems which could not be left untouched. It may be said that no study of a religion could claim to be terminated without some measure of *recognition* of that religion. After all, every religious tradition is so obviously a matter of *people* as to make all attempts at a strictly impersonal stock-taking futile. Some personal engagement is present in any historical treatment of religion, even in the most "objective" acts of collecting and ordering the data of investigation. Tantrism shows us a particular type of *gnosis* which grew up in conditionings and circumstances far from those which moulded our common Western traditions; one might expect them to be quite alien to us. But on the contrary, it seems to me that in Tantrism a thirst for liberating knowledge is recognizable which is of great importance to an understanding of religious structures in our own age and among ourselves. This question of recognition has led me to some concluding reflections. On this topic general formulations are treacherous, here perhaps more than anywhere else. But if a historical account is historically correct, it tells us something about human life, and for that reason some final questions are inescapable. Especially if an attempt is made, as in the present essay, to deal with religious structures, something comes to life and should come to life in the process of understanding

itself. In the concluding exploration, in the final chapter, I have also ventured some theological remarks. I am aware of the difficulties involved in making a transition from a religio-historical analysis to a theological exposition. For the "pure phenomenologist" this essay comes to an end somewhere in the fifth chapter. If any Christian theologian reads it, I am afraid that for him the essay will begin only there, and it will perhaps not satisfy him. I am indeed ready to admit the difficulties; it seems intellectually difficult and temperamentally impossible to be a historian of religions and a theologian at the same time. But I am convinced that the subject material and the discipline of religio-historical work demanded some attempt. In any case, I hope to have made at least this abundantly clear in the final chapter that no remarks, however "final", will or can put an end to the discussion of these most intriguing problems of all.

I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many scholars and friends. Without professor Mircea Eliade's guidance, and, above all, without his encouragement, I would not have been able to undertake this study. The one temptation I feel to boast of the present work with all its shortcomings concerns professor Eliade's willingness to write a preface and thus attach his name to it. Without professor K. H. Miskotte of Leiden and professor B. M. Loomer of the University of Chicago I would not have had the boldness to tackle anything theological at all. Without professor G. V. Bobrinskoy and professor J. A. B. van Buitenen of the Sanskrit department in the University of Chicago I would have lacked the tools to operate with and a great many other things as well. The Rockefeller Foundation enabled me to spend two years in India; I am particularly grateful to Mr. Chadbourne Gilpatric, the associate director of the humanities, whose lively interest stimulated my study project.

My studies in India were greatly furthered by professor V. Raghavan (Sanskrit Department, University of Madras); by Mr. V. S. Ranganathan (then lecturer for Sanskrit in the Madras Christian College of Tambaram, presently professor of Tamil in the University of Allahabad) who has been an inexhaustible mine of information and whose friendship and scholarly curiosity have not only helped me many times then, but have filled me with gratitude for ever; by Mr. M. P. Pandit (Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry) to whose sincerety and spontaneous friendship I owe my introduction to the Ashram's life; and by many others. Further I should mention the names of professor Pierce Beaver, Mrs. Patricia Long, Miss Winifred

Hunt, Mr. Edwin Gerow and Mr. Charles Long. They have all rendered invaluable help.

Finally, without my wife's help and little Sonja's cooperation this work would have been impossible from the outset.

Brown University, August 1963. KEES W. BOLLE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: TANTRISM WITHIN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

> We are not able to put history at our service. We cannot submit history to our reason and to our need of orientation. It is history which imprisons us. Its logic is unknown to us. Its unity does not exist; at least, it is imperceptible to us. We speak of historical development. We like to speak of "gradual development." With these words we seem to have some hold on what happens in history. But we forget often that this development is creation, and in this case most certainly, creation in its sense of uniqueness, because history never repeats itself.
>
> Dr. W. Brede Kristensen [1])

1. Vastness of the Subject

India's religious history can be approached in an infinite variety of ways. In any work that is not encyclopaedic in design and volume, a choice needs to be made, as to the problem focused upon and as to the relationship of the problem to other problems in history.

Choosing is inevitable in the history of Indian religions, most obviously because of the overwhelming wealth of material. For instance, when dealing in this essay with Tantrism, we run into a whole cluster of texts and problems concerning the rise and spread of the religiosities of release. Without the aspiration and the techniques to reach *nirvāṇa*, Tantrism would be inconceivable. Within this cluster, one problem is the relationship of Buddhism to the Upaniṣads. However, it would be impossible for us here even to summarize all the important historical work that has been done by scholars on this topic alone. [2]) Choosing, then, involves not only the discussions of problems and relationships, but even more the omission of such discussions as would be essential to a complete historical study. Another example bringing home the inevitability of making a choice is the large number of the Tantras, the works basic for any study of

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[1]) "Over Waardering van Historische Gegevens," first published in *Onze Eeuw* (1915); republished in *Symbool en Werkelijkheid* (Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1954).

[2]) David L. Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra* I (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 6, n. 1 gives an impressive, although selected bibliography on this topic.

Tantrism as a historical movement. The numerousness of Tantric manuscripts staggers the imagination. The Asiatic Society of Bengal alone has more than a thousand of them. [1]) Granted that many of these texts overlap, we should still frequently have to account for many variants in the same work in a study with pretensions to historical-critical completeness. We should have to remember too that these more than thousand manuscripts form only the Hindu Tantra-collection of only one institution; that this number refers only to Sanskrit works and does not take into account the Buddhist Tantras and the Tantric writings in the regional languages. It is true that tradition makes a distinction between basic Tantras on the one hand and derivative works, digests, etc. on the other hand. But in a historical study it is hard to find out the meaning of this distinction and to establish along which lines and through what writings Tantrism actually spread.

So far we have been speaking rather superficially and rather negatively about the reasons why we have to make a selection in dealing with our subject. There is a positive reason, however, which is of greater significance. One has to choose aspects, images, relations, correlations in the endeavour to understand a religion, a religious movement, a complexity of religious symbols, because this makes up the very act of understanding and making oneself understood. The endeavour to understand a religion is quite comparable to our endeavours to understand people. In our understanding of the symbolic forms that will concern us in this essay we shall of course try to avoid misinterpretations. Concretely, in our religio-historical study we should not be in conflict with what is historically known about the meaning and structure of the data under investigation. Our selections should not be arbitrary, just as the picture of a person one might ask me to describe should not be arbitrary, in spite of my limited understanding of that person. We shall have ample opportunity to come back to the question of "selectivity" in our subject and in its presentation.

2. General Features

Being interested in the study of man's religions implies an interest in long periods of time at least as much as an interest in specific facts

[1]) Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasāda Shāstri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VIII: *Tantra Manuscripts*, Part I (Calcutta, 1939), Part II (Calcutta, 1940.)

and data. Tantrism is for the historian of religions a late phenomenon in man's history. We may date its beginning at roughly 400 A.D., with the appearance and increasing influence of the Tantras. The Tantras are texts of a much disputed nature. Without raising controversies we can say only that they appear both in Buddhism and in Hinduism, that their content is diversified, that as a rule they deal with ritualistic procedures and forms of worship, that they describe baroque forms of yoga and that female divinities play a considerable role in them (what is called Śāktism in Hindu-tradition). Next to the importance of women and goddesses we find the use of meat and liquor in their rituals.

Tantric teachings were and are meant for esoteric circles. But their influence remained by no means restricted to a few. Tantric ideas and forms of worship penetrated all traditionally and historically distinguished sections in Hinduism. Vaiṣṇavism, which developed the closest approximation of a single, supreme, exclusive God and of a masculine character, has its own extensive Tantra-literature, known as *Pañcarātra*. [1])

The interwovenness of an esoteric strain with generally accepted forms of worship all by itself would justify a religio-historical study of Tantrism. One could compose an anthology of statements by serious scholars that discard too easily the study of Tantrism. We have reason to think that scholars felt shocked by the unambiguous attention given to females, which did not tally with their lofty concepts of Eastern idealistic systems. E. J. Thomas is rather careful in his expressions. Yet, in his discussion of the topic he can not withhold himself from writing about Tantrism:

> It consists in giving a religious significance to the facts of sex. Such a development, at least in a certain stage of society, is not necessarily immoral. Its discussion, however, belongs to medical psychology. [2])

B. Faddegon, in an article on Brahmanism and Hinduism, dismisses the subject of the reputedly immoral practices of an important Tantric "school" (Vāmācāra) even less reservedly: "We may regard this Śāktism as an epidemic and social neurosis; as such it is not without significance for neurology." [3])

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[1]) See F. Otto Schrader, *Introduction to Pañcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* (Adyar: Adyar Library, 1916). For the name Pañcarātra, see J. A. B. van Buitenen, "The Name 'Pañcarātra'," *History of Religions*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 291-299.

[2]) Edward J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought* (2nd ed.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951), pp. 245-246.

[3]) B. Faddegon, "Brahmanisme en Hindoeisme," *De Godsdiensten der Wereld*, ed. G. van der Leeuw (Amsterdam: H. Meulenhoff, 1940), I, 333.

As early as 1898, L. de la Vallée Poussin [1]) knew that we could not so easily discard the study of seemingly crude practices. In recent years his work has been continued by students particularly on Buddhism. The best work along this line has probably been done by D.L. Snellgrove. He saw that the exterior rituals cannot be separated from the religious meaning according to the Tantras themselves.

> On the contrary the outer sense is usually commended as necessary to lead men to the inner, which is precisely their use. [2])

The decision not to reject rituals because they do not appeal to our sense of beauty or ethics is an important step forward. But it does not mean that we now *understand.* Snellgrove rightly concludes:

> The task now of trying to understand becomes very much more difficult, and can only be attempted when one has amassed sufficient knowledge of the historical and religious setting of the time to permit one to see certain practices in a sufficient context. [3])

We have already gained some idea of what this amassing of sufficient knowledge should comprise. Our study does of course not pretend to take the place of works as designed by Snellgrove. Yet, our work, based on only a few texts and historical data, might be of use to the historian's questioning. For a question such as we have raised: how we should understand the fusion of "crude" practices with the "purest" philosophical and religious notions, cannot ultimately be answered by sheer accumulation of facts, by sheer historiography. Again, it is the selection that counts most. Our concentration on religious symbolism envisages such a selection.

It is assumed by De la Vallée Poussin and by the younger generation of scholars that the rituals and practices of the Tantras are in substance much older than the Tantras themselves with their refined or even sophisticated philosophies. Who were the people who practised such rites before they were "elevated" to a Buddhist or Hindu Tantric setting? What made these seemingly crude rites and symbolic complexes capable of such transformation? Such questions should and can be answered to quite an extent in a religio-historical study in which we focus on the meaning and changes of symbolism.

The greatest difficulty in understanding Indian religions is not our lack of data. There is an overwhelming mass of data of different

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[1]) *Bouddhisme, Etudes et Matériaux* (London: Luzac & Co., 1898).
[2]) Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, I, 34, footnote.
[3]) *Ibid.*

orders. Here anthropologists study the primitive tribes. There Sanskritists study the philosophical systems. Elsewhere comparative linguists study the earliest Vedic texts and the aboriginal languages. Psychologists are fascinated by geometrical designs. Archaeologists study the excavations of the Indus Valley civilization. And so forth and so on. The tragedy is that no single line of approach suffices, while at the same time all lines put together—if that were humanly possible —could yield only an agglomeration of aspects, but no unity of understanding. Again we are led to the risk of selection as a necessity. Any interpretation of religious material is risky. It is bound to be limited. But it can never be refuted, except by a better selection. It is true that every single aspect investigated by an expert may be religiously symbolic. But it is equally true that whatsoever is or becomes symbolic (a tree, a woman, an act, etc.) exhibits a specific structure. No one can invent or change a religious symbol at will. The existence of structures in religious symbolism, i.e. the reality as such of the religious, is the assumption of our study.

In summary, we may say that we are aware of the difficulties of our subject. A greater problem than the vastness and multifariousness of our topic is the problem of religio-historical understanding itself. If the accumulative study of many aspects by many experts can at most be judged as insufficient, the historian of religions should realize from the outset that what he is after is risky by nature. He can only hint at the object of his study with the word "religion." "Religion" is a *Grenzbegriff*, an ultimate concept. Studying a specific religion is risky not just in the sense that our interpretation may be wrong, however. It is risky for ourselves. Religion being an *eschaton*, our work as such cannot reveal, bring to full daylight what it is; yet the act of dealing with a religion, if done well, will affect us. It will certainly change, at least upset, the nature and direction of our thought.

This brings us, at the close of our introductory remarks, once more to the question of choice and selectivity. In the curious civilization in which we find ourselves the religion of man has become a problem. We are able to set before us on an academic level of discussion that which for well-nigh all humanity during virtually the whole period of man's existence, both in history and praehistory, went without saying. We are not able to gloss over the problems of the *homo religiosus* in the manner that was so familiar to rationalists and positivists of a recent age in our Western spiritual history. This age in fact seems

farther remote than the boom period of Mohenjo Daro and Harappā. Whatever else we may know or not know about the *homo religiosus*, we know for certain that he never looked with academic objectivity at religious phenomena that presented themselves as such. When he saw them, for instance when encountering other people with strange customs, he recognized their reality. Without further ado he dealt with those phenomena. Whether with fear and trembling or in joy or simply with a practical turn of mind he inserted them in his orientation. The willingness to accept new elements, the openness characteristic of religious man in this process in India is the theme of this essay. Our decision to discuss so much self-evidency, however, is a point of importance in our own orientation.

Especially in dealing with a religious movement so strange to our own roots as Tantrism we shall find that it is not just the answers to our questions that matter. More than that, the questions arizing before us will bind us. Then perhaps our essay will stop being academic in the bad sense of that word here and there and egg us on to reorient ourselves.

3. Guiding Line

The continuity of religious forms is in all its complexity the most striking feature in Indian history. The term "Hinduism" carries with its mere geographical connotation something of what is conveyed so well by the Indian name *sanātana dharma*, "the eternal religion." Hinduism is not a system, but a perpetual flux. Historically, Tantrism is the latest great movement in this process.

Although we shall have occasion to point to events and structures outside of India and outside of Hinduism, we want to focus our attention on Indian Tantrism. To make our approach both practically and theoretically possible, we shall keep in mind two important problem-areas of Tantric symbolism. The first one is the religious significance of goddesses and women. The second one is the problem of *orientatio*, the age-old endeavour of man to discover, to reveal to himself his own place, his "reality." Both complexes of symbolism loom large in the Tantras. As guiding lines for our attention they may have a useful "paedagogical" function. Both are so wide-spread and variously expressed also in the oldest documents that they can hardly foster prejudices or prevent us from noticing other important problems.

CHAPTER TWO

THE "ORTHODOX" PRAEHISTORY

> ... and we should keep in mind that "orthopraxis" would be a more accurate term.... J. Gonda [1])

1. Introduction

The study of Vedic religion abounds with problems. One area of problems is the cultural and religious relationship of the Aryans who invaded India to the other peoples speaking Indo-European languages. Another is the influence of pre-Aryan and non-Aryan peoples on the religion that came to be crystallized in the Vedic texts.

An obvious and immediate difficulty for us here is that we have to rely on interpretation by experts. A vast linguistic knowledge is a minimum requirement for a Vedic scholar. This vast knowledge remains nevertheless specialized, which involves limitations that hamper our endeavours to understand symbolism over a long period of time. The expert Vedic philologist is often guided in interpreting and translating by considerations that do not arise from the religious world that he studies. Of course, this problem is not confined exclusively to the Vedic scholar, but since his material is so inaccessible to the outsider and requires so much single-minded attention, the problem is far greater for him. The problems of the Vedic language seem often insuperable, and it is but natural that he seeks support in existing general theories on man's religion. Many such general theoretical notions have proved to be doggedly persistent, most of all the notions of fertility and of some impersonal power or powers as the all-explanatory driving forces of religious life. Another fashionable notion—certainly, like the other notions, not altogether untrue, but almost amusing in its all-embracing persistency—is the reputed masculinity and warrior-like character of the ancient Vedic people. In a hymn addressed to the goddess Uṣas (R.V., I, 48) [2]) Geldner

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[1]) *Inleiding tot het Indische Denken* (Antwerpen: Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V. Standaard-Boekhandel, 1948), p. 160.

[2]) See for this and subsequent quotations from the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā: *Der Rig-Veda*, aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden

understands *samana* as battle, so that Uṣas becomes in stanza 6 "Die die Schlacht entfesselt..." ("[She] who sets off the battle...."). It took the hand of a scholarly lady to point out that *samana* means here, as in most instances, some sort of festivity, a rather joyful social gathering, not a warlike pursuit on a battlefield. The same words (vi yā sṛjati samanaṃ...) can be rendered more easily and more meaningfully in their context as signifying that the goddess Uṣas is the creator of *Samana*, the festival. [1]) Rather than to war, the hymn contains references to sacrificial procedures (st. 9, 11). However this may be, the authoress brings in a human element in her dealings with debatable details as *samana*, showing us that in the social and religious life of the Ṛgveda not everything turned around heroism and masculinity. No human life is like that. There is no simple key to interpret the Vedas.

Even if we succeed in leaving aside the worst of the all too easy theories, we must face time and time again the main problem of Vedic interpretation, also within the limited scope of our concern here. Is there anything that can be called central or dominant in Vedic life?

In the first chapter we have had our first indications that Tantrism cannot be regarded as a phenomenon on the fringes of Hinduism. In spite of its associations with seemingly crude practices, Tantrism as a movement became a constitutive—if not *the* constitutive—force of Hinduism. Many examples of "crude," magical practices can be quoted from the Vedic texts, above all from the *Atharvaveda* and the Kauśikasūtra which belongs to it. [2]) It would lead us too far, however, to discuss the possibility of survivals of customs from these ancient records. We are trying to understand the nature and the amazing influence of Tantrism. Hence, in dealing with the praehistory of this movement, we ask ourselves first and foremost what in the main

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Kommentar versehen von K.F. Geldner (4 Vols.; Harvard Oriental Series, Vols. XXXIII-XXXVI; Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951-1957).

[1]) Shakuntala Rao Shastri, *Women in the Vedic Age* (Bhavan's Book University, No. 10; Bombay, 1960), p. 9.

[2]) J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, Vol. I: *Veda und älterer Hinduismus* (Series: Die Religionen der Menschheit, ed. C. M. Schröder, Vol. XI; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960), pp. 110 f.

Atharva-Veda Saṃhitā, trans. W. D. Whitney (H.O.S., Vols. VII and VIII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1905).

Altindisches Zauberritual: Probe einer Übersetzung der wichtigsten Theile des Kauśika Sūtra, trans. W. Caland (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel III, No. 2; Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1900).

traditions of early India could have contributed to the later Tantric developments. What can we say with any reasonable certainty on this score?

2. Practicality

No Absolute Beginning of Vedic Religion demonstrable

Gonda describes the religion of the ancient Indians as "Concern for 'Heil' and for well-being, in the widest sense of that word, in this world and in the other world; consequently it is a decisively practical affair." [1]) This is an introductory description and obviously not a definition, applicable as it is to most religions of mankind. No religion can be defined merely conceptually; to this rule Vedism is no exception, and not because of its technical difficulties of access for us. Of every religion we can say—among many other things—that it is concerned with "Heil" and well-being and above all that it is practical. A religion that stops being practical stops being a religion. It becomes at most a worldview—as it normally is for the consciousness of modern, so called "secularized" man—the nature of which leads to theoretical discussions rather than to practice. The unsavoriness of this dichotomy between theory and practice, which has become the normal situation in our "academized" world, is not the normal situation for religious man. It is a matter of common knowledge—although for us statable only in academic terms—that *Ṛta* in the Vedas encompassed as a cosmic order the worlds of both gods and men, divine life and human everyday life. In Vedic religion, as in other religions, our word "practical" would make more sense than "theoretical," but our implied dichotomy would make no sense at all. That Vedic religion was a matter of practical importance, then, may be taken for granted. Rather than a mere conceptual definition we should try to discern somewhat of the structures in Vedism. We shall see that "decisively" is the most crucial word in Gonda's description: Vedic religion is *decisively* practical. Not without cause are the scholarly works on the Vedas devoted in large part to ritualism. The practicality of Vedic religion finds its expression, more than anywhere else, in rules prescribing minutely where, when and how the right things are to be *done* in the right order by the right people.

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[1]) "Sorge für Heil und Wohlsein im weitesten Sinne, in dieser Welt und im Jenseits, also eine entschieden praktische Angelegenheit." (*Veda*, p. 15.)

The roots of this distinctly practical religiosity are in a distant past, of which quite a few elements have been revealed to us by the works of Georges Dumézil. [1]) We know that certain gods and mythical structures of the Ṛgveda occur in religious structures of other peoples speaking Indo-European languages. Most significant perhaps is a socio-religious tripartition among these peoples that has its Indian counterpart in the three *varṇas*: the brahmans, the "priestly group"; the kṣatriyas, the "warriors" or nobility; the vaiśyas, the peasants and tradesmen, the "third class." For our essay, it is sufficient to realize that the most ancient "orthodox" root of Indian tradition that we find in the Vedic scriptures is not an "absolute" beginning. Dumézil's studies show that there is more than an external, linguistic similarity in the ancient Indo-European languages. Through these languages we perceive specific concepts of life, religious practices and social patterns that are quite distinct from those in other primitive religions and make the impression of a coherent whole.

3. Early Religious Incorporations

The Ṛgveda Saṃhitā is as a literary work the oldest of the Vedas. It was composed by and large in Brahmanic, priestly circles, like the other Vedas with all subsequently attached works (Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads). Two of the most general and conspicuous innovations made by the invaders on Indian soil were the extension of the classical tripartition in society with a fourth group (the *Śūdras*) and the incredible force in ritualistic systematization. The first innovation can be understood at least to some extent. The invaders, who formed a unity in their tripartition may have distinguished themselves from the dark-skinned and probably more numerous people in the land where they settled, so that they grouped the latter together with the name Śūdras ("serfs") [2]). The religious meaning, more important, is beyond doubt that the newly encountered people were incorporated in the structure of reality peculiar to the Aryan tradition. In R.V. X, 90 the existing social groups are related to the various parts of the body of the primordial being (*Puruṣa*); the *Śūdras*, according to this famous hymn, came forth from *Puruṣa*'s feet. This origin may seem

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[1]) *Ouranós-Váruṇa* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1934); *L'héritage indo-européen à Rome* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949); *Les dieux des Indo-européens* (Paris, 1952); etc.

[2]) See A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954), p. p. 35.

humbler than that of the higher classes, the "priests," "warriors" and "agriculturalists," who were born respectively from the Puruṣa's mouth, arms and thighs. But the point is that also the Śūdras were incorporated in the mythology as a whole.

The second innovation is much more puzzling. Was there any compelling reason for the ritualistic systematization that fills the Brāhmaṇas and that finds its culmination in the ritualistic sūtras? Did the contact with earlier inhabitants play a role here, too? We know that many non-Aryan elements found their way into the Brāhmaṇas. But we have no clear answer to the question why this conspicuous systematic tendency developed.

This systematization did not always imply elaboration of what already existed. The Ṛgveda contains technical terms, and names and functions of priests that surpass in number what is given in later ritualistic works. [1]) The systematic ritualistic works are rather an indication of a mental *habitus* that came to stay. To what extent this ritualism was typical of the existing religion at the time of the early Brāhmaṇas is a different question. But systematized ritualism did become typical of the "orthodox" development known as Brahmanism. Although we are on many points in the dark, we may see in the Brahmanic remodelling of society and in the urge for ritualistic systematization two aspects of the same development.

4. Ritualistic Orientatio

Elaborate data on the symbolism of *orientatio* in Vedic religion and Brahmanism can be found in W. Kirfel's *Kosmographie der Inder*. [2]) Symbolism in Vedic writings is in many respects comparable to symbolism elsewhere. For instance in the Ṛgveda also a world-axis seems to be attested to (p. 7). The division of the cosmos into three parts: the earth, the middle-region or atmosphere, and the sky or heavenly world belongs to the oldest layer (e.g. R.V. VI, 69, 8; A.V. VII, 44, 1. See Kirfel, *op. cit.*, p. 7). The expression for the sum total of this universe (bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ) is never completely lost in later developments in Hinduism. Further, man's orientation in accordance with the four main points of the compass, indeed a world-wide symbolism,

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[1]) A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads* (H.O.S. XXXI and XXXII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp. 252-253.

[2]) Bonn-Leipzig, 1920. See especially chap. i, "Die altere Periode."

is known here too (Kirfel, p. 7). Examples could easily be multiplied.

But this general structure is not all that is to be mentioned. The orientation of the world in four directions occurs as a rule in a ritualistic setting:

> To the four immortal region-guardians of the regions (āśā), to the overseers of existence (bhūtá), would we now pay worship (vidh) with oblation. (A. V.-S., I, 31, 1)

The sacrifice that is to be performed gives the symbols their special character. This is the positive side of what is—rather negatively—known as the fact that Vedic religion has not temples, no fixed places for its worship and sacrifice. The *act* of sacrificing evidently takes precedence over and determines the *place* where the sacrifice is to be performed. This is a major distinction between the religion of the Vedas and later Hinduism. Thus, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (III, 1, 6-7; III, 6. 4, 12) we learn that the sacrificial ground is delineated and surrounded by the place of the gods to the East, of the ancestors to the South, of the serpents to the West, of the people to the North. (See also Kirfel, *op. cit.*, p. 8). That is to say, the sacrifice is the crucial point of orientation; in fact, it structures reality all around. The attention to the event of sacrifice imparts to the Brahmanic religion a dynamic character all its own, including those symbols that, in their general structure, we know from elsewhere. The "navel of the universe" is known in several places as a peculiar form of the general symbolism of the center of the world. It is "a supremely 'creational' place, because the source of all reality and consequently of energy and life is to be found there." [1]) Since this symbolism of the center and the navel is by nature rather static, pointing to the *place* of origin, which as such is different from other places and is naturally *kept* in reverence, we may be somewhat surprised at the texts of ancient India, where not a particular place but *Sacrifice* is said to be the navel of the world. (R.V. I, 164, 35; similarly Black Yajur Veda, viz. T.S. VII, 4, 18 f.)

Mutatis mutandis, we find the same peculiarity in other symbolisms. The tripartition of the world into earth, air and heaven is a general Indo-European heritage. The ancient Indian specification of ritualism is unique. There is a relationship between the earth and *Agni*, between the air and *Vāyu* or Indra, between heaven and Sūrya (see

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[1]) Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp. 233-235, 377.

Kirfel, *Kosmographie*, p. 3), for *Agni* is pre-eminently the sacrificial fire one arth; *Vāyu* ("Wind") is ruler of the air, through which the *soma*-sacrifice passes first on its way to heaven; hence *Vāyu* is sometimes referred to as the first one to drink from the *soma* [1]); Indra is the *soma*-drinker *par excellence*, but apparently he has not lost his character of stormgod. *Sūrya* (Sun) is naturally related to Heaven, the final goal of the sacrifice. He completes the imagery under discussion, although his place does not seem to be quite as fixed as the place of Agni, Indra and Vāyu.

5. Ritualistic Reality in Symbols and Myths

The sense for the ritualistic acts coloured much of Vedic and later symbolism and shaped (or reshaped) myths. Even at the time of the earliest texts the ritual was basic in mythic imagery. Thus we read: "The gods sacrificed with sacrifices to the sacrifice. *These were the first customs* [dharmāṇi]...." (R.V. I, 164, 50). [2]) The same words are repeated in R.V. X, 90, 16, in the famous Puruṣa-hymn that also in later times is well remembered and often quoted. In the first *kāṇḍa* of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, which treats fully of the important *Darśa-pūrṇamāsa* or New and Full-moon sacrifices, we read how the gods and the *Asuras* once were contending for superiority (I, 2, 5, 5ff.). The *Asuras* seemed to be most powerful in the world. In fact, the whole world was in their power. They were able to divide the world at their will. This division—denoting concretely how powerful they were—performed by them, who were *not* gods, would obviously make all real, cosmic life impossible and create chaos. What were the gods to do? Most later mythological accounts would in similar conflicts describe a battle. But here the cosmos is restored differently, in a classical and, indeed, most orthodox way:

> Placing Viṣṇu, (in the shape of) this very sacrifice, at their head, they went (to the Asuras).
> They then said: 'Let us share in this earth along with yourselves! Let a part of it be ours!' The Asuras replied rather grudgingly: 'As much as this Viṣṇu lies upon, and no more, we give you!'
> Now Viṣṇu was a dwarf. The gods, however, were not offended at this, but said: 'Much indeed they gave us, who gave us what is equal in size to the sacrifice!'.

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[1]) See Heinrich Lüders, *Varuṇa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), I, 213 ff.

[2]) Geldner: "Mit Opfer opferten die Götter dem Opfer. Dies waren die ersten Bräuche...."

Then the story goes on to tell minutely about the sacrificial ceremony, the metres of the sacred formulas (*mantras*) used, the shape and orientation of the altar, etc.

The god Prajāpati does not belong to such early layers of Vedic religion as Viṣṇu. He makes his first appearance in Ṛgveda X, which as a whole is generally regarded as part of the youngest collections of Ṛgvedic hymns. His name, Prajāpati, means "Lord of creatures." Is there a more theoretical or speculative tendency shimmering in his name and his occurrence in the midst of more "philosophical" hymns? Did he fulfil a need for abstraction, a need for one clear figure in a multifarious religious world with many deities? It would be tempting to suggest answers in the affirmative. Yet, the symbolism of Prajāpati shows structures which cannot be explained by a supposed theoretical speculation without further qualification. Prajāpati is always connected with or identified with the sacrifice. This is no doubt the very "practical" reason why in the Brāhmaṇas he appears to be present *in illo tempore*, that is to say in that primordial time to which the world owes its existence. In Ṛgveda X his attributes and activities cover the whole gamut of life, from the loftiest adoration to the most common aspects. His name is that of the supreme creator, whose sway is over all living beings (121, 10); he is the one who leads the cows into the stable (169, 4); he is the one who should give us children (85, 43), who should in fact pour in the sperm (184, 1).

In the sixth book of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, within a lengthy treatise on the building of the fire altar, we find Prajāpati at the heart of the sacrificial procedure. Here, as center of the sacrifice and as prototype of the sacrificer, he is at the same time the Supreme One at the cosmogony. (ŚB VI, 1, 3.) Numerous creation stories and cosmogonic principles exist side by side and are alive through the ritual. One of the elements or layers to which Prajāpati gives rise in this cosmogonic account is the socalled *akṣara*, which we shall meet with later as a supreme "creational" principle. It may be difficult to grasp the nature of a life which allowed for so many principles and symbols with seemingly identical functions and yet without conflict. This is a difficulty for our logical mind, used to "substantive" thought. But it will be good for our subject to realize that "compilations" of symbols which logically seem to exclude each other in one and the same context occur at an early date. As to the texts of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas, some unity of understanding is certainly possible. For we may say that many of the symbols, such as the ones we discussed,

have the reality of the sacrifice as their soul. Thus Prajāpati *as the sacrifice* is both man's orientation in space and the source of time.

Both world and time (the sacrifice is often homologized with the year) [1]) derive their reality from the sacrificial event. Everything related to it shares in its dynamics. Part of the ceremony in early times is for instance the request addressed to the king for his consent to the choice of the place for the sacrifice. Similarly, the purchase of the herbs used for the preparation of the *Soma*-sacrifice is not a secular act, separated from the holy ritual, but it is incorporated dramatically in the ceremony.

All this shows the formation of a *habitus* of mind that became rooted in India. *Mīmāṃsā*, the systematic thought on the ritual, had a strong impact on Indian religious tradition. [2]) Historically, as we shall see, Vedic ritualism had great influence on almost every single transformation of symbols and religious acts. Here we may call to mind the pan-Indian doctrine of *karma*, karma being first and foremost a ritualistic act, that as such cannot possibly be without effect. This original meaning was never entirely lost. Thus Kṛṣṇa, instructing Arjuna, in the Bhagavadgītā (III, 15), in a context that deals explicitly with the significance of ritual, says:

> Know that *karma* springs from the *brahma* (= the primordial, ritual word that makes sacrifice effective) and that the *brahma* springs from the primordial Syllable (*akṣara*); therefore the universal *brahma* is for ever based on *yajña* (= at the same time worship and sacrifice).

6. "Ritualism" not applicable as a Conclusive Theory

Our remarks on the ritual cannot be *applied* as an all-explaining theory. It is only too clear that "by nature" we do not share in the Vedic sense for ritualistic procedures The view that we have developed only opens a way for our understanding. It may be compared to the sense for *beauty* as a religious experience, which the student of Greek religion may develop in reading Homer [3]); he does not become a Homeric Greek, but he will no longer be obsessed, for instance, by features in the stories of the gods that beforehand he had given undue attention as contrary to (his own) morality and

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[1]) E.g. Ś.B. XI, 1, 2, 1 ff.

[2]) See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), I, p. 69.

[3]) W. F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods* (New York: Pantheon, 1954).

world-view. "By nature," or, more precisely, by virtue of those features of our own cultural epoch and environment that are taken for granted, we are too easily inclined to follow an easier and wrong way."By nature," pietistic missionaries—but not only they—have often compared the superior character of Jesus with the personalities of the gods they heard about in the mission field, as if for religious man qualities of character should form the only frame of reference. Closer to home and to our subject, the enlightened Western mind (enlightened only since the *Aufklärung*) still tends to explain Vedic gods as phenomena of nature, because our fashionable, reasonable, empiricist "nature" wills it so. [1]) Our "nature" in this sense will occupy us at greater length in the last chapters of this essay. For the moment only a word of caution suffices: as the discovery of beauty in the religion of the Homeric gods does not solve all problems, "ritualism" will not explain all and sundry in our case. But we are now perhaps in a position in which we can avoid some of the worst mistakes, exaggerations and generalizations. As a way for our understanding, ritualism, sacrifice, the sacrificial event, is abundantly supported by the Vedic documents; all Vedicists have to give ritualism its full weight.

However, we still have to make some remarks on some specific customs, divinities and imageries selected because of their possible relationship to the much later Tantric developments. But even here, where the Vedic sacrifice does not determine the selection, we shall meet with references to pervasive existence of the ritual derived as we saw from what the gods did first, or, according to a broad Mīmāṃsā-tradition, preceding the very gods.

7. Speech and Brahman

Accompanying and constituting the ritual are the powerful words spoken by the priests. The *brahman* is often said to be related to the power inherent in these words, *mantras*. [2]) Unfortunately, the many discussions on *brahman* have not yet led to a conclusive result. [3]) *Brahman*

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[1]) As one of the many examples of this "Western" tendency we may very well point to S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), pp. 30 f.

[2]) Gonda, *Veda*, p. 32.

[3]) See Gonda, *Veda*, pp. 32 f. Footnotes on the same page give bibliography, to which is to be added L. Renou, "Sur la notion de 'Bráhman,'" *Journal Asiatique* (1949), pp. 7 ff.

occurs here and there in conjunction with well-rounded symbolisms. In the universe it is the material from which heaven and earth were formed; at a construction of a house it is the power by which the house is established; in cosmological speculations it appears as the support (*skambha*) of the universe, carrying heaven and earth; but more generally it is also said to bestow healing-power; etc. [1]) A major problem is that *brahman* nowhere consistently allows for an interpretation reducing it to an idea (some sort of magic or religious power in general) or to a specific thing or function (like "formula," "hymn," "incantation" or "charm"). A few facts, however, can be established with reasonable certainty. In the first place there is the documentary evidence already mentioned that *brahman* refers to the power inherent in the *mantras*. Second, more general, is the impossibility of explaining *brahman* merely theoretically, "statically " as a *concept*; whatever its exact origin and nature, as a "power" *brahman* has something dynamic. Thirdly, the Brahmans are particularly represented as the bearers of this "power." Consequently we cannot be quite wrong when we see this mysterious word as an integral part of the ritualistic *orientatio*.

Brahman is not the only Vedic word that made history in later Indian tradition. We shall see the importance of efficacious, mystic syllables in the Tantras; hence a brief discussion of some other Vedic syllables and words that developed beyond their immediate context will be appropriate.

8. Syllables

The most famous of those syllables is *OṂ*. Historically, it derives its importance from its use in the ritual. It has been suggested that originally it meant "no more perhaps than a formal word of assent." [2]) The etymology that suggests this as a probability is of course no proof. We have seen how the most profane-looking acts are sacred because of their insertion into the ritual. The possible triviality of *OṂ* at the beginning does not help us in finding its meaning any more than our certain knowledge of "Jesus" as a common name helps us to understand the Nicene creed. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa [3])

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[1]) Gonda, *Veda*, p. 33.

[2]) Keith, *Philosophy of the Veda*, p. 519.

[3]) *Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇas of the Rigveda*, trans. A. B. Keith (H.O.S., Vol. XXV; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920).

says (in VII, 18): "*Oṃ* is the response to a Ṛc, 'Be it so' [1]) to a Gāthā [2]); *oṃ* is divine, 'Be it so' human...." The comparison that has been made between this peculiar word as an article of consent and "Amen"[3]) by overzealous comparatists has somewhat of a formal merit in that both are affirmations of what is not "human," man made or "given" in the world as it is (whether faith and God's revelation or the sacrifice and the Vedas) and hence have to have a divine ground for their validity. *Oṃ*, however, could develop in an almost independent way because of its divinity. In sum, we know about *Oṃ* in the last analysis only as a symbol. It came to be recognized as the all-embracing "principle" of reality in all Vedic traditions. As such, in the right, prescribed usage, it naturally exerts its power over the whole world. *Oṃ*, analyzed in three constitutive sounds, A-U-M, is the primordial syllable, intrinsically connected with the three Vedas and the conjoined priestly functions (Ai.B., V, 32); similarly, *Oṃ* is said to conceive the three worlds (bhūḥ — bhuvaḥ — svaḥ; C.U., 23, 3-4).

Information on the early usage of *Oṃ* is given in a rather matter of fact way (e.g. in T.S., III, 2, 9) without speculation of any sort. The *praṇava* (the technical name for the syllable *Oṃ*) has its place in the liturgy like other *mantras*, to be said by specific priests at the right moment. According to the Gṛhyasūtras, however, the syllable *Oṃ* and also the *Vaṣat*-call (accompanying an oblation cast into the fire) are to be honoured ceremonially at the completion of a student's Vedic study; these ritual utterings are to be honoured together with and in the same manner as Agni, Vāyu and other gods, the ṛṣis, the metre, etc. [4]) Some change has taken place apparently, whereby ritualistic words seem to become in a way isolated from their context.

9. Syllables, in Ritualism and Realization

It would be a tempting jump to conclusions to suggest that the dynamics of ritualism is replaced by a symbolism of a more static nature. Perhaps this is true. It is peculiar that, in the series of venerated divinities just referred to, Indra, statistically the most important god in the Ṛgvedic hymns, is lacking. We have seen in passing how *brah-*

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[1]) tathā.
[2]) stanza from a non-Vedic source.
[3]) See e.g. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, under *óṃ*.
[4]) Keith, *Philosophy of the Vedas*, p. 213.

man could in certain texts become the "power" by which a house is established (A.V., X, 7-8) or the *skambha* supporting heaven and earth.

In the Brāhmaṇas and certainly in the Sūtras convincing examples could be found to show how non-Vedic elements and ways of thinking found recognition. But what concerns us at present is a change that differs from what could be indicated by such a list of details and suggestions. This transformation is at the same time more subtle and of farther-reaching consequences. Ritualism—of which we should not forget that it is *our* word for the complicated structure that for the people in Vedism and Brahmanism went without saying—was not replaced, but correlated by another type of movement that we may well call: mental realization, or even more briefly (in order to avoid the superimposition of our psychological views): realization. In and by the course of history *Oṃ*, but also other syllables (vaṣat, vauṣaṭ, phaṭ) were prepared for use in individual meditation-techniques. This transformation is akin to what Eliade in his studies on *yoga* has called "ritual interiorization." [1]) Various portions of the sacrifice are related to man's vital breaths (*prāṇas*) (Chāndogya Upaniṣad, V, 19-24). The relationship is not a streak of poetic imagination: the oblations made *are* oblations to the breaths. To realize this significance is of vital importance: "If one offers the Agnihotra without knowing this, that would be just as if—removing the live coals—he were to pour the offering on ashes" (C.U., V, 24, 1). The Chāndogya Upaniṣad as a whole gives a new cosmic and at the same time inward meaning to the sāman-chanting, i.e. to the stanzas chanted by the Sāmavedic priests. The trend of history in which *yoga* developed was certainly the main-trend of the stream of such reinterpretations. But the stream of "orthodoxy," of generally accepted symbolisms and practices was broad. "Realization" indicates this broadness; it takes into account that not all lines led to physical techniques of meditation. The close alliance of *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* as distinct systems with distinct influences prompts us to maintain the distinction between a (more general) tendency for realization and a (more particular) tendency for interiorization also in the continuation of "orthodoxy." Finally it should be noted that we cannot speak of a *break* with the ritual anywhere, whether in the stream as a whole or in its particular trends.

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[1]) Mircea Eliade, *Techniques du Yoga* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 113; *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* (Bollingen Series, LVI; New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), pp. 111-114.

The history of the syllables is a point in case. One of the earliest "speculative" texts on *Oṃ* shows how the syllable and its meaning are imbedded in the ritual (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, I, 8, Radhakrishnan's translation):

> *Aum* is *Brahman*. *Aum* is this all. *Aum*, this, verily, is compliance. On uttering, 'recite,' they recite. With *aum*, they sing the sāman chants. With *aum*, *śom*, they recite the prayers. With *aum* the Adhvaryu priest utters the response. With *aum* does the Brahma (priest) utter the introductory eulogy. With *aum*, one assents to the offering to fire. With *aum*, a Brāhmaṇa begins to recite, may I obtain *Brahman*; thus wishing, *Brahman*, verily, does he obtain.

The homologization of the syllable *Oṃ* (analyzed as Aum) with the brahman and with "this all" makes indeed a "speculative" impression. Very obviously it is not meant as a mathematical equation. Rather, it is meant as a realization in a man's knowledge and existence. The living relationship in which this realization comes about is the ritual, as shown in the quotation. The fact that Brahmanic and Upaniṣadic texts such as this one are filled with technical ritualistic terms which seem quite foreign to "modern man" should not prevent us from seeing that it is precisely this ritualistic activity which provided a living source for the realization. Crucial words and associations came from there.

10. Dynamics of Ritual Continues in a New Way

A study on *akṣara* by Van Buitenen [1]) is of the utmost importance for our context in that it shows how the significance of the ancient Syllable (=akṣara) arises primarily from the reality of ritual, and is related only secundarily to speculations on the Absolute. In the course of history, *akṣara* came to be interpreted as an adjective, "imperishable," which as such qualified *Oṃ*. The original meaning, "syllable," denoted "a very concrete tool for priests-poets who measured their metrical utterances by syllables." The speech of the priests not only maintained but constituted the cosmic order, everything that can be named. The ultimate measure, the syllable, became identified with *Oṃ*. The Word had its effectiveness in conjunction with the sacrificial Fire. This fact, the thought on *the* Syllable, the tripartition of A-U-M opened the way for series of analyses and identifications. In

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[1]) J. A. B. van Buitenen, "*Akṣara*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 3, July-Sept., 1959, p. 196.

these developments the correlation of female and male elements also plays a significant part; the prototype is given in Word (Vāc, f.) and Fire (Agni, m.), but some form of dualism is naturally created by the fact that *Vāc* (f.) is expressed most significantly, indeed, ultimately, in words that take on a masculine form and a "male" function (*akṣara*, *brahman*, *puruṣa*, *ātman*). Van Buitenen speaks in this context of a "rudimentary dualism." Since we are interested in the development of religious symbolism, it may be noted that this does not mean in the first place that a full-fledged philosophical system had not yet developed, but that as long as the religious ceremonies would go on, a living spring of symbolism was present that could flow in many directions, depending on the environment. From the earliest texts onward the symbolism of "female" and "male", the still uncreated and the created creator, the unmanifest and the manifest was present and kept its source in the ritual.

Our discussion on Word and Syllable shows that the Upaniṣadic emphasis on the acquisition of the right knowledge is deeply rooted in the very nature of the sacrificial ceremonies. The *realization* follows from the ritual. It forms a correlate to ritualism that makes many new developments possible. The dynamics of ritualism was continued in a new way. What counts in the teachings of the Upaniṣads is not the taking note of various ready-made speculative analyses, but the act of apprehending the actuality of such analyses. The meditation in Indian philosophy and religion has struck the Western mind too often as something "inactive," just like the attaining of *nirvāṇa* elicited thoughts of contempt for the world or pessimism. Both conceptualizations are equally wrong as they arise from presupposed and limited, culturally conditioned fashions among us. We have seen that the dynamics of early "orthodoxy" has its own structure. This dynamics was continued in the—equally "orthodox"—realization.

CHAPTER THREE

THE "UNORTHODOX" PRAEHISTORY

Religion is always on the move. — Verrier Elwin [1])

1. Aryans and "Non-Aryans"

First of all we have tried to deal with the "orthodox" praehistory of Tantrism. We have done this not by searching for details that might with some effort be related to peculiar elements in Tantrism, but by pointing to the most typical features in Vedism and Brahmanism. We have found as the first characteristic a ritualism, derived from and intrinsically related to the society as a whole, to the "common weal." Secondly, we have seen a development of a more "individualistic" nature as a logical result and counterpart of the ritual. It is still a far cry from here to Tantric symbolism. Now that we are to speak on the "unorthodox" praehistory, we may remind ourselves of the reason why we dealt first with orthodoxy which is so elaborately documented, in contradistinction from the non-Vedic and non-Brahmanic religion. However hard it may be to avoid speculation on the meaning and origin of Tantric symbolism, we should at least try to postpone speaking of prae-Aryan and non-Aryan elements as long as possible; these elements which played and play no doubt a part, should not be allowed only in order to fill the gaps in our knowledge as arguments *ex silentio*.

Positive evidence of linguistic influences from outside sources (Austric, Austro-Asiatic, Protomunda, Munda, Dravidian) is not lacking. But on this basis little can be assessed up to now in terms of articulate religious influences on early Vedic texts. [2])

The investigations and suggestions on linguistic and ethnological sides paled somewhat before the archaeological discoveries of the Indus Valley civilization. The obviously important point here is that the Aryans were not the first ones who founded a highly developed

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[1]) *The Muria and Their Ghotul* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 223.

[2]) See the cautious conclusions in F. B. J. Kuiper, *An Austro-Asiatic Myth in the Rigveda* (Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel XIII, no. 7; Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandse Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1950).

civilization in India. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not the Aryans, whose heritage we have before us in the Ṛgveda, have had any contact with the people of Mohenjo-Dāṛo and Haṛappā; it may well be that the last layer of civilization in these cities was destroyed before the Aryan arrival. It is inconceivable, however, that a civilization as vast and advanced as that of the Indus Valley, which lasted perhaps a millennium, simply disappeared, without leaving a trace; Eliade rightly stressed this point. [1]) At the same time we should state that this point is too subtle to serve as a key to explain the rise of Hinduism in historical details. Much discussion has been given to the socalled "Proto-Śiva," a show-piece of suggestion in religio-historical indology. The image, depicted on one of the steatite seals of Mohenjo-Dāṛo, represents an ithyphallic, horned god with four animals, seated with crossed legs. Like the Śiva of Hinduism, who is also "Lord of Animals" and who is the masteryogin, for whom the yogic *āsana* is a normal position, the god of the seal appeared to some people to have three faces. A minor argument against the emphasized similarity is the long period that separates this image from any documented comparable Śiva-image in Hinduism (about a thousand years). Another, major argument is twofold. In the first place it cannot be right to depict the image as a prototype of Śiva because we know that the imagery depicted is so widespread, that for the time being there is no reason at all to link *this* seal with Śiva. Mode discussed the seal and its peculiarities as an example of a *type* that is known in several other parts of the ancient world. [2]) An image on a kettle found in Scandinavia corresponds to our seal even in minute details (horned deity, posture, one animal turning its back to the central figure, an elephant, etc.) [3]) and could easily compete on this score with later Indian representations of Śiva. The legs bent double in the way of the "Proto-Śiva" is attested also in Celtic and Sumerian art. [4]) No one has gone so far yet as to suggest yoga-influences on the religions of the Celts and Sumerians. Why should one be so glib in relating this image to later Hindu phenomena? This brings us to the second part of our argument.

[1]) *Yoga*, p. 358.

[2]) Heinz Mode, *Das Frühe Indien* (Stuttgart: Gustav Kilpper Verlag, 1959), pp. 66 ff.

[3]) *Ibid.* Full description in F. O. Schrader, "Indische Beziehungen eines nordischen Fundes," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (1934), p. 185.

[4]) Heinz Mode *loc. cit.*

We can imagine the joy of an archaeologist who recognizes in an excavated object features that are of great and specific importance in later art. Moreover, since it is highly unlikely that a great and extensive civilization as of the Indus Valley was wiped out without leaving anything to posterity, it is more than probable that the art of India continued in some way what was known in Mohenjo-Dāṛo. But there is a not at all imaginary danger that the caution of the archaeologist is lost when we come to speak of religious influences. This danger is definitely present when this single seal of the past is closely linked up with the figure of Śiva in Hinduism. Then we forget the simple fact that we cannot know religious symbols except through the colourful and unsteady thing that we call human existence. By the time the Śiva of Hinduism becomes known, many things have happened; among these things is the identification with the Rudra of the Vedas. It is no wonder that those Indologists who entered the spirit of India through the study of Sanskrit have been most reluctant to applaud such far-reaching conclusions as to a Proto-Śiva.

2. Vedic and Non-Vedic Elements

After this has been said, however, we may turn to Brahmanism again to prepare ourselves for the next step. For in spite of outer appearances, one thing is for us formally the same in Brahmanism and the Indus Valley civilization: in the scope of the history of religions both represent the lives of religious forms. We have seen that in Brahmanism such "life" could not be defined as, geometrically, the lines on a steatite seal can be defined. Brahmanism as a living religion found its own resources to deal with new questions. So far we have bypassed the question why new questions for Brahmanism arose, but we have observed how the changes that came about were related to the Vedic-Brahmanic tradition itself, in the few instances we discussed. We may assume safely that among new questions priority went to those concerning the non-Vedic, non-Brahmanic religion. As among all "non-confessionalistic" groups, such questions about the contact with others were not settled by councils or synods, but in an indeed much more "natural" way. At this point we can perhaps make a statement that comes as close to being a law as anything that can be stated in the study of religious phenomena: a living religion finds its own resources to deal with the new situation that arises in the encounter with phenomena of another religion. In the course of our essay we shall find several confirmations of this "law." Especially

the capacity of inner realization that developed in Brahmanism and perhaps even earlier formed a gateway to meet new symbolisms.

Of these new symbolisms met by Vedism and Brahmanism something can be said. The question whether the Aryans actually clashed with the people of the Indus Valley civilization will remain obscure. But some of the Indus Valley artifacts may also help us to increase our understanding of what sort of religious problems the Aryans had to face.

3. Fusions of Ritualistic and Local Symbols

We have characterized Vedism and Brahmanism with the adjective "ritualistic." The qualification "local " is probably the best word to designate the non-Aryan Indian symbolisms as compiled by archaeology and by gleanings from Sanskrit literature. In the first place, at that time as well as in later times, indigenous religion was widespread, but showed no trace of that systematization which the Brahmans provided for their cultic life; in this sense the indigenous symbolisms were indeed local. In the second place, indigenous Indian symbolism missed the dynamic forms of ritualism; religious acts could of course not be lacking, but characteristic was rather the awareness of divine presence in specific places: this tree, that lake, etc. Accordingly, there were—as always in Hindu development—specific cult-places; not the holy acts to be performed *anywhere*, but the *locus sanctus* to be revered *somewhere*.

The distinction ritualistic — local must not be mistaken for a pair of opposites. It is rather a convenient distinction of emphases that intends to avoid two extreme positions. The first one is the extreme and long abandoned position that the Aryans were in all respects superior to the totally different aborigenes. The second position unfortunately still holds in various ways that basically there was no distinction at all between the Aryans and their primitive predecessors or contemporaries, either by asserting that both shared in a similar sort of primitive world-view (in which e.g. all sorts of mysterious, impersonal powers ruled) or by suggesting that in both the same kind of *philosophia perennis* was present *in germine*, which was to come to full bloom in Buddhism or in Hinduism or in both. We should realize that we know Brahmanism only as a movement spreading in history, not as a fixed *corpus* of doctrines. It was living in the encounter with foreign elements. *Mutatis mutandis* this should be said of the local cults too.

One symbolic figure that was certainly pre-Aryan, but at the same time *also* Aryan, is the figure of the "Great Mother." In "orthodoxy" the great goddess came to be identified as *Vāk*, the Word. (R.V., X, 125, the hymn on Vāk or Āmbhṛṇī). Where the ritualistic acts and the priestly, powerful words predominate, it is understandable that the "personality" of the divinities can become secondary. In spite of so many Vedic texts in which the gods are attributed all possible qualities by the priestly supplicants, we have of most gods only the fuzziest "personal" image. Yet, the case of the greatest goddess named in the Vedas, Aditi, is somewhat different. Not that we can describe her as we could any of the local deities, but we can recognize her relationship to the many local forms of the Great Mother attested in neolithic times over large parts of Asia and Europe. To her more is attributed than to any other Vedic deity. She is the all-embracing one, the source of all things:

> Aditi is the sky; Aditi is the atmosphere; Aditi the mother; she is also father and son; Aditi (all) gods; the five peoples [or, according to Przyluski: les cinq sortes d'êtres]; Aditi that which is born; Aditi that which is future. (R.V., I, 89, 10.) [1]

Przyluski is no doubt right when he sees in Aditi a deity related to the great goddess of Asia Minor (Nanaï, Tanaïs) etc. in ancient times, [2] whether his etymological connection of Aditi and Anaïtis is correct or not. The explanation, by older scholars, of "Aditi" from abstract notions: "illimited," "inexhaustible," "absence of boundaries," etc., is certainly not very illuminating. But more important than the historical origin of Aditi for us is the realization that the Aryans had maintained elements in their own religious life that enabled them to recognize the worship of goddesses among the original inhabitants. We may remember also that the Ṛgvedic people were not purely pastoral, but were semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural. In terms of cultural history, nothing was more natural than such recognitions of agricultural cults. In the symbolism of Aditi in the Ṛgveda we find much that is structurally "local." She is identified with the earth (I. 72, 9; V, 59, 8), or asssociated with a river or stream (IV, 55, 3; maybe also in VII, 18, 8?); from her womb help is expected

[1] Geldner: "Aditi ist der Himmel, Aditi das Luftreich, Aditi die Mutter, dieselbe auch Vater und Sohn, Aditi (alle) Götter, die fünf Völker, Aditi das Geborene, Aditi das Zukünftige."

[2] Jean Przyluski, *La Grande Déesse* (Paris: (Payot, 1950), pp. 39 f.

(VII, 88, 7, etc.); the womb of the goddess—naturally of great importance in the agricultural religiosities—is mentioned several times, also in relation to the ritual (IX, 26, 1; 71, 5; VII, 88, 7, etc.). Recognition of and adaptation to local forms of goddesses could occur not in spite of Brahmanic ritualism, but rather because of this ritualism which, with the subsequent realization techniques, preserved the peculiar all-embracing figure of the goddess-symbolism. B.U., V, 8, dealing with Speech, combines in a few lines several elements: the ancient word-play on "speech" and "cow," the association of ritualistic syllables with the goddess, the comprehensive orientation through her and also a reference to *prāṇa*, the breath of life that in later developments will become so important.

> One should meditate on Speech (*vāk*) as cow (*dhenu*). She has four udders, viz. *svāhā*, *vaṣaṭ*, *hanta* and *svadhā*. The gods live on two of her udders, viz. the *svāhā* and *vaṣaṭ* sounds; men on the sound *hanta*, and the fathers on the sound *svadhā*. The vital breath is her bull, mind her calf.

4. Continuation and Rebirth of Old Symbols in Hinduization

For an understanding of the development of symbols, the historiographical problems concerning the links between Aryans and pre-Aryans loose much of their sting. It is certain that the Aryans, and Brahmanism throughout the course of its history over all of India, met with specific non-Aryan forms and symbols that continued, renewed and enriched forms already existing in their own heritage. These non-Aryan symbols were largely agricultural in type, certainly in North-West India, the area of the early Aryan settlements.

On the basis of archaeological evidence, the history of Indian art and Buddhist and Hindu texts, Coomaraswamy has shown the importance of the divine figures known as *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣīs*. [1]) They are deities or spirits, usually of a beneficent kind, granting wealth and fertility. They are worshipped in a way that leads Coomaraswamy to see in their nature and worship the natural source of the later *bhakti*-cults. Although this view may be somewhat one-sided, the *Yakṣas* represent no doubt a type different from the systematized dynamic, characteristic of the Brahmanic ritual. They have

[1]) A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. LXXX, no. 6; Washington, 1928); *Yakṣas*, II (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, 1931).

fixed places of worship (*caitya*, *āyatana*), often outside the cities, in a grove, on a mountain, at a ghāt at the bank of a river or by a tank. Their local character, in the ordinary sense of the word, is evident. But also structurally their local character is unmistakable. The symbolic imagery of the *Yakṣas* fits perfectly that which Jean Przyluski called "le paysage complet." [1]) This perfect landscape has three characteristic elements: the stone or rock (interchangeable with a mountain), the water, and the tree (or grove). These three sum up the whole of cosmic reality and thus form the sacred place *par excellence*. This ancient and wide-spread symbolism has had a powerful influence on India through the popular religiosity around the *Yakṣas*. Not only is the name "*Yakṣa*" given to Hindu deities and also to the Buddha, [2]) but in Buddhist and Hindu temple art *Yakṣas* figure at many places, and always as guardian angels of houses or people, and as tutelary divinities depicted around a place of worship. The chief of the *Yakṣas* is usually called Kubera or Vaiśravaṇa. He is depicted as one of the four or eight *lokapālas* (the "world protectors," ruling over the North, East, South and West and also over the intermediate regions); as such he is regent of the North, mythologically often the most important point of the compass, the direction in which the Buddha made his seven strides, the top of the world [3]); he is the lord of power and wealth. With his pot-belly, surrounded by flames expressing his fiery energy, with his riches he is indeed the lord of *Yakṣas*.

Another name for *Yakṣas* is Guhyas or Guhyakas; it occurs often when they are represented not just as the attending hosts of Kubera, but as the bearers of his image in art. Even in later times these Guhyas, as crouching dwarfs, have in Buddhist and Hindu tradition the function of *vāhanas* (vehicles). The dwarf on which Śiva as Naṭarāja places his foot is usually regarded as representative of evil, crushed by the god; in the traditional images, however, there is neither a trace of crushing nor of evil. [4]) The conservative art-forms have maintained the ancient features of the Guhya. The epic tradition also shows the popular and persistent importance of the Guhyas.

The popularity of Kubera's circle makes it not unlikely that the word *guhya* had still something of its old ring at the time in which the

[1]) *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

[2]) Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pp. 36-37.

[3]) Mircea Eliade, "Les sept pas du Bouddha," *Pro Regno Pro Sanctuario*, eds. W. J. Kooiman and J. M. van Veen (publication at G. van der Leeuw's 60th birthday; Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach N. V., 1950), pp. 169-175.

[4]) Cf. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, p. 8.

Guhyasamājatantra, one of the earliest Buddhist tantras known to us, was composed. *Guhyasamāja* can be translated as "secret meeting" or "mysterious assembly," or in an even more abstract and somewhat forced manner as "secret doctrine." For *guhya* (secret, mysterious) is a common Sanskrit word, in contradistinction from *yakṣa*, which may be of non-Aryan origin. It is noteworthy, however, that the work sets forth how various superhuman beings (Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas) have assembled to receive instruction from the highest Lord. Much weight is given to the character and number of these beings and to the order in which they take their places. They orient themselves in accordance with clearly prescribed and defined *maṇḍalas* ("circles"). In fact, *they make up* these *maṇḍalas*, which are to be reactualized, whether mentally or ritually, by the worshipper. Since these beings and the realities they represent are of such crucial importance, it would not be impossible to understand *guhyasamāja* as "assembly of the Guhyas." Of course, we do not want to build a whole case on this single suggestion. But, on the other hand, we cannot exclude the possibility that the old and concrete meaning of *guhya* contributed to the selection of this title for this particular work. We shall see later, in dealing with Tantrism, that we should not push our own ideas of secrecy too much.

The Hinduization process, blending different elements into a new harmony, is peculiarly documented in MBh. 2, 10. Kubera's heavenly abode is described with its many splendours. It is "supported by Guhyakas." Many divisions and members of the hosts of *Apsaras* and *Gandharvas* are mentioned by name. *Ṛṣis* and gods are present in Kubera's palace. The goddess Lakṣmī is said to be always there. More significant than the list of various symbolic elements is the manner in which the blending of the symbols is presented. That we find Lakṣmī (who is later always Viṣṇu's consort) is not surprising. She is one of three figures with whom Kubera is said to be united: Ṛddhi, Lakṣmī and Soma's daughter Bhadrā. The three are obviously connected with Kubera in their representation of success, abundance, fortune, prosperity. [1]) It is noteworthy that we also learn from this chapter that Vaiśravaṇa (= Kubera) built his heavenly estate by using his ascetic power. In other words, he does something that in popular tradition is associated with the world of Śiva as master *yogin*. Of course, it would be an unwarranted jump to conclusions to pose that *yoga* and

[1]) See J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht: V. A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1954), pp. 194 f.

all miraculous powers (*siddhis*) with it are a wholesale contribution from the cult of the *Yakṣas*. There are reasons to believe, however, that particular forms of ecstacy did occur in the *Yakṣa* cults, an ecstacy so great that it could not but touch the deity at whose holystead a person worshipped. There are accounts of such great devotion as to cause the *Yakṣa*'s throne to shake, so that the deity virtually *had* to grant the devotee's desire. [1]) In our chapter of the epic the blending of Hindu-yogic with earlier elements is clearly expressed by the presence of Śiva himself. The association of Kubera and Śiva is not theorized on here, but we are told that also "the husband of Umā," "the three-eyed Mahādeva (= Śiva)," among other things said to be "surrounded by multitudes of spirits," some of which in the form of dwarfs, is always here attending to their friend Kubera. The chapter informs us also almost casually that one day Bhava(= Śiva) became befriended with Kubera, and that from then on he remained always in the abode of his friend, the lord of treasures.

Like Kubera, Śiva has his "hosts," that are similar even in details ("dwarfs," evil as well as good spirits). In the epic, Śiva is called Gaṇeśa (= lord of hosts). Only in later tradition Gaṇeśa becomes the name of an independent figure, the famous elephant faced deity; as such, Gaṇeśa appears only from approximately 400 AD onwards. His presence is not documented among the *Yakṣas*, but it is significant that his type—his big belly, his general character, making undertakings successful, relationship to wealth—is that of the *Yakṣas*. [2]) He is the son of Śiva. Again, the curious blending of elements that made up Hinduism is brought to mind. Coomaraswamy has indicated how Śiva's association with *Yakṣas* is confirmed by the development of art forms. [3]) All in all, we see in the associations and identifications of different elements not so much the outcome of violent, mutual opposition—although such opposition was also present and is documented in the Ṛgveda—as well the result of living together. Moreover, unifications could come about because of the very nature of the symbolisms at stake.

5. Symbolic and Mythical Transformations

The names of goddesses in ancient India and later are innumerable. The goddesses share the structurally local character of the *Yakṣas*. In

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[1]) Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pp. 25 ff.
[2]) Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* p. 7.
[3]) *Idem*, p. 29.

fact, many of them (*Yakṣīs*, *Yakṣiṇīs*) are of the same class. *Yakṣas* have the peculiar ability of assuming any form or shape, male or female; the form of beautiful damsels is most attractive, as attested to by later literature (as in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*). There are levels, however, both historically and structurally, on which the dividing line between male and female is subordinate to the reality expressed in the religious symbolism. The "local" symbolisms in which the "perfect landscape" could precede the deity related to it, could formally be compared to the Vedic symbolism in which the ritualistic reality took precedence over the "personal" features of deities.

Przyluski has undertaken the sheer impossible task of establishing chronologically the transition from the "perfect landscape" to independent deities. [1]) The first type of divinity developing is in his view of a female signature. For that reason he gave his book on the great Goddess the subtitle: "Introduction á l'étude comparative des religions." The assumption that fecundity and its symbolism prevail not only in early agriculture, but also in small hunt and food-gathering and that infusion of masculine elements in religious symbolism could only be brought about by social changes caused by the domestication of the horse and the tending of cattle influenced Przyluski no doubt too much in the development of this theme. However this may be in detail, Przyluski's general approach seems quite relevant to India. His theories are the more applicable to our subject since what is known of India's development is still *late* in terms of cultural history; in these societies, which are wholly dependent on agriculture or at least influenced by it, symbolisms of a female signature are not surprising. Very significant for us, however, is that Przyluski has shown that symbols of a female signature do not necessarily imply *qua* symbol a sexually definable entity. The peculiarity of the great goddess, whose statues are found everywhere between the Indus and the Aegean Sea, is not that she is a *mother*, but that she is *superior* to all gods.

As to her imagery, the narrow relationship between goddess and tree—integral part of the perfect landscape—is well established. Until this very day the tree (especially the "ficus religiosa") is the central symbol in the holysteads of village-deities. These village-deities are as a rule represented as females. [2]) With the ever increasing

[1]) *Op. cit.*, especially chap. iv.

[2]) See H. Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India* (Calcutta: Association Press, 1921), *passim*.

waves of Hinduism in more remote parts, e.g. in South India, also the male gods Śiva and Viṣṇu gained in importance. Both had already been associated with cults of the *Yakṣa*-type in the North-West. It is noteworthy that some of their famous temples in the South have also a tree in or by the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbhagṛha*). [1])

We should be very cautious in conceiving of any sort of "chronological rule." In the first place, everything (whether tree, river, rock or anything else) can become a *hierophany* (Eliade). In the second place, when a symbol develops in a manner which is usually designated with the ugly word "anthropomorphic," this does not mean that the presumably earlier non-anthropomorphic symbolism from which it originated is abandoned. This should be stated not so much because of our lack of knowledge as well because of the nature of religious symbolism. The dividing line between male and female divinities is fluent. Whether or not under the impact of social changes, goddesses became sometimes replaced by gods. Symbolically such changes are subordinate to the fact that the existing symbolism allowed such transformation at all. The thrust of the existing symbolism is not exhausted after "anthropomorphic" and sexual differentation. Often it finds a new way of expression. Famous is the image of Śivārdhanārī or Ardhanārīśvara; this image has the crescent moon (a symbol of Śiva), but only half of Śiva's matted locks, a half male, half female face, one female breast, etc. One name of Viṣṇu is Śrinivāsa = dwellingplace of Śrī (= Lakṣmī); it occurs as name of a well known temple and is a very common personal given name in South India.

Particularly important for our subject is the persistence of not "anthropomorphic" or not quite "anthropomorphic" elements. One such element is the tree or pillar as *axis mundi* in mythological accounts. Obviously, there is a distinction between the sacred pillar or tree in a particular place and the real cosmic pillar or tree, linking and supporting heaven and earth. But equally obvious is the structurally *local* character of both. Sometimes, the cosmic tree is thought to be situated on top of mount Meru, the cosmic mountain.

Another such element consists in the genitals of the goddess, strongly emphasized as they are in her pre- and protohistoric images as a triangle pointing downward. This design—like the female breasts —plays a not altogether insignificant part in some tribal art; it occurs

[1]) A noticeable example is the Jambukeśvara-temple close to Tiruchirapalli; the name Jambukeśvara, given to Śiva, is related to the rose apple tree. Another example is the Ekāmreśvara ("Lord of the one mango tree") in Kanchipuram.

for instance in the ornamentation of the village-dormitories among the Muria and other tribes, as "abstract art." [1])

Among the examples of non-anthropomorphic and persistent symbolism we should also mention the *nāgas* ("serpents"). They are typologically closely related to the *Yakṣas* and are always linked up with aquatic symbolism. [2]) They were incorporated in Brahmanism at an early date, as attested to by their occurrence in the Sūtras. [3]) Homage is paid to them at particular places. Anthills are their beloved dwelling place and are to be treated with great caution; e.g. a tree that grew up at such a spot is not to be cut down. [4]) In the Hinduization process this symbolism, like the others, did not disappear but was continued. A telling example is the famous South Indian Śiva-temple where Valmikeśvara, literally: "Lord of the Anthill," resides (in Tiruvarur, Tanjore District). Śiva, the powerful Hindu god, with his strong roots in Brahmanism, triumphs, but the old symbolism continues.

The distinction that we mentioned in regard to the tree symbolism between the local holystead and the one, "real," "imagined," cosmic entity, is present in all cases cited. The inner, mutual reference (which makes also the "imagined" reality local as to its structure) is the decisive factor in the symbol; it is obvious that the triune totality of rock, tree and water is never "just" a rock, a tree and water. The complete landscape refers to paradise; we shall recognize paradisal imagery again in the tantric meditation techniques. The serpent is not just an item of some tribal or village "superstition"; historically and structurally, the *nāga* symbolism is crowned in Ananta, the one giant serpent on which Viṣṇu is lying in his pre-cosmic slumber. Similarly, the many goddesses are related to the one supreme goddess.

The *reflection* on the local imagery in its relation to the corresponding mythical reality followed and follows naturally from the symbolism. It is doubtful, however, that this development would have had such force and would have reached such heights without the realization that arose in Brahmanic orthodoxy. In Hinduism the two be-

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[1]) Verrier Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1947), see especially the design of the windows, p. 330.

[2]) See Eliade, *Patterns*, pp. 207-210; Kees W. Bolle, "Die Göttin und die Ritualbewegung," *Antaios*, eds. Mircea Eliade and Ernst Jünger (Vol. III, no. 3, September 1961), pp. 272 f.

[3]) Keith, *Philosophy of the Vedas*, pp. 193 f.

[4]) J. J. Meyer, *Trilogie Altindischer Vegetationsmächte* (Zürich-Leipzig: Max Niehan, 1937), III, 56.

came inseparable. We shall see how the two reached perhaps their deepest unity in the Tantras.

6. Excursus on Draupadī

Any exposition of a vast subject such as ours, most certainly when it is compressed in a short essay, runs the risk of oversimplification. In anticipation of our discussion of Tantra proper, it would be tempting to say for example that the concrete imagery of goddesses is an autochthonous Indian contribution, while the ritualistic and subsequent realization techniques are of an Aryan origin. Such a statement would be right too, but it can easily distract the attention from the complexity of the symbolisms in history. We have already learned from Coomaraswamy that in early indigenous cults people knew how to please and worship the deities in a profound and indeed most effective way. We may allow for a little excursus of suggestions and questions here to remind ourselves of the historical complexity, to which not only clear cut, recognizable religious symbols contributed, but many factors of life.

Draupadī is of course known as the famous heroine of the Mahābhārata, wife of the five Pāṇḍavas. Curiously, "Draupadī" occurs also as a name of a village goddess in Madras State. Was Draupadī installed as a goddess? Or was her name given to already existing deities? We do not know, nor do we know at what date she came in. Somehow, the epic must have played a part in channelling this name to South India. But if the need for some sort of mother goddess was felt, why was Draupadī chosen? Would not e g. Kuntī, the mother of the five heroes, have been more appropriate? Some suggestions can be made here. Firstly, we remember of Przyluski's investigations that the Goddess is not necessarily typified by being a mother. Secondly, in Hinduism in general—not just in Tantrism—the beloved outshines by far the mother. Thirdly, South India is particularly strong in its tradition of cults and educational narratives regarding the *pativratā*, the unconditionally obedient, devoted wife, whose husband is her God; telling and retelling such stories is regarded ideally suited for the education of young girls. The divinity of Draupadī may have had a root also in the text of the epic itself (MBh. 1, 197, 1 ff.) where we learn how the goddess Lakṣmī herself is appointed to be reborn as wife of the Pāṇḍavas. But also other themes of the epic may have stimulated the cult.

The problem of Draupadī's marriage with the Pāṇḍavas, five in

number, has often been discussed but is far from settled. Is this curious polyandry a survival of an older cultural tradition in which women may have wielded much more power than in Hindu society? Is it a narrative version of a supposed Indo-European religious structure, in which a goddess represented as it were the crown or sum total of the divine power of some gods to which she was related? [1]) We shall not deal with these and similar questions here. It may be noted, however, that each question, although it is addressed to only one aspect of a greater problem, is bound to lead to an answer in religious or socioreligious terms. That is to say, answers will have to deal with the symbolism of goddesses and of woman.

The case of Draupadī in the Epic is particularly instructive for an understanding of the very fluid line in Hinduism between "sacred" and "profane", between myth and narrative. A famous and dramatic story is narrated in the Sabhā Parva (MBh. 2, 68). King Yudhiṣṭhira, the oldest and wisest of the five brothers, has been defeated in the fateful game of dice with his opponent Duryodhana. He has lost everything: all his possessions, his kingdom, and even Draupadī, his and his brothers' wife. Draupadī is cruelly dragged into the assembly and is forcibly undressed. But she prays in her distress to Kṛṣṇa and miraculously, each time a new garment appears on her whenever one is torn from her body.

The story appealed to the imagination of Indian artists. This was no doubt due to its literary, accessible form; it lent itself to dance and to popular dramatization. Yet, the story may very well have had its effects on a more "unconscious" level at the same time. Przyluski has drawn the attention to the symbolism of the goddess in late agricultural societies; her heavy garments, even in climates in which so many and such heavy clothes could make no practical sense, are part of her being; they are a warrant of the earth's wealth! It is most probable that this mythical motif influenced the narrative in the Epic. The presence of such religious overtones would also explain how the heroine of the Mahābhārata could arrive at or return to a full divine status in many villages.

Finally—who knows?—the cult of Draupadī may owe some sti-

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[1]) See for this question S. Wikander, "Pāṇḍava-sagan och Mahābhāratas myteska förutsättningar," *Religion och Bibel*, VI, 1947, pp. 27 ff.; G. Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus IV* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1948); G. Dumézil, "La transposition des dieux souverains mineurs en héros dans la Mahābhārata," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, III, 1959, pp. 1 ff.

mulus to the awareness at an early date of the connection with Drupada, not only as the name of her father, but in the sense of (wooden) pillar or column (in R.V., V.S., A.V.).

In the case of Draupadī we are in the relatively fortunate position that we can formulate guesses and questions because of the vantage point offered by the epic. In most cases we are not even able to do that much. Yet, every deity has a history, even when it is in no way recorded.

7. Cultural Complexities and Cross-currents

At the conclusion of this chapter, two more groups of data that are well known but not always given due attention deserve to be mentioned; they are quite relevant to an understanding of the Hinduization process.

A. One is the manner in which the indigenous local gods and goddesses were worshipped; this manner is in part constitutive of the Hindu (and Buddhist) temple- and house-*pūjā*. The common use of incense, of bells, of dramatic and ceremonial dances, the offerings of cloths, food and flowers to the deity has its origin in the pre-Hindu period [1]) (This period varies a great deal of course in the different parts of India). The use of instrumental music also has its "not yet Hindu" roots; one example of many is the story of the *nāgasvaram*, a wooden wind-instrument without which the temple ceremonials, weddings, etc. in South India are incomplete; the families of the *nāgasvaram* players are traditionally not among the high castes. We shall have occasion to come back briefly to the art of dancing in the discussion of *mudrā* later on. Also the offerings of bloody sacrifices and of liquor (although in a different way also known in Vedism) in some temples date back to pre-Hinduism and earlier. Many of these customs that were not or not fully accepted in the great temples continue in smaller and popular holysteads. In the Tantras the Goddess is sometimes described and meditated on as dressed in yellow. Curiously, dressing the image of the Goddess and her worshippers (particularly those who participate with the *pūjārī* in the fire walking ceremony) in yellow garments is a wide-spread local custom at her annual festivities. Offerings of fish, meat and liquor are of prime importance in the traditional, local cults.

The later use of *dhāraṇīs*, of "mystic" syllables and *mantras* is no

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[1]) Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, p. 28.

doubt connected with early magical practices. [1]) The Hevajratantra (I, 2) lists some *mantras* with purposes such as petrifying, subduing, driving away, producing rain, chasing away an elephant, a tiger, etc. [2]) It goes without saying that this type of charms was not invented at the late date of such texts. The type is known everywhere, also outside of India. But in this general area we see more than anywhere else the transforming impact of Brahmanism. More precisely, we see how in its realization, systematic as its ritualism, Brahmanism reinforced the use of occasional magical words that as such were known in all places and times (to avoid bad luck, to put dangerous animals to flight, etc.), by placing in speech a new and central meaning for existence: firstly, the word as ultimate measure and summary of the ritual and hence the force constituting the cosmos; secondly, the concentration of power realizing a new level or mode of life; thirdly, the very way of realizing the "real reality" beyond the cycle of existences. In this context it is significant that the famous *mantra*: *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, which travelled beyond the borders of India in the expansion of Buddhism, begins and ends with syllables of the Vedic ritual. Within India, the tool of Hinduization and in many ways its crown remained the triumph of the Sanskrit language.

B. The second group of noteworthy data, which we can, unfortunately, only point to here, consists in the traditions of art and architecture. The temples being of a local character, it is not surprising that the architectural and artisan traditions are especially rooted in the indigenous, structurally local imageries. We have observed specific expressions of *orientatio* symbolism in Vedic texts. Works on *Śilpaśāstra*, however, describe to us minute details of construction (of temples, cities, villages) and structures and building-plans of such huge dimensions that the difference between the two is quite tangible and substantial. A city like Kāñcīpuram does not only have enormous temples, in other words structures of a permanence ostensibly different from the elaborate symbolism of the building of a fire-altar in Vedism and Brahmanism, but special broad roads are provided for the temple processions with the *rathas* (carriages) of the gods; these carriages themselves, of large dimensions, are often, like the temples, jewels of craftmanship. They are drawn by hundreds and hundreds of people at annual festivals (*Brahmotsava*), in which all castes can parti-

[1]) L. de la Vallée Poussin, *op. cit.*, p. 127. See also B. Bhattacharya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 18.

[2]) See also *Sādhanamālā*.

cipate, in the tour around the city. The artistic designs and the general religious traditions belong together. The beauty of temple plans, city plans and the processions is unmatched. The religious experience and the huge dimensions that go with this beauty can perhaps be termed typically Dravidian. The abstractness of the symbolism involved (geometrical design of temple and city) is in principle as much part of North as of South India. In the *maṇḍala* we shall see a new development of this symbolism.

CHAPTER FOUR

TANTRA AND TANTRISM [1])

> . . . existenziell erlebt werden kann nur, was von Mensch zu Mensch geht. — Joachim Wach [2])
>
> "Hey, listen," I said. "You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you happen to know by any chance?" I realized it was only one chance in a million.
>
> He turned around and looked at me like I was a madman. "What 're ya tryna do, bud?" he said. "Kid me?"
>
> J. D. Salinger [3])

1. Nature and Persistence of Symbols

The preceding chapters may have provided a background for our discussion of Tantrism. We have distinguished between "orthodox" and "unorthodox" elements, but we have also seen the interpenetration and mutual transformation of the two. Vedism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, and finally, as we shall see, also Tantrism, are religious movements in history, not doctrinal systems. The dividing lines between them are fluid. It is true, enmity was not altogether absent; we may recall here again the documented contempt of at least some Vedic people for the "phallus- worshippers." [4]) Yet, in religious affairs, enmity and exclusiveness, as well as missionary urge for conversion, are negligible. The development of symbols, which can be properly called the substance of religion, has its own way of persisting. Their continuous adaptation and transformation show as their basic character a great *openness*. Because of this basic character of symbolism, in spite of all sorts of war and of human peculiarities and inconveniences, Vedism, Brahmanism, Hinduism and Tantrism survived. But, even more clearly than before, we shall see in Tantrism that survival of religion is tantamount to change, incorporation and adaptation.

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[1]) Some parts of this chapter are elaborations of topics in our essay "Die Göttin und die Ritualbewegung."

[2]) . . . only that which is transmitted from man to man can be experienced existentially. (*Meister und Jünger* [Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer, n.d.] p. 11).

[3]) *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Signet Books, 1953), p. 49.

[4]) Gonda, *Veda*, p. 8.

We should be clear about two things in this context. In the first place, the "openness" of symbolism is not restricted to India. The "openness" is characteristic of religious symbolism as such. A curious example is given in the mythology of central Flores (Indonesia). We find there Adang and Evang (Adam and Eve!) as names of the first people [1]): remains of the contact with the Portuguese, but totally incorporated in the creation myths. We should not embellish this sort of process with our qualification "tolerant," in Hinduism any more than anywhere else. "Tolerance" as a concept is typical of a rather recent Western mental attitude, documented in and spread through works like Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*. Above all, in popular parlance, it is dangerously akin to "indifference." In tracing the way of religion, however, we find that a place has to be provided for new religious elements that are encountered; no religious reality that presents itself as such can be ignored The openness of religious symbols and myths involves creative acts. Thus, in the Hinduization process, India created mythological narratives to account for newly encountered tribes. This and similar mythical incorporations and transformations were obviously not the result of indifference, nor of a noble humanitarianism or tolerance; they were much more: a religious, ontic necessity. The openness of symbolism was part and parcel of the "orthodox" traditions in India as well as of the "unorthodox" traditions and local cults that they met.

In the second place, the success of a symbolism that gains the upper hand in the course of historical encounters is not due to publication and propagation in the common, modern sense of these words. Although it may be propagated too (Buddhist literature consists largely of *sermons*), it wins rather because of its "self-evidency," because of its "simply being there." [2]) This is not as much of a truism as it seems to be, certainly not for a Westerner. Our distinction between things that are and things that ought to be, the separation that we know in Western philosophy between metaphysics and ethics, is absent in India; in Indian philosophy what *is* (or even more concretely: what is available, what is undeniably there) is supreme; it determines what is to be done. There is a multitude of examples of

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[1]) P. Arndt, *Mythologie, Religion und Magie im Sika-gebiet* (Ende, Flores: Arnoldus druckerei, 1932), pp. 16, 19, 24, 67.

[2]) It is generally known that the Sanskrit words *tattvam* and also *satyam*, which can be loosely translated as "truth," have as prime referent a concrete reality, something at hand, a specific state of affairs.

more immediate relevance to our subject in specific symbols and "symbolic behaviour." We have seen how Śiva and Kubera were set side by side harmoniously in the epic, how Brahmanism was open to strange elements and absorbed the *nagas*, etc. In many villages, Brahmans have participated since time immemorial in local cults of the Goddess. It is true that, as a rule, they do not participate in matters of the bloody sacrificial acts, but the fact that Brahmans have their role in the long ceremonies is itself significant. It means the victory of the local goddess-symbolism, including again possibilities of re-adaptation in the process. The process of transformation, inherent in a symbol, is more important than the question about factual details: who conquered? The power to undergo transformations is in fact identical with the "self-evidency" of the symbol.

Elements of the "great tradition" and of the smaller local cults can move both ways. Next to the case of the local goddess, accepted by the "symbolic behaviour" of representatives of the "great tradition," we might cite other cases. One example among many is given in the tradition of the Sembadavans, a boatmen's tribe in the South Arcot District, who have a goddess called Angalamman (with a famous shrine at Malaiyanur). According to the accounts of the Sembadavans the goddess was originally a girl of their own community with whom Śiva once fell in love; their name Sembadavan would really mean "Śiva's boatmen." [1] Thus a local tradition was reinterpreted in terms of a wider tradition.

2. Cultural Matrix of Tantrism

Cultural influences have crossed India in all directions since early times. In writing they are attested to already in the inscriptions of Aśoka. Before the Gupta-dynasty (± 320 — ± 544), at the beginning of our era, cultural expansions increased also beyond the borders of India through enterprising travellers and merchants. A great increase of cultural expansions and contacts coincides with the age of the Guptas, who established their mighty empire in North (and partly Central) India. In this Classical Age of India the first Tantras appear. This does not imply that they were popular or widely accepted.

We have already indicated that we should study the Tantras in the light of the transformations to which symbolism lent itself in the meeting of various religious traditions; it can hardly be a coincidence

[1] W. Francis, *Gazetteer of the South Arcot District* (Madras, 1906), p. 110.

that they come up, or at least begin to become important, in an age in which intercultural encounters were the order of the day. Although we want to limit our discussion to certain developments within the boundaries of India, we should not underestimate the upsurge of colonial and cultural expansionism that began at that time. It was more than a matter of political, military, and technical factors. A point in case is the Tibetan and Chinese translations of Sanskrit works; these translations were more than literal renditions in other languages; they were ritual-inspiring undertakings that transformed life beyond the domain of Indian domination.

For an understanding of Tantrism attention to cultural encounters seems more promising than the rather academic interest in the question where exactly Tantrism originated. Assam and Bengal are "classical" regions of Tantric practices. Nepal could be mentioned. Also Kashmir. Also China. But Kerala, in the South, has a long Tantric reputation too. Significant in all these suggestions is that in each case we have to do with border-regions; in other words, with lands of cultural amalgamation. Even if we could indicate precisely where the oldest forms of Tantrism arose (Assam and Nepal would perhaps have the best chances here), this still would not throw much light on the problem of Tantrism. The problem is not comparable to, for instance, the problem of Platonism, where the teachings of Plato are obviously of the greatest importance. The existing Tantras give no conclusive evidence concerning a single geographical origin; at most lists are given classifying texts according to existing, *most diverse* locations. [1])

3. "Tantra"

The word "tantra" itself is not very illuminating. There are texts whose title ends in *-tantra* that are by no means Tantric in content, "tantra" being only a name for "work," "book," like *sūtra*. There are also Tantric works which are not entitled Tantra. The word is derived from the root *tan*, to extend, spread, stretch. Yet, it is doubtful whether we should attach much importance to *tantra* in the sense of "loom" (lit.: "instrument to stretch") [2]), although in ancient days the typically female occupations of spinning and weaving yielded

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[1]) See in this context the materials collected by P. C. Bagchi in his *Studies in the Tantras* (Calcutta, 1939), I, 45-60.

[2]) In this context we may note that the ordinary word *sūtra* has as its first meaning "thread."

important material for the symbolic imagination. We think of the Moirai and the Norns and of the text in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (III, 6) where the world is said to be woven like a tissue.

We are inclined to attribute more weight to the common usage, in which *tan* is given the more general meaning, "to do." "to make." It denotes especially the right way of doing things in rituals; a priest is to place a vessel in such and such a way, in such and such a place, etc. Since the Tantras are as a rule written in a rather faulty, grammatically incorrect Sanskrit, it may be of some use to bear in mind this common usage, rather than to indulge in unnecessary speculation in order to explain the preference for the word Tantra in those texts. With the common meaning of doing things in the right way in rituals, "tantra" is distinct (which in no way means separated) from *mantra*, the prescribed, sacred formula.

We may add that this common parlance corresponds to the early usage in which *tantra* was applied to *mīmāṃsā* (the science dealing with Vedic ritual) and the performance of sacrifice.

Although we do not want to dwell on etymological elaborations, we may note that the emphasis on the right conduct is exceedingly great in Tantrism. We shall see later how, in fact, all of life, all of the world, is transferred into ritual.

4. "Secrecy"

One word is to be said about the socalled "secrecy" of the Tantras.

It seems to us that misunderstanding in regard to the Tantric teachings arises from the confusion about religious mysteries in general. We know that the instruction of the Upaniṣads was not given to all and sundry; it was transmitted to and by a socially limited group. Yet, we should remember that this instruction was organically related to the ritual, and, through the world-establishing symbolism of the ritual, to the common weal. The existing secrecy is obviously of a social nature, but it is derived from something else; from the common symbolism as it is appropriated individually in specific ways of realization. Not the social diversification as such determines the secrecy, but the increasing emphasis on the *appropriation* of the symbolic realities.

That secrecy in religion is not of a merely social character is rather humorously demonstrated in a popular narrative about the famous Vaiṣṇavite *ācārya* Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja received a *mantra* from his *guru*. Custom demands that such a *mantra* be transmitted and kept in

great secrecy. The *guru*'s grace that is conveyed in it guarantees the pupil's salvation; it is evidently of an "individual" nature. The story, however, tells that Rāmānuja ascended a temple and shouted his new *mantra* from the rooftops so that all could hear it. He did not do this in spite of its secrecy, but because the appropriation of the symbol, if relevant at all, had to be relevant to the whole world. In such stories the awareness of what secrecy is in religious symbolism is still maintained.

The more emphasis is given to appropriation, the more mystery or secrecy is stressed. The basic symbolism, whether of a "ritualistic" or of a "local" signature, remains the same for the public cult and for the esoteric circles. At least there is no radical division between the two. Hence we can use the word "individualism" only in quotation marks. The individual does not become a final criterion of religious reality, leave alone the measure of all things, because of the force of symbols whose reality he appropriates.

5. Divine Reality and its Appropriation

We have already suggested that the force of the realization methods which developed in ritualistic circles became decisive in later developments. Historically this force met and blended with developments in places where a "local" symbolism prevailed. The interpenetration of the two, documented in the Tantras, is understandable among other things because we find in both a coalescence of a generally accepted symbolism and a sense of mystery calling for "esoteric" instruction.

In this context, the ancient female deity is very important for the development of the local cults. She is the guardian of the products of the field, of that which sustains the common life of the whole village. This wealth arising from the earth is not "just capital," but the bearer of her sacredness. She is often *represented* by heaps of unthreshed grain. [1]) From early times on, the significance of the sacred common weal has often been expressed by mysterious rites, in which women have played an important part. During long droughts in the district Mirtapur, naked women pull the plough through the field while praying to Mother Earth, at which occasion men are not allowed. [2]) It is important for our subject to note that with the agricultural rites we are at the roots of all later and more complex ri-

[1]) J. J. Meyer, *Trilogie*, I, 179.
[2]) *Idem*, p. 115.

tualization of woman. But also, with the early agricultural symbolism, we are at the roots of a development in which mysteries take an increasing part. The divine symbols are basic to the life of the whole community; but it is necessary to know and enact the secrets of the Goddess. In this development is a beginning of "individual" devotion.

Wealth is inseparably connected with the origin and renewal of life. This is, already expressed too abstractly, the mystery that needs an appropriation on the part of the devotee. According to a long established conviction and practice in Indian villages, those houses which do not contribute to the ceremonies and festivals of the Goddess are excluded from her protection; in other words, her protection does not go without saying and an "individual" effort or contribution is to be made.

There must have been a common essence and origin of the two sides of the agricultural religiosity, public and mystic, in the entire ancient world from India to Rome. This symbolic unity of the two sides is probably nowhere more lucidly dealt with than in the works of Professor W.B. Kristensen. Discussing the cult of the chtonic divinity Dis Pater, he says: "...the secular festivity was a mystery-festivity of the same character as the festivity in Eleusis, devoted to Demeter, also the goddess of the life of the earth. Characteristic of both festivities was the mood of anxiety and hope, in which the holy acts were done whose purpose was the victory over death and finiteness, the mood which dominates all forms of mystery-cult." [1])

Wording and tone of many a Tantric hymn show the unity of the basic symbolism. The central Goddess is said to be the "origin of all prosperity," [2]) the "giver of prosperity and wealth." [3]) The awareness of the divine source of food and wellbeing is reflected especially in hymns to Annapūrṇā who is "ever giving rice." [4]) The name Annapūrṇā itself means "the one who is replete with food." In a hymn to her it is said:

> Whoever having recited the *mantra* daily,
> Reads this hymn at dawn of day,

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[1]) W. B. Kristensen, "De Rijkdom der Aarde in Mythe en Cultus," *Verzamelde Bijdragen tot Kennis der Antieke Godsdiensten* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitg. Maatsch., 1947), p. 297.

[2]) Arthur and Ellen Avalon, *Hymns to the Goddess* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1952), "Bhairavīstotra" 13 (from the Tantrasāra).

[3]) *Idem*, "Tārāṣṭakam" 1 (Nīlatantra).

[4]) *Idem*, "Annapūrṇāstotra" 1 (Tantrasāra).

Obtains wealth of rice
And prosperity. [1])

But the same symbolism has its mysterious, esoteric aspects. Our hymn to Annapūrṇā concludes with the following stanza:

Not to all and any should this hymn be revealed,
For be it made known to one who is unworthy,
Then ill falls upon him,
Therefore should it be carefully concealed. [2])

6. The Setting of Tantric Appropriation

Methods of appropriation are paramount in the Tantras. The texts leave no room for a "merely theoretical" or "epistemological" interpretation, even to a Western reader who is used to such an approach. The *concrete experience* of the Tantric worshipper (*sādhaka*) or *yogin* plays a crucial role. The extraordinary and articulate emphasis on experience of realities that strike us as "non-empirical" is no doubt one of the reasons why some investigators have been led to assign the whole subject to psychologists and psychiatrists. The *sādhaka* is not to accept as an item of our world-view, much less to take for granted, but to *realize* the relation of Śiva and Pārvatī. Words meaning "to realize" abound in the Tantras. *Cakras* ("mystical centers of orientation"), the presence of deities in them, etc., are all to be realized, which can be understood as "produced" or "made" concretely, or as "realized in one's consciousness" or both.

The importance of "realization" is shown in all Tantras in the very form of instruction. The relation between the *śiṣya* ("the one who is to be taught," the pupil) and his *guru* is indispensable. [3]) The *śaiva* and *śākta* Tantras are as a rule written as dialogues between Śiva and his consort Devī or Pārvatī, his śakti ("power"). Usually Śiva takes the role of the teacher, Devī of the pupil. In some texts the roles are reversed: Devī teaches, Śiva is taught. The bond with the teacher is an absolute necessity; on it solely depends psychic, mental and spiritual progress.

Of course, the submission to a *guru* as absolute authority does not start with, nor is it limited to Tantrism. It occurs in all *bhakti* and *yoga* traditions. It is well known that already the Upaniṣadic teachings

[1]) *Idem*, "Annapūrṇāstotra" 11.
[2]) *Idem*, "Annapūrṇāstotra" 12.
[3]) See Kulārṇavatantra, ed. A. Avalon (London: Luzac & Co., 1917), chaps. XII and XIII.

demanded a specific relationship. But the Tantras make this point in exuberant terms. Everything else may be wrong, but the relationship to the *guru* should be pure; this is the only condition and if it is fulfilled, perfection is guaranteed. The way to perfection (*sādhana*) is open, an early Buddhist Tantra tells us, for outcasts, even for professional murderers, etc.; only those "who are intent on reviling the teacher do not succeed on the way to perfection." [1]) The same argument is set forth with many variations. It would be wrong to hear in this sort of reasoning a rebellion against the caste system, whether in Buddhist or in Hindu texts. We should see first and foremost the religious center of such remarks. That center is the intimate relation, or even identity of God (whether Śiva or the highest Buddha) and his female counterpart. From here can we understand that the Tantric *sādhana* requires not only the *sādhaka*'s full confidence in the teacher, but even the veneration of the teacher as a deity. The relation of *deva* and *śakti*, their ultimate identity, as a symbol, does not only refer to the final goal of one's efforts, but determines the form of the instruction from the outset. This form is itself *sym-bolic* in the literal sense of the word, "co-inciding." Where the *guru* teaches the *śiṣya* and supervises his progress in liberation techniques, there is not just a psychological experiment going on which may or may not succeed. Rather, the basic reality of the whole world is present, then and there.

7. Micro- and Macrocosmos

There are many differences of detail in Tantric imagery. There are differences between Buddhist and Hindu texts and between texts of the same tradition in names and numbers of divinities. Specialists may stress the great variety of details, [2]) but not infrequently they are unable to clarify the significance of the dissimilarities. However, what is known of the Tantras delineates a movement that as such is a distinct, although not separate unity within the history of Indian spirituality.

One basic characteristic of the Tantric teachings, in spite of all varieties, is the identification of *macro-* and *microcosmos*. The *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, perhaps the most important text edited by Arthur Avalon, [3])

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[1]) ācāryanindanaparā naiva sidhyanti sādhane, Guhyasamājatantra, ed. B. Bhattacharyya (G. O. S., LIII; Baroda, 1913), V, 5.

[2]) See A. Wayman, "Totemic Beliefs in the Buddhist Tantras," *History of Religions*, eds. M.. Eliade, J. Kitagawa, Ch. Long (I, 1, Summer 1961), pp. 81 f.

[3]) *The Serpent Power* (6th ed.; Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1958).

gives a clear account of such equation. In Tantrism we find not only the most elaborate development of what we have called "realization," but also the climax of "interiorization." However, the objects of interiorization are no longer restricted to the symbolisms of the ritual, but comprise predominantly "local" symbols.

In the human body various *cakras* (centers) are located, In between the anus and the sexual organ, at the root of the spine, is the *Mūlādhāra*, the basic *cakra*. In the middle of this design is a yellow square, representing *pṛthivī* (the Earth). Within this element is a triangle, pointing downwards, representing the *yoni*, the female element, as in the wide-spread archaic symbolism. In the heart of the *yoni*, the *svayambhūliṅga* is situated, i.e. the *liṅga* "existing by itself." The Goddess, whose presence is indicated by the triangle and the Earth, is again present here in the form of a serpent, Kuṇḍalinī or Kuṇḍalī, "the coiled one"; for the accumulation of symbols in the Tantras is infinite. She is coiled around the *liṅga* and sleeping. In her sleep she covers the opening of the *liṅga*.

We should not be hasty in explaining the symbolism of the *Mūlādhāra* and all related imageries in the Tantras as sexual. It is true that the togetherness of a "female" element (triangle, *yoni*, Kuṇḍalinī) and the "male" element (the *liṅga*) suggests a sexual interpretation to many investigators. But sexuality as such does not bring us much closer to the *Mūlādhāra* nor to almost any other symbolism. In the first place we should rather emphasize here the cosmogonic features. The triangle, the earth and the serpent express a primordial power more than a form of sexual precision. The triangle, pointing downwards, as we have seen, is the most "abstract" symbol of the Goddess as ruler of the world, as "Genetrix," but not necessarily as mother or as wife. The Earth, in India as elsewhere, is the Great Mother of life; her classical partner is Dyauḥ, the Sky, but again, her generative power, her abundance is mentioned much more frequently than her partnership. In the *Mūlādhāra* symbolism, at best only the connection of Kuṇḍalinī and the *liṅga* seems to be open for a sexual interpretation. But here the serpent form relates more easily to the imagery of the beginning or of the mythical time before the beginning of the world; it symbolizes the origin of what is yet uncreated, the "chaotic." [1]) The *liṅga* also cannot be called a sexual image, *in casu* a phallus, without a great deal of qualification. The myth of its origin narrates

[1]) See Eliade, *Patterns*, chap. viii.

how the *liṅga* arose from the primordial waters, symbolic of Śiva as lord of creation and destruction. [1])

Secondly, we may discern in our particular symbolism of the *Mūlādhāra* a certain "inertia"; Kuṇḍalinī's sleep, the closed *liṅga*. But we have to qualify and correct this external impression immediately. The symbol of Pṛthivī, the Earth, is clearly meant as the foundation of life. In conjunction with this, Kuṇḍalinī's sleep and her covering of the *liṅga*'s opening are meant as the comprehensive source of things that are not or not yet manifest. We are told that the basic *cakra* comprises the principles of matter, of sound, of odor, of *apāna* (one of the vital breaths, supposed to be located in the abdomen), and also several of the gods. The text of the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* (8) explicitly mentions the presence of Kandarpa, the god of love, as Jīveśa, i.e. Lord of individual souls (for the rest also identified here with a vital breath); the commentary remarks: "he is called Jīveśa because he upholds the souls." [2]) The whole imagery is in agreement with the general Indian thought that the unmanifest state is at the same time the fullest possible. Hence it can also be said that the *deva* who resides in the *svayambhūliṅga*, i.e. Śiva, is *vilāsin* (the "playful" and "radiant" one; a "sporter"), [3]) which may be indicative of his sexual activity or of his function as Lord of the world's "play" (*līlā*), but at any rate of the opposite of "unmanifestness" in the sense of "non-being."

In the same vein we may understand the allusions implying "fullness" in the symbolism of the Goddess in the *Mūlādhāra*. The *yoni* in the form of the triangle is said to be Kāmarūpa. [4]) Kāmarūpa refers to the existing, manifest world, in which Jīveśa rules; but it is interesting that it is also the name of Assam, the principal place of Tantric practices according to many traditions and legends. Further, the triangle is known as Traipura, [5]) which is literally "belonging to Tripura;" Tripura is the mythical city of the Asuras, destroyed by Śiva, who thus restored the true order of the world. The commentators on our text explain Traipura as referring to the dwelling place of Tripurasundarī, the "fairest maiden of the three worlds," the queen of the universe in her most adorable form.

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[1]) H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. J. Campbell (Bollingen Series, VI; New York: Pantheon, 1946), pp. 128 f.

[2]) asya jīvadhārakatvāt jīveśa ityuktam.

[3]) *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, 9.

[4]) *Idem*, 8.

[5]) *Ibidem*.

The symbols of the Devī are multifarious and often overlapping. But in all images that are given, which are to be contemplated by the Tantric *yogin*, we notice the all-containing fullness which we observed in the *Mūlādhāra*. In the rest of the subtle physiology we find precisions and completions of this theme.

When Kuṇḍalinī is aroused, she begins her way upward along nerves or channels (*nāḍīs*). The various methods aiming at her arousal will not occupy us at length in our endeavours to understand symbolic developments. Among the methods, the major one is the use of respiration techniques. It is well known from the classical and older forms of *yoga*. [1]) We should note that the Tantras represent the means of concentration in a concrete, localized fashion. There are many such concretely conceived *nāḍīs* in the human body. In some texts their number is increased fabulously (72.000 according to *Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā*, 4, 18; according to *Śiva Saṃhitā* as many as 300.000!). Three of them are of explicit importance. The central one, related to or identified with the spinal column, is named *Suṣumnā*. Around the *Suṣumnā* are the *Piṅgalā*, connected with the sun, the colour red and with mortal poison, and the *Iḍā*, which is connected with the moon, is pale coloured and has the qualities of *soma*. These two are said to end in the nostrils.

It is clear that *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* represent opposites: sun and moon, life and death. Their colours correspond respectively to the colours of Śiva and Pārvatī in their androgynic form. The three *nāḍīs* are equated also with the three holy and life-giving streams (*nadīs*) of the world: *Suṣumnā* with the Sarasvatī, *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* with the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. This homologization makes understandeable how—like the rivers—the *nāḍīs* can occasionally be represented as goddesses. The *Suṣumnā*, at or in which the six main *cakras* are located, is equated with the cosmic mountain, Mount Meru. The micro- and macrocosmic symbolism is complete.

The opposition in all respects of *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* shows that not all opposites are necessarily expressed in terms of male and female; both words are feminine. Yet, also here the texts do not allow for easy generalizations. In an other Hindu Tantra, the *Sammohana*, quoted in the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, the nerve *Iḍā* is said to be the *Śakti* and *Piṅgalā* corresponds to *Puruṣa*, [2]) "the male principle." Furthermore,

[1]) See Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, chap. iii.

[2]) See S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism* (Calcutta: University, 1958), p. 107.

in Buddhist texts, in which *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* are called Lalanā and Rasanā, we find also as names of these two respectively Prajñā ("wisdom," "the right knowledge"; feminine) and Upāya ("means," "method"; masculine).

At most we can very cautiously draw the following conclusions. In the first place, the terminology in the Buddhist Tantras is here (as it seems to be on the whole) more philosophically transparent. "Wisdom" and "means," especially in conjunction with śūnyatā (the ultimate "void") and karuṇā (compassion) have been subjects of important philosophical discussions. [1]) In this particular case the gender of words known from philosophical traditions contributed quite naturally to the Tantric symbolism of the opposite nerves and of the commingling of the extremes in a supreme embrace. In the Hindu Tantras we look in vain for clearly identifiable philosophical associations, although the principle of opposites expressed in the two nerves is equally clear. It seems to us that the names *Iḍā* and *Piṅgalā* are presented as symbols *pur sang*, in spite of the obscurity of their history. *Piṅgalā* in the sense of "nerve" occurs already in Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8, 6, 1. *Piṅgalā* and *piṅgala* (and also related words: *piṅgākṣa*, *piṅgākṣī*) as adjectives (reddish, reddish brown) occur widely; it is noteworthy that they have often reference to Śiva or figures associated with him, [2]) the more so because, of the two nerves, it is only *Piṅgalā* which is identified as *puruṣa*. The name *Iḍā* is principally known from the Ṛgveda and subsequent ritualism. It is the name of "food," more particularly the sacrificial food or libation and is at the same time a goddess, hence the "personified" libation and welfare that results from the offering. [3]) *Iḍā* maintains the mark of a female being in the Tantras when she is identified as *prakṛti* ("primordial nature," as against *puruṣa*).

In the second place, our discussion may convince us once more that sexual imagery by itself does not fully elucidate symbols in the Tantras. We can only say that it is the most important factor that lent itself to symbolic usage in this religious development. This usage, shaped and reshaped in the course of time and tradition, is the theme of our essay. It is not the concept of the triangle, the earth, the snake, of the phallus or of sex that explains the *Mūlādhāra*. The

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[1]) *Idem*, chap. iv, especially pp. 90-95 and *passim*.

[2]) See under Piṅgala in O. von Böhtlingk and R. von Roth, *Sanskrit Wörterbuch* (7 vols.; Petersburg, 1852-1875).

[3]) See Gonda, *Veda*, pp. 102, 106.

symbolism evolves in using these elements. It is always *something else* that makes the ingredients into a new religious structure. This "something else" is the intriguing object of the history of religions. It is intriguing in that it is continuously moving and is always ahead of the signs, ingredients, elements by which we recognize it. As we have seen in our instance, each of the elements involved in the *cakras* has its own symbolic history; besides, even if we could for a moment de-symbolize the elements ("just" or "merely" earth, phallus, sex), we would at that instant lose sight of the symbolism which we try to understand. For our understanding it is apparently necessary to follow the course of the "something else," the *ritual movement*. At this point it is perhaps not superfluous to remind ourselves of this concern, for otherwise it is quite possible that we should not see the wood for the trees in following the symbols, the multifarious traces of the "something else" in Tantrism.

8. Interiorized Cosmic Process

The symbolism of the *nāḍīs* brings in a dynamic element, different from what we observed in the *Mūlādhāra*. Something is to happen in the *yogin*. Hence, texts like the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, where the interest in immediate and physical results is carried to the extreme, have very little patience with the multitude of bodily channels. In the same place where it mentions the existence of 72,000 *nāḍīs*, the text goes on to say: "*Suṣumnā* is the Śambhavī *śakti* [the *śakti* of Śambhu = Śiva] The other *nāḍīs* do not lead to what is wanted" (4, 18). Also in the Buddhist texts the central nerve, the *Avadhūtī* corresponding to the *Suṣumṇā* of the Hindu Tantras, is given great importance.

In whatever way the *nāḍīs* are articulated, Kuṇḍalinī, raised up in the *Mūlādhāra* by the yogin, passes through various *cakras*. The *svayambhūliṅga* is no longer closed. The process of creation begins. The cosmogonic imagery coincides with and is realized by the *sādhaka* on his way to the "great liberation" (*mahānirvāṇa*) or "supreme bliss" (*mahāsukha*). The six *cakras* that exist according to the Hindu Tantras and which are traversed consecutively by Kuṇḍalinī are each in the form of a lotus: wide-spread cosmogonic symbol as it arises from the water, the pre-cosmic, the chaotic. The numbers of lotus petals differ in the various *cakras*. So do the letters of the alphabet which are written on the petals; also the colour, name of god and *śakti*, *dhātu* ("element," "ontic layer": earth, water, fire, air, ether). The sixth center (counting the *Mūlādhāra* as first) is the *Ājñācakra*. It is beyond the

dhātus and is the seat of *manas*, the discriminative faculty which governs the five cognitive faculties, and of Paramaśiva himself. The letters on the petals of the *cakras*, taken together, form the alphabet (fifty signs) and are called *mātṛkās*.[1]) Just as in some older texts, where only some sounds or letters—usually the eight vowels—went by that name, the interest in *origins* dominates; the first meaning of *mātṛkā* is "mother," "source." Tantric speculation on sound and speech forms a climax of symbolism in Indian linguistics. [2]) The origin of speech is inseparably connected with the origin of the cosmos and forms part of the Kuṇḍalinī symbolism; in the second chapter we have seen the strong impetus for this development in ritualistic, "orthodox" circles. One name of the Goddess in the Tantras is Parā Vāk, the Supreme Word. [3]) From her in her transcendent form (Parā Śakti), that is her unmanifest form, the *mātṛkās* emanate after a process with several stages. These fifty signs are the alphabet, the principles of speech, and yet more than that: since they come from the primordial force itself, they are just as many creative forces that can be put to use by the initiate.

9. "Paradise"

Each *cakra* that is traversed by the Goddess means a new realization of the *yogin* on his way to the final goal. The highest place to be reached, as stated by the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* and accepted in the common tradition in India, is the abode of Śiva, *Śivasthāna*, beyond the six *cakras*. It is located on top of the head. As another name, *Sahasrārapadma*, indicates, it is a lotus with one thousand petals. It corresponds with the sixth, the highest *cakra*, the *Ājñācakra*—which is thought to be in the space between the eyebrows—in that it is described as having a *maṇḍala without form*. This should be taken, no doubt, as signifying that in these highest realms such limitations as implied by form are transcended. With all of the six *cakras*, certain *bījas*, "mystical sounds" or "seed syllables," are connected, respectively

[1]) The Devī herself can be named "the one who is in the form of *mātṛkās*." See *Lalitāsahasranāman, with Bhāskararāya's Commentary*, trans. R. A. Sastry (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1951), p. 258. For "orthodox" antecedents of cosmogonic qualities of the alphabet, see Aitareya Āraṇyaka, II, 2, 4, where night and day are said to be brought about respectively through consonants and vowels.

[2]) For the history of linguistic speculation, see L. Renou, "Les spéculations sur le langage," *L'Inde Classique*, II, eds. L. Renou and J. Filliozat (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1953), pp. 79 f.

[3]) She is seen in relationship to *Vāk* or *Ambhṛṇī* in Ṛgveda, X, 125.

laṃ, vaṃ, raṃ, yaṃ, haṃ, and finally the supreme one *Oṃ* (in the *Ājñācakra*); they are powerful means of concentration for the *sādhaka*. But here, in the highest place, no *bīja* is present anymore. All boundaries of the phenomenal world have lost their importance. After what we have said in regard to the *Mūlādhāra* about "unmanifestness" as fullness, it is no wonder that at the same time, exactly here, the Goddess is again present in her full abundance: while the six *cakras* are marked by certain characters of the alphabet, the *Sahasrārapadma* has twenty times the whole alphabet (*mātṛkās*!). Its "ontic layer," *dhātu*, is described as *satyam*, "truth," reality itself.

But, being a religious symbol, the abode of Śiva is described on various levels also in very concrete terms. The *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, I, 1-5, speaks poetically of Śiva's mountain as scented with the fragrance of the flowers of all seasons, fanned by soft, cool and perfumed breezes, inhabited by singing birds, and so on. Such descriptions of beauty and harmony, not logically coherent with the undefinability of this supreme state, show the paradisal features of the *Śivasthāna*. This paradise exists in its own way, beyond all pairs of opposites; here the union of Śiva and Śakti is complete. In terms of Tantric physiology, Śiva's paradise is higher than the top of mount Meru, the *axis mundi* itself; the *Sahasrārapadma* is located on top of the head, but mount Meru (= the spinal column) ends in the neck. This is expressive of the eternal urge of Indian spirituality to reach an ultimate beyond the ultimate.

10. Monotony or Variety in Tantric Symbolism

In the imageries presented here is undeniably a certain monotony for the Western mind. We may flatter ourselves with the hope that this monotony is not altogether due to our presentation. Are the imageries not all mere variations on one theme in one and the same key? We have seen how from the beginning of the aspirant's training the divine, realizable unity determines the instruction and its very forms. The complex symbolism of the unmanifest state is expressive of the fullest reality. There are the nerves with their opposite qualities, but at the same time the unity of the opposites is suggested in the central *nāḍī*. What does the initiation and what do the subsequent realizations *lead to*? Can we really speak about a movement at all?

We should discern that our questioning is extraneous to the development of the symbolism with which we are confronted. Evidently it is *our* problem, which did not arise in India, certainly not in this

form. Our sort of boredom and fatigue is clearly unrelated to Tantric traditions or to the traditions of which Tantrism is the confluence. We have to do our utmost to realize that all those traditions were borne by people, conveyed from man to man. Transformation and accumulation were part of the movement in handing down the symbols, but to all this our impatience is alien. Our problem in following the *ritual movement* is comparable to our perplexities when we begin to listen to Indian music. Harmonic development does not play a role; modulation to other keys is lacking. It seems monotonous indeed; throughout the piece of music that we hear, there is the continuous sound of the dominant plus the upper tonic and the octave below; the music naturally cannot leave this grasp. But, is the monotony part of the music or of our hearing? Music can be developed according to various principles. The monotonous sound of dominant and tonic can also be called "the ambient in which the song lives and moves and has its being" (Coomaraswamy). [1]) Listening somewhat more closely, we discover that within the unchanging key, the melody moves with great spontaneity—the creative ability of the performing artist—and refinement—the musician's skill of ornamentation. Then we discover also that our first reaction was quite external; apparently there are forms of music with standards different from the one we are used to; there are also different ways of listening.

Similarly, in Tantric symbolism we may discern only one repetitive theme with only minor variations; this is correct—as in the Indian music which we heard the fact remains that the key does not change. But the seemingly insignificant variations are to be given as much attention as possible. They are among the forms which are transmitted by people who have been and are living with them. It is true, personal reactions are inevitable in any meeting; this is as true for the ancient *tāntrika* as for the modern person reading the Tantras. Without personal reactions, an encounter would not be human. But at the same time we have to postpone our judgment, at least until we have seriously considered the possibilities of human life in terms of seemingly fatiguing complexities of symbols as found in the Tantras. For those symbols are not fatiguing in their complexity. On the contrary, they have a simplicity of their own. Their changes and equations are multifarious, but not arbitrary. What matters—as in music which is

[1]) A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Indian Music," *The Dance of Shiva* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957), pp. 85-97.

strange to us—is the endeavor to find the details and structures to which we had not given that peculiar importance in our own tradition.

11. Totality of Time and Space

Each *cakra* with its own features can be understood as a "fulness;" the lotus form, the particular manifestations of deity and *śakti*, etc., all suggest that. We are able now to accept in our description a certain tautology as inevitable. Thus we see that the *cakras* together form a "complete fulness," a *maṇḍala* of which the *Sahasrārapadma* is the center. [1]) Since together the *cakras* represent all elements that make up the world, this *maṇḍala* is clearly an *imago mundi*.

This static symbolism is completed by the dynamic voyage of Kuṇḍalinī. Through her awakening, uncovering of the *liṅga* and ascension along the *nāḍīs*, the six *cakras* are realized, i.e. the cosmos comes into being. This meaning presents itself so much more easily since the world is always thought of as an "emanation" (*sṛṣṭi*) rather than a creation.

The *maṇḍala* is not just a conceptualization or a picture of the world. No matter how often and in how many concrete forms it is expressed in art, as a symbol it reveals the ground, the ultimate reality of the world. It contains the highest point, the paradise in which all "wordly" lines meet in their transcendent center. In the same way, dynamically, temporally, the *sādhaka* realizes in Kuṇḍalinī's voyage through the *nāḍīs* (which are his subtle nerves and at the same time the great streams of the world) the inscrutable course of the cosmos, its creation, its sustenance and its completion or destruction.

Correspondingly, we find in the ritual certain distinctions. The placing of the letters in *cakras* is divided in *sṛṣṭi* ("creation"), *sthiti* ("existence," "maintenance") and *saṃhāra* ("destruction"). These are the three great, divine functions; but here by *sṛṣṭi* is meant the insertion of the fifty lettersigns (from *a* to *kṣa*) in the *cakras*, either concretely by writing them down, or by pronouncing the sounds; by *sthiti* is meant the placing of the letters mentally in the *cakras*; by *saṃhāra* is meant the placing of the letters in the reverse order (from *kṣa* to *a*). [2]) As we have seen, sound is a crucial principle of "creation," fully expressed in the alphabet, so that pronouncing the

[1]) See Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 244.

[2]) See Arthur Avalon, *Tantra of the Great Liberation* (2nd ed.; Madras, 1927), p. 10, n. 11.

mātṛkās and writing them down are equally symbolic in the ritual.

The simultaneously static and dynamic symbolism is expressed not only in the *maṇḍala* of the six *cakras*. Several designs and objects serve as *yantras*, "instruments," more especially, instruments of concentration which express the same totality of time and space. Well known is the *Śrīyantra* or *Śrīcakra*, a geometrical design of triangles, enclosed by concentric circles and lotus petals. [1]) Following the letters of the alphabet in it, one turns in a direction opposite the clock, in a spiral movement to the central point, the *bindu*. [2]) The historical origin of the *Śrīyantra* is obscure, but we can understand why it became popular. Like the *cakras* in the subtle physiology, it does not portray an empirical reality, but it comprehends in a precise, formal way what is expressed in the *cakras* together, combining the reality of the cosmos (spatially) with the cosmic development (cosmogonically, temporally). [3])

12. Concreteness of Experience in Imagery

The symbolic, both physical and cosmic, nature of the *cakras* prevents too systematically conceptualized conclusions. The texts are hard to understand. The meaning is often intentionally dressed in a secret language which one has to learn from the initiate. This "intentional language" is the result of the ever increasing emphasis on realization and initiation. [4]) In rituals and techniques the expression and the actual "application" of the symbols, which are the basis of any formulation, are protected by the greatest secrecy.

A particular secrecy exists around the so-called *Ānandakandapadma*, the heart lotus with eight petals. [5]) It is situated close to the *Anāhata* (the fourth *cakra*). But the *Ānandakanda* itself is not among the six principal *cakras*. It is the center of all happiness and bliss and the seat of the *jīva* or *haṃsa*, that is the human soul, or rather, the "individual ego." It seems to play a role particularly among those worship-

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[1]) See e.g. Bhāskararāya's description in *Varivasyā-Rahasya*, ed. and trans. S. Subramaṇya Śāstrī (Adyar: Adyar Library, 1948), in the first *aṃśa*. Also Lakṣmīdhara's commentary on *Ānandalaharī* 14, translation in Saundaryalaharī, eds. R. A. Śāstri & K. R. Garu (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1957), p. 37.

[2]) See P. H. Pott, *Yoga en Yantra* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1946), pp. 43 f.

[3]) The *Śrīyantra* is a perfect example of the phenomenon for which Zimmer coined the term "expanding form" in *Myths and Symbols*, pp. 130-136.

[4]) See for "intentional language" (*Sandhābhāṣā*) especially P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-33, and Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 249-254, 410-411.

[5]) See P. H. Pott, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

pers who are considered followers of the left path (*vāmācāra*, to which we shall return briefly). The *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* (22-27), speaking of the *Anāhatapadma*, refers also to the heart lotus, according to a commentary:

> Inside [i.e. inside the Anāhata] is the red eight-petalled lotus. There is also the Kalpa-tree [the "tree of plenty"] and the seat of the Iṣṭa-deva [the "chosen divinity," chosen by or assigned to the aspirant for the fulfilment of his *sādhana*] under a beautiful awning..., surrounded by trees laden with flowers and fruits and sweet voiced birds. There meditate on the Iṣṭa-deva according to the ritual of the worshipper. [1])

We have already noticed how the Tantras extended and elaborated, above all concretized the theory of the *prāṇas* (vital breaths). That is to say: the value of the (subtle) physiology is greatly increased. One could perhaps interpret the classical Yogasūtras of Patañjali as interested in bodily existence merely as an instrument to lead the *yogin* to his supreme, transcendent goal, but here the instrument becomes all important. The heart lotus as place of the "individual ego" underlines what is generally Tantric: the concrete experience of supreme reality. The word "individual" should not be misunderstood: the individual's concrete experience does not expand at the expense of the overall cosmic symbolism. On the contrary, it is related to it, inserted in it. In this way, the individual and his experience are given an ontic status.

The concrete experience, expressed in the symbolism of the heart plexus, throws some light on the problem which Dasgupta faced in his endeavor to understand what seemed to be a curious reversal in the location of *cakras* in *Vajrayāna* texts. [2]) The Buddhists know of three main *cakras*, in the navel region, in the heart and in the region just below the neck. These are to be traversed before the highest symbolic point on top of the head is reached, and correspond to *Maṇipura*, *Anāhata*, and *Viśuddhicakra* in the Hindu Tantras. Three different *kāyas* ("bodies")—*Nirmāṇakāya*, *Dharmakāya*, *Sambhogakāya*, respectively—are related to the three centers. Dasgupta observed that what should have been the highest of the three, the *Dharmakāya*, understood in Mahāyāna as the absolute principle underlying all entities, was located in the heart-*cakra*; accordingly, the *Sambhogakāya*, the essence of the Buddha's enlightenment, was given the highest

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[1]) Avalon, *Serpent Power*, p. 378.

[2]) S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Esoteric Buddhism*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1958), p. 148.

place, equally contrary to philosophical expectation; the lowest *kāya* of the three, the *Nirmāṇakāya*, being indicative "merely" of the embodiment of the great figure who taught the way to enlightenment, could of course not create a problem. However, what is philosophically strange at first sight, becomes understandable in the evolution of Tantric *yoga*. The highest realization is reached most concretely, "individually."

13. Concreteness in Left and Right Devotees

A distinction of schools and of sects, which seems quite natural to us in the study of Western religious history, is often rather inadequate in the study of Indian religious forms. In Indian philosophy, always of a religious nature, there is a common core of concepts which makes separation of schools a precarious enterprise. In religious forms proper, this is even more obvious. To the many cases of symbolisms with an innate power of evolution which we have dealt with we could add the example of the *Sahasranāmas*, "the litanies of thousand names" by which a devotee extols a divinity. [1]) The example is peculiar in that it has a clear, definable form, more so than many a symbolism which we have seen, but at the same time in that it occurs in all significant divisions of Hinduism. Every important deity has his thousand names, which the devotees chant or mutter in quite similar ways. Also, each *Sahasranāma* has its esoteric meanings which are commented on and handed down in the respective "schools," whether Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava or Śākta.

The study of schools, sects and their doctrinal differences is of course significant. But we should realize that for the development of a symbol or ritual the supposed group divisions are often of secondary importance, even when such classifications occur in the texts. One cannot escape the impression that some classifications are, if not of an artificial nature, of a somewhat "ideal-typical" nature, reflecting more of the speaker's ideas than of a given, demonstrable order. It has been stressed that in earlier times the transition from non-Buddhism to Buddhism in Indian cultic life must have been imperceptible in many instances. [2])

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[1]) See our "Remarks on Bhakti," *Adyar Library Bulletin* (XXIV, 3-4, December 1960), pp. 120 f.

[2]) Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, I, 7 f.; De la Vallée Poussin, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 44-47 and *passim*.

We meet with a comparable difficulty of defining matters in regard to *vāmācāra* ("left cult") and *dakṣinācāra* ("right cult") in Tantrism. No doubt the difference between the two has often been given undue attention. Then, the former would represent a rather "immoral" and "impure" tradition; the latter would be pure and moral in character and rituals. It is obvious that such qualifications can be made only by an outsider whose sympathy naturally goes to the moral and pure or by one who is a follower of a group which call themselves *dakṣinācārins*.

It is interesting, however, that even by quite pure and moral, modern *Śrī Vidyā* devotees (whose worship centers mainly around the *mantra* of that name) the ancientness of *vāmācāra* is admitted. This is in general agreement with the historical view of an earlier, widespread use of meat and liquor as offerings and ritual sexual union (*maithuna*). These *Śrī Vidyā* devotees hold that at a certain time (earlier than can historically be verified), especially through Śaṅkara's activities, a reformation and purification took place. Accordingly, many Tantric hymns are attributed to the authorship of the great philosopher, certainly a great deal more than he wrote. [1])

However all this may be, the distinction between "immoral," ritually perhaps more concrete practices on the one hand and "purer," more sophisticated ideas and doings on the other hand, is untenable, both typologically and historically. Firstly, also when *maithuna* is enacted, such practice cannot be called immoral. The concreteness of a symbol or symbolic act is of another nature.

Indeed, very little in the Indian traditions would justify the indignant fixation by so many Victorian and post-Victorian scholars on the "merely sexual" side of Tantric imagery. The texts express a preference for women of low castes for the ritual sexual act. In other words, the evident opposites of male and female are underlined *as opposites* by making use of the data of the social structure in Indian society. There is no lasciviousness, but a *coincidentia oppositorum* is realized. On this all Tantric traditions agree. Especially in Bengali forms of Tantrism, the impossibility of the realization, which is nevertheless made possible, is expressed in the union with the wife of

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[1]) including the famous Saundaryalaharī, which has been edited and translated by W. Norman Brown (H.O.S., Vol. XLIII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958). Another edition, also with translation, has been given by R. A. Śāstrī and K.R. Gāru (Madras, 1957). This edition includes several Sanskrit commentaries.

an other man (parakīyā) [1]); the union with such a woman is superior to that with one's own wife (svakīyā), no doubt because of the conspicuous impossibility in the rigidity of the existing social system. The existing social system provided as it were the most "natural" materials to express the most extreme opposites to be transcended by the yogin.

The question which the modern reader is inclined to ask in reading descriptions of *maithuna* is whether these descriptions are meant literally or figuratively. Even if this question could be answered, it would be at most a statistical answer: so many concrete enactments of *maithuna* have taken place and so many devotees have claimed when questioned that the descriptions are expressive of something else. The point is that the crucial symbolism does not very well permit the question. The question shows rather that at least in some of our recent academic traditions we too think in terms of opposites. But these opposites (literal — figurative, real — "merely symbolic") are projections on a purely intellectual plane. This type of antithesis does not occur in the Tantras. When totally opposite poles are mentioned, other images are used, as we have seen.

Eliade has shown the antiquity of the ritual sexual union [2]) and also that sexual elements in the Tantras are consistent with other Tantric *yoga* traditions. [3]) The mastery over the seminal flux (stopping or even "reabsorbing the semen") can be understood in one line with the absolute steadiness of the body in *āsana*, the arrest of the respiration, the arrest of the mental flux.

This does of course not mean that all deviations are precluded. Texts and teachings could and can easily be misunderstood and wrongly applied. A *mudrā*, a way of intertwining the fingers, can be designated by the name of a woman of a certain caste; Hevajratantra, I, 5, 5 identifies one *mudrā* as Dombī, i.e. washer woman; another one as Brāhmaṇī, i.e. Brahman lady; etc. Such designations may have raised all sorts of doings that were not intended. [4]) Certain misapprehensions

[1]) This point was brought to our attention by professor Ed. Dimock of the University of Chicago.

[2]) Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 254 f. [3]) *Idem*, pp. 248-249.

[4]) That such misinterpretations are not limited to the past is clearly shown in the work of B. Bhattacharyya, whose main concern seems to be to edit and discuss ancient Buddhist Tantras only in order to show how immoral all that material is. See for the rectification of several of his misinterpretations (including that of *mudrā*) P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, chap.: "On the Sādhanamālā," pp. 34-44.

As to the very real possibilities of misunderstanding the erotic symbolism, see Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 262 f.

could even lead to cannibalism, especially in areas where human sacrifice (which after all did not come to an end in India until the latter part of the nineteenth century) was still performed. [1]) But, *abusus non tollit usum*, at least, not in general.

Secondly, the word *vāmācāra* is not always used as denoting the performance of certain concrete rituals, over against philosophical refinement. It is true that Tantric thought was modified in the course of time under philosophical, mainly advaitic influences. This meant that the ritual changed, but it does not imply that the concreteness of symbolism and ritual was lost. The concreteness of the devotee's experience may appear in different garments, but it remains concrete. It is understandable why the *Ānandakandapadma*, the seat of the individual ego, could take a prominent place among *vāmācārins*. The world is far from illusory, for the simple reason that it provides all the means whereby *I* can reach the ultimate. The Devī, far from being considered inferior because of her manifestation in the world, is worshipped, glorified, when she is called upon in devotional hymns as "Treasure-house of the guṇas." Therefore the advanced *sādhaka*, following the highest way of life, before becoming a *jīvanmukta* (= one who has reached *nirvāṇa* during his life), is able to experience concretely the ultimate reality in the union with his particular divinity (*iṣṭadevatā*), who as a rule is a form of the Goddess. No wonder that the place of this union, the *Ānandakandapadma*, shares with the *Sahasrāra* all features of paradise. [1]) Certain practices, notably the ritual sexual union, in which the woman represents the Goddess, came to be replaced by other ritual forms in circles where such union had lost its meaning. The ritual union with one's own wife was given an important place. But also influences of a more clearly philosophical order did not impair the concreteness. From the perspective of the symbolism involved, the similarities are more striking than the differences. The eighteenth century *Tāntrika*, Bhāskararāya, is counted among the *vāmācārins*, but he has left a great number of Tantric, philosophical writings. He is a great authority also in *dakṣināchāra* circles. Even when in these texts the process of unification and equation gains in baroqueness, the great basic theme of the Devī's presence does not wane.

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[1]) Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 300-301.

[2]) Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā 6, 2-8. The Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā is available in a translation by Richard Schmidt in his *Fakire und Fakirtum im alten und modernen Indien* (Berlin, 1908).

14. Concreteness in Differentation

Bhāskararāya's Varivasyārahasya [1]) shows a great genius for baffling analyses of *cakras* and *mantras*, indispensable means of realization since the earliest Tantras. This development is in line with what we have seen thus far. In the 94th stanza, the *Śrīcakra* is said to have the form of *Yoginī* (a manifestation of the Goddess) when in the process of making up the *cakra* certain geometrical designs, each with its own significance, are added. [2]) Elsewhere (stanza 101) *guru*, godhead, *mantra* and *cakra* are capable of being equated:

> One's Guru is identical with these three, viz. Devatā, Vidyā [=*mantra*] and Cakra; by the strength of his power to realize such identity, the guru himself becomes Gaṇeśa, etc.; similarly, with the grace of the Guru, the pupil attains identity therewith. [3])

whereby Bhāskararāya's own commentary reiterates. "...With his [the *guru*'s] grace one is a *sādhaka* oneself. Thus it is said: 'The body of the Guru is declared to be just like the body of the Goddess. Because of his grace, also the *śiṣya* shines forth in that form.'..." [4])

Of course, philosophical influences have played a role from the very beginning; we had occasion to see that in Buddhist Tantric imagery. In Hindu development, strong philosophical *stimuli* came from the tradition with which the name of Abhinavagupta, the great medieval, Kashmiri philosopher is connected (appr. 1000 AD). Abhinavagupta wrote several great treatises on Tantraśāstra. No doubt, also his work may be strange to us in that it is never only epistemology, but this peculiarity it shares with all Indian philosophy; the philosopher is a saint; the system visualizes that knowledge which leads to *mokṣa*. Given this peculiarity, however, we can on the whole follow his, quite systematic, argumentation. In the introductory chapter of his *Tantrasāra* we read:

> Here by knowledge we understand the cause of *mokṣa*, because it stops the ignorance which is the cause of bondage. There are two sorts of ignorance: the mental ignorance and the innate ignorance. The former consists in lack of certainty or in false certainty. The latter has a discursive nature and is basically of a limited scope. Precisely this ignorance

[1]) Ed. and trans. S. Subrahmanya Śāstri (3rd ed.; Adyar: Adyar Library, 1948).

[2]) sthitisaṃhṛticakre dve padme dve vṛttabhūgṛhe ca dve evam ṣaḍbhir yogāc chrīcakram yoginīrūpam

[3]) etat tritayābhinnaḥ svagurus tadabhedabhāvanādārḍhyāt tena gaṇeśādimayas taddayayā ca svayaṃ tathārūpaḥ

[4]) tatprasādena svayaṃ sādhako 'pi. taduktam — "devyā deho yathā prokto gurudehastathaiva ca/tatprasādācca śiṣyo 'pi tadrūpaḥ san prakāśate" iti.

is the main cause of *saṃsāra* as we shall see later in dealing with purification. Now, this innate ignorance may indeed disappear through initiation, etc., but initiation is quite impossible in case of the mental ignorance which consists in lack of determination, because the initiation, which consists in the purification of the *tattvas* (levels of reality) and thus in the conjunction with Śiva, must be preceded by the certitude as to what is to be rejected and what is to be accepted. As to initiation then, the principal thing is the mental knowledge whose nature is determination, for this, when practised, destroys even the innate ignorance, for in the end there is no dialectic anymore for one who applies himself fully to dialectics. What should be attained is this knowledge which is perfect certainty and which always deals with all things; this knowledge is of such form as to illumine the discursive process and restricted awareness; it has itself Śiva as its nature. [1])

To be sure, we could have chosen a more obscure passage from Abhinavagupta's work. It would have been harder, however, to find in Bhāskararāya a quotation more perspicuous than the one we read above. In both cases man's reaching of a divine state is at stake, but the tone is altogether different in the two circles of thinking. Abhinavagupta's circle seems quite "modern." A hymn, apparently made by one of Abhinavagupta's pupils, eulogizes the Kashmiri *ācārya*. [2]) It contains the exclamation of highest realization: "I am Śiva!" (Śivo 'smi); yet, also this peculiar religious exclamation fits in the hymn, among its carefully selected philosophical terms, in harmony with the consistence and logic of Abhinavagupta's system. [3]

Yet, the two spheres of which our quotations served as examples can also be seen together. Both, the seemingly more accessible, "logic-

[1]) iha jñānaṃ mokṣakāraṇaṃ bandhanimittasya ajñānasya virodhakatvāt; dvividhaṃ ca ajñānaṃ buddhigataṃ puruṣaṃ ca; tatra buddhigatam aniścayasvabhāvaṃ, viparītaniścayātmakaṃ ca. puruṣaṃ tu vikalpasvabhāvaṃ saṃkucitaprathātmakaṃ, tadeva ca mūlakāraṇaṃ saṃsārasya iti vaksyāmo malanirṇaye. tatra puruṣam ajñānaṃ dīkṣādinā nivartetāpi, kiṃ tu dīkṣāpi buddhigate anadhyavasāyātmake ajñāne sati na sambhavati—heyopādeyaniścayapūrvakatvāt tattvaśuddhiśivayojanārūpāyā dīkṣāyā iti. tatra adhyavasāyātmakaṃ buddhiniṣṭhameva jñānaṃ pradhānam, tadeva ca abhyasyamānaṃ puruṣamapi ajñānam nihanti, vikalpasaṃvidabhyāsasya avikalpāntatāparyavasānāt. vikalpāsaṃkucitasaṃvitprakāśarūpo hi ātmā śivasvabhāva iti sarvathā samastavastuniṣṭhaṃ samyaṅniścayātmakaṃ jñānamupādeyam. (*Tantrasāra of Abhinavagupta*, ed. Mukund Rām Shāstrī [Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, No, XVII; Bombay, 1918], beginning of the 1st āhnika.

[2]) V. Raghavan (ed.), "The Gurunāthaparāmarśa," *Bulletin of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library*, Madras, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 1-13.

[3]) Abhinavagupta's work in fact has such a "modern" appeal that recently an Italian publisher took the courage to bring out a translation of the Tantrasāra in a popular series: *Essenza dei Tantra*, introd. and trans. R. Gnoli (Torino: Boringhieri, 1960).

al" approach (Abhinavagupta) and the more "associative" one (Bhāskararāya), different in tone and obviously different in time and space, are endeavors to see everywhere the divine reality, *capable of being experienced.* What ultimately matters in both is beyond mind and mental understanding.

The philosophy and the rituals of the Tāntrikas belong together in the urge for concrete experience, the attainment of "the ultimate mode of being." This is their source and determines their goal. A distinction is made between outer (*bāhya*) and inner (*āntara*) worship. The highest worship is the purely mental one, where even the muttering of *mantras* is surpassed; one's whole existence incorporates the deity. But the outer and inner rituals are never separated. Likewise any form of philosophy may be of help. We find here on a more sophisticated level an extension of what we spoke of before as the "tolerance" or rather "openness" of religious symbolism. [1])

Sometimes, however, the outsider may very well mistake this religious attitude for conceit. A story tells how Bhāskararāya, seated on the verandah of his house in Madhyārjuna Kṣetra, refused to take notice of a *saṃnyāsin* who used to pass by every evening on his way to the temple. When confronted with the accusations of the insulted ascetic, Bhāskararāya replied that he would endanger the *saṃnyāsin*'s life by prostrating in the customary way. This reply naturally excited the *saṃnyāsin*, who challenged him to prove that statement. Bhāskararāya requested the *saṃnyāsin* to put down his gourd and his staff; he prostrated before them, and, as could be expected, gourd and staff broke into a hundred pieces. The ascetic apologized. But the story adds even more: the curious ending in which the ascetic utters his fear that the *saṃnyāsa āśrama* itself (the *saṃnyāsin*'s stage of life) will be discredited by disrespect, which will perhaps be contagious; whereupon Bhāskararāya graciously consents to retire into his house before the *saṃnyāsin*'s approach from that day onwards. The point which we want to stress here is that other convictions and forms of life can be tolerated not because of one's uncertainty about what is ultimately correct or true, but exactly because of a supreme certainty. The fulness of divine life is realized in one person, now here, then there. In our story, it was not necessary for the *saṃnyāsin*, although we might have expected it, to bow before the *ācārya* and beg his instruction. It is enough, also in a popular anecdote such as this,

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[1]) *Varivasyārahasya*, introduction, pp. xxx f.

that the *type* of the realized soul is given. Concrete experience and its popular counterpart, demonstration, count, not indoctrination. It is noteworthy that contemporary endeavors of Aurobindo devotees to persuade people are often resented. Different from what we might expect, a certain conceited attitude is felt in such persuasive endeavors, not in Bhāskararāya who consents to stay home after an impressive show.

15. The Yoga of Power

In the course of history symbolism changes, also in the esoteric circles. The most elevated and the most humble factors contribute. But again, the continuous differentiation and equation of symbols is not only a matter of historical development. It is given with the very structure of symbolism. The symbolism seems to utilize whatever philosophy, fashion or experience it touches. In the Tantras this structure often finds expression in what we like to call an urge for "a beyond beyond the beyond." We mentioned in passing the growing number of *nāḍīs* in the subtle phyisology. There are also *cakras* below the lowest and above the highest. The most fundamental opposites, *saṃsāra* and what should be its transcendence, *nirvāṇa*, are equated in the yogic process. By the grace of the Devī (synonymous with the *guru*) the impossible becomes possible.

When the ultimate union is achieved, in terms of the subtle physiology, it is not limited to one *cakra*. The experienced *sādhaka* is able to lower his *jīvātman* in union with his chosen goddess to the *Mūlādhāra* and raise it to the highest *cakra* at will.[1]) In the union with the goddess, the complete identification with Śiva is reached. The cosmological symbolism continues, for this identification means a complete control of the divine acts: creating, sustaining and destroying. This freedom that is thus attained is not quite the same as the final goal in the classical *Yoga*; there, the *puruṣa* ("self," "Spirit") is liberated from all conditionings that body and mind are heir to; those conditionings are shaken off and fall back into the "primordial matter" (*prakṛti*). It is true that here also the final goal means freedom from all conditionings, but, at the same time, freedom is tantamount to *power*. The powerful, complete identity with the supreme God and his Śakti who is herself *Prakṛti*, the primordial substance of the world, is the central symbolism. It explains quite naturally the leanings of

[1]) Pott, *op. cit.*, pp. 21 f.

the *Tāntrikas* toward philosophies of the advaitic (non-dualistic) type. But it is understandable that the symbolic forms of the *sādhaka*'s ritual could not easily be found in Śaṅkara by an arduous student of Indian metaphysics.

Among the *yantras* chosen as objects of concentration, on which the *sādhaka* may project the attained reality, an important place is given to the pot. That almost primordial symbol of containing-all is indeed a most appropriate receptacle in the revitalization of archaic symbols that we discern in the Tantras. We may mention here also a general custom in regard to the installation of temple-idols. Not only should the whole lengthy ceremonial be conducted by someone who is well-versed in the Tantras and Āgamas, but the power of the deity's image is thought to depend largely on the power of the deity's image is thought to depend largely on the power of concentration of those present; hence it is essential to have a group of spiritually advanced devotees. Indeed, the most essential Tantric elements are part and parcel of Hinduism. The relation of esoteric and public cultic life is never cut off because of the symbolic forms common to both. In the Tantras we can see this also in the precise descriptions of deities as they are to be meditated on. The Kulacūḍāmaṇitantra[1]) (7, 12-14) describes the goddess Mahiṣamardinī with her eight arms; with her right hands she holds a discus, a sword (*khaḍga*, used for sacrificial purposes), an arrow, a trident, and with her left hands another *khaḍga*, a shield and a bow. Her eighth hand is in the position of threatening, with raised forefinger. Dressed in yellow, she is trampling upon the body of a big, black and terrible buffalo. The implements she holds and other details vary in various texts. Sometimes she is pictured trampling upon the head of the buffalo. Sometimes the *mudrā* of her eighth hand is not threatening, but appeasing, or—for everything is possible—the frightening gesture is in the meditation to be realized as conveying peace. But at any rate, precise images are always given. If not in the texts, they are supplied by the commentators. They are indispensable for the *sādhaka*'s progress.

16. Ritualization of the World

The world takes on a new meaning. It is transformed before the initiate's eyes and becomes both means and object of his realization.

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[1]) Ed. Arthur Avalon (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1956).

"Every naked woman incorporates prakṛti." [1]) The origins of this view are of great antiquity, [2]) but its implications in the Tantras are new. When the devotee meets a beautiful woman, but also in a great many other seemingly contingent cases (such as seeing certain birds and animals), he is to follow a special line of behaviour, bow, recite the appropriate *mantra*, etc. (Kulacūḍāmaṇitantra, IV). In fact, the whole world is ritualized.

In this light we may take a fresh look at the cultural amalgamations which we have stressed before. It will become clear that in Tantrism these amalgamations meant more than the coalescence of different social and cultural factors. Tantrism may be seen as the central force of the Hinduization process, creating a new unity in the encounters of people with different, sometimes quite unequal religious traditions.

Meetings of this sort are in several cases borne out by the titles of Tantras. The Śabaratantra owes its name to the Śabaras, an Indian tribe belonging to the Australoids. Bengal has its *Śabarotsava*, the survival of an old Durgā festival in the autumn. Some features of this festival tell of the origin: like the Śabaras, the participants used to daub their bodies with mud and covered them with leaves and flowers. Licentious songs and the practice of uttering the names of the organs of generation before Śākta initiates used to be included in the ceremonies. [3]) In this case we can discern three distinct *strata* (which are not necessarily neatly separated "stages" of development): a primitive cult, the incorporation as a vegetation festival in the stream of Hinduism, and finally an esoteric, Tantric transformation. What happened sociologically can hardly be guessed. We should of course not understand the development which took place in such a way as if Tantrism caused a new social reintegration.

The one important fact for our essay in instances such as this one is that Tantrism *as a religious movement* utilized, transformed, reintegrated particular phenomena which it met, in a symbolic setting. We could only add that this had in turn its influence in wider circles in the course of time; in the first place because of the veneration of "holy men" and *sādhus*; secondly, because the specialists in the Tantras and in the Āgamas dealing with temple cults and ceremonials are closely akin and often identical.

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[1]) Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 259.

[2]) Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Brāhmanism and Hinduism* (London: John Murray, 1891), pp. 222 f.

[3]) Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 342 f.

Another illustration is the Kubjikātantra. The text says that the group of Tantras of which it is a part has originated among the potters that is to say, among low caste Hindus. The Tantras of this "school" are said to have belonged to the *kulālikāmnāya* (the potters' tradition). The text prescribes that the Goddess Kubjikā should be worshipped in the house of a potter. [1]) This text too gives evidence not of a social reform, but of a religious revaluation of "worldly" data, possible within the Tantric ritualization of the world.

In this religious sense we should also understand the preference shown by the *Tāntrika* in his rituals for low caste women as partner. The washer woman, the cobbler woman, the barber woman are often mentioned explicitly. Or course, systematically, such preference—opposed as it is to all traditional ideas of purity—can be interpreted as a concrete expression of the transcendent state, a state beyond pure and impure, and beyond the extremest opposites, as we have seen before. But the question is much more complicated. We may think also of the intentional language by which things are not always what they seem to be; intentional language plays its part in producing a new cosmos out of a chaotic world. However all this may be in detail, the terms indicating these women do not lose their original, common meaning and are not chosen at random. In the history of symbols and their meaning the preference shown here signifies the religious incorporation—with all the transformations that this involves—of border regions into the Hindu world, through Tantric ritualization. The same process can also be traced in some names of the Goddess which occur in the Tantras. Vindhyavāsinī, Koṭṭavi (Tamil: Koṟṟavai) and others have their origin in local cults.

The ritualization of the world belongs to the bone and marrow of Tantrism. We saw how it is expressed in the micro-and macrocosmos symbolism. The sanctity of the totality of life and world reminds us somewhat of the "dynamism" which at one time, rather indiscriminately, was thought to be peculiar to primitive religions. India's history, as many another history, shows that the supposed peculiarity is equally appropriate or even more so, to advanced cultures. However, it is true that the Tantras continued and renewed archaic structures. Cultic life is interiorized. Yet, it is not abandoned. The external, "objective" world is not lost, but is given a new significance in its totality. The steady deteriotation of the world—a thought which is as

[1]) Bagchi, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

Puranic as it is Tantric—is part of the vision in this literature. For exactly for this last and worst of ages (*Kaliyuga*) Tantric techniques are designed. Man achieves an unshakable orientation and realizes the whole cosmic process, of birth and decay, and of time and eternity. He can do so exactly by means of this given world.

The ritualization of the world is almost a religio-historical revolution. It becomes more understandable when we keep in mind that the world that was conquered by the Buddhist and Hindu expansion was a particular religious world. Many of the village cults and deities on which the educated Indian now looks with a certain contempt have often an illustrious prehistory and ancestry, which in the past have greatly influenced that Hinduism and that culture in which the same educated man grew up. Two quite different examples may serve as illustrations to the environment of the Tantras.

17. Relation between Tantra and Surrounding Religious World

The first example relates to the Goddess Mahiṣamardinī. There are descriptions of elaborate festivities in honour of this Goddess by the Portuguese traveller Domingos Paes, who visited the Vijayanagar kingdom at the time of its cultural climax (in 1522). [1]) During the annual nine days of festival (Navarātri) the king used to be present at the sacrifice of twenty four buffaloes and one hundred and fifty sheep. The end of the festivities was even more impressive: "...on the last day there are slaughtered two hundred and fifty buffaloes and four thousand five hundred sheep." [2]) Both the blood and the heads of the animals were offered to the Goddess.

We know that Devī-worship was widespread at an early date; it is attested by many temples and sculptures, also by early Tamil literature describing details which correspond astonishingly to what we know from Tantric symbolism. [3]) But it is important to realize that such elaborate ceremonies as described by Paes were performed in late and highly developed Indian civilizations. They formed part of the world together with which Tantrism developed.

We have met Mahiṣamardinī as described in the Kulacūḍāmaṇi-tantra, trampling on the body or on the head of a buffalo. But she

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[1]) Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire* (London, 1900) presents a translation of Paes's narrative, pp. 236-290.

[2]) *Idem*, pp. 274-275.

[3]) See Bolle, "Die Göttin," pp. 268-270.

is best known from the Devīmāhātmya ("the Glory of the Goddess").[1] A work of Brahmanic character, it is part of the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa (of which it forms chapters 81-93). It is highly esteemed by the Tantras, but outside of Tantric circles proper it made its influence felt all over India. The seven hundred stanzas are recited and chanted by the devotees especially during the Navarātri festival and form always part of the concluding tenth day, the day of the Devi's victory (Vijayadaśamī). In some regions the text is read every day, throughout the year. There are three stories woven within a story within another story, in accordance with a popular, pan-Indian tradition. The three narratives, which form the main substance of the song, are devoted to the heroic deeds of the Goddess. They are told by the sage Medhas to two grief stricken men, a king and a merchant, both of whom, by treason and enmity, have lost everything they had. Instructed by the sage, the two men take their refuge with the Goddess, going through the required austerities and rituals, of which the constant repetition of the Devīsūkta (Ṛgveda, X, 125) is an integral part. After three year years the Devī appears to them. The king is restored to power and is promised a rebirth as Manu Sāvarṇi; as such he will be the father of the human race in a whole cycle of time. The merchant, in agreement with his wish, is granted the knowledge (*jñāna*) that leads to supreme realization (*saṃsiddhi*). The wishes of both men are at first sight contradictory. But in the Devī symbolism they belong together and can be granted in one breath.

As we saw before, the urge for emancipation and the aspiration to power go together manifestly in the Tantras. But the thought that Hinduism at large is characterized by desire for emancipation and dissociation from the world is fallacious, although still too prevalent. The coextensiveness of ultimate release and the tempting colourful world became and is the great tradition. Without it, the exuberant and vital art of India—such as the many sublime love scenes at Konarak—would be incomprehensible. The symbolism in this great tradition and its *openness* provided the frame in which the Tantric specifications fitted quite well: the realization of the identity of *saṃsāra* (the endless cycle of existences) and *nirvāṇa* (release), the togetherness of *yoga* (techniques to curb the passions and thus to attain freedom) and *bhoga* (sensual enjoyment). It is hard to distinguish sharply between a

[1]) Ed. and trans. Swāmī Jagadīsvarānanda (Madras: Śri Ramakrishna Math, 1953).

religious world which Tantrism *met* and a religious world in which Tantrism *occurred.*

The Devī's deeds, extolled in the *Devīmāhātmya*, are, *par excellence*, deeds for the world. She slays the primordial monsters, the rebellious *asuras*, who are threatening the gods and the universe. One of them is Mahiṣāsura, the monster in a terrible buffalo form. His slaying, like the others, amounts to an establishment of the world. That themes with this same meaning are repeatedly told is not strange: what is told is *always* true, just as much as it is always *true*. The slaying of the Mahiṣāsura is in symbolism quite naturally connected with the widespread buffalo sacrifices, which persist even today in many a village cult. Whatever the exact date of the *Devīmāhātmya*, the text did definitely not precede such cultic symbolism. Also the religious world surrounding the Tantras was continuously "on the move." The text illustrates this clearly, for certainly here, the openness of the symbolisms involved is manifest as power. The Brahmanic character of the work, which is suggested not only by its insertion in an important Purāṇa, but also by its perfect Sanskrit and poetry, gives also an indication as to the nature and direction of symbolic development. Sanskritization is an external but sure sign of Hinduization. But the power involved here consists first and foremost in the renewal of existing symbolisms, both "orthodox" and "unorthodox," their recreation into an new whole. The Brahmanic traditions, themselves multifarious and in motion, did not just accept what existed here and there, but rejuvenated the most different traditions, thereby *returning with force*, in a new way, many a local symbolism.

Thus in the *Devīmāhātmya*, we find many of the elements that we have touched on, not only in the religion before the Tantras, but also in the Tantras. We may perhaps see an attestation to local influences in the references made to the Vindhya mountains, where, according to the text (11, 42) the Goddess will destroy two monsters in a future time. The name Cāmuṇḍā, under which she kills the monsters Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa (7, 25-27) is striking because of its non-Sanskrit appearance; the local origin of the Cāmuṇḍā story can hardly be doubted. More important are the following facts. The chaotic power of the two monsters Śumbha and Niśumbha is reached by their usurpation of Vāyu's authority and Agni's duty (5, 4); that is to say, the order of the sacrifice, on which the world depends, is disrupted (Cf. above, II, 6-5). Naturally, only the Goddess can restore the right order. Hers is the power of the earth's wealth, she is able to maintain the whole world

with the life-sustaining products of the field which come forth from her own body (11, 48). The Goddess is given various names, but all Śaktis are manifestations of the one (chapter8). That she is said to be all by herself in the world (10, 5) only underlines this: this oneness is the fulness of all manifestations. For it was only through her—as Yogani-drā—that Viṣṇu woke up from his precosmic slumber and could conquer the first pair of chaos monsters (chapter 1). *Devīmāhātmya*, 11, 32 indicates her dwellingplace with lines suggesting the chaotic: the place of *rākṣasas* and poisonous snakes, of foxes and robbers and of forest fires. Perhaps, could we think here too of local overtones? In literature, forestdwellers, fierce people, living on robbery, are sometimes described as devī-worshippers. [1]) Local overtones seem likely, but it is clear then, that what is at stake is not simply an incorporation of some local cult, but a religious orientation in regard to existing phenomena. However this may be, the Goddess is in the same stanza also said to be in the depth of the sea (*abdhimadhye*): "standing there, you save the world" (tatra sthitā tvam paripāsi viśvam), sing the gods. It is true, there is no Kuṇḍalinī imagery proper. But the step from here to the typically Tantric interiorization is certainly small. The gods praise her, among other things, as the Devī who is in all beings as Viṣṇumāyā (5, 14-16), as consciousness (*cetanā* 17-19, citi 78-80), as intelligence (*buddhi* 20-22), also as error (bhrānti 74-76).

The *Devīmāhātmya* is a mythical narrative. As such it was (and is also to us) (much more immediately inspiring than the Tantras, whose techniques are by nature meant for a select few. The concrete application of *yoga* as *bhoga*, the concrete identification of *nirvāṇa* as "great delight" (*mahāsukha*) could not alter that. We may draw the conclusion, however, that Tantrism, owing the origin of its symbolism to ancient cults, remained, also in its development, related to the non-esoteric religiosity. Also in its strangest forms, it cannot be, mechanically as it were, separated from the dominant traditions.

18. Interwovenness even in Most "Secret" Data

The second example, illustrating the relationship of the Tantras to their environment, is the so-called *five m's* (*pañcamakāra*).. They may certainly serve to illustrate the interwovenness, both culturally and religiously, of Tantric characteristics on the one hand and the surrounding practices and thought on the other hand.

[1]) Thus in the *Śilappadigāram*, chap. xii.

By the "five m's" are meant the five elements used in Tantric ritual, each beginning with the letter *m*: *madya* (intoxicating beverages), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (specific positions of hand and fingers) and *maithuna* (ritual sexual union). We cannot fully deal with these five here, but we want to bring to mind briefly some aspects and peculiarities within the scope of our essay.

The most immediate significance that presents itself in the use of liquors, meat, fish and in sexual union, is that something "forbidden" happens. Hence, here again we can sense that the full initiates reach a state beyond the common concepts of good and evil which are inherent in the imperfection of uninitiated people. This impression is strengthened when also *mudrā* is represented as a female or when even eating of human flesh is mentioned (as in Hevajratantra, Guhyasamāja). The Guhyasamāja (VII) goes so far as to state quite explicitly: "One does not attain success by hard, vexed restraints; but one attains success rapidly by the enjoyment of all desires." [1]) thus denying the value of traditional asceticism.

However, three things are to be kept in mind with this apparent rejection of common morality. Firstly, the ambiguous practices were certainly not always concretely performed. Secondly (also in case of actual performance), the satisfaction of all one's desires is to be taken with a grain of salt, because all texts reiterate how dangerous the rites are for those who are not fully initiated. In a real sense, the symbolic reality precedes the actual ritualism. Thirdly, most interesting for our topic, the very existence of those secret rites logically presupposes an outside world, where at least some circles of people were opposed to the use of liquors, etc.

A relationship to the non-esoteric world is most evident from the materials indicated by the five *makāras*. Intoxicating beverages, meat and fish were not only used in local cults in a dim past, but are used even today. [2]) The customs in Vijayānagar, described above, show

[1]) duṣkarair niyamais tīvraiḥ sevyamāno na siddhyati sarvakāmopabhogais tu sevayaṃś cāśu siddhyati Cf. Kulārṇavatantra, ed. A. Avalon (London: Luzac & Co., 1917), V, 48: yair eva patanam dravyaiḥ siddhis tair eva coditā, "success is reached by the very things which lead to fall."

[2]) The awareness in Tantric circles e.g. of the use of intoxicating beverages as related to non-orthodox, local practices is discernible in several places, also in late texts. Thus, in *Lalitāsahasranāman, with Bhāskararāya's Commentary*, trans. R. A. Sastry (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1951), p. 396, Bhāskararāya says, in explanation of one of the Devī's names, Bindutarpaṇasaṃtuṣṭā: "*Bindu* is the Sarvānandamayacakra; *Tarpaṇa* is offerings in that *Cakra* by Brāhmaṇas with milk, by Kṣatrīyas with ghee, by Vaiśyas with honey and *by Śudras with mead*....

the importance of bloody sacrifices in local cults even in a recent epoch. Likewise, the religious importance of sexual union and of sexual symbolism in general, played a role in non-esoteric, traditional cults, and is still of importance in many tribal cults.

The relationship of *mudrā* in the Tantras to general cultural and religious patterns is more complex. There are a great many intertwinings of the fingers which are significant in the *sādhaka*'s ritual. They evoke a divine image or accompany, or even represent particular offerings. Since everything turns around concrete experience and evocations, this general meaning is not astonishing; it is never "mere ceremony." But in the course of time many different interpretations and differentiations have come in. In some circles of Śrīvidyā devotees in South India, a certain way of intertwining the fingers, called *Matsya-mudrā*, sometimes substitutes for the actual offering of fish; the Śrīyantra, which is the central image here, is *in concreto* offered only flowers, coconuts, etc. Such a development can at least in part be understood by the social pressure of an increased vegetarianism.

For our context, two problems regarding *mudrā* may be singled out. The first one is the occasional reference made to *mudrā* as signifying parched, or roasted grain or rice. According to Oppert, [1]) this is the meaning in the Vīraśaiva worship. He quotes from the Sabdastomamahānidhi:

> In the required practices of the *vīras*, which are well known to the Tantras, the name *mudrā* is given to roasted grain, rice, to wheat, peas, etc.; this is so according to the pañcamakāra-elements, etc. In propitiating a particular deity, it [*mudrā*] refers to particular intertwining of the fingers, etc.

The Vīraśaivas belonged to what we may call the "Tantric circle," although their interest on the whole seems to have been more on the level of cultic reformation than of esoteric achievements; their activities had even some political propensities. [2]) Some relationship to Śākta Tantrism is perhaps not imaginary.

We should hasten to say, however, that one cannot establish a

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[1]) Gustav Oppert, *On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarṣa or India* (Westminster: A. Constable & Son, 1893), p. 414: ["Tantraprasiddhe vīrācāryasevye pṛthukas tāṇḍulā bhṛṣṭā godhumacaṇakādayaḥ; tasya nāma bhavenmudrā, ityukte pañcamakārādidravyabhede. Devaviśeṣārādhanayā aṅgulyādisanniveśaviśeṣe."

[2]) See R. G. Bhandarkar, "Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious System," *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde*, III, 6 (Strassburg, 1913), pp. 131-140.

whole story on such scanty data concerning a single word. Yet, the sheer possibility of *mudrā* meaning parched grain, etc. becomes interesting when we see mudrā together with elements which have a long tradition and an established meaning as ceremonial offerings (meat, wine, etc.) and we remember the "local" and "agricultural" character of Tantric deities. We should also add that even today, in many tribal cults, parched or roasted rice is an important offering. It is an essential ceremonial and festive gift in places where the village dormitory survives. Also in Hindu writings which are not emphatically ritualistic liquor, fish, meat *and cereals* are often mentioned together (e.g. in the Tripura Upaniṣad).

It is clear that all this did not bring us closer to the possible "original meaning" of *mudrā*, [1]—which is not our problem. We only wanted to show points of contact between the Tantric, esoteric religion and wider and earlier traditions, exactly in ways of worship which seem to form an absolute separation between the two. In other subjects (*cakras*, *bījas*, etc.) the relationship between the Tantras and other forms of literature (especially the Śakta Upaniṣads, but also others) is too well established to need elaboration.

We can be brief on the second problem regarding *mudrā*. For it is generally known that *mudrā* in Indian culture brings to mind first and foremost the position of hands, fingers, etc., in other words, the gestures in dancing and acting. That *mudrā* occurs both in the Tantras and in the theoretical works on art, in both with the same general meaning, is not astonishing. The problems one has to deal with in studying the origin and development of Tantric symbolism and of the Indian dance are similar and in many cases identical. Both are religious in origin and nature. Both have their local roots and show an increasing refinement. [2] The Indian theoreticians have always been convinced, be it in various ways, that the aesthetic experience and the religious experience are akin to each other. The great *Tāntrika* Abhinavagupta was also a great authority on art. [3] For the present, it is enough for us to conclude once more that

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[1] For literature on and meaning of the word *mudrā*, see Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 405-407.

[2] See for Indian dramatic art: H. H. Wilson, V. Raghavan, K. R. Pisharoti and A. C. Vidyabhusan, *The Theatre of the Hindus* collected essays (Calcutta: Susil Cupta, 1955). For *mudrā*, especially K. R. Pisharoti, "South Indian Theatre," pp. 165 f.

[3] Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Serie Orientale Roma, ed. G. Tucci, Vol. XI; Rome: Is. M.E.O., 1956).

Tantrism in its ritualization of the world met a world to which it was intimately related, a world, moreover, which was prepared to accept many of the Tantric peculiarities.

19. Remarks on our Basic Problem

At the end of our wanderings through Tantra and Tantrism, we feel certainly entitled to say that their typical features cannot be explained in terms of one historical line, whether orthodox or unorthodox, Vedic, Mohenjo-Daro-Harappan, or otherwise. No item in Tantrism raises an either-or question. If one tries to force a question along one line, one fails to understand and shares the fate of all reductionists. We saw before that not a single one of the "simple" forms in the pre-history of Tantrism was itself explainable by reduction, historically and structurally.

There may be something irritating, however, in the irreducibility of the symbolism in the Tantric movement. The complexities in the Tantras are baffling to an extent far beyond our normal measures for the recent historical time in which they occur. [1]) But we can also say, and we should say it, that irreducibility, in spite of its extra-ordinary forms here, is only the negative side of what we have designated before as the *ritual movement*. The most curious adaptability and power to transform matters is part of man's nature. It is even *more* than man's nature. When we try to get hold of a form, it escapes us. But also the man who was living by that form (his chosen deity or his *Śrīyantra*) did not possess that form. At most, if he was great enough, he could transform it. But he did not create it. It was there, before him; it survived him.

Following the course of a symbol a bit of the way is one thing. Following a symbol the whole way in all its transformations and relations is quite an other and, apparently, quite impossible thing. It would necessitate a reduction of the "ritual movement" itself in which man lives. Would it not even imply a reduction of our very idea of man? We should not answer this question too hurriedly. For might not even a reduction by us be a transformation within the ritual movement? For the moment, one thing is certain: we are not authorized anymore to use one idea of ourselves (whether of reason or morality), conditioned as it is by our own culture and biases,

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[1]) According to Gonda, *Veda*, p. 223, Tantra doctrines are documented in 424 AD for the first time.

to "explain" religious symbols and structures or man in an other culture, including the *Tāntrika*.

Symbols do not develop arbitrarily. This much we can see, even in the limited course we can follow. In Tantrism, the process of interiorization, begun in the Upaniṣads, reaches its fullest extent. Ritualism is not debased, but given an inner and ritual significance. The age old *orientatio* is expressed in a new way in the *cakras* and *nāḍīs* of the human body. The appropriation of an unfailing Reality, together with a new affirmation of the world, becomes a crucial point. The absolutely trustworthy teacher conveys the means by which man experiences unmistakably and even has in his power what is cosmically true, real. Phrased in this way, the Tantric teachings sound rather modern to a man of our time and place, in need of confidence, of a wise instructor (or psychiatrist), of meaningful means to live, in short, to a man with individuation problems. Whether they give the answer he needs is a different question.

CHAPTER FIVE

ŚRĪ AUROBINDO [1])

. . . La réflexion est pourtant toujours réflexion d'une réalité préréfléchie. — G. Gusdorf [2])

1. Aurobindo

Aurobindo Ghose lived from 1872 to 1950. He belonged to an important Bengali family. His father was a physician, educated in England, and seems to have been a staunch admirer of everything British. As a little boy, Aurobindo went to a school in which English was the language of instruction. After that, when he was only seven years of age, he was sent to England with his two brothers and stayed there until his twenty-first year. He proved to be an extra-ordinarily bright student; in the course of his studies, he learned several European languages and imbibed a great deal of knowledge of Western history and culture.

But for a technicality, of which different accounts are given, he completed the studies required for the Indian Civil Service, which his father had wanted him to enter. Instead, he entered the State Service of Baroda, the dominion of a Maharaja. He also taught French and English in Baroda College and served that institution for some time as vice-principal.

The period in Baroda, almost as long as the time he had spent in England, was important in several respects. He became familiar with and studied some Indian languages, including his own native tongue, Bengali, and its literature. Here he studied also Sanskrit. He began to practise *yoga*. At the same time, he became engrossed in the political and social turmoils in which took shape the thought and powers that were to lead to India's independence.

The interest he had taken in social and cultural history as a student bore rich fruit. Although the struggle for independence was never a merely political issue for Indian leaders, particularly in the early years of our century, Aurobindo found ways and traditional, religious

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[1]) Parts of this chapter have appeared before as an article, "Tantric Elements in Śrī Aurobindo," *Numen*, Vol. IX, Sept. 1962, pp. 128 ff.

[2]) *Traité de Métaphysique* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1956), p. 62.

terms in which to voice the desire for independence that have not been surpassed. In 1907 he expressed forcefully the doctrine of Passive Resistance before it gained fame under Ghandi. From his earliest speeches and writings on, he regarded nationalism basically and principally as the work of God. In his political essays and addresses, India is referred to as a Goddess, more as a figure of thought than as a figure of speech—if we are allowed to use Coomaraswamy's distinction here; it fulfilled for Aurobindo a religious and philosophical need (not excluding but including political life) rather than an aesthetic or emotional desire. These early writings show that spiritual life and concrete, worldly realities belonged together for Aurobindo from the beginning. He became a political leader, second in importance perhaps only to Tilak, during the rather brief period in which he actively participated in the events of the day; this revolutionary period (1904-1910), prepared and begun in Baroda, continued in Bengal; he settled in Calcutta in 1906. Suspected of being a party to a political bombing plot, he was arrested in 1908 and spent a year in prison. In terms of his life's history, this imprisonment determined his future; in jail, through *yoga* and meditation, he reached the highest realization. Upon his acquittal, he withdrew from public life. In 1910 he travelled in secret to Pondicherry, Indian soil but at that time French territory, where he stayed until his death. Here he wrote many works and developed his own *yoga* system, the Integral Yoga. An *āśram* grew up around him, which today has some twelve hundred inmates. Aurobindo remained the center and spiritual head, assisted by "the Mother," a French lady whom he met in 1914 and who stayed with him permanently from 1920 on. She still governs the *āśram*, not only in practical, but also in spiritual matters. The devotees approach her as the principal *guru*.

It is hard to assess the importance of the Aurobindo *āśram* in contemporary India. There is no doubt, however, that Aurobindo's philosophy gains in influence. We have been told that his work is studied in an increasing number of colleges.

That Aurobindo could become an important and popular political leader at one time can be explained somewhat by his long stay in England; he could not be hampered as much as others by regional or caste biases. Yet it would be far fetched to explain the peculiarity of his political views, as well as of his all-embracing philosophy, by his English education, as if that contributed the substance of his innovations. We shall not indulge, for instance, in the all too easy task of

collecting quotations from his work which witness to his total misunderstanding of Christianity; in this he is not inferior to S. Radhakrishnan. Besides, it could be argued that those misunderstandings themselves are a contribution of his Western education, in England, before the turn of the century. It is of course true that the language in which he wrote his major works (English) and some terms or the way in which he used them (such as "humanity" and "progress") are not or not quite Indian.But we should preclude a hasty conclusion about Western influence by keeping in mind at least the following points. In the first place, we have no reason to doubt the sincerity with which Aurobindo used Indian, traditional concepts and images even in his early political life. The world of figures like Rāmākṛṣṇa and Vivekānanda, was his own in his terminology also. He had great respect for Vivekānanda, whose command of the English language was not his least ability, but who did not cease to be Indian throughout, in spite of the use of concepts which for us nowadays have the ring of a bygone Western age of shallow hopes and evolutionistic ideas. In the second place, of more immediate importance to our essay, we should remember that religious movements can be influenced, but hardly ever explained, by the origin, early occupations, and studies of individuals who later became great leaders of such movements or established their own schools in them; in Western church-history, Augustine and Calvin are no mean examples, nor are they the only ones.

2. Approximations

We do not intend to spend more time here on Aurobindo's life; it has been fully described by his biographers. However, we want to bring to mind two details which are interesting, partly as they are characteristic of the time and atmosphere in which Aurobindo was living, partly as they reveal something of Aurobindo's spiritual attitude.

In his Baroda period, Aurobindo married Mrinalini, a Bengali girl, but he did not want to engage in ordinary marital relations. He felt that his calling did not allow such trivial matters. This fact might meet with some dispraise among us in our part of the world at present, but we shall see how Aurobindo's attitude can also be understood as consistent with his philosophy, aiming at a complete spiritualization of life and all relationships. It is somewhat reminiscent of what

Ghandi tells us in his autobiography about his early marriage relationship; Gandhi narrates the story of his passion almost with disgust. We have to take into account, then, that what seems most natural among us is apparently absent here; there is no sense of shame in giving publicity to the attitude of withdrawal from conjugal duties and joys. A.B. Purani, a prominent ashramite, saw no harm in publishing some of Aurobindo's intimate letters to Mrinalini in his biography of the sage. We may be allowed to quote some sentences from these letters. Who is to tell us where the dividing line is between the spirit of the time, which called for renunciation, and the developing structure of Aurobindo's *yoga*, which envisaged a higher transformation of soul and matter?

In a long letter in 1905 Aurobindo describes the nature of his calling to Mrinalini. In self-irony he speaks of his three "madnesses" or "follies." The first concerns his faith that whatever virtue, talent, education and possession he has been endowed with belongs to God and may be spent only for Him. The second is this conviction: "... by whatever means, I must get the direct realization of the Lord." [1]) The third "folly" is that he does not regard the country as an inert object: "I look upon my country as the mother, I worship her and adore her as the mother." Aurobindo is convinced that he is called to come to the rescue of India. The mother is to be rescued by her son. "The power of the warrior is not the only kind of force, there is also the power of Brahman, which is founded on knowledge. This is not a feeling within me, it is not of recent origin, I was born with it, it is my very marrow, God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission." [2]) The letter shows that the rescue of the mother involves much more than shaking of the British yoke. Accordingly, he states what he expects from his wife:

> Now I ask you: "What do you want to do in this matter? The wife is the shakti — the power — of the husband. Are you going to be the disciple of Usha and adulate the Europeans? Would you be indifferent and diminish the power of your husband, or would you double his sympathy and enthusiasm?" You might reply: "What could a simple woman like me do in all these great works? I have neither the strength of mind, nor the intelligence required, I am afraid even to think these things." There is a simple solution for it — it is to take refuge in the Divine, enter the path leading to the attainment of the Divine. He will soon

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[1]) A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* (2nd ed.; Pondicherry: Ashram, 1960), p. 100.

[2]) *Idem*, p. 101.

cure you of all your shortcomings; fear gradually leaves the person who takes refuge in the Divine. And if you have faith in me, and listen to what I say instead of listening to others, I can give you my force, which would not be reduced by giving but would, on the contrary, increase. We say that the wife is the Shakti of the husband, that means to say, the husband sees his own reflection in the wife, he finds the echo of his own high aspiration in her and this doubles his own force. Would you always remain like this, thinking: "I would put on fine dress, eat good food, laugh and dance, and enjoy all possible pleasure?" That state of mind is not called progress. Nowadays the life of women in our country has a very narrow and undesirable form. Leave all these things and come along with me. We have to come to the world to do God's work, let us begin it.

There is one defect in your nature — you are too simple. You listen to what everybody says. As a result your mind is always disturbed, your intellect does not develop and there is no concentration in any work. This has to be corrected; you have to gether knowledge by listening to one person only, having fixed the aim you have to accomplish the work, you have to disregard the slander and ridicule of people and keep your devotion calm and firm.

There is another defect also — not of your nature but of the times. The times have become like that in Bengal: people are unable to listen to profound subjects; they laugh at and make fun of everything — Dharma, philantropy, high aspiration, great endeavor, liberation of the country; with a grin they want to dismiss anything serious, all that is high and noble.... It is necessary to throw this defect firmly from the mind; you will be able to do it easily, and once you cultivate the habit of thinking, your real nature will blossom; there is a pull towards altruism and self-sacrifice in your nature, only the strength of mind is lacking; you will get that strength from your devotion to God.... [1])

He had made up his mind that they were not to live together as an ordinary couple would do. Still in February 1907 he asked Mrinalini to come to him. But in December of the same year, he had apparently accepted that she should stay by herself where she was (in Deogarh).

I know it is hard for you to live by yourself at Deogarh, but if you make your mind firm and have faith, then the feeling of suffering will not be able to overcome you. This suffering is your inevitable lot, since you have married me. At intervals there is bound to be separation, because, unlike ordinary Bengalis, I am unable to make the happiness of the relatives and of the family the main aim of my life. In these circumstances, what is my Dharma is also your Dharma; and unless you consider the success of my mission as your happiness, there is no way out. [2])

[1]) *Idem*, pp. 101-102.
[2]) *Idem*, pp. 104-105.

The information we obtain from these letters should not lead us to a probing into Aurobindo's private life. Yet, the spirit of his time and the climate of his thought, demonstrated in them, may serve as an introductory illustration. His calling is of a divine nature. In the words of the letter to his wife in February 1907: "...henceforward I am no longer my own master; I will have to go like a puppet, wherever the Divine takes me; I shall have to carry out like a puppet whatever he makes me to do." [1]) Our quotations from these intimate letters show clearly the urge to express intellectually what his calling and vision mean; this urge characterizes all his writings. Every issue is elevated (or should we say: reduced?) from a particular, individual setting to a level of idealistic abstraction. At least, formally, stylistically, we cannot see it otherwise. In this manner we do not mean to express any doubt as to his experience; besides, we have seen before that Indian traditions allow for a different treatment of all that we usually associate with "individual." But at any rate, we cannot fail to note the curious way in which Aurobindo holds up to his wife the image which she ought to conform to. His innermost convictions are expressed or hinted at, here as elsewhere, in general statements: "*We* say that the wife is the Shakti of the husband, that means to say, *the* husband sees his own reflection...." It is hard to avoid the impression that Aurobindo's intellectual urge is also affected by a time spirit of a rather Western variety. Does not the pronouncement: "There is one defect in your nature—you are too simple..." contain in a nutshell, almost as a caricature, man's modern marital crisis? Granting that such a word, calling on the wife to be more like the husband's mental image of her, may not sound as harsh in India as it would among us, because of the different traditions about individuality, yet the form of expression is curious. However this may be, we are still as far from suggesting a predominance of Western sources in Aurobindo's thought as before. We shall soon see the importance of traditional Indian elements in his system.

The other detail showing the young Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his time, indicates more clearly the direction of his thought. Early in this century, he wrote a pamphlet under the title "Bhawani Mandir" (temple of Bhawani), [2]) in which he depicts his political and religious vision. The notion of India as much more than a geographic-

[1]) *Idem*, p. 103.
[2]) *Idem*, pp. 84-97.

al entity was in the air. Aurobindo proposes to erect a temple for the goddess. One should not say: To Aurobindo, India is the goddess, in the sense of a simple equation. The pamphlet's tenets on this point should rather be understood in the sense that the goddess is the reality, the power, from which also the political struggle and the rebirth of India derive their actuality and meaning.

> In the unending revolutions of the world, as the wheel of the Eternal turns mightily in its courses, the Infinite Energy, which streams forth from the Eternal and sets the wheel to work, looms up in the vision of man in various aspects and infinite forms. Each aspect creates and marks an age. Sometimes She is Love, sometimes She is Knowledge, sometimes She is Renunciation, sometimes She is Pity. This Infinite Energy is Bhawani, She is also Durga, She is Kali, She is Radha the Beloved, She is Lakshmi, She is our Mother and the Creatress of us all....
>
> In the present age, the Mother is manifested as the Mother of Strength. She is pure Shakti. [1])

A pan-Indian tradition is expressed in the idea of the "revolutions," cycles of the world, to which different manifestations of the divine correspond. Also, we are already familiar with a female manifestation of the Absolute, conceived as a male form. New is the idea that the Eternal's Energy would be manifested in our age as Strength, "pure Shakti," particularly in the form described by Aurobindo. The present age which is suggested in this further description seems to be somewhat at odds with the traditional *Kaliyuga*. It is true that here and there people have tried to give the accurate dates of the *Kaliyuga*. Aurobindo, without mentioning dates, means by "the present age" first and foremost a religious time unit, as the old authors did by *Kaliyuga*; but this time unit here bears a close resemblance to the kind of unit known by such names as the colonial or Vasco da Gama age or as the industrial era or as the epoch of capitalism:

> Let us raise our eyes and cast them upon the world around us. Wherever we turn our gaze, huge masses of strength rise before our vision, tremendous, swift and inexorable forces, gigantic figures of energy, terrible sweeping columns of force. All is growing large and strong.
>
> The Shakti of war, the Shakti of wealth, the Shakti of science are tenfold more mighty and colossal, a hundredfold more fierce, rapid and busy in their activity, a thousandfold more prolific in resources, weapons and instruments than ever before recorded in history. Every-

[1]) *Idem*, p. 84.

> where the Mother is at work; from Her mighty and shaping hands enormous forms of Rakshasas, Asuras, Devas are leaping forth into the arena of the world. We have seen the slow but mighty rise of great empires in the West, we have seen the swift, irresistible and impetuous bounding into life of Japan. Some are Mleccha Shaktis clouded in their strength, black or blood-crimson with tamas or rajas, others are Arya Shaktis, bathed in a pure flame of renunciation and utter self-sacrifice: but all of them are the Mother in Her new phase, remoulding, creating. She is pouring Her new phase, remoulding, creating. She is pouring Her Spirit into the old; She is whirling into life the new. [1])

The interest in, or rather, passion for the most concrete levels of existence never left Aurobindo. Although the bulk of his writings were composed in his earlier years, and first published especially in his regular publication, the *Arya* in Pondicherry (1914-1921), this abiding interest is of great importance. Absorption in worldly events means for Aurobindo appropriation of the "Creative Force." What counts is, of course, not the engrossment in political events as such but engrossment in them as revelations and developments of this Force. In this context, we notice at once two continuations of the traditional Tantra teachings. First, there is the total ritualization of life, or, as Aurobindo would write to a friend in 1920: "There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great." [2]) The withdrawal to Pondicherry is not an escape from the struggle for freedom; it was, on the contrary, a step which should lead to that realization to which an external, political freedom owes its very possibility.

Secondly, there is the ambiguity of our era. On the one hand, the Mother, the "pure Shakti," is engaged in all the gigantic events which make this an evil age. On the other hand, all depends on the right way of understanding Her, on the right initiation, for from Her comes the energy that is necessary. The Bhawani Mandir manifesto goes on to deplore the sad state of India which fails to realize this:

> But in India the breath moves very slowly, the afflatus is long in coming. India, the ancient Mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she who is after all so vast and might be so strong? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us, nor is it difficult to lay

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[1]) *Idem*, p. 85.
[2]) *Idem*, p. 195.

> our finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms. [1])

There are two continuations of the ancient symbolism. But here again, continuation means transformation. Aurobindo is quite conscious of continuing old śākta-Tantric traditions, but he feels that the great force which is to be recovered should not be too easily related to Kuṇḍalinī. The Kuṇḍalinī of the subtle physiology is by no means obliterated, but she seems to Aurobindo to be tied up too much with a merely individualistic type of asceticism which he refers to at times disdainfully as the "refusal of the ascetic," because of the negation of the physical world.

But, before investigating some crucial concepts and details, we shall do well to take note, even here, of the peculiar polyvalence of terms which would make no sense if it were not for their traditional, symbolic matrix, or—with the word we used before—for the ritual movement allowing for their transformation. "The present age" is concretely the time in which we are living, with all its vicissitudes, but also the era with its hidden force of spiritualization. "The Mother" is the mysterious, pervasive power of reality, but the present head of the *āśram* too; also, "India" is among Her names as we have seen; hence, Aurobindo can also say about India, a little further in his pamphlet: "It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul." [2])

3. Concepts

The scheme of concepts coined and applied constantly by Aurobindo is relatively simple. Together with some of the exact and approximate synonyms which he uses, a bare outline of this scheme would look as follows, listing the supposed levels of reality from the top down:

I Existence, Divine Existence, Pure Existent, Ultimate Reality, Absolute Spirit, Saccidānanda (unmanifest).
II Consciousness-Force, Conscious Force, Shakti.

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[1]) *Idem* p. 85.
[2]) *Idem*, p. 89.

III Bliss.
IV Supermind, Gnosis.
V Mind.
VI Psyche, Soul.
VII Life.
VIII Matter.

Aurobindo's philosophy presents a *yoga*-system; hence—like the bulk of the traditional *darśanas*—it is not interested in "epistemology." Not the method or foundation of our knowledge is central, but the transformation of life. His thought begins and ends with a vision that is to be followed, experienced, realized. Consequently, it is not strange that the scheme follows by and large the pattern of *sāṃkhya*, *yoga* and tantra expositions. Thus the scheme indicates the unfolding of reality, beginning with concepts of the Absolute which correspond to what in various systems went by the name *sat*, or Sadāśiva, Iśvara, etc.

The opening sentence in S.K. Maitra's brillant booklet on Aurobindo's system rightly summarizes his basic thought as follows: "The fundamental idea upon which the whole structure of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy rests is that Matter as well as Spirit is to be looked upon as real." [1]) For in the final analysis, Matter also, the lowest plane, is spiritual. This means a refusal of the old dichotomies of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, of a real and an illusionary existence. Above all, it means a new resumption of the Tantric and Tantricized teachings where *Prakṛti* could be identified with the Supreme's Śakti, with a particular woman or with an element in the subtle physiology, and where *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, *mukti* and *bhukti* could be homologized in the symbolism. The major distinction to be emphasized here is indeed due to the widening horizon, geographically and in terms of modern philosophical trends which entered India from outside; this explains also the "intellectual urge" in Aurobindo which we noticed before; no one before him posed the problem of "matter" and physical existence in such a straightforward way. It is true that long ago Rāmānuja affirmed the full reality of the world, [2]) over against Śaṅkara, but one cannot entangle the *viśiṣṭādvaitin* more than by asking whether God in creating the world

[1]) S. K. Maitra, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* (Benares: Benares Hindu University, 1945).

[2]) *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, ed. and trans. J. A. B. van Buitenen (Deccan College Monograph Series, XVI; Poona, 1956), *passim*, especially p. 66.

(*prapañca*) also created *saṃsāra*, and what the relationship is between the two. This sort of question did not arise with great urgency in classical India, where the idea of *saṃsāra* went without saying. Nevertheless, the direction of Aurobindo's thought remains Indian, as a cursory glance at his scheme of concepts shows.

Expounding his *Yoga*, quite naturally, his major problems arise in presenting the unfolding of reality. For reality is not homogeneous in its spirituality; but everywhere it is related somehow to the Absolute, the unmanifest. The problem is to discuss in a convincing way the planes of reality in relation to each other. This is in structure analogous to what occupied the older systematicians of Kashmir Śaivism, of *Pāñcarātra*, etc. Old and new meet each other in Aurobindo; in fact, they revitalize each other, and thus the openness, characteristic of symbolism, is maintained.

As of old, the transition of the unmanifest to the manifest is crucial. It cannot be by chance that so many terms for the supreme principle are given by Aurobindo. Such transition cannot be proven by logic; it is ultimately only significant as part of the inheritance of *ṛṣis* "who knew" and, so doing, transformed, interiorized yet earlier cosmogonies. Aurobindo is no exception; his conceptual urge does not change that.

For our purpose, some brief observations about the relationship of the various planes which are to be realized will suffice. The realization process, with the spiritualization of all levels as its ultimate goal, has its corresponding, dynamic reality in these relationships. The whole scheme of concepts has the traditional symbolic ambiguity of referring both to the unfolding of the world at large and the fundamental structure of man. The first three concepts, Pure Existence, Conciousness Force, and Bliss are identical with the better known words *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. But the three are intimately connected and also grouped together as "the supreme planes of Infinite Consciousness." On the one hand, as *Saccidānanda*, they are the Supreme in manifestation; while, on the other hand, the Supreme can be called the unmanifest *Saccidānanda*.

The Supermind represents, like the preceding concepts, a level of which the ordinary consciousness is not aware. It is the outgoing consciousness of the Supreme, the creative power of *Saccidānanda*, the medium which relates the higher triad to a triad of a lower order. This reminds us naturally of the classical theory of the *guṇas*, the "strands" or "qualities" which as such are not discernible in the world,

but which precede the cosmogony, perfect in balance as they are only on the very highest level, and hence unmanifest.

Aurobindo often refers to the levels of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* as "the three higher planes." Contradistinct from these are "the three lower planes" of Mind, Life and Matter, with which man is familiar. Since everything is to be interwoven dynamically, Aurobindo gives much attention to the "middle plane," as hard to catch in words as the evolution from unmanifest to manifest.

> The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where mind and supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illumining descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the allcomprehending supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing, all-blissful Ānanda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and Matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence. [1])

We could understand the transition from an unmanifest to a manifest state as a symbol in the most ancient mythological accounts of the creation. Here we are faced with the same symbolism in a new place, crucial in the technique of *realization*. Aurobindo introduces several concepts which all have the same general purpose of making the inner dynamics of the *yoga* system at least as tangible as possible. Thus he introduces the idea of the *Overmind*, which, schematically, should be placed between the Supermind and the (human) Mind. Each of the related planes has again its interrelated subdivisions, as is visible also in the above quotation.

4. Symbols

Concepts and conceptual statements can easily mislead us in the study of *yoga*-systems. To avoid the danger of a conceptual reductionism, we emphasized the inner dynamics in what looks on paper like a mere skeleton of ideas. However, Aurobindo does not make it easy for us.

When Arthur Koestler, albeit too superficially, too "journalistically," presented his analysis of Indian *yoga*, he showed himself an exponent of our highly esteemed "common sense." For instance, he

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[1]) Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1955), p. 316.

expressed his doubt as to the inconclusive tests designed to prove or disprove the supposed yogic capacity of stopping the respiration. The airtightness of the devices used would have been far from certain. He wondered why no easier and quite trustworthy instrument was ever used to test yogic claims. Could not a supposed levitation have been proven quite adequately by placing the yogin on a weighing machine? The loss of a single pound, even less than that, would have been quite convincing. [1])

There is something to Koestler's reasoning. It might even have been acceptable if he had also directed his journalistic enthusiasm toward the question how any yogin could lend himself confidently to respiration experiments without sharing, in all likelihood, Koestler's qualms about air-leaks in the devices used. Granted that this questioning would not have resulted in a scientific proof of mysterious forces, it would at least have suggested that people can *live* by ideas different from, but as trustworthy as, Koestler's common sense.

One might well wonder what would have happened if Koestler had taken to analyzing Aurobindo's *Yoga*. It is true, in Aurobindo, as in Patañjali, the *siddhis* are not the central issue. But the transformation of life is no less a problem, as we saw. In āśram-circles today, Aurobindo is considered a fully "realized soul." So, by many, are some others, especially T.V. Kapali Sastry, probably the most gifted and certainly the most learned follower of Aurobindo. Realization is taken quite concretely. It is exactly at this point that our "common sense" stirs. In Aurobindo's words: "Yoga means union with the Divine—a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic (universal) or individual or, as in our Yoga, all three together." [2])

It is not necessary to talk ourselves into undergoing the reality of religious or magic experiences. This is neither the level nor the issue of our discussion. The least thing we should realize, however, is that man's ideas and experiences are conditioned. Only a few centuries ago it was quite fashionable in certain aristocratic circles in the West to have heavenly visions before one's death; so everybody who was anybody had them. Aurobindo, also a child of his time and land, at one time suffered, with his friends in Pondicherry, from stone-throwing; stones hit the house without a visible hand throwing them; they even appeared from nowhere inside the house; this went on

[1]) Arthur Koestler, "Yoga Unexpurgated," *Encounter*, LXXXIII (August, 1960), pp. 7-26,

[2]) Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga* (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1953), p. 16.

until the cause, residing in the enmity of a servant, who had hired a black magician, was neutralized. [1]) It sounds incredible, and it probably is, but this mysterious power of throwing stones is such a common expression of enmity in India even today, that one could ask also why it should not have happened to Aurobindo's abode too.

In the study of symbols we are shown that conditionings play a role; yet, symbolism follows its own course, no matter how slowly. Furthermore, as we have seen before, symbols are not identical with fashions of thought or experience. Symbols are also affected by fashions gradually, but it is of much more significance that in religious traditions the symbols remould the fashions. Thus, in Aurobindo's account of the stone-throwing event, due emphasis is given to the Mother's ability to recognize the magic for what it was worth and to control it.

We should also recognize in Aurobindo the symbolic structure of the urge which we saw in the Tantras as an urge for a "beyond beyond the beyond." This urge makes his scheme of concepts understandable, with its various levels and added transitional levels. Each level, with its cosmological significance, corresponds to a stage in the *sādhaka*'s realization. The same urge is most clearly expressed in the repetitiousness of a "not yet" in the pile of letters in which Aurobindo answered the questions of his devotees; [2]) there is the continuous danger of mistaking lower experiences for higher ones; the most sublime realization is still higher than the one just reached. All this may seem a groping in the dark, a building up of tall and unfulfilled claims; but the problem is first and foremost our own, because our traditions do not know much of the underlying type of individualism in its simultaneously macro- and microcosmic dimensions. The doubts of the devotees concern, almost without exception, the *sādhana* which is to be followed, not Sri Aurobindo's or the Mother's divine consciousness. As in the Tantras, no doubt is expressed in regard to the possibility of attaining to the highest levels. Aurobindo himself uses his whole arsenal of concepts to point to the "beyondest":

> The integral Yoga, refusing to rely on the fragile stuff of mental and moral ideals, puts its whole emphasis in this field on three central dynamic processes — the development of the true soul or psychic being to take the place of the false soul of desire, the sublimation of

[1]) Purani, *Life*, pp. 208, 315 f.

[1]) Collected in Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, II, Tome 1 and 2 (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1958).

> human into divine love, the elevation of consciousness from its mental to its spiritual and supramental plane by whose power alone both the soul and the life-force can be utterly delivered from the veils and prevarications of the Ignorance. [1])

The urge is expressed in the very concept of the Integral Yoga. As Aurobindo formulates it in his major work devoted to it:

> The principle of Yoga is the turning of one or of all powers of our human existence into a means of reaching the divine Being. In an ordinary Yoga one main power of being or one group of its powers is made the means, vehicle, path. In a synthetic Yoga all powers will be combined and included in the transmuting instrumentation.[2])

Thus his Yoga is distinguished from *Haṭhayoga*, which makes the body and life its instrument, from *Rājayoga*, which chooses the mind as its vehicle, etc. The endeavor of integrating, as a continuing urge to incorporate everything, reaching out incessantly, cannot be easily separated from the Tantric teachings, especially those of the Śaktitantras. Aurobindo realizes this quite well:

> Tantric discipline is in its nature a synthesis. It has seized on the large universal truth that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is the secret of existence, Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is power of the spirit ot rather is spirit as power... it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation, which is the one all-mastering preoccupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object. It is a bolder and larger system. [3])

The synthetic yoga of Aurobindo is presented, above all, as an elaboration and specification of this "bolder and larger system." The goal is still higher than the unity of *mukti* and *bhukti*; it is "the perfect outflowering of the Divine in Humanity." [4]) Yet, the longer one tries to follow Aurobindo's systematic exposition of what is "more" in his yoga, the meaning of this "perfect outflowering," the harder it becomes to pin down the distinction from the Tantric symbolism. For in both, intrinsically, the urge for "more" and "higher dominates. In both the significance of the cosmos is central. The only important difference seems an addition which can be understood in

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[1]) Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, I, "The Synthesis of Yoga" (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1957), p. 174.
[2]) *Idem*. p. 695.
[3]) *Idem*, p. 698.
[4]) *Idem*, p. 700.

terms of India's widening horizon. It is visible wherever Aurobindo speaks not only of the significance *of* the cosmos, but of the significance *for* the cosmos in his yoga::

> We regard the spirit in man not as solely an individual being travelling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and all Nature and we give this extended view *its entire practical consequence.* [1])

The highest realization is to lead back to the earth in order to be complete. We may formulate it this way: also in Aurobindo, the ritual movement goes on, meeting, recognizing, and structuring what reveals itself as real. The form given to this recognition and restructuring, also of directly "Western" concerns, displays a Tantric signature. Noteworthy is the same ambiguity which we found in the Tantras, stressing simultaneously the unimaginable, supreme goal and the easy quick way of attaining it. For also Aurobindo is well aware of the almost unsurmountable difficulties, but says at the same time: "To arrive by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and divinise by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living is our inspiring motive." [2])

It will be clear that Aurobindo's *sādhana* does not end up in pragmatic stratagems; e.g., for the social uplift of mankind. Not only are the principal concepts of his yoga symbolically loaded, but also visible, more tangible elements show that the "practical" interest finds symbolic expressions. He stresses the *gurvāda*: he himself is the manifestation of the Divine for his devotees. Since his death, his *samādhi* has been in the center of the *āśram*. The *āśram* itself is there to present the form of Aurobindo's vision, an anticipation of as well as a preparation for the new world. [3]) Also the required celibacy of the inmates should be seen in this light. Since 1926, the 24th of November is celebrated as "the Day of Siddhi," the day of the descent of the Overmind; it was Aurobindo's realization, but as such significant to all. [4]) The symbol of the female principle is quite complex in Aurobindo's system, as we have seen already; the Mother is related to the manifestation of the Divine and to the emanation of the world; she dominates the lower levels and quite concretely dominates the *āśram*. Aurobindo wrote a little work under the title *The Mother*; it is a

[1]) *Ibid.*
[2]) *Idem*, p. 699.
[3]) See Purani, *Life*. pp. 198-199.
[4]) *Idem*, pp. 240 f.

treatise in philosophical terms, without any distinct reference to the person at the head of the *āśram*; but it is published by the *āśram* in the form of a devotional booklet and the Mother does indeed incorporate the divine Śakti for the devotees. The undefinability of the Mother does not make her less concrete. In a way, the reverse is true: the experience of the Mother varies, according to the level of the sādhaka's realization.

Aurobindo accepts the Tantric subtle physiology. [1]) Yet, in his own *yoga*, he does not insist on the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī in the lowest center. It is in fact unnecessary, because:

> Our synthesis takes man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature. [2])

What is at stake here is again not a split between the Tantras and Aurobindo, but rather a matter of "greater expediency," "a more realistic approach," in the *sādhana*. Aurobindo's constant stress on an inner psycho-spiritual experience, [3]) or psychic realization [4]) or on the "mystic heart" as seat of the immanent Divine, the "hidden Purusha," [5]) reminds us somewhat of what we have heard about the heart-lotus in the Tantras. For Aurobindo this is of course never the level of the final experience. Yet, neither for the *Tāntrika* could this be said without great reservation, when we remember their ways of expressing a total mastery and transcendence. [6]) Moreover, the Tantric line is clear in that Aurobindo shows a development of interiorization in regard to the subtle physiology. He explains that there is no need for an initial stress on the *Mūlādhāra* exactly because the Divine's action and realization may start on any level. [7]) Finally, in the coalescence of ascent *and* descent, pervading his whole system, we may see a renewal of the symbolism in the *vāmācāra* and Vajrāyāna

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[1]) See e.g.: *On Yoga*, II, 2, pp. 938 f. Especially *Lights on Yoga*, pp. 17 f.
[2]) *On YogaI*: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 699.
[3]) E.g. *On Yoga*, II, 1, pp. 91, 123.
[4]) E.g. *Idem*, p. 123.
[5]) *On Yoga I*: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 170.
[6]) *Supra*, pp. 87 ff.
[7]) Thus in the passage already referred to in *Lights on Yoga*, pp. 17-18. Cf. M. P. Pandit, "Our Yoga and the Tantra," *Sri Aurobindo Circle* (Journal of Sri Aurobindo Society, Nl. XVI; Bombay, 1960), pp. 53-57.

texts, in which the perfect *yogin* is able to travel up and down along the *nāḍīs* and *cakras*, in conjunction with his *iṣṭadevatā*.

5. Excursus, Critique of "Scientific" Methods

We may allow ourselves for a moment to place Aurobindo side by side with that other great exponent of Indian traditions, whom we have met frequently in the preceding pages, Ananda Coomaraswamy. The two are comparable; for example, because of their contact with the West, and, not least, materially, because of their interest in the Tantric traditions. Yet, at least one important distinction catches the eye: if Coomaraswamy is first and foremost the historian, interpreter, exegete of classical India, Aurobindo is India's "theologian," "dogmatician." Coomaraswamy gives a sample of his work in interpreting the four *varṇas*; on the side, he may deplore, criticise or sneer at the chaotic structure of our own society, but his main concern is the right interpretation of the documents, and he remains open for new evidence. After all we have said about "openness," it would be difficult and quite unnecessary to accuse Aurobindo of rigidity, inflexibility, unwillingness to consider new and serious evidence. Technicalities are not at stake here. Aurobindo's concern and tone, however, are quite different when he speaks about "birth" and "caste," in his *Essays on the Gita*. [1]) He rejects the complicated caste system of modern India on the basis of the Gītā (18, 40-48), as any serious exegete would do. But a crucial point is for Aurobindo that the Gītā

> ...accepts the four orders of men, but gives to it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction. And immediately the idea behind the theory changes its value and becomes an enduring and living truth not bound up with the transcience of a particular social form and order. [2])

Thus Aurobindo goes beyond the activities of the scholars, without by any means neglecting their work, and directs himself to the world in which he is living. On the one hand the births are "types" necessarily present in all social structures:

> ... in any society we should have all four types, — even for an example, if we would create a purely productive and commercial society

[1]) (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1959), chap. xx, entitled: "Swabhava and Swadharma," pp. 688 f. Cf. *The Gita*, with text, translation and notes, compiled from Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, ed. Anilbaran Roy (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1954), pp. 283f.
[2]) *Op. cit.*, p. 598.

> such as modern times have attempted, or for that matter a Sudra society of labour, of the proletariate such as attracts the most modern mind and is now being attempted in one part of Europe and advocated in others. There would still be the thinkers moved to find the law and truth and guiding rule of the whole matter, the captains and leaders of industry who would make all this productive activity an excuse for the satisfaction of their need of adventure and battle and leadership and dominance, the many typical purely productive and wealth-getting men, the average workers satisfied with a modicum of labour and the reward of their labour. [1])

This is still a matter of externals. But, on the other hand, more fundamentally:

> Each Jiva possesses in his spiritual nature four sides, is a soul of knowledge, a soul of strength and power, a soul of mutuality and interchange, a soul of works and service, but one side or other predominates in the action and expressive spirit and tinges the dealings of the soul with its embodied nature; it leads and gives its stamp to the other powers and uses them for the principal strain of action, tendency, experience. [2])

This summarizes for Aurobindo what is ultimately meant by the four *varṇas* in the Gītā. In final analysis, they are indicative of the order of ascent and descent, of evolution and involution, set forth in Aurobindo's *yoga*; they are related to and constitutive of each individual as he is in his time and place

Few historians and philologists will endorse Aurobindo's views. This is quite understandable. Aurobindo composed his works in "automatic writing," guided by inspiration from above. Often, the spirit dictated quite hastily. Hence, the historian devotes a small section to Aurobindo, who, after all, had a political career; the philologist takes note of the fact that, even in modern India, some philosophy is practised, and withdraws to study the *ṛṣis* of the past. Almost inclined to apologize for this long chapter, which is still incomplete, we remind ourselves of our task: to follow the development of religious symbols. Aurobindo is for us not just a politician, or a contemporary and brilliant interpreter, but a creative figure in the ritual movement, who transformed and revaluated age-old symbols in a changed world. Aurobindo's philosophy belongs to our legitimate object of study, as artistic creations to the art historian's, and theological systems to the churchhistorian's. The art historian may

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[1]) *Idem*, p. 610.
[2]) *Idem*, p. 611.

prefer an epoch in the past as special object of his concern. The church historian may be too busy with the past to be engrossed profoundly in anything contemporary; moreover, the whole world is on his side in his pursuit of the past, for Augustine and Thomas can be freely mentioned, but not long thereafter names become suspect. We are afraid that historians of religions find themselves in a similar position, where a specialistic preference counts, and where habits of thought dim one's view.

In our present essay, we cannot escape the reminder of man's persistent religiosity, which Aurobindo hands us in his symbolic structure. It is not such a reminder as to convince us by the number of his devotees. Nor is it a reminder in the sense that in him we still have a survival of the archaic type, *homo religiosus*, a living fossile. We are reminded, however, of the great caution with which we should speak of "secularization;" for there is no easy and straightforward answer to the question: where and when did man stop being religious? Aurobindo's yoga shows us how archaic structures do not only go together with so-called "secular" ideas ans ideals, but incorporate them, as they incorporated various foreign elements in the past. The unpopularity of the word "religious," among many of Aurobindo's followers too, is a hindrance, but also such a minor problem that it should not detain us here. In general, symbolism, with its power of incorporation, does not ask for a name. But in few cases is a symbolic structure so clearly recognizable on the contemporary scene as in the Integral Yoga.

The question of untraditional forms of thought was met by Aurobindo, as we have seen, in politics, in cultural and social issues. The question came up with great urgency in regard to the Western, humanist sciences, when Aurobindo dealt explicitly with ancient scriptures, especially the Ṛgveda-saṃhitā.

That he tackled the problem of Vedic interpretation is in itself a remarkable feat. It is true, the main body of Hinduism and Hindu Tantra recognizes the authority of the Vedas, and, more particularly, the influence which set in with the Upaniṣads is great. But by and large, this recognition is a matter of formality. Thus, the Kulārṇava-tantra mentions as a fact, in one stanza, that the Kaulaśāstras are based on the Veda, but no effort is made to spell this out. [1])

For our contemporary, Sri Aurobindo, things and necessities have

[1]) II, 85.

changed. He devoted two substantial volumes to Vedic interpretation, not even to the Upaniṣads, but to the hymns of the Ṛgveda; [1]) the second volume contains translations of hymns to Agni. Characteristic of his Vedic interpretation, on which we can only touch here, is again the recovery of the course of world and man, set forth in his yoga. Yet, we would do great injustice to Aurobindo's work by this statement and dispel immediately the attention of every student engrossed in the Vedas. For how could the new ever interpret the old? However, Aurobindo's approach is not so naive as to allow for such an easy dismissal of the subject. His endeavor to discover the "esoteric sense" of the hymns is certainly not exhaustively defined by explaining that he reads his own experiences and convictions into the text. An integral part of his work is an awareness of the shortcomings of the scientific approach, and a dissatisfaction with a formal, but meaningless recognition of Vedic authority.

The opening sentences in the first of the chapters dealing with sacrifice, in his *Integral Yoga*, present the main tenet of his Vedic interpretation:

> The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption in this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. [2])

In other words, the interiorization of the sacrifice, together with the (Tantric) re-ritualization of the world is normative for the primordial, esoteric meaning of the Veda. This is hardly in accordance with the historical sequence of things. At the same time, we can hardly be altogether unmoved by his criticism of modern, scientific standards. The Western humanist sciences provide helpful technical tools, but Aurobindo considers their overestimation of themselves absurd.

> We have to recognize in fact that European scholarship in its dealings with the Veda has derived an excessive prestige from its association in the popular mind with the march of European Science. The truth is that there is an enormous gulf between the patient, scrupulous and

[1]) *On the Veda* (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1956); *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (Pondicherry: Āśram, 1952).

[2]) *On Yoga*, I, p. 120.

> exact physical sciences and these other brilliant, but immature branches of learning upon which Vedic scholarship relies. Those are careful of their foundation, slow to generalize, solid in their conclusions; these are compelled to build upon scanty data, large and sweeping theories and supply the deficiency of sure indications by an excess of conjecture and hypothesis. They are full of brilliant beginnings, but can come to no secure conclusion. They are the first rough scaffolding for a Science, but they are not as yet Science. [1])

It is most likely that Aurobindo did not keep up to date with Western humanist sciences. But it is very improbable that he would have revised his judgment severely if he had taken notice of writings more recent than perhaps those of Keith. We may think of caricature-like habits among ourselves. There is, for instance, the strange manner in which W. Norman Brown, in his edition of the Saundaryalaharī, reveals to his readers the correct version of the Śrīvidyā-worshippers' principal *mantra*, which those devotees confided to him; the strangeness resides not so much in the act of publishing this secret *mantra* as is the inability to deal with its meaning. Nevertheless, it is quite evident from our quotation that Aurobindo does not have a very clear eye for the philosophical struggle in which the "Western humanist sciences" have been and are still involved. Hence, the fact that the very origin of these disciplines has something to do with a particular spiritual tradition and a profound need escapes him, and thus his eye is naturally drawn to caricatures of explanation, presented by and since Max Müller, in other words, to weaknesses that are perfectly clear to us today.

Our sympathy with Aurobindo's approach does not concern what he overlooks or represents too one-sidedly. It concerns the very fact that, within his own symbolic perspective, he saw the dangers of any merely objectifying and causalistic approach, even early in this century. His critique is not just a resentment of what is European or Western. He objects rather to a modern attitude which in various ways penetrated into India as well as into the Western countries. In this context it is interesting to note how he clarifies his own position in regard to other important Indian leaders.

Among modern Indian contributions, the nearest to his own purpose, as Aurobindo declares, is that of Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj. Why is it nearer than, for example, Tilak's attempt to prove an exceedingly old date of the Vedas and an even older

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[1]) *On the Veda*, pp. 35-36.

origin of the Aryan races? Without expressing himself as sharply as he did before in regard to the Western humanists, Aurobindo does not leave his readers in doubt as to his opinion that Tilak's approach is too external for his own purpose. [1]) This is perfectly understandable, for Tilak surpassed many a Western scholar in "sweeping theories" on the basis of "scanty data." But why could Aurobindo not endorse Dayananda's view completely? Again he expresses himself carefully, but the dividing line is made quite distinct. Aurobindo could not but admire Dayananda for his "remarkable attempt... to re-establish the Veda as a living religious Scripture." Nevertheless, in the final analysis, he had no use for the Swami's interpretation. For "Dayananda's interpretation of the hymns is governed by the idea that the Vedas are a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth." [2]) In other words, he rejects in Dayananda the supernaturalist twist, which mistakes itself for orthodoxy, in India as well as in the West. This would make all movement impossible and, consequently, take the heart out of Aurobindo's yoga. For Aurobindo, the "truth" of the Veda could not but be dynamic; the Veda, as is affirmed in all his writings, is infinitely more than a storehouse of texts which can be used and interpreted, in an external way, whether "scientifically" Western, or "supernaturally" Indian. Human reason is itself only a superficial tool and can do its work well only if it is aware of its function within the dynamic universe. True Vedic study should not be hampered by an approach which leads to a reductionism. The Vedic *mantras* served as a "prop or authority" [3]) for the intuition of the Upaniṣadic *ṛṣis*; they should be studied likewise now: "The Veda is primarily intended to serve for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. It is, therefore, this sense which has first to be restored." [4])

6. Concluding Remarks

We cannot say that Aurobindo brought Western influences to India without a great deal of qualification; in fact, so much qualification would be required as to nullify the statement. Especially within the scope of our essay, it is more correct to say that Aurobindo un-

[1]) *On the Veda*, pp. 36-37.
[2]) *Idem*, p. 37.
[3]) *Idem*, p. 16.
[4]) *Idem*, p. 38.

derwent Western influences in a way comparable to the openness of symbolism in the past which made it possible to absorb and renew foreign elements within a symbolic structure. Like every great reformer, Śrī Aurobindo restores and interprets old traditions, as is most clearly shown by his interest in the Veda. His major concern, in spite of and because of all modifications of a modern epoch, can still be indicated by the same terms which served us in our understanding of Tantrism: concrete realization, ritualization of the world, urge for an ever higher "transcendence."

Before we turn to our final chapter, we may note the existence of a "Christian" endeavor to deal with Aurobindo, a booklet by a missionary lady. [1]) Not only serious students in general who consider the religious era closed and themselves "secularized," but also professed Christians as such have their problems with the phenomenon of Pondicherry. A brief remark will suffice here. The booklet has its merit in presenting a most useful survey of Aurobindo's aims and concepts, but for the rest, leaves much to be desired. It is one in a long series of attempts to give an account of non-Christian religions in a reasonable, coherent way; that is to say, without purposely becoming rude. The book suffers from the ambiguity from which all books in this category suffer: it compares ideas, ideals, morals in Christianity and in an other religious system; it appreciates the other religion on the one hand, and decides that it falls short of the Christian standards on the other hand. One wonders which of the two is worse: the appreciation or the rejection. No serious attempt is made to understand, to recognize. Hence also, the concluding critique in this sort of writing, supposedly of theological value, is a great deal less convincing than the condemnation of paganism and of gnostic systems by the ancient Fathers, who, at least in many cases, knew what they were talking about. In the proverbially small world of today, much is said and suggested about the "self-salvation" of man, as if that were a sure concept to characterize the Hindu and to distinguish him from the Christian. Here, we may indeed bring to mind, wistfully, Aurobindo's wholesome aversion to externals.

[1]) Eva Olsson, *The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, in the Light of the Gospel* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1959).

CHAPTER SIX

THE PERSISTENCE OF RELIGION

Quisquis honus verusque christianus est, Domini sui esse intellegat, ubicumque invenerit veritatem.

Augustine

All honor to learning and scholarship, all praise to the man who can control the material detail, organizing it with the authority of genuine insight, with the reliability that comes from acquaintance with the original sources. But the life of the problem is nevertheless in the dialectical issue.

Kierkegaard

1. Conclusions and Questions

What can we say of symbolism, at the end of our journey through Indian history? What is a "symbol"? What is the symbolic account, called "myth"? Willy nilly, we have to use formulas which are not quite correct, when dealing with myth and symbol. Which of our words can define Agni, *brahman*, *akṣara*, this or that *cakra* or *maṇḍala*, and so on and so forth? If a religious symbol could be conceptually defined, it would be superfluous. Struggling with words, we could say that man designs and projects his own image, with an unwavering hand. He accepts or, at least, tries to accept an orientation for his life. He relates himself to his society and culture. All this, and more, is true, but it leaves symbol and symbolism undefined. The only general point made in these statements is that man differs from animals. And that we knew already. Apart from one's personal view of the world, the interest developed in specialized academic disciplines is apparent in every approach to symbolism. How could it be possible otherwise to say anything at all about man's religious world, its possible origin, its possible end? The question concerning symbolism can and should be posed, qualified, evaluated and answered in a variety of ways. Every formulation of the question and every reply to it bring in a host of other questions. To this our concluding chapter will be no exception.

Setting aside the problem of defining for a moment, what can we say about symbolism on the basis of our study? It seems to us that we can at least point to certain characteristics of symbolism, which

must form at the same time minimum assumptions on our part:

a. *Symbols and myths are the substance of religion.* This first remark may sound almost superfluous after all our wanderings through Indian religion. Yet, stating this quite clearly may fill us with a wholesome suspicion for theoretical or doctrinal generalizations and differentiations.

For instance, we have no clear notion of what a worshipper thought when, in his devotion, he caused a *yakṣa's* throne to tremble. The focus of our watchfulness is and ought to be the *yakṣa*, and not the worshipper's—or anybody else's—ideas. This is to be kept in mind when we take note of the means by which religion comes to our attention in general: emotions, opinions, rationalizations, social behaviour, cultural preferences. Our object is symbolism: its reality precedes any of the means; this assumption is a methodological necessity within our discipline. The opinions, emotions, upbringing, environment, artistic expression, etc., of the *yakṣa*-devotee may be worthy of investigation in themselves somewhere else and even contribute to the explanation of the enigmatic symbol. For us, they are important only as they are related to the mythical and symbolic reality of the *yakṣa*. This must be the order, not the inverse.

b. *Myths and symbols are universally true.* They not only reveal faultlessly what really *is*, the "ground" of man's life, but also they leave no doubt of their general validity.

In the *Devīmāhātmya*, we have seen how the same theme—slaying the monsters and re-establishment of the cosmos—can be expounded in various ways. This happens not in spite of, but because of the symbolism. Closely connected with this is what we found to be the "openness" of symbols. A living symbolism absorbs or revitalizes whatever is recognized as real.

c. *Myths and symbols always present a lived truth.* They are basic for man's total orientation; not only for his rational life or his economic life, etc.

This is the principal reason why we object to a glib separation between "religious" and "secular," whether as adjectives to epochs or to people. While dealing with Aurobindo, we saw that so-called "secular" elements can become incorporated into a symbolic structure. This is not a curious survival. Rather, it is curious in our contemporary confusion of tongues that we have to stress the point at all. It goes without saying that the people who first fought or welcomed the Aryan invaders in North-West India faced tremendous problems

of orientation and re-orientation. At present, as in ancient days, man faces problems with all the complexities in and around him. But he cannot stop orienting himself without ceasing to be human.

d. *Myths and symbolic reality in general, in order to be what they are, must be reactualized.* This point is in accordance with the preceding one, but it refers more to the formal character of symbolism.

The Vedic ritual and the periodical festivities at local holysteads amount symbolically to a renewal of the world. They repeat "what the gods did first." The "interiorization" did not disrupt the symbolism, but continued it in a new way. We have seen that this development began quite early in India, but comparable changes took place elsewhere.

Every highly developed religion has its gnostic systems in some form or other. Public cults may lose their attraction altogether. But the individual searches for an integration into what is the fundamental reality of the cosmos; it is but natural that he makes use of traditional terms. Thus, what looks from the outside as a loss of symbolism, as a "secularization," is in fact a new development. This is true even today. Of course, expressions differ widely. There is a gnostic-religious propensity to the modern urge for a re-establishment of an inner harmony. There is the Ramakrishna Mission with its Western devotees, Theosophy, Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale, and so on. Apart from these names and forms which do not appeal to every one, there are more popular things such as the pocketbooks, endowing every one with knowledge of the soul, and the general and still spreading interest in symbolism.

Whatever the result of the modern Western climate may be, the church in its history resisted gnosticism. At least in comparison to India's history the gnostic movements remained quite limited in size and scope. The remarkable feature in India's history is exactly that a gnostic influence became dominant and reshaped India's culture at large. As to Western developments in the future, we could hardly venture a prediction; it may take some time before Billy Graham and psychiatry are organically related in a gnostic remodelling of the cosmos. But India, not only in tolerating but in accepting and reinforcing gnostic developments, has built a tremendous reservoir of power; viz., an idea of human individuality, intrinsically related to old religious forms; individualism is not a recent revolution against authority, as in the West. It may very well be that at least on this score a rapid modernization with growing industry and cities and a splintering up

of an old society does not find India as unprepared as a slow modernization found Europe. The oldest forms are most persistent and resistant in much the same way as the vital is stronger than the psychic and the physical stronger than the vital—to use Aurobindo's terms.

e. *Myths and symbols cannot be invented or discarded at will.* They lead an "autonomous" life.

In a very real sense, "there is nothing new under the sun." Novelty exists in transformation. We have seen and stressed this repeatedly. Even the goddess, who, in all her manifestations, is characteristic of so historically identifiable a movement as the spread of agriculture, has her precursors.

Here again, we cannot make an exception for our very recent, "Western" period. We have become quite familiar with popularized forms of anti-religionism, whether disguised or not. But we can hardly speak of a break with traditional forms, at least, if we do not bring in our preconceived notions of what "religion" ought to be.

The huge American Christmas celebrations may reflect little of the church's teachings. But the many who are indebted half of the year for the expenses of Christmas gifts, can also be said to conform to an ancient sacrificial need. Similarly, tourists in London, who deem it their duty to pay their reverence to the grave of Marx, can hardly be said to pursue a pragmatic purpose by doing so.

More fundamentally, the words of our headlines and the things we suggest as "absolute" necessities or vital issues in our time, bearing on our freedom or on a future, perfect state of society make sense only as symbolic entities. This means, of course, no devaluation of these entities, if we have at all been seriously engaged in our previous chapters.

We do not want to delude ourselves by drawing straight lines and attaching generalizations to the points we are listing. We remember quite well that we are still in the process of indicating characteristics of symbolism and that we did not set out to analyze modern history. Our generalizations may show, however, somewhat in anticipation of our final problems, how difficult it would be to prove, empirically, that religious man is dying out. The dissatisfaction we feel with this sort of empiricism does not concern us in the present context yet.

f. *The continuity of symbols involves a transformation without a loss of the characteristics mentioned.*

There is, among the most drastic transformations we have seen,

the transition from an axis of the world to the spinal column of an individual, or from a serpent to another reality within the subtle physiology. But nothing "partial," be it some theoretical reflection, or some particular line of behaviour, or whatever else, takes as such the place of the concrete, true, and open, dynamic and vitalizing, paradigmatic and re-creative, unchangingly independent and yet changing reality, concentrated in a religious symbol.

We could indulge here in poetic revelry on this mysterious reality of symbols and myths. We are not going to do that, but we should at least realize the possibility of such revelry, and, to quite an extent, its appropriateness. Not by coincidence, we receive many of our data from great poets, in the study of the history of religions.

More soberly, however, we are faced with great problems. The characteristics which we listed look rather meagre as conclusions.

It is true, they should not be overlooked. In defence of our characteristics, we could say in the first place, that they cannot replace our whole effort of understanding a religious movement. E.g., they should lead us again to the study of interiorization, a reality which the West has never known very well and which has been a constant object of misinterpretation; Western varieties of individualism—separation from society as a whole, man as measure of all things, self-salvation, or plain selfishness as disregard for one's fellow-man—have been read into it, quite unjustly.

In the second place, the characteristics may be of some use to the treatment of further problems. They may serve us in much the same way as historical research served us in the course of our essay. We selected certain data in order to understand a *religious* development, with the understanding that we should not contradict what is historically verifiable in and between these data. Similarly, our reflections on further questions should take note of the "characteristics."

For there are questions galore; the most intriguing ones are left, on which our characteristics as listed throw little light. The question "What is a religious symbol or a myth?" has not left us. Is the suggestion that man will always be religious, an *animal symbolicum*, or even that he really is like that today, verifiable? Is there any criterion for an understanding of religious man? How can we deal with him at all, that is to say with him who, in his religion, designs and projects man's final image? What is man's image and destiny? Is not our very understanding of religious man fiction?

2. A Vanishing Vantage Point

Such are the leading questions when our task seems—but only seems—to be fulfilled. Their multiplicity and repetitiousness can be explained by the fact that the quest for religious symbolism is inseparable from—indeed identical with—the quest for what man really is. The study of a particular religious development in a particular part of the world is incomplete without realizing this. Consequently our study, also, brings us to *our* problem of man, general and particular at the same time.

It is more than probable that one cannot even begin the study of religious man in history very well without sensing some ulterior motive, no matter how honestly one tries to go about it "scientifically," in describing and classifying phenomena. Ulterior motives may be quite different; they are probably not the same in a full-fledged communist anthropologist and in a boyish moral-rearmer. But in the course of a serious study of religious man, one is bound to be confronted with ulterior motivations.

If science would be limited to an "objective" description and classication, what we want to say from here on would not be scientific. Whatever one's idea of science is, the questions raised are inescapable, even if we cannot answer them, or, at least, not in their present form. Moreover, in so far as every branch of learning is to direct itself to the demands and necessities of its object, the term "science" is as appropriate as any other more or less exalted name. However, in the opinion of the present writer, a more exalted name would be more appropriate. As historians of religions, we can only exult at the formulation of Sierksma, which may be translated as follows:

> All anthropology which moves from describing to designing is a form of literature; this bears on all anthropology which is studied by a man who refuses to be degraded to a specialized cerebral animal, or, in other words, on all anthropology worthy of the name.[1])

Much more than describing is needed. Much more also than classifying. Much more than the two together with the conceit of objectivity.

The historian of religions' materials are not like stamps, even for the most imaginative stamp-collector. Symbols are constitutive of man's life, and they are held by living men. For the discipline of the

[1]) F. Sierksma, *Freud, Jung en de Religie* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., N.V., 1951), p. 209.

study, it makes no difference whether they belong to a modern or an ancient culture. "Discipline" is an excellent term here. For it is not just a desirability, but a duty for the student of religions to live with his materials in a continuous contact; he is not to shrink back for fear that he might be influenced by them. In other words, to the best of his ability, he is to develop an "openness" parallel to the openness of man's symbols and myths.

To avoid misunderstanding, we do not suggest that the student should identify himself, for instance, with a fifth century *tāntrika*; not even with a contemporary one. We do suggest, however, that a culturologist who ventures an interpretation of some religion should be willing to reconsider the adaptability to life of his theories.

The historian of religions' total task is endless. But since in a real sense man's life is at stake, he cannot sit down and reflect on infinity. An immediate and practical concern is the critical evaluation of concepts and "methods." For myths and symbols cannot be caught in well intended ideas, once and for all; interpretations need as much of a constant revaluation as symbolism itself.

But can one not have too much of a good thing? Is there no limit to all this constancy? We think not. But the limitlessness of the task is no formlessness of the effort. In any serious study, which does not reduce symbolism to something else, but deals with it, certain lines become visible, drawn with the purpose of finding real man. They should not be discarded lightly, not even by men with firm religious or rational ideas of their own, who already "know" what religion is.

One example may serve as an illustration. It forms a good illustration in that it is quite problematic to ourselves. It is no doubt one of the most valuable approaches to symbolism in our time. We have in mind the endeavours to understand religion with the help of "fixed" archetypes, a method with which especially the names of Jung and Kerényi are connected. The method has been exposed to criticism, not in the last place by men with theological convictions, but not only by them.

Why should we raise objections to an approach with Jungian archetypes? Somewhat of a reason to object to it, as well as to comparative exposés on religion which derive their ultimate criteria for what man and religion are from Buddhism, is the neglect of historical changes in symbolism. Not only are the religious symbols of man innumerable, over against the few supposedly eternal archetypes (such as child, mother, maiden), but each symbol goes through transformations

which affect its meaning considerably. However, no matter how severe this criticism is, we should not get too emotional about it yet.

In the first place, we can very well conceive and follow a Jungian approach which tries hard to take changes into account. Archetypes are not clearly defined concepts. Mythology only provides a "ground" for man's life; the "causes" which it gives are only *archai*, in the sense in which Aristotle speaks of them: they are things belonging to the *apeiron*, the undefined, the unlimited. [1]) The colourfulness of the world is not at all denied or reduced.

In the second place, we ourselves are not so stubborn as not even to feel quite distinctly the need for a more or less "metaphysical" formula. This is a complicated way of saying that our concern for man's true orientation persists, even while we attribute an almost exclusive importance to the change of symbols. For we remember that symbols are universally true, in spite of their "openness."

We can quite well understand the archetypes religiously, as expressive of an urge for symbols beyond the symbols, and to which all particular symbols are, nevertheless, related. Not by coincidence, Jung expounded on the process of individuation, perhaps most brilliantly, in his writings on Indian symbolism, on the *maṇḍalas*, and on structurally comparable symbolisms in alchemy. The urge has its unmistakable parallel in the Tantric imageries of "an ever higher beyond," and certainly strikes a chord in our time. In this context we may perhaps also bring to mind that the important Christian theologian Paul Tillich speaks of a "God beyond God." [2])

It is quite possible—it has been done—to regard Jung and the Jungians not as scientists, but as gnostics at heart. But saying this makes little sense. In the first place, they have done a great deal more for an understanding of religion than hosts of Western pietists and reductionists together. In the second place, after all we have said, we are not so sure whether "gnostic" is a word of blame in our day and age. Moreover, if "gnosticism" enables one to live with and interpret religious data, a most important "scientific" requirement is fulfilled. Myths and symbols are the object, and we have noticed the discipline which they require.

Yet, even though we do not know the origin of symbols, and even

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[1]) See K. Kerényi, "Einleitung. Über Ursprung und Gründung der Mythologie," in C. G. Jung, and K. Kerényi, *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie* (Zürich: Rascher, 1941).

[2]) *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 186 ff.

though we realize that we know man only as *homo symbolicus*, we still want to give a more substantial attention to history. Do we *have* to end up in an unapproachable relativism? Do we have to lead a double life, between the universal truth and the unpredictability of symbols?

3. Ritual Movement

We took our refuge before in the term "ritual movement," for lack of a better word, and for that reason only. There is no reason to hide that it reflects as much of our "ulterior motives," that is, of our own anthropological problems, as of a scientific need. It is meant to take into account the reality of symbols—with their openness and changeability—and the necessity to see man as *homo symbolivus*, i.e. as that creature that is obsessed by orientation in all periods of history, even today. One would need an unimaginably firm ground to stand on, outside the stream of symbols. At the same time, we would like to suggest with this term the possibility of a meaningful historical approach, to discover the structure of symbols in their perennial flux.

Does not a historical approach imply a withdrawal from the ritual movement itself, at least, a giving up of a full contact? In studying the historical changes of symbols, do we not furtively crawl on the bank of the stream, in which we pretended to be swimming? Does it not refute the very criticism to which we subjected "objectivity"?

At first sight, an answer in the affirmative seems necessary. We seem to cloud the issue when we emphasize the legitimacy of a historical study within the ritual movement.

Yet, we forget something important. History, and certainly the history of symbols, is not an objective entity which we are able to look at from outside the stream. We have only *our* historical works. *We* give names to periods. Our historical accounts themselves are of a mythical character, as Van der Leeuw taught us. Hence, they may be said to belong in the stream and thus affect our orientation. Short term research may serve a useful purpose in destroying previously held certainties. But, however the aims are defined in detail, in historical study we do not set our heart on destroying, but on finding certitude concerning man. Exactly this commitment brings the historian of religions *in concreto* to his critical appraisal of premature objectifications—and objectifications usually are premature.

It is important to stress this point—of the mythical character of our treatment of history—at the present time, with its compartmentalization of learning and the resulting tinkering with "final" problems. In the *humaniora*, one never stands aloof from, nor above man and his final problems. False modesty is quite out of place. No sight is more disconcerting than that of the scholar who innocently confesses, for instance, that he knows only about religious man in the late Hellenistic era, and who makes at the same time objective generalizations which make one's hair stand on end. The "emaciation of science" (Van der Leeuw's expression) is an urgent problem for the historian of religions. A specialist of religion may have successfully banned a spirit of superstition, but if a totem-pole becomes only an expression of social solidarity, if the Eleusinian mysteries are completely explained as fertility cult, then more than seven evil spirits may take its place.

However, even if we take part in the ritual movement with our changing, indeed, our mythical accounts of history, the problems are by no means solved. The problems which are left are certainly not caused by, or limited to the vicissitudes of our modern universities. There is still the religious man himself. Whether we listen to him in the Vedas, in the Purāṇas and Tantras, in temple sculptures, in Aurobindo's writings, or for that matter, in the works of Jung, or anywhere else, he is as a rule not very concerned with our sort of passion for historical honesty. And, for the life of us, we cannot accept, in the final analysis, Aurobindo's readings of the Ṛgveda-saṃhitā —as if the sacrifice really envisaged his spiritualization of the world—nor the certitude of archetypes creating an order in the flux of our symbols. We are quite well aware of the fact that this implies a reservation in regard to the phenomena of symbolism and mythology at large.

It is not easy to broach the subject of history to religious man. When he speaks to us at all, whether through the Tantras, or anything else, or through the mouth of a contemporary anthropologist, he may tell us that we are poring our eyes out on what is mere *pariṇāma*, that we are historicists or relativists. He has a right to speak with authority to us, who claim an interest in religion. Our study of Indian spirituality has shown that he represents a natural continuation of the archaic man with his ritualistic or local cults. He represents the majority, today as well as centuries ago. A meeting is inevitable, especially as we regard his symbols as real. The meeting is not sufficiently academic

to allow us to get away with the recognition that our accounts of history are mythical *too*.

We should at least recognize that this mythical pursuit of ours is different from what more numerous samples of religious development show. The latter we may indeed group together as "gnostic" in structure. Its symbolism, with all its changes and transformations, is consistent and clear. It fulfills a great need, also at present in the West, a need which could grow so strong and chaotic, exactly because our rationalism and empiricism, and, to quite an extent, the church with its creeds, stood in the way of a "natural" development. Its characteristic, expressed in different, concrete forms, can be summarized as a harmonic integration of man in a cosmic totality, including—a paradox when formulated non-symbolically—an ever higher transcendence.

From a religious point of view, the search for a history of symbols is a great deal less satisfactory, to say the least. Granted that a "gnostic" approach is in practice more recognizable by an urge for transcendence than by a possession of it, the historian is constantly aware of the short-lived truth of his accounts. More fundamentally, he may be quite conscious of the need for a metaphysical reality in his "mythical" narration, but he realizes the transitoriness of a metaphysic as well as the changeability of the symbols.

The net result of our discussion will hardly content the "gnostic." He will go on reading into history things which in our opinion are not there. He can follow his course; we can follow his readings. In the modern world he is the religious man *par excellence*. But we shall have to remind him time and time again that the things he reads are not exactly what his reading bestows on them. If he reproaches us that we have only one leg in the stream, and if we are forced to engage in a discussion on an academic level, we can at most reply that *panta rhei* is not the meanest philosophical uttering, and not the most recent one.

However, we should not distract the attention from the fact that our design of man is at stake in encounters with religious man. Such encounters take a practical turn, as a rule unexpectedly, and do not necessarily occur in an academic setting; the fact that such encounters can occur at all within academic communities at the present time is not in the last place due to men of Jung's stature. Religious symbolism is essentially practical; likewise its transmittance from man to man in history; likewise its understanding. This fact alone would

justify the term "ritual movement." It is not possible to settle issues philosophically by way of "prolegomena" to symbolism. Philosophical questions can arise only after the experience of or confrontation with specific symbols, myths, symbolic behaviour, and even then not in isolation from them. This is in accordance with the characteristic of the "lived truth" of symbols. Moreover, we hasten to add, it is in accordance with the sequence of things in history.

The least thing which we should do and are entitled to do on a practical level is to destroy conceptualizations. As a rule, we have to do so on the basis of our historical understanding of symbolism, whether or not the unmistakably religious man agrees with us. Is he right after all in considering our religiosity something dubious? Or are we perhaps so—almost religiously—engaged in our historical concern, and is this sort of concern so recent that we are not able to discern its symbolic structure? An answer would be most helpful. We do not doubt that it should be a most practical answer to a most practical question.

4. Theologians and Religion

We suspect that the theologian has been with us from the beginning in our ulterior motivations. We cannot say this unequivocally, for in the problems just discussed we feel very much aligned with historians and philologists who do not take pride in their acquaintancy with theologians, if they have any at all. Yet, we cannot leave the theologian aside, for in the first place, he is legitimately concerned with answers to our problems, and, in the second place, he is factually concerned with answers that he should not be concerned with.

The major problem, most generally and most crudely stated, is that the theologian, perhaps unconsciously, still wants to out-objectify and out-conceptualize his colleagues in other branches of learning, although, consciously, he thinks himself past that stage.

No *Verbi Divini Minister* should feel offended personally by this introductory statement. We are still speaking of *our* problem; therefore, it will not be necessary to make more than an occasional reference to specific theologians and their view of religion. Above all, nothing is more natural than that a theologian should have and handle concepts concerning religion.Is not religion his field? The vast majority of people would still grant him that. Even a considerable number of academicians is inclined to leave the study of religion to the theolo-

gian, for whatever reason or habit of thought. It is needless to say that among the important exceptions we find anthropologists.

If the anthropologist is one of the merely describing and classifying variety, he will be the last one to approve of such a generosity toward a field which in his view is suspect, or worse; he lives in the illusion that his own contribution is the closest approach to completeness; to his imagination nothing can be contributed even by the philosophers, who distinguished, long ago, that which *ought* to be from that which simply *is*; he cultivates, at least officially and verbally, a subhuman way of perception; thus in effect he makes his "science" open to the vicissitudes of his time and its fashions, in a manner incomparably less meaningful than the least historically inclined villager his changing religion.

A more important exception is formed by the anthropologist who moves from a description and classification of men to a design of man. He finds himself in the company of several other humanists, who are willing to take religious phenomena quite seriously, to the point at which their own image of man changes. He feels a hindrance in that which we have called the theologian's out-objectification and out-conceptualization of other academicians. It is our contention that, in most cases, he has a right to feel that way quite strongly. To avoid misunderstandings, we should add that the theologian's hindersome dealings with religion can easily be ignored in a serious study—as every day practice in the history of religions and related subjects show.

However, at present we are to deal not with the historian of religions', but with the theologian's task, as it concerns the history of religions. Is the theologian aware of the generous gift—the concern for religion—which the majority still assigns to him? The question is not less, but more cogent, since the generous bestowers give little evidence of clarity or unanimity in the reasons for such bestowal; their reason may cover a whole range, from "My priest administers the sacraments to me" to "I have no use for religion; it is his business."

Especially since Söderblom, it is not an uncommon opinion in the best of circles that Christianity represents the climax of religiosity. The argumentation cannot be denied a certain consistency. It can be shown that Christianity has a place for most any religious expression and form which can be found anywhere: mysticism and prophetism, rationalism and idolatry and far reaching extremes of materialism and spiritualism, etc. One does not bicker about "little" things, such

as cannibalism. Besides, could not the communion celebration be presented as a supreme way of eating the god? However, it is impossible to follow the reasoning which leads from a supposed all-inclusiveness of Christianity to its supremacy. In the course of our essay, we have met with the all-inclusiveness of Hinduism. But there it meant a power of absorption which, indeed, "went without saying," in the development of symbolism. Here, an overt rational effort is made, and not too successfully at that. Even if Christianity were superior in thoughts, morals and customs, on what empirical basis could this be demonstrated? In fact, violence is done to the empirical data of religious man.

We do by no means intend to say that the great archbishop Söderblom is responsible for caricatures in this type of thinking. On the contrary, he was well aware that one could not derive Christianity logically from the course of man's religion or depict Christianity as its natural crown. He struggled with the questions of the relation between Christianity and the religious world of man, not just because the religio-historical tools of his time made it easy, but because he could not do otherwise *as a theologian*. For that reason he could arrive at statements which sound not quite irrelevant, even now, although the suggestions of an organic growth or process are unacceptable:

> There is a world-wide spiritual process which should give rise to the triumphant knowledge of God as a good held in common by all humanity. The mission of the church has called forth this process in all earnest and will impel its completion. The amorphous beginning and the final completeness of this knowledge of God are both beyond the scope of our perception. We can follow the ways of the process only for a little stretch. [1])

It is good to remind ourselves of the existence of great figures such as Söderblom, theologian who *struggled* with questions presented by man's religions, with all means available. Söderblom was quite conscious of the fact that we could follow the ways of religion only for a little stretch. Söderblom's influence exceeded the circles of historians of religions. We are dealing here with only one of the

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[1]) Den weltumfassenden geistigen Prozess, aus dem die siegreiche Gotteserkenntnis als ein gemeinsamer Besitz der gesamten Menschheit hervorgehen soll, hat die Mission in vollem Ernst ins Leben gerufen und treibt ihn seiner Vollendung entgegen. Der formlose Anfang wie die endliche Fülle der Erkenntnis liegen auszerhalb unseres Gesichtskreises. Nur eine Strecke weit können wir die Wege verfolgen. (N. Söderblom, *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens* [2nd improved edition; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1926], p. 345.)

cases in which *hoi polloi* among the theologians discovered useful apologetic theories; the struggle, which was and had to be involved, escaped their attention.

This brings us back to those whose reasonings we have satirized somewhat. They continue ideologies which precede Söderblom considerably, ideologies of a human progress and a growth which will proceed naturally if only man is educated sufficiently, in other words, ideologies which are not at all peculiarly theological in character. We do not belittle the stimulus which these ideologies, with their eighteenth and early nineteenth century roots, have provided for Western scholarship. But at present, Sanskritists and theologians alike would hardly be able to suppress a smile when they read the preface with which Sir Monier Monier-Williams beautified the new edition of his Sanskrit dictionary—still an indispensable tool—at the end of his life, in 1899. In justification of his almost exclusive devotion to the "dreary and thankless drudgery of writing Dictionaries and Grammars," he refers in hearty agreement to the purpose, stated by the founder of the Boden Chair of Sanskrit in Oxford University. The purpose of all this is "to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion." [1])

Still, this sort of honest and straightforward statements of great nineteenth century scholars contrasts favourably with the ways theologians have *applied* the concepts developed by men like Söderblom. The fact that it is not always the great theologians who apply anthropological, ethnological or historical theories to their apologetics, does not diminish the problem under discussion. Something is very wrong with a missionary in our day and age who is sent out to preach the gospel among primitive tribes and refers to the people entrusted to him indiscriminately as "animists." The worst thing is not that he uses a rather antiquated term, but that he lives in the illusion of meeting and understanding people by framing them in a developmental theory, the relationship of which to his Lord is rather obscure. The case is not an exception. We have met before with a comparative and, indeed, over-conceptualized "Christian Approach" to Aurobindo.

It is true that when they are at work, Christian missionaries are not always so bad as they seem to be when they speak. In down to earth situations, they always have a chance to forget, soundly, that

[1]) Sir Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899, reprinted 1956), p. ix.

they are exponents of a superior civilization. More difficult is the situation for the theologian in the West. He has the advantage of keeping up-to-date with anthropological discoveries, if he cares for them. But he has also the time and the opportunity to over-conceptualize whatever comes his way. This means a danger at every turn of the road he travels.

We found it necessary to speak of symbols and myths as forming the substance of religion. To the best of our ability—conditioned as that may be too by our time and our traditions—we gave our attention to an empirical treatment of specific symbolisms of man in India. Only in this way could we avoid the injustice done to man by external schemes. Our study does in no way justify a relegation of symbols and myths to a supposed heap of antiquated world-views. In the reality and inevitabillity of symbolisms in human life as such—and not just in human life of a dim past—we found ourselves close to what modern thinkers arrived at: e.g. Jaspers (in his discussions with Bultmann) and Cassirer.

What should the theologian do? Should he say that he also treats of symbols, and that "his" symbols are equally real or more real? Or, that his symbols and myths are more consistent than the others? Should his system conclude with a study of comparative symbolism, or, perhaps, even a treatise of comparative mythical consistency?

There are indeed many pitfalls for the theologian. He may resort to the recent prophets who see the emergence of a new, totally irreligious type of man, in spite of contrary evidence perceived by other students. He has a right to do so. As a preacher, he may even *have* to, in order to make himself understood. The new type of man meant is not a scientific construct, but a nightmare which has been with us for many years. We have the memories and experiences of unimaginable cruelties in two senseless wars. Today, people—people indeed—in responsible places, are discussing, with clear minds and carefully computed figures, the possibilities of a "preventive," thermonuclear attack. We know about the completely disoriented man.

The theologian should speak. This is no point of discussion for us. But, within the limited scope of our study, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that this total disorientation can only be a problem to man who knows better, that is to say, to him who is *homo symbolicus* in spite of himself. And we resent the *homo theologicus* who asserts, sitting at ease in an armchair, that the coming dereligionization will finally clear the air, show man's real nature, so that the road is at

last open for a confrontation with the gospel. This is not only naiveté, it is blasphemous conceptualization of a prophecy.

There are more snags, not in so grand a manner, but even more treacherous. Things that are definitely and uniquely Judeo-Christian can be studied and contrasted with what is known of other religious systems. It is a secure way and has its merits. Furthermore, it is a way which has to be followed by the theologian, somewhere along the line. It does not involve the childishness of comparing ideas, etc., which we have met before, at least, not intentionally , in order to demonstrate that the bible has "more." On the contrary, sometimes that which is found to be unique can be in many ways *less* than what other religions provide.

We can look for myths and symbols in the bible. If we do so as soberly as we attempted in Indian texts and keep in mind the characteristics which we listed, we cannot help being struck by the biblical poverty in this respect.

There is an account of creation which cannot be called mythical. There is no trace of reactualization anywhere, whether in a public cult or in an individual technique. Besides, the story would hardly lend itself to such treatment. The experts have told us that repetition of words usually is significant in Hebrew narratives. God declares in the story that the created things were good, or very good. This declaration is apparently addressed to man, who is living in "real" life and who could very well be of a different opinion. A myth? No.

We can read the paradise story and come to the same conclusion. Motifs are the same as elsewhere in paradisal imagery: tree, snake, immortality. Also a stupid act, the result of which seems to be out of proportion to the act, is not at all exclusively biblical. But again, no trace of reactualization. The reader is supposed to know about the gravity of man's error already. The story is evidently a mere preface which hurries into what really matters: man's life outside of paradise and the first fratricide.

We can go on listing details and motifs which should be decently religious but are not. Typically mythical elements as Leviathan, the giants, the great hunter, etc. are few and vague, and can hardly be said to present such reality as we found in Indian symbols. God is a rock—but it is mere poetic allegory. Many a mythical motif is used (psalm 48!), but as a rule twisted in such a way as to confuse religious man. No matter what the myth-ritualists do to the psalms, one can at most admire their ideas and persistency to reconstruct a

Near Eastern or even wider setting in which the biblical data should fit perfectly.

Then, there is the stroke of luck for us, if we are theologians. We discover the Exodus as the crux of the matter, and the history of passion, crucifixion and resurrection in the New Testament. We discover history. If we are good protestants, we perceive lucidly, at the same time, why there is no interest to speak of in immortality in the biblical accounts. Gods' acts in the world count most, and His affirmation of life.

All this is true. But it will not be meet and right to draw hastily the conclusions which present themselves, almost spontaneously. General conclusions are wrong here, exactly to the extent to which they are general. The theologian finds himself in a position analogous to the one in which we have found ourselves when trying to define symbolism.

The temptation remains nonetheless. The theologian may come to speak of a "biblical realism" with a certain right. Yet, his right is not so great as to allow him to build his theology on the phenomenological construct denoted by the term. It is a useful term, somewhere, for the man who notices that the bible is worth reading. If it is meant to signify more, it falls short. For instance, if it is meant to denote a realism to the exclusion of other, supposedly less real or unreal realities, or to their judgment or even to their completion. If this were the case, what would prevent us from building a system on our "characteristics" of symbols? It requires no conceit to suggest that such a system would indeed be superior. The vicissitudes of life and limitation of things with which this biblical realism deals so realistically are mere trifles in any *yoga* system. In earnest, the implied distinction is too neat and too pure to be true. It is a camouflaged fundamentalism, since it envisages, with too emaciated a logic, a split between biblical truth and other truths.

The theologian may resort to the concept of "transcendence." It is probably inevitable that he does so. But everything depends on the way the concept is handled. Needless to say, the concept transcendence, as well as its counterpart, immanence, is not "biblical." The theologian may use it, while he is engaged in the interpretation of the bible, without objection, just like he may speak of biblical realism in certain contexts. Especially if he realizes that it is as such not biblical, it is most helpful in his interpretation. What would have happened in the pursuit of theology, if such unbiblical systems as

those of Plato and Aristotle had not been drawn upon? The line of thought in which such philosophical words as "transcendence" are used, is itself more than useful. It is necessary. The theologian who is willing to confront Hinduism and who is not satisfied with depicting Hinduism as a bugaboo to his parishioners will not be able to bypass Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. We do not in the least object to the use of philosophical terms. But they become misleading when they are used by theologians to make clear and conclusive separations, e.g. between Hinduism and Christianity. The danger is far from imaginary. We could argue quite convincingly that Hinduism does not know of a real transcendence. It is true; there is no real transcendence for us when one can speak of a higher transcendence, as in the Tantras. But the statement brings us to a sterile over-conceptualization with its logical completion that we *do* know apparently of a real transcendence. We have not arrived at a solution of a problem, but at most at the beginning of an intricate discussion, in which we should have to take the idea of an Unmanifest Supreme quite seriously. Moreover, at this point, the fact that the biblical texts do not know of a transcendent God *as such* would take on a new significante and force us to reconsider our helpful concept.

Another conclusion which the theologian is tempted to draw can be summarized as "particularism." The peculiarity of the biblical accounts is that God reveals Himself in a particular place, at a particular time in history; He is never and nowhere a general truth. As a specification of the "biblical realism," this reasoning is acceptable to some extent. But does it separate Christianity from Hinduism? It is impossible to make the statement with that intention, after all we have said about "concrete experience" in India. The statement is valid, but is not applicable to a comparison of religions.

The same thing can be said and—fortunately—needs to be said about kindred reasonings which take note of an inevitable, mythical element of our historical accounts, but proceed *from there* to make an exception for the history of which the bible treats. Biblical history, or, more precisely, a part of the biblical accounts, is singled out as "history of salvation," and consequently, precisions have to be made in concepts of eternity, time, temporality, etc., in order to safeguard the relevance of this particular history to all men in all times. The precisions may be quite necessary in themselves, but any relationship to religious man, whether asserted explicitly in the beginning or implied in the end, remains obscure.

We may raise the question whether any systematic theological attempt can do justice to religious man, to his ritual life. We are convinced that the theologian who establishes his work wholly or partly on the historian of religions' data commits an error. It makes little difference whether he sets out with a great phenomenological conception of man at the foundation of his system, or whether he bases himself on a little phenomenological insight in a little detail. He is bound to be open to a severe criticism as a theologian, and at least, he will oversimplify and misunderstand man as *homo symbolicus*.

On the one hand, it is out of the question that there is such a thing as one religious man with one ultimate concern for one ultimate reality. Symbols are too concrete and too open to unexpected changes to allow for such an idea. The theologian who takes such an idea as his starting point addresses himself to an imaginary person—unless of course the person spoken to happens to share the same idea of ultimacy with the speaker and not with some Vedic *ṛṣi* or the Zuni Indians.

On the other hand, the theologian should know that he addresses religious man. He may speak of God's acts. He has to keep in mind that these acts are to be *remembered*—if he cares at all for the biblical accounts of the Exodus, the giving of the Law, etc. "Memory" and "remembering" are no doubt crucial biblical words. They are vastly different from the words "realization" and "realizing" with which we had to deal in our essay. But woe to the preacher who forgets that whatever he says about the memory of God's acts will be *realized* by his listeners, in an Indian parish, and, for that matter, in quite a few other places. The forms of realization will vary considerably. But if they are any good at all, they will be symbolic forms. The theologian has every reason to hope that they will be good forms.

5. Another Movement

We have given a dry list with possible mistakes of the theologian dealing with symbolism. We concluded the list rather suddenly with an almost trivial paragraph. This may be disappointing to some. But others, we hope, could have predicted the outcome.

We may bring to mind at which point of our discussion we introduced the theologian. We did it, when we spoke of the ritual movement and thoroughly entangled ourselves in the question how we could meaningfully deal with the flux of symbols and myths,

in other words, when we wanted to justify a historical treatment which the religious man is hardly in need of as a rule. At that point, we saw our final problems in our dealings with man concentrated. We recognized our problems as quite practical in nature, practical as ritual man himself. Hence, it was neither quite fair to the theologian nor quite appropriate to our discussion to review wrongly applied theoretical notions with no more than a semblance of practicality here and there.

One could refute all we have said by saying: "The theologian is not at all supposed to form concepts in order to deal with religion in general; he is a servant of God and as such spokesman of the church."

This is exactly the point which we intended to make. The theologian does not have to use all his ingenuity to fit all living religious forms into a system. They find their own "system." Such is the ritual movement.

Theology is a supremely practical discipline. Our final problems with the ritual movement are practical and we need a practical answer. Many may consider a theological answer which does not systematize all that we know already far too practical for our purpose to deserve the name "answer" at all.

The term "answer" is perhaps incorrect. We would hold that the theologian has a good right to become a little more old-fashioned, indeed mind his own business, and in that way only, almost by coincidence, be of some use to the historian of religions. His own business is to think and say what should be thought and said if we believe in God. With this old-fashioned calling he is to confront man and his problems. When he makes a mistake in any specific area, there are enough experts to bring that to his attention.

What is the strange urge in him to know all of everything and tie the pieces together into an apologetic in which he speaks when speaking is uncalled for and is silent when he should speak? Could it be something that is induced by fear of losing the ground on which he stands? Such fear would be equally strange.

We do not intend to crack a cheap joke in our discussion with the theologian when we call to mind Aurobindo's reproach to his wife: "You listen to whatever anybody says." These words are elastic and applicable in many cases, including the case of man's objective describer and classifier who does not know that selectivity is a human necessity. The reproach is most appropriate in the case of the theologian. Wherever he hears these humiliating words, he does not

have to be bashful in guessing who the real speaker is. Don Camillo heard the words not infrequently from the man on the cross; thus even a mediocre story can become profound.

That theology is a practical discipline means to us that it provides a place on which to stand when we are dealing with our final religio-historical problems. There is no reason for pushing this idea. In spite of everything, we feel a closer association with the mere classifier or descriptionist who does not know better than with the theological theoretician who should know better. Above all, the practicality of theology is such as to present a danger at every point of our problems. The dangers are more manifest than the desired usefulness or applicability.

The danger of systematic theology which is most obvious in regard to our field of enquiry is too early a solidification. The theologian becomes too eager to provide a place on which to stand. Self-defence against a supposed "foreign" religious threat takes precedence over a sober watchfulness. This happens in all the tempting theological conclusions which we cited. The strategy fails for two interdependent reasons. Firstly, in his eagerness to come to grips with religious man, the theologian overlooks the fact that the place on which he himself stands is not secure, not always the same, not unchangeable. Secondly, in his eagerness to secure a fixed place, he does not notice the changeability of his supposed opponent—the ritual movement.

We have seen the resulting inadequacy of theological endeavors to deal with religion. The point which we try to make about the theologian's pre-occupation with a secure place may need some elaboration. It is quite pronouncedly of a theological nature. Theology does not deal with man and his place as such. It deals with man and his place only in so far they are related to God's revelation. This is the sober designation of the theologian's concern, whatever concepts he uses to elaborate on this in any given situation. We can see no theological reason why the theologian should be so over-zealous in "fixing" man's place. On the contrary, if he holds on—as he should—to the notion of God's revelation because of God's *acts* in history, his major concern should be altogether different. If God's acts count and—as some theologians have said—God's *coming* to the world, these notions should lead also the theologian's thought on the Christian man facing the religious world around him and in him. No matter how many preconceived ideas about religion the theologian may cherish personally, they should not define and crown his anthropology;

least of all should they lead him to draw a circle around the "Christian man," safeguarding his place, separating it from the Hindu or from a construed religious man in general. Such drawing of circles is an illusionary activity. It is not less meaningless when it is done with the purpose of *relating* the Christian to his fellow religious man. For it is the concern for a safe place which makes no sense.

Apart from the fact that the *homo symbolicus* is too concretely engaged to perceive this conceptualistic artificiality, the theologian should not be concerned with the drawing of circles. His anthropology should reflect the dynamics of his theology proper. The crucial point is a meeting, a confrontation, time and time again, not a learned, phenomenologically conceived harmony.

Does this yield a solution for our problems? Properly speaking, no, it does not. Instead of one movement, now we have two. Exactly in our historical interest in symbols we found our own relationship to the ritual movement somewhat dubious. Religious man, as we met him in his orientation, did not seem to be in need of our researches. We would have been delighted if we had reached an agreement on our historical interest itself as a new point of orientation, whether inside the stream of symbols—as we would like to see it—or outside the stream—as it seemed to be. The theologian did not provide any help with wrong theoretical notions, designed to provide a bridge between a phenomenology of man and an ultimately trustworthy reality. At this moment, theology with its real, practical concern does not seem to be of help either. For it points to the necessity of encountering religious man in all his vicissitudes and in all his reality over and over again.

We have no solution for each and sundry historian of religions. But we hold that theology forms a paradigm for the history of religions as a discipline. It presents, in its own course, essentially the same dubiousness which we found in our study. But theology does not consider this a frustration, but its reason of existence.

It goes without saying that we do not imitate theology in posing our object and in finding our method. Theology is paradigmatic in practicality, in discipline, in the willingness to take risks, in other words, in all these things without which the historian of religions cannot operate. Theology as a paradigm may prevent us from falling a victim to reductionism, because this is theologically impossible, in spite of the theologians.

We do not have to stress the fallibility of theologians and of the

Christian church again, except for the possibility of a new misunderstanding. Our designing work *cannot* come to an end, even with a design of theology as a paradigm. We hope that the theologian will understand that.

The theologian has enough in his past to think about with a sense of shame: the inability to understand the signs of the time. With great and unnecessary difficulty, he granted man the freedom to study the universe without regarding the earth as its center. This happened long ago, but not so long ago as to make him feel at ease. The study of man requires freedom, because of the endless variations of man's symbolic structures. This freedom too should be granted, not in spite of theology, but because of it. Does not the theologian know about a perfect freedom, the freedom of the children of God?

Too many mistakes have already been made in an endeavor to incorporate the historian of religions' findings into theological systems. These findings are necessarily hypothetic and imperfect. The endeavor to incorporate them is a senseless way of making the historian of religions' freedom harmless. This too has its analogy in the treatment Copernicus' discoveries received.

The theologian has a lot to ponder about in shame, when he brings to mind misunderstandings of his own task. We owe all our confessional scriptures and creeds, beginning with Apostolicum and Nicaenum, to the willingness of the church to meet obstacles in a changing world. Not every confession of our faith has been successful. However—as all theologians agree—not the *confessio* as such is at stake, but the act of confessing; *confiteor*, I confess, I bear witness in the face of the world. The church knows that there is not one confession for all times. So should her theologians. The making of clear confessions has been out of fashion for some centuries. Yet, it must be a horrible sign to the theologian that the church has not seen fit to come to any clear pronouncement in its missionary history. In spite of the missionary expansion of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the church has yet to discover and encounter religious man. It hardly needs a great seer to predict that the encounter with religious man in specific forms, and not in general ideas, will surpass in importance the early church's encounters with gnostic opponents or deviationists.

We realize that we are asking the impossible from the theologian. But we can rightfully say that the impossible is entrusted to him. His task is endless, in so far as we are able to see. But he has a reason for undertaking it. The endlessness of his task too is paradigmatic for us.

In some cases—no matter how rare they are—not only theology, but even the theologian may be paradigmatic for us, viz. where he feels a sense of shame in recognizing religious man. Kathryn K. Atwater, in a study of Australian aborigines, wrote in a postscript: "Our own religious endeavors seem feeble in comparison with theirs." [1]) The theologian who does not know this experience at all is to be pitied. We feel that every theologian should be able to understand *something* of this humiliation as it is not unrelated to the precepts about love for the fellow man. This love is not made of sugar. It is often rather incisive. It is related to one who became fully man and who was humiliated indeed. It has a way of urging its necessity very practically and rather unexpectedly. Among the highest aspirations we can have in our essay is that of humbling a theologian a little at some point with the image of the *tāntrika*.

In the meantime, this necessary experience does not make the historian of religions' task any lighter, and certainly not the theologian's. When the theologian gives up the conceit of an all-inclusive system, he does not have the consolation of any conceit in his practicality. That much does not necessarily have to be said of the historian of religions, although it would be good if we could say it of him too.

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[1]) Kathryn Kellog Atwater, "The Great Wollunqua, a Study of Primitive Ritual" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1959), p. 86.

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