

Viktor Rydberg's

Investigations into

Germanic Mythology

Volume II

Part 1: Indo-European Mythology

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The Original Beings

16) In Indo-Iranian, as well as in Germanic mythology, the original beings were as follows: 1) the primeval cow; 2) the Chaos-giant; 3) the first beings with human form i.e. with the shape of the gods, because according to the Indo-European conception the form of man is modeled after the image of the gods; 4) the first divine race; 5) the artisans, primeval artists, which are not of divine birth, but partially obtain divine rank.

7.

The Primeval Cow.

17) *Gylfaginning* has preserved the following tradition: when warmth worked on the rime-frost in Ginnungagap, so that it dripped, a cow arose whose name was *Audhumla*; four streams of milk ran from her udders and fed Ymir (the Chaos-giant). She received her own food by licking the rime-stones which were salt. The primeval cow, an androgynous being with sperm and milk, and therefore also called the primeval bull, was a figure in Indo-Iranian mythology as well, and thus entered into both the *Rigveda* and the *Avesta*.

The primeval cow – *Gēush-urvā*, properly the cow-spirit, according to the Iranian religion is the first being that arose in Chaos endowed with a living soul.¹ She resided in the world-tree, which with her death received a part of her engendering and nourishing juices (*Bundehesh*).²

¹ “In the Parsi or Pâzand language, the name is corrupted into *gôshûrân* which is very likely preserved in the modern Persian *gawhar*, ‘nature’. According to the tradition, it was the first animated creature, in the shape of an ox, after which, having been killed and cut into pieces, the whole living creation is said to have sprung.” Martin Haug and E. W. West, *The Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis*, 1878. p. 147 footnote.

² “*Gēush urvâ* means the universal soul of earth, the cause of all life and growth. The literal meaning of the word, ‘soul of the cow’, implies a simile; for the earth is compared to a cow. By its cutting and dividing, ploughing is to be understood. The meaning of that decree, issued by Ahuramazda and the heavenly

As scholars have recognized and pointed out, she is a symbol of the oldest zoological life, seen from the positive side. She arises once the world-tree has shot up out of its golden seed from the primeval waters, fructified by warmth. The world-tree represents life in its entirety: the vegetative, the zoological, the mortal, and the divine. The primeval cow, on the other hand, represents animal life in its separation from the stem.

The *Rigveda*-Aryans, like the Iranians, have given the primeval cow this place in their mythology and compare her nourishing to the nourishing earth and call the earth “cow” so often in their hymns, that the Sanskrit word *gô*, cow, also has the meaning earth.³

After she performs the task the Norse myths confer upon her, which is to bring into existence the first divine being, Buri, and to feed the Chaos-giant with her streams of milk, she completely vanishes from the mythological epic. If, from this we prematurely conclude that Germanic cosmology had nothing more to say of her, we ought not forget that it comes to us in a fragmentary state. A Swedish folk-song tells that the primeval cow remained inside a mountain for thousands of years, and shall issue forth from there on the final-most day.⁴ According to the Iranian myths, as they are relayed in *Gatha Ahunavaiti*, a portion of the *Avesta*, she is killed and butchered, but it is not revealed who the culprit is; and one myth allows the All-knowing one to say that the deed shall benefit earth's farmers.⁵ *Rigveda* IV informs us that the primeval cow's killers were three artisans of nature and primeval smiths, the brothers called the Ribhus: “They cut the cow and made the earth fertile.”⁶ Her spirit, however, is immortal and the Iranians praise her in their hymns. In a later era, the evil king Ahriman, the author of all offense in Ormazd's creation, is regarded as the murderer of the primeval cow.

The world-period during which the primeval cow lived, according to *Bundehesh*, lasted 3000 years.⁷

council, is that the soil is to be tilled’ it therefore enjoins agriculture as a religious duty.” Haug and West, p. 148.

³ “*Gâus* has in Sanskrit the two meanings ‘cow’ and ‘earth.’ In Greek *gê*, ‘earth’ can be traced to this word [As well as Gaea, the Greek goddess of the earth],” Haug and West, p. 148 footnote 1. See also Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, ch. 21, section 2: Animals, Oxen. In *Germania*, ch. 40, the wagon of Nerthus, Mother Earth, is drawn by cows.

⁴ A local legend in the area of Norra Vi in Ydre, Sweden, in the north of Småland on the frontier of Småland and Östergötland, speaks of the gigantic primeval cow (*Urkon* or *Sommakoa*) that is said to have been enclosed in a mountain (*Urberget*) by the sorcerer, Some of Tellerum, after she fitfully hollowed out a crater that became Lake Sommen in Småland. There she lies on a bed of coal and fur. Each Yule, she eats one hair from the fur. When the fur is completely consumed, she will break loose and destroy the world. It says: *Åra å håra di går, men stenkôla di rôtnar allri*, “The years (åren) and the hairs (håra) disappear, but the coal never changes.” She escapes and kills any crowned king who comes to Ydre. Legend has it, she killed King Frodi.

⁵ “The slaughterer of this primary ox, the supposed ancestor of the whole animal kingdom, is often alluded to in the name *gêush tâsha* “cutter of the ox.” Who was the killer is not stated in the *Zend-Avesta*, but tradition charges this murder, of course, to *Angrô-mainyush*, the devil.” Haug and West, p. 147, footnote 3.

⁶ The source of this quote is unknown to me. No hymn or verse number is given. Rydberg apparently obtained it from Haug and West, pg. 148, footnote 1: “In the *Vâmadeva* hymns (fourth book of the *Rigveda*), the Ribhus (comparable to the elves of the Teutonic mythology), who represent the creative powers in nature, are said to ‘have cut the cow and made fertile the earth.’ The term evidently refers to the cultivation of the soil.”

⁷ *Bundehesh* 1, verses 8 and 20.

8.

The First in Human Form.

18) *Gylfaginning* 6 tells that when the primeval cow licked "rime-stones," which were salt, a man's hair appeared by the end of the first day. The day after, a man's head appeared, and by the end of the third day there was an entire man, extremely beautiful to behold, big and strong. He was called Buri and he became grandfather to Odin and his brothers.

The Iranians have the same myth. It comes to us transformed by the Zoroastrian reformation that made the person in question a creation of the All-mighty and called him Gayô-maratan, "the living mortal," but, nevertheless, their common features were not extinguished. In the Iranian documents, the primeval cow and Gayô-maratan belong to the same world-period and share the same fate, and when the primeval cow is praised, Gayô-maratan's name is connected with hers. Thus, there can be no doubt that in the original Iranian myths the concepts were closely associated with one another. James Darmesteter⁸ in his excellent work *Ormazd et Ahriman* concludes on the basis of much evidence that the first part of the compound-name Gayô-maratan is a contraction of *gavya* (from *gau*, bull, cow) and that *maratan* refers to the Maruts, wind-elves, celebrated in the *Rigveda*, and that the name's original meaning consequently was "the Marut (wind-genius) brought forth by the cow."⁹ Darmesteter has presented convincing reasons for the connection between *maratan* and the Maruts. But, be that as it may, the basic features of the myth about Buri and Gayô-maratan are the same in any case. The primeval cow licks the rime-stones, dripping from warmth and thereby brings forth Buri. According to the Iranian narrative, Gayô-maratan is created from *sweat* and matter. In *Rigveda* V, 58, 7 the word sweat, *sveda*, is used poetically of the rain: "the Maruts yoked the winds to the wagon-pole and turned their sweat into rain." The Latin *sudare* is related to the Indic *sveda* and the Swedish *svett* means both to sweat and drip. It may be observed that the other primeval being, Ymir, whose existence depends on Audhumla, also brings forth beings by means of sweat: "*pá er hann svaf, fekk hann sveita*,"¹⁰ and then under his left arm grew a man and a maid, etc. (*Gylfaginning* 6). To procreate in such a fashion is not the norm; in the Iranian circle of belief, this case stands alone and in *Rigveda* only a single instance is mentioned, which for every reason must pertain to the same mythic person who was called Gayô-maratan among the Iranians after the Zoroastrian

⁸ James Darmesteter (1849-1894), French scholar and antiquarian who primarily focused on Zoroastrian religion. Author of *Ormazd et Ahriman* (1877) and translator of *The Zend-Avesta, Part I: Vendidad* (1880). In regard to Zoroastrianism, Rydberg relied heavily on Darmesteter's research. The structure of this volume closely mirrors Darmesteter's *Ormazd et Ahriman*, with its numbered chapters and subchapters.

⁹ *Ormazd et Ahriman*, Chapter III, 6, *Meurtre de Gayomert, le premier homme* ("The Murder of Gayomert, the first man"), nos. 129-134 [pp. 156-164]. In the course of his investigation, Darmesteter gives other possible meanings of the name: If *Gayô* means "the living" and *maratan* signifies "the mortal," then the name might mean "first among mortals." If *maratan* is understood as a singular of Maruts, gods of the storm, then the name might mean "the first Marut." The reading *go-mâtaras* would yield "son of the cow" or "son of the variegated cow," while *gavya maratan* would mean "the man born of the bull," or "the Marut born of the bull." Why Rydberg settled on the last meaning is made clear in no. 22.

¹⁰ "when he slept, a sweat came upon him." [Arthur Brodeur tr.].

reformation. The extreme rarity of the case increases the probability that the same myth exists here in different forms.

19) The Iranian myth relates that Gayô-maratan came into the world, not as a child, but as a large and handsome fifteen year old youth. The Norse narrative does not report Buri's age, but allows him to be very handsome, big and strong, once he is completely licked from the rime-stones.

20) The Iranian myth says that the earth was inhabited by dangerous beings and monsters when Gayô-maratan lived.¹¹ The Norse myths, which set the Chaos-giant on Audhumla's udders after her tongue brings forth a divine being, allows the aforementioned giant to produce a three-headed monster, Thrudgelmir, and become progenitor of the thurses, enemies of the gods and the world. The earth is occupied by these monsters until they drown in their progenitor's blood.

21) According to the Iranian myths, the "navel" of the Indo-European country (i.e. the center of their land) is created using the dead Gayô-maratan's corpse as material. (After a 30 year heroic struggle with the monsters, Gayô-maratan succumbs to them). Creation with a dead man's corpse as its material is parallel to the earth's creation from the dead Ymir's limbs. It is, however, only the "navel" that receives the honor of getting its material from Gayô-maratan. In the Indo-Iranian mythology, as in the Norse, a dead primeval giant provided the material for the remaining and greatest part of the earth (see further).

22) As I mentioned, Darmesteter has given strong reasons that Gayô-maratan was a wind-god and father of the Maruts, wind-divinities, in the Iranian nature-religion. In the Norse myths, Buri becomes the progenitor of the ruler of the wind, the storm-god Odin, and to Thor, the god of the thunderstorm. The name *Búri* itself can hardly have any other plausible explanation than from the Old German *borja*, wind. Compare the Old Norse *byrr*, gen. *byrjar*, favorable wind.¹²

9.

The Primeval Giant.

23) Of the primeval giant Ymir-Aurgelmir, the Norse documents relate the following: he arose from the drops of life, which, having met heat, dripped from the ice that gathered in Ginnungagap. He sucked Audhumla's udders and thereby got his nourishment. When he slept and sweated, a man and a maid were produced under his left arm, but his feet with one another begat a three-headed monster, Thrudgelmir, giving rise to the frost-giants, the giant-monsters of primeval days. Buri's grandsons, Odin and his brothers, killed Ymir by opening the veins of his neck.¹³ Then so much blood ran out of the wound that his offspring (with few exceptions) were drowned in it. After this, the

¹¹ *Bundehesh*, ch. 18.

¹² Today, the name *Búri* is thought to mean "procreator," from *bera*, to bear [*Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Jan de Vries, 1962].

¹³ Circumstantial evidence indicates that the sons of Bor beheaded Ymir, perhaps as the first ritual sacrifice. In *Sonatorrek* 3, Egil Skallagrímsson, uses the kenning *jötuns háls undir*, "waves [blood] of the giant's neck" to indicate the sea, and in several places the sky is said to be his skull. Decapitation of giants is a recurring theme in Germanic lore as evidenced by the beheading of Mimir, and the losing wagers of the heads of Vafthrúdnir (see *Vafþrúðnismál* 19) and Loki (*Skáldskaparmál* 43).

gods took Ymir and moved him to the middle of Ginnungagap and, using his corpse as the material of creation, made mountains of his bones, soil of his flesh, heaven of his skull, and clouds of his brains. They lifted solid land up out of his blood, which formed an ocean.

The myth belongs to the Proto-Indo-European era. It recurs in *Rigveda* X, 90, obviously reworked with a bias to support the rising Brahman empire and caste system, but nevertheless completely recognizable. The *Rigveda* bard says that before the creation, there existed a primeval giant, as big as the world and bigger. The gods killed him and of his limbs created the current universe, of his head the vault of heaven, of his feet the earth and so on. His mouth became the Brahmins (priests), his arms became the Rajanyas (warriors), his thighs the Vaisyas (the third free class); from his feet arose the Sudras (thralls).

The common basic concepts are: 1) a giant being arose before the creation of the world, consequently in Chaos; 2) from different parts of his body came different clans; 3) the clan engendered by his feet was an ignoble clan; 4) the gods killed the Chaos-giant; 5) the gods created the world from his limbs.¹⁴

10.

Ymir's Sea.

24) When the Germanic gods commenced their great work, the creation of the world, Ymir's blood covered the ground and, in the sea of blood, the monsters were drowned. "Where did the gods stand when they 'lifted up' the solid land (*Völuspá* 4) out of the sea?" was a natural question. *Rigveda* X, 72 6, 7 says that during the creation of the world, they "found themselves in the sea" and strove there "as workers," "in quick motion."

Bundehesh chapter 7 preserves the memory of the sea in which the monsters of the primeval world drown, even though the Zoroastrian religion had cast the myth about the primeval giant overboard and allowed the All-mighty to create the world, without utilizing a previously existing giant's skull to make the heavens, etc. The concept of a Chaos-giant from whose feet emerged the evil portion of beings endowed with life has given way in the *Avesta* to the closely-related concept of Ahriman, an evil being born from the darkness of Chaos, who begets a world of evil creatures in contrast to the good created by Ormazd. The connection with the ancient Indo-European myth becomes clearer still when *Bundehesh* states that Ahriman covers the earth with poisonous, appalling monsters in the time when the primeval cow and Gayô-maratan (*Búri*) still live, thus in the time when Ymir, fed by the primeval cow, produced the giant-race. After Gayô-maratan's death, after he had battled the monsters bravely but in vain for 30 years, the All-mighty intervenes via three of his subordinate holy assistants – these three stand in the place that Buri's three grandsons occupy in the Germanic myth – and in succession, supported by the lord of heaven, these three cause an inundation that in its depth covers

¹⁴ For a thorough review of all relevant Indo-European analogues, and a detailed examination of the correspondences between parts of the body and parts of the cosmos, as well as between parts of the body and social classes, see Bruce Lincoln's *Myth, Cosmos, and Society, Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

the entire world. Then the monsters die and are washed down by the water into the depths of the earth.

11.

The Creating Gods.

In the mythology of the Proto-Indo-European people, the gods are not all of one age. They form four or five generations. The two eldest generations are purely cosmogonic in the Norse and lived during the period between their own development out of Chaos and the actual creation of the world, when the current cosmos with heaven and earth were established. The gods of the third generation, the triad of brothers: Odin, Hönir, and Lodur, are the actual, however not the only, creators of the world; other older gods and a number of primeval artisans have shared the work with them. In *Völuspá*, these personal creative powers are called *regin öll*, *ginnheilög goð*.¹⁵ They work with one another, hold council, sitting on *rökstóla*,¹⁶ and together determine the progress and outcome of the work of creation. In the edification and adornment of the world, they are employed by two primeval artists "Mead-drinker" or "Power-drinker"¹⁷ (*Móðsognir*) and Durin, who, in accordance with the resolution of the divine council, produced a band of helping "smiths" from the elements of life in the corpse of the Chaos-giant. On the Ida-plain, the field surrounding the world-wells in the underworld, which is the first ordered part of the universe, forges are built, tongs are made, as well as tools and ornaments (*Völuspá* 8) in order to construct the universal structure¹⁸ that is built on this foundation.

Also, according to *Rigveda*, many gods have worked together in the creation of the world. Some scholars have been surprised that first one and then another of *Rigveda*'s powers are praised as world-creators in the hymns sung to them, and a special, psychologically improbable and otherwise unnecessary hypothesis has been invented to explain it. This demonstrates how difficult it is for the professional mythologist in the study of heathen religions to liberate himself from the Christian faith ingrained in childhood—specifically the doctrine of a single creator. If the Teutons' religious hymns had been preserved, one would probably have encountered the same phenomena and found Odin, Hönir, Lodur, and Mimir each praised as world-creators, perhaps also Buri and Bor, as well as Fjörgynn, the father of the queen of heaven and Odin's father-in-law,¹⁹ because they were world-creators and thus the cause of the world's creation.

Among the gods of the second and third generation, we find two, Odin and Fjörgynn, who retain their Proto-Indo-European names through thousands of years. When one considers that the Norse gods like those of the *Rigveda*-Aryans have multiple names, and that epithets had a tendency to solidify gradually into names during the course of centuries after the geographic and linguistic separation of the Indo-European peoples, and that these epithets could be attributed to each of them in infinite numbers, one must expect that originally identical gods would bear different names in later times among

¹⁵ "all the powers," "most holy gods."

¹⁶ "judgment seats."

¹⁷ [Rydberg's footnote] S. Bugge's translation.

¹⁸ *världsbyggnad*, literally "world-building."

¹⁹ Rydberg leans toward identifying Fjörgynn with Hönir. See *Our Fathers' Godsaga*, Glossary, s.v. *Anar*.

different Indo-European peoples. Like all words, these names lead a struggle for their very existence and this battle can have many different phases among different peoples. Only in rare cases can the ancient common god-name still be found among many peoples. In reference to the world-creating gods — the gods of the second and third generations— two such cases exist among those listed above: Odin and Fjörgynn, whose names are found again in the *Rigveda*-names Vâta and Parganya.

12.

Vâta-Wodan.

26) The common Germanic form for the name *Óðinn* is *Vôdana* (Old Saxon *Wôdan*, OHG *Wuotan*, Old English *Vôden*). As far as I know, it was Heinrich Zimmer who first pointed out that this name is the same as Vâta,²⁰ who is the *Rigveda*-Aryans' foremost air-god. The word Vâta, which means wind, comes from *vá*, *vâti*, "to blow," to which the Gothic *vaian* and the German *wehen* are related. That Odin, the Lord of Heaven, when seen from his natural side, is a god of the atmosphere, no mythologist has doubted.

Vâta is also and most often called Vâju, a name that has the same meaning and comes from the same root. The god is designated as Vâju when his spiritual and epic personality is emphasized, and as Vâta when the natural side of his being is stressed. In the poems of the *Rigveda*, he already had many names, and among the Iranians he bore a multitude of epithets (see below).²¹

27) Vâta-Vâju belongs to a particular group of *Rigveda*-gods that correspond to the Aesir group in Germanic mythology. They preside over the earth, the heavens and the atmosphere. They are the *Rigveda*-mythology's warring, adventurous, quick-witted gods. To them belongs the most celebrated of all: Indra, the tremendously strong hero, armed with the thunderbolt weapon, the Indic Thor. Vâta-Vâju is the central figure in this circle of heavenly warriors and in rank the foremost, as Odin is the foremost within the Germanic.

Vâta-Vâju's²² ruling position among the gods of the atmosphere has previously not been sufficiently recognized by mythologists, because the wealth of hymns that are devoted to Indra in the *Rigveda* and the fondness with which they describe his prowess in his many battles with demons draw more attention than those that award Vâta-Vâju the highest rank, not least among them verses in hymns to Indra. The tone, in which both of the closely-associated gods are celebrated by the *Rigveda*-skalds, also attests to this. There is more familiarity when Indra is celebrated, and his description does not lack comic and burlesque features, while the tone toward Vâju is always respectful. Vâju is invoked as the father, the lord of heavenly order, *Rigv.* VIII, 26, 20. It is expressly stated that no one has rank above him, *Rigv.* I, 134, 6. When many gods are enumerated without a praising epithet attached to their name, Vâju is an exception and is called "the great" *Rigv.* X, 66, 4, 5. He is the spirit of the gods, *Rigv.* X, 168, 4. All gods are united with

²⁰ Heinrich Zimmer (1851-1927), German linguist and professor, author of *Altindisches Leben*, 1879.

²¹ For a compelling argument to equate Varuna with Odin, see Edgar Polomé, "Approaches to Germanic Mythology" in *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*, University of California, Berkeley, 1974. pp. 51-65.

²² Rydberg begins to vacillate between the spellings Vâju and Vâyu.

him says *Rigv.* I, 142, 12 and does so in a context that refers to Vâju's superiority over his allies, because they are placed beside his servants the Maruts, and Pushan, who are herders, farmers, and colonists adopted among the gods, but originally not divine guardians. Vâyu goes to the soma-drink and the morning offering before all other gods, *Rigv.* IV, 46, 1. Under his guidance, the gods are approached with respectful *craddha* (a word that means faith and is connected with *credo*), *Rigv.* X, 151, 4. The men, who are happy that they have Indra and the gods as defenders, enjoy this protection because they are Vâju's men, *Rigv.* VIII, 46, 32. Indra is praised as Vâju's wagon-keeper, *Rigv.* IV 46, 2, and the red-brown coursers before Indra's wagon belong to Vâju, *Rigv.* X, 26, 2²³ and many other places. The gods of the atmosphere, the Vâjus, are called by their ruler's name, *Rigv.* II, 11, 14.

As one of the creators of the world, Vâju is called "the seed of the world," *Rigv.* X, 168, 4. He receives the byname *ribhu* after the name of the three famous primeval artists and brothers, and is associated with Tvashtar, the artisan and master smith among the circle of gods.

28) In his natural side, he is what his name Vâta-Vâyu specifies, the lord of the wind:

"The wagon-ruler Vâta's glory I praise!
In thunderous voice, with power that breaks, he fares
And red stands the heaven, when he rushes through it,
The earth, a dust-cloud, when he is on his travels,

"And all the troops of wind hurry after
him there as women to the strong.
United with them, the wagon-ruler storms forth,
he, the god, this entire world's king." (*Rigveda* X, 168, 1, 2)

The winds that gather to him "like women to the strong" are *Apsarases*, the honor-giving swan-maids, and the beautiful band of brothers is called the Maruts, youths with glistening limbs, adorned with gold rings and breast-plates, and bearing flashing spears, which they wield in the storm-cloud. It is Odin's hunt, as it was seen by the heathen power of imagination, free from the demonic tinge it received, along with Odin himself, in the Christian popular imagination.

29) At the same time as being a god of the atmosphere, the storm and wind, Vâyu, like Odin, is a war-god. The heavenly powers that the *Rigveda*-Aryans invoked before a military campaign or a battle, were Vâju and Indra, just as Teutons in the same circumstances invoked Odin and Thor. Then the gods were also brought sacrifices, among which the horse-sacrifice was foremost, as it was among the Germans (Heinrich Zimmer; *Altindisches Leben*, p. 294). At the time when "The Lawbook of Manu"²⁴ was written, foot-soldiers were respected as holy among the Teutons, and the wedge-shaped formation taught by Odin was sanctified by ancient custom; the divisions of troops took

²³ This reference is not supported in the Griffith translation; however, in the Ludwig translation, the wagon team is referred to as "Vâtâpyam." Geldner, who notes that the meaning here is uncertain, translates this tentatively as *die mit dem Vâta befreundet ist*, "those with whom Vâta is friendly."

²⁴ *Manu Smṛti*, the standard lawbook of Hinduism, composed about 100 B.C.

place along tribal and family relationships, a custom which Tacitus reports as Germanic. The epithet, "the one prevailing over wagons," which belongs to Vâju (*Rigv.* VI, 49) ought to have reference to the war-chariot that represented the most essential part of the *Rigveda*-Aryans' war-equipment.²⁵ Vâju is invoked regarding the power of victory in a song to Indra, *Rigv.* VIII, 46, 25, and when Indra succeeds, it is with Vâju that he wins the victory, *Rigv.* IV, 21, 4. Vâju, who is handsome in appearance, *Rigv.* I, 2, 1, is represented with a helmet and spear (see below), as is Odin.²⁶

30) In character, Vâju is reported to be heroic, wise, and "always strong," *Rigv.* IX, 44, 5.

Among the Iranians, his worship must have had extremely strong roots before the Zoroastrian reformation, because while countless other Vedic gods, and among them even the oldest described, such as the Asvins and Indra, were transformed into demons by the reformation, Vâyu is spared and receives a much honored and prominent place among Ahuramazda's divine companions. In the oldest Iranian documents, the *Gathas*, he is the only Vedic divinity that is mentioned by name. Among the beings that Ahuramazda commanded Zarathustra to worship (*Vendidad*, Fargard 19) are the "self-supporting universe," "the boundless times," and Vayu.²⁷

In the Iranian writings, Vaju's character as both the lord of the wind and god of war appears with the greatest clarity. In the *Avesta*, he is called "the wind whose activity is in the heights." He is said to be worshipped by Ahuramazda himself and by antiquity's great heroes and sages. He is invoked to annihilate enemy armies and he is the mighty vanquisher of demons, who on one occasion grabbed the sun itself and used it as a weapon against those who create darkness. In the *Avesta*, he is an eloquent god, a conquering god, radiant with a long, well-crafted, penetrating spear, and with a golden helmet, tinkling rings, a gold necklace, a gold chariot, golden sandals, and a golden belt. Helpful to all others, he is terrifying to the evil. He is the strongest of the strong, the quickest of the quick, taller in stature, broader about the hips and shoulders than the other heavenly beings. He says to Ahuramazda: "I am called the charitable, because I do well before Ahuramazda. I am called the pure, the bewinged, the strongest, the quickest, the powerful destroyer of demons by deathblows. I am called the shrieking, the biting. I am called the sharp spear, the glistening spear. I am called the descender. These names of mine you shall invoke, when armed units clash in the throng of battle." (*Avesta*, 15. *Ram*

²⁵ Similarly Odin is known as *runni vagna* (*Sonatorrek* 22), *vári vagna* (*Höfuðlausn* 21) as well as *vinr vagna*, the "guardian", "protector", and "friend of chariots." His designation as *valdr vagnbrautar*, "ruler of the chariot-road" in a loose verse by Ormr Barreyjarskáld makes these kennings improbable references to war-chariots, not used in the North. Instead they must refer to *vagn*, constellations or planets, pictured as chariots moving across the nighttime sky, an image familiar in the Greco-Roman world, which may hail from the Proto-Indo-European era. Compare the use of the word *vagn* in the constellation-name *Karlsvagn*, Ursa Major also known as the "Wain," and in *Skáldskaparmál* 31: "How shall the sky be referred to? By calling it Ymir's skull and hence giant's skull, ...land of sun and moon and stars, constellations [*vagn*] and winds, etc." [Faulkes' tr., *Skáldskaparmál* 23].

²⁶ Odin is depicted with "a helmet on his head" [*á höfði hjalm*] in *Sigrdrífumál* 14. The kenning "Brimir's sword" in that verse most likely refers to "Mimir's head."

²⁷ [Rydberg's footnote]: The name here has a short vowel, but there is no doubt regarding the identity of Vâyu and Vayu (see Haug, Darmesteter, and others).

Yasht.) – Echoes of these bynames are found again among Odin's epithets in the Norse literature, such as *Sviðr*, *Fjölsviðr*, *Herjann*, *Viðrir*, *Biflindi*, and *Hnikarr*.²⁸

13.

The Eagle and Suttung's Mead.

31) *Rigveda* IV, 26, IV, 27 and many other passages, refer to details of a myth, that, to judge by them, must have had the greatest similarity to the myth related in the *Eddas* concerning Odin and Suttung's mead. If one compares what these passages say, the scattered features provide the following picture:

A mead-store, immensely large –it is said to have been a thousand, ten thousand offerings large, *Rigv.* IV, 26—had fallen into the hands of the gods' enemies. These enemies are called the *Arâti*, "the covetous," an expression synonymous with the common name in the *Rigveda* of the giant-powers that rob the earth of its nourishing juices, *Panîs*. They are also called the *Dasyu*, an often-occurring name for demons hostile to the gods.

The possession of this mead-store is of importance to the gods, but its acquisition is associated with great danger, greater still because an archer of lower divine rank, Kriçanu, who was otherwise a friend of the higher gods, is now their foe and has made a pact with the demons who possess the mead.

One of the gods decides to defy the danger and, clad in eagle-guise,²⁹ he flies away rushing in whirring flight to the remote place where the Soma treasure is concealed, farthest out in the space that surrounds Creation. "Breath-quick," he flew air's "broad paths" and reached his goal. Kriçanu saw him and shot an arrow at him, which bounced off his feather-guise, or which he cast aside. How the god successfully takes possession of the mead after he arrives at the *Arâti*'s is not reported in detail, but the event was not without conflict, because it says that he killed the *Dasyus* with his claws (*Rigv.* X, 99, 8), and describes his strength and his courage (*Rigv.* IV, 27). It probably did not occur by force alone, but also by cunning, for *Rigv.* IV, 26 allows him to appear as "no-fool" and the *Arâti* as "fools" on this occasion.

The *Arâti*'s retreat and the mead's hiding-place was a mountain. It is further suggested that the eagle found his way out of the mountain by means of a spinning, boring action, *Rigv.* I, 93, 6: "The eagle has bored the Soma out of the mountain." (Compare Bergaigne I, 173).³⁰ Grasping the mead-store, with strong claws around "a thousand, ten thousand libations together," the eagle whisked away, "leaving the *Arâti* (the fools) behind him."

²⁸ According to Rudolf Simek in *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*: *Sviðr* (from *sviða*, spear), *Fjölsviðr* ("very wise," although I suspect Rydberg may have seen *sviðr* here), *Herjann* ("lord" of hosts), *Viðrir* ("weather," a common metaphor for battle in kennings), *Biflindi* ("painted shield"), and *Hnikarr* ("instigator").

²⁹ Ludwig and Griffith identify the bird as a falcon (*Falke*); Geldner identifies the bird as an eagle (*Adler*).

³⁰ Abel Bergaigne, *Le Religion Vedique d'après des hymnes du Rig-Veda*, Vols. I-IV (1886, Reprint 1963; Translated as *Abel Bergaigne's Vedic Religion* by V.G. Paranjpe, 1978, and hereafter); Bergaigne translates the word *amathnât*, used to describe the Eagle's action when he brings the Soma out of the mountain, as "a sort of churning." Griffith translates this word as "*rent*," Geldner as "*riß*" (tear, rent, cleft), and Ludwig as "*geraubt*" (robbed).

The name of the god who accomplished this feat is never given. It was not Indra, or else the adventure would have been reported in the many exploits that the hymns attribute to him. *Rigv.* IV, 26, 4 also expressly says that the eagle was another besides Indra: "The bird must be praised before other birds, which brought Manu (Indra according to a previous verse) the god-beloved *havya* (oblation)." The entire situation shows, however, that he was one of the air-gods. Vâju is the lord of the atmosphere, and as such no one else is more entitled than he is to appear as the eagle, the greatest and the fastest of the air's winged sailors. The supposition that he was Vâju is confirmed in that the mead, which the gods enjoy, thereafter is found in Vâju's dwelling and called his own, *Rigv.* X, 186, 3: "Your house preserves the amrita-store, O Vâta, give us thereof so that we may live!" *Rigv.* VI, 37, 3: "May Vâju's amrita never fail Indra!" In another place it tells that the store of soma is in Vâju's care. The circumstance that Vâju is the foremost of the gods, when they proceed to the earth to partake of man's soma offering in the myth must also have its justification and explanation in an exploit performed by him that entitled him to this preference and was suited for the rank that he occupied among the gods. On these grounds one assumes that in the mythology of the *Rigveda* it was also Odin (Vâta-Vâju) who robbed the demons of the mead supply that is afterwards accessible to the gods. The resemblance between the Germanic myth and the Vedic is so obvious that it must proceed from the Proto-Indo-European era.³¹ Even the detail that an archer, who was the gods' friend, becomes their foe, is rediscovered in the Germanic *godsaga* in the myth about the archer Egil, and the enmity caused by carrying away the mead from the giants' mountain is also connected to this (See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 89).

14.

Hönnir, Lodur, and Fjörgynn.

32) Hönnir and Lodur work with Odin in killing the Chaos-giant in the creation of the world, and afterwards in the creation of man too. Among the world-creating Vedic deities, we find two who correspond in function with Hönnir and Lodur.

In the first volume of this work (no. 95) I have shown what Hönnir's function is. It is he, who, when a human embryo forms in the mother's womb, sends it the same gift that he gave the parents of the human race when they were fashioned into the image of the gods: the living individuality, the soul, *óðr* (*Völuspá* 17-18). His name *Hönnir* refers to his being symbolized by a bird; his epithets *Langifótr* "long-legged" and *Aurkonungur*, "King of the Marsh," imply that the bird was a wader. One of the Germanic people's common stories preserves the idea of Hönnir's activity in the formation of the generations of humans, when it has a wading bird, usually a stork, fly with the life-extending fruit, the child to be, to expectant mothers.

Hönnir is thus the lord of the chain of generations, the provider of descendants. One of the Vedic world-creators is referred to by the epithet Pragâpati, "the lord of

³¹ In *The Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* (1997), s.v. *Eagle*, John Greppin writes: "The most frequently remarked correspondence is the Old Norse Óðinn's use of an eagle to obtain the sacred mead, which provides some vague parallel to the Old Indic motif of Indra sending an eagle to fetch the corresponding sacred drink, soma."

descendants," "the ruler of procreation." He is, as Kaegi designates him, "*ein Zeugung vorstehender Genius*."³² One invokes him: "Pragâpati, provide children and grandchildren!" *Rigveda*, hymn X, 948³³ compares him with Ka, the personal representation of the world-tree, whose branches bear fruit for coming generations. It is probable that among the Indians this spirit has also been represented as a bird. While the gods in general are said to have "stood in the sea" when they created the earth (see above), the Brahmanic tradition tells of the world's creator Pragâpati, that he traveled like the wind *over* the primeval waters. A wading bird mentioned in the Veda literature is named Kanka (Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben*, p. 92), a name that can be associated etymologically with Hönir.³⁴

33) In closest connection with the creator Pragâpati stands the creator Savitar, who also is active in bringing forth generations and therefore also shares in the epithet *pragâpati*, *Rigv.* IV, 53, 2.³⁵ The meaning of the name Savitar also refers to this: "life-waker" or (with Bergaigne, *La Religion Vedique* III, 41), "he who dispatches children into the world."³⁶ Savitar stands in the same relationship to Pragâpati as Lodur to Hönir. As is well known in Germanic mythology, Lodur assists in the creation of man and gives the earliest ancestors warm blood and the form of the gods (*Völuspá* 18). *Rigv* X, 10, 5 calls Savitar an artisan who forms the children in the womb.³⁷

In the world's economy, Savitar has exactly the same function as Lodur, whose identification with *Mundilföri*, I have shown (*Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 83). Mundilföri, the superintendent of the Germanic world-mill, by this means sets the revolving vault of heaven in motion (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 81). Savitar sets the heavens and the heavenly bodies, the day and night in motion. Their regular running depends on him, *Rigv.* II, 38, 4; V, 82, 2; VI, 71, 4 and many other places (Compare Bergaigne III, 55)³⁸ and the enormous soma-mill that corresponds to the Germanic world-mill, is managed by him, *Rigv.* VI, 71, 2 (Compare

³² "a spirit presiding over procreation," Adolf Kaegi, *Der Rigveda*, 1886.

³³ The reference is properly X, 121, 10. Ludwig numbers the verse 948.

³⁴ In Celtic iconography, might *Tarvos Trigaraunos* (the bull and three cranes) which are pictured in a tree on the Sailors' Pillar of Notre Dame, symbolize three creating gods, the primordial cow, and the world-tree?

³⁵ Griffith: "Lord of the whole world's life."

³⁶ Bergaigne writes: "I would derive the word Savitar from the root *sū* 'to give birth to a child.' ...he actually bears a masculine name derived from a root which denotes female activity. The Vedic language also knows a root *su* with a short *u* which means 'to press out soma-juice.' This root is evidently identical in origin with the preceding one and the ordinary confusion of the ideas ...has probably been particularly facilitated in the case of the god Savitar."

³⁷ According to Bergaigne, the subject of this verse and *Rigv.* III, 55, 19 is *tvastâ savitâ*, Tvashtar Savitar. Geldner confirms that Tvashtar and Savitar are "united in one person" here and in *Rigv.* III, 55, 19 making it possible for the latter name to be taken as a modifier of Tvashtar. In both verses, Griffith treats *savitâ* as a modifier rather than a proper name. In *Rigv.* III, 55, 19, Ludwig treats *savitâ* as a modifier, but in X, 10, 5, he treats it as a proper name. Bergaigne notes that the names are also "very closely associated" in an enumeration of the gods in *Rigv.* IX, 81, 4. They are given the same function in *Rigv.* VI, 50, 13.

³⁸ Bergaigne writes: "If this god sets in motion the sun from whom he has derived several of his attributes, it is also he who stops his [the sun's] horses at night, II, 38, 3. In other words, Savitar brings on the night, II, 38, 4 just as he brings on the day [It is in this sense that I understand V, 81, 4: "Thou envelopest the night on both sides," VI, 71,4 "Savitar rises each night (cp. v. 10 of I, 35 on the nocturnal progress of Savitar)] and his double role which is summed up in one phrase: *prasâvitâ niveśanah*, IV, 53, 6, 'who causes exits and entries', which we find developed in the following passages: V, 45, 1 and V, 71, 2."

Bergaigne III, 46. Of this soma-mill, see further).³⁹ The sun is Savitar's daughter. Mundilföri is the sun's father.

34) Fjörgynn in the Germanic and Parganya in the Vedic mythology belong to the older family of gods. Zimmer has pointed out the complete phonetic equivalence between the Norse and the Vedic forms of the name, and the little information that our sources leave us regarding Fjörgynn, confirms, as far as it goes, his and Parganya's personal identity and their equality in the mythological epic. Parganya is the god of the rain-laden and the rain-giving clouds. He is also the thunder god alongside of, or more correctly before, Indra and represents these natural phenomena more naturally than the latter, who is essentially a hero and warrior, but a thunder god foremost in the sense that the lightning bolt is his weapon of choice in the battle with the demons. Among the Lithuanians, Parganya was also known as a thunder god under the name-form Perkunas and even to this day thunder among them is called *perkuna*. The Maruts, the young wind-gods, participate in his, as in Vâju's, excursions into the atmosphere. "Like as a driver that whips and urges his horses, he rouses up his rain-messengers with wild uproar, deep as the distant roar of the lion. Swiftly Parganya collects his clouds for rain: the winds rush, the lightning bolts fall, stroke upon stroke, which smites the blasphemer, and terrifies even the pure. The heavens swell and then at once the floods rush down." (*Rigv.* V, 83)⁴⁰

In Norse mythology, Fjörgynn is father-in-law to the storm- and wind-god Odin and grandfather to the thundering Thor. This creates a high degree of probability that among the Teutons he also stood in closest connection with the natural phenomena of storm and thunder. The goddess Jörd, Frigg, is Fjörgynn's daughter and bears his name in feminine form, Fjörgyn.⁴¹ Because Frigg does not now represent the earth and the ground as such, but the "oak-green" (*eiki grónu*, Guttorm Sindri),⁴² the harvest-bearing, the creature-nourishing, Mother Earth (*Terra Mater*, Tacitus, *Germania* 40), and when in this aspect, she is a creation of the rain-giver and receives her power from him, these family relationships increase the probability that Fjörgynn, like Parganya, was the lord of the rain shower.

35) Thereby, light is shed upon an insinuation that occurs in *Lokasenna* 26. There Loki, who heaps insults on the gods and goddesses, says: "Shut up Frigg! You are Fjörgynn's daughter!" and adds that she has ever been desirous of men. It is obvious that

³⁹ Bergaigne writes: "His name ought to invoke a preparer of Soma. The activity of Savitar, ordinarily denoted by the other derivatives from the root *su*, *sū* is in one place denoted by the word *savana*, which only means the pressed soma or the act of pressing, and the use of this word is accompanied by such details as do not leave any doubt as to the nature of this activity attributed to Savitar VI, 71, 2: 'The mighty god Savitar has raised his arms of gold for the *savana*; joyous, young, and wise, he moistens his two hands with *ghrita* (clarified butter) in the vat of the atmosphere.' ... In a similar strain of ideas, Savitar is described as a 'milk-man' who milks the celestial cows I, 164, 26."

⁴⁰ This is not a continuous quote from *Rigv.* V, 83, but does contain all of line 3, part of line 4, and part of line 9. Rydberg is actually quoting this passage from Adolf Kaegi's *Der Rigveda*, where it appears verbatim in the description of the rain-god *Parjanya* (Parganya). Thus, I have used a slightly modified version of the R. Arrowsmith translation of Kaegi's text (p. 40).

⁴¹ Frigg is said to be Fjörgynn's daughter in *Lokasenna* 26. Fjörgyn is an alternate name for Jörd, the Earth goddess. Rydberg identifies Jörd as a byname of Frigg, Odin's wife. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. I, no. 25 and Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 5-6.

⁴² From a verse in *Heimskringla*, *Hákonar saga Aðalsteinsfóstra*, ch. 9; Compare the verses by Hallfreðr vanaræðaskáld, preserved in *Skáldskaparmál* 24 and 53, which include the lines: *einga-dóttur Ónars viði gróna*, "Annar's only daughter, tree-grown." "Annar's daughter" is a kenning for the earth, Jörd.

the statement "You are Fjörgynn's daughter" in this connection cannot be a mere genealogical notice, but must involve an insult and also an allusion to a relationship intended to disparage her. In the heathen mythology, there are many instances of incest, which were a source of irritation and the subject of astonishment for the believing heathen and are a legacy from a period farther back in time than all history and all documents, when nature's powers were certainly personified through the influence of speech, but these personifications still were not yet shaped to perfection by the imagination into a completely and morally conceived personality. In this period for example, the personified rain-cloud could be understood simultaneously as the father and husband of the earth, depicted as nourishing beings.⁴³ The hymns of the *Rigveda* portray the relationship between Parganya and the plant-generating earth from both standpoints. Parganya is likened to an animal that gives birth to a heifer, which in turn is the seed of plants, *Rigv.* VII, 101, 1 and here Parganya is the father of the heifer, of the nourishing earth. This is in complete agreement with Germanic mythology; it even says that Parganya "gladdens the earth with his seed," *Rigv.* V, 83, 4. One sees how apparent the concept of incest is here, an idea that in other respects is not uncommon in the hymns of *Rigveda*, and there is every reason to assume that the same indecency of the age entered Germanic mythology and occasioned Loki's insulting statement to Frigg. That the ideas concerning incest changed during the course of centuries need hardly be added.

⁴³ Similarly, *Gylfaginning* 9 informs us that Earth was Odin's wife and daughter. If in fact, Rydberg is correct in identifying Fjörgynn with Odin's brother Hönir (also known as Vé), then this verse contains an allusion to Frigg sleeping with her father and brother-in-law at the same time.