

# ***Viktor Rydberg's*** **Investigations into** **Germanic Mythology** **Volume II**

Part 1: Indo-European Mythology  
Translated and Annotated by William P. Reaves  
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## **Regarding the Results of the Foregoing Investigation.**

From the preceding account of the myths which appear to be common possessions of the Germanic and the Asiatic Indo-Europeans, I have excluded all similarities that seem to me to be explained:

- 1) by common human conditions and which, therefore, should also be found in non-Indo-European myth-cycles;
- 2) by mere coincidence.

In addition, I have endeavored to exclude everything that could be attributed to parallel cultures arising after the dispersal of the Indo-European tribes without a verifiable origin from some Proto-Indo-European myth.

After these exclusions, a mythic treasure, whose extent will presumably seem surprising to many, remains as an inheritance from the Proto-Indo-European era. And it is not only the number of common myths that ought to draw attention, but also the circumstance that already in their time of unity these myths obviously appear to have been associated into a connected chain, into a mythic system, into an epic whole, whose Germanic variant can be said to be identical to the Indo-Iranian variant with reference to the system's primary features as well as the bulk of its details.

To explain this identity as the sole work of chance or common human psychology is an absurdity that simultaneously condemns the comparative method and its use not only in mythology but also in linguistics and in natural sciences. Such an explanation finds its rebuttal in the impossibility of discovering a congruence comparable in the slightest degree between the Indo-European cycle of myths and non-Indo-European cycles or between these same Indo-European myth-cycles and other Indo-European cycles, which, like the Greek and Roman, were shattered in prehistoric times and blended with Semitic, Egyptian, and other non-Indo-European elements.

When I say that the myths in the Proto-Indo-European era were already organized into an epic whole, I do not mean to say that the Proto-Indo-European people possessed a mythological epic consummately composed like the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Mahabharata*, or the *Ramayana*, although presumably this does not lie outside the realm of possibility; I

merely wish to point out what the foregoing investigation has demonstrated unconditionally: that the myths had already ceased to be free-standing concepts of imagination and reason independent of one another, and instead had become moments in a connected religious-poetic worldview that began with the origin of the world, the gods and human beings, and concluded with the end of this world-age and the world's renewal. And these, the outermost links of the epic chain, were tied together with an account of the world's physical and moral course of events, of the battles between good and evil, between the world-creating and the world-spoiling powers. There is nothing surprising about myths linking up. In general, when a people with an active cultural capacity are in possession of holy stories passed down from generation to generation, these tend to unite by degrees, and as if by themselves, into an epic based entirely upon the need for unity and connection in the world of imagination and reason. It does not require a high degree of culture for this to happen. Among the Finns and the Bulgarians, as among the Indo-Europeans, inherited stories have linked up, forming epic chains.<sup>1</sup> That a chronological thread thus runs through all the important mythic events is simply unavoidable in such mythologies where a divine genealogy begins to arise and in which narratives about progenitors are included. By the very fact that a myth proclaimed, for example, that Indra was born during a world-crisis when the older gods were paralyzed with fear and when the powers of evil were close to bringing back the darkness of Chaos, one must imagine that a course of events preceded Indra's birth and, in this foregoing time-period, locate the world's origin from Chaos, the older gods' birth, the animosity between good and evil and the battle between them up to the moment when Indra broke out of the womb and re-established world-order. His subsequent exploits must be placed in a later time: his adventures with his companions Kutsa and Pushan, and the world-threatening crisis that occurred when Tvashtar and the Ribhus became Indra's enemies. Once stories arise about the origin of the cosmos and the gods, of mankind's creation, of the primeval patriarchs, and how they acquired the first elements of culture such as the use of fire, the awareness of causality and the association of ideas force the contents of these stories to be arranged chronologically so that the knowledge of fire's use follows the creation of man, which again follows the origin of the gods who created man, and this in turn is placed in connection with the origin of nature, within which the gods are personal active powers. Stories of patriarchs following one another in succession especially compel an epic-chronological treatment of divine myths, because progenitors are always placed in the closest connection to the gods. The holy powers of heaven and of the underworld protect creation and mankind, their protégés, against world-threatening beings and join the course of events, in company with the progenitors. The epic-chronological principle, thus established, extends its influence by degrees even further and provides places in the connected chain of events for even more of the originally freestanding myths.

The need for such an order makes itself felt even after a system of myths originating in this manner becomes hopelessly confused or altogether shattered. This can be caused by a religious reformation, as for example the Zoroastrian, or by a collision and blending with foreign myth-complexes, such as the Hellenic Indo-European mythology's disintegration and blending with Semitic and Egyptian elements. The newly-arisen

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<sup>1</sup> Here Rydberg refers to the Finnish *Kalevala* compiled by Elias Lönnroth (1835) and the Bulgarian *Veda Slovena* compiled by Ivan Gologanav and written by Stefan Verković (1874). The authenticity of both works has never been fully accepted.

Zoroastrian doctrine sought and found the necessary chronological threads among their myths to transform various Indo-European divinities and divine heroes into human patriarchs who follow one another in time: Vîvanhâo, Yima-khshaêa (Dschemschid), Athwya, Thrîta with the sons Urvâkshaya and Kereçâspa, to which were tied Purushâspa and Zarathustra. In connection with Zarathustra, all were newly arranged into an epic-chronological series. After the ruin of their old, purely Indo-European, system of myths, the Greeks arranged its debris, mixed with Semitic and Egyptian concepts, into a new chronological system. They distinguished between the events in a golden age under Chronos' rule and those in a silver age, when the scepter passed to Zeus, and those in a copper and an iron age, and again within the latter between the mythic events in Cadmus' and Jason's times and those events which followed one another up to, during, and shortly after the Trojan war. Thus, when Ovid wanted to celebrate all the metamorphoses the ancient mythology mentioned, he could do so in a pre-established epic-chronological order that began with Chaos and that concluded with Caesar. In the century before him, the Alexandrian Greeks had looked for synchronistic points of contact between their divine and heroic myths and the events of Egyptian history.

Therefore, that the myths of a highly-gifted tribe of people sooner or later assume a chronological state, arrange themselves into a causal series, and thereby receive a character that transforms them into a kind of world-epic is not surprising. On the contrary, it is a natural process displayed by all religions capable of development from the time they disentangle themselves from the purely animistic phase, and the confused and disorderly polydemonistic phase, and pass into the actual polytheistic phase, which with its more plastic divine and heroic figures, its effort to survey the world, its teachings produced by tradition, and its richer and ethically formulated mythic constructs, demands order and connection among the myths and urges the poet to treat them as a series of events. Unfortunately, this simple truth has been set aside and pushed into the background by the one-sided treatment, driven by monomania one could almost say, that mythology has suffered for so long and still suffers under nature-mythologists. With insistence on the view that myths, within extensive but not unlimited borders, flowed from the impressions that nature's more powerful phenomena made on early human beings, nature-mythologists attempt to explain all myths, in the form they come to our attention, as nothing more than solar-, lightning- and rain-myths etc., and leave it at that without sufficiently examining the changes that the myths underwent during many intervening periods before acquiring the look they now have in the source documents available to us. In all too many cases, this view renders scientific results impossible in the effort to trace the roots of myths to natural phenomena. Nature-mythologists have a free hand for their fancy so long as each myth is regarded as independent and, collectively, they are regarded as a disorganized mass. But the unencumbered freedom by which they interpret any mythic concept as solely an expression of the activity of the sun, lightning, the clouds, etc, suffers a setback, if one can demonstrate that the myths as they come to us constitute parts of an epic that has its own causality, in which the acting gods and heroes are persons in whose existence one believes, and in which events do not represent daily and annual meteorological phenomena only, but also great epic crises occurring in the natural course of world events (the formation of the world, and its degradation by demons, the fimbul-winter, the world's conflagration, and its renewal), as well as cultural

and moral phenomena and crises (the holy fire's arrival among human beings, the battle between celestial magic and witchcraft, the struggle between good and evil).

Thus, it should be expected that the Indo-Iranian and Germanic mythologies upon closer investigation, would appear to be kinds of world epics. The only unexpected result of the investigation undertaken here is that these world-epics are of such great age that they have their common origin in an epic that already was completely formed in the Proto-Indo-European era, that is to say in the Neolithic period.

According to Professor Montelius' investigations, the Bronze Age, with reference to Scandinavia and Germanic Northern Europe, began around 1500 years before Christ at the latest.<sup>2</sup> Before this, during the Neolithic period, southern Scandinavia was already inhabited by a race whose Indo-European origin cannot be doubted, since the investigations of skeletal finds in Scandinavian Stone Age graves made by Retzius, von Düben, and Virchow<sup>3</sup> provide the result that it then had inhabitants, who in skull-shape and bone structure, are indistinguishable from the current Swedes. Studies of graves and ancient objects have also given an important basis for the view that the Bronze Age in Sweden and Denmark did not begin with the immigration of a foreign tribe of people. Numerous finds from the Neolithic period suggest that it must have lasted many centuries. Therefore, we are forced to assume that tribes of the Indo-European race were living in Scandinavia 2000 years before Christ.<sup>4</sup> On well-balanced grounds, one can

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<sup>2</sup> Currently, the Nordic Bronze Age is dated circa 1800–600 BC. With the discovery of the Neolithic mummy, Ötzi the Iceman, who carried a copper axe, the threshold of the Copper Age recently has been pushed back 500 years to 3350-3300 BC.

<sup>3</sup> Swedish histologist Gustaf Retzius (1842-1919), Swedish Professor Gustaf von Düben (1822-1892) and German pathologist, Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), all of whom wrote on the subject of anthropology. For a discussion of their findings, see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 6.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, J.P. Mallory observes: "The Jastorf culture is the earliest Iron Age culture of northern Germany and southern Scandinavia which emerges c. 600 BC and continued to the end of the millennium. ...The Jastorf culture is generally considered at least part of the core area of the Proto-Germanic peoples and there has been a tendency to date the first Germanic sound shift to the period of the earliest Jastorf culture, i.e. 500 BC." (pp. 321-322) "Any attempt to retreat further into the prehistoric period carries us beyond the temporal definition of the Proto-Germanic suggested by the linguists into the vague realm of northwest Indo-European or late Indo-European. It is widely held that there is considerable continuity in both the archaeological and physical anthropological record of northern Europe from the earliest appearance of the Germans back into the Bronze Age. The Jastorf culture for example, is regarded as a direct continuation of the local northern Bronze Age after the introduction of some iron metallurgy. The line of continuity extends throughout the entire course of the Bronze Age down to the transition between the middle and later Neolithic in south Scandinavia, i.e. between the earlier TRB culture and that of the Corded Ware horizon. The appearance of the Corded Ware culture (c. 3200 BC) in this region is associated by many archaeologists with the earliest appearance of the Indo-Europeans in the north Indo-European realm. (p. 223) "The Corded Ware culture is the major north and central European cultural grouping of the Copper Age during the period c. 3200-2300 BC. The culture, reflected primarily by its burials, is known from the Netherlands and Switzerland in the west, across Scandinavia and central Europe. ...The Corded Ware culture was originally supposed to represent the PIE culture in theories that derived the Indo-Europeans from the north European plain. Today, this theory has little currency although the Corded Ware culture is still commonly seen as ancestral to those IE peoples whose immediate origins are sought across northern, central, and parts of eastern Europe, i.e. the Celts, Germans, Balts, and Slavs. ...The distribution of the Neolithic TRB culture coincides considerably with the later range of Corded Ware sites and the physical type of Corded Ware burials tends to reflect that of earlier populations in the same region. There is little doubt that, at least in some regions, the earlier TRB culture should be associated with the origins of the Corded Ware horizon, e.g. in the Netherlands." (pp. 127-128) "The TRB (Trichterbecher or "Funnel-necked-beaker") culture is the primary Neolithic culture of the North European

assume that Indo-European tribes were living in the British Isles at the same time, and again around the same time that other Indo-European tribes were in the vicinity of the Indus, and the Vedic poetic hymns were then in their infancy. Under such conditions, it is necessary to conclude that the Proto-Indo-European era ended between 3000-2000 years before our era, at the latest, and that the epic within Proto-Indo-European mythology, which was the common basis for the Indo-Iranian and Germanic epics, already existed completely formed in the third century before Christ.<sup>5</sup>

To evaluate this epic, to map its basic themes, and seek to determine its place within periods of human development, and especially within the spiritual life of the Indo-European tribes, lies completely beyond the scope of my work. One sees that the Indo-Europeans of the Neolithic period already had their eyes open to, and ventured to tackle, the most important basic problems of religious reflection and philosophical speculation. This should not cause wonder. Child-psychologists know well that gifted children have the same tendency. Yet, they also realize that the time for more abstract reflection still lies far ahead. Lacking are its necessary prerequisites: the command of language and a familiarity with the workings of imagination. We meet ideas of significant depth, but still wrapped in swaddling clothes. The swaddling clothes, however, are woven of a fresh, original, and bold poetic fabric. The epic is what one would expect, when its poets and thinkers belong to the childhood of the same race that in more mature years produced the writings of Plato and Aristotle, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's plays, Newton's *Principles*, and the natural sciences.

When I liken to childhood the period of development in which this mythological epic was formed, it is relative. Upon casual reflection, the material culture that distinguishes the early Stone Age must seem primitive when compared to the material culture in the age of steam and electricity. On the other hand, the archaeologist, who understands that in ancient times it demanded equally as much inventive genius and far greater effort in order to accomplish a small step forward than it does now to accomplish great progress, views the matter differently. When he compares the oldest evidence of human existence and human living conditions with our early Stone Age, he finds that enormous progress was made in the interval and that the Neolithic era was a time of abnormally high material and also esthetic culture, in comparison to previous epochs. The tools and implements that they utilized then were of multiple kinds and well suited to their purpose; no small pains were taken to make them beautiful and neat. In addition to hunting, they tended livestock and even did some farming. They already possessed nearly all the modern types of domestic animals. With stone-tools, they felled trees, constructed

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plain 4500-2700 BC. Sites are distributed from the Netherlands across Northern Europe, including the Netherlands, south Scandinavia, Germany, Poland, and the northwest Ukraine. ...The TRB culture occupies an important role in any discussion of the IE origins since its territory is broadly coincidental with that of the Germanic and possibly the Baltic and Slavic languages, and perhaps more importantly with the Globular Amphora and the Corded Ware cultures which are widely regarded as the major vectors for the expansion of the IE languages. Moreover, as it yields evidence of the plow, wheeled vehicles, and the horse (wild or domestic is uncertain), it can accommodate the minimum cultural requirements for identifying a prehistoric culture as potentially Indo-European. ...On the other hand, in the "Kurgan solution" to the IE homeland problem the TRB culture has been cast in the role of an indigenous culture marked by associations with the Mother Goddess, and ultimately replaced by the IE cultures such as the Globular Amphora, Baden, and Corded Ware cultures." (pp. 596-597).

<sup>5</sup> Modern research places the Proto-Indo-European era at c. 6000-4000 B.C, and favors a homeland in the Russian Steppes, based on the "Kurgan theory" first purposed by Marija Gimbutas in 1956.

houses, built boats, and crafted wagons. An organized tribe-wide community life existed and many common words for the circumstances of family and kinship, preserved to this day, attest that these relationships had received fixed forms. Grave monuments at times were magnificent.

Alongside what archaeologists and linguists have discovered in reference to our forefathers' culture during the later Stone Age, the mythologist can now place his discoveries, which lift the veil from over their spiritual life and allow us to know their world of ideas, their beliefs and musings on the mysteries of the world, as well as their ideals modeled by divine and heroic figures.

Now, however primitive this mythology may seem when regarded as a worldview, nevertheless, it is obvious that it developed as did the younger Stone Age's material culture — in other words, that it is the product of many centuries of spiritual development and represents an enormous step forward with intellectual, moral, and religious reference. The unordered polydemonism that best characterizes religion's animalistic stage is a phase long-since vanquished. From polydemonism has come a polytheism, one whose gods possess concrete forms; they stand in ordered, collaborative relationships to one another, have their definite functions, and are not merely nature gods, but are also culture-shaping and culture-advancing powers, working for good and battling against evil. Animism's second characteristic mark: witchcraft, which seeks to force demons, through the assistance of incantations, to benefit the practitioners of witchcraft and those who can best use its arts, as well as to harm their enemies, plays a strong active role in the Proto-Indo-European epic. But here it appears dualistic and is subject to moral categories. Thus, witchcraft that is practiced with harmful intent is considered to have been established by the evil powers and is a world-ruining heresy spread by them among human beings. Against this stands legitimate magic, coming from the gods, that strengthens the bonds of association between the powers of good and their devotees through sacrifice, prayers, fimbul-songs, and formulas and weakens evil demons, hostile to the world. One certainly cannot escape the concept that association between gods and human beings is intended for mutual material gain, that the defense which the gods provide human beings demands a tribute in offerings that humans devote to the gods; but, moreover, one sees that a moral life before the gods has value in and of itself, that true love, manly courage, and altruism are proper for humans and pleasing to the gods. In Thor-Indra, the heroic, kind-hearted humanitarian whose activity amounts to benevolence toward weak mortals and unceasing struggle against evil, the Indo-Europeans of the Neolithic era have drawn their ideal of man. Characteristic of this ideal, he eats and drinks enormous amounts, but also loves songs and poems. His closest friends are the Ribhus, representatives of the power of invention and artistic skill. The belief in immortality is strongly shaped by morality. The pious expect happiness in a coming life; the wicked expect severe punishment. Death does not sever the bonds with the survivors; the spirits of departed heroes fight for their descendants and take part with the gods in the battle against world-ruin.<sup>6</sup> The worship of ancestors, which has its origin in the period of

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<sup>6</sup> In *Investigations in Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 61, Rydberg concludes that "those on the hel-ways" who sit out the battle of Ragnarök in *Völuspá* are the women, children, and men who never wielded a sword, who have descended to the kingdom of death for countless centuries. This reveals the purpose of the Einherjar, at least in part, to protect the souls of their own relatives now residing in Hel from destruction. Thus, the Einherjar do what they did in life; they go to war to protect and defend those they love.

animistic religion and is its most beautiful feature, has endured and received a moral stamp.

In the myths that belong to the Proto-Indo-European era, not a single weapon, not a single tool, not a single piece of jewelry made of gold, bronze, or iron is mentioned. This is clear from a comparison between the Asiatic Indo-European and the Germanic sources.<sup>7</sup> In them, the weapons that play a role are the spear or prod, the wedge (i.e. “the celestial stone” or hammer), the club, the axe, and the bow and arrow. Vata-Wodan is the spear-champion, and the wind-geniuses (the Maruts) are subordinate to him. The wedge— “the celestial stone”— is Thor-Indra’s weapon, and when he receives a new wedge forged by Tvashtar, it is one made of *ayas* (copper); the other was fabricated from the bones of Dadhyank’s horse’s head. Pushan bears the prod and the axe; Kutsa-Egil bears the bow. The wonderful goblet from which the gods drink and from which the Ribhus make four goblets is not made of gold, but of fire and other elements. One “forges” living animals from empty skins, and they who do this, are also praised as remarkable wagon-makers. The brewing vessel that Thor-Indra steals from the giants is originally not a cast or forged kettle (*gharma*), but a cask (*krivi*). A wedge made of horse-bone may seem peculiar in our time, however, the Sanskrit word *paraçuh*, whose actual meaning is rib, testifies that a sharp piercing tool was meant during a time when such tools of bone, especially horse-bone, were in common use.

In regard to the question of where the Indo-Europeans’ oldest homeland is to be found, the mythological research provides a contribution, I believe, that tips the scales in one direction. Vedic, as well as Germanic, mythology has imagined, correctly or incorrectly, that the Indo-European progenitors lived near an ocean over which Agni-Heimdall was sent by the gods to them with the gifts of culture, and that this ocean was in the north, because in the north, according to the Indo-Iranian and the Germanic conception, lay a bewitched and dangerous waterway, Rasâ-Ranha or Hrönn “with a thousand currents,” that divided Midgard from the world of demons, darkness, and *fimbul*-cold. I must regard it unlikely that such a picture of mythic geography would arise among a population that dwelt deep inside the Asiatic continent, separated from every ocean by enormous tracts of land, held by other races with different languages to the north, east, and south. Because the ocean, over which Agni was thought to have come, was a northerly one, it thus cannot have been one that washes the east coast of Asia or one that washes its southern shores, of which the Indo-Europeans probably had heard nothing, before migrating into the Indus valley. Under these conditions, the Caspian Sea is the only one that the Indo-Europeans would have known; but even if this sea were greater in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> millennium before Christ than it is now, it was still not a world-sea on the other side of which tribes, migrating around it, and tribes familiar with boats could locate the world of the gods, from which their culture-bringer was sent to them. Besides, there is not the slightest reason to assume that Europe was originally unpopulated and received its inhabitants via a migration from Asia. I am disinclined, upon mythological grounds, to mix questions regarding the Indo-European tribe’s first dwelling-place with the theory that great changes in the distribution of land and water on our planet’s surface have occurred. Of course, the more complicated the assumption from which a hypothesis proceeds is, the worse off it is for it. For my part, I am satisfied that the primeval land of the Indo-European race, which seems to be one of the youngest human divisions, can be

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<sup>7</sup> See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no 111.

set in a time when the configuration of our planet's surface was not extremely different than its current configuration. But even those who, on the question of the Indo-Europeans' primeval home, find it necessary to involve geological changes have no basis to say that west of the sea that they assume to have divided Asia from Europe lay unpopulated territories that awaited pre-Indo-European and Indo-European immigrants. If the brutishness of a human type is a sign of its great age, then the find in Spy (Belgium), which was recently considered by our Swedish anthropologist, Professor Gustaf Retzius, demonstrates that northwestern Europe, in an undeterminably remote time accommodated a populace that must be counted as the oldest, or one of the oldest, human races the earth has borne.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that in the future one will make a similar find on Asiatic soil, but for the time being, Europe has the preeminent claim to have housed an early-human tribe of people. In any event, the evidence no longer supports the opinion that the ancestors of the current European nations of people were immigrants from a *vagina gentium*<sup>9</sup> in Asia. Human beings, as far back as research can extend, have inhabited the westernmost European continent, and the tribal differentiations that the historical era in Europe inherited from its pre-history could have developed there just as well as in Asia. It is also troubling to situate the Indo-European tribes' cradle close to that of the Mongolian race. If "*les circonstances environnantes*"<sup>10</sup> played any role in the development of the various human types — and of course this is highly probable — it would be a mistake from a methodological standpoint to propose a hypothesis according to which such distinct types as the Indo-European and the Mongolian would have developed under the influences of roughly the same natural surroundings.

We have seen that Agni and Heimdall are originally the same god, that the Teutons assumed him to have come over the western sea to Berich's and Mannus' people, and likewise that the *Rigveda* Aryans considered him to have come to Bhrigu's and Manus' people over a western ocean that is difficult to identify as the Caspian sea. The Germanic and the Vedic myths are one and the same, and as anyone can see, it is more likely that the Vedic Aryans brought this myth to the Indus valley on their migration west and south, than that the Teutons should have carried it from central Asia, where no ocean is found.

Notwithstanding the great number of specifics in which the Germanic myths agree with the Vedic, the former, in their spiritual type and ethical direction, are nevertheless more closely related to the Iranian myths, which before the Zoroastrian reformation undoubtedly contained many more details in agreement with the Germanic, than those preserved in the Vedic documents. To use a daring image, one could say that

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<sup>8</sup> In 1886, in Spy, a commune near Namur, Belgium, Maximin Lohest and Marcel de Puydt found the complete skeletons of a man and woman, with implements of the Mousterian type, along with bones of extinct mammals, including the woolly rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros tichorhinus*), mammoth (*Elephas primigenius*), and the cave-bear (*Ursus spelaeus*) in the *Betche aux Roches* cavern. The human skulls had large brows, sloped foreheads, massive jaw-bones, and large posterior molars. The bones of the forearm were curved, while the tibia was comparatively stout, and shorter than in any other known race. Although human, both the tibia and femur were articulated such that to maintain equilibrium the head and body had to lean forward, as in the gait of the large apes. Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, 1911.

<sup>9</sup> "womb of nations," a reference to Jordanes' *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, ch. 25: "Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name." [Charles C. Mierow tr.].

<sup>10</sup> "environmental circumstances."



Germanic mythology was pregnant with a Zarathustra without bringing him into the world. More than once in the study of this religious circle of concepts, the thought has occurred to me that the sentiment that distinguishes the Germanic must have existed to the same or a higher degree among the Iranians before their reformation, and that this was the soil in which it received strength to sprout and make itself viable. Regarding the time of its appearance, there are reasons to reject<sup>11</sup> utterly all attempts to locate it in the historical era. No one could have been better informed than Aristotle of what the Persian priests themselves believed about this at a time when his pupil Alexander the Great had made himself the ruler of the Iranians and put at his disposal what the conquered east could offer him in raw material for his thirst for knowledge; nor was anyone a more reliable informer than Aristotle of what he learned from the Persian Magis. The naturally unscientific chronology that they considered valid then placed Zarathustra's life more than 6000 years before our time. During the course of time, the name Zarathustra became the title of a high-priest, and Berosus<sup>12</sup> says that a prince with this name founded a noble family, who ruled in Babylon between 2200—2000 BC. In the *Zend-Avesta* itself, the reformer is already transformed into a purely mythical personality who was supposed to have lived and acted in *Airyana-vaêyô*, i.e. in the "Aryan homeland," later ravaged by the fimbul-winter, and there to have recovered the revelation, originally pronounced to the oldest progenitors by Agni. All this refers to his appearance in an ancient time of whose remoteness the magis in historical times could only make guesses. In such circumstances, it is of interest that comparative mythic research can establish that the ethical impetus, from which the Iranian reformation sprang, had its echo among the Indo-European populations living by the Baltic and North Seas.

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<sup>11</sup> In place of the phrase "to reject," Rydberg uses an idiom meaning "to break the staff over" (*att bryta stafven öfver*) from the old custom in which a judge broke his staff over a condemned person. (*Bevingade ord*, collected and edited by Pelle Holm, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> A Chaldean priest of Bel, who lived in the days of Alexander (356-326 BC). He wrote a three volume work in Greek on the history and culture of Babylonia, widely used by later Greek historians, titled *Babyloniaca* or *Chaldaica*. He professed to have derived his information from ancient Babylonian chronicles preserved in the temple of Bel in Babylon, and this assertion may well be valid since most of the surviving fragments of his work show remarkable affinity with the cuneiform inscriptions found in temples in Babylon and Assyria.