



About the cosmogony

Mircea A. Tamas



gua Pi



gua Sui



gua Gui Mei



gua Tai

The four hexagrams presented here symbolize a synthesis of cosmogony. Yet, to properly understand their significance we have to embark on a journey that will implicate the symbols found in different traditions and which, in fact, belong to the primordial Tradition.¹

In the Hindu tradition, Brahma produced the Cosmos “simply by way of sport,” as a pastime (**Brahma Samhitâ** XVII). Playfully, the Principle unveils one of its many facets and manifests the Cosmos; playfully, the Principle unveils another facet and “falls” as Dragon, together with the World; and, revealing another face, the Principle comes down as the solar Hero to save the decaying Cosmos and behead the Dragon. At the same time, the Principle remains immutable, infinite, without parts, unchanged in itself. Brahma is, therefore, the Creator, the Savior and the Devil all-together, the same as his Shakti is the one-and-only, yet has many faces. The Principle is the supernal Sun, super-luminous, absolute and unmovable; yet it “comes down” as *Oriens* (*Sol Invictus*, the Savior) and also “falls” as a lamed, “mortal” sun to produce and maintain the Existence.

The Principle is a Master Puppeteer.

It is useless to try to discover the terrestrial origins of the puppet theater, but there is a general opinion that China was the place where puppetry started as an art; in fact, due to its symbolism, puppetry has no historical origins. It is said that the legendary king Mu, on his way home from Kunlun Mountain (a symbol of *Axis Mundi*), noticed a carpenter

¹ The traditional Chinese cosmogony has the theory of the five “elements” as its fundament. The five “elements” (symbolically called water, fire, wood, metal, earth) are rather “agents” and they cannot be compared to Hindu *bhûtas*. However, the present chapter strives to describe the cosmogony from another perspective, even though we fully understand the importance of the five “agents.”

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performing a dance with wooden dolls he had made.¹ The puppet theater is one of the most explicit illustrations of the divine Play (Hindu *Lîlâ*), since the ten thousand beings are “the puppets,” which the Master Puppeteer, Principle and spiritual Sun, rules with its strings, each string representing an integral and total being, a “personality”; the string is the absolute “thread of life,” an immortal thread, which constitutes the axis of what René Guénon called “the multiple states of the being,” but, as long as this thread, this personality, appears as different from the Great Person, Mahâ Purusha, it will continue to feed the whirl of the multiple existences, and only the breaking of the string will cause the liberation from the whirl, from the chain (*pâsha*), and will transform the being from “pure animal” (*pashu*) into Man, when the string is absorbed into the Golden String, Dao’s Activity, and the being is bound forever to this Chain.

Striving to break the chain only to be chained again would appear to be a dim-witted endeavour. The **Rig-Vêda** transmitted the prayer: “Liberate me from the curse of Varuna, from the claudication of Yama,” where “claudication,” from the Latin *claudicare*, “to limp,” refers to having the legs tied up, like Saturn, and has, similar to “Varuna’s bonds,” two facets: the limping, with regard to the world, means imperfection, ephemeral, evil; the limping, with regard to the Principle, means One without the second, the Golden Chain, the Dragon; we could reformulate the *Vedic* prayer: “Liberate me from the Varuna’s bonds, to be bound to Varuna, and save me from limping to become lame as Varuna.” It is the upside down thinking (*pratyakcêtanâ*), used in all the traditions, but considered today a characteristic of Zen.

In the Hindu tradition, *Axis Mundi* is also called *ashwattha*, “the horse’s station,” the horse being another emblem of Dao’s Activity, of the spiritual Sun, of Prâna, Brahma’s Breath. The horse is, consequently, identified with Prajâpati, the Lord of all ten thousand beings, and *ashwamedha*, “the horse sacrifice,” symbolizes the spiritual “binding and unbinding.”

The **Brhadâranayaka Upanishad** commences with the words: “Om. The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn, its eye the sun, its prâna the air, its open mouth the fire called Vaishwânara, and the body of the sacrificial horse is the Year. Its back is the heaven, its belly the atmosphere, its hoof the earth, its sides the four cardinal points, its members the seasons, its joints the months and fortnights, its feet the days and nights, its bones the stars and its flesh the clouds. (...) Its forepart is the ascending sun, its hind part the descending sun, its yawning is lightning, its body shaking is thundering.”

As we have already seen, in the previous chapters, even though we did not explicitly draw attention upon it, the **Yi Jing** hides a triple significance related to the triad Cosmos – Year – Man. The **Brhadâranayaka Upanishad** suggests the same triad; in fact, any traditional doctrine has to shelter this triple symbolism.

“Inside the Year, the Man (Purusha, Prajâpati) felt the desire to talk. ‘Bhûr!’ he exclaimed; and there was the Earth. ‘Bhuvar!’ he exclaimed; and there was the Atmosphere (the intermediary space). ‘Svar!’ he exclaimed; and there was the Sky” (**Satapatha Brâhmana** XI.1.6.3-4).

¹ Puppetry is related to the Chinese shadow theater (the shadow puppets were made of animal skin), and to the ancient mask theater. In the Middle Ages, the Christian tradition used puppetry to transmit its sacred tales; the name “marionette” (puppet controlled by strings) means “little Mary.”

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“The Three Mothers in *the World* are Aleph, Mem and Shin: the Heavens were produced from Fire; the Earth from the Water; and the Air from the Spirit is as a reconciler between the Fire and the Water. The Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem and Shin, Fire, Water and Air, are shown in *the Year*: from the fire came heat, from the waters came cold, and from the air was produced the temperate state, again a mediator between them. The Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem and Shin, Fire, Water and Air, are found in *Man*: from the fire was formed the head; from the water the belly; and from the air was formed the chest, again placed as a mediator between the others. These Three Mothers did He produce and design, and combine; and He sealed them as the three mothers in *the Universe, in the Year and in Man* – both male and female” (**Sepher Yetsirah**, III, 3-5). Paul Vulliaud said: “Sepher Yetsirah considers the Universe from the viewpoint of harmony. Hence, this symbolism results, of the «signs» or «witnesses,» called the World, the Year and the Man. (...) The Cosmos, Year and Man were the «witnesses» because everything referred to them, since they were images of each other.”¹

Indeed, any “sign” has a triple meaning and purpose: a cosmogonic one (the production of the World), a cyclic one (the rotation of the World) and an initiatory one (the Liberation), and from this perspective the horse contains all three “witnesses,” since the horse is The Three Worlds, and the Year, and the Universal Man as a synthesis of the initiatory realization. Yet, even though each “sign” hides the triple meaning, always there is a fourth one, beyond all the symbols, corresponding to the Principle,² and for this reason the horse is essentially the supreme Sun, and primarily his head is the Sun.

In the **Satapatha Brâhmana** (XIV, I), there is a tale about the sage (*rshi*) Dadhyac threatened by Indra with beheading if he unveils the secret initiatory lore (*madhu-vidya*); hence, the Ashwins, twin brothers, having the Sun as father and the mare as mother,³ will replace brahmana’s head with a horse’s head, and this very horse’s head will transmit the esoteric teaching. Indra will behead Dadhyac, and the horse riders Ashwins will bring back the initial head. The sacrificial and ritual act of beheading is a special step of the initiatory journey, and here it connects the symbolism of the horse with Man, the third term of the triad. In the **Brhadâraryaka Upanishad** (II, 5.16), the silent meditation is highlighted, associated with the sun, and transmitted by a horse’s head, and also the secret meditation (on the Self), the spiritual realization being inseparable from the cosmogonic act.

The head of *Yajna* (the Sacrifice), for example, after the sacred act of beheading, became the Sun; the rite *Pravargya* will operate the restoration. As in the case of the horse’s head, so the sun at the beginning of the cycle and of the world leaves the World Tree (the beheading) and comes back at the end of times: from this angle should be understood the association of the sacred horse with the Year. René Guénon affirmed that, in different traditions, the sun represents the fruit of the World Tree, the tree being indeed the “sun’s

¹ Paul Vulliaud, **La Kabbale Juive**, Émile Nourry, 1923.

² Therefore, *Âtmâ* has four conditions, and the **Yi Jing** is the Book of Changes, but contains, beyond the triad Cosmos – Year – Man, the mystery of Dao.

³ It is the same mare of the **Yi Jing**. On the other hand, the trigram Qian, Heaven, has the horse as an emblem, the dragon being attributed to Zhen, the thunderbolt.

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station,”¹ and the Chinese character signifying the sunset depicts the sun resting in the tree at the end of the day.²

In the Far-Eastern tradition, as we saw, the horse is replaced by the dragon; and the **Sepher Yetsirah** stated: “The Celestial Dragon, Tali, is placed over the Universe like a king upon the throne; the revolution of the Year is as a king over his dominion; the heart of Man is as a king in warfare” (VI, 2).

All the traditions safeguard rich data about the Dragon, either with respect to cosmogony or regarding the initiatory process. Let us remember some famous dragons: Ananta (“the infinity”) – the dragon of the primordial abyss, on which Vishnu reposed; Pangu, the Universal Man of the Chinese tradition, the one who split in two the World Egg; the emperor Fu Xi; Cadmos (radical *qdm*, “primordial”), the founder of Thebes. The Dragon is associated in these examples with infinity and primordially and so, as stated in the **Yi Jing**, it is an equivalent of the Principle.³ All the more the dragon should be present as a symbol for the terms of the triad Cosmos – Year – Man. There is the well-known picture of the World Tree and the dragon wound around it, where the dragon’s coils represent the cosmic helix, the degrees of the universal Existence, and the cosmic cycles, while the tree is Dao’s Activity; in the Hindu tradition, the *Axis Mundi* is Mount Meru and the dragon Ananta is wound around it. In Orphism, the god Phanes is born from the World Egg as Universal Man, the Egg being the Zodiac; the superior half of the World Egg, which is Phanes’ hood, represents Tian, the Heaven that covers, and the inferior half is Di, the Earth, supporting the god, who symbolizes Ren, the Mediator and the Grand Triad’s middle term.⁴

NOTE:

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Ariana Muresan

contact@rose-crossbooks.com

¹ This is the meaning of “solstice”; we note the equivalence with *ashwattha*, “the horse’s station.” The ideogram for a tree’s fruit shows the sun as fruit (Wieger 280):



² The ideogram for sunrise (Wieger 282) shows the sun in a tree (we should notice the tree’s symbol, with three roots and three branches):



³ The “claudication” in the case of the dragon is extreme, since it has no legs.

⁴ We refer here, of course, to the Far-Eastern triad Tian – Di – Ren.