

Vedic Religio-philosophical Thought.

June-September 2003.

Introductory

1. Civilization in Ancient India, or *Bhārata-Varṣa*, is much older than the first extant written materials or the earliest Harappan culture. In this article I am concerned with the religio-philosophical thought that developed in the North-Western part of the Indian Subcontinent and what is today Pakistan, which formed a unitary culture in the fourth millennium BC. The Harappan culture is only one of its material phases and is wrongly termed 'Indus Valley Civilization'; it will be called hereafter ISC (=Indus-Sarasvatī Civilization) since the river Sarasvatī just as much as, if not more than, the Indus formed roughly its axis (McIntosh 2002: 24, 28). As archaeological investigations continue both in Pakistan and the land of the Bhāratas, new finds may necessitate modifications of the picture we now have of the (proto-)history of that region. We may have to revise even some of our notions about the earliest phase of the Vedic Tradition itself as expressed in that remarkable document, the *R̥gveda*, and the texts *Atharvaveda*, the other *Samhitās*, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. As far as is known it was an oral tradition, (unrivalled in the history of mankind), and it was sustained even as recently as the 20th century of the Common Era by brahmin families devoted to its sacred lore.

The *RV* (= *R̥gveda*) is remarkable not only in containing at once religion, science, poetry, ritual, history and legend but also in being an absolutely primary text and perhaps the oldest known document of mankind revealing the beginnings of the Indoaryan civilization. It is now generally assumed that "civilization" implies urban structures, tools, weapons and other material artefacts. This is essential for archaeologists and (proto-)historians since it is the presence of such artefacts that enables them to know anything about non-literate communities of the past. However, even in Rome the word *civis* 'city dweller' (from which the word 'civilization' comes) and its cognates implied the idea of law, constant and well-defined, as opposed to rapacity and lawlessness implicit in barbarism. Plato's first ideal society is a community with simple agriculture, animal-husbandry, essential crafts and trade (exchange), feeding on barley-bread and bulbs, drinking wine in moderation and singing hymns to the gods (*Republic* 370C ff). This sounds remarkably like the way of life we find in the *RV*. R. Rudgley cites a modern scholar, Prof. Yoshinory Yasuda who found "a marvellous principle" for civilization which is "a respect for and co-existence with nature" and wrote further: "Civilization begins to appear when a workable system for living, that is a proper relationship between man and nature, is established in accord with the features of a given region": Yasuda wrote this in regard to the Jōmon culture in Japan beginning c 11000 BC (Rudgley: 1998: 31-33). This too is apparent in the *RV* in Saptasindhu, the-land-of-the-seven-rivers, the axis of which was mighty Sarasvatī, "flowing pure from the mountains to the ocean" (*RV* VII, 95, 2). This implies a fair knowledge of the processes and rhythms of Nature in the seasonal changes, the weather, the behaviour of animals, plants and minerals – in other words "scientific knowledge". And this the ancient Indoaryans had since they had agriculture, animal husbandry, building, metallurgy and the tools necessary for these arts and crafts – as the *RV* testifies. Their religion with its many deities, who are said to be manifestations of One Primal Cause, constitutes their attempt to penetrate the mysteries of Nature and life and death and know the unseen causes behind the observable phenomena – again as the *RV* testifies. Moreover, as another author writes on Ancient Egypt, "In a civilization, men are concerned with the quality of the *inner* life rather than with the *conditions* of day-to-day existence ... a concern ... to master greed, ambition, envy" (West 1993: 6-7) – a concern clearly expressed in the Vedic texts. Their simple mode of life (and aspirations) did not require advanced technology, oppressive urbanization and enormous buildings, though it was not entirely free of pressure, anxiety and conflict – as shown by the prayer to Agni to avert poverty and neglect (*RV* III, 19, 25-6) or to Varuṇa for forgiveness of sins (VII, 89) or the gambler's lament (X, 34). Those ancient Āryas ('noble, civilized' people, as distinct from the *anārya* 'irreligious, uncivilized') left no monuments like the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, the pyramids of Egypt or the megalithic structures of Malta, but they left the *RV*

which is a monument of language.¹

The R̥gveda

2. Being an absolutely primary text, the *RV* can be, and has been, interpreted in many different ways. More often than not, because the uniqueness of the *RV* was not given its due importance and because much material in the hymns is elliptic and/or enigmatic, material from post-rigvedic (and even other Indo-European) texts was used. Sāyana's tradition saw it mainly as a text for ritual and this view coloured heavily the approach of the European scholars in the 19th cent CE; moreover these scholars imported, often unconsciously, the political, ethnic and religious notions, prevalent in that period – colonialism, European supremacy, the Christian missionary zeal, the theory of evolution, anthropological views formed from the study of 'primitive' peoples, materialism and the like². Thus one reads of polytheism, fetishism, the evolution of religious ideas and forms, deities and demons representing forces of nature, theriomorphism and anthropomorphism or "arrested anthropomorphism" or "opportunist monotheism" (Hiriyanna 33, 39) and so on. Most of these views are mentioned by A. B. Keith in the first seven chapters of his

1. Throughout this study the dates are BCE except where stated as CE. The date after the name of an author in brackets denotes a modern date, of course. E.g. (McInstosh 2002: 24, 28) – where 2002 is the year of the publication and the other numbers denote pages in that publication.

I take it for granted that the ancient Indoaryans are indigenous from at least the early 5th millennium BC and that the (bulk of the) *RV* was, as the native tradition has it, compiled just before 3102, which marked the onset of the Kali-yuga (Kazanas 2002 and 2003b) although there may have been (Witzel 1995) later redactions, insertions and other modifications of the original text.

Here only a brief summary can be given of the evidence discussed at length elsewhere.

All archaeologists stress the uninterrupted continuity of culture from Mergarh (c 7000) to late Harappan and down to the Persian encroaches after 600 BC. There is only a break in the skeletal record between c 6000-4500 BC (references in Kazanas 2002: 287). There is no mention of any invasion/migration in the early Vedic texts (unlike texts in other Indo-European branches like Iranian, Greek, Celtic, Scandinavian). The rigvedic people may have practised some nomad pastoralism but they also lived in settled communities: they had agriculture (*RV* IV, 57; VIII, 91, 5; etc) and animal-husbandry of cattle, sheep, and goat and horse (*RV* passim); they had weaving (I, 134, 4; II, 3, 6; VI, 9, 2-3; etc); also metallurgy and smithies (IV, 2, 17; V, 9, 5; IX, 112, 2; etc); they also seemed to engage in maritime trade (I, 25, 7; 56, 2; etc).

The *RV* is pre-Harappan. It knows no urban structures or ruins thereof; no rice *vrihi*, no cotton *karpāsa*, no brick *istakā*, no fixed fire-hearths/altars – all elements present in the late Indus-Sarasvatī culture and post-Rigvedic texts. The river Sarasvatī dried definitely c 1900 BC, according to geological and palaeoenvironmental studies (Rao 1991: 77-9; Allchins 1997: 117). However, G. Possehl concludes that it could have reached the ocean only before 3200 and more probably c 3800 (1998; so also Francfort 1992). So those hymns that praise the Sarasvatī as "best river *naditamā*" (II, 41, 16), having the Ārya tribes settled along its bank (VI, 61, 8-10, 12) or flowing to the ocean (VII, 95, 2) must belong to a period before 3200 and perhaps 3800! By the *AV* the great river seems to have diminished; for in this text the name tends to denote the goddess rather than the terrestrial river (Ludvik 2000). Then, there are the archaeoastronomical papers of B.N. Achar who find that some references place the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* c 3000-2900 BC, the *Jyotiṣa Vedāṅga* c 1800 and the early core of the *Mahābhārata* 3067 (Kazanas 2002: 293-7); the epic received the form in which we now have it at c 100 BC -200 CE after many accretions and some revisions and rearrangements over the intervening centuries. Since the *RV* is linguistically many centuries older than the epic it must be assigned to a date much earlier than 3067.

2. From the many publications I select few Western ones which expose these prejudices: Shaffer 1984; Leach 1990; Feuerstein et al 1995; Trautmann 1997; Bryant 2001.

classic study (1925). In the 20th century new views appeared on the rigvedic gods: psychosomatic or spiritual forces within man (Shri Aurobindo, 1956; Coomaraswamy 1942; Frawley 1992); forces of fertility and sexuality (O' Flaherty 1980a, etc); even forces of Thermonuclear Physics (Rajaram 1999).³ Although I have consulted all these and many more studies, I shall ignore their conclusions. Post-rigvedic texts and other IndoEuropean traditions can, and sometimes do, shed light on some rigvedic issues, but since the *RV* is an absolutely primary document it must be interpreted chiefly by its own terms.

3. The One-and-the-Many is an important theme in the *RV*: all deities are expressions or appearances of the One Source which is prior to all manifestation and beyond description. With this is connected the theme of man's "divinization" (i.e. the actualization of inherent divine powers) or Self-realization in the later tradition. This is missing from mainstream academic studies because of the bias mentioned in §2 expressed in such terms as 'primitive, pre-philosophic, pre-scientific' and the like, and because the term 'philosophy' is used in post-Aristotelian senses and not as it was understood by the Socratic circle in the late 5th and early 4th centuries in Greece, where it was first used extensively, especially by Plato, in a specific sense.⁴ In the Socratic-Platonic teaching *philosophia* (>philosophy) meant 'love of wisdom' which entailed daily living according to ethical precepts and the exercise of virtue or excellence *aretē* (cognate with Vedic *ārya*), the pursuit of self-knowledge through reasoning and "dialectic", the contemplation of the highest causes, and the practice of some form of meditation, all of which lead to divinization. On the face of it, all this sounds far removed from the *RV* and akin to the Upaniṣads, but it is also very much a pre-occupation of many rigvedic hymns.

In fact, philosophy in Ancient India does not start with the schools or systems Nyāya, Mimāṃsā etc, with their epistemological, ontological and similar problems, nor with the Upaniṣads, but with the *RV*. Calling the hymn "the most famous Rigvedic speculative symposium", W. Johnson examined at length the questions posed in the *brahmodya* of *RV* I, 164: 'Who witnessed Agni, the first-born?' (4a); 'Who created space and hence all phenomenal manifestation?' (6c); 'what really is the source of everything, that mysterious one?' (6d); and so on. He wrote, not without a note of condescension (a common feature in many other writings), "Despite their archaic age, these questions should not be dismissed". (Who dismisses them?) Then he added, "As the first formulations of serious pre-philosophical inquiry, these questions present remarkably sophisticated concepts even while using images and mythological themes, as Plato did, for their articulation" (1980: 106-9). Such questions are not pre-philosophical formulations since they enquire after the first or highest causes; they present indeed remarkably sophisticated concepts. Stanza 21 ('the mighty herdsman of the whole universe, he the wise one has entered into me') and 35 ('this holy-brahma-power is Vāk's highest heaven') indicate that they are closely linked with Plato, one of the greatest philosophers of the West. Johnson did not examine stanzas 21 and 35 and their implications. Before we do so, we should deal with some general concepts of the rigvedic Cosmos.

4. The *RV* contains no well defined system of cosmogony or metaphysics. It is a collection of some 1000 hymns to deities mostly, that are considered 'sacred revelation' *śruti*, apprehended by 'seers' *ṛṣi* in an extra-ordinary state of consciousness. The linguistic variations indicate clearly that they

3. Alone K.Warner's 1989 article adheres to the rigvedic material; also to a degree, D. Frawley (1991, 1992) and Jeanine Miller (1974, 1985).

I do not know translations of the *RV* in modern Hindi or other Indian vernaculars. English, French and German (Geldner 1951-7) are very inadequate. I suspect that for a good rendering the translator would need, apart from a good knowledge of Vedic, the very state of consciousness of the ancient ṛṣis themselves.

4. See *GEL* under φιλοσοφείω and φιλόσοφος. See also Kazanas 2003a, section 2, and *GPA* §§1, 26, 29.

were composed at different places and periods of indeterminate date.⁵ It is not surprising, then, that we find inconsistencies and incomplete information on many subjects in the hymns.

This state of affairs has caused some major misinterpretations of the Vedic religion by many scholars. For F. Kuiper for instance “the fight of Indra with the dragon (*vṛtrá* /*Vṛtrā*) is a creation myth” (1967: 98) but secondary to the cosmogonic myth of the waters even though, as he admits, “clear references to the primeval waters ... are found in the last and most recent book of the *Rig-Veda*” (p 99). But because other cultures have cosmogonic waters Kuiper finds it quite reasonable that this applies to Rigvedic thought as well (p 99). But because other cultures have cosmogonic waters Kuiper finds it quite reasonable that this applies to Rigvedic thought as well (p 100). He thinks the same of the dragon/snake, found in NE legends (p 108). He gives only a passing reference to That One (in *RV* X 129, 3) but does not mention (p 132) that all gods and all phenomena are expressions of That One. W. Norman Brown, again, said much the same as Kuiper (1978: 21-33) and found a basic dualism in ‘real’ *sat* and ‘unreal’ *asat*, *RV* VII, 104, 8-12 and X, 129 (1978: 14-19). There is of course, no such simplistic duality in the *RV*. On the contrary as will be demonstrated below (§§7-8), what stands out in the *RV* for the careful reader is that the great multiplicity (of gods and other phenomena) is product of triplicity, that is of the three major levels within the cosmos, and this in its turn is an expression of a primal Unity: ‘It being One became variously all this.’ *ékaṃ vá idám ví babhuva sárvaṃ* (*RV* VIII, 58, 2).

5. The picture of the Cosmos that emerges in a general broad outline is a primary one of two levels, sky and earth (=the dual deity *Dyāvāpr̥thivī*, often called *rodasī* and presented as two bowls *dhiṣaṇē* ‘full of intelligence(?)’ I, 160, 1, or *camvā* III, 55, 20); but also a commoner tripartite one of sky, midspace *antarikṣa*, and earth. The three are said to have three levels each, giving a total of nine. (The numbers 3, 9 and 7 have mystical and magical significance.) Air fills the region above the earth while the extended earth is likened to a wheel or disc (X, 89, 4) having risen out of and floating on water (*AV* XII, 1, 8). There are streams in the sky (*RV* I, 32, 12; VII, 101, 4) and Sarasvatī is both a terrestrial and a celestial river (V, 43, 11; VI, 61, 11; etc). The sun and the moon are known and worshipped as deities but there seems to be no worship of any other celestial body. The planets may have been known, but certainty comes with later texts. Time has day and night marked by the rising and setting of the sun; there is a 10-month gestation year and a solar year of 360 days, while a thirteenth supplementary month is mentioned (e.g. I, 25, 8)⁶.

5. E.g. the common ending in the dual nominative **-ā** gives way to **-au** (masc; different in fems and neuts) in later hymns; so also neuter nom. pl. **-ā** to **-āni**; and so on. Besides, several hymns mention ancient and modern ṛṣis or hymns: eg. I, 1, 2; I, 48, 14; IV, 50, 1; V, 42, 6; VII, 53, 1; etc, etc. It is known that of the 10 Maṇḍalas the 10th is the latest while the six family ones (2nd to 7th) are early, but no dates can be assigned: the difference between them may be many centuries, given the conservatism of old traditions. Moreover, linguistic variants may also have been used concurrently in different geographical areas and this may have applied to some/many hymns/passages of the *AV*, which on the whole seems to be linguistically younger (§16). The whole issue requires a new systematic study in depth.

6. Much more precise information appears in the later Vedic texts: see *VI* under *graha* and *māsa*; see also Kak 2001 and 2003 with more and updated information.

The Cosmos is characterized and maintained by *ṛta* ‘order, course-of-Nature’. This force is not deified but it is very powerful. Everything flows from the Seat of *ṛta* (I, 164, 47: *sádanād ṛtásya*)⁷ and the year is its wheel with 12 spokes (st 11). Generated out of *tapas* (X, 190) it may never be infringed. Uṣas never deviates from *ṛta* (I, 123, 9); Varuṇa and Mitra have their great powers through *ṛta*, which they uphold and promote (I, 2, 8; V, 63, 7); Agni is repeatedly called *ṛtāvan* ‘observer of, true to, *ṛta*’; and so on: in fact, all ‘the gods have ever followed the laws *vratāḥ* of *ṛta* (I, 65, 2). The term has religious significance as the order-of-sacrifice ‘rite, ritual’ (II, 24, 8; X, 16, 4) and also a moral connotation ‘right, truth, reality’ and *anṛta* the opposite; the latter acquires prominence in later texts.

6. The gods in the *RV* are supposed to be 33 (I, 34, 11), though, certainly, several more appear. There are 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras and 12 Ādityas but the first two differ in number in the lists of (later) texts; there are also the Vasus associated with Indra (and later Agni). Although the gods abide in heaven (as do the Fathers *pitṛ*, the 7 ṛṣis and heroes, in stellar form, in X, 68, 11, in 107, 2 and 154, 2), they are connected, in three groups of 11, with the three regions of earth, midspace and heaven⁸. *RV* X, 158, 1 prays “May Sūrya protect *pātu* us from heaven *div*-, Vāta from midspace *antarikṣa* and Agni from earth-regions *pārthiva*-”, where Vāta (=Vāyu) may stand for Indra also, as is evident in later texts.⁹ Indra has a special affinity with Vāyu and, in any case, apart from being the Wargod *par excellence*, he is also solar and aerial (filling the midspace in IV, 18, 3-5).

Apart from the Sungod Sūrya/Savitṛ, celestial gods are Varuṇa, Mitra and Aryaman (all three of the moral order, law, regulation, harmony), Dyaus ‘Skygod’ (but only a name, really), Bhaga ‘the bountiful provider’ (again, only a name), Viṣṇu ‘the active/expansive one’ of the three strides, whose abode is highest heaven (VIII, 52, 2; X, 1, 3); here too are Pūṣan and Vivasvant (aspects of the Sun), Uṣas the Dawngoddess (to whom are addressed some of the loveliest hymns: I, 48; 92; IV, 52; etc) and the Aśvins ‘twin horse-deities’ who succour and cure; also the Moon, Candramās or Soma, connected with the mind (X, 90, 13).

In midspace, apart from mighty Indra ‘of the bolt’ *vajrin*, who slays the dragon Vṛtra and releases the waters and cows (I, 32-33; IV, 18; VIII, 16; etc, etc: a major theme of *rigvedic* mythology), and Vāta/Vāyu the Windgod, we find Mātariśvan, related to Agni (III, 29, 11) yet bringing Fire to men (I, 60, 1; III, 2, 13; X, 46, 9); Apām Nāpāt ‘Offspring-of-Waters’, a form of Agni in the atmospheric waters (e.g. II, 35); Āpaḥ, the atmospheric Waters, providing an abode for Varuṇa (VII, 49, 3) and Agni (III, 1, 12; X, 91, 6); the Maruts ‘Stormgods’ who aid Indra and gleam with lightning (I, 88, 1; V, 54; etc); “fierce” Rudra, father of the Maruts (I, 114, 6; II, 33, 1) with some destructive traits (I, 147, 7; II, 33, 11); Parjanya the rain-giver, god of fertility – in cows, mares and women (VII 102, 2) and father of Soma (IX, 82, 3); the old but subordinate and rather

7. This follows directly st 46 which states that to the One the wise-poets give many names – Indra, Mitra etc; st 47 itself starts with *kṛṣṇām niyānam* ‘dark is the descent’: so the Seat of *ṛta* may be that One and *ṛta* itself may be Its expression as cosmic order or course-of-Nature. The idea of monism is quite pronounced in the *RV*, as we shall see, and here we have an instance of it.

8. This triple division is adopted by Yāska (*Nir* VII, 5): it is largely correct but has inconsistencies, as expected. For more details about the deities see Macdonell 1898, Keith 1925 and E. Ghosh 1933/1983. The first two have misinterpretations due to the prejudices of their age. The last one has some misinformation due to bad translations and typographical errors. Otherwise all three are very useful.

Hereafter Keith will be given with page number only.

9. *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* IV, 2, 12. For a full discussion see Keith, 86-7.

obscurer deities, Ahi Budhnya ‘Serpent of the Deep’, Aja Ekapād ‘the Unborn One-footed’,¹⁰ which in AV XIII, 1, 6 makes firm the two worlds (cf *aja* in RV VIII, 41, 10; also X, 65, 13); Trita Āptya of the secret abode (IX, 102, 2) who prepares Soma (II, 11, 20; IX, 34, 4).

Agni is terrestrial but he is the most repeatedly invoked god after Indra and, being a personification of the sacrificial fire and a messenger between gods and men, appears in all three regions, is identified with some 15 gods and goddesses (including Aditi, Bharatī and Iḷā: RV II, 1), comprehends all deities (V, 3, 1) and knows all (*visvavid*, *visvaveda*- and, of course *jātavedas* VI, 15, 13). Other terrestrials are *Pṛthivī* ‘Earth’, quickening the soil (V, 84); the Rivers with Sarasvatī as the “best mother, best river, best goddess” (*āmbītamā nādītamā dévītamā*: II, 41, 16). Then Soma is the plant and drink, coming third in importance after Indra and Agni; it has origin on the mountains in its physical aspect and in heaven in its divine one, brought down by an eagle (IV, 26; 27). Bṛhaspati or Brahmaṇaspati ‘lord-of-prayer’ (I, 190, 2) is the divine priest, closely linked (I, 33, 13; etc) to Agni *purohita* ‘domestic priest’ (I, 1, 1), but also allied to Indra in destroying demons and goblins with fire (II, 23, 14; X, 68, 4-8) or with his roar (IV, 50, 5; X, 68, 8)¹¹

Echoing a long line of scholars, Th. McEvelley writes of “two types of gods... *devas* and their adversaries ...*asuras*”; he adds that “*māyā*, magical illusion, is used in connection with [*asuras*]” (2002: 257-8): the former are Aryan the latter native non-Aryan, in the normal frame of the AIT (=Aryan Invasion/Immigration Theory). Given to easy generalizations, this scholar does not bother to tell his readers that this *deva-asura* contrast appears only in few late hymns of the RV and in post-rigvedic texts. If he had examined the hymns he would have found that *deva* and *asura* are interchangeable terms in the early and middle strata describing thoroughbred Indo-European gods like Mitra, Varuṇa and others, including Rudra. See, e.g. V, 42, 11 *namóbhīr devāṃ ásuram duvasya* ‘do adore with salutations the deva asura [Rudra]’; VIII, 25, 4 *mahāntā mitrāvaruṇā/samrājā devā-ásurā* ‘2-great Mitra-and-Varuṇa, 2-imperial-lords, 2-devas [and] 2-asuras’; etc, etc. These *deva/asura* deities fight demonic forces (§9, end), not one another. The *asura* is *ahura* ‘god’ and the *deva* is *daeva* ‘demon’ in the Iranian *Avesta*. (*asura* is probably the Scandinavian *aesir*, also ‘gods’.) Nor does McEvelley know that *māyā* (‘power through knowledge’ <√*mā māne*; also Mayerhofer under *māyā*) is wielded by these *deva/asura*-s and the demons equally. I shall mention him often because he purports in a 700-page study to delineate *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, concluding, with much similar misinformation and rather superficial judgments, that Mesopotamia and Egypt were the sources of most of the ancient cultures. While it is true that the two great civilizations influenced other cultures in the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean, including Greece, he ignores the Proto-Indo-European heritage (which goes back to c 7th millennium) and dismisses the antiquity of the Veda.

An equally curious view is given by M.J. Shendge, the leftist historian who adheres to the AIT (2001). She applies “a new methodology consisting of criteria of rationality and realism” (p 146) and finds that “The Asuras and others were really the human clans who inhabited the Indus Valley” and “opposed the advance of the Āryas” (p 148). In an incredible outburst of “rationality and realism” she tells us that the RV was composed in Akkadian “by the Asura poets”, i.e. by the Indus Valley natives who actually spoke Akkadian, and that the RV was adopted by the Aryan conquerors (p 153). This extraordinary theory is put forward despite the fact that all (Western invasionist) vedicists from Max Müller to Keith and to Witzel (2001) agree that the RV was

10. Often translated as ‘One-footed Goat’ (Keith, 137). A goat could be conceived of as divine, like a cow or a horse, but how could ‘one-footed’ convey any significance? Even lightning (ibid and Macdonell 1898: 73) could hardly suggest ‘one-footed goat’!

11. Many of (the names of) these rigvedic deities are found in the ancient religion of other Indo-European peoples: *Dyaus* – Gk Ζευς/Δις-, Roman *Ju[s]piter*, Hittite ^D*Siu*, Germanic *Tiwaz*; *Parjanya* – Slavic *Perun*, Baltic *Perkunas*, Nordic *Fjörgyn*; *Uṣas* – Gk Ἑώς, Roman *Aurora*, Germanic *Eostre*; etc. For a full presentation see Kazanas 2001a.

composed in Vedic by the Indoaryans in Saptasindhu. (See also n85, end, for Shendge's linguistics.) At least, Shendge does not ignore that the terms *asura* and *deva* are interchangeable.

We should note finally that the deities are said to obtain immortality (X, 53, 10) by the grace of Savitṛ, the sungod (IV, 54, 2), or through Agni's mind-powers *kratubhiḥ* (VI, 7, 4) or by drinking Soma (IX, 106, 8).

7. Such a polytheism appeared also in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and other areas of the ancient world. But there are some important differences. Obviously, the gods in all those ancient religions represented natural phenomena: the Sungod was the sun in the sky; the Firegod was the fire in a hearth, a burning forest or lightning; the Raingod was the rain that filled rivers and lakes and fertilized the soil invigorating plants and animals; the Nightgoddess was the night that absorbed the sun, bringing darkness and dangers but also rest to creatures; and so on. In this they all agreed. Some of them also agreed that the deities were the numinous forces, the spirit within the natural phenomenon that made it behave as it did. In this, they recognised a numinous or causal realm that was imperceptible to the senses but apprehensible by the mind and responsible for the manifestation and sequence of natural events in the physical world. This divine realm could be approached and to a degree influenced by men (mainly ṛṣis), or special functionaries like priests, through various modes of worship, ritual, prayer, offerings and thanksgiving, so as to yield desired results out of the normal order of things.

However the rigvedic gods differed in some very important respects. First, it is very obvious that there was no king of gods the way Anu initially and later Marduk was in the Mesopotamian pantheon¹², or Zeus on Olympus. In the Vedic pantheon the gods have extraordinary fluidity. Thus, to take the example of Agni, this god, without losing his character or chief function of 'blazing', is said to be or have the attributes of Wargod Indra and of the Law-and-Order Varuṇa; he knows the doings of men and gods (VII, 46, 2) and, like the Asvins, has healing remedies (II, 33, 7). This is due to the fact – and this is another and the most important difference – that all these deities are appearances/expressions of That One (*tadékam*: X, 129), an otherwise unnamed Being (which I shall call Godhead), the source of all divine and mundane manifestations¹³: as VIII 58, 2 says, *ékaṃ vā idāṃ ví babhuva sárvaṃ* 'It being One has variously become this All [and Everything]'. This aspect we shall examine below together with the third, equally important difference that these divinities are also functions within man's total organism, i.e. mind and body, constituting an underlying doctrine of Unity of Being that fused together cosmic and human powers.

8. RVX, 114 again says explicitly that sages have traced the One Cause of everything abiding in

12. In this article, 'Mesopotamian' denotes the totality of Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian cultures, which, despite differences, have a clear continuity. I follow specialist-assyriologist Stephanie Dalley's example where she collects the translation of many texts from these cultures under the title *Myths from Mesopotamia* (1991).

13. I do not know what Indian authors have written on this issue, except Shri Aurobindo. But mainstream scholars in the West do not give due emphasis to, or do not mention at all, this subject (e.g. Macdonell 1898; Keith 1925; Johnson 1980; etc). Notable exceptions are Miller (1972, 1974, 1985) and K. Werner (1989). I find this omission remarkable since there are several explicit statements and many more implicit ones, but it is understandable in view of the prejudices mentioned in §2.

Keith notes this rigvedic "assertion of the unity of the gods and the world" and comments that the *RV* "asserts [this unity] as a fact but which it does not justify or explain in detail" (p 434). This is partly true since the hymns are not explanatory treatises. Detailed explanations are found in other texts. But there are enough details in the *RV* to show that this unity was known well enough both intellectually and emotionally as an underlying system at least in some circles (see next § 8).

distant and mysterious chambers (st 2) and that wise poets describe in many different figures that which is One in nature (st 5). Just as explicit is the statement in I, 164, 46, “the sages give many names to what is One – Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni”, etc (here the One may be the sun); stanza 6 again refers to the One Unborn that has established firmly the world’s six regions/dimensions: the presence of the “One as the Absolute’ in this hymn is acknowledged even by W.O’ Flaherty (1981: 73). These passages may be said to belong to the late (Maṇḍalas VIII and X) and middle (Maṇḍala I) strata of the *RV*. But III, 54, 8 is decidedly early (the Visvāmitra family-book): “The All which is One *visvam ékam* governs *patyate* what moves and what is at rest, what walks and what flies, this multifarious manifest creation *viśuṇaṃ vi jātām*”.

Then, the 22 stanzas of III, 55 (same Bk III) have as refrain *mahād devānam asuratvām ékam* ‘great and single is the lordly-power of the gods’ – which implies that gods are gods by participating in that single great power existing independently of every one of them. And in this simple phrase, in one of the early Books, long before the philosophical schools Nyāya etc, we find the kind of reasoning that Socrates will employ in the fifth century Athens to arrive at definitions of essential ideas, as is shown in the early Platonic Dialogues and as Aristotle notes in his *Metaphysics* (978b1 and 1078b3-5; see *GPA* §26): and this, 3000 years earlier than the Greek philosopher. The refrain has also implications about appearance and reality, the phenomenal and the numinous. The hymn refers to many deities – Agni, Indra, the Dawns, Heaven and Earth, Mitra and Varuṇa, the Cow-of-plenty, Bhaga, Tvaṣṭṛ, and others. Now, to take one example, within every form or manifestation of fire is the *deva* Agni, the numinous force responsible for the particular appearance: consider I, 59, 1 *vayā id agne agnāyas te anyé* ‘Agni, other fires are your own branches/energies (vayā[h])’. This force is before, beyond and after, as well as within, every particular phenomenon of fire – in the hearth, on the altar, in a blazing forest, etc. Hence, the collocation *sahasah putra/sūnu* ‘son of strength/force’, the strength/force being the cause of every appearance of fire. Similarly, Indra is ‘son of might’ or ‘of truth’ (*RV* IV, 24, 1; VIII, 58, 4) and, as Macdonell notes, all divinities are termed ‘offspring of immortality’ or ‘of skill/creativity’ (1898: 12). Similarly, then, the *devas/asuras* as a class are manifestations of *asuratva* ‘godhood/lordship’, the One Power which is within every one of them, before, beyond and after them all. Just as every fiery phenomenon is a transient manifestation of the one permanent *deva* Agni, so every *deva* is an expression of the One Godhood. Thus, implicit, in this simple statement, iterated 22 times, is the idea that not only mundane phenomena but the divinities themselves are transient and therefore unreal in relation to the permanent One Godhood. This very concept is articulated in I, 68, 2/4 *bhājanta visve devatvām nāma* ‘all enjoy/share godhood, indeed’ and in II, 33, 9 where Rudra’s *asuryā* is said not to leave him and to make him ruler of this world: rudra is *iśāna* thanks to this *asurya*. (We may note also Indra’s *indriyā* ‘Indra-power’, which is “uttered-forth” in I, 55, 4, etc.) This idea will find, of course, full articulation in the Upaniṣads (§26).

Thus we have the simultaneous presence of many deities and the One Godhead from which they have all issued and which any individual deity can represent, as indeed Agni, Indra, Sūrya, Varuṇa and others obviously do at times. K. Werner put it nicely saying that the older “evolutionary view of religion did not apply to Vedism”, adding: “In place of a linear notion of evolution of the Vedic religion from lower to higher stages, we shall then have a structural notion of synchronicity, of simultaneous co-existence of multiple stages and layers” (1989: 13), or, in other words, Monism and Polytheism at once. He also dismissed the notion that the Vedic deities were deifications of natural phenomena or “abstractions of action” and adopted R. Otto’s “hidden power of the numinous” (p 21). Naturally, “the ādhyātmika understanding and apprehension of reality was then, as in all other times, limited to a minority[;] far more interest was directed towards the diverse lower forces ...[than] the one power” (p 23). And this interest in lower forces is amply exhibited in the spells, exorcisms and curses of the *AV* (= *Atharvaveda*), examples of which are found in the *RV* too.

In fact, we can go one step further and state that almost all known cults are mentioned in the *RV*, mostly in small, sometimes in large. McEvilley writes that the Aryans seem to have opposed initially some “sexual cults” which “they partially accepted in the Middle Vedic period” (= *RV* Book X and *AV*) and then directed them into “a process of mentalization, a conversion to an antimaterialistic and antisensual idealism which arose in part in reaction to the body practices of the ancient cults” (2002: 276-7). This is not only a confused statement but also thoroughly misinformed. Alone hymn I, 179, which belongs to an earlier rigvedic period, and describes the sexual act between sage Agastya and his wife Lopāmudrā (with all the complex nuances of that situation), should suffice to show that the rigvedic seers were not squeamish about sex and understood fully its part in life. In *BU* VI, 4, 1ff (and *CUV*, 7 and 8), the sexual act is again described in full in its physical details, not as a “mentalization”, but with its spiritual dimension, as befits the human being, who has mind and spirit in addition to the gross body. If in his vague generalization McEvilley refers to incest, harlotry and homosexuality (practised fairly freely in Mesopotamia: §38), these certainly are not condoned in the *RV* nor any post-rigvedic texts. While fertility (Parjanya) and sexuality are acceptable, incest is rejected in the well-known hymn X, 10, where Yama repulses his sister Yami’s sexual approaches – in contrast to the Iranian twins Yima and Yimeh who do unite and produce offspring (Macdonell 1898: 173). Some instances of incest among gods occur in the hymns. But this is easily comprehensible. At one level, as was said, rigvedic deities represent natural forces or phenomena; these mingle to generate new phenomena and often some of the former mingle again with the latter to produce yet newer phenomena (as heat and air give winds, then with moisture clouds, then rains or storms which cause growth of plants, fruit and so on): thus at this level, incest is understandable. But it is not acceptable in the human society. This rigvedic morality must go back to the Proto-Indo-European period (at least c 6000) since incest etc are not endorsed by any other Indo-European tradition – Greek, Roman, Germanic etc. McEvilley does not seem to know well enough the *RV* and the Indo-European cultures and many important issues escape him. Thus he mentions (pp 258, 264) in connexion with shamans the Muni or *kesin* of *RV* X, 136 “with his claimed ability to travel throughout the universe at will” (280) but not seer Visvāmitra who stops the river(s) in the early Bk III, 33; he mentions the *brahmodya* (§§3, 22) in *SB* XIII, 5, 2, 11 calling it a “Vedic ritual... within the greater Vedic sacrifice” (408) but is unaware of its presence in I, 164 where the sacrifice is mentioned in different forms of riddles (stanzas 15, 35, 50) but none is taking place. He is also unaware of the deities’ aspect as functions within the human organism, physical and mental.

9. The powers of the numinous are also in man. The poet of I, 164, 21 explicitly declares that the Godhead is within him: “Where ceaselessly the fine-feathered birds sing out in light their share of immortality with knowledge, there the mighty Herdsman of the whole universe, *sá mā́ dhīraḥ pākam átrā vivesa* – he, the wise one, has settled in me, the simple one”. We may be uncertain of the exact location where the birds sing, but there is absolute certainty that the Godhead, in the figure of the world’s Herdsman, is within him; and, naturally, He would function again as the Herdsman or regulator of all other phenomena within the man. Then, Agni the god who encompasses all gods (V, 3, 1: 13, 6) and knows all (III, 1, 17; VI, 15, 13), and thus appears as an apt manifestation of the Godhead, is the light and source of all inspiration *kratu* in man’s heart *hṛdaya āhita-* (VI, 9, 6) and is perceived through mind *manasā nicāy-* (III, 26, 1; cf also I, 67, 2; IV,

1, 20)¹⁴. Indra too is internalized in IV, 26, 1 by identifying himself with Sūrya but also the sages Manu, Kakṣivān and Uśanās; moreover, VIII, 70, 3, says that Indra, or his state, may be attained by men (though not by deeds or sacrificial rites). Certain qualities, recognizable in man, are presented as deities, like *devī prāmati-* ‘goddess foresight’ (I, 53, 5) or *devī tāviṣī* ‘goddess strength/vigour’ (I, 56, 4). The ‘holy-power’ *brāhman*, inherent in prayer and ritual, is often the means whereby the great seers performed their miraculous deeds: Vasiṣṭha helped king Sudās defeat the confederation of the 10 hostile kings (VII 33, 3); Atri rehabilitated the sun with the fourth level of *brahman* (V, 40, 6), which J. Puhvel called “silent meditation as opposed to varieties of articulated speech” (1989: 153). This fourth *brahman*, says I, 164, 35, *brahmāyām vācāḥ paramām vyòma* ‘this brahma-power is Vāk’s highest heaven’. This Vāk ‘goddess of Speech’ or *brahman* is obviously innate in man, otherwise he would be unable to pray, speak or sing: ‘may we be conspicuous with our horse[-skill] or with our brāhma-power’ (II, 2, 10). And VI, 75, 19 states *brāhma vārma mamāntaram* ‘the brahma-power is my inmost armour’: *antara* ‘inner’ cannot refer to anything gross and external. Even Keith conceded that in many passages *brahman* “must be taken rather as holy power than as prayer or holy rite” (p 446). All these are aspects of what I termed earlier (§7, end) the doctrine of the Unity of Being.

The interiority of the deities becomes quite obvious in the *AV*. For instance, here, Vāta/Vāyu is the life-force *prāṇa* (V,9, 7) in general; this is universal *prāṇa* and *apāna* in the supreme god *Skambha* ‘support’ (X, 7, 34) but also in individual plants and men as in- and out-breath (XI, 4, 13-14). Man *puruṣa* is the *pur* ‘stronghold’ of gods with eight *cakras* (inner centres of cognition or experience) and nine openings (i.e. two ears, two eyes etc: X, 2, 31). Man is the *brahman* and in him reside all the deities as cattle in a pen (X, 8, 32). S.Kak explores this theme in his *Gods Within* (2002c).

It follows that in many cases the demons and fiends (Cumuri, Namuci, Śambara, etc), whom gods like Indra, Agni and Soma destroy together with their ‘defences’ *pur-*, are also internal. Thus there is an inner conflict between the forces of light (knowledge and piety) and those of darkness (ignorance and arrogance).¹⁵ The supernatural battles between gods and demons also symbolize the battles between good and bad impulses within man’s mind.

10. Cosmogony and theogony. Different hymns ascribe the genesis of the world, or parts of it, to different gods. The six regions, earth and heaven are measured out by Indra (VI, 47, 3-4) or Varuṇa (V, 85, 5) or the Sages (III, 38, 3) or Viṣṇu (I, 154, 1). Other gods make earth, midspace or heaven fast with various supports (I, 56, 5; IV, 50, 1; VII, 99, 3; etc). While Varuṇa measures out the earth with the sun as his rod, the Sun Savitrḥ fixes the earth with bands (X, 149, 1). In I, 115, 1,

14. Without adducing any evidence from the hymns, W.O’ Flaherty sees Agni as “the sun within your umbilicus” (1981: 46) but J. Gonda (1963), Miller (1974) and Johnson (1980) see him as the unitary force of consciousness that vivifies and watches over all the functions of man leading finally to immortality. VI, 9, 4 *idāṃ jyótir āmṛtaṃ martyeṣu* is taken as not ‘this immortal light in men’ but ‘among men’ by O’Flaherty (1981: 116) and K.F.Geldner (vol 2, 101: *unter den sterblichen*); this must be rejected since st 5 calls Agni “swiftest thought” and “mental energy” *kratu* (so also O’ Flaherty and Geldner) and st 6 has him as “light placed in the heart”.

15. In many cases too the foes are other human beings, designated by the collective terms *dasyu* and *dāsa* (I, 51, 8; II, 13, 9; X, 86, 19) or *paṇi* (II, 24, 6; IX, III, 2): see also VI and Mayrhofer. The word *pur* is usually rendered as ‘citadel, fort, town’. This is utterly wrong. In the *RV* no *pur* is built or destroyed directly by humans. It is a ‘magical/occult stronghold/defence’ as is obvious in I, 58, 8 and 189, 2; II, 20, 8; IV, 27, 1; VI, 48, 1; VII, 5, 3; VIII, 1, 28; etc. (See Kazanas 2003b: §38 and full discussion in Kazanas Forthcoming.) The *rigvedic* people live in settled communities, although nomads should not be excluded; but this is indicated by the frequent *viś-* ‘homestead, settled community’ (see *MSD* and Mayrhofer), not by *pur*.

Sūrya (allonym for Savitr) is “the spirit/soul/self (*ātmā*)¹⁶ of what moves and what is at rest”; in IV, 53, 2 Savitr has the epithet *prajāpati* ‘lord-of-creatures’. In X, 121 *Hiraṇyagarbha*, who may be the sun (= *sūra*, st 6), is the creator god and is called *Prajāpati* in the last stanza.

A different concept, clearly pantheistic, appears in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* X, 90. *Puruṣa* is the cosmic being/man who manifests the world with only a quarter of himself becoming all beings, while the other three are immortality in heaven. From his sacrificial dismemberment by the primal gods arose all else: the holy chants and formulas, animals, men and celestial bodies; from his mind the Moon, from his eye the Sun, from his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vāyu, from his head Sky; his mouth became the Brahmin caste, his two arms the warrior (*rājanya* = *kṣatriya*), his thighs the Vaiśya and his feet the Sūdra. McEvilley calls this hymn “macranthropic” and sees in it “a major element of late Mesopotamian influence” (p 26). He finds antecedents for it in the Egyptian Memphite Theology where various deities are described as parts of god Ptāḥ (§52, below) and the great *Hymn to Amun-Re* in which, again, other deities are parts of him (§53), and ignores the fact that the first is not earlier than 1200 and the second c1500. He finds antecedents also in Mesopotamian hymns to deities like Inanna/Ishtar and Marduk (§§29, 36) – again ignoring that these are not earlier than 1500 at best (pp 24-7). But what he also misses here is the important aspect that the Cosmic *Puruṣa* is sacrificed and his different members become parts of the universe: it is (not a “macranthropic” but) a cosmogonic hymn. Moreover the *Puruṣa* sacrifice is IE since we find a similar cosmogonic motif with a divine being’s dismemberment like Skygod Ouranos in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (185ff) and Scandinavian Ymir (*Edda*, p 10ff). Hymns closer to the Marduk one, in which this god is identified with other deities and appropriates their functions becoming king of gods, would be *RV* II, 1 and V, 3 where Agni is identified with some deities (but in no way becomes King of gods). However, McEvilley thinks these two hymns present Agni, i.e. the element ‘fire’, as “the underlying world-substance” (p 302), which is utterly fallacious. With an evident panache for finding parallels and influences where they don’t exist, and missing them where they do exist, he disregards the cosmogonic/theogonic import of the *Puruṣa Sūkta*.

In this X, 90 *Sūkta* we have also an explicit theogony. In other hymns different gods engender others. Often Dyaus and Pṛthivī are the parents of the gods (I, 159, 2; etc) even though they sprang from *Puruṣa*’s head and feet and Indra is elsewhere said to have generated them (V, 30, 5; VIII, 36, 4; etc). *Brahmaṇaspati* is the gods’ father (II, 26, 3) and he also fashioned the world like a smith (X, 72, 6). Soma also is said to be the gods’ father (IX, 87, 2). Uṣas is said to be the gods’ mother in I, 113, 19. Here she is called Aditi who elsewhere is a separate goddess and the mother of the *Ādityas* (X, 72) and of *mārtāṇḍa* ‘dead-egg’, who is the sun being born and dying again and again (X, 72, 8-9). There are others.

Behind this apparent confusion lies, presumably, the idea that it does not matter what deity is given priority or superiority at any one instance since every one is the expression of the Godhead and could therefore take on this role: to quote Kak, “the various gods are, in turn, the disguises of the same [R]eality” (2001: 18). This is a form of henotheism which, while admitting polytheism and in this case also monism, yet ascribes importance/supremacy *hic et nunc* to only one god.

11. All these aspects of cosmogony and theogony (and anthropogony) are woven together in the remarkable *Creation Hymn* X, 129. Here, in the beginning, before creation, before existence and non-existence, immortality and death, there was only ‘That One’ *tād ékam* breathing (*an-*) of its

16. This may be one of the first uses of *ātmā*- in the sense ‘self’ that will become common in post-rigvedic texts. See also IX, 2, 10 where Indra is “the primeval self/soul (*ātmā*) of the sacrifice”; also IX, 6, 8.

own power *svadhāyā* – absolutely nothing else existed (st 1-2)¹⁷ It was unfathomable Potency *ambhas* enveloped in darkness *tamas*, yet having ‘fluctuating energy’ *salila* without any distinct form *apraketa* (st 3). From that, by the power of transformation *tapas*, arose *ābhu* ‘that-which-becomes’, still enveloped by the void *tuchya*. Desire or ‘love’ *kāma* evolved upon that – desire which is the ‘first seed of mind’ *mānaso rétaḥ prathamām* (st 4). After that came other powers and energies (st 5), the whole creation and the gods (st 6). But whence and how exactly it all comes about, is not known – not even by the ‘Overseer in highest heaven’ (st 7)! Nonetheless, the sages seeking with discrimination/wisdom *manīṣā* in their heart *hṛdi* find the bond *bandhu* of ‘what-is’ *sat* in ‘what-is-not’ *asat* (= *ābhu* ‘becoming’).

This hymn, *Nāsadiya Sūkta*, is most astonishing. Much can be and has been said about it. I mention three points. **a)** It is remarkable in that in seven stanzas it outlines the evolution of the creation, the macrocosm and the microcosm, the universe and man, and suggests that this can be discovered within one’s heart or mind. **b)** The poet displays unusual humility in admitting that the absolute beginning of creation, the transformation of *ābhu*, is not really known or, at least, cannot be described. **c)** Men can discover in the ever-changing *asat* or *ābhu* the bond of true being *sat*

17. Here, three words deserve attention. In 1d is *ambhas* (only once, here, in the *RV*), invariably translated as ‘water/ocean’ (Macdonell 1917; Geldner 1951-6 *Wasser* ‘water’; Miller 1972, 1985; O’ Flaherty 1981; etc, etc): this is unwarranted and unjustified since “nought else existed”, including ‘water’. The meaning must be ‘potency/potential’ (*Gewalt* ‘power’ and *Wucht* ‘force’ in Mayrhofer; also *MSD*). So 1d – ‘Was there Potency, profound and unfathomable?’

In 3b is *salila*, again translated as ‘water’. This is also unwarranted. At this stage, still nothing has been manifested or created. Only *tamas* ‘darkness/inertia’ and *tuchya* ‘void/emptiness’ are mentioned, both being non-material, whereas ‘water’ is material and does not ontologically belong here. So *salila* must be the ‘fluctuating energy’ of the ‘breathing’ of ‘That One’ which was ‘Potency’. Given the alternation of *y/ī* and *r/l* in Vedic, *sal-* probably <*sar*< *sr gatau* in the *Dhātupāṭha* ‘movement’; Mayrhofer ‘extending’. See also *salila* in X 72, 6 wherein the gods stand closely-clasped and from them, as from dancers, *reṇu* ‘dust, germinating pollen (?)’ was produced and from this ocean *samudre* (st 7) the worlds and the sun; it is very difficult to see how dust/pollen could arise from water.

In 3d is *tapas*, translated as ‘heat’. Undoubtedly it means ‘heat, fervour’ and ‘penance, austerity’ and the like. But need this be the only meaning(s)? The *Dhātupāṭha* certainly has *√tap-a santāpe*, covering all meanings of ‘heat, conflagration’. But it also gives *aiśvarya* ‘supreme dominion/power’. Here in 3d it must mean the ‘power-of-transformation’ which generates laws but can also modify or annul them. So *ābhu* ‘that-which-becomes (something or other)’ arises with the inherent power of transformation in That One, from *salila* through energy, heat, light, vibration.

There is nothing physical in this description. Even mental forces must be excluded since mind does not appear until later (st 4). Consequently, here we have causal power(s) of a very fine and high level. Mental forces and the gods appear at a lower stage (st 4-5), all within mind. Thus the gods are within man. See Kazanas 2003a, §5.

Like many others, mistranslating “an undistinguished ocean”, McEvelley sees here Near Eastern influences, Egyptian and Akkadian (p 29), then misinforms his readers that “the Vedic creation myth is also clearly based on Near Eastern antecedents” (p 112), when there is absolutely no creation doctrine/myth in Mesopotamia or Egypt remotely resembling *RV* X, 129. Although he claims to be undogmatic, he very obviously follows the hard-line view that the Aryans came to India c 1500 and the *RV* was composed c 1200-1000. He even cites – not disapprovingly (p 664) – R. Drews (1993) who has the Aryans invading India in the 16th cent not across the Hindu Kush but by sailing in ships across the Persian Gulf. Unless the invaders were no more than 200-300 (how could so few conquer and aryanize the vast expanse of the ISC?), the fleet required to carry warriors, horses and chariots must have been enormous! Yet neither Persian nor Mesopotamian sources mention such an event. The views of Drew are not followed by other indo-europeanists and, clearly, McEvelley does not bother to weigh hypotheses against facts and probabilities.

within their heart/mind with discrimination.

A fourth aspect concerns the triple manifestation of the One in *kāma*, *manas* (and *hṛd*) and, implicit but not stated, *sarīra* ‘physical body’. Desire/love, *kāma*, the force regulating *ābhu*, here represents what later schools call *kāraṇa* ‘causal, spiritual’; this is the Supreme Will which the *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* will term *prajñānaghana* ‘mass of consciousness’, *sarveṣvara* ‘lord of all’ and *antaryāmin* ‘inner regulator’. Then there is *manas* and *hṛd* corresponding to the later *sūkṣma* ‘subtle’ or *antaḥkaraṇa* ‘the inner organ of mind’ being in between the causal and the material and linking them (the *taijasa* ‘brilliant one’ of the *Māṇḍukya*). Finally all this is embodied in the material body, the *sthūla-sarīra*. K. Werner (1978) showed that this triplicity is found in different passages in the hymns but not in any systematic way; he identified *aja* ‘the Unborn’ with the highest body, the true Self of man or *ātman*. However, it is possible to find among the scattered references in the hymns three bodies apart from *aja*, i.e. physical, subtle and causal (Kazanas 2002b), which correspond to the terms given here in X 129. But, I repeat, there is no such systematic exposition in the *RV* hymns.

12. The discovery of ‘true being’ in oneself is in fact no different from the ‘divinization’ of oneself (§3) since all powers, or substances, or levels of being, are within oneself (§9). In the *RV* this divinization is accomplished through inner purification by means of *yajña* ‘sacrifice’ which entails the intervention of a higher power, also within oneself¹⁸.

In the *RV* *yajña* is both external and internal. The word means, as many writers show, ‘worship, offer-of-praise, offer of material things’ and the like.¹⁹ For *yaja-ti/-te* Mayrhofer gives *verhert, huldigt, opfert, weih* ‘worships, does-homage, offers, hallows’. These senses reflect largely the definition in the Dhātupāṭha *yaj-a deva-pūjā-saṅgati-karaṇa-dāneṣu* which I take as relating four terms to *deva* ‘god(s)’. Thus *pūjā* is ‘worship/reverence/homage’ to gods; *saṅgati* is ‘meeting/uniting with’ the gods; *dāna-* is ‘offering, gift’. The term *karaṇa* ‘instrument, making’ is more difficult²⁰: it could mean ‘being an instrument for the gods’ or doing something for them, or ‘making (oneself? something else?) a god.’ I take the option *deva-karaṇa* ‘making oneself a god’. Besides, this is implicit in many hymns, and Keith noted some such transformation in *yajña* where the performer “is filled with a sacred spirit” (p 276). The external ritual and its mechanics, seeking to propitiate the gods with prayers and offerings and to obtain benefits like offspring or wealth, has been studied and described frequently and in detail. Here I concentrate on the inner process of purification and illumination that is divinization.

We have seen that Agni is an immortal light in man’s heart, the source of inspiration (§9). He also purifies by destroying darkness (I, 94, 5; VIII, 43, 32), demons (III, 15, 1; X, 87, 1) and guilt (IV, 12, 4; VII, 93, 7), protects with his magical *purs* (VI, 48, 8; VII, 3, 7) and confers immortality on men (I, 31, 7) and, through his *kratubhiḥ* ‘mind-forces’, on gods (VI, 7, 4). This light is invoked to find a path for the holy power of prayer (*brahmaṇe* : VII, 13, 3). Agni is entreated to purify *punihi* “our prayer *brahman*” with his cleansing glow, together with Soma and Savitṛ (IX, 67, 19-26). This purification of prayer refers obviously to that fourth state of brahma-power which is most silent and potent, Vāk’s highest heaven (§9): this fourth holy brahma-power (V, 40, 6) the *ácittam bráhma* ‘the *brahman* beyond thought/conception’ (I, 152,5), is known only to Brahmins who have comprehension (I, 164, 45). It is the process which Visvāmitra describes in a hymn to Indra: “They [=the sages] rested seeking with mind *manasā*, making with hymns the way to immortality

18. For a full discussion of this process in the *RV* see Kazanas 2003a, §§6-8. Here only a brief outline will be given.

19. For details and bibliography see Kazanas 2003a, §6.

20. Some suggest a tatpuruṣa compound *saṅgati-karaṇa* ‘making a meeting/union with’ but I don’t agree because *saṅgati* ‘union-with’ is self-sufficient and does not need *karaṇa*; the definitions are always brief and want every term to count and denote something distinct.

amṛtatva” (III, 31, 9). Elsewhere it is described differently: ‘the wise poets harness their mind and reflections’ *yuñjāte māna utā yuñjate dhīyo víprāḥ* (V, 81, 1); or, ‘they found the spacious light as they were reflecting’ *urú jyótir vividur dīdyānāḥ* (VII, 90, 4). Harnessing their mental powers and refining them the sages reach realization in light. Thus, contrary to most scholars’ belief (e.g. Mahoney 1998: 120) that in later texts there is a gradual interiorization until the process becomes meditation in the Upaniṣads, this is already present in the *RV*. When later texts will say that the *yajña* is within man (§ 22, end), they will be restating what is in the *RV*.

The one ritual repeatedly mentioned in the *RV* is that of Soma – the pressing, the pouring, the filtering, the drinking. This too has its inner aspect, explicitly mentioned. The purifying filter (normally outside) is said to be in the heart: ‘three filters has he set within the heart’ *hridy-antār ādadhe* (IX, 73, 8). And the Soma flows forth with right word *ṛtavākena* (or ‘word’ [harmonized] with *ṛta*), truth *satyena*, faith *śraddhayā* and transforming power *tapasā* (IX, 113, 2). Soma too has four states corresponding to its four stages of preparation (IX, 96, 16-20); but the adjectives used here (*ṛṣimanās* ‘with the visionary mind of a seer’, *ṛṣikṛt* ‘making a seer’, *svaṛṣāḥ* ‘disclosing heavenly light’) and elsewhere (e.g. *pātir dhiyāḥ* ‘lord of insight/vision’ IX, 75, 2; *āsamaṣṭakāvyaḥ* ‘of infinite wisdom’ IX, 76, 4), again suggest an internal process. Ordinary people do not know of the higher states: “Nobody tastes of the Soma the brahmins know,” says X, 85, 3, adding “As you stand listening to the singers, O Soma, no earthly person tastes of you.” The seers themselves declare: “We have drunk Soma: we have become immortal; we have gone to the light and found the gods” (VIII, 48, 3).

Clearly there are wise men who have knowledge and others, the multitude, who have not. In the enigmatic hymn I 164, the poet says (st 6): “As one who has no realization *acikivān*, I ask those sages here who have realization *cikituśaḥ*... *kavīn*, I who know not for the sake of wisdom *vidmane*: what is the One who in the form of the Unborn *aja* has established apart these six regions/dimensions *rajāmsi*?” Now the rest of this long hymn shows that its author, Dīrghatamas Ancathya, knows more about Reality than most, yet he is honest and humble enough to call himself *pāka*, a simpleton, and to admit that he is *acikivān* or *nā vidvān*, i.e. lacking full realization with regard to the Unborn One which having no prior cause is Itself the First Cause. He knows that the mighty Herdsman of the universe abides within him (st 22) and that *Vāk* has four divisions (st 45) yet says “What I am really I don’t know being all tied up in my mind... I have obtained only a portion of *Vāk*” (st 37). Similar humility is displayed by seer *Ḡṛtsamada* in II, 27, 11, where he says he does not know much and prays for guidance to the *Ādityas*. This aspect of knowing yet not having full realization is also stressed in the Upaniṣads, especially in *Kena* II: “If you think you know well the Brahman then you know only its small form in yourself or in the gods.” There are, then, the wise who have realized and the learned but unwise who do not really know but go through the mechanical motions as if they know. This distinction is made very clearly in X 71, the hymn dedicated to *jñāna*: those who look but do not see and listen but do not hear (st 4) are not real brahmins and are left far behind by the others who have realized (st 8). No doubt there are gradations of attainment but another clear distinction is made in X 85, 3-4: the Soma true brahmins know is not tasted by others who are enmeshed in earthly concerns. The Soma here must be the wisdom and power that comes with the full realization of the unborn and immutable Godhead.

Thus “they found what lay secretly high above, the supreme domain of *yajña*... They found through mind while reflecting (*mānasā dīdyānāḥ*) the first path to the gods” (X, 181, 2-3). However, we must not ignore in all this that the seers attained the supreme state by the aid or intercession of a higher power (=deity: *Agni*, *Indra*, *Soma*, *Vāk*, etc) to which they directed their meditative prayers.

Another important aspect is that this divinization is obtained by humans before death. Some scholars try to connect this Vedic idea with Egyptian notions of immortality but ignore the fundamental difference that the Egyptian doctrine is found only in *funerary texts* (the *PT*, *CT* and

BD: see § 44) but nowhere as a possibility in this life with the obvious implication that immortality will be achieved in the Afterlife! (For such misconceptions and false parallels see McEvilley 2002: *passim* and, for this case, 135-9.) This is evidenced very clearly in seer Kaṇva's second birth, when he states in VIII, 6, 10: "Having received from my father the essential-knowledge (*medhā*-) of the Cosmic Order (*ṛta*) I was born even like the sungod Sūrya". Here we should note also, apart from the brilliance that this knowledge produced, the tradition whereby the father transmits the sacred knowledge to his son – a feature continuing even in much later periods. (In *RV* IV 4, 11 Vāmadeva has acquired from his father Gotama his power to destroy mighty enemies through speech *vácobhis*.)

13. On the whole the *RV* has a joyful, optimistic outlook on life – and death. While Viśvāmitra complains that in his time people see only the gods' lower abodes (= *avamā́ sádāmsi*: here, the stars? usual states of being and consciousness?) and there are not many who can declare the path leading to them in their remote regions (III, 54, 4-5), nonetheless the ṛṣis still communicate and meet with the deities – as Vasiṣṭha does with Varuṇa in the god's boat (VII, 88) or when gods and mortals come together in VIII, 48, 1. (See also close relation between Atharvan and Varuṇa in *AV* V, 11, 1-3.) We find humorous and even satirical touches in some hymns towards the sacred – as in the frog hymn VII, 103 or regarding Indra in X, 119. There is none of the pessimism we find in Mesopotamia (see §40) or the gloom of Hades in Greece. There is an "abysmal region" for evil and false people (IV, 5, 5), and all kinds of evil-doers, including sorcerers, may be cast into an abyss of bottomless darkness (VII, 104). But generally the concern is with the joy and light of heaven: "O Soma Purifying, put me in that imperishable deathless realm where shines light everlasting... Make me immortal in the third sphere of inmost heaven where there is movement according to will... where there is joy and bliss" (IX 113, 7-11).

Virtues bringing reward are piety and worship, faith, adherence to *ṛta* and truthfulness – already mentioned. To these should be added *tapas*, an element in sacrifice and purification, bravery (X, 154, 2) and liberality (I, 125, 5; X, 154, 3), liberality having a hymn to itself, advocating the giving of wealth and food: *kévalagho bhavati kevalā́dī* 'who eats alone is all-sin' (X, 117, 6).

Immortality is not automatically conferred on the dead, even if they have led a virtuous life; otherwise, the prayer cited just above, or V, 55, 4 "Lead us to immortality", would serve no purpose. In fact the dead go to different places – in the realm of celestial light (=Sun, stars?), of Yama, of inmost heaven, of the Moon and of bliss *ānanda* (IX, 113, 7-11), of the Sun (X, 107, 2; 154, 5). Immortality itself is attained by those who have reached divinization (§12).

14. Is there **transmigration** in the *RV*?... Most scholars think not, but some few do find evidence for it (Miller 1974: 184; Werner 1978: 286ff).

To begin with, the phenomenon for repetition/recurrence is common in Nature. Every day light breaks at dawn and the sun rises; after sunset, night comes and then a new day. The moon too waxes and wanes in measured cycles. Then, men sleep and wake up and sleep and wake up. Of course, no day (or night) is exactly like the previous one, but the recurrence is a fact. So, not surprisingly, the *ṛgvedic* poets wrote that Dawn, though ancient, is born again and again *púnaḥ punar jāyamanā purā́ṇī* (I, 92, 10; cf also III, 61, 3) and thus gives fresh life (VII, 80, 2); then, in I, 6, 4 the Dawns (or the Maruts, according to others) "again have obtained the embryo-state (*garbhatvám*)". Associated with Dawn, the Moon also is born anew *návo navo bhavati jāyamana... candrá́mās* X, 85, 19).²¹ Then, the Sun *mā́rtāṇḍa* was again (*punar*) brought forth by

21. S. Radhakrishnan (1953: 44) and Werner who follows him (1978: 286) assign this to Mitra, which should in fact, be the previous stanza 18.

Aditi for life and death (X, 72, 9); and in the form of Mitra, the Sun “orders the seasons and is born again” (X, 85, 18).

By themselves such references may be taken to be simple metaphors and so prove nothing – although metaphors relate to what the poet considers real-life phenomena compared and conflated in any one metaphor. A stronger indication is the rebirth/reincarnation implicit in Indra’s or Vāmadeva’s declaration that he was formerly Manu and Sūrya (IV, 26, 1). A different indication appears in seer Pratikṣatra’s statement that he has knowingly yoked himself to the ‘pole’ *dhur* and carries that-which-gives-help and conveys-across but he seeks no release and no turning back again *nāvṛtam pūnaḥ* (V, 46, 1).

Much clearer indications appear elsewhere. H. D. Griswold cited in full X, 16, 3 and X, 58 (1923: 313-4): a) “May your eye go to the sun, your spirit/breath (*ātmā*) to air; go to heaven and to earth according to your *dharma* ‘nature/merit’; or go to waters if there be your lot (*hitam*); with bodies stay within plants”; b) Your *manas* ‘mind/spirit’ that went to Yama... to heaven and earth... to the four directions... to the flooding sea... to rays of light... to waters and plants” and so on (X, 58, 1-7). Surely, all these references suggest transmigration. The same holds for X, 14, 8: *hitvāyāvadyām pūnar āstam éhi/ sám gachasva tanvā suvārchāḥ* ‘leaving evil come again home; in full brilliance, move with your subtle-form (*tanu-*)’. Of similar import is I, 164, 30: *jīvo mṛtāsya carati svadhābhir āmartyo mārtyenā sāyonih* ‘according to its own nature/habits, the life-element of mortal-man moves on – the deathless brother of the mortal’; and st 38, *āpaṅ prāṅ eti svadhāyā gṛbhit[ó] ’martyaḥ* ‘the immortal [element] comes and goes gripped by its own nature/habit’.²²

Passage IV, 54, 2 is much clearer, (despite the mistranslation of Macdonell and Geldner): *savitara vṛ-ūrṇuṣe ’nūcīnā jīvitā mānuṣebhyaḥ* ‘O Savitar, you unfold/open-out successive lives for humans’.

22. Keith dismisses these examples either as similar to aboriginal beliefs (1925: 571 and n 12) or as not being explicitly part of the ethical system of merit and demerit expounded in the Upanishads. He is doubtless a great vedicist but not free of the prejudices of his time. The argument about the ethical system is sound but misapplied. First, words like *dharma*, *hitam* and *svadhā* imply an ethical system (also *devāyu* ‘devoted to god(s)’ I, 154, 5) as do the different locations where the soul/spirit goes – heaven, earth, water etc. Second, as is obvious, the hymns do not constitute a mythology manual nor a theological/religious tractate to give expositions of (to us incomprehensible) ideas. Even simple tales like that of the Eagle breaking free or bringing Soma and that of Bhujyu being rescued by the Aśvins remain unexplained in detail by the later texts. But the authors and audience of the hymns obviously connected with these allusions and had no problem. This aspect too shows that the *RV* is much much earlier than other Vedic texts. We should not expect every idea to be explained so that **we** can be satisfied. We must use our reason and make the best we can out of such fragments and allusions. The beliefs of aborigines discovered in the 19th and early 20th centuries are irrelevant to the *RV*.

On the ethical argument, it is noteworthy that 55 years later similar statements are repeated: “When we examine the eschatology of the *Rg Veda* we are confronted with an unethicized religion” (Obeyesekere 1980: 156).

This statement is as plain as it can be²³. True, there is no explicit exposition of the upanishadic doctrine of reincarnation in the *RV* but the passages cited are quite adequate to show that the *RV* knew some form of this doctrine. After all, the Celts up in Gaul had reincarnation, according to Caesar (*De Bello Gallico* VI, 14); this indicates that reincarnation was IndoEuropean and an inherited element in the Greek Orphic and Pythagorean traditions also (*GPA* §8).

15. Closely linked to reincarnation is the idea of the twofold path – *pitṛyāna* ‘the Fathers’ way’ and *devayāna* ‘the gods’ way’. This too can be traced in the *RV*. Again, there are the natural phenomena of the sun’s and the moon’s courses in the sky. In the *rigvedic* circumstances, the Sungod’s course would more appropriately be connected with the way to immortality. The sun-course itself has its upward and downward movement (I, 35, 3). Then, Reṇu Vaisvāmitra says: “I have heard of two ways *srutī* for fathers, gods and mortals: all that moves travels on these two between father[-heaven] and mother[-earth]” (X, 88, 15).²⁴

Here I stop. I have been long on the *RV* because most major religiophilosophical ideas of the Vedic tradition and many elements of what later is collectively called ‘Hinduism’ are present in the hymns. Hereafter I shall adumbrate briefly the important developments in the *AV*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

23. For translations similar to mine – R.T.Griffith, Miller (1974: 184) and Werner (1978: 287). Werner cites with approval H.Grassman’s free translation *Leben, das auf Leben folgt* ‘life which succeeds/follows-upon life’.

McEvelley first writes that the *RV* “does not teach reincarnation” and assigns *RV* IV, 26, 1, “I was formerly Manu and Sūrya...”, one of the early hymns in a Family Bk, to the Middle Vedic period c 1000 which includes Bk 10 as well (!p 112 and n 42, p 146). He has a Late Vedic period also with *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*, but I found nothing about an Early period. He cites X, 16 “May your eye go to the sun, your spirit/breath to air...” and finds in it “the theme of cosmicization” of the dead soul which is “strongly reminiscent of Egyptian afterlife myth, where also the dead soul expands throughout the universe” – BUT he cites no Egyptian parallel wherein the eye goes to the sun, the breath to air etc, since there is none. It is again a case of non-existent parallels. Then he cites *AV* XIV, 2, 24, “which may reflect additional Egyptian input” from the *Book of the Dead*, but does not cite *AV* VI, 53, 2 (§ 19, below). To cap it all, he misinforms us that “the Aryan establishment admitted tribal influences from Munda and Dravidian peoples along with renewed Near Eastern influences” at the time just before the *Upaniṣads* and that “the primitive forms of the doctrine of reincarnation may go back to indigenist animists [?!] of the Ganges Valley or even earlier to the pre-Indus culture of “Austic proto-Australoids” (pp 112-3). I find much confusion in all this and sloppy scholarship. Reincarnation appears clearly in Egypt and the Near East only after 300 BC under Greek and, perhaps, Indic influences.

McEvelley slips into sloppiness again when he refers to *RV* I, 164, 46 translating “That which is One the seers speak of in various terms: they call it [among other things] Fire” (p 38; square brackets original); thus the *RV*, he states, “teaches the ultimacy of fire as a symbol of the One’. Of course the *RV* does nothing of the sort: the cited stanza says “They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni” – a very different proposition from “ultimacy of fire”. Intent on *proving* the “ultimacy of fire’ in the *Veda* and to connect it with the Heraclitean fire in Greece, McEvelley cites *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* II, 1, 1, finding that here “fire is seen as the source and goal of all things” (p 38). But he does not see that the *MU* passage is a simile, an analogy, denoted by the correlatives *yathā... tathā* ‘as from a fire... so from the Imperishable’. We meet several similar egregious misreadings and misrepresentations in this author.

24. It is difficult to see how Keith finds here “a reference merely to day and night” (195: 571). Griffith translates according to the traditional view of the two paths; so does Werner 1978. I found not one allusion to reincarnation in the *RV*, not even a dismissive one, in O’Flaherty 1980b.

Atharva Veda

16. Magical spells, apotropaic, purificatory or therapeutic, charms, exorcisms, curses, and the like, constitute the bulk of the *Atharva Veda* – though some examples are found in the *RV* too. Book XX and about one seventh of the rest of the *AV* is taken from the *RV*. This Saṃhitā is also known as *Atharvāṅgirasah* ‘the Atharvans and Aṅgirasas’. Bk X is wholly, and Bk XVI mostly, composed in prose while prose passages are found in other Books as well. In addition to the magical incantations and cultic formulas which seek to influence the divine or supernatural world, the *AV* contains hymns with new cosmogonies and new divine figures of henotheism and a developed philosophical terminology that takes us to the upanishadic doctrines. Linguistically the *AV* hymns are generally younger, and although some may be as old as those of the late or even the middle strata of the *RV* and most scholars believe that they contain older primitive material, nothing in fact can be determined with certainty and such scholarly beliefs are merely conjectural.²⁵ There is not the slightest proof that the Vedic religion started with such spells. The *AV* merely records this level of religio-magical practices (see §8). For, although I concur with the general view that the *AV* on the whole is later than the *RV*, it is very likely that portions of it are contemporaneous with the late and even early strata of the *RV* but the task of identifying such passages/hymns and assigning dates even approximately would require a separate and lengthy study.

17. Here are given some examples of these magical spells from different areas of experience. Agni has displaced Indra in the general preference and is mentioned about 650 times while Indra 450 (Singh 1997: 31, 45). Agni is invoked in charms of all kinds, since some ritual with fire (and often water and/or some plant) was involved. Thus I, 25 is against *takman* ‘yellow fever’, son of Varuṇa (also V, 22, VI, 20; etc). Agni is often invoked (and other gods) against sorcerers and demons (I, 7&8; V, 14&31, etc); against *piśacas* as disease-demons (VI, 36) and disease generally (III, 31, 6) or against disease and death (V, 30, 11-14); in III, 12 Agni is to provide longevity (also VII, 53). He also cures madness and wards off rakṣasas (VI, III, 1-3). In VI, 85 and X, 6 Agni is associated with the *varaṇa*-tree (against disease) and the amulet of *khadira*-wood (for faith, strength, abundance, superiority, etc). In Hymns II, 1 and 2 Agni burns up enemies’ schemes and deprives them of hands. There are charms for merchants’ gain (III, 15) and success at dice (VII, 50, 3). With II, 36 a suitor is obtained for a maiden while VI, 130 rouses a man’s passion for a woman (also 131, 1-3; cf III, 25; etc). With VI, 106 Agni himself is to avert fire. Then we find charms for expiation of sin (VI, 45) and good fortune (VI, 110). In II, 10 Agni is to remove hereditary disease, curses of relatives, hatred from others, Varuṇa’s fetters and guilt. Many other spells could be cited invoking other gods or using amulets, plants, water etc for various purposes, but enough has been said to indicate the range of these magical-ritual practices.

18. From the point of view of this study, more significant is the emergence of new deities into prominence while others recede in importance. (This could be due to geographical differences in henotheism, but any such speculations do not seem to be susceptible to proof). Thus, Soma, one of the more important rigvedic deities (120 hymns and numerous other passages in all 10 Maṇḍalas) is mentioned 280 times but while it is the best of plants (VI, 3, 2) and is used in sacrifice (also magical and medicinal practices), as a god he is now identified with the Moon (*candramās*: VI, 81; XI, 6, 7). Uṣas is mentioned in several *AV* hymns and invoked with other deities in various charms (III, 7, 7; IV, 4, 2; XI, 6, 7; XVI, 6, 5; etc) but is also cosmic god Vṛātya’s *pumscali* ‘harlot’ (XV, 2, 13: a rather vulgar expression here).

Book XIII is devoted to the cosmic deity *Rohita* (and his consort *Rohiṇī*). He is evidently a

25. See Winternitz 1981, vol 1; 116-7. Scholars who have failed to discuss fully such ideas of the rigvedic religion as the Many-out-of-the-One, the esoteric side of *yajña*, the aspect of divinization, and their wider implications, are hardly in a position to evaluate correctly the Vedic religion and its beginnings.

solar deity, omnipresent and omniscient, like other deities (Skambha, Kāla, Prajāpati). In fact all gods, the past and the future, death and immortality are united in him (XIII, 4, 21-5). *Kāla* 'Time' is another such deity, celebrated in two hymns, XIX 53 and 54: existing in many forms, the lord of all, and father of Prajāpati, he is the highest god, ever moving on. More significant is the rise of Prajāpati. The name started as an epithet of Savitr (RVIV, 53, 2) and Soma (RVIX, 5, 9) but was given to a cosmic deity in RVX, 85, 43, in 169, 4 and 184, 1; in the AV he acquires greater importance, generating the creatures (VII, 9, 1) and all worlds from the sacrificial rice (XI, 3, 52), identified with *Brahmacārin* (XI, 5, 16: in this hymn, cosmic deity), Rohita (XIII, 2, 39) and Vrātya (XV, 1, 2), and will be the chief god in the Brāhmaṇas.²⁶ Here we certainly observe the development of a motif.

19. In the AV the two paths of gods and fathers *devayāna* and *pitryāna* are mentioned explicitly in VI, 117, 3 (also VIII, 10, 29: *devayāna*). The dead go to *antarikṣa*, from there to heaven and then beyond heaven's vault *nāka* to celestial light (IV, 14, 3). They ascend to heaven apparently retaining their male/female sex and capable of enjoying pleasures similar to earthly ones (IV, 34, 2; XII, 3, 40). But they can also assume varied forms (e.g. charioteer or bird) and move beyond (IV, 34, 4) – whatever that means. In XII, 4, 36, occurs the phrase *naraka loka* which thereafter designates 'hell', the place where evil female sorceresses (and, later, murderers and other sinners) go, a place of blackest darkness (II, 14, 3; V, 30, 11; etc). Moreover, the idea of reincarnation is found in *punaḥ prāṇaḥ punar ātmā na etu* 'may the life-force, may spirit come to us again' (VI, 53, 2).

26. We may note here, also, that Rudra is given the epithet *pasupati* (XI, 2, 5, etc) which will remain in later texts with god Śiva; however, already in RVI, 43, 6, Rudra grants health to horses, rams and ewes and cattle (without the use of the epithet *pasupati*). Note also that *Bhūmi* 'Earth', originally herself water, has the quality *gandha* 'fragrance' found in people too, and here may be the beginning of the doctrine of the distinctive quality of each of the five elements (earth-scent, water-taste, fire-light/form, air-texture/touch, ether-sound).

McEvelley thinks that the AV "represents the *asura* view as against the *deva*- oriented *Ṛg Veda*" (p 257). He thinks that "magic and witchcraft" enter into the Vedic Tradition at the time of the AV as well as the hymns to Kāla, the Cosmic Person (=Puruṣa Sūkta in RV: p 258), the Vrātyas and the like (thanks to shamanic, Dravidian and Near Eastern influences). Again, he displays confusion and ignorance. Magical practices are found also in hymns of the earlier strata in the RV (I, 23, 21-2 and 133, 3; V, 12, 2; VII, 104; VIII, 23, 14-5; etc). There is no Egyptian hymn like the two of Kāla in the AV – and Ancient Egyptian has no word for 'time' (Assman 2001: 79). There is nothing asuric about Kāla, Prajāpati, Rohita, Skambha. McEvelley says also that Akkadian words *apsu*, *tiamat* (*abzū* and *ti'āmat*, in fact) and *umma/umā* came into Vedic. If he searched a little further, he would have found that the common Vedic *apsú* 'in waters' is a locative plural of *ap* (*ap+su*) with strong-stem nominative plural *āpaḥ*; *ap* is a common IE stem found in Iranian *ap/āf*, Old Prussian *ap-e* and Lithuanian *up-e* all meaning 'water' or 'river'. It is hardly possible that Mesopotamian *āp-əm/Abzū* 'freshwater' (see § 33, below) reached the North-European languages as well! The *taimāta* (AVV, 13, 6) 'brown/black water-snake(?)' is thought by Mayerhofer to be cognate with *tim- a/i* 'large fish' (and *√tim* 'become wet') and so could hardly be borrowed from Akkadian *Ti' āmat*, the sea-water goddess whom Marduk killed (see §§ 28, 33). As for Vedic *Umā* (*Kena* U III, 12), later consort of Śiva, her name has the homonym *umā* 'flax', also thought by Mayerhofer to be IE (perhaps from *√ve* 'weave'). Thus, with the removal of the AIT blinkers, we can reasonably claim that Akkadian borrows from Vedic. This is another example of McEvelley's hasty and superficial judgments. Although in instances like that of *Umā* or *Skambha* we may have innovations/developments from native elements, other cultural elements in the AV seem to me to stress or expand unobtrusive rigvedic ones (or, again, be cultic occurrences in geographical areas where the main rigvedic deities were less popular).

The holy power *brahman* becomes in the *AV* yet another cosmic deity but also the conscious First Cause of all creation. Being everywhere and full of knowledge, it has manifested the bond of everything and articulates all the births of gods (IV, 1, 3). The Brahmacārin (XI, 5) is in every sense the *brahman* since this is what he practises and bears (*bibharti* : XI, 5, 24) – the Power permeating all creation. Skambha too is identified with *jyeṣṭha-brahma* ‘the highest/eldest *brahman*’ (X, 1, 34) – entering into, supporting and containing everything (X, 7, 10ff). The *brahman* has settled in the *kośa* ‘case/sheath’ or *pur* ‘stronghold’ of man (X, 2, 32-3). Man’s *prāṇa* ‘life-force’ continues only by virtue of *brahman* (XI, 4, 23). Therefore the sage who knows this *puruṣa* knows him to be *brahman* (XI, 4, 23). Brahman as Spirit *yakṣa* is described as *ātmanvat* (X, 2, 32); *ātman* is desireless *akama*, wise *dhīra*, immortal *amṛta* and so on: whoever knows him thus does not fear death (X, 8, 43-4). These passages foreshadow the upanishadic formula *ayam ātmā brahma* ‘this Self is Spirit Absolute’.

Sacrificial Ritual

20. Generally speaking a sacrificial rite required four types of priest. Even the *RV* has sacrifices other than that of Soma as the two hymns to the Horse (I, 162 and 163) attest for the *asvamedha*. All four types are attested in the *RV*. The *hotṛ* ‘invoker’ recites the *ṛcas* ‘verses’ praising and inviting the gods. The *udgātṛ* ‘singer’ accompanies with chants the whole performance. The *adhvaryu* is the practical priest who carries out the liturgical acts muttering the sacrificial formulas *yajus*. The *brahmān* ‘highpriest’ supervises the whole performance and corrects any errors with the appropriate sacred words. With these functions are connected the three Vedas: the *Ṛgveda* with the *hotṛ*; the *Sāmaveda* with the *udgātṛ*; the *Yajurveda* with the *adhvaryu*.

21. The *Sāmaveda* consists of verses found in the *RV*. Only 75 verses do not occur there but are found in other Samhitās or works on ritual. As such, the *Sāmaveda* is of no interest to our study.

22. The *Yajurveda* has come down to us in six recensions four of which belong to the *kṛṣṇa* ‘Black’ school and two to the *sukla* ‘White’.²⁷ The best-known of the four recensions of the Black *Yajurveda* is the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*. The White school is represented by the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*. The difference between the two is that the *VS* contains only *mantras*, i.e. prayers and incantations, while the *TS* has also a description of the rites. The rites include the *agnihotra* ‘fire-offerings’ (morning and evening), the *rājasūya* ‘coronation’, *asvamedha* ‘horse-sacrifice’, funeral ceremonies, etc. The prayers are dedications and petitions. A simple dedication formula mentions the offering and the deity: “this (or, you) for Agni (or Indra, or whoever)”. A simple petition formula is: “You Agni, are protector of bodies: protect my body! You Agni, are giver of life: give me life!” (*VS* III, 17). During some ceremonies are used riddles, known as *brahmodya* (found also in the *RV* and *AV*). E.g. in the *asvamedha* is found the following: “Who wanders lonely on his way?/ Who is born always anew?/ What is the cure for cold?/ What is the great container?// The sun wanders lonely on his way./ The moon is always born anew./ Fire is the cure for cold./ The earth is the great corn-container//” (*VS* XXIII, 45ff).

Several more points need mention. One is the *Śatarudrīya* the enumeration of the ‘hundred names of Rudra’ in *VS* XVII. This practice will develop in later religious texts into the 1000 names of Śiva and the 1000 names of Viṣṇu: their recitation was (is still) considered a highly meritorious act of worship. Secondly, we find some sacrificial invocations like *svāhā* ‘hail!’ and *vaṣaṭ* ‘hail/amen’. Here is found also the sacred syllable *OM* which in the language of the gods signifies what is denoted by *tathā* ‘thus, so it may be’ among men (*AB* VII, 18) or which expresses consent

27. These are the *Kāthaka*, the *Kapisthala-Kaṭha*, the *Maitrāyanī* and the *Taittirīya* Saṃhitās of the Black school and the *Kāṇva* and *Mādhyandina* Saṃhitās of the White school: the last two differ only in minor respects.

‘yes, so be it, amen’ (*CUI*, 1, 8).

Thus although concern with the ritual is preeminent, devotional or philosophical passages are not lacking, though almost invariably subordinated to the sacrifice. E.g. "May life accord with the sacrifice; may expiration... inspiration... the eye... the ear... mind... body accord with the sacrifice;" and the text adds the theme of divinization: "We have come to heaven, to the gods; we have become immortal; we have become the offspring of Prajāpati" (*TS I*, 7, 9). In these texts Prajāpati rises to supremacy: "All the gods are Prajāpati ... From his body Prajāpati fashioned the bull and the cow" (*TS II*, 1, 4). Here also, in connection with Prajāpati as creator-god, appears the formula, "Prajāpati desired 'May I create offspring'; he did *tapas* and created..." (*TS III*, 1, 1). Nor is the esoteric aspect of the sacrifice forgotten; it is in fact stressed in several passages: the sacrificer calls forth the Waters "with mind" (*TS I*, 6, 8); "Prajāpati performed the sacrifice with mind" and the sacrificer "remains silent to support the sacrifice" (*ibid*; also *II*, 5, 11, 3); "When the hotṛ invokes *Īdā*, the sacrificer... should in mind reflect on *Vāyu*" (*I*, 7, 1); etc.²⁸

23. All these elements are developed *in extenso* in the prose texts known as *Brāhmaṇa*, which treat in greater detail, and often (for us) tediously, the various sacrifices already mentioned. The best known are the *Aitareya* and *Kauṣītaki*, both attached to the *RV*, and the *Śatapatha*, belonging to the White *Yajurveda*. Another and older name for *brāhmaṇa* was *bandhu* 'connexion', indicating that the purpose of these texts was also to explicate connexions between the rituals and prayers or other religio-philosophical ideas. Thus *Manu* tells one of his sons, "the *Āngirasas* are performing a *sattra* [=sacrificial session] but they cannot discern the heavenly world; you declare this *brāhmaṇa* to them" (*TS III*, 1, 9). But *bandhu* also indicates the connexion of sacrifice between man, god and the cosmos²⁹.

While all *Brāhmaṇas* describe the sacrifice, those of the *RV* stress the *Hotṛ*'s duties, those of the *Sāmaveda* the *Udgātṛ*'s part, and those of the *Yajurveda* the *Adhvaryu*'s function. Apart from technical matters like the construction of the fire-altar *agnicayana* (eg *SB bks VI-IX*) and descriptions of rituals like the *asvamedha* 'horse-sacrifice' (*SB XIII*), there are legends developed from hints contained in the *RV*, like the story of *Naciketas*, the boy given by his father to *Yama* (*TB III*, 11 from *RV X*, 79, 5) or of *Sunaḥsepa*, another boy who was given as a sacrificial offering in the place of a king by his avaricious father (*AB VII*, 13ff from *RV V*, 2, 7 and *I*, 24-30) and the

28. J. C. Heesterman (1993) is well aware of the esoteric aspect and cites *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra XXIV*, 2: "Where then is the sacrifice?... It is in man" (p5); or, "both hotṛ and sacrificer are said to be the self (*ātman*) [in *Kauṣītaki Br IX*, 9; *SBr IX*, 5, 2, 16] (p144). Yet, he chooses to resort to traditions and cults later than the Vedic Tradition (Iranian, Greek, Judaic, Christian) and to stress the anthropological and sociological elements related to the ritual, like "the domestication of fire" (p6), "the solemnization of food and its distribution at a communal meal" (p10), conquering "the world of the wild... through fire" (p30), the emergence of "an exclusive specialized priesthood" (142-3), etc. All these observations are partly true, of course. But this (predominantly structuralist) approach leads to some very strange conclusions. Thus, "at the heart of the sacrifice there is the threat of catastrophe overthrowing all order" (p 27) – as if such a threat does not exist with most phenomena in this world of change; or, the fire-cult "gave rise to the concept of the *ātman*" (p 217) – as if any (normal) man does not first have awareness of his own self and does not relate all his perceptions and everything else to this self; and "it was ritualism that achieved the decisive break and so led to the Upanishadic *ātman-brahman* doctrine" (p 220) – when this is already implicit in the imagery of the *RV* (§§9-13) and explicit in the *AV* (§ 19, end).

29. Many views have been published about *yajña* from F. Kittel (1872) to Keith (1925: chs 18-22) and later. *Dandekar* saw in it "profound cosmic significance... a representation in miniature of the cosmic order... the rhythmic course of nature" (1967: 70). More recently, S. Kak thinks that the sacrifice "posits an identity of the sacrificer and the universe...[and] the knowledge central to the sacrifice...becomes the vehicle of the transformation of the participants" (2002a: 5). See also Keith, 442 and n1.

love-story of king Purūravas and nymph Urvasī (*SB* X, 5, 1 from *RV* X, 95); another tale is that of the Flood wherein Manu was saved by a fish (*SBI*, 8, 1). These may be fuller versions than the elliptic ones in the *RV* or attempts at filling the gaps in the rigvedic references. Since the rigvedic brief allusions imply the presence of full legends, religious myths and historical events well known at that time, and since the Vedic transmission has proved to have enormous mnemonic power, I would incline towards the first alternative – for there are allusions, like the story of Bhujyu, who is saved by the Asvins, that were not later given in fuller versions with the implication that they went out of the memory of the Tradition

24. Many and varied are the cosmogonic accounts in the Brāhmaṇas. In one account a golden egg appears on the primeval ocean and after a year Prajāpati broke out of it and proceeded to create through monosyllabic utterances (*SB* XI, 1, 6). In another one Prajāpati creates man from his own mind, various animals from his vital airs and others from his different organs; in as much as he created man from his mind “man has all animals” (*SB* VII, 5, 2, 6). In yet another account Brahman created the gods and then the worlds for their abodes – earth to Agni, midspace to Vāyu and sky to Sūrya; then it descended into these worlds through name and form (*SB* XI, 2, 3; also *TB* II, 8, 9, 3-7). In a fourth one, *brahman* springs to life as mind and then Prajāpati into whom *brahman* enters so that he may become a progenitor (*TB* II, 2, 9; also *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* III, 38, 1). In a longer account (*AB* V, 32) after the genesis of the gods and the Vedas, Prajāpati took three sounds, **a**, **u** and **m** and brought them together into **OM**, the Praṇava (which will be the subject of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*).

However, of much importance is also the continuation of the theme of the absolute *brahman* and of the elements of the Macrocosm being in man, the Microcosm. One passage says that gods and other creatures are in various parts of man: *ātman* is the *ātman* in his heart, Indra is his strength, Parjanya in his head, and so on, and what is immortal is in *brahman* (*TB* III, 10, 8). In the *Kauṣītaki Br* “the holy power *brahman* born first in the east is yonder” (VIII, 4) while the last section of the *AB* gives the cycle of life and death of the holy power *brahmaṇaḥ parimara* where everything arises and dissolves on that cycle (VIII, 28). More important, the *brahman* and the *ātman* are identified and knowledge of the *ātman* as the self frees the man from the pollution of action (*TB* III, 12, 9); the same idea is found in *SB* X, 6, 3, 1-2, where one meditates on *satyaṃ brahma* and *ātman*, identified with the *puruṣa*.

All these threads continue in the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads.

The Upaniṣads³⁰

25. The central teaching of the Upaniṣads declares: **a)** *sarvaṃ khalv-idaṃ brahma* ‘truly all this [universe] is Spirit Absolute’ (*CU* III, 14, 1); **b)** *ayam ātmā brahman* ‘this Self [in man] is Spirit Absolute [=the Self of All]’ (*BU* II, 5, 19); and so *ahaṃ brahma-asmi* ‘I myself am Spirit Absolute’ (*BU* I, 4, 10). This I called the doctrine of the Unity of Being and, as we have seen (§9), this can be traced in the *RV*, in mythological and poetic images and symbols, in the *AV*, in the other Saṃhitās and in the Brāhmaṇas. The Upaniṣads present this most ancient doctrine in greater detail. And the theme of ‘divinization’ is now termed ‘self-knowledge’ *ātmajñāna* or ‘knowledge of brahman’ *brahmavidyā*. The doctrine of reincarnation is also presented more explicitly and fully in that good conduct will result in a good birth and foul conduct in birth in lower forms (*BU* III, 2, 13; IV, 4, 6; *CUV*, 10, 7; *KU* II, 2, 7). The two paths *devayāna* and *pitryāna* are also given (*BU* VI, 2, 2 and 2,

30. Here I am thinking primarily of the ten early ones: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittiriya*, *Īsa*, *Kena*, *Kātha*, *Prasna*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Māṇḍūkya*. Obviously, the *Svetāsvatara* and *Maitrī*, contain useful material and, later, for Śaṅkara’s view one needs *Kauṣītakī*, *Subāla*, *Jābala*, *Paiṅgala*, *Kaivalya* and *Vajrasūcikā*. I omit the Āraṇyakas since they fade imperceptibly into the Upaniṣads.

For detailed analysis of variant doctrines in the Upaniṣads one should consult Keith 1925.

9-16; *CU* IV, 15, 5 and V, 3, 2; etc)

The Upaniṣads were composed and/or compiled by different sages who lived in different periods and places. Even the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* is not a unitary work but a collection of at least three separate pieces since adhyāyas II, IV and VI have a teachers' *vaṃśa* at the end; the names of the teachers (60 to 65) are different except for few that are common to the first and second: thus we must assume different schools or traditions³¹. It is understandable, therefore, that there should be differences and even contradictions in some of their doctrines. The main doctrine being man's salvation/liberation *mokṣa* through Selfrealization, the variations are largely due to the different approaches presented for the achievement of this aim. Another reason would be the varied experiences obtained by the sages in higher states of consciousness, their varied perceptions and insights into aspects of the nature of the world and man, the significance they assigned to these experiences and, of course, their judgment or predilection as to what they should include in their teaching in response to the needs of their students. When scholars write of "advance" and "evolution" of thought, they mean I suspect, a movement towards a clearer, common and constant terminology.³² I shall ignore the apparent differences and the various interpretations that gave rise to the later Schools (*Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta*, *Sāṅkhya* etc) and focus on the essential teaching.

26. However, before examining this essential teaching we must mention parenthetically and briefly the theme of the 'real-unreal' which becomes a major issue in the discussions of the later Schools. Implicit throughout the Upaniṣads, and sometimes overtly stated, is the doctrine that Brahman alone is real while the world and its mutable multiplicity is unreal. Thus, for example, *BU* II, 1, 20 describes, with the analogy of threads issuing from a spider and sparks from a fire, how all vital

31. The upaniṣadic traditions go back many centuries. Taking an average period of 20 years for each of the 60 teachers we obtain 1200 years. These traditions do not present a clean break from the texts on rituals or the older hymns. E.g. *BUI*, 1 presents the sacrificial horse in its mystical cosmic aspect and section III, 9, 1ff examines the number and nature of the gods, while *CU* II, 1ff deals with details of the morning litany and the three pressings (cf also IV, 16, 1ff) and *Kena* III, 1ff brings in Agni, Vāyu and Indra (but subordinate to *brahman*). On the other hand, *MUI*, 2, 7-10, rejects rites altogether as futile activities in ignorance. I see no real contradiction here because many people may well find rites more amenable being in no condition to follow the ascetic's way of life and concentration on the *ātman-brahman* identity. Nor is there any real contradiction between "pantheism" and a God immanent in the world or a transcendent Absolute. Such "problems" exist not in the Upaniṣads themselves but in the fixity of the later Systems (or Schools) and in modern scholars' minds, which, in any event, like to indulge in casuistry, not realizing fully that supposedly "scientific" definitions have no end since every term in every new definition requires further definition *ad nauseam*.

32. Historians of Philosophy write at length about "the evolution of thought", and, no doubt, there are many instances of such an "evolution". Personally, I find little doctrinal change in the Vedic texts, only differences in the mode of presentation of ideas and in emphasis of detail. One scholar sees "advance" and "evolution", e.g. in the doctrine of the elements (earth, water, etc): there is only water in the *RV*, then earth, water and fire in the *Chāndogya* (VI, 2, 2-4) and all five of them in the *Taittirīya* (Hiriyanna, 1994: 64). Such statements ignore that all five elements, including air and ether, are mentioned in *CUV*, 14, 16 and VII, 4, 2 and are presented as divinities in the *RV* (ether being denoted by *div-* or *rajas* and similar words); the absence in earlier texts of the *Taittirīya* formulation does not indicate that the elements were not known.

Another issue often emphasized is the (apparent) rise of kṣatriyas who teach brahmins – seen as a conflict between castes. That there were conflicts cannot be doubted: there have always been good and bad kṣatriyas, wise and foolish brahmins. But while there were kṣatriyas who attained wisdom with study and practice and could therefore teach brahmins who had not, we cannot ignore the simple fact that Yājñavalkya (*BU* III, 1, 1ff) and Aruṇa (*CU* VI, 1, 1ff), two great teachers, are both brahmins.

forces *prāṇāḥ*, gods, etc, emanate forth from the *ātman* and concludes by stating that the One Self is *satyasya satyam* ‘the true/real of the true/real’, because, although these forces are regarded as real, yet the reality behind them is truly the *ātman*; their own reality is only relative. This idea is implicit in the *RV* and was held at least by the elite of the ṛṣis who understood that the Many are expressions of the One (§§ 7-8). This reality is denoted by *sat* ‘being, existen-t/-ce’, though in the case of the Brahman strictly nothing can be predicated. In *CU* IV, 19, 1, we meet an apparent problem since it is said that “In the beginning this [world] was ‘non-being’ *asat*; the same view occurs in *TU* II, 7. (This goes back to *RV* X 72, 2-3 where *sat* is said to have issued from *asat*.) But here *asat* obviously does not mean ‘absolute non-being’ or *nihil* but only ‘unmanifest’ or ‘non-existence in perceptible form and name’. The notion that absolute non-being is the origin of All is refuted in the *CU* itself, in VI, 2, 1: *katham asataḥ saj-jayeta* ‘how could being (or the real) manifest from non-being (or the unreal)?’ Thus this is no problem. The doctrine that Brahman alone is real is found, among other places, in *BUI*, 3, 28 in the prayer “From the unreal/non-being *asataḥ* lead me to the real/being *sat*”. It could be any humble ascetic/yogin/seeker praying to a Higher Power or any student requesting his master. The ‘real/being’ is the Supreme Self expressed in the *ātman-brahman* identity : It is imperceptible, inconceivable, indescribable, ungenerated, undying and unchanging, its only allowable predication being *prajñānam brahma* ‘the Absolute is pure Consciousness/Intelligence’ (*AU* III,3) and taught in ‘Thou [man] art that’ (*CU* VI, 8, 7). It is real because it does not depend on anything and does not change at all, unaffected by whatever changes seem to us to occur in its substance. The world is ‘unreal’ because it is, as a creation/emanation, dependent on the Brahman and changes constantly since all its constituent phenomena have beginning and end. Terms like ‘monism, idealism’ and the like which we use for this teaching seem inadequate (and irrelevant) since those ancient sages seem to speak from experience and not mere abstract intellection, an uncontrolled habit for disputation. The real test for us would be not in ratiocination, to read, talk and write about this, but to follow their practical instructions and see for ourselves in actual experience - as it is implied in the proverbial proof of eating the pudding...

27. As sparks fly from a fire so all beings issue from the Imperishable: gods, other celestials, humans, animals, birds and plants, mountains and oceans issue forth and return (*MU* II, 1, 1-9). How is the return effected? All beings issue forth and return according to the natural movement of the “breathing”, to put it synoptically, of That One (*RV* X, 129): the out-breathing is generation and the in-breathing is the absorption. But man has the possibility of accelerating for himself this process and, moreover, of rising above, or escaping from, this cycle of generation, withdrawal and reissuing into the creation, and thus attaining absolute freedom in uniting with the Primal Cause. This now is the meaning of Self-realization or liberation. And how is this effected? Through education, training, preparation. There is lower knowledge and higher knowledge (*MU* I, 1, 4-5; *CU* VI, 1, 1-4). Lower knowledge concerns the world and higher knowledge the *brahman*. Ignoring *brahman*, the Immutable One Reality, whence they emanate, and which is in them as their Self (e.g. *CU* II, 6; *AU* I, 3, 12), the vast majority of people follow their desires for the things of the world and get enmeshed in the widespread nets of death (*KU* II, 1, 2). *Maitrī* III, 2 gives a good description of man in ignorance – “affected by the *guṇas* of material nature ... no longer sees Himself, the bountiful Lord... defiled, unstable, cut off, full of desires, scattered, he falls into arrogant identification (*abhimānitva*) ‘I am so-and-so, this is mine’ ... ”. This is not unnatural but it entails delusion (*moha*) and suffering (*soka*, *duḥkha*). Only the realization in one’s being of the *ātman-brahman* identity brings liberation (*mokṣa*) and real happiness (*ānanda*). Education in ethics is indispensable. A man can remain in the world and enjoy life, as *Īsā* 1 says, but with renunciation (*tyaktena*), not coveting anyone else’s goods (*mā grdhaḥ*): restraint of desire is stressed repeatedly. The prudent follow the good (*śreyas*), the foolish the pleasant (*preyas*: *KU* I, 2, 1-2). The moral virtues are not different from those in the *RV* (§13), *tapas* ‘austerity’, *dāna* ‘liberality’, *ārjava* ‘straightness/integrity’, *ahiṃsā* ‘non-harming’, *satyavacana* ‘truthfulness’ (*CU* III,

17, 4); to these should be added compassion (*dayā*) and self-control (*dama*) (*BUV*, 2, 3). *TUI*, 9 adds ‘hospitality’ and duties to other men and one’s wife and progeny but also *svādhyāya* ‘self-study’ and *pravacana* ‘recitation/speaking-forth’³³. The ‘self-study’ (or ‘study of the Scriptures’, as most take it) entails seeing and hearing the Self in oneself and others, and thinking and reflecting on the Self, and so coming to know the Self: *ātmā... draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyaḥ* (*BU* II, 4, 5, end). All this requires quietude and tranquillity of mind (*BU* IV, 4, 23; *CU* III, 14, 1; *KU* II, 3, 10).

In the end, however, no matter how pious and virtuous, no matter how self-restrained and tranquil one is, Selfrealization will come only by the intercession of grace from the *ātman* himself. The Self cannot be reached by senses, by learning or even great intelligence (*MU* III, 2,4; *KU* II, 3, 12) but only by revealing Himself to the man He chooses (*MU* III, 2, 3).

One process is through purification of the mind to bring senses and lower mind under the control of the *buddhi* (higher, discriminating intellect), merging speech into mind, this into intellect and this into the greater aspect of spirit (*KU* I, 3, 8-15; II, 3, 6-10). Another is to detach by stages oneself from the material sheath of food (*annamayakośa*), from that of life-energy (*prāṇa*-), from that of mental activity (*manas*-), from that of discriminating intellect (*viññāna*-), reach that of bliss (*ānanda*-) and be Oneself (*TU* II, 1-8). A third one is, again by stages, to realize and transcend the Self as *Viśva* in the waking state, as *Taijasa* of the dreaming state and as *Prājña*, the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*), of deep sleep which is “undifferentiated mass of consciousness” (*ekībhūtaḥ prajñānaghana*) and attain *Turiya*, the non-dual and otherwise indescribable Fourth hypostasis, which is the Self (*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*). There are other approaches. In each case the theory can be described briefly and easily; the realization requires a lifetime of application involving many practices, such as remembering that one is not what one is observing (sensations, thoughts, feelings, desires, etc), attending to whatever one is doing, setting aside the various notions one usually has about Oneself (...*neti...neti...*) and the like. When Selfrealization is attained, when the man “knows thus ‘I am *brahman*’ he becomes all this [universe]; even the gods cannot prevent this, for he becomes their very Self” (*BUI*, 4, 10). Indeed, he sees all creatures in himself and himself in all creatures (*Īśa*, 6-7).

One final point. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* opens with a homology where the sacrificial horse is presented as an embodiment of the different parts of the Cosmos: it may be a suggestion that one should view all creatures in a similar way. The final section of the *Upaniṣad* deals with the human sexual act which is so essential to the perpetuation of the species. This too is a kind of homology where, as the couple embrace, the man corresponds to father-sky and the woman to mother-earth (*BU* VI, 4, 21). Thus this common and crucial act is shown to have, beyond any other ordinary aspect, a cosmic dimension and spiritual significance. (See also *CUV*, 7 and 8.)

28. In Conclusion, we have followed religio-philosophical motifs and themes from the *RV* to the *Upaniṣads* holding fast onto the thread of the Unity of Being, presented in myth, cult, ritual and philosophical enquiry. In some texts myth and symbol preponderate, in others the sacrificial ritual and in the *Upaniṣads* plain descriptions of Selfrealization. Later will follow other Schools and sub-

33. In view of all these statements which Keith also cites, it is astonishing that he ascribes to the brahmins “lack of ethical sense” (p 586). That there were immoral brahmins is surely not worse than immoral priests and Popes in the Christian Church. Equally astonishing is Keith’s (wrong) judgment that the ideal seeking of truth is in asceticism “by turning away from the things of this world and concentrating unnaturally the mind on the object” (!! *ibid*: 587). Surely *Yājñavalkya* with his two wives, his ashram and his cattle, no less than King *Asvapati Kaikeya* (*CUV*, 11, 3tt), and so many other sages with families, were not ascetics except in that they were *inwardly detached* from the world.

Y.K. Menon, again, wrote that the ‘virtue’ of the ancient Greeks’ “justice” is omitted or is secondary (1976: 93). But surely *dharma* ‘duty, attribute, law’, which he mentions often, means also “justice”.

branches with their own terminology placing emphasis on different aspects of the Unity of Being. But at all times the Vedic Tradition retained its broad, unitary character. Perhaps one day, with less arrogant casuistry and more of the ethical and meditative practices of the upanishadic sages or the rigvedic seers, it will reemerge in its non-assertive splendour.