

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

Translated and Annotated by William P. Reaves
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Later Germanic Myths

We have seen that a cohesive group of myths is common to the Germanic and the Asiatic Indo-Europeans. Their affinity of language demonstrates that these tribes once lived together and proves that this group of myths is identical. Moreover, it shows how far they extended into the religious culture during its time of unity.¹

But this common group of myths does not encompass all of the Indo-Iranian, nor all of the Germanic mythology. There is a line, so to speak, a sharp line, between the ancient collective mythic property and the remainder that is unique to each tribe, the Indo-Iranian and the Germanic. This line must have formed because of their geographic and social separation. On the far side of the line are found myths that certainly have their common root in the time of unity but developed differently afterwards, as well as those that are altogether foreign to the others.

The Germanic mythology, like the Vedic mythology, knows two high clans of gods. In character, both clans completely correspond to one another.

Among the Teutons, these clans are called the Aesir and the Vanir. The Aesir's call is to defend the order of the world against its foes. For this reason, they inhabit a realm called Asgard, high in Yggdrassil's crown, with a view in every direction from which danger lurks. They all are quick-witted gods of battle and victory, even the gentle Baldur. (Regarding Baldur in this capacity, see Frigg's words in *Lokasenna* 27). The Vanir's call is to maintain the regular working of world events, governed by natural laws. It is the Vanir who look after the fixed motion of the starry firmament and the tides, the uniformity between years, the phases of the moon, and night and day, dividing the course of time's events. It is the Vanir who insure the success of the crops and good harvests, and it is they who knit men and women together with bonds of love, attaching link after link to the chain of generations. But when a powerful action is needed to defend and protect, the Aesir appear.

Among the Asiatic Indo-European designations for the divine powers, Devas and Asuras were used especially of the highest and the next highest powers respectively. The word Devas is rediscovered in Germanic mythology in the form *tívar*, *tífar* (singular *tívi*). The word Asura has been associated with the Nordic *áss*, in older form *ans*, but the association presumes that the *n* in *ans* is not organic. Both of these designations, *Deva* and *Asura*, were originally used partially in

¹ See the treatise "*Germanic Myths of Proto-Indo-European Origin*" published in Viktor Rydberg's *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 2, Part 1: Indo-European Mythology (2006).

a more common sense indicating all the gods, and partially in a more limited and exact sense referring only to the quick-witted class of gods whose most celebrated representative is Indra and who correspond to the Germanic Aesir. Similarly, in Nordic mythology, the dignity of *áss* is also extended to Loki, because, even though of giant birth, he was adopted into the circle of the Aesir. Presumably for the same reason, the name Asura has been extended to the demon *Pipru* (identical to *Fífl*, a Loki-epithet), which he is called in *Rigveda* X, 138, 3. However, it is possible that this first occurred in the late Vedic era, when the word Asura came to mean its opposite for a combination of religious and linguistic reasons.

The second Asiatic Indo-European clan of gods, which correspond to the Vanir, are called Adityas, Aditi's sons and relatives. Originally, Aditi was a goddess of dusk or night and, in this regard, corresponds well to the Germanic Nótt (Night), in her capacity of being the mother of many gods. Among Night's children is Sol, whom she bears to Mundilföri-Lodur, the keeper of the world-mill.² Among Aditi's children is the sun-goddess Sūrya, and among the Adityas is reckoned the god Savitar, who is also the keeper of the world-mill. However, with perhaps only one exception, it is obvious that the remaining Adityas and Vanir are new mythic creations that first appeared after the separation of the Indo-Iranian and the Germanic tribes. The Adityas are Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, Bagha, Daksha, and Añça.³ With the exception of Varuna, originally a god of heaven, the Adityas are abstractions of a moral or philosophical nature that were personified and placed in the Adityas' family circle. It is particularly significant that while they (especially Varuna) possess more or less very typical religious ethical characters, they completely lack the epic disposition that distinguishes the older gods. They are, one could say, mythless gods, mythless in the sense that they do not play a significant role in the mythic epic and they have no evident counterparts in the Germanic godsaga.

Only with respect to Varuna, the god of heaven who was probably elevated to Ahura-Mazda among the Iranians with the Zoroastrian reformation according to Darmesteter, can there be no doubt that we are presented with a new mythic construct, a creation, younger than the Proto-Indo-European era. But if the word *varuna* is the same as the Greek *uranos*, as it is usually assumed, this does not confirm, but on the contrary contradicts the assumption that the sky was already a pronounced personal deity by this name in the Proto-Indo-European era. The god Uranus has no mythological similarity to the god Varuna. All they have in common is an ancient word for sky, which became conferred on two mythic creations independent of one another after the separation.

After the separation, the Vanir⁴ or Adityas clan expanded on the Germanic side with divinities of which no trace occurs in Indo-Iranian mythology. The new Adityas are Njörd, Nerthus-Frigg, Frey and Freyja.

Njörd and Frey's rise to prominence within our mythic circle undoubtedly was due to cultural development. They could not be created by the imagination, acknowledged by bards, priests and the people, nor so eagerly and commonly worshipped as the testimony of witnesses confirm they were, if some need had not existed necessitating this course of events. What this need was is found in the significance of these gods. Njörd is an ocean divinity, the god of navigation and wealth. Frey, his son is the god of agriculture, cultivation, and horse-rearing. It should be noted in passing that perhaps there is some significance in the "gentle," "beneficent"

² See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, nos. 79-85.

³ See *Ormazd et Ahriman*, chapter VII, by James Darmesteter, 1877.

⁴ [Rydberg's footnote] The word *Vanir*, with which the Teutons designate this class, has a cognate in Sanskrit *vanas*, love, gentleness, and is akin to the Latin goddess-name *Venus*.

powers, as the Norse skalds referred to them, being placed in the relationship of father and son, the lord of coastal trade being the father and the lord of agriculture, the son. The Germanic people were coastal inhabitants before they conquered the primeval forests for their primitive means of agriculture. In any case, it is obvious that Njörd and Frey would have been superfluous gods who could not stake claim to altars and temples, priests and sacrifices, if navigation and agriculture had not been significant enough to entitle them to those things by the time their worship arose. They must have received this significance during the Bronze Age. With reference to navigation, one need only recall the Bronze Age rock-carvings that depict men, some of them armed, in hundreds of similar well-manned ships, alongside the plowman and his plow drawn by two draught-animals. In regard to the Teutons of the Scandinavian peninsula specifically, it is necessary not to only assume that they were in contact with people on the other side of the Baltic and the North seas for a Bronze Age to rise among them, but also that this naval contact must have been fairly developed and active in order for the quantity of copper and tin that they used during the thousand-year span of the Bronze Age to reach them. The many products of foreign work, beside domestic products, particularly beautiful weapons and equipment extracted from Bronze Age graves, testify to this. Concerning horse-rearing, we find both riders and drawn wagons on the rock carvings. Sickles of bronze and hand-mills, which have been found here and there, confirm the testimony of the rock-carvings regarding the farmer's tools.⁵

Pushan-Thjalfi, whose origins lie in the Stone Age and the time of unity, had represented Indo-European industrial life up to a point and did so in a particularly distinguishing manner for an older cultural period, since he is especially a hero of cattle-tending and colonization.⁶ Yet, it should be added that he too is familiar with the use of a boat; *Rigveda* speaks of Pushan's vessel—which is of course also necessary for colonists when wider bodies of water met them on their quest for new lands—and in the Nordic mythology, he discovers islands and populates Gotland. But a time came when this champion of industrial life was no longer sufficient to represent it. Among the Teutons, he remained a hero who never acquired god status, while Njörd and Frey not only received the dignity of Vanir, but were also adopted into Asgard and achieved equality with the foremost sons of Odin. That navigation first received a representative in the Indo-European Olympus and particularly in the Germanic Asgard after the Proto-Indo-European era and the end of the Stone Age does not mean that the Stone Age Indo-Europeans were unfamiliar with boat building. Stone Age navigation laid the foundation for Bronze Age navigation. The Stone Age term for vessel has been preserved in the Sanskrit *naus*, Old Persian *nâvi*, Greek *ναύς*, Latin *navis*, Germanic *nacho*, Celtic *nau*, and we rediscover it in the name of Njörd's home, Noatun. The name for rudder, *aritrás*, *ῥητιμός*, *remus*, *rudor*, has also been preserved in both eastern and western Indo-European languages.

That these new Vanic powers were pan-Germanic in nature makes it certain that their worship began in a time when the regions that the Teutons inhabited were limited to coastal stretches along the North Sea and the Baltic, among which relations were common and when the Germanic dialects, in a practical sense, still constituted a single linguistic unity. To the same degree that their region expanded and dialects arose, the formation of common Germanic mythic structures must have become more complicated, even as local constructs became easier.

⁵ [Rydberg's footnote] On this, see the work of H. Hildebrand and Oscar Montelius. [In English, the work of Montelius can be found as *The Civilisation of Sweden in Heathen Times*, translated from the second Swedish edition, revised and enlarged by Rev. F. H. Woods, B. D., 1888]

⁶ See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 2, Part 1, no. 31: "Indra's Protégé and Comrade. b) Pushan-Thjalfi."

The life-producing, fruit-bearing earth's female representative among the powers, the goddess Frigg, has, as I shall demonstrate below, mythological prerequisites that go back to the Proto-Indo-European era; but, as a pronounced epic personality, she belongs to the same period that gave rise to Njörd, Frey, and Freyja. In order not to perpetuate an error that lies close at hand with reference to the name Frigg, we ought to carefully distinguish between this epithet, which is merely one among the many she bore, and the personality of the goddess. It is by no means certain that the name Frigg and its German equivalent Friia were fixed on her at all times and by all Germanic tribes. On the contrary, there are reasons to assume that this was not the case. Friia, which stands in etymological connection to the proto-Germanic *frija* and Sanskrit *priya*, dear, friendly, is an epithet that can easily be applied to Freyja and actually seems to have been used of her in the German designations for Friday, *Frîatac*, *Frîgetac*, which correspond to the Latin *dies Veneris*, the goddess of love's day, Freyja's day. The name Friia, Frigg (compare Anglo-Saxon *frigu*, love) originally was, and among certain Germanic tribes presumably always has been, an epithet applied to Odin's wife as well as Frey's sister, on the matronly queen of the world and on the young goddess of love, who however, in other respects, are as completely different from one another in personality as Hera-Juno and Aphrodite-Venus. To draw the conclusion that these goddesses did not appear as different personalities in the Germanic imagination because the epithet *friias* was common to Odin's wife and Frey's sister is logically unjustified and meets with psychological impossibilities. Older designations of Odin's wife and Thor's mother, exclusively applied to her, are Fjörgyn, Hlóðyn, Jörð, and Nirdu-Nerthus. Thor is *mögr Hlóðynjar*, *Jarðar burr*, and *Fjörgynjar burr*.⁷ One learns with certainty from the Nordic sources (*Lokasenna*, *Saxo*, *Prose Edda*) that the Scandinavians ultimately fixed the name Frigg on this Fjörgyn.

The name Nirdu (Nerthus in Tacitus) is an older feminine form of the name Njörd.⁸ Njörd is, as mentioned, the god of the Ocean and navigation; Fjörgyn-Frigg is the goddess of the life-producing earth. In the Germanic theology, the Ocean and the Earth have been regarded as siblings, both born of the mother of the gods, Night-Aditi. The memory of this is still preserved in *Gylfaginning*. The commonality of names between the siblings Njörd and Nirdu has its parallel in the commonality of names between the siblings Frey and Freyja and therefore ought not come as a surprise.

In Norse mythology, the goddess Jörð appears with the character she has had as far back as one can trace a distinguishing narrative about her. Tacitus (*Germania* 40) clearly identifies Nerthus with her: *Nerthum, id est, Terram matrem* ("Nerthus, who is Mother Earth"). He relates that the Langobardians and some of their neighbors worship her in common and believe that she "intervenes in matters that touch human affairs and the *fate of nations*." The *History of the Langobardians* explains why the Langobardians specifically devoted their foremost adoration to her and believed her to intervene in their nation's fate when it says that the god of heaven's wife, Wodan's wife, Frea, persuaded Wodan in a cunning manner to give the Langobardians victory over their opponents, the Vandals. This tale is an illustration of Tacitus' statement, and Tacitus' statement explains it. The connection of both sources to one and the same mythic episode is obvious. Of no Germanic goddess, with the exception of Frigg, is anything similar related. And because Tacitus collected a great part of his mythic information regarding the Teutons from sources that went back to Christ's birth and the era surrounding it, we thus have evidence as far back as that time that Nerthus, Njörd's relative, is identical with Mother Earth and Wodan's

⁷ *mögr Hlóðynjar*, Hlóðyn's boy; *Jarðar burr*, Earth's son; *Fjörgynjar burr*, Fjörgyn's son.

⁸ Rydberg apparently follows Grimm here, calling Nerthus *Nirdu, which is a conjectured older form of *Nerthus*.

wife, Freya-Frigg. The description Tacitus provides in the same chapter of *Germania* regarding the ceremony with which she was worshipped corresponds to a Swedish ceremony described in *Ögmundar þáttur dytts*, (*Flateyjarbók* I, 335) in which Frey, her brother's son, was worshipped. Since both gods are Vanir divinities and, in regard to the natural phenomena they represent, both stand in the same relationship to one another as the nourishing earth to the harvest, a mutual similarity can be presumed about these ceremonies. The identity of Terra Mater and Frigg is additionally confirmed in the 2nd chapter of *Germania*, where it says that Terra Mater was mother to Tuisco, the son of Tívi. In the first part of this work I have demonstrated that Tuisco is the same as Frigg's son, *Jarðar burr*.⁹

In Vedic mythology, Mother Earth, Prithivî, is the wife of the sky god Dyâus, like Mother Earth, Frigg, is wife of the sky-god, Votan-Odin. In *Rigveda*, we have already encountered another name of heaven and another sky-god, Varuna, "encompasser," "enveloper" (Uranus). In him, the sky is so completely personified as an ethical connector of worlds, defender of right, and punisher of sin, that his character as a nature being thereby vanishes in comparison. It has already been pointed out above that his evolution into a personality belonged to the time after the Indo-European dispersal and he has no parallel in the European Indo-European mythologies. The designation Dyâus refers to the sky. There can be no doubt that in the Proto-Indo-European era it was already an object of veneration, since we discover Dyâus-pitar, "Father Dyâus," in the Greek *Zeus pater*, in the Roman *Diespeter*, *Jupiter*, in the Germanic *Tiu*, *Zio*. And it is equally obvious that in the Proto-Indo-European era this veneration viewed the sky as a natural object, "the vault of heaven." The kind of personification that this natural object received from its designation as father and its marriage to Mother Earth, at that time, still had not evolved into an anthropomorphic construct and had not extended into a concrete personality that would give him a fixed character and a fixed place or role among the fully personified gods appearing in the epic. Among the Indo-Iranians, Dyâus never held such a position. In the *Rigveda*, he never

⁹ See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 25.

Frigg's role in the Baldur myth best indicates her nature as an earth-goddess. There she extracts oaths from all earthly things (*Gylfaginning* 49) to do her son no harm. The one thing she overlooks is a plant that does not grow in the earth, but hangs as a parasite from trees. From the underworld, Baldur's wife sends her a veil (vegetation?) to beautify her. Her role as an earth-goddess also explains the name of her hall, *Fensalir*, Marsh-Halls, a name inappropriate for the dwelling of a sky-goddess. In *Lokasenna* 26, Frigg's father is called Fjörgynn, a masculine version of the earth's name, Fjörgyn (cp. Frey and Freyja).

In the remaining skaldic poetry preserved for study, the earth is referred to as "Odin's wife" much more often than "Thor's mother" (6:1 ratio); yet in all other sources, Frigg alone is Odin's wife. In stanza 13 of *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings*, a warrior who dies is said to "á Hlín fallinn," fall to Hlin, fall to earth. Hlin, as a poetic byname of Frigg is confirmed by *Völuspá* 53. That verse, intended to describe "Hlin's second grief," actually describes the deaths of both Odin and Frey, before concluding with the ambiguous statement "Frigg's beloved (*angan*) shall fall." If Frigg's beloved does not also refer to Frey, his presence in the verse is superfluous. Notable too is Frigg's association with Njörd, Frey, and Freyja in *Lokasenna* 25-36, and the association of "Odin's wife" who sails in "earth's ship," with Njörd and his children in *Sólarljóð* 77-79. These references are best explained if Odin's wife Frigg is Njörd's sister and the mother of his children, Frey and Freyja (*Lokasenna* 36).

Because Snorri identifies Frigg and Jörd as distinct goddesses, most scholars have come to see them as separate. However, Snorri treats them inconsistently first calling earth Odin's daughter and wife, then identifying Jörd's father as Annar (*Gylfaginning* 8). Since Snorri identifies Jörd's mother as the daughter of a giant, modern scholars have come to see her as an independent giantess, even though Snorri himself reckons both Jörd and Hlín (a known byname of Frigg) among the Asynjes (*Gylfaginning* 36).

appears as a living personality. He never takes part in epic events and, although he and Prithivî are often named in personal hymns, he does not hold an important place in the cult. His and Mother Earth's position to the remaining gods and goddesses is a riddle to the singers of the hymns themselves. When the white *Yagurveda* reckons all 33 divinities divided into 3 established clans or classes, the pair Dyavâ-Prithivî receives a separate place outside of these clans; the remaining places in the Vedic documents that reckon the 33 divinities exclude Dyâus and Prithivî altogether. In the many places in the *Rigveda* where the word *dyâus* appears, it means nothing more than the natural object, the sky.

The Dyâus myth was found in this undeveloped state at the time the Asiatic Indo-Europeans separated from the European Indo-Europeans. The *name* and the natural phenomena it designated were worshipped. The epithet "father" was associated with it and the union with "Mother Earth" was a complete fact. That was the limit. This uncertainty allowed independent hands to develop the Dyâus myth further after the separation of the Indo-European tribes. Two names of heaven, one that corresponded to *varuna* and one that corresponded to *dyâus*, existed for mythic treatment. The Asiatic Indo-Europeans chose the name Varuna and in the process fixed it on an ethical all-ruling personality. The European Indo-European tribes chose Father Dyâus, which in the beginning was only an epithet, and fixed his name on a personally fully developed god, namely the god of the atmosphere and the regions of the wind, Vâta (Vâya), who, as such, stood closest to the conception of a sky-god.

For the European Indo-Europeans, *Diaus patar* of the Proto-Indo-European era thus was identical to the old storm- and wind-god, Vâta, who, in a fixed position, still occupies the foremost place among the ruling gods. Presumably, his name, Vâta, was preserved throughout the European Indo-European time of unity; in any event, it was the case among the Northern tribes from which the Germanic branch later emerged. In other words, during this period, Vâta became the god's proper name, at least among a portion of the European Indo-Europeans, and *Diavaspater*, *Diupater* was used only as an epithet for him, which however became his common designation, because "father sky" expressed his ruling position among the gods better than "wind." It is then easily explained that, since the Greek and the Roman forefathers split themselves from the remaining European Indo-Europeans, the name Vâta fell out of use among them, replaced by the spoken epithet, that, if the Greeks and Romans shared a common language for a time, would take the form *Dieuspater* among them, and thereafter *Zeus pater* among the Greeks, and *Diespiter* and Jupiter among the Romans. The word *vâta* lost its mythological meaning among them and only retained its objective meaning, in the form ἀήτης, wind, among the Greeks. Among the Teutons, on the other hand, the old Vâta was preserved in the form Vôdana (Voden, Wuotan, Óðinn) and was never replaced by the epithet "Father Sky," in proto-Germanic form *Fadar Tiva*. By degrees, the word *tiva*'s meaning of sky was lost to them, replaced in this sense by *hemina*, *hemila*, *hefina*; but the word *Tiva* itself was retained as the name of a god and found again in the form *Zio*, *Týr*.

Since the expression "Father Sky" originated in the Proto-Indo-European era and thereafter is found again among two of the European Indo-European branches, the Greeks and the Romans, we can assume with great probability that it was also common among the proto-Teutons, so that, as an epithet of Vôdana, Father Tiva among them formed a parallel to the Greek Father Zeus and the Roman Diespiter. Thus it is understandable that the name Tiva in its later form Ziu, Týr, could be given to a son of Odin, the war-god or the god of soldiers, who does not originate from the Proto-Indo-European era, but is the creation of a later time. Had Odin ever borne the epithet Tiva alone without the addition of father, the transfer of this epithet from him to

his son would hardly have been possible in a mythology such as the Germanic where the continuity never seems to have been broken, and where no practice could have arisen and no edict proclaimed that stripped one god of a name, under which he was commonly known and worshipped, in order to give it to another. If, on the other hand, Odin was called Fader Tiva, it is entirely natural that one of his sons could, as the son of this father, be called Tiva, Ziu, Týr alone. Perhaps from the expression Fader Tiva also originated the usage to call Odin *allföðr*, *aldaföðr*, an epithet in which the designation father was preserved moreover with the concept of an all-enveloping power of space and time that originally could only have belonged to a god representing the all-enveloping sky.

Because Father Sky was regarded as the husband of Mother Earth in the Proto-Indo-European era, among the Teutons, their Father Sky, namely Fader Tiva=Vôdana, was also regarded as the husband of the earth-goddess, and so too among the Greeks and the Romans. It is consequently a parallel originating from the Proto-Indo-European time that Odin is married to the goddess Jörd, Father Zeus to the earth-goddess Dione, and Jupiter to the earth-goddess Juno. Zeus appears with all of the old attributes of Vâta and Dyâus combined. He is the god of the wind and the god of the sky at the same time, and his oldest oracle among the Greeks was pronounced through the rush of the wind in Dodona's sacred oaks. His place in Greek theology is also the same as Odin's in the Norse. Two generations, Uranus and Kronos, go before Zeus; two generations, Buri and Bor go before Odin. With the third generation, the branch expands threefold: among the Greeks, with the brothers Zeus, Poseidon and Hades; among the Teutons, with the brothers Odin, Hoenir and Lodur. Zeus corresponds to Odin, since Zeus originally was Vâta; Poseidon, the lord of the watery element corresponds to Hoenir, who is also placed in connection with the same element. Lodur is a god of the underworld, like Pluto, and likewise is placed in connection with underworld fire.

Zeus and Jupiter are bearers of lightning; likewise, Odin has been. His glittering spear Gungnir, cast at the enemies of the gods, was originally the lightning bolt. Here it should be noted that in the Proto-Indo-European era, as in the *Rigveda*, lightning was not the exclusive privilege of any one god. Vâta, Parganya, Indra, the Maruts, and Tvashtar all threw lightning bolts as weapons. It was the same in Germanic mythology as well, as I already pointed out in the previous volume of this work.¹⁰ That Thor ultimately was the actual thunder god does not mean that he was portrayed as such from the beginning, but only that, as the Aesir's greatest hero in their continuous battle with the giants, he used this weapon more often than the other gods. Through this constant use, it finally became characteristic of him. Thor is not really a nature god, but a hero god, a heroic ideal, who received the thunder's name, the thunder wagon, and the lightning as attributes, because he used them so unflaggingly. But still, in the *Rigveda*, Parganya rather than Indra-Thor is the actual god of the electrical storm, if one can be spoken of as such. In Greek mythology, Indra-Thor corresponds to Zeus' son *Herakles* and his weapon not to the lightning bolt, but to the club. The remainder of the Hercules myth was strongly transformed through the adoption of Semitic elements.

I have already demonstrated above that the Germanic hero-myths or stories about the patriarchs have their roots in the Proto-Indo-European era.¹¹ The myth of the creation of man from trees is common to the Indo-Iranians and the Teutons. So too the myth about Agni-Heimdall, who comes to primeval man with the holy fire, the customs of religion, and the arts of culture, and becomes their first patriarch. Similarly, they share myths about the second patriarch

¹⁰ See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 36 and 82.

¹¹ See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 2, Part 1: "Germanic Myths of Proto-Indo-European Origin."

Bhrigu-Berik and the third patriarch Manu-Mannus. These, however, are vastly more developed among the Teutons than we find in the *Rigveda*. The commonalities extend further to the myth about a terrible winter that forced our fathers to migrate from “the Indo-European homeland,” which in many respects is particularly worthy of consideration, and further to the myth about the cause of the winter, which is discord arising between the gods and the nature-smiths (elves-Ribhus).¹² The discord in turn is caused by a comparison of the nature-smiths' works carried out by the gods, who were given the works as gifts.

In both mythologies, the discord ends with reconciliation and with the nature-smiths or their relatives being adopted into the powers entitled to offerings. Afterwards, one of the wronged smiths forges in vain a dreadful weapon of revenge that comes into the hands of the gods before it can inflict any harm.

That is as far as the common epic extends. In the Vedic mythology, it ends there as well. But among the Teutons, the epic received a grand sequel, characteristic of a later period and of new cultural developments, in the myth of the sword of revenge and the closely related myths concerning Mannus' three sons, the Germanic tribal princes: 1) Yngvi-Svipdag or Erik, who is the leader of the Ingevenes; 2) Horm-Gudhorm or Jormunrek, who is the leader of the Hermiones; and 3) Hadding or Thjodrek (Dieterich), who is the leader of the Istevones. These three tribal princes' battle for empire is interwoven with the myth about a war between the Aesir and Vanir in which the Vanir take the side of the Ingevenes and, in association with them, the Hermiones, while the Aesir, who for a time are driven from Asgard, favor Hadding-Dieterich and the East Germanic tribes. This war ends in reconciliation, with the giant forces hostile to the world conquered, the foremost representatives of evil (Gullveig and Loki) rendered harmless, and the mythical period deemed *ár alda*, at an end. The historic time begins and is to last until Ragnarök and the regeneration of the world.

The most characteristic feature in the purely Germanic sequel of the ancient Indo-European world-epic is the myth about the sword of revenge. It has its Proto-Indo-European point of contact in the myth about the weapon of revenge, which the offended smith of the gods, Tvashtar, forges to overthrow them. But this weapon is a tool of the Stone Age, manufactured from the skull of Dadyank's head. However, among the Teutons, the weapon is a sword, the first and the finest of all swords, forged by Völund, who occupies Tvashtar's place. The new weapon appears as a murderous tool of unholy origin, with a curse laid upon it; it even plays a part in the destruction of the world. Therefore, this myth must have arisen in a period when the sword was unknown, a period that the Teutons knew about from their inherited sagas, just as the Greeks of Homer and Hesiod's era knew that there was a time when iron was unknown. Sword-making presupposes the use of metal, and since the sword was commonly known and used by the Teutons during their thousand-year Bronze Age, the origin of the myth about Völund's sword must have originated during this period, which ended in Scandinavia 500-400 years before Christ according to Montelius. It was during the Bronze Age that the myths about the Vanir and about this weapon entered into the regions covered by the Germanic godsaga and expanded across their former borders. The perfection of the hero-saga about Mannus' three sons, at least in its essential features, should be ascribed to the same period. The songs, which were sung about them among the Teutons around the time of Christ's birth, were then already *carmina antiqua* (ancient songs),

¹² For a more recent treatment of this subject see Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda*, Vol. 2, p. 261. She acknowledges the “linguistic identity” of Old Norse *álfr* (Old English *ælf*) and Sanskrit *Rbhús*, as well as their “coincidence in function.” Also see *The Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*, Edited by J.P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams (1997), s.v. “elf.”

carmina perantiqua (very ancient songs), according to Roman testimony. The division of the Germanic people into three tribes, which the myths speak of, was then already a fact that had entered into these tribes' realm of ideas, and had been in existence for a long time.

Because Loki plays a significant role not only in the actual myths of the gods but also in these hero-sagas,¹³ it is probable that the character with which he appears in the Nordic inherited sagas received its direction and definition during the same period, the Bronze Age, although later times could have sharpened it and added important details all the way up to the end of the heathen period. The kernel of the myth about him is Proto-Indo-European. He has a name in common with the Vedic wolf demon Vrika and, as father to Fenrir and other *Fíflmegir*, he is also a wolf-demon. His adopted position among the gods, as a being of giant birth reckoned among the Aesir, seems to be Proto-Indo-European, since the demon known as Pipru (the same word as the Loki epithet *Fífl*) is reckoned among the Asuras in the *Rigveda*. However, no trace of a demonic personality, so excellently characterized in an aesthetic and ethical respect as Loki, appears in the Vedic literature. Yet, there is reason to assume that the beginnings of the Loki character were already forming in the time closest to the separation of the Asian and the European Indo-Europeans while the Germanic and the Greek forefathers still lived together or in close proximity to one another, since the myth about Loki and that about Prometheus, despite the different directions each took, seem to have sprouted and grown from the same root.

Loki is originally a fire-giant (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Volume 1, no. 82). Prometheus is a Titan and likewise originally a being who stood in connection with fire. To begin with, his name, which is correctly associated with the Sanskrit word *pramantha*, fire-scraping staff, attests to that. Like Loki, Prometheus is adopted into the circle of the gods and becomes their close companion, even though he belongs to a race, the Titans, that fought the gods, and even though his brothers, the insolent Menötios and the hard-hearted Atlas, like Loki, remain the enemies of the gods and the object of their revenge. Like Loki, Prometheus was originally portrayed as a prankster and a deceiver who seeks to pull the wool over Zeus' eyes; the well-known offering of the ox in Hesiod's *Theogony* testifies to this.¹⁴ As Loki stands in connection to Gullveig, Prometheus stands in connection to Pandora, through which mankind is afflicted with suffering. That he steals the fire and presents it to man, from the beginning, was not looked upon as an act of love towards humanity, but as a means to mock the gods, and his gift, like Loki's gifts, brings unhappiness in place of happiness. Like Prometheus, Loki is a thief and robs the gods of their means of rejuvenation. The descent of fire to man through Prometheus originally would seem to be the same myth which relates how Loki came to earth through the "damaging striker," the lightning giant Farbauti, who sires him with Laufey, the tree-crowns ignited by lightning. Ultimately Prometheus, like Loki, is imprisoned in unbreakable fetters at the farthest end of the earth and is tormented there by a demonic animal: in the Nordic tale, a serpent; in the Greek tale, an eagle, who nevertheless is begotten by two serpent-demons, Typhon and Echnida. The magnificent direction that the Prometheus myth took afterwards did not belong to it in the beginning. Its older form has such an unmistakable and characteristic likeness to the Germanic myth about Loki that one must assume a common basis for both.

¹³ See "*Hárbarðsljóð*" in this work; and *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, nos. 38-41.

¹⁴ The myth seeks to explain why man always reserves the better part of a sacrifice for himself, leaving the gods only fat and bones: When a dispute arose over the rightful share of the gods in a sacrifice, Prometheus made two bundles of an ox and asked Zeus to choose which he preferred. In one bundle, Prometheus hid the choice cuts of meat inside the stomach. In the other, he covered the white bones with shining fat. Zeus picked what he thought was the better portion for the gods, and was angry to find himself left with only bones and fat. Thus angered, he became determined to withhold fire from mankind.

Another myth that belongs after the Proto-Indo-European era, but to the time the Germanic and Greek fathers remained in contact with one another, is that of the three dises of fate. It may certainly have had its outermost foothold in the concept of the three Nirrtis, three goddesses of death who appear in *Rigveda* X, 114, 2. But the Nirrtis have an entirely different character than the dises of fate, and they have nothing to do with predestination, nor predestination concerning the length of life, nor with the lot, *bhaktam*, that man is allotted during his earthly life. In the *Rigveda*, predestination and the laying of life's lots belong to all the gods. "None lives, even if he had a hundred lives, beyond the statute of the gods," says *Rigveda* X, 33, 9.¹⁵ However, the Teutons and the Greeks agree on the notion of three sisters, weird sisters, Moiri, who exercise their influence over birth and death and both peoples' imaginations have thought of them as spinning, measuring, and stretching fate's threads. It is also possible that Skuld, the name of one of the Germanic dises of fate, and Klotho, the name of one of the Hellenic fates were originally the same word. Because the initial *s* in Indo-European words in certain circumstances becomes lost before *k* in their Greek derivatives (compare *skar-χρῖνω* *skarta-χριτος*, *skarp-χολαπτω* *sklad-χλαθαω*, etc.),¹⁶ Klotho (χλωθω) in an older form might have been Sklotho and had its root in the Indo-European *skar*, to swing, to turn, move in a circle, *skard*, to swing (compare *χραθω*) and *klad*, to swing (compare *χλαθαω*); from which the Germanic name Skuld may also have come. Klotho means a spinster. Originally then, Skuld could have had the same meaning.

From the investigation above, it follows that the comparative method can detect many stages of development within Germanic mythology:

- 1) The animistic-polydemonic stage, which belongs to the early Stone Age and may have lasted until the time that the Indo-European race and the Indo-European language broke away from an older condition of race and language;
- 2) The Proto-Indo-European era, which belongs to the Neolithic Age and during which a coherent mythic epic that later constitutes the kernel of the Indo-Iranian as well as the Germanic cycle of myths, was formed;
- 3) The European time of unity, which must have been a later stage of the Neolithic period. Likewise, the time closest to the end of the European time of unity also must belong to the Neolithic Age;
- 4) The Germanic Bronze Age, which exhibited a strong expansion of the old mythic epic and brought it forth to a boundary over which it would not cross afterward.

¹⁵ Ralph Griffith translation.

¹⁶ This theory still appears to be valid. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Revised and edited by Calvert Watkins, 1985), lists three definitions for *sker-* and several derivatives that drop the initial *s*: *sker-* "to cut" and among its derivatives, *carnage*, *carnal* and *carnivorous*; *sker-* "to leap," and a derivative *coruscate*; *sker-* "to turn, to bend," with the derivatives *circa*, *circle*, *circum-*, Greek *krikos*, ring.

Consequently, the early Iron Age (i.e. the four or five centuries closest to the birth of Christ) can be considered the Germanic mythology's maturity, during which it did not grow further. The *carmina antiqua* and *perantiqua* concerning the Germanic gods and tribal heroes of which the Roman literature from Caesar's time speaks must have been composed during this period, from which echoes reverberate through the tumultuous centuries of the late Iron Age, characterized by impressive Germanic migrations and conquests, into the Middle Ages.

The late Iron Age was the beginning of Germanic heathendom's period of slow dissolution, a period in which nothing significant was added to the old mythic cycle, but during which a good deal may have been lost and minor details altered through contact with Romans and Romanized people.
