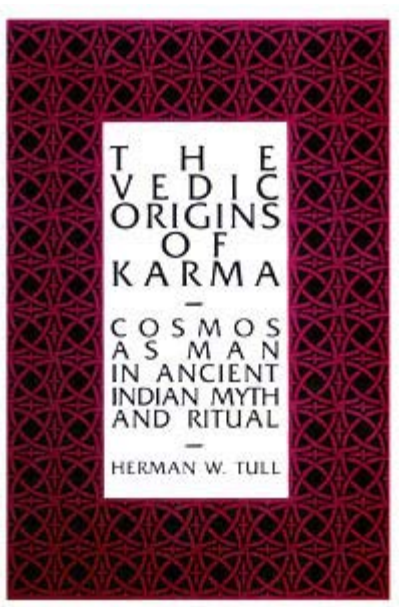


THE
VEDIC
ORIGINS
OF
KARMA

—
COSMOS
AS MAN
IN ANCIENT
INDIAN MYTH
AND RITUAL

—
HERMAN W. TULL



The Vedic Origins of Karma

title:	The Vedic Origins of Karma : Cosmos As Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual SUNY Series in Hindu Studies
author:	Tull, Herman Wayne.
publisher:	State University of New York Press
isbn10 asin:	0791400948
print isbn13:	9780791400944
ebook isbn13:	9780585088464
language:	English
subject	Karma, Vedic literature--History and criticism.
publication date:	1989
lcc:	BL2015.K3T85 1989eb
ddc:	294.5/22
subject:	Karma, Vedic literature--History and criticism.

cover

SUNY Series in Hindu Studies
Wendy Doniger, Editor

The Vedic Origins of Karma

Cosmos as Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual

Herman W. Tull

State University of New York Press

Disclaimer:

This book contains characters with diacritics. When the characters can be represented using the ISO 8859-1 character set (<http://www.w3.org/TR/images/latin1.gif>), netLibrary will represent them as they appear in the original text, and most computers will be able to show the full characters correctly. In order to keep the text searchable and readable on most computers, characters with diacritics that are not part of the ISO 8859-1 list will be represented without their diacritical marks.

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

© 1989 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

For information, address State University of New York
Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tull, Herman Wayne.
The Vedic origins of karma : cosmos as man in ancient Indian myth
and ritual / by Herman W. Tull.

p. cm.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-7914-0094-8.ISBN 0-7914-0095-6 (pbk.)

1. Karma. 2. Vedic literature—History and criticism. I. Title.

BL2015.K3T85 1989

294.5'22dc19 88-37610

CIP

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Chini and Jasha

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
	5
The Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine	7
A Note on Texts, Method, Terms, and Translations	
Chapter 1. The Problem of Karma and the Textual Sources	12
	14
The Brahmanas and Upanisads in the View of Nineteenth Century Indology	21
The Upanisads and the Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine	28
The Earliest Notice of the Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in the Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanisads	41
Conclusion: The Karma Doctrine in the Context of Brahmanic Thought	
Chapter 2. The Cosmos as Man: The Image of the Cosmos in Vedic Thought	44
	47
The Cosmic Image and Its Vicissitudes in Vedic Thought	50
Purusa and the Creation of the Cosmos	54
The Reenactment of the Cosmogony	57
Prajapati and the Creation of the Cosmos	69
Conclusion: The Reenactment of the Cosmogony	

Chapter 3. The Fire Altar (Agnicayana) as Man and Cosmos	72
	72
The Problem of Sacrifice	

	77
The Problem of Sacrifice and the Agnicayana	
	81
The Construction of the Fire Altar	
	95
Conclusion: Man and Cosmos in the Fire Altar	
Chapter 4. From Death to Rebirth	103
	108
The Agnicayana and the Smasanacayana	
	119
Conclusion: The Karma Doctrine in the Context of Brahmanic Thought	
Abbreviations of Vedic Texts	123
Notes	124
Bibliography	161
Index	175

Acknowledgments

This book is a somewhat unexpected by-product of my doctoral dissertation, submitted to the Department of History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University in 1985. Simply because the completion of a dissertation is an arduous enough task, I did not originally see my work as something that might later be published in the form of a book. An odd coincidence has brought this book back into the hands of Wendy Doniger, who first encouraged me to seek a publisher though as I now recall it, it was encouragement stated in the imperative mood. Certainly, without her support I would not have so willingly revised it "one more time," nor so readily submitted it to the scrutiny of a publisher. This latter process due to the efforts of William Eastman of the State University of New York Press has been a surprisingly agreeable one.

Over the years many people taught me a great deal and along the way became close friends. I now find that many of my questions were their questions; for, those who taught me left an indelible mark though each one of a different sort on my way of thinking: what I thought about as well as how I thought about it. They are, at Hobart College, Professors Marvin Bram, Lowell Bloss, Chris Vescey (now at Colgate University), and my classmate John Blodgett; at Northwestern University, Professors George Bond, Edmund Perry, Isshi Yamada, and Robert Cohn (now at Lafayette College); and at the University of Chicago, Professors Edwin Gerow (now at Reed College) and Wendy Doniger, and my colleague David Lawrence. Most recently my colleagues at Rutgers University, Professors Henry Bowden, Alberto Green, James Jones, Chun-fang Yu, and Mahlon Smith, and, at Princeton University, Professor John Kelly, have by their examples challenged me to explore further in my own field.

I am especially indebted to Wendy Doniger, who gave unstintingly of her time to nurture this project, as she shared with me her ideas, her library, and the invaluable stray references that textualists tend to collect over the years. The remarkable enthusiasm with

which she read and commented on several drafts of this project bolstered me in what seemed to be a neverending process of writing and rewriting, thinking and rethinking.

My parents, Gerald and Helene Tull, never questioned, but at all times enthusiastically supported the choices I made.

My wife Lekha has shared this project with me from its inception to its completion. Through her persistence sacrificing with the one concern of seeing my work in a completed form, first as a dissertation and now as a book she has contributed to it perhaps more than I have.

Introduction

J. C. Heesterman has recently observed that the Vedic sacrificial texts propose "a separate self-contained world ruled exclusively by the comprehensive and exhaustive order of the ritual." ¹ The closed world of the Vedic sacrifice recalls the larger closure of the Hindu universe, depicted from an early period as an egg "whose total contents can never increase but can only be redistributed."² As Wendy O'Flaherty has noted within the world egg "the Hindu cosmos is a series of receding frames, circles within circles."³ This image of circles within circles leads back to the world of the Vedic sacrifice, which itself consisted of a series of concentric circles;⁴ and so articulates again the close resemblance between the world of the ritual and the larger cosmos.

The world of the sacrifice is intentionally made to resemble the larger cosmos. The Vedic ritualists sought, in their own sacrificial activity, to recreate the primordial events which shaped the cosmos. An often-quoted passage that appears in the Satapatha Brahmana thus declares: "This [ritual act] done now is that which the gods did then [in the beginning]."⁵ What the gods did then was to create the world, an event that the late Vedic texts often depict as having occurred through the sacrifice of an anthropomorphic being, whose dismembered body was formed into the ordered cosmos.

However, the death and destruction implicit in the primordial event created an untenable situation for the sacrificer; in particular, the reenactment of the cosmogony would seem to have required the sacrificer to give up his own life.⁶ The Vedic ritualists attempted to circumvent this actuality by employing various substitutes (ranging from grain and animals to a gold effigy) for the sacrificer's own person. Moreover, the closed world of the ritual, with its carefully delimited boundaries, seems to have been constructed to keep out the reality of death;⁷ for, just as the sacrificial arena itself represented a symbolic cosmos, so, too, the death that occurred in the ritual was only symbolically that of the sacrificer. There was one situation,

however, in which the body of the sacrificer was used as the material of the offering; namely, the funeral rite, which is appropriately called the *final sacrifice* (*antyeṣṭi*). This final sacrifice, in which the death of the sacrificer is a real death, moves the sacrificer from the world of the ritual to the larger cosmos.

This transition forms the subject of what is considered to be the earliest statement of the karma doctrine, a statement that appears in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. After discussing how the deceased enters into the various planes of the cosmos, a process that replicates the dismemberment of the primordial man, the famed Brahmanic sage Yajñavalkya is asked: "What then becomes of this person?" Yajñavalkya then enunciates the doctrine of action (*karman*): "Indeed one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]." ⁸ In the context of Vedic ritual thought good and bad apparently refer to a valuation of action based on ritual exactitude; good being equated with the correct performance of the rite, bad with the incorrect performance. And, since the funeral sacrifice is not performed by the sacrificer who is about to attain either a

good or a bad state, Yajñavalkya is apparently referring not to the funeral sacrifice but to the actions of a lifetime of sacrificial performances. The nature of that activity, which had been contained in the closed world of the ritual, now determines the conditions of the sacrificer's afterlife within the larger cosmos.

This interpretation of the karma doctrine differs from the doctrine's apparent meaning in later texts, which propose that an individual attains a specific state in the afterlife, or is reborn, according to the moral quality of all sorts of actions performed prior to death. If the context in which Yajñavalkya enunciates his doctrine of action is presumed not to be that of the Vedic ritual, then this general meaning can easily be seen in Yajñavalkya's statement, "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]." And, in fact, this was precisely how nineteenth and early twentieth century Indologists tended to view this and other presentations of the karma doctrine in the Upanisads. These scholars remained curiously silent about the doctrine's attachment here to the paradigmatic event of the Vedic ritual, the sacrifice of the cosmic man, and focused instead on how, in isolation, the phrase "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]" seemed to express a principle of morality extending to all sorts of actions.⁹

How and why scholars of an earlier generation adopted this view of the karma doctrine is discussed in the first chapter of this book. At the simplest level, this viewpoint owes much to a larger

page_2

Page 3

tendency among these scholars to disparage "priestcraft," a perspective rooted in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. ¹⁰ In its application to the ancient Indian context this tendency led scholars to separate the Brahmanas, ritual texts par excellence and the exclusive possession of the Vedic sacerdotalists, from the Upanisads, discursive texts that seek to express the nature of reality. Accordingly, the karma doctrine, which is first articulated in the Upanisads, was seen as addressing itself to issues not germane to the Vedic ritual tradition. There is strong textual evidence, however, suggesting the continuity of the Brahmanas and the Upanisads: their physical contiguity; their use of a similar "idiom";¹¹ their claims of a shared authorship. In the early Upanisads, the Brhadaranyaka and the Chandogya in particular, the Vedic rites represent the starting point for the disquisition into the nature of what is real: beneath increasingly greater levels of abstraction lies the concrete event of the sacrifice.

It is this ritual substratum that scholars of an earlier generation failed, or were simply unwilling, to recognize in their examination of Upanisadic thought. Such lack of recognition, I believe, was at the base of these scholars' inability to understand generally the origin of the karma doctrine,¹² for at least certain aspects of the doctrine are clearly rooted in the conceptual context of the Vedic ritual milieu.¹³ Certainly, the notion that particular actions lead an individual after death to the attainment of a particular state ("becoming good by good action, bad by bad") reflects precisely the sort of effective action that, albeit in the closed world of the ritual, was believed to result from the sacrifice. In examining this ritual substratum I shall draw out some of the difficulties inherent to the sacrifice; in particular, those that resulted from the relationship of the officiants, who performed the ritual, to the sacrificer (*yajamana*), who was supposed to benefit from the rite. How this relationship affected notions of the attainments of the afterlifethat is, the transition from the world of the ritual to an existence in the larger cosmos clearly articulated in the formulation of the Upanisadic karma doctrine.

In moving from the world of the ritual to the larger cosmos the sacrificer becomes *saloka*, "one together with the world(s)." The ability to attain this state implies that the sacrificer's own existence is in some sense correlative to that of the cosmos though perhaps this relationship could not be realized in the sacrificer's ordinary experience. The late Vedic cosmology expresses this idea of a correlation between man and cosmos in the ideology of the

page_3

Page 4

cosmic man (Purusa in the Rgveda, Prajapati in the Brahmanas). The investigation of this ideologyas the notion that the cosmos arose from the sacrifice of a primordial anthropomorphic being expresses it is the subject of Chapter 2, "The Cosmos as Man: The Image of the Cosmos in Vedic Thought." This myth's implicit notion that the cosmos has the shape of a man reflects the belief that man might potentially integrate himself with the cosmos. Here, the correlation between body and cosmos, senses and natural phenomena, that the Vedic cosmogony proposes, seems to facilitateat least theoreticallythis integration.

However, as noted earlier, the application of this cosmogonic theory would seem to have required the dismemberment

and death of the individual who attempted to re-create the primordial activity of the cosmic man. Although the sacrificer may have been able to meet this requirement in the funeral rites, the "final sacrifice," the event of the sacrificer's death in the ordinary (i.e., nonfuneral) rituals creates an untenable situation. Death would keep the sacrificer from meeting a myriad of ritual obligations, obligations which could be fulfilled only through a lifetime of sacrificial performances. One particular response to this problem is seen in the Brahmanic myth of Prajapati, which modifies certain elements of the established Vedic mythology of the cosmic man. This myth, which is the subject of the second half of Chapter 2, replaces the act of a cosmogonic dismemberment with a combination of creative activities: heating, desire, and in particular, sexual generation. Whereas in each instance the body of the cosmic man shapes the cosmos, the emphasis shifts from a disjunctive to a conjunctive model of creation: Purusa establishes the various cosmic spheres with his own dismembered body parts (he is said literally to be "divided up," *vi-/dha*); Prajapati puts himself into the cosmos by a process of "uniting [with it] as a pair" (mithunam *sam-/bhu*). The Brahmanic myth thereby proposes a model that, in its application, would seem to alleviate man of the need to die in the ritual performance.

To meet the demands of the ritual theory that is, the notion that the sacrificer reenacts the cosmic man's primordial activity, these modifications required a complex ceremonial. The ritual of constructing the fire altar (*agnicayana*), as it is presented in the Satapatha Brahmana, is considered to be the greatest practical expression of this modified cosmogony. 14 The complexity of the Agnicayana, like the complexity of the Prajapati mythology, derives from its attempt to circumvent the problem of death. The Vedic

page_4

Page 5

sacrifice, accurately described by J. C. Heesterman as "a controlled act of death and destruction," 15 by its nature would seem to oppose this attempt. How the Agnicayana ritualists responded to the problem of death in the sacrifice and how their response allowed the human sacrificer to replicate the events of the cosmogony forms the subject of Chapter 3, "The Fire Altar as Man and Cosmos."

Chapter 4 returns to the nature of the sacrificer's transition, through his death, from the self-contained world of the ritual to the larger cosmos. How the ritual event prepares the sacrificer for the afterlife, and how it facilitates his transition into the larger cosmos on the event of his funeral forms the particular subject of this chapter. The relationship between the Agnicayana and the funeral rite for one who in life performed the Agnicayana, exemplifies this relationship. For, the funeral rite for one who in life performed the Agnicayana replicates the Agnicayana, with the apparent intention of ensuring that the same attainments experienced in the ritual event are attained again in the sacrificer's transition into the larger cosmos. Along with this specific relationship between rites performed in life and the funeral rite there are certain general ritual theories that express how the sacrificial oblation which, at the funeral rite, was the sacrificer moved from this world to the other planes of the cosmos. One prevalent theory explains this event through the model of a cycle of generation and regeneration; thus, the smoke from the sacrifice forms clouds in the other world, which then return to this world in the form of rain, which nourishes the plants and creatures, which again form the objects of the sacrifice. 16 These theories lead us back to the karma doctrine, as they represent an essential aspect of the theory of rebirth as it appears in the earliest expressions of this doctrine.

The Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine

Recent studies suggest a consensus regarding the origins of the karma doctrine, a subject that really is "shrouded in the mists of time." On the one hand, the karma doctrine seems to contain an agricultural component, specifically one that reflects the cultivation of rice: as O'Flaherty notes, "rice is planted twice, first the seed and then the seedling that is replanted; rice is also harvested over and over in a year, rather than at a single harvest season; hence it is a natural symbol for rebirth." 17 And, because rice cultivation was not a feature of the Indus Valley, where Vedic culture arose, these notions support a "tribal" origin for the karma

page_5

Page 6

doctrine. However, the supposition of a tribal origin in a certain sense evades the issue of karma's origins, for, citing O'Flaherty once again: "To postulate a . . . 'tribal origin' is to some extent a way of passing the buck away from the major religions which must be explained; it is a scholarly way of saying 'somewhere else.'" 18

Throughout India's history, there has been a constant exchange of ideas and practices between tribal (non-textual, local) and textual traditions. The osmotic nature of the Indian tradition is evident from what has been a tired and fruitless attempt to delineate Vedic from non-Vedic (an enterprise rooted in the nineteenth century desire to separate racially ancient India's Aryan and non-Aryan populations)¹⁹ in the development of the ancient Indian tradition. Quite simply, once an idea or practice, whatever its origins, was incorporated in the Vedic tradition, the nature of which can be understood through the evidence of a substantial textual record, it must be considered Vedic that such ideas and practices may have been antithetical to the established Vedic tradition bears no relevance here. For example, the Brahmanas contain a notion of the sacrificial oblation that seems based in agriculture (though perhaps not in rice culture per se); that is, the notion that the oblation went from the smoke of the sacrifice to become the clouds, rain, plants or food, semen, and again creatures, which form the oblation.²⁰ Although this notion may have originated outside the Vedic sphere, its association with the sacrifice means that, at least by the time these texts were composed, this notion was Vedic. In choosing to discuss karma's *Vedic* origins, I have in mind this inclusive view of what is Vedic.

At the most basic level, the Vedic tradition employed the term *karman*, from the Sanskrit root */kr* ("to do"), to describe the "doing" of the sacrificial ritual. However, over the many centuries during which it represented India's "culturally hegemonous" system of belief and practice,²¹ the Vedic sacrifice developed into an entity of astounding complexity, and the "doing" of the sacrifice became more than a matter of simple action.

Karma, as a "doctrine," emerges from these complex structures; the textual point of this emergence is the early Upanisads. This textual epoch represents a "privileged" point in the history of the Indian tradition; for these texts represent at once the furthest edge of Vedic sacrificial thought and the first stage in the rise of classical Hindu thought. And at this point certain notions, such as karma, attain the stature of "doctrines"; that is, they are articulated in ways quite similar to their later existence as the presuppositions for nearly all (post-Vedic) Hindu thought.

page_6

Page 7

The aim of this book is to examine and delineate the Vedic structures leading to this emergence, for, I believe, the earliest statements of karma in the Upanisads look back to structures, patterns, and paradigms already contained in both ideology and practice in the Vedic rite. And, though not all these structures may have been "originally" Vedic, before the karma doctrine emerges in the Upanisads, its antecedents were already entrenched within the sphere of the established Vedic tradition.

A Note on Texts, Method, Terms, and Translations

The Vedic texts Samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanisads and Vedangas ("limbs" of the Veda) with their many recensions, constitute a vast corpus. Although a number of the texts in this corpus have been used in this study, it has not been my intention to present a comprehensive view of the Vedic textual tradition. For the most part, the texts cited in this study are from the late Vedic period (ca. 800-600 B.C.E.), when the latest of the Brahmanas and the earliest of the Upanisads were composed. One Brahmana in particular, the Satapatha Brahmana, reflects this transition in textual epochs, as it contains within its final book the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, a text with which it has much in common.²² This Brahmana, said to occupy "the most significant and important position of all the Brahmanas"²³ and described as "one of the highest achievements in the whole range of Vedic literature,"²⁴ has been used as the chief source for the views expressed in this book.

Despite this praise the Satapatha Brahmana has not escaped the general disdain Western scholars have expressed for the Brahmanas. In 1860, more than a decade before critical editions of a significant number of Brahmanas became available to scholars in the West,²⁵ Max Müller declared that: "The general character of these works is marked by shallow and insipid grandiloquence, by priestly conceit, and antiquarian pedantry."²⁶ If this warning did not sufficiently discourage scholars from investigating the Brahmana texts, Müller went on to note a few years later that: "No person who is not acquainted beforehand with the place which the Brahmanas fill in the history of the Indian mind, could read more than ten pages without being disgusted."²⁷ For Müller, only a trained Sanskritist much in the same fashion as the physician alone is able to bear the raving of madmen possessed the intestinal fortitude to face these texts "which no circulating library

page_7

would touch" 28 and study them "as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots."29

From the mid-nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century, Indologists repeatedly expressed these same sentiments.³⁰ Müller's legacy is clearly seen in Julius Eggeling's translation of the Satapatha Brahmana. Eggeling spent twenty years on this task. Yet, he introduces his translation with a warning to his readers about the vapidity of thought they were about to encounter:

The translator of the Satapatha Brahmana can be under no illusion as to the reception his production is likely to meet with at the hand of the general reader. In the whole range of literature few works are probably less calculated to excite the interest to any outside the very limited number of specialists, than the ancient theological writings of the Hindus, known by the names of Brahmanas. For wearisome prolixity of exposition, characterized by dogmatic assertion and a flimsy symbolism, rather than by serious reasoning, these works are perhaps not equalled anywhere; unless indeed, it be by the speculative vapourings of the Gnostics, than which, in the opinion of the learned translators of Iranaeus, "nothing more absurd has probably ever been imagined by rational beings."31

In view of Eggeling's remarks it is not surprising that the Satapatha Brahmana, despite its accessibility as part of the Sacred Books of the East series, has remained the nearly exclusive domain of a few specialists.

Before I read Eggeling's warning I read his translation of the Satapatha Brahmana, and then read it a second and a third time. Having by this time gained a general idea of the structure and peculiarities of the text I proceeded to make my own translations of all the parts that I found particularly interesting. This procedure has been my "method of interpretation." For the most part the passages on which I focused contained some sort of incongruity: one sage contradicting another sage, one myth overlayed on another myth, a certain ritual procedure juxtaposed on another procedure. I read and reread, translated and retranslated these passages until I thought I had some idea of what the conflict was about, and then looked for other patterns in the text and in contemporary texts to which the conflict seemed related. Although this method of interpretation largely ignores the historical factors that may underlie some of these conflicts, it does concern itself with understanding

page_8

the larger structures into which these conflicts were resolved. As Wendy O'Flaherty has stated of this method: "for the question to ask is not where the disparate elements originated, but why they were put together, and why kept together."32

By asking these questions of the Brahmanas, texts that to Müller were "simply twaddle, and what is worse theological twaddle,"³³ the outlines of a coherent system of thought begin to emerge. The Brahmana period represents a crucial period in the development of the Indian tradition; many of the patterns that later dominate both the ritual and philosophical spheres were established in this epoch. Certainly, the conceptual paradigms first articulated in the Brahmanas dominate the Upanisads, the watershed texts of the Indian speculative tradition. To the modern reader the Brahmanic thinkers seem to have expressed themselves in a style that is at best idiosyncratic, at worst incomprehensible. During the long period, more than a hundred years by the most conservative estimates, in which these texts were composed, the Brahmanic thinkers seem to have encountered a number of disparate ritual and philosophical elements, which challenged and thus needed to be assimilated into the existing Vedic tradition. Yet, although the process of assimilation seems to have led to changes in how established rites were performed and in how they were understood, the several authors of the Brahmanas did not concern themselves with eradicating obsolete views (an enterprise that in an oral tradition such as the Brahmanas would have destroyed the "text") but rather tended to juxtapose one set of views over another.

It is undeniable that the authors of the Brahmanas often resorted to what Eggeling called a "flimsy symbolism." Yet, in view of the peculiar circumstances in which these texts were composed, this "flimsy symbolism" represents the means by which the Brahmanic authors could, and did, bind together any number of seemingly disparate elements into what is in fact an elaborately conceived system of thought and practice. Within this system many of the presuppositions of later Indian thought, such as the doctrine of karma and rebirth, were first articulated. And thus, consigning the Brahmanas to a shadow existence as the aberrations of a cultural epoch leaves an unassailable gap in our understanding of the Indian

tradition.

The system of transliteration used follows the now well-established conventions for the Sanskrit language. These conventions, however, have not been imposed on quotations from other authors, particularly those who wrote in the last century. The style

page_9

Page 10

of transliteration preferred then is most noticeable for using *ri* for the vocalic *r* (for example, *Rig* instead of *Rg*), and *sh* for the lingual *s* (for example, *Upanishad* instead of *Upanisad*). 34

One convention adopted for this study is the use of the term *Brahmanic* to indicate the milieu of the Brahmana texts and not to refer simply to the priestly caste, the Brahmins, who were chiefly responsible for these texts. The distinction here may seem insignificant; the Brahmanas were the nearly exclusive domain of the priestly caste, thus their content is in some sense "priestly." What I seek to avoid, however, is the implication of a simple equation between *Brahmanic*, which reflects a vast textual epoch, and *priestly*; for, in the works of an earlier generation of Indologists where this equation was implied, *Brahmanic* bears a distinctly pejorative sense. Throughout this book *Brahmanic* is used in precisely the same manner as the term *Upanisadic* has long been employed; that is, to refer to a textual milieu and not to reflect the character of the authors.

Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Vedic texts are my own. In the case of the Satapatha Brahmana, Julius Eggeling's translation though its style is cumbersome has been a constant guide.³⁵ (And, in view of its accessibility, quotations from the Satapatha Brahmana have been kept to a minimum.) My debt to Eggeling, though large, represents one part of a much larger debt to the Indologists of the last century and their remarkable legacy a vast body of critical editions, translations, and analyses of the Vedic texts. Certainly, the nineteenth century was a privileged period in the history of Indology; for it seems the best minds in the West turned their attention to the Vedic texts.³⁶

The prodigious ability of these scholars, however, did not make them immune to a certain narrowness of perspective, a narrowness that reflected the ethnocentrism of nineteenth century scholarship in general. Nonetheless, because these scholars possessed a breadth of knowledge of the Vedic texts that has been achieved only sporadically in recent decades (e.g., in the work of Renou and of Gonda), their works yet remain for the modern researcher the point of entry into the Vedic world. However, while the works of this earlier generation of Indologists allowed me to find my way through the maze of Vedic literature, I did not allow their interpretations of Vedic thought and practice to define the limits of my own views. I often found that although these scholars knew where things were, their understanding of why they were there was inadequate; accordingly, in the case of karma these

page_10

Page 11

scholars rightly identified the early manifestations of the doctrine but, because they believed the Upanisadic thinkers sought only to denigrate and dispense with the thought of the preceding Brahmanic period, failed to discern karma's roots in the Vedic sacrifice. If my treatment of the views held by this earlier generation of scholars at times appears unkind, it reflects, I believe, a process endemic to scholarship; as Max Müller himself observed in his pioneering work, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*: "Our own studies may seemingly refer to matters that are but secondary and preparatory, to the clearance, so to say, of the rubbish which passing ages have left on the monuments of the human mind. But we shall never mistake that rubbish for the monuments which it covers." 37

page_11

Page 12

1.
The Problem of Karma and the Textual Sources

The doctrine of karma and rebirth was well known to Western Indologists long before the Indian textual tradition had been fully investigated. In one of the earliest knowledgeable accounts of Hindu beliefs and practices, Abbé J. A. Dubois noted the "doctrine is, as is generally known, one of the fundamental principles of the Hindu religion" and cited a popular religious text that accurately represented the main tenets of the karma doctrine, ¹ while he depicted with wild inaccuracy the Indian philosophical schools, grossly misrepresenting their doctrines as well as those found in other orthodox Hindu texts.² This is not at all surprising; although the doctrine is found as a presupposition in almost all Indian philosophical thought,³ it is perhaps most widely disseminated on the level of popular culture. As the anthropologist Ursula Sharma has noted: "In practice the individual receives the concept of karma as a part of a living folk tradition."⁴

However, that the doctrine imbues virtually every level of Indian thought seems to hinder the task of arriving at an explicit definition of karma.⁵ Because the general parameters of the doctrine are so well known, the doctrine is often defined by default as one eminent Indologist remarked: "The doctrine is so well known that it seems hardly necessary to define karma."⁶ This approach assumes the meaning of karma is fundamentally the same regardless of its context. Yet, not all its several elements—causality, rebirth, ethicization⁷—are implied in each instance the doctrine occurs. To understand what karma means first requires an assessment of its context.⁸

The failure to assess properly the doctrine's context has been an enduring problem in efforts to understand the nature of karma in its earliest appearances. Scholars have generally agreed that

page_12

Page 13

the earliest formulation of the karma doctrine occurs in the Upanisads. ⁹ However, the doctrine's pre-Upanisadic history represents, as the great nineteenth century Sanskritist W. D. Whitney noted, "one of the most difficult questions in the religious history of India, how that doctrine arose, out of what it developed, to what feature of the ancient faith it attached itself."¹⁰ The problem of ascertaining the karma doctrine's pre-Upanisadic history may be attributed to the view that nineteenth and early twentieth century Indologists held regarding the relationship of the Upanisads to the preceding Brahmanic period; namely, that the Upanisads rejected entirely the viewpoints expressed in the Brahmanas and so expressed views unprecedented in ancient Indian thought. As a result of this view scholars often failed to acknowledge or simply ignored that the Upanisadic contexts in which the doctrine first appears exhibit themes clearly drawn from the Brahmanas. And, because the meaning of the karma doctrine is inextricably linked to the circumstances of its presentation, these scholars often incorrectly assessed the import of the karma doctrine in its earliest appearances.

In particular, there was a marked tendency in these scholars' interpretations to emphasize that, similar to its later occurrences, the Upanisadic karma doctrine was characterized by a concern with a broad range of ethical behavior and its consequences. The supposed range of the Upanisadic karma doctrine's ethical concern contrasts sharply with the limited sphere of Brahmanic ethics, which values behavior in terms of ritual performance. Yet, rather than turn to the Brahmanas' ritual orientation, which is an obvious aspect of the early Upanisadic karma doctrine, scholars preferred to interpret this doctrine through imposing upon it a broad notion of ethics. This approach resulted not only in the estrangement of the karma doctrine from its original context but, in an odd circular argument, in the estrangement of the thought of the Upanisads from that of the Brahmanas. For, if karma in its earliest appearances in the Upanisads was indeed broadly ethical in scope, then the doctrine itself evinced a gulf between Brahmanic and Upanisadic thought.

Although many of the views expressed by scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarding the relationship of Upanisadic and Brahmanic thought, and the role of the karma

page_13

Page 14

doctrine in that relationship, are no longer considered to be authoritative, the work of these scholars represents the foundation of modern Indological studies (and also a large part of the foundation of the modern study of history of religions). Accordingly, these views, which led scholars to discount the role of Brahmanic thought in the formulation of the karma doctrine, underlie the confusion that still reigns regarding the doctrine's early history. ¹¹ The attempt to discern the Vedic origins of karma thus requires a reexamination, of how and why an earlier generation of scholars arrived at their peculiar view of the relationship of the Brahmanas and the Upanisads, to see where scholarship made a wrong turn and so obfuscated karma's early history.

Following this examination, I shall turn to a detailed study of the karma doctrine's earliest appearances in the Upanisads. I do not intend here to formulate an explicit definition of the karma doctrine; rather, my intention is to ascertain its meaning within the larger context of Brahmanic thought, where I believe the origins of the Upanisadic karma doctrine lie. Here, it appears the doctrine represents the natural outgrowth and culmination of certain developments in the performance of the Vedic ritual in particular, those concerning the role of the individual sacrificer and the nature of the results of the ritual performance in both this world and the next.

The Brahmanas and Upanisads in the View of Nineteenth Century Indology

Although a realistic depiction of the Vedic texts appeared in 1805, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that Western scholars were able to undertake a systematic investigation of the whole of the Vedic literature.¹² Significant for the later course of Vedic studies was the availability during this interval of a Latin translation of the Upanisads, Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*,¹³ and its introduction into Western academic circles by scholars such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Schelling, who embraced the philosophy of these texts.¹⁴ These scholars esteemed what they perceived to be the timeless spirit of these texts; Schopenhauer, in fact, anticipated that the influence of the Upanisads "will not be less profound than the revival of Greek in

page_14

Page 15

the fourteenth century." ¹⁵ However, as Edward Said has recently noted of early Oriental studies: "almost without exception such overesteem was followed by a counterresponse: the Orient appeared lamentably underhumanized, antidemocratic, barbaric, and so forth."¹⁶ In the early history of Vedic studies, the obvious over-valuation of Upanisadic thought inevitably led to an under-valuation of other aspects of the Vedic literature. Even before the Vedic literature had been thoroughly investigated, Schopenhauer thus expressed the opinion that "the Upanisads were the only portion of the Veda which deserved our study, and that all the rest was priestly rubbish (*Priesterwirtschaft*)."¹⁷

When scholars did turn their attention to the early Vedic texts, they found this preconceived notion of "priestly rubbish" disproved by the tenor of the earliest of these texts, the Rgveda. In this text scholars believed they glimpsed the Vedic religion before the rise of Indian sacerdotalism. Writing soon after Western scholars began studying the Rgveda, W. D. Whitney noted:

To characterize the Vedic religion in general terms is not difficult . . . it is not one which has been nursed into its present form by the fostering care of a caste or priesthood; it is one which has arisen in the whole body of the people, and is the true expression of the collective view which a simple minded, but highly gifted nation, inclined to religious veneration, took of the wonders of creation and the powers to which it conceived them ascribable.¹⁸

However, this exalted view of the religion of the Rgveda, like the previous estimation of the Upanisads, seems to have been established at the expense of nearly all other aspects of Hinduism. With the exception of Upanisadic thought, the history of Hinduism following the Rgvedic period appeared to be one of complete degeneration. Rudolph von Roth, exemplified this view when in 1853 he wrote of the Rgveda:

The charm of primitiveness which surrounds these ancient hymns in a yet higher degree than the immortal poems of Homer, is united with a nobility of diction, a pure and fresh earnestness of thought, which are no longer to be met with in the later literary productions of India. . . . [One] finds the high spiritual endowments which belong of right to the Indo-European family of nations, and which have placed it foremost in the world's history, still fresh and vigorous in

page_15

Page 16

the most eastern branch of that family, and not yet disfigured by the manifold excrescences of the later Indian people, that, were it not for their language, the European would scarcely recognize them for his own kindred. ¹⁹

According to von Roth and other nineteenth century Indologists the initial stages of this decline occurred within the Vedic period itself; being clearly visible in the texts that immediately followed the hymns, the Brahmanas. In von Roth's estimation, the displacement of the Vedic hymns by the Brahmanas resulted in the degeneration of all Hinduism in the

post-Vedic period, a condition empirically verified by the British colonial experience.²⁰ As von Roth noted: "[India] has, indeed, carefully treasured up and at all times regarded as sacred, the productions of its earliest period [i.e., the Rgveda]; but it has attached the main importance to a worthless supplement [i.e., the Brahmanas], and lost from sight and from knowledge the truly valuable portion."²¹

Although the composition of the Upanisads immediately followed that of the Brahmanas, scholars tended to posit a line of development that aligned Upanisadic thought with that of the Rgveda, milieus they perceived to be in opposition to the intervening Brahmanic period.²² Nowhere is this more apparent than in the view scholars took of the Upanisadic doctrine of karma and rebirth, particularly in regard to this doctrine's problematic origin. In contrast to the corrupt trends that pervaded the Brahmanas, the Upanisadic karma doctrinewith its wholesome ethical tenorseemed to signify a return to the healthy atmosphere of the Rgveda. The notion that the Upanisadic karma doctrine arose in concert with the intent of much earlier Rgvedic beliefs, while it opposed that of the Brahmanas was partly due to what scholars perceived to be a general pattern in the evolution of a religious tradition. Referring to such an evolutionary model, W. D. Whitney thus noted of the doctrine's origin that: "Its introduction later is equally in accordance with the general course of religious history; it is a part of the prevailing shift from the basis of nature to that of morality."²³ In the case of the karma doctrine, this pattern of evolution was given added support by what was perceived to be the degenerate state of the religion of the Brahmanas. The shift to morality found in the Upanisadic karma doctrine, was interpreted as being "anti-

page_16

Page 17

sacrificial," to oppose the "corrupt" sacerdotalism systematically promoted in the Brahmanas.

The tendency to separate the Rgveda and the Upanisads from the Brahmanas, and to position them in opposition, may be attributed to the general view that nineteenth century Indologists held of the role of priestcraft in the decline of a religious tradition. ²⁴ The Brahmanas, which were compiled over several centuries (ca. 900-600 B.C.E.), record the growth of the sacrificial (*śrauta*) ritual and its subsequent dominance in ancient Indian religion. The growth of the sacrifice (in both complexity and stature) during this period naturally coincided with the growth of a specialized sacerdotal class. In the view of many nineteenth century Indologists, the religion of the early Veda became devitalized at the hands of these sacerdotalists. As one scholar remarked: "the priests had lost the inspiration that came from action; they now made no new hymns; they only formulated new rules of sacrifice. They became intellectually debauched and altogether weakened in character."²⁵ Every aspect of the Brahmanic ritual was interpreted in light of this supposed debauchery. More than one scholar asserted that the priests maintained their interest in the sacrifice because it provided them with a pretense to sanctity and thus an exalted position in society: "the age is overcast, not only with a thick cloud of ritualism, but also with an unpleasant mask of phariseeism."²⁶

The task of interpreting the Brahmanas, with their bulk and esoteric subject matter, was a formidable one to the Western scholar uninitiated in the intricacies of the Vedic sacrifice.²⁷ The authors of the Brahmanas created unique sacrificial events by correlating basic ritual techniques with a complex theoretical base. The focus of this theory was the mythical event of the cosmic man's (Prajapati's) primordial sacrificial activity, which, replicated in the individual sacrificer's own ritual performances, established the symbolic identity of the sacrificer and the cosmos.²⁸ The authors of the Brahmanas employed their peculiar theory of the sacrifice to conjoin what apparently were already existing rituals and ritual techniques into unique sacrificial events. However, whereas the developed Brahmanic sacrifices often combined several different rites, the connections between them were established not on the level of physical performance but through a series of metaphysical propositions. Consequently, the discussions that appear in the

page_17

Page 18

Brahmanas are often abstruse and esoteric; the authors apparently "supposed their audience to be well acquainted with the course of the ritual, its terminology and technicalities," ²⁹ and therefore could (and did) limit their discussions to the higher significance of the rite.

For example, the Brahmanic rite of the piling of the fire altar (*agnicayana*) incorporated several distinct ritual events, among them an initiation (*dikṣa*), an animal sacrifice (*pasubandha*), an offering to Rudra (*satarudriya homa*), and a Soma sacrifice.³⁰ Because these several ceremonies probably were well known in themselves, the descriptions of the

Agnicayana that appear in the various Brahmanas do not present a detailed conspectus of the physical performance of this sacrifice. The Brahmanic narrative instead concerns itself with the metaphysical implications of virtually every detail of the rite and, in this way, transforms the several elements of this sacrifice into a singular event. In the Agnicayana rite, this transformation is brought about through the symbolic identification of the ritual event with the primordial sacrifice of the cosmic man, Prajapati, which itself brought the cosmos into being. This identification is made to extend through each discrete ritual act (initiation, construction of the altar, soma sacrifice, etc.), despite the lack of connection of these acts to the Prajapati mythos in earlier Vedic contexts. While the Agnicayana comprises a multiplicity of ritual performances, the integrity of the sacrifice is maintained as the sacrificer replicates one or another aspect of the cosmic man's primordial activity in each separate ritual event. The discrete elements of the rite are thus subsumed to the ritualist's larger metaphysical vision.

It is this specialized knowledge of the ritual that brought the sacrificial rite under the dominion of the sacerdotal class. Nineteenth century scholars, however, with their deprecatory view of sacerdotalism, had little patience for the intricacies of Brahmanic thought. Maurice Bloomfield, for example, remarked of the Brahmanas that: "Both the performances and their explanations are treated in such a way, and spun out to such lengths, as to render these works on the whole monuments of tediousness and intrinsic stupidity."³¹ Hence, scholars agreed that these texts did not even merit the most cursory examination: "Even a resume of one comparatively short ceremony would be so long and tedious that the

page_18

Page 19

explication of the intricate formalities would scarcely be a sufficient reward." ³² (Though, at least as an exercise in philology, these same scholars produced critical Sanskrit editions of nearly all the extant Brahmanas, translating several into European languages.)

Scholars vindicated their reluctance to examine thoroughly these texts that is, beyond producing critical editions of them by appealing to their peculiar view of the development of the Vedic religion. Their assertion that the Upanisads represented a renaissance of the high spiritual achievements of the Rgveda meant that the intervening Brahmanic period represented a dark age. In fact, if the Brahmanas were studied at all, it was only to emphasize this characterization.³³ On the one hand, the Brahmanas represented the utter degeneration of the high spiritual attainments of the early Vedic religion, exhibiting what Max Müller called "a most important phase in the growth of the human mind in its passage from health to disease."³⁴ Accordingly, Müller noted that "every page of the Brahmanas contains the clearest proof that the spirit of the ancient Vedic poetry, and the purport of the original Vedic sacrifices, were both beyond the comprehension of the authors of the Brahmanas."³⁵ On the other hand, however, the diseased thought of the Brahmanas represented the necessary foundation from which a healthier period might arise. This revival in Vedic thought was seen in the advent of the Upanisads; as Charles Lanman noted: "[In the Upanisads] the Hindu character has been transformed almost beyond recognition. The change is wonderful. It would also be incomprehensible, but for the literature of the Brahmanas . . . they are puerile, arid, inane."³⁶ For these scholars the Brahmanic domination of the religious sphere impelled this transformation: "The Indian mind was by no means dead, although sacerdotalism was drunk with supremacy and in its folly and arrogance was hastening the day of revolt."³⁷ This "revolt" manifested itself in what was believed to be the antisacrificial attitude that appeared first in the Upanisads, and afterwards in the heterodox sects, especially Buddhism.³⁸

With such a view in mind, Max Müller made the broad claim that the object of the Upanisads was "to show the utter uselessness, nay the mischievousness of all ritual performances; to condemn every sacrificial act which has for its motive a desire or hope of reward."³⁹ To prove this assertion scholars cited repeatedly certain

page_19

Page 20

Upanisadic passages that they believed derided the sacrifice. ⁴⁰ One such passage appears in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad:

who knows thus, "I am Brahman," he becomes this all. The gods do not control his attaining [this state]; indeed he becomes their self (*atman*). Now the one who worships to another god, thinking "I am one, he is another," he does not know. He is like a [sacrificial or domestic] animal (*pasu*) for the gods. Now as many animals are useful

to men, each man serves the gods. When even one animal is taken away, there is unhappiness. What about many? Therefore it is not pleasing to the gods when men know this.⁴¹

The apparent opposition here between the performers of the sacrifice (those who serve the gods) and those "who know" was viewed by scholars such as Deussen as evidence that the Upanisads are "radically opposed to the entire Vedic sacrificial cult."⁴² This view, however, assumes that the activity, which is not specified in this particular passage, of those "who know" is not sacrificial, or is perhaps even antisacrificial in nature. A passage that occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana clarifies the nature of the activity of those "who know":

They say: "[Who] is better, the one who sacrifices for the self (*atmayajin*), or the one who sacrifices for the gods (*devayajin*)?" Indeed he should say, "The one who offers for the self." Indeed the self offerer is the one who knows that by this [ritual] the body is formed for me; by this ritual that body is placed near to me . . . so he arises in the heavenly world.

Now the god offerer is the one who knows, "I indeed offer to the gods; I honor the gods." He is [the same] as the inferior who brings tribute to the superior. . . . Indeed he does not win a world of the same extent as the other [i.e., the self offerer].⁴³

This passage indicates the Brahmanic thinkers recognized two paradigms for sacrificial activity: the self offerer, who attains the results of the sacrifice directly, and the god offerer, who attains the results of the sacrifice through the intercession of the gods. Furthermore, the Brahmana passage clarifies what is left unsaid in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad; namely, that the one "who knows thus," (the self offerer in the Brahmana passage) is yet a sacrificer, albeit

page_20

Page 21

one who couples his ritual activity with a certain type of knowledge, and thereby minimizes the role of the gods (an unhappy circumstance, according to the Upanisad passage, for the gods). And, although this pattern of sacrifice is represented in the Brahmana as being "better" than offering to the gods, neither this text nor the Upanisad negates this latter pattern. ⁴⁴ Most important, the similarity between these passages from the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad and the Satapatha Brahmana, indicates that, contrary to the views of nineteenth century Indologists, the Upanisadic thinkers continued to acknowledge and to draw upon the patterns for sacrificial action already established in the Brahmanas.

The similarity between these passages from the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad and the Satapatha Brahmana, and the continuity in thought they express, reflects the proximity of the Brahmanas and Upanisads; the latter are appended to the former in the Vedic textual tradition. Though scholars were aware of the practical relationship between these texts, their notion of how the religion of ancient India evolved from the healthy (and simplistic) tenor of the Rgvedic worship of nature, through a period of disease in Brahmanic ritualism, to a revitalization in the Upanisads led them to emphasize an underlying dissension in the growth of the Vedic tradition. To establish the opposition of Upanisadic thought to the preceding Brahmanic period required scholars to vitiate both the textual evidence of physical contiguity and the contextual evidence, which strongly suggested the ideological continuity of the Brahmanas and Upanisads. This process is clearly visible in these scholars' treatment of the karma doctrine, the result of which was to detach karma from whatever roots it possessed in the thought of the Brahmanas.

The Upanisads and the Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine

In the Vedic textual tradition, the older Upanisads are contiguous with their corresponding Brahmanas.⁴⁵ These Upanisads, together with an intermediary portion of the text referred to as an Aranyaka, were physically inseparable from their Brahmanas; in manuscripts, the texts were appended to one another, and

page_21

Page 22

often could not be differentiated easily. ⁴⁶ The continuity of these texts is seen not only through their physical contiguity but also through their contextual similarity. Even Deussen, who vigorously supported the separation of the Brahmanas and Upanisads on theoretical grounds,⁴⁷ admitted that "the separation of the material is by no means strictly carried out, but in all three classes, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads, there are found occasional digressions of a ritual as well

as of an allegorical or philosophical nature."⁴⁸ The conjoint nature of these texts is reflected in their titles: the Aranyaka and Upanisad portions are often referred to as *brahmana-upanisad*, *upanisad-brahmana*, and *aranyaka-upanisad*.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the compilers of the Upanisads employed several "literary" devices to indicate the continuity of these texts with the Brahmanas. Perhaps chief among these is the use of recognizable Brahmanic motifs to present their teachings. For example, the authors of the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad place their teaching regarding the distinct natures of the gods, asuras, and men in a frame story that recounts how these three classes of beings approached Prajapati to be instructed:

The threefold offspring, the gods, men, and asuras, dwelt as students, unmarried, with Prajapati, [their] father. The gods, having dwelt as students, spoke: "Instruct us, sir!" To them he uttered the syllable "da," and said: "Do you understand?" They said: "We understand. You said to us: You must control yourselves (*damyata*)."⁵⁰ "Indeed," he said, "You have understood."⁵⁰

Subsequently, Prajapati tells the men and asuras who approach him to practice respectively giving and compassion.⁵¹

The frame story here is clearly drawn from the Satapatha Brahmana, the Brahmana to which the Brhadaranyaka is appended: "Living beings once approached Prajapati. These living beings, [his] offspring, spoke: 'Give us a manner of living!' Thereupon the gods, having been properly invested for the sacrifice, came [to him] on their knees. He spoke to them: 'The sacrifice is your food; immortality your strength; and the sun your light.'"⁵² Subsequently, Prajapati bestows a distinct manner of living on the fathers (they eat monthly, their light is the moon), men (their eating is daily,

page_22

Page 23

their light is the fire), creatures (they eat all things), and asuras (their lot is darkness and illusion) who approach him. ⁵³

While the specific doctrines presented in these two texts differ, the texts follow a remarkably similar format; both present Prajapati as the father of the various classes of beings who inhabit the cosmos, both depict these beings as having completed their studentship (making them eligible to sacrifice), and both express, through Prajapati's teachings, the distinct natures of these beings.

Related to this use of similar motifs is the employment throughout the Brahmanas and Upanisads of a set of terms, suggesting the existence of an idiom specific to these texts, to describe the cosmos.⁵⁴ These descriptions focus on the interrelations, often through a process of homologization, of the breaths (*prana*), the sense organs (eye, ear, speech, taste, mind), the divinities (Agni, Vayu, Rudra, Aditya, Candramas), and the spheres of the cosmos (a category that includes the earth, sun, moon, and quarters of the heavens, as well as units of time the year, months, fortnights).⁵⁵ At the very least, the existence of such an idiom indicates the discussions of the nature of the cosmos, discussions that typify the Upanisads, were built on patterns already established in Brahmanic thought.

Another device employed by the compilers of the Upanisads was the attribution of many of their teachings to the same sages that appear in the Brahmanas or to sages whose lineages are traced to Brahmanic teachers.⁵⁶ Best known among these sages is Yajñavalkya, who is cited as a doctrinal authority in both the Satapatha Brahmana and the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. Although the Brhadaranyaka indicates that it is the same Yajñavalkya who appears in both the Upanisad and the Brahmana,⁵⁷ this is clearly not intended to represent a historical fact; for, even by the most conservative estimates, at least a century separates the composition of these two texts.⁵⁸ Rather, the figure of Yajñavalkya seems to have been employed in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad to establish a sense of continuity between the Upanisad and its Brahmana.

In their interpretations of the Upanisads, Western scholars tended to minimize the importance of such devices. Robert Hume, for example, dismissed the idea that the textual evidence implied an integral relationship between the Brahmanas and Upanisads, as he noted that the material drawn from the Brahmanas, such as

page_23

Page 24

"explanations of the sacrificial ritual, legends, dialogues, etymologizings . . . and so forth are, in the main, merely mechanically juxtaposed [in the Upanisads]." ⁵⁹ Macdonell and Keith, following the view of Oldenberg, noted that "no importance can be attached to the mention of Yajñavalkya [in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad]." ⁶⁰ That scholars failed to

attribute any importance to these points reflects an assumption that the chief doctrines of Upanisadic thought originated outside the bounds of the Brahmanic ritual cult. The view that epitomizes this assumption is that of Deussen, who asserted that the doctrines of the Upanisads had originally been "fostered primarily among the Kshatriyas and not within Brahman circles, engrossed as these were with the ritual."⁶¹ Although few scholars fully endorsed Deussen's assertion,⁶² the premise upon which it was established represents an important presupposition of early Vedic studies; that is, that the Upanisads are "radically opposed to the entire Vedic sacrificial cult, and the older they are the more markedly does this opposition declare itself."⁶³

Rather than consider the possibility that the Brahmanic motifs that appear in the early Upanisads was the result of an orthogenetic process, scholars attributed their appearance in the Upanisads to a later textual appropriation by the Brahman ritualists. According to Deussen:

Soon also the Brahmins laid claim to the new teaching as their exclusive privilege. They were able to point to princes and leaders, as Janaka, Janasruti, etc., who were said to have gone for instruction to Brahmins. Authorities on the ritual like Sandilya and Yajñavalkya were transformed into originators and upholders of the ideas of the Upanishads.⁶⁴

The Brahmins' appropriation of the Upanisads was a natural corollary of the notion that, in an earlier age, the Brahmins had appropriated all aspects of the Vedic ritual to attain their dominant position in the religious sphere. Moreover, such an appropriation, which would have allowed the Brahmins to maintain their religious hegemony in spite of the depreciation of the sacrificial rite by groups (Ksatriya or Brahman) disaffected with the sacrifice, was in accord with the perverse motives that scholars had attributed to the priesthood; as A. B. Keith noted: "the process is one of steady

page_24

Page 25

accommodation to the popular view, which was at the same time the profitable view to the priests." ⁶⁵ Thus, with their preconceived notions of the debilitating effect of priestcraft, scholars vitiated the textual evidence that seemed to indicate the continuity of the Brahmanic and Upanisadic traditions. Furthermore, it was apparent that if the Brahmanic concerns that appeared in the Upanisads were merely a priestly fabrication then no substantial link existed between the thought of the Upanisads and that of the Brahmanas. Accordingly, although scholars such as Max Müller reflected that "the sacrificial technicalities, and their philosophical interpretations with which the Upanishads abound, may *perhaps in time* assume a clearer meaning, when we shall have fully mastered the intricacies of the Vedic ceremonial"⁶⁶ (italics mine), they were confident that such an elementor, as Müller referred to it, "such utter rubbish" was largely inconsequential to an understanding of the import of the Upanisads.⁶⁷

The tendency to separate the thought of the Brahmanas from that of the Upanisads is especially apparent in these scholars' interpretation of the origins of the doctrine of karma and rebirth. In general, the doctrine was believed to be unprecedented in Brahmanic thought.⁶⁸ In fact, scholars were so firmly convinced of karma's absence in the Brahmanas, they viewed its acceptance in the Upanisads as the point of bifurcation between the Brahmanas and Upanisads. According to Keith: "The distinction corresponds, we may fairly say, in the main to a change of time and still more to a change of view. The Upanishads hold in some degree at least the doctrine of transmigration . . . the Brahmanas, which, taken all in all, know not transmigration."⁶⁹

Nonetheless, certain afterlife beliefs that appeared first in the Rgveda and then in the Brahmanas were widely accepted as suggesting transmigration.⁷⁰ In the Rgveda these beliefs occur in a passage addressed to the individual after death: "May your eye go to the sun, your life's breath to the wind. Go to the sky or to earth, as is your nature; or go to the waters if that is your fate. Take root in the plants with your limbs."⁷¹ Whereas scholars correctly identified this passage as containing incipient elements of the later karma doctrine in particular, the doctrine's idea that the rebirth process entails the individual's integration into the constituents of

page_25

Page 26

the cosmos they did so for what now appears to be the wrong reason. Although it represents an obvious reversal of the central Brahmanic mythology of the cosmic man (Purusa, Prajapati), according to which the cosmos arose from the body of a primeval anthropomorphic being, scholars tended to discuss this passage as a reflection of animistic beliefs. ⁷²

According to these scholars, in such animistic beliefs "there is a first rude idea of the theory of metempsychosis."⁷³

Animism, which either came from "contact with the rude aboriginal inhabitants of the Indian peninsula" or "had maintained its hold upon the lower strata of the Aryan people themselves from savage times,"⁷⁴ represented a level of belief that was clearly antithetical to that which, according to nineteenth century scholars, pervaded the Rgveda. According to one scholar: "This notion [animism] seems to belong to religious beliefs of a lower type, which this collection [the Rgveda] despises."⁷⁵ In other words, this level of belief was viewed as an aberration, and therefore was not considered to be of any consequence in the evolution of Vedic thought.⁷⁶ The Rgvedic passage just cited seemed to exemplify this level of aberrant belief; as A. B. Keith commented, the "view once found in the Rigveda, which sends the eye of the dead to the sun, the breath to the wind, bids him go to the heaven and the earth, or if he prefers to the waters, and to dwell among the plants with his members, cannot be treated as more than a mere deviation of no great consequence for the general view of Vedic religion."⁷⁷ Yet, as a reflection of the cosmic man mythology, this view that homologizes the body of the deceased with the spheres of the cosmos is found throughout the Brahmanas.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, by suggesting that underlying this text was nothing more than an aberrant, though decidedly popular, belief in animism scholars discounted the role of this mythology in the formation of the karma doctrine. In its place they emphasized the ethical dimensions of the Upanisadic karma doctrine. A. B. Keith, in his monumental study *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (perhaps the summation of nineteenth century Vedic studies in the West), thus remarked:

What is necessary is to point out that, while the ideas thus recorded are of some value as showing the presence in Indian religion of the belief of the incorporation of the souls of the dead now and

page_26

Page 27

then in animals or plants of the latter there is even a hint in the Rigveda itself *the importance of transmigration lies precisely in the fact that the doctrine is an ethical system, and . . . is thereby referred for its real origin to something quite other than popular belief.* ⁷⁹ (italics mine)

By "popular belief" Keith refers not only to animism but to a range of beliefs that nineteenth century scholars believed led to the formation of Brahmanic thought (itself an aberration in the evolution of Vedic religion). In their discussions of karma's earliest appearances in the Upanisads, scholars quickly disposed of these elements that might lead them back to the Brahmanas. Deussen, for example, referred to the Brahmanic afterlife beliefs that encompass an early presentation of the doctrine in the Upanisads as being "evidently primitive," and remarked that: "We must therefore look for the original doctrine where it appears by itself."⁸⁰ Keith commented of the Brahmanic motifs⁸¹ that occur along with the doctrine's first appearance in the Chandogya Upanisad that: "The mythical character of the whole is obvious, and reminds us that the new doctrine of action as determining the future life was decidedly disadvantageous to the sacrificial priest, and that it was natural to reserve it as a holy mystery."⁸² Here, Keith minimizes the interpretive value of the context in which the doctrine occurs by appealing to the notion that the priesthood was largely motivated by the most perverse concerns: since the doctrine constituted a threat to their stature, the Brahman compilers (or, in the view of many nineteenth century Indologists, the Brahman usurpers) of the Upanisads attempted to conceal its intent by drawing on the esoteric symbolism (Keith's "holy mystery") employed in the Brahmanas.

It was precisely this sort of ethical vacuum that scholars believed Upanisadic thought in general, and the karma doctrine in particular, filled. Accordingly, the karma doctrine, with its origins in "something quite other than popular belief," was not organically related to the Brahmanic mythology that, in its earliest appearances in the Upanisads surrounded it, but arose from ethical concerns that were foreign perhaps even antithetical to the Brahmanas' ritual orientation. In this sense, the interpretation of the karma doctrine echoed the larger view that scholars held regarding the relationship of the Brahmanas and the Upanisads.

page_27

Page 28

The Earliest Notice of the Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in the Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanisads

Scholars have generally agreed that the earliest formulation of the karma doctrine occurs in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, ⁸³ a text composed ca. 600-500 B.C.E., and considered to be the earliest of the Upanisads.⁸⁴ The doctrine occurs here in

the context of a discussion of the fate of the individual after death.⁸⁵ After stating the Vedic doctrine of the dissolution of the dead person on the funeral pyre (the breath into the air, the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon, the hearing into the quarters, etc.),⁸⁶ the sage Yajñavalkya is asked by his colleague Artabhaga, "What then becomes of this person?" Yajñavalkya replies, "My dear Artabhaga, take my hand. We two alone shall know of this, this is not for us two to speak of amongst [other] people."⁸⁷ The text then continues in the third person: "Having gone aside, they engaged in a consultation. That which they spoke about was karma and that which they praised was action (*karman*): one indeed becomes good by good action (*karman*), bad by bad [action]."⁸⁸

Western scholars have considered this passage to present the fundamental premise of the karma doctrine; that is, an individual attains a state after death that is a direct result of the moral quality of his activities before death.⁸⁹ The supposed moral aspect of the doctrine presented here was especially emphasized; according to Deussen, in this passage: "the motive which lies at the basis of transmigration is clearly expressed. It is the great moral difference of character . . . which the philosopher explains in our passage on the hypothesis that a man has already existed once before his birth, and that his inborn character is the fruit and consequence of his previous action."⁹⁰ That scholars understood this to be the intent of this passage, which is drawn from the earliest strata of the Upanisads, is a point of fundamental importance; for, the "great moral difference of character" of the karma doctrine distinguishes this doctrine from the limited, or nonexistent, ethics of the Brahmanas.

According to A. B. Keith, who, among early Indologists, presented the most detailed discussion of the ethics of the Brahmanas,⁹¹ "the question of the nature of right action does not

page_28

Page 29

seem ever to have in any degree influenced the speculations of the curious spirits [who composed the Brahmanas]."⁹² To exemplify the Brahmanas' "most unedifying indifference to morality," Keith noted that: "The Jaiminiya Brahmana actually records, without disapproval apparently, a rite, the Gosava, in which the performer pays the ox the compliment of imitating its mode of existence, including incest with mother, sister, and female relative."⁹³

In view of the Brahmanas' overwhelming concern with the performance and meaning of the Vedic rituals, this apparent indifference to ethical behavior is not surprising. Nonetheless, within the context of the ritual performance, the Brahmanas do distinguish between good and bad (ritual) acts, and as in other ethical systems, this valuation is based on the consequences of actions.⁹⁴ For example, a typical Brahmanic passage declares: "When the Agnihotra is being offered, what he does mistakenly, either by word or deed, that cuts off his vigor, his own self, or his children."⁹⁵ Although the idea expressed here that the valuation of actions rests upon results rather than on the acts themselves may not reflect morality in a general sense, within the limits of a well-defined system it yet expresses a notion of ethics. J. L. Mackie has discussed this distinction between a general and a narrow morality:

A morality in the broad sense would be a general, all inclusive theory of conduct: the morality to which someone subscribed would be whatever body of principles he allowed ultimately to guide his choices of conduct. In the narrow sense, a morality is a system of a particular sense of restraints on conduct ones whose central task is to protect the interests of persons other than the agent and which present themselves as checks on his natural inclinations or tendencies to act.⁹⁶

To fulfill the requisites of a narrowly defined ethical system may require the abandonment of the general norms of conduct. The disregarding of one's "natural inclinations or tendencies to act" in the pursuit for ritual correctness, which is the narrow ethic of the ritual system, is apparent in one Brahmanic passage, which implies that the performance of a certain ritual act might lead the sacrificer's wife to separate from her husband and so, perhaps to become an adulteress. Yajñavalkya, who is cited as a final authority throughout the Brahmanas and Upanisads, responds to this con-

page_29

Page 30

flict by disregarding the ethical constraints of ordinary action; he is thus quoted: "Let it be as directed for the wife; indeed who cares if the wife should be apart from her husband (*parah pumsa*)?"⁹⁷ However, though this act of separation, which seems implicitly to condone adultery, like Keith's example of the Gosava rite's requisite act of bestiality (which the actor impossibly performs as an act of incest), is reprehensible in any ordinary circumstances, this does not mean an

indifference on the part of the Brahmanas' authors to morality. Within the narrowly defined ethic of the ritual system which seeks exactitude in the performance of the rites such acts, insofar as they fulfill the demands of the ritual, are morally good; as Sylvain Lévi observed, "le bien est l'exactitude rituelle."⁹⁸

Scholars failed to consider this valuation of action in the Brahmanas as the basis of an ethical system; as Keith noted of the Brahmanas: "But though terminology shows a certain advance in view, it remains the case that nothing architectonic arises in the way of conception of good and evil."⁹⁹ Consequently, the earliest formulation of the karma doctrine, the statement "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]" suggested a sudden flowering of a broadly based moral concern; as one scholar noted, it indicated a "moral advance on earlier ideas; for it gave all conduct a moral meaning."¹⁰⁰ Yet, it is not entirely certain that the expression "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]" refers to a broad spectrum of conduct. The context in which this phrase occurs, and certain aspects of the phrase itself, suggest that it refers only to the activity of the sacrifice. The context, namely the notion that upon cremation "the speech of this dead person enters into the fire, the breath into air, the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon . . .,"¹⁰¹ clearly recalls the symbolism of the Brahmanic ritual. Underlying this symbolism was the theory that, "every great sacrifice is a repetition of the archetypal sacrifice in which Prajapati . . . while being dismembered, was transformed into the universe."¹⁰² As Jan Gonda has observed, in its application, the purpose of this ritual theory was to "bring about a transformation, new birth and higher existence of the sacrificer who in and through this ritual is identified with Prajapati."¹⁰³ The obvious similarity between the fate of the deceased described here and the fate of the dismembered Prajapatis they are both transformed into the various elements of the cosmos signifies that the

page_30

Page 31

Upanisadic karma doctrine was theoretically commensurate with the Brahmanic sacrifice.

Moreover, the notion that "one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]" appears to be a reflex of the Brahmanic idea of the merit resulting from the well-done (*sukṛta*) sacrifice and, its opposite, the demerit resulting from the poorly done (*duṣkṛta*) sacrifice, that awaits the sacrificer in the next world. According to Jan Gonda, these terms *sukṛta*, *sadhu kṛta*, *punyakṛta*, *punya karman* (the term used in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad to denote "good action") and their opposites *duṣkṛta*, *papa karman* ("bad action" in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad) represent two parallel complexes in the Vedic ritual sphere. ¹⁰⁴ *Sukṛta*, on the one hand, expresses "the lasting merit, the effective and positive result of the correct performance of the ritual acts [which] accumulate for the benefit of the performer [in the next world]"; ¹⁰⁵ its opposite, *duṣkṛta*, refers to "omissions, negligence or reprehensible behaviour in the ritual or religious sphere," resulting in the diminution or destruction of the individual's afterlife realm. ¹⁰⁶ In view of the established meanings of these terms in the Vedic ritual sphere, the phrase "one becomes good by good action" in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad may refer only to the acquisition of, and a consequent state of becoming one with, the merit (the "good") or demerit (the "bad") accumulated through a lifetime of sacrificial activity. ¹⁰⁷

This early presentation of the karma doctrine does not refer to any specific sphere of being (plant, animal, caste) that, in the classical formulation of the doctrine, ¹⁰⁸ relates the fact of rebirth to the moral efficacy of an individual's deeds. Another passage in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, also attributed to Yajñavalkya, seemed to many scholars to suggest this aspect of the karma doctrine. ¹⁰⁹ This passage first describes the different forms (*rupa*) that an individual might attain after death: "Just as a jeweler, having taken an ornament, renders it into another newer and more beautiful shape, so this very self, having thrown away this body, and having dispelled ignorance, makes another newer and more beautiful form, either [that of] a father, or a *gandharva*, or a god, or Prajapati, or Brahma, or other beings." ¹¹⁰ This passage is immediately followed by a restatement of the doctrine that Yajñavalkya had previously imparted to Artabhaga: "As one does, as one conducts oneself, so one becomes. The one who does good becomes good, the one who does

page_31

Page 32

bad becomes bad; one becomes good by good action, bad by bad [action]." ¹¹¹

Yet, it is unclear whether the description here of taking on "another newer and more beautiful form, either [that of] a father, or a *gandharva*, or a god . . ." indicates an afterlife existence based on the moral quality of an individual's conduct in general or only on the specific activity of the sacrifice. The notion that an individual might attain a variety of forms

(that of a god, a father, etc.) after death again recalls the Brahmanic notion of acquiring, and becoming one with, the merit accumulated through a lifetime of sacrifice. However, in place of an integration into the cosmos or, more precisely, into the cosmic body of Prajapati, the deceased attain one of the various spheres (*loka*) that, in Brahmanic thought, are associated with one or another of the beings, gods, fathers, and so on, that inhabit the cosmos.¹¹² This corresponds to the Vedic-Brahmanic notion that: "Ritual techniques enable a sacrificer to become *saloka*'of one *loka* with' a power, to gain access to lokas characterized by the 'presence' of a particular divine power, to enter into communion with that power, and henceforth to be a 'denizen of heaven.'" ¹¹³

Unlike later formulations of the karma doctrine, according to which evildoers are reborn in an inferior form (animal, insect, etc.) or even, as one text states, "fall down into hell," ¹¹⁴ this passage discusses only the attainment of "newer and more beautiful forms." The failure to depict a sphere (*loka*) that is exclusively associated with evildoers is in accord with the Brahmanic notion that the poorly done (*duskṛta*) sacrifice results in the diminution or destruction of the sacrificer's world of merit (*sukṛta loka*), rather than the attainment of a lower form of life, or of a hell.¹¹⁵ The most important effect of the poorly done sacrifice thus seems to be the denial of a store of merit in the next world, the benefits of which sustain the sacrificer in his afterlife existence.

Among the early formulations of the karma doctrine in the Upanisads exists another passage, more elaborate than the passages cited earlier, that scholars generally identified as the "chief text that sets forth the doctrine of transmigration, on which all subsequent texts are dependent." ¹¹⁶ This passage is found in two recensions, appearing in both the Chandogya and the Brhadaranyaka Upanisads.¹¹⁷ The doctrine presented here also occurs in the con-

page_32

Page 33

text of a discussion of the fate of the individual after death, although this discussion refers to somewhat different notions than those found in the earlier presentation of the doctrine. Moreover, this passage is distinguished by its concern with the process of birth, which is represented here as being concomitant with death. The passage is accordingly divided into two parts: the first part, referred to as the five fire doctrine (*pañcagnividya*), describes the cycle of human generation and homologizes this process with the elements of the sacrifice; ¹¹⁸ the second part differentiates between the two paths traveled by the deceased, the path of the gods (*devayana*) and the path of the fathers (*pitryana*).¹¹⁹ According to this latter part of the passage, those who attain the *devayana* follow a course that ultimately leads them to the world of Brahma; those who attain the *pitryana* follow a course that leads them to the moon, from which they return just as they ascended to attain another birth. This process of rebirth is established on the model of the five fire doctrine, which precedes it in the text.

The five fire doctrine, which also occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana and Jaiminiya Brahmana,¹²⁰ relates the process of human generation to the continuous activity of a cosmic sacrifice. This doctrine represents five spheres of the cosmos—the heavens, atmosphere, earth, man, and woman¹²¹ as five sacrificial fires, identifying an element associated with each of these five spheres as an element of the firefuel, smoke, flame, coals, and sparks. For example, as a sacrificial fire, the heavens are said to have the sun as its fuel, the rays of the sun as its smoke, the day as its flame, the moon as its coals, and the stars as its sparks; and a woman, as a sacrificial fire, is said to have her lap as fuel, "what invites" as smoke, her vagina as flame, "what she does inside" as coals, and pleasure as sparks.¹²² The creative process is set in motion as the five sacrificial fires yield, in turn: *soma* (the primal material of the sacrifice), rain, food, semen, and an embryo.¹²³ The cycle is completed by a sixth sacrifice, the funeral rite. Significantly, whereas each of the five spheres of the cosmos is only symbolically represented as a sacrificial fire (in the sacrifice of the heavenly sphere, for example, the sun is the fire, the day is the flame, the moon is the coals, etc.), the funeral rite is represented as the only real sacrificial event (the fire is the fire, the flame is the flame, the coals are the coals).¹²⁴ This final sacrifice regenerates the individual into

page_33

Page 34

the cosmos and, depending on which afterlife path he follows (the *devoyana* or the *pitryana*), possibly leads to reentry into the birth cycle. These two afterlife pathshow they are attained, where they lead the deceasedare described in the second part of this passage in the Upanisads.

According to the description of the *devayana* and the *pitryana* in these Upanisadic passages, the attainment of one or the

other of these paths results from a distinction in ritual activity; that is, the nature of an individual's ritual activity before death leads the sacrificer to attain one or the other of these two paths after death. The *devayana*, which ultimately leads to the world of Brahma, is said to be attained by "those who know this [five fire doctrine], and who worship in the forest thinking 'faith is austerity.'" 125 On the other hand, "those who worship in the forest thinking 'giving [to the priests who perform the sacrifice] is for [the purpose of] storing sacrificial merit in the other world,'" 126 attain the *pitryana* and reenter the birth cycle. The distinction in ritual activity made here is that between a traditional path of worship, one that maintains the relationship between gods, priests, and sacrificers and a path that concentrates on the individual, to the point of actually "interiorizing" the sacrifice. 127 Although this latter path attains its most prominent position in the Upanisads, it is consonant with certain developments in Brahmanic sacrificial thought. In particular, these developments seem to have been initiated by problems arising from the fact that the sacrificer (*yajamana*) did not perform the sacrifice himself but depended upon a number of sacrificial priests (*rtvij*) to perform the rite for his benefit. Both the officiants and the sacrificer were supposed to accrue merit through the same sacrificial performance. 128 The authors of the Brahmanas began to question the logic of this system: could both those who performed the sacrifice and those for whom the sacrifice was performed attain the rewards of the same sacrifice? 129 The interiorization of the sacrifice resolves this problem by removing the dichotomy between priest and sacrificer (*yajamana*). 130

Those who follow the traditional path of worship attain after death the "path of the fathers" (*pitryana*). This path leads them from the smoke of the cremation fire upward through several of the spheres of the cosmos, to the world of the fathers and finally to the moon, where they remain "only as long as there is the residue [of

page_34

Page 35

sacrificial merit]." 131 Following this otherworldly sojourn those who follow this path are said to "return again as they came," a process that ends with reentry into the human birth cycle. The nature of this journey reflects the nature of the traditional ritual performance with its corporate format. Because the sacrificer (*yajamana*) depended on a number of ritual specialists to perform the sacrifice for his benefit, the sacrificer realized the results of the sacrifice indirectly. According to Brahmanic ritual theory, the sacrificer ransoms the merit of the sacrifice through the giving of sacrificial gifts (*daksina*) to the priests who perform the ritual. 132 A passage in the Satapatha Brahmana describes how, through the agency of the *daksina*, the sacrificer acquires the fruits of his sacrifice: "That sacrifice of his goes to the world of the gods, after that goes the *daksina* which he gives [to the officiants], and holding on to the *daksina* is the sacrificer." 133 Accordingly, in these Upanisadic passages, "sacrificial giving" is said to be the chief characteristic of the traditional path of sacrifice. 134

The problem of acquiring the merit of the sacrifice that arose from the employment of ritual specialists was compounded by the sacrificer's myriad ritual obligations. For, in the traditional sacrificial format, the sacrificer's ritual efforts were undertaken not only for his own benefit, but also for the benefit of his ancestors. 135 Accordingly, those who follow this path of worship and attain the *pitryana* after death do not seem to be able to take total possession of their heavenly store of merit; the pattern of sacrificing for the benefit of others seems, according to one passage in the Brahmanas, to continue in the conditions of the afterlife: "The fathers and grandfathers, swift as thought, approach him (saying): 'What, dear son, have you brought us?' He should answer them: 'Whatever good I have done that is yours.'" 136 A similar fate seems to be implied in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad's description of the *pitryana* as the sacrificer, upon reaching the moon, is said to become "food," and there the gods feed on him. 137 Because the deceased must share himself, or his accumulated store of sacrificial merit, he does not attain a full and lasting afterlife existence, but remains there "only as long as there is the residue [of his sacrificial merit]" 138 and reenters the cycle of generation.

On the other hand, those who follow the interiorized path of sacrifice attain a lasting afterlife in the world of Brahma. The chief

page_35

Page 36

characteristic of this path is knowledgeits followers are thus described in these passages as "those who know" 139an experience that cannot be shared, for it signifies, in its attainment, the unity of subject and object. 140 The singular nature of this attainment is already apparent in one passage in the Satapatha Brahmana that describes the world attained by knowledge as the place where sacrificial gifts (*daksina*) do not go; 141 that is, an experience independent of the ritual

specialists. In the Upanisads this independence continues in the development of an interiorized sacrifice; its unfragmented nature, centering entirely on the individual, is thus mirrored in the conditions of the afterlife.

The attainment of the *devayana* or the *pitryana* reflects the Brahmanic notion that specific ritual acts lead to the attainment of specific "worlds"; thus, for example, the performer of the infamous Gosava rite, which requires the sacrificer to imitate a bull, is said to "win the world of the bull."¹⁴² Several passages in the early Upanisads continue to suggest this principle: the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad describes the Pariksitās, known as horse sacrificers, simply as going "to the place where the performers of the horse sacrifice are";¹⁴³ and those who meditate on the breaths as "winning complete union with that divinity and residence in the same world with him."¹⁴⁴ Other Upanisadic passages, however, extend this principle as they extol ritual performances that lead to the winning of all the worlds; that is, to the attainment of the cosmos as a whole. A passage in the Chandogya Upanisad, thus answers the question, Where is the world of the sacrificer? by describing a series of rites, the performance of which lead the sacrificer to the world of Agni (the earth), to the world of Vayu (the atmosphere), and finally to the world of the Adityas (the heavens).¹⁴⁵

The notion of attaining a series of worlds, of becoming integrated into the cosmos as a whole, seems to be the intent of the several Upanisadic passages identified as early formulations of the karma doctrine. The description of the fate of the deceased in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad "the speech of this dead person enters into the fire (*agni*); the breath into air (*vata*); the eye into the sun (*Aditya*); the mind into the moon (*candra*); hearing into the quarters (*dis*)"¹⁴⁶ represents this notion by drawing on the symbolism of the Vedic cosmogony. The sacrificer, after death unites with the various spheres of the cosmos that "in the begin-

page_36

Page 37

ning" arose from the body of a primordial anthropomorphic being (Purusa, Prajapati). Similarly, the notion of attaining progressively "newer and more beautiful forms, either [that of] a father, or a *gandharva*, or a god, or Prajapati, or Brahma," ¹⁴⁷ suggests the attainment of a number of spheres leading up to an integration with the cosmos as a whole, a notion represented here by the figures of Prajapati and Brahma; for their "worlds" are the cosmos.¹⁴⁸ This same level of attainment seems to be implied in the description of the *devayana*, according to which the deceased travels through a number of cosmic spheres and arrives finally at the "world" of Brahma. ¹⁴⁹

The *pitryana*, which also leads the sacrificer to the attainment of a series of worlds, differs from the *devayana* by leading the sacrificer back to this world; that is, those who attain the *pitryana* do not attain a complete and lasting integration into the cosmos, but instead reenter the cycle of birth and death in this world. The difference between these two paths is prefigured in the Brahmanas in the notion that the cosmos is divided into an immortal realm where the gods dwell and a mortal realm of "these creatures [who] die."¹⁵⁰ This distinction is also seen in the Brahmanic representation of Prajapati, the upper half of whose (cosmic) body is said to be immortal, the lower half mortal.¹⁵¹ And, although those who attain the *pitryana* remain within this "lower half," the *pitryana* itself leading the sacrificer from smoke to the night, to the fortnight, to the sun, to the moonsuggests an integration with the cosmos similar to that described in the other Upanisadic karma passages; namely, an integration into the several spheres of the cosmos that is, at the same time, the body of the primordial man.

All in all the passages identified as early representations of the karma doctrine base the attainments of the afterlife on the model of the sacrifice. As Jan Gonda has succinctly noted: "every great sacrifice is a repetition of the archetypal sacrifice in which Prajapati . . . while being dismembered, was transformed into the universe."¹⁵² Does this mean, however, that the type of activity valued in moral terms ("one becomes good by good action, bad by bad") in these passages is implicitly limited to the activity of the sacrifice? This question can be answered only by first looking to the unique view of the sacrifice promulgated in the Upanisads; namely, that the activity of the sacrifice is not limited to a specific

page_37

Page 38

ritual arena but is commensurate with life itself. This notion differs, for the most part, from the view found in the Brahmanas, that only those activities performed by the sacrificer after his initiation (*diksa*) have an effect on the outcome of the sacrifice. ¹⁵³ A passage in the Chandogya Upanisad thus describes how a man's life represents the activity of the sacrifice:

Indeed, a person is a sacrifice. His (first) twenty-four years is the morning libation. The *gayatri* has twenty-four syllables, and the morning libation is [offered with] the *gayatri*. . . . Next the forty-four years, that is the midday libation. The *tristubh* has forty-four syllables, and the midday libation is [offered with] the *tristubh*. . . . And next the forty-eight years, that is the third libation. The *jagati* has forty-eight syllables, and the third libation is [offered with] the *jagati*.¹⁵⁴

Seen in this way, all actions occur within the limits of the ritual for the ritual's only limitation is life itself and, thus, all actions ultimately affect its outcome. These results are then manifested in the attainments of the afterlife, which represent the cumulative effects of a lifetime of (sacrificial) activity.

The notion that an individual's life is commensurate with the sacrifice is consonant with the development in Upanisadic thought of the interiorized sacrifice, with its emphasis on knowledge. For knowledge, unlike action, is not readily delimited; that is, the individual does not stop "knowing thus" outside the sacrificial arena. The Upanisadic thinkers, however, continued to recognize a traditional sacrificial format, the nature of which was reflected in the limitations of the *pitryana*. Just as this form of sacrifice is confined to a certain arena, limiting the sacrificial performance to one aspect of the many that constitute a person's life, so those who follow this path after death do not attain a complete and lasting integration into the cosmos, but remain within the "mortal" realm that leads to a reentry into the sphere of human birth and death. Nonetheless, the description of the *pitryana* that occurs in the Chandogya Upanisad suggests that similar to the interiorized sacrifice, the attainments of the afterlife of those who follow the traditional sacrificial format are based on actions that extend beyond the sacrificial performance:¹⁵⁵ "For those who have been of pleasant conduct here, the consequence is that they attain a pleasant

page_38

Page 39

womb, either the womb of a Brahman, Ksatriya, or a Vaisya. But for those whose conduct has been stinking the consequence is that they attain a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, a hog, or an outcaste (*candala*)."¹⁵⁶

Among the several early Upanisadic passages that relate an individual's actions prior to death to the conditions of the afterlife ("one becomes good by good action, bad by bad"), this passage corresponds most closely to the formulation of the karma doctrine in the later Hindu tradition.¹⁵⁷ Unlike the terms employed in the other Upanisadic texts to denote good and bad actions, the terms used here *pleasant conduct* (*ramaniya-carana*) and *stinking conduct* (*kapuya-carana*) do not appear to be rooted strictly in the activity of the sacrifice.¹⁵⁸ In other words, this passage is unique in apparently referring to a moral valuation of action in general. Yet, among the several karma passages, this passage, which is attached to the description of the *pitryana*, refers specifically to the traditional sacrificial format; that is, this passage alone describes a form of worship confined to the ritual arena and not equated with life itself. As such this passage suggests how the doctrine of action in the Upanisads was extended from the activity and results of the sacrifice to include all actions and their consequences. At the same time, it suggests how in the early Upanisads the karma doctrine brought to closure doctrines already under consideration in Brahmanic thought regarding the affects of the ritual performance in the conditions of the afterlife.

Several discussions that appear in the Brahmanas indicate the Brahmanic thinkers recognized two types of sacrifice: the traditional sacrificial format and a form of sacrifice that emphasizes the individual to the point of excluding the priests and perhaps even the gods.¹⁵⁹ Although the Brahmanic authors still asked: "Which [of these two forms of sacrifice] is better?"¹⁶⁰ at least one discussion in the Satapatha Brahmana suggests the traditional ritual format led to distressing results in the afterlife:

now who performs these [rites] for another, he causes these oceans [the rites] to dry up [for himself]; those dried up, his meters are dried up; after the meters, the world [*loka*]; after the world, the body (*atman*); after the body, (his) children and cattle. Indeed he becomes poorer (*papiyas*) daily, who performs these rites for another . . . , now who does not perform these [rites] for another becomes more pros-

page_39

Page 40

perous (*sreyas*) daily. Indeed this [rite] is his divine, undying, body (*atman*); who performs these [rites] for another gives his divine body to another. Only a dried trunk remains. ¹⁶¹

This passage suggests the Prajapati model, with its emphasis on the single sacrificer,¹⁶² was viewed by at least some Brahmanic thinkers as the exclusive model for the sacrifice; the notion that "a dried trunk" rewarded those who followed a traditional path of worship (indicated here by the practice of performing for another) effectively represents the denial of this mode of worship.¹⁶³ The severity of this view is lessened in the Upanisads in the contrast between the respective afterlife attainments of those who attain the *devayana* and those who attain the *pitryana*. Although these afterlife attainments are based on a distinction in performance similar to that described in the Brahmana passage cited earlier, unlike this Brahmana passage, the formulation of the *pitryana* indicates that those who follow the traditional sacrificial format do attain an afterlife existence. Moreover, this afterlife existence resembles to a degree the attainments of the *devayana*, as the *pitryana* albeit on a different level from that proposed by the *devayana* leads the deceased to an integration with the cosmos, thus reenacting Prajapati's cosmogonic activity. This relationship suggests that rather than denying the traditional sacrificial format, the Upanisadic thinkers were concerned with assimilating it to the Prajapati model; for, as the normative model in Upanisadic thought, promulgated in the form of the "interiorized" sacrifice with its emphasis on knowledge, the assertion of its dominance no longer required the rejection of an earlier form.

The Upanisadic attempt to correlate two types of worship within the single paradigm of Prajapati's sacrifice led, I believe, to the promotion of the idea that even for those who follow the traditional sacrificial format despite its sharply delimited nature all actions, not just those associated with the ritual performance, affect the conditions of the afterlife. In other words, the conduct of those worshippers following the traditional ritual format was viewed in the same way as the conduct of those following the "interiorized" sacrifice, which was not limited to a specific arena or to a certain aspect of an individual's life. On the one hand, the nature of the *devayana*, an abiding integration into the world of Brahma,

page_40

Page 41

reflects the "otherworldly" nature of the activity of those who follow the interiorized path of worship: life itself is the activity of the sacrifice. On the other hand, the nature of the *pitryana*, which leads the sacrificer back to this world, reflects the "this worldly" nature of the activity of those who follow the traditional path of worship: except for those acts contained within the sacrificial arena, actions are mundane. Accordingly, the *pitryana* leads finally to this world and the attainment, "for those who have been of pleasant conduct," to a birth as a Brahman, Ksatriya, or Vaisya, or, "for those whose conduct has been stinking," to a birth as an animal or an outcaste.¹⁶⁴

The point that draws the Upanisadic karma doctrine out of the realm of ritual activity is simultaneously the point that leads back to the model of the sacrifice. For, only when the activity of the sacrifice became equated with all activity that is, with life itself did the Upanisadic thinkers begin to envision a doctrine of the moral efficacy of actions that actually were disconnected to the sacrifice. And, although this notion of the moral efficacy of all actions is itself unprecedented in the Brahmanic texts, its presentation in the Upanisads suggests it represents the culmination of views that had emerged in Brahmanic thought regarding the relationship between (sacrificial) acts, those performed by the individual sacrificer and those performed by the ritual specialists, and their effects in the conditions of the afterlife.

Conclusion: The Karma Doctrine in the Context of Brahmanic Thought

In this chapter, I have emphasized the continuity of the Upanisadic and the Brahmanic traditions and, in particular, the continuity of the Upanisadic karma doctrine with the Brahmanic ritual world view. In part, I have emphasized the continuity of these traditions to counter the pervasive bias against the Brahmanas that stands at the foundation of Western Indology. The result of this bias has been a tendency to remove the Upanisadic tradition from its historical and conceptual context. In the case of the karma doctrine this failure to investigate, or even to acknowledge, the Brahmanic structures that continue to assert themselves in the thought of the Upanisads has been particularly damaging,

page_41

Page 42

for scholars tended to view the karma doctrine from its successors, which measure the moral efficacy of actions in all contexts, rather than from its antecedents, which are concerned with the moral effects of ritual action. By not understanding or by simply misrepresenting this Vedic substratum, scholars of an earlier generation believed the appearance of the karma doctrine in the Upanisads meant that the Brahmanic notion of the rewards of the sacrifice was

no longer considered to be effective; as Deussen remarked: "strictly speaking the entire [Brahmanic] conception of recompense is destroyed." 165 Viewed in this way the karma doctrine represented to these scholars the point of separation between the thought of the Upanisads and the thought of the Brahmanas.

Although in this chapter I have emphasized the continuity of the Brahmanic and Upanisadic traditions, it is not accurate to assert that the Upanisads are entirely inseparable from the Brahmanic traditionundeniably, even the earliest Upanisads express views that are unprecedented in the Brahmanasor that the karma doctrine in its earliest appearances in the Upanisads has the same meaning as karma in later Upanisadic and in later Indian thought. In investigating karma's earliest manifestations in the Upanisads I have sought primarily to isolate the Vedic antecedents of karma and, thereby, to show that karma does have a prehistory in Vedic thought, an understanding of which is critical to an understanding of the karma doctrine in its earliest appearances in the Upanisads. For, the Upanisadic karma doctrine continues to develop the structures underlying Brahmanic ritual thought.

In the following chapters, I shall turn to a detailed examination of what is perhaps the chief structure underlying Brahmanic ritual thought; that is, the notion that the cosmos itself arose from the primordial sacrifice of an anthropomorphic being (Purusa-Prajapati). The ideology of this event seems to have been the point from which the Brahmanic ritualists began to question the nature of the sacrificial formatin particular, focusing on the problem of (ritual) death and how it affected, as well as its effect on, the traditional relationship between the sacrificer and the ritual specialists employed by the sacrificer to perform the rites for his benefit. Although the Brahmanic authors naturally framed their discussions in terms of the sacrifice (in developments in both practice and theory), they nevertheless addressed the fundamental questions of hu-

page_42

Page 43

man existence: the nature of life and death and man's relationship to the larger cosmos in which he exists. However, the Brahmanic doctrines that treat these fundamental questions, largely as a result of their being constantly related to a ritual format developed over many centuries, are sometimes ambiguous, at other times inconsistent. The Upanisadic karma doctrine, which is not only prefigured in these Brahmanic doctrines but is presented as the textual successor to them, represents an important interpretive tool in clarifying their ambiguities. To utilize the karma doctrine toward this end I have "reintroduced" it into its proper historical and conceptual context of Brahmanic ritual thought.

page_43

Page 44

2. The Cosmos as Man: The Image of the Cosmos in Vedic Thought

In the preceding chapter the attainments of the afterlifethe various paths and states that contextualize the Upanisadic karma doctrine were shown to be prefigured in the thought of the Brahmanas. In particular, these attainments correspond to the Brahmanic idea of *saloka*, having "a world together with" one or another of the constituents that represent the various planes (*loka*) of the Vedic cosmos. 1 In the Brahmanas, the notion of *saloka* is linked to the activity of the sacrifice; the performance of specific rites leads the sacrificer, apparently even before his death, to a union with certain worlds:

Who sacrifices the Vaisvadeva [sacrifice] becomes Agni, then indeed, he attains a world, closely united, together with Agni; who offers the Varuna-praghasa becomes Varuna, then indeed, he attains a world, closely united, together with Varuna; and who offers the Sakamedha offering becomes Indra, then indeed, he attains a world, closely united, together with Indra.2

The role of the sacrifice in leading the individual to the attainment of a world reflects the creative nature of this activity; as Jan Gonda has observed: "each performance of the rite holding out a prospect of divinization or of winning a foundation or a residence in heaven, the rite may be said to promote a new 'rising' of the *loka*."3 However, ritual activity, which consists of a series of predetermined and precisely ordered events, creates through recreating; as the Brahmanas

express it: "This [ritual act] done now is that which the gods did then [in the beginning]."4 What the gods did then was to create the cosmos, an event that the Vedic texts depict as having occurred through the sacrifice of a primordial anthropomorphic figure. The ritual act that enables the sacrificer to

page_44

Page 45

become *saloka* entails the re-creation of this primordial sacrifice; 5 just as the body of the primeval being was transformed into the cosmos, so, too, the individual becomes "one together with the cosmos" through his own ritual activity.

Theoretically, every great (*srauta*) sacrifice replicates the cosmogonic activity of the primordial man.⁶ In practice, however, only a few of the rites in the Vedic corpus exhibit an explicit concern with the re-creation of this event. This situation reflects the peculiar relationship between theory and practice in the development of the Vedic ritual tradition. Although the Indian tradition is notorious for the impenetrability of its history, the establishment of the majority of the Vedic rites appears to have preceded the articulation of the theory that the ritual replicates the event of a primordial anthropomorphic sacrifice. Thus, while many of the basic ritual forms that appear in the Brahmanas are in evidence throughout the Rgveda, the notion of a primordial anthropomorphic sacrifice, presented in the Brahmanas as the regnant cosmogony, is first articulated only in the latest stratum of the Rgveda.⁷ Of course, the absence of this theory in the textual tradition does not preclude its presence in Vedic thought; the idea of a cosmogonic sacrifice apparently persisted from the Vedic people's Indo-European past and seems also to have been an important part of the indigenous Indian beliefs that, throughout much of the Rgvedic period, were gradually absorbed into the Vedic religion. However, the Rgvedic rituals do not appear to be founded on the theory of a cosmogonic sacrifice (though they do replicate other cosmogonic motifs),⁸ and this indicates that the early ritual forms actually preceded the establishment of the ritual theory, with which virtually all the *srauta* rites were later identified, of the cosmic man's sacrifice.

In the post Rgvedic texts, the Brahmanas, the notion of the primordial cosmogonic sacrifice was propounded as the foundation of the entire Vedic ritual corpus. Although the implementation of this theory did lead to the addition of new rituals, the older ritual forms did not fall into disuse. In fact, these older rituals are not only highly visible in the texts of this period but are occasionally called on to exemplify the reenactment of the cosmogonic sacrifice of the primordial man.⁹ Furthermore, the older rites were used in various combinations to constitute the new rites, such as the Agnicayana, which appear to have been created for the precise purpose

page_45

Page 46

of re-creating the cosmogonic sacrifice of the primeval man. 10 Employing the older rituals in this way though it often forced the authors of the Brahmanas to assert identifications between entities that had no obvious relationship (a process said to characterize the Brahmanic enterprise in general)¹¹ lent the authority of tradition to the notion of the sacrifice of a primordial anthropomorphic being.

Despite its late appearance the notion of a primordial sacrifice of a "cosmic man" (Purusa, Prajapati) was not entirely unheralded in Vedic thought. In particular, the connection between the sacrifice and the sacrificer, which stands at the center of this notion, was, as Julius Eggeling noted, "an essential and intimate one from the beginning of the sacrificial practice."¹² The sacrificial stake (*yupa*), which was used since the Rgvedic period to bind the victim at the ritual,¹³ demonstrates this relationship between sacrificer and sacrifice. In the traditional ritual format the sacrificer (*yajamana*) stood outside the action of the ritual, in part, to minimize the danger to his own person.¹⁴ In his place at the center of the ritual arena an animal or another substitute victim was bound to the *yupa*. To demonstrate the intimate relationship between the victim bound to the *yupa* and the sacrificer standing outside the ritual arena, the *yupa* was made to be a representation of the sacrificer himself; according to one passage in the Taittiriya Samhita, the stake was erected to the same height as the sacrificer, and thus was "as great as the sacrificer."¹⁵ Through his identification with the *yupa*, the sacrificer at least, symbolically thus bound himself to the sacrificial victim.

To extend, from this point, the intimate link between the sacrificer and the sacrifice into the notion of a primordial anthropomorphic sacrifice, a model that truly represents man as the sacrificial victim, requires no great imaginative leap; at the very least, its theoretical base is consonant with trends long established in Vedic ritual thought. The application of

this theory, however, placed demands on the ritual that threatened to break its carefully delimited boundaries. In particular, the notion of the primordial sacrifice implies that the sacrificer must give up his own life to re-create the cosmogony. How the Vedic thinkers responded to this challenge represents a decisive point in the development of the Vedic tradition, for this challenge appears to have been instrumen-

page_46

Page 47

tal in the shift from the external performance of the sacrificial rite to the "interiorized" sacrifice of the Upanisads.

In this chapter, I examine the Vedic notion of the cosmic man: how it represents the cosmos and what this representation means for the sacrificer, whose ritual actions are based on the model of the cosmic man's primordial sacrifice. Because the notion of the cosmic man subsumes earlier depictions of the Vedic cosmos this examination requires a brief exploration of Vedic cosmology. Following this I turn to the image of the cosmic man as it first appears in the Rgveda, attending, in particular, to the unique demands on the human sacrificer placed by this image, with its underlying notion of an equation between man and cosmos, a notion that appears to be unprecedented in early Vedic thought. The image and ideology of the cosmic man in the Rgveda leads to what is the most elaborate account of the cosmic man myth in the Vedic literature; namely, the creation myth that accompanies the Agnicayana ritual in the Satapatha Brahmana. Here I focus on how this myth transforms the Rgvedic notion of the cosmic man and what this transformation implies for the late Vedic world view.

The Cosmic Image and Its Vicissitudes in Vedic Thought

The Vedic texts contain several depictions of the shape of the cosmos. The Rgveda alone contains two basic images of the cosmos: 16 a bipartite cosmos, consisting of the two spheres of heavens and earth,¹⁷ and a tripartite cosmos, consisting of the three spheres of heavens, atmosphere, and earth.¹⁸ The bipartite cosmic image of heavens and earth (*dyava-prthivi*), which appears to be closely related to other Indo-European cosmologies, is generally considered to be the earlier of these two images.¹⁹ The tripartite cosmos, which became the favored image in the Rgveda,²⁰ subsumes the features of the bipartite cosmos: the heavens and the earth and adds to them an atmospheric region. However, the transformation from the bipartite to the tripartite cosmos does not seem to have been made merely for the sake of astronomic precision. In fact, the creation of the tripartite cosmic image reflects a complex of ideas and associations of which the delineation of a region between the heavens and the earth may be the least important.

page_47

Page 48

The Vedic poet's lack of concern with the precise cosmographic relationship of the atmospheric region to the established cosmic image of the heavens and the earth is apparent from the ambiguous name they assigned to it: the *intermediate* space (*antariksa*).²¹ The idea of an "intermediate" space may not only imply location but also refer in a general way to the extension of two into three. Thus, the location of the three spheres of the cosmos at times seems less important than its triple nature: there are references to three earths, three atmospheres, and three heavens.²² And although the "intermediate space" is sometimes found between the heavens and the earth, in some instances this sphere seems to be positioned beneath the earth.²³ These points suggest that the tripartite cosmic image may have its most important antecedents in an aspect of Vedic thought that saw a special significance in triplicity and that it does not represent an advancement in the astronomic sophistication of the Vedic poets.²⁴

In the Satapatha Brahmana the Rgvedic tripartite cosmos yields to the image of a pentadic cosmos.²⁵ Just as the tripartite cosmos was inclusive of the constituents of the earlier bipartite cosmos, so, too, the pentadic cosmos includes the three spheres of earth, atmosphere, and heavens. And, similar to the earlier transformation from a bipartite to a tripartite cosmos, the constituents of the preceding image serve to orient the later image. Thus, the pentadic cosmos is created through the addition of two intermediate regions: one between the earth and the atmosphere and one between the atmosphere and the heaven to the tripartite cosmos of earth, atmosphere, and heavens. In the Satapatha Brahmana these newly added regions bear the same sort of indistinct appellation seen in the Rgveda's naming of the atmospheric region as the "intermediate space;" these two regions are referred to as "what is above the earth and on this side of the atmosphere,"²⁶ and "what is above the atmosphere and on this side of the heavens."²⁷ Although these terms imply location, the precise cosmographic relationship of the five spheres is overshadowed by the fact that there are five of them.

For example, the authors refer to five regions beneath the sun and five regions above the sun,²⁸ an image that exceeds ordinary cosmography. These points again indicate that the pentadic cosmic image was not developed as an expression of a sophisticated cosmography (though this pentadic imagery certainly suggests a so-

page_48

Page 49

phisticated *cosmology*). Rather, in the Satapatha Brahmana, the notion of a fivefold cosmos is a reflection of the extraordinary importance assigned to pentadic imagery in the thought of this text. ²⁹

The varied nature of Vedic cosmography has been a source of discouragement to scholars attempting to explicate Vedic notions of the cosmos.³⁰ Vedic scholarship has thus rarely risen above the view that Vedic cosmology is most notable for its "comparatively indefinite and unsystematic character."³¹ However, variety has been improperly equated with inconsistency here, for each of the various depictions of the cosmos appears to be oriented in terms of an earlier image and each draws on the same basic elements of heavens and earth and adds to them one or more intermediate planes. These intermediate planes appear to have no cosmographic significance and, thus, do not affect the shape of the cosmos as much as they do its meaning. As David Knipe has observed "each of the basic triadic, tetradic and pentadic series makes a unique statement."³²

Knipe refers here to the triad of heavens, atmosphere and earth; the tetrad of the four quarters or directions (dis); and the pentad that combines these images and "is quite simply both at once and therefore the most complete expression of all."³³ The extension of three into four, and four into five, is a result of what Knipe has labeled the principle of "x plus one," according to which the extra number "encompasses, succeeds, and completes" the members to which it is added.³⁴ Thus, the fourfold cosmos adds the four directions to the threefold cosmos of heavens, earth, and atmosphere. And, because the directions are a characteristic of each of the four planes, this added element is not merely a fourth, but a fourth that encompasses the other three elements. Viewed in this way, the extension of the cosmic image, seen throughout the Vedic texts, appears to be a way of re-presenting, apparently on another level of existence, the already existing members of the cosmos.

By the late Vedic period the most significant expression of the cosmic image is found in the figure of the cosmic man (Purusa, Prajapati). In the Rgveda the image of the cosmic man (Purusa) extends the tripartite cosmos, which is the most common depiction of the cosmos in this text, into a fourfold cosmos. In the Satapatha Brahmana, the image of the cosmic man (Prajapati) extends the

page_49

Page 50

Rgvedic Purusa's four regions into five. In both instances, however, the cosmos is depicted as being correlative to the body of the cosmic man, and thus, the shape of the cosmos is implicitly that of a man.

To express the notion of an all-encompassing added member in this anthropomorphic cosmos, the Vedic thinkers turned to the peculiar relationship of the mind and the body that characterizes human existence. Although the mind partakes in all levels of physical experience, it also has the capacity to experience independently things that usually belong to the physical realm. Moreover, the presence of the mind is not limited to any one particular sphere of physical existence but seems to encompass all its aspects. This is perhaps best exemplified in Vedic thought in the role of the Brahman priest; as Wendy O'Flaherty has observed: "This priest, the Brahman, did absolutely nothing; his job was to sit there and to *think* the sacrifice while the others *did* it." ³⁵ The relationship between the Brahman's mental experience and the other priests' physical experience reflects the nature of the mind as the embodiment albeit on its own unique level of experience of all physical experience. Accordingly, a passage in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad declares that the Brahman priest, with his mind alone wins an "unlimited" world, whereas the other priests (*udgatr*, *hotr*, *adhvaryu*) win by their efforts at the sacrifice only one or another world.³⁶ Just as the mind encompasses the sum of physical experience, so, too, the cosmos founded on Purusa (or, in the Brahmanas, Prajapati) has an inner or essential aspect that seems to encompass the entire physical universe.

The Vedic mythology of the cosmic man presents this relationship between gross and subtle existence, body and mind, in its depiction of the cosmos in a way that suggests the cosmos itself replicates human existence. Accordingly, this mythology posits an integral relationship between man and world.

Purusa and the Creation of the Cosmos

The Purusasukta (Rgveda 10.90) represents Purusa's creative activity as consisting of two distinct phases. In the first phase, Purusa's creative activity is described as a "spreading asunder" (*vi-/kram*): "With three quarters Purusa rose upwards; one quarter

page_50

Page 51

of him remained here. From that he spread asunder in all directions, to what eats and does not eat." 37 The places to which Purusa spreads himself are necessarily indistinct; at this point in the cosmogony the specific spheres of the cosmos—heavens, atmosphere, earth, and so forth—are still uncreated. The idea of the undefined primordial cosmos is expressed in another well-known creation hymn, Rgveda 10.129, which states that in the beginning: "There was neither existence nor non-existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky beyond." 38 Purusa's initial task thus appears to be to establish a material foundation in this primordial absence. And because "Purusa is this all, what has been and what will be," 39 he accomplishes this task by spreading himself into the unformed cosmos; that is, by establishing himself as the stuff or *materia prima* of creation.

The second phase of Purusa's creative activity brings forth the manifest cosmos (the earth, atmosphere, and heavens) and its animate constituents (sun, moon, winds, humankind, and wild and domestic animals). This second phase of creation is accomplished through a sacrifice in which Purusa is the sacrificial victim: "That sacrifice, Purusa born in the beginning, they consecrated on the sacred grass. With him the gods, Sadhyas, and [those] who [were] seers sacrificed." 40

The form of this sacrifice is dismemberment. 41 Purusa's body represents the whole of the undifferentiated cosmos; to bring forth the manifest cosmos, with its several constituents, this whole must be broken up into distinct parts. The act of breaking apart is, of course, potentially an act of disordering. Here, the order that Purusa's anthropomorphic features lend to the unformed cosmos is instrumental in the emergence of an ordered cosmos. The Purusasukta poses a series of questions that point to the importance of these features in the act of creating the cosmos: "When they divided Purusa, into how many parts did they apportion him? What [became] of his mouth? What [of his] two arms? What are [his] two thighs, [his] two feet called?" 42

As this verse indicates, Purusa's body is distinguished by four points of reference: his head (represented by his mouth), trunk (represented by his arms), pelvis (represented by his thighs), and lower legs (or feet). In conjunction with the notion, "With three quarters he rose upwards; one quarter of him remained here,"

page_51

Page 52

expressed in a previous verse, these reference points suggest a specific cosmic orientation to Purusa's body. Now this orientation lends itself to the emergence of an ordered cosmos, that is, one in which the spheres of the cosmos are correlative to Purusa's body parts: "From his navel the atmosphere arose; from his head the heavens; from his two feet the earth; from his ear the quarters: thus they fashioned the worlds." 43

The general features of the cosmos that emerges from this act correspond to the features of the tripartite image of earth, atmosphere, and heavens seen throughout the Vedic texts and in the Rgveda in particular. 44 The addition of a fourth region, the quarters, which represents the four cardinal points, seems to have been made here not to effect a radical transformation in the basic cosmic image but to effect a shift from the established tripartite cosmic image to an image of a fourfold cosmos, in particular, one based on the notion of the cosmic man's body. 45 That this fourth region mediates between the traditional tripartite cosmic image and Purusa's fourfold nature is apparent from the unrestricted nature of the quarters; in the Vedic literature, they are not distinguished from any single cosmic plane but represent a characteristic of the cosmos as a whole. 46 However, although the addition of this fourth region does not radically alter the tripartite cosmic image, the establishment of a definite correlation between Purusa's body and the ordered cosmos represents a significant innovation in Vedic cosmological thought. The image of the cosmos this correlation establishes is wholly personal; that is, the cosmos, or its foundation, is imagined here as a man, with the earth founded on his feet, and the heavens on his head.

Along with its depiction of the emergence of the gross planes of the cosmos from Purusa's body, the Purusasukta describes the origin, from Purusa's head, of several constituents that inhabit the cosmos: "The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth Indra and Agni; from his breath the winds were born."⁴⁷ According to the Purusasukta's description of the emergence of the gross planes of the cosmos, the region of the heavens is correlative to Purusa's head. However, among the constituents depicted in this verse as emerging from Purusa's head the moon, the sun, Indra and Agni, and the wind only the sun clearly belongs to the region of the heavens; in Vedic mythology

Agni (fire) is generally associated with the earth, the winds with the atmosphere, and the moon with the quarters. ⁴⁸ Clearly, Purusa's "head" here must be distinguished from that which founds the region of the heavens. Whereas the head from which the heavens emerge is an aspect of Purusa's gross body, the head from which these various elements arise represents the subtle aspect of Purusa's existence. The mind, eye, mouth, and ear, which are the loci of sensation, represent the underlying or inner nature of man's material being.

The origination of the various natural phenomena, each of which represents a particular cosmic plane, from Purusa's head suggests that the head contains the whole of the cosmos. In fact, their relationship to the specific parts of Purusa's head reflects the orientation of the gross cosmos to Purusa's body. The relationship of Agni to the mouth below, of the sun to the eyes above, and of the wind to the nose or ears that lie in between,⁴⁹ thus reflects the hierarchy of earth, atmosphere, and heavens, whereas the relationship of the moon to the mind, which seems to be everywhere at once, reflects the ubiquitous presence of the quarters. These relationships suggest that Purusa's head is a microcosm of the manifest cosmos (which is at once his body):

Purusa's Body:	Gross Cosmos:	Cosmic Phenomenon:	Purusa's Head:
head	heavens	sun	eye
navel	atmosphere	winds	nose/ears
feet	earth	fire	mouth
ear	quarters	moon	mind

The correlation between Purusa's "head" and the moon, sun, Agni, and the winds that is, the natural phenomena that animate the various cosmic regions and Purusa's body and the material planes of earth, atmosphere, and heavens establishes a two-tier cosmic image. This image, which is represented as a man, reflects the dual nature of human existence; that is, the material body and the immaterial spirit or that which animates the material body.⁵⁰ As such, it attests to the precise nature of the correlation between man and cosmos.

The Reenactment of the Cosmogony

Mircea Eliade has stated that the "cosmogony is the exemplary model for every creative situation." ⁵¹ In late Vedic thought, the Purusasukta clearly represents such a model. However, the Rgveda contains several cosmogonies, and in the early Vedic epochs, these myths clearly represented the "exemplary models" for many creative (ritual) situations. For example, the chief cosmogonic myth of the early Rgveda is the slaying of Vrtra by Indra and Indra's subsequent separation of the heavens and the earth through propping up the sky with the cosmic tree or pillar.⁵² This event was reenacted by erecting a pole at the New Year's festival,⁵³ and also seems to have been an important part of the mythical background in the many Vedic rituals that featured some type of agonistic encounter.⁵⁴ Although the ascendancy of the Rgvedic Purusa myth very nearly obliterated these ritual practices and the myths that engendered them,⁵⁵ it is nevertheless apparent that this older complex has a different ideological orientation than that implied by the Purusa cosmogony. In particular, the Purusasukta's assertion of an equation between man and cosmos seems to be unprecedented in the cosmological thought of the early Vedic period.

Nonetheless, by the period of the Brahmanas, the replication of the creative activity of the primordial man represents a

fundamental aspect of the sacrificial theory;⁵⁶ according to Gonda: "By identifying oneself with the mythical Purusa and by ritually repeating the mythical event and so reactivating its inherent power for the benefit of oneself and with a view to one's own reintegration one believed oneself to achieve one's own 'rebirth.'",⁵⁷ The idea that the cosmos arose from the body of a primeval man leads to the belief that man might potentially integrate himself with the cosmos. The correlation the Purusa cosmogony establishes between body and cosmos, senses and natural phenomena, clearly facilitates the process of integration. However, with the exception of the funeral ritualthe "final sacrifice" (*antyesti*)the complete replication of the cosmic man's activity, and hence man's realization of his cosmic potential, creates an untenable situation. A. B. Keith, following Sylvain Lévi, observed that in Brahmanic thought: "The sacrifice is essentially commensurate with man, and the conclusion is not doubtfully drawn that the sacrifice should be the

page_54

Page 55

sacrifice of man himself. . . . The conclusion would, therefore, appear to be that the perfect form of sacrifice would be suicide. ⁵⁸ As Keith points out, however, suicide is never mentioned in the Brahmanas.⁵⁹ Though it fulfills the requisites of the sacrificial theory, suicide would prevent the sacrificer from meeting his obligation to the gods and the fathers, whom he sustains through the continued performance of various ritual acts and the production of offspring.⁶⁰

The Brahmanic thinkers clearly recognized that the replication of Purusa's creative activity might require the dismemberment and death of the human sacrificer. Thus, in the ritual literature (Srauta Sutras) the Purusasukta was often cited in association with the Purusamedha, the "sacrifice of man."⁶¹ Many scholars have questioned whether the Purusamedha was ever actually performed or whether it was merely intended to be a symbolic event.⁶² Nevertheless, the simple fact that it was included in the ritual corpus, "as a reasonable complement to the theory of sacrifice,"⁶³ clearly expresses the difficulties that the demands of Purusa's cosmogonic sacrifice raised for the human sacrificer.

Perhaps because the sacrificer's death was the intention, though not necessarily the outcome, of the Purusamedha, this rite appears to exhibit an exclusive concern with the material aspect of existence, for man's gross body forms the material of the offering. Thus, the description of the Purusamedha that appears in the Satapatha Brahmana homologizes the sacrificer's body with the material cosmosequating the feet with the earth, the legs with the region above the earth, the waist with the atmosphere, the trunk with the region above the atmosphere, and the head with the heavensbut does not mention the inner, or animate, aspect of human existence.⁶⁴ And, although an oblique reference is made to the subtle aspect of the cosmos's existence,⁶⁵ the authors do not assert even a vague correlation between it and man's inner nature.

Although the ritual paradigm of the cosmic man's bodily integration into the planes of the cosmos continues to assert itself in the thought of the Upanisads, the acceptance of the practice of "ritual interiorization" seems to have circumvented the necessity of the sacrificer's physical death and dismemberment. As Eliade has observed, in this type of ritual activity, "physiological functions take the place of libations and ritual objects."⁶⁶ In the

page_55

Page 56

Upanisads these functions are correlated to the various spheres of the cosmos. A passage in the Chandogya Upanisad thus homologizes this inner aspect of human existence with the cosmos through an offering to the various "breaths" (*prana*, *vyana*, *apana*, *samana* and *udana*), which in Vedic thought represent the organs of sense: ⁶⁷

What should first be offered he should offer [saying], "Hail to the prana." . . . The prana being satisfied, the eye is satisfied. The eye being satisfied, the sun is satisfied. The sun being satisfied, the heavens are satisfied . . .

Then what should be offered second he should offer [saying], "Hail to the vyana." . . . The vyana being satisfied, the ear is satisfied. The ear being satisfied, the moon is satisfied. The moon being satisfied, the quarters are satisfied . . .⁶⁸

The passage continues to relate, in the same manner, the *apana* breath to speech, fire, and the earth; the *samana* breath to the mind, lightening, and the rain; the *udana* breath to the skin, the winds, and the atmosphere.⁶⁹ Whereas the cosmos is depicted here in terms of its dual naturethe material (the gross planes of the heavens, the quarters, and so forth) and the inner or animate (the sun, moon, and so forth)there is no mention here of man's material being; that is, his physical body. This implies that the Upanisadic thinkers saw man's "inner" existence as the summation of his entire being and therefore

was relatable to both the material and the inner aspects of the cosmos's existence. Although this correlation raises its own unique set of problems for the achievement of the activity it proposes, unlike that of the traditional sacrificial format, cannot be verified empirically it does seem to lift the onus of the sacrificer's physical death in the performance of the rite.

Between these two positions, ideologically and perhaps historically, stands the Agnicayana ritual, a rite that the Brahmanic thinkers presented as the culmination of the Vedic rites. This rite takes to the extreme both performance, in the form of what is perhaps the most complex ceremonial in the Vedic ritual corpus, and knowledge, for each aspect of the ceremony bears a specific metaphysical implication, the knowledge of which makes the rite effective.

page_56

Page 57

tive. In so doing, the Agnicayana presents a model for man's own integration into the cosmos that provides for both aspects of his being: the gross body and the inner nature. To attain this end, however, the Agnicayana ritualists effected a subtle shift in the Vedic notion of the cosmic man, represented in the Brahmanas in the figure of Prajapati, thereby allowing the sacrificer to replicate the cosmogony in his own ritual activity.

Prajapati and the Creation of the Cosmos

The creation of the cosmos and its inhabitants from the body of a primeval anthropomorphic figure is the central cosmogonic myth of the Brahmanas. 70 Scholars have long recognized that the Brahmanic myth closely resembles Rgveda 10.90, the Purusasukta, with the important distinction that in the Brahmanas Prajapati takes the place of Purusa.⁷¹ However, the factors that led to Purusa's displacement in the Brahmanic myth have not been precisely determined.

Recent studies have looked to the cultural amalgamation that occurred during the late Vedic period, the period in which the Brahmanas were composed, as the likely cause of Prajapati's appearance in Purusa's place in the Brahmanic cosmogony.⁷² Jan Gonda has argued that many of Prajapati's noncosmogonic characteristics, particularly those that associate him with domestic animals (hence, the name Prajapati, which means "Lord of Creatures"), indicate that he originated in the "popular" sphere.⁷³ Gonda suggests that Prajapati's rise to the position of the cosmic man and "supreme deity" occurred when

the poets and ritualists, prompted by the inclination to associate elements of the religious tradition of the Aryans in general with elements of sacrificial lore and practice, had begun to credit him with new qualities and functions, and to make him an often central figure of more or less etiological myths and mythical narratives adapted or even concocted for definite ritual purposes, as well as a subject for ritualistic, theological, and philosophical speculation.⁷⁴

The important point here is that the process Gonda describes suggests the existence of certain "outside" pressures to which the Brahmanic ritualists would have had to respond. On the one hand,

page_57

Page 58

such pressures may have led the Brahmanic ritualists simply to incorporate the new beliefs and practices they encountered; on the other hand, this situation may have served to provide these ritualists with a measure of freedom in transforming albeit subtly already existing traditions.

Prajapati, as cosmic man, attains his greatest prominence in the Satapatha Brahmanain particular, in the mythology of the Agnicayana ritual, which is the subject of approximately one-third of the Satapatha Brahmana. ⁷⁵ The obviously synthetic nature of the Agnicayana ritual,⁷⁶ supports Gonda's supposition that Prajapati's rise to prominence resulted from the recasting of a "popular" deity into the established Vedic mythology of the cosmic man (Purusa). In fact, the authors of the Satapatha Brahmana specifically refer to Prajapati's "integrative" nature; as all levels of worship, from the "popular" to the hieratic, are said to be merely different ways of acknowledging the same cosmic man. In a passage that employs the sort of etymological reasoning typical of the Brahmanas, the authors of the Satapatha Brahmana state:

That one [Prajapati] called "Agni" the Adhvaryus (Yajurvedins) worship (or acknowledge) him as the "Yajus"

indeed because he yokes (/yuj) this whole universe. The Chandogas (Samavedins) [worship him as] "Sama" because in him this whole universe is uniform (*samana*). "Uktha" the Bahvrchas (Rgvedins) [worship him because] he causes this whole universe to be brought forth. "Demon" those skilled in sorcery [worship him] because by him this whole universe is governed. The serpents [worship him as] "poison." The snake charmers [worship him as] "snake." The gods [worship him as] "vigor." Men [worship him as] "material possessions." The asuras [worship him as] "magic." The fathers [worship him as] "*svadha*."77

Significantly, scholars have not seen Prajapati's appearance in the Brahmanas as an indication of a radical alteration in the Vedic notion of the cosmic man, which had been previously represented in the figure of Purusa. Since nearly a century ago when Julius Eggeling noted that "it might seem rather strange that the name [Purusa] . . . should have been discarded [in the Brahmanic myth]," scholars seem not to have viewed Purusa's displacement as an indication of anything more substantial than an incidental process of renaming.⁷⁸ In other words, though Prajapati may have been appro-

page_58

Page 59

priated from the "popular" level, his assumption of the role of cosmic man is so thorough in the Brahmanas that he can be distinguished from the Rgvedic Purusa in name only. This view, however, fails to consider both the special value which the Brahmanic authors attributed to the word of the Rgveda, which in the Brahmanas is designated as "divine speech,"⁷⁹ and the importance attributed to names in Brahmanic thought. As Jan Gonda has noted of this milieu: "the connection between a name and its bearer . . . is so intimate that there is for all practical purposes a question of identity, interchangeability or inherent participation so that the name may reveal to the man who understands it well the nature and essence of the bearer."⁸⁰ To displace, or even rename, the Rgvedic Purusa in their cosmogonic speculations suggests a deep motivation for change on the part of the Brahmanic authors.

The identification of the sacrificer with the primeval man represents the chief means by which the cosmogony is recreated in the ritual performance.⁸¹ In this context *Purusa*, which simply means "man," appears to be an especially apt name for the primeval man, as it establishes an immediate identification with the human sacrificer.⁸² Julius Eggeling, clearly recognizing that in Brahmanic thought a name was a potent means of establishing identity, attempted to account for the change in the Brahmanas to Prajapati, which means the "Lord of Creatures," by suggesting that the name "Prajapati was manifestly a singularly convenient one for the identification of the sacrificer with the supreme 'Lord of Creatures'; for doubtless men who could afford to have great and costly sacrifices . . . performed for them . . . would almost invariably be 'Lords of Creatures; i.e., rulers of men and possessors of cattle.'"⁸³

However, Eggeling's remarks trivialize the distinction between Rgveda 10.90 and the Brahmanic cosmogony; that the cosmic man is named Prajapati, the "Lord of Creatures," clearly signifies a different way of thinking about the relationship of man and cosmos than that implied by referring to the cosmic man as Purusa, the "Man." In the creation myth, which in the Satapatha Brahmana accompanies the discussion of the Agnicayana ritual, this difference is expressed through depicting Prajapati's primordial creative activity as a process of sexual generation.⁸⁴ To a certain degree, the naming of the cosmic man, Prajapati, "Lord (*pati*) of [that which is] Procreated (*praja*)," may be attributed to the nature of this activity;

page_59

Page 60

for, unlike Purusa whose creative act takes the form of a dismemberment, Prajapati creates through "propagating." (The Sanskrit *praja* is derived from *pra-/jan*, "to be born, to propagate offspring.") How Prajapati's creative activity affects his relationship to the cosmos and what the peculiarities of this primordial activity imply for the human sacrificer who replicates the cosmogony in his own ritual activity is seen in the Satapatha Brahmana's detailed mythology of the cosmogony.

The Agnicayana section of the Satapatha Brahmana begins with a lengthy narration of the creation of the cosmos.⁸⁵ Although this creation myth includes motifs that are seen in several Rgvedic hymns,⁸⁶ the central episode of the cosmogony presented herethat is, Prajapati's creation of the cosmos and its inhabitantsresembles the cosmogony described in Rgveda 10.90, the Purusasukta. However, in accordance with a general distinction between the Rgveda and the Brahmanas, the Brahmanic version of this myth is considerably more verbose and detailed than the myth that appears

in the Rgveda.⁸⁷ Moreover, unlike the Purusasukta, the myth that occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana has an immediate ritual purpose; as a prelude to the performance of the fire altar building ceremony (*agnicayana*) it establishes a paradigm for the sacrificer's own activity and this purpose visibly affects certain details of the myth.⁸⁸

The Agnicayana creation myth begins by stating that, "In the beginning this [all] was nonexistent,"⁸⁹ a thought-provoking notion that occurs with some frequency in the Vedic texts.⁹⁰ In the Rgveda an entire hymn, Rgveda 10.129, the "Creation Hymn," is founded upon the notion of a primeval state of nonexistence. There the motif shapes a cosmogony that is very nearly overwhelmed by its nihility: even the first existent principle is wholly enveloped in the primal emptiness.⁹¹ The paradox of this first principle's emergence—that is, how existence arises out of nonexistence—seems almost to deny the event of the creation.⁹² And, though the existent is said to emerge through the power of its heat (*tapas*) and desire (*kama*), the hymn seems to attribute the fact that creation occurs at all to the Vedic poets' extraordinary powers of perception: "Poets (*kavi*) seeking in their heart with wisdom found the bond of existence in non-existence."⁹³

page_60

Page 61

The authors of the Satapatha Brahmana draw on several motifs that occur in this Rgvedic myth: in particular, those of heat, desire, and the Vedic poets or sages (*rsi*), whose knowledge is instrumental to the creation of the cosmos.⁹⁴ However, they do not agonize over the conceptual difficulties presented by the idea of primordial nonexistence; by employing the chief elements of the Rgvedic myth, the authors of the Brahmana perhaps imply that this problem has been resolved elsewhere. Accordingly, they freely (and obscurely) construct their own myth of creation from the non-existent: "They say, 'What was that non-existent?' The Rsis indeed were the non-existent in the beginning. They say, 'Who were the Rsis?' The Rsis [became] the vital airs (*prana*). Before the universe was existent, desiring this [existent universe], they perished (*/ris*) by their exertion (*srama*) and their heat (*tapas*). Therefore they are called Rsis."⁹⁵

Although this brief myth draws its formal elements from the Rgveda's "Creation Hymn" (10.129), its construction here suggests the ideology of the central Brahmanic creation myth of Prajapati, which it introduces; the elements of an earlier mythology are thus reshaped by the Agnicayana ritualists to establish their own retelling of the Prajapati myth within the known Vedic corpus. Accordingly, in this version of the myth the activity of the Rsis, which itself combines several Vedic creation motifs, is described in a way that clearly prefigures Prajapati's own career, during which he creates through his desire (*kama*), the power of his heat (*tapas*) and exertion (*srama*),⁹⁶ and finally "falls apart" (*vi-/srams*).⁹⁷ The Rsis' activity, however, represents an order of creation quite different from that established by Prajapati. Prajapati's creation is the *existent* cosmos. The Rsis, on the other hand, are said to be identical with the *nonexistent*; their activity does not lead directly to the creation of the cosmos, but rather occurs *in illo tempore*, before Prajapati and apparently before existence itself are manifest. Nonetheless, as a prelude to the central episode of the cosmogony, the Rsis' activity initiates the conditions necessary for Prajapati's existence and, hence, to a degree shapes the creation of the cosmos.

Prajapati, like Purusa, creates the cosmos and its inhabitants out of his own self; in the Brahmanic myth the totality of this act is made apparent in the initial reference to the nonexistence of the

page_61

Page 62

universe.⁹⁸ The cosmos that arises from Prajapati's primordial creative activity, like that which arises from Purusa's dismemberment, is ordered in correlation to Prajapati's being; that is, relative to both the gross planes of his body and the inner planes of his head (the locus of his senses: sight, hearing, speech, and so forth). The authors of the Agnicayana express this correlation in terms of a heptadic symbolism.⁹⁹ This symbolism is established immediately in the Agnicayana creation myth in the figures of the Rsis, who in Brahmanic literature were typified as a group of seven.¹⁰⁰

The Rsis perish as a result of their exertions, leaving behind them the vital airs (*prana*). In the Vedic literature the vital airs often denote the sense organs or, according to Sayana, the "orifices of the head."¹⁰¹ Although they seem to have been variously enumerated,¹⁰² in the Agnicayana myth their relationship to the Rsis establishes them as seven in number. That the vital airs arise as a result of the Rsis' diminishment indicates their subtle nature; though in Brahmanic thought they are identified with the physical sense organs, their locus seems to be the intangible aspect of sensation such as sight, hearing, thought, and so forth.¹⁰³

Following their emergence from the Rsis, the vital airs are "kindled" (*/indh*) another reference to the creative power of heat in this myth apparently to gain greater substance, and "being kindled they emitted seven separate persons (*Purusa*)."¹⁰⁴ The seven persons, however, find that the condition of being separate prohibits them from procreating; consequently, they make themselves into one person (*Purusa*): "They said 'Surely, being thus we cannot procreate. We must make these seven persons into one person.' They made those seven persons into one person. These two were compressed upwards of the naval; two downwards of the navel; a person [in each wing]; one person became the foot."¹⁰⁵

The seven "persons" form themselves into the gross planes of the body. The head, however, is formed separately from the body. It is constituted as the "essences" (*rasa*) that is, the vital breaths of each of these seven persons are "removed upwards" (*urdhvam sam- ud- /uh*): "Now what excellence (*sri*), what essence (*rasa*), there was of those seven persons, that was removed upwards, that became his head."¹⁰⁶ This idea not only establishes the head as the microcosm of the body, but a microcosm that represents the essential nature of the body.

page_62

Page 63

The fully constituted person is identified as Prajapati: "that same person (*Purusa*) became Prajapati."¹⁰⁷ This statement contains several levels of meaning. Superficially, the term *Purusa* simply refers to the person who becomes Prajapati. On another level, however, *Purusa* refers to Purusa, the cosmic man, and the statement thus establishes the identity of Prajapati with his Rgvedic predecessor. And finally, *Purusa* refers to man that is, the human sacrificer who in and through the performance of the Agnicayana ritual "becomes" Prajapati.

Prajapati immediately expresses his desire that: "I should be manifold; I should reproduce."¹⁰⁸ In the Agnicayana creation myth, Prajapati's creative activity appears to extend over two distinct phases. In the first phase Prajapati creates through a process of exerting (*/sram*), heating himself (*/tap*), and finally "emitting" (*/srj*).¹⁰⁹ The purpose of this phase of the creation seems to resemble that which the Rgvedic Purusa achieved through his "spreading himself" into the unformed cosmos; namely, to establish a foundation out of which the constituents of the cosmos can be created. And, because Prajapati alone exists during this initial phase of the creation, his actions are necessarily self-contained. The cosmic foundation created as a result of this activity allows Prajapati to externalize his activity in the next phase of the creation. In this phase, Prajapati's creative activity is described as a process of "coupling" (*mithunam sam- /bhu*). This latter activity accentuates what is implicit in Prajapati's act of heating during the first phase of the creation; namely, that Prajapati's act of creating is a sexual act. For, as Walter Kaelber has noted, the act of "heating" (*/tap*) represents in the Vedic texts "the heat generating and generated by the sexual act which issues in biological birth."¹¹⁰

Prajapati, following the model of the Rsis, enters into the first phase of his creative activity by exerting (*/sram*) and heating (*/tap*) himself. Exhausted from this effort, Prajapati first creates, or more precisely, first emits the *brahman*:

That person (*Purusa*) Prajapati desired: "I should be manifold; I should procreate." He exerted and heated himself. He heated himself and was exhausted. The *brahman* was first emitted, the triple [body of] knowledge. That became a foundation (*pratistha*) for him. Therefore they say: "The *brahman* is the foundation of this whole [universe]."¹¹¹

page_63

Page 64

There has been considerable scholarly discussion over the meaning of the term *brahman*, particularly of its meaning in the pre-Upanisadic period of Indian thought. ¹¹² Mircea Eliade has summed up this discussion by noting that "the important fact is that, at all periods and on all cultural levels the *brahman* was considered and expressly called the imperishable, the immutable, the foundation, the principle of all existence . . . in other words, the *brahman* is the *Grund* that supports the world, is at once cosmic axis and ontological foundation."¹¹³ In the Agnicayana myth the *brahman*, which is Prajapati's first creation, is immediately identified with the triple body of the Veda (Rg, Sama, and Yajus), speech (*vac*), and Prajapati's mouth.¹¹⁴ Although the authors of this myth declare that "the *brahman* is the foundation of this whole [universe],"¹¹⁵ it is the identification with the Veda that defines the way in which the *brahman* founds reality.

The authors of the Brahmanas viewed the Veda as a repository of the spoken word coexistent with reality.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in the Brahmanas speech itself represents a potent means for penetrating the imperceptible relations of all existence.¹¹⁷

(The seemingly interminable verbal identifications that dominate the discussions in these texts attest to the importance the Brahmanic authors attributed to the potency of the word.) However, the reality that the word represents is insubstantial, and the reality that it embodies can be apprehended only by those possessing extraordinary powers of perception (exemplified by the Vedic Rsis). The identification of the *brahman* with the Veda thus implies that the *brahman* founds not the gross cosmos but rather an intangible albeit an underlying and essential aspect of the cosmos's existence.

Following the creation of the *brahman*, Prajapati again expresses his desire that "I should be manifold; I should reproduce."¹¹⁸ And again Prajapati exerts and heats himself to attain this goal. The result of this activity is the creation, or more precisely, emission of "foam" (*phena*): "he heated himself [and] was worn out. He emitted the foam. He knew that form indeed was that which is manifold."¹¹⁹ As Wendy O'Flaherty has pointed out, foam "plays an important part in the creation by virtue of its ambivalence, half water and half air, mediating between matter and spirit."¹²⁰ In this instance the foam mediates between Prajapati's creation of the underlying foundation, the *brahman*, and his cre-

page_64

Page 65

ation of a gross foundation, the earth (*prthivi*, *bhumi*), which follows the foam. Prajapati enters into his creative activity of heating and exerting himself only three times: once to create the *brahman*, once to create the foam, and once to create the earth. However, unlike the *brahman* and the earth, the foam does not found any particular aspect of the creation. Its importance seems to lie in its intermediate character and, as such, in the possibility of a state of unification between two modes of existence.

Having created the foam, Prajapati again exerts and heat himself. The resulting creation is distinguished by its plurality: "He exerted and heated himself . . . and being worn out he emitted clay, salt, the dry sea beds, gravel, stone, gold, plants and trees. By this [emission] the earth was covered." ¹²¹ The creation of the earth along with these several elements that cover it, indicates that the earth founds existence on the material level. This point is reiterated by elucidating the "etymologies" of the two common Sanskrit terms for earth, *bhumi* and *prthivi*, in a way that shows they inherently represent a foundation that can be materially "spread out": "They say, 'This was (/bhu) indeed the foundation [so] it became the earth (*bhumi*); he spread (/prath) that out [so] it became the earth (*prthivi*).'"¹²²

The first phase of Prajapati's creation ends with the establishment of the two foundations: the earth, and the *brahman*. Prajapati begins the second phase of his creative activity by "uniting" (*mithunam sam-* /*bhu*) with the earth; that is, by joining together with the material foundation he established in the first phase of the creation.¹²³

The Sanskrit phrase *mithunam sam-/bhu*, "to unite as a pair," bears the specific sexual connotation of copulation; in the Agnicayana myth the result of this activity is an egg (*anda*) that arises and hatches into the various constituents of the cosmos. However, the idea of "uniting as a pair" also expresses the dual nature of the cosmos. This duality is manifested in the idea that the essential nature of the various cosmic spheres are embodied in certain natural phenomena, represented as deities: the earth in fire (Agni); the atmosphere in the wind (Vayu); the heavens in the sun (Aditya); and the quarters in the moon (Candramas).¹²⁴ In the Agnicayana's creation myth the dual nature of the material cosmos facilitates Prajapati's creative activity of "uniting as a pair." Accordingly, to

page_65

Page 66

create each sphere of the cosmos Prajapati employs successively the fire, sun, wind and moon as his agents of procreation. Beginning with the earth, with which Prajapati unites by means of its corresponding natural phenomenon fire (Agni), Prajapati's creative activity literally takes the form of "uniting as a pair" with the spheres of the cosmos. "Prajapati desired: 'It should become manifold; it should procreate.' By means of Agni he united as a pair with the earth. From that an egg arose." ¹²⁵ The egg that arises from this activity becomes the atmosphere (*antariksa*) and the wind (*Vayu*); that is, the region and its characteristic phenomenon, or deity, that in traditional Vedic cosmography are located above the earth: "That which was the embryo inside emerged as the wind (*Vayu*) . . . and that which was the shell became the atmosphere (*antariksa*)."¹²⁶ The distinction between the egg's shell and its embryo aptly reflects the distinction between the material planes of the cosmos and the natural phenomena that represent them. While the egg's shell becomes an aspect of the material cosmos the atmospheric region the embryo (*garbha*), "what is inside," becomes the phenomenon the wind that represents the essential (or, "inner") and animate aspect of that region.

This phase of the creation continues as Prajapati unites with the atmosphere by means of the wind to produce another egg.¹²⁷ The shell and embryo of this egg become the heavens (*div*) and the sun (*Aditya*), respectively; that is, the region and its phenomenon that are above the atmosphere. Prajapati next unites with the heavens by means of the sun to produce another egg, and its shell and embryo become the quarters (*dis*) and the moon (*candramas*).¹²⁸ The cosmos that has been progressively established through this activity is the same as that which Purusa in the Rgvedic myth established through his dismemberment; that is, the three spheres of heavens, atmosphere and earth, and the ubiquitous quarters, or cardinal points.

Having created the various cosmic planes, Prajapati turns to the creation of the beings who inhabit and animate those planes. Although Prajapati's creative activity is still depicted as a process of "uniting as a pair," this stage of the creation is distinguished from the previous stage that is, the creation of the cosmic planes by its use of only two elements, speech (*vac*) and mind (*manas*), elements that represent the inner or sensate aspect of

page_66

Page 67

existence and, in a previous phase of the creation, were identified with the *brahman*. Thus, in this stage of the creation Prajapati is said to have "united as a pair with speech by means of mind."¹²⁹ The result of this activity is that Prajapati himself becomes pregnant (*garbhin*). Here the absence of an egg, the shell of which constituted the *materia prima* of the cosmic regions, again evidences the subtle nature of this part of the creation.

As a consequence of his pregnancy, Prajapati gives birth to the various deities who are associated with the four cosmic realms: the Vasus, who are associated with Agni and the earth; the Rudras, who are associated with Vayu and the atmosphere; the Adityas, who are associated with the sun and the heavens; and the Visvadevas, who are associated with the moon and the quarters.¹³⁰

In Vedic thought the Vasus, Rudras, and Adityas personified the natural phenomena found on each of the three spheres of earth, atmosphere, and heavens, whereas the Visvadevas seems to have personified the notion of universality¹³¹ and thus are aptly identified here with the quarters, which are everywhere at once. In the Agnicayana creation myth the idea that these beings are engendered through speech and mind implies that they represent the inner or essential aspect of the cosmos. Their relationship to the various material spheres appears to be similar to that which the vital breaths have to Prajapati's gross body; that is, they seem to embody the animate, and animating, aspect of the material cosmos.

To locate these "beings" within the various material spheres Prajapati again utilizes the agency of the various natural phenomena, or deities, that represent the cosmic planes:

Agni was created, the Vasus were created in succession. He placed them on this one [the earth]. Vayu [was created], the Rudras [were created in succession]. [He placed] them in the atmosphere. Aditya [was created], the Adityas [were created in succession]. [He placed] them in the sky. Candramas [was created], the Visvadevas [were created in succession]. [He placed] them in the quarters.¹³²

In facilitating the creation of the material planes of the cosmos, the role of Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Candramas seems to have been that of natural phenomenon. When the Vasus, Rudras, Adityas, and Visvadevas are placed into the material cosmos, their role seems to be that of "deity"; that is, they are personified. The distinction

page_67

Page 68

between these two roles reflects the distinction between the two aspects of the creation: the gross and the subtle, the inanimate and the animate. However, the malleability of Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Candramas that is, their easy transformation from deity to natural phenomenon derives from the fact that in either of their roles they are intermediaries; mediating between the two aspects of the cosmic man and the two aspects of the cosmos.

Placing these various "beings" in the material planes completes Prajapati's creation of the cosmos.¹³³ The animate and inanimate natures of Prajapati's creation suggests the same sort of two-tier cosmic image that previously was seen in the Purusasukta; that is, a cosmos that comprises the two aspects of human existence, represented by mind and body. However, in the Purusasukta, the cosmos that arises from Purusa's dismemberment is ordered in direct correlation to the

gross planes of the cosmic man's body and the subtle planes of his "head"; thus, the two-tier cosmos is at once cosmos and man. In the Agnicayana creation myth the relationship between Prajapati and the cosmos he creates appears to be less immediate than that established as a result of Purusa's creative activity. In particular, the idea that Prajapati's creative activity occurs through the agency of such intermediaries as Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Aditya (sun) and Candramas (moon) implies a sense of separation between the cosmic man and the cosmos.

In the discussions that follow the creation myth, the authors of the Satapatha Brahmana's Agnicayana section represent the cosmos much in the same way as it is represented in the Purusasukta; that is, the cosmos is imagined as being correlative to man. Thus, the gross planes of earth, atmosphere, and heavens are said to be the same as Prajapati's feet, body, and head, respectively;¹³⁴ and Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Candramas that is, the cosmos's animate aspect are said to be the same as his speech, breath, eye, and mind.¹³⁵ In the discussions that accompany the Agnicayana ritual, Prajapati is repeatedly equated with man, the sacrificer,¹³⁶ and this identity provides a model for the identification of man and cosmos. However, the authors of the Agnicayana do not conceive the identity of man and cosmos as a direct relationship but rather utilize the agency of the fire altar to establish this identity.¹³⁷ Just as the notion that Prajapati, though he is equated with the cosmos, creates through the agency of Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Candramas suggests

page_68

Page 69

a relationship of both identity and separation to the cosmos; so, too, the fire altar stands between man and the cosmos with which he is supposed to be identical.

Conclusion: The Reenactment of the Cosmogony

Both the Purusasukta and the Agnicayana's Prajapati myth describe, through the event of the creation, the constitution and shape of the cosmos. And, as I have noted repeatedly in this chapter, the cosmos that arises through this event is conceived of as being correlative to man: its gross planes are equated with man's material body, while its subtle and essential nature is equated with the inner aspect of man's being. On the one hand, the Purusasukta proposes this equation through directly relating Purusa's being to that of the cosmos; here the activity of the cosmogony, Purusa's dismemberment, facilitates the direct nature of this relationship. On the other hand, in the Agnicayana's creation myth, this equation between man and cosmos, though still apparent, is muddled by the cosmic eggs and various demigods that participate in the cosmogony. This myth lessens the directness of the relationship between man and cosmos, proposed by the Purusasukta, as Prajapati first emits a foundation (the *brahman* and the earth) and then unites with it to create the two aspects of the cosmos.

The differences between these mythologies mirrors a distinction in their orientations. Whereas the Purusasukta clearly establishes the ideological basis of the innate relationship between man and cosmos, it does not address the problem of how man realizes that relationship; that is, how man becomes *saloka* with the cosmos that, according to the Purusasukta, he so closely resembles. Though the Vedic ritualists acknowledged, in rituals such as the Purusamedha, that the model of Purusa's act of creating the cosmos could be reenacted through the death and dismemberment of the sacrificer, they do not ever seem to have taken this step in their ritual performances. For, in the Purusamedha the sacrificer, for whose benefit the ritual was performed, was not put to death but rather a large number of human victims were sacrificed in his place.

The Agnicayana's creation myth, although it also proposes an ideological basis for the identification of man and cosmos, exhibits

page_69

Page 70

at least an implicit awareness of the practical aspect of realizing this identity. The authors of the myth, employing the sort of tautological reasoning often seen in the Brahmanas, thus declare: "Indeed that was the building up of [Prajapati]; because [Prajapati] was built up it was the building up of him. And now indeed this is the building up of the sacrificer (yajamana); because he [will be] built up it is the building up of him." ¹³⁸ In particular, just as Prajapati first established the two foundations, the *brahman* and the earth, and then through them continued his creation, so too the sacrificer builds an altar that serves as the foundation for his (creative) ritual activity. And, following Prajapati's model of uniting with his

creation, the sacrificer generates himself into the cosmos through the agency of the fire altar,¹³⁹ with which the sacrificer is said to form a "pair" (*mithuna*). The sexual connotation of this union is expressed in the notion that the pair possesses the same generative capability as that required to produce sons.¹⁴⁰

The mythology of Prajapati's primordial creative activity at once represents a model for and a model of ritual action, for, in the Brahmanas, myth and rite are inseparable. And, just as the transformation from the Rgvedic Purusa to the figure of Prajapati in the Brahmanas centers on a transformation from a "disjunctive" model (in which the cosmos arises from Purusa's dismembered body parts) to a "conjunctive" model (in which the cosmos arises from Prajapati's act of "uniting as a pair"), so, too, the rituals, which this mythology underlies, exhibit an overwhelming concern with creating a format through which the sacrificer joins his own existence to that of the cosmos. These changes seem to have arisen as Vedic thought confronted the question of how man might realize the state of existence that the correlation of his own and the cosmos's own being held out to him.

Though many rites in the Vedic corpus reflect the cosmic man mythos, the building of the fire altar (*agnicayana*) presented as the culmination of all the Vedic rites stands out among the ritual analogues to the Prajapati mythology. In fact, the most systematic Brahmanic presentation of the Prajapati mythology, that which accompanies the Agnicayana in the Satapatha Brahmana, almost certainly seems to have originated in concert with the incorporation of this rite in the Vedic ritual corpus.¹⁴¹ In the following chapter, I turn to an examination of this rite, for it represents the "other

page_70

Page 71

side" of the Vedic complex that culminates in the Upanisadic doctrine of karma; that is, standing on the ideological foundation of the cosmic man mythology, it proposes a *ritual* technique through which the sacrificer was supposed to become *saloka*.

page_71

Page 72

3. The Fire Altar (Agnicayana) as Man and Cosmos

The Problem of Sacrifice

J. C. Heesterman has succinctly characterized the nature of the sacrifice:

When taken seriously sacrifice is, quite bluntly, an act of controlled death and destruction. This act purports to force access to the other world, the transcendent. The gap, the vacuum created by the sacrifice has to be filled by the other side with the opposite of death and destruction, that is the goods of life, in the most tangible sense of food and survival. Or in simple terms one must sacrifice a cow in order to obtain cows. ¹

In this basic form of offering "a cow for cows" the sacrificial ritual does not appear to be a problematic operation. However, when this principle of exchange is extended in particular, from exchanging food for food to exchanging (human) life for (human) life problems are rapidly encountered. The ideology of this extension, which seems to have been embraced by the Vedic thinkers, perceives the other world as the realm of life itself and, thus, seeks access to that world as a means of renewing one's life. In fact, this world was characterized as a realm of death; in creating the cosmos it is said that Prajapati "over [this world] created death, who is the eater of men."² The way to life was through the sacrifice: "A man, being born, is a debt (*rna*), by his own self he is born to death, and only when he sacrifices does he extract himself from death."³ Yet, the mechanism of the sacrifice would seem to require the sacrificer to give up his own life to attain this renewal. As A. B. Keith noted, "the perfect form of sacrifice should be suicide."⁴

Suicide of self-sacrifice does not appear in the Vedic texts as a ritual method. Although such an act might have fulfilled the theo-

retical demands of the sacrifice, its finality would have been contrary to the sacrifice's practical purpose; that is, the attainment of the goods of life from the other world. This attainment could not be realized though a single ritual event but required a lifetime of ritual performances (which is, of course, another way of sacrificing one's life): "A year should not pass without sacrificing; indeed the year is life, and life is this immortal state which he bestows on his own self." 5 Moreover, the texts make it clear that the individual who goes to the other world (perhaps through a self-sacrifice) before completing, this process does not attain a full existence in that realm; the Satapatha Brahmana thus describes the fate of those individuals who die before completing the lifelong process of performing sacrifices:

Those who depart before the age of 20 they become attached to the world of the days and nights; those who [depart] above 20 and below 40 [become attached] to that [world of] the fortnight; those who [depart] above 40 and below 60 [become attached] to that [world of] the months; those who [depart] above 60 and below 80 [become attached] to that [world of] the seasons; those who [depart] above 80 and below 100 [become attached] to that [world of] the year. Now only that one who lives 100 years or more indeed attains the immortal state.⁶

Furthermore, the actual death of the sacrificer would have been contrary to the corporate nature of the Vedic rituals, as the sacrificer's ritual efforts were undertaken not only for his own benefit but also for the benefit of his ancestors and his offspring, who were not capable of sacrificing for their own selves: "For whosoever has offspring when he goes by his own self to that other world [his] offspring sacrifice in this world."⁷ In the Satapatha Brahmana this relationship between the sacrificer, his offspring, and his ancestors was described just as the compulsion to sacrifice was as the sacrificer's debt (r̥na), which the sacrificer could discharge only through a continuous process of sacrifice.⁸

Nevertheless, the ritualists were certainly aware that the sacrificer should be the object of the sacrifice. In part, the growth of the Vedic ritual into what has been called "the richest, most elaborate and most complete among the rituals of mankind,"⁹ reflects the Vedic thinkers' attempt to circumvent the actual death of the

sacrificer, while they strived to maintain the ideology of such an event, in the ritual performance. The attempt to resolve this practical difficulty was concentrated in two closely related areas: the use of substitute victims such as goats, cattle, horses, and even men in the place of the human sacrificer, and the employment of ritual specialists to perform the rites for the sacrificer's benefit.

The authors of the Satapatha Brahmana explain the principle of substitution in the use of an animal victim for the human sacrificer: "Indeed, when he is offering, the sacrificial fires advance toward the flesh of the sacrificer; they think of the sacrificer, they desire the sacrificer . . . then when he sacrifices by means of the animal sacrifice indeed he ransoms his own self." 10 The substitution of an animal victim, however, raised its own unique set of problems. There was, in particular, a peculiar problem of identification. On the one hand, the ritualists had to establish a substantive identification between the sacrificer and the victim that stood in the sacrificer's place. For the most part, such an identification was established through correlating certain ritual implements to the sacrificer's physical proportions. Thus, the sacrificial stake (yupa), the offering area, and the offering spoons were all constructed to the sacrificer's proportions.¹¹ In view of this correspondence the Brahmanic authors asserted that "the man arranges the sacrifice to the same extent as a man; therefore, the sacrifice is a man,"¹² despite the fact that the victim was an animal or other substitute for man (the sacrificer).

The problem of identifying the sacrificer with the victim who stood in his place is also seen in several Brahmanic discussions regarding the nature of the bond (*bandhu*) that existed between the sacrificer and the victim. In the basic form of offering a "cow for cows" the animal sacrifice was called pasubandha, "the binding (*bandha*) of the animal (pasu)," which apparently referred either to the manner in which the animal was slaughtered (it was strangled with a noose) or to its binding to the sacrificial post. However, in the Satapatha Brahmana several passages suggest a subtle shift in the meaning of *bandha*, from the physical binding of the animal to that of a metaphysical binding of the animal to the sacrificer.¹³ One passage in particular exhibits these two senses of binding: the physical binding of the animal to the yupa and its metaphysical binding to the sacrificer through its assertion of the equation

between the sacrifice and the sacrificer: "The horse sacrifice is the sacrificer, and the sacrificer is the sacrifice; when he yokes the animals to the horse [in the horse sacrifice], indeed the sacrifice binds (*/rabh*) that [victim] to the sacrifice [i.e., the sacrificer]." 14 Here the equation between sacrifice and sacrificer (which is established in a somewhat convoluted syllogism through the middle term of a specific ritual event, the horse sacrifice) implies that the victims that are physically bound in the sacrifice become metaphysically bound to the sacrificer.15

On the other hand, however, the establishment of a very close identification between the sacrificer and the victim had certain negative connotations. As Hubert and Mauss observed, the sacrificer "needs to touch the animal in order to remain united with it, and yet is afraid to do so, for in so doing he runs the risk of sharing its fate."16 The ambiguity of this situation is clearly reflected in one passage in the Satapatha Brahmana:

Now they say: "There [should] be no touching [of the victim] by the sacrificer (*yajmana*); for they lead it to death. Thus he should not touch it!" But he should touch it; for what they lead by the sacrifice they do not lead to death. Thus he should touch it. For indeed when it is not touched he excludes his own self from the sacrifice; therefore he should touch it. It is touched in an imperceptible manner (*paroksa*). The Pratiprasthatr [holds it] by means of the skewer; to the Pratiprasthatr [holds] the Adhvaryu; to the Adhvaryu the sacrificer. Thus it is held in an imperceptible manner.17

The ambiguity that the sacrificer experiences in the ritual killing of the victim may also be attributed to the general undesirability of death and destruction. The distance between the ritual exchange that brings new life into this world and a simple act of murder is not great; as Hubert and Mauss noted, "outside a holy place immolation is mere murder."18 There is in the ritualists' assertion that "what they lead by the sacrifice they do not lead to death" an implicit recognition of just how close the ritual killing is to an act of murder. The hint of discomfort expressed here over the killing of the sacrificial victim is, in fact, consistent with the tenor of several passages in the Brahmanas that suggest the ritualists were unsure of the animals' willingness to die in the sacrificer's place. Thus, throughout the Brahmanas there appear several brief

narrative episodes that describe how the cattle, who were at first unwilling to submit to the role of victim, were convinced or coerced into accepting this fate. 19 Although, according to the Satapatha Brahmana, the cattle eventually "condescended and became ready-minded for the [sacrificial] killing,"20 before slaughtering the animal, the sacrificer still asks the permission of the victim's mother, father, and other relations.21

Closely related to the use of the substitute victim was the employment of ritual specialists, who actually performed the rite, in place of the sacrificer. On the one hand, the ritual specialists allowed the sacrificer to distance himself from the actual killing of the animal; thus, in the passage quoted earlier, the sacrificer's bond with the victim was established through holding on to the Adhvaryu (who was one sort of ritual specialist) who held on to the Pratiprasthatr (another specialist) who held on to the sacrificed animal.22 On the other hand, the need for ritual specialists reflects the Brahmanic concern for ritual exactitude. Ritual, by definition, is a strictly ordered series of events. And, because the outcome of the ritual performance depended on the ability to recreate precisely this series of events, it was necessary to employ specialists who were well versed in the techniques of the rites. However, this need for exactitude, and the employment of specialists to ensure its attainment in the rite, created a double bind for the sacrificer; as Sylvain Lévi noted:

It takes an imperturbable confidence, hardly to be doubted, on the part of the faithful sacrificer to back up his decision to confront so many risks; it is not enough to admit the all-embracing power of the rites and formulas as dogma; one must entrust himself to the priests as though he were bound hand and foot, knowing that by an error or an act of negligence they could bring ruin or death upon him.23

The debt that the sacrificer incurred for this service was discharged through the form of strictly institutionalized sacrificial gifts known as *daksina*. Similar to the rope (*bandha*), which the ritualists saw as the representative of an

unseen bond between the sacrificer and the victim, the *daksina* bound the sacrificer to the officiant: "'Let there be a share for me in the world of the gods!' Whoever sacrifices, he sacrifices [for this reason]. That sacrifice of his goes to the world of the gods, after that goes the

page_76

Page 77

daksina which he gives [to the officiants], and holding on to the *daksina* is the sacrificer." 24 These gifts were not merely a form of payment used to induce the ritual specialists to carry out their office but were seen as a part of the ritual performance: "Thence he must give what should be given; no offering should be without a *daksina*."25 Without the giving of the sacrificial gift the sacrifice would not have been properly enacted and thus could not yield the results desired of it.

In the Brahmanas the nature of the *daksina* appears to be closely related to the specific benefits expected from the sacrificial performance. Thus, there is an emphasis on the giving of cows, the primary source of life among the Vedic people, and gold, symbol of immortality, as *daksina*.26 The giving of sacrificial gifts determined in this manner may not have been a problem in a sacrifice where the desired result is the winning of cows. It does, however, create a difficult situation in the rituals that seek new life for the sacrificer. Heesterman thus paraphrases a passage that implies that the sacrificer, having enacted the ritual to gain a rebirth, must give up his regenerated self to discharge his debt to the officiants:

the sacrificer when distributing the *daksinas* is considered to give himself; to the *hotr* he gives his voice, to the *brahman* his mind (*manas*), to the *adhvaryu* his breath (*prana*) to the *udgatr* his eye, to the *hotrakas* his hearing, to the *camarsadhvaryus* his limbs, to the *prasarpakas* the hairs on his body, and to the *sadasya* his trunk; for these parts of himself the *daksinas* are substituted.27

In this form of ritual activity that seeks not cows but new life for the sacrificer, the sacrificer finds himself in the position of having to give up, as sacrificial gifts, the benefits of the sacrifice that should have properly accrued to the sacrificer himself; namely, the sacrificer's regenerated self.

The Problem of Sacrifice and the Agnicayana

The chief problem raised by the ritual substitutes, both the animal victims and the officiating priests, appears to be one of distance; that is, how far could the sacrificer distance himself from the actual performance of the ritual and still expect to receive its benefits?28 Hubert and Mauss thus describe the offering area: "In

page_77

Page 78

the outer circle stands the sacrificer; then come in turn the priest, the altar, and the stake. On the outer perimeter, where stands the layman on whose behalf the sacrifice takes place, the religious atmosphere is weak and minimal." 29 In fact, the Brahmanic thinkers insisted on the sacrificer's (*yajamana*) limited participation in the ritual performance. In one instance, Yajñavalkya, who is cited as the chief authority in the first five books of the Satapatha Brahmana discusses the appropriateness of a prescription requiring the sacrificer to perform the simple action of averting his eyes at a certain moment in the ritual. Yajñavalkya is said to have responded to this point by asking, "Why do not the [sacrificer's] become Adhvaryus [i.e., officiating priests] themselves?" The sarcastic tone of this remark suggests that any activity on the part of the sacrificer was seen as an aberration.30

The Brahmanic thinkers were aware of the problematic nature of this situation; that is, how the sacrificer's weak position in the actual performance of the rite might affect the benefits that accrue to him. In a key discussion that occurs at the end of the Satapatha Brahmana's description of the Agnicayana ritual, the authors of the text distinguish between the sacrificer who performs the Agnicayana for his own self and the one who performs it for another.31 In this discussion, performance for another is clearly disdained, as the authors describe the fate of such ritualists: "Now this [fire altar] is his divine undying self (*atman*); those who complete it for another bestow their divine selves on those others, and thus only a withered trunk is left [for them] as a remainder."32

At the end of this passage Sandilya, who is the most frequently cited authority in the Satapatha Brahmana's Agnicayana

section, recounts a discussion, between the ancient sage Tura Kavaseya and the gods, that seems to represent a recanting of this position regarding performing the rite for another. According to Sandilya, Tura Kavaseya was asked by the gods, "Sage, they say the building of the fire [altar] is not conducive to heaven, then why did you build one [for another]?"³³ Tura Kavaseya is then said to have replied:

"What is conducive to heaven and what is not conducive to heaven?" The sacrificer is the body (*atman*) of the sacrifice, the officiants are the limbs; where the body is, there are the limbs and

page_78

Page 79

where the limbs are, there is the body. Indeed, if the officiants are [in a state that is] not conducive to heaven, then indeed the sacrificer also is [in a state that is] not conducive to heaven. Both are equally heaven-winners. ³⁴

The idea presented here that the performers of the Agnicayana should continue to follow the traditional Vedic ritual format is supported by an additional statement by Tura Kavaseya that "in the matter of the sacrificial gift (*daksina*) there should be no discussion."³⁵ The *daksina*, through which the sacrificer binds himself to the officiants (and, at the same time, the merit of the sacrifice), is, of course, given only in a ritual performance that employs ritual specialists; that is, a "performance for another."

The ambiguity that arises from these two contiguous discussions of performing the ritual for another is typical of many discussions that appear in the Satapatha Brahmana's Agnicayana section. Although the origin of the Agnicayana ritual has not been precisely determined, it does not appear to have belonged to the early Vedic ritual corpus.³⁶ In fact, as Julius Eggeling noted, this rite "would seem originally to have stood apart from, if not in actual opposition to, the ordinary sacrificial system, but which, in the end, apparently by some ecclesiastical compromise, was added on to the Soma ritual as an important, though not indispensable, element of it."³⁷ Nonetheless, although it may not have been an indispensable element of the Soma rite, this association firmly established the Agnicayana within in fact, at the highest level of the Vedic ritual system.³⁸

If the Agnicayana did indeed originate outside Vedic culture, then perhaps the ritualists used this circumstance, as they incorporated this rite into the Vedic tradition, to allow themselves a certain measure of freedom in addressing the traditional format of the Vedic rites. In any case, as part of the Vedic ritual system, the Agnicayana seems to have been elaborated in response to the problems raised by the format of these rites. Here the Agnicayana's unusual position being at once part of the Vedic ritual system while (perhaps due to its external origins) addressing itself to the problems of that system leads to contradictory statements in some of the discussions regarding the nature of this rite's performance. This is apparent in the passage quoted earlier, in which the

page_79

Page 80

Brahmanic authors seem to favor the notion that the ritual should be performed by an individual for his own benefit an idea antithetical to the traditional ritual format but then fail to support this extreme position. Accordingly, after denying the practice of performing for another they immediately cite the opinion of an ancient ritualist, Tura Kavaseya, which firmly supports the continuation of the traditional relationship between the officiants and the sacrificer. This equivocation reflects the fine line the Agnicayana ritualists trod, as they attempted to alleviate the inherent problems of the Vedic ritual format. Working within the ritual system they had to temper their ideas, or at least their application in the rite, when these ideas bordered on destroying that system, as the displacement of the officiants would have done.

The most sensitive issue the Agnicayana ritualists addressed was the problem of death in the ritual. In view of the Agnicayana's emphasis on individual attainment, this problem was especially complex, for it seems to imply that the sacrificer must himself constitute the offering. On the one hand, the Agnicayana's conceptual framework addresses this problem in its modification of the cosmic man mythology; in particular, that achieved by transforming the Rgvedic figure of Purusa, and the event of his primordial dismemberment, into the Brahmanic figure of Prajapati, who creates largely through a process of sexual generation both heating (*tapas*) and coupling (*mithunam sam-/bhu*). The modifications established in the Prajapati mythology are clearly represented in the actual performance of the Agnicayana ritual; ³⁹ in replicating Prajapati's primordial creative activity, the sacrificer generates through the agency of the fire altar the cosmos out of his own self. The result of this activity is the sacrificer's attainment of a "unified, undecaying, and immortal" state;⁴⁰

that is, a state in which the sacrificerlike Prajapati, who is the cosmosrealizes his identity with the cosmos.

On the other hand, the traditional Vedic ritual format presented several obstacles to the replication of the Prajapati mythology. In particular, while the model established by Prajapati's creative activity seems to circumvent the necessity of the sacrificer's death in the performance of Agnicayana, the basic structure of the ritual format yet demanded an exchange of life for life. In the Agnicayana the need to meet this demand is seen in the employ-

page_80

Page 81

ment of five substitute victims. The Agnicayana ritualists redefine this act through assuming a unique view of the fate of the five victims. They propose that the animal victims are not killed but "healed" in the ritual, and so overshadow the event of their death (and the death of the human sacrificer that they represent) in the sacrifice. This notion of "healing" follows a concept firmly established in Vedic thought; namely, that all beings are born "dead" and come to life only through the performance of the rite. 41

In the following section, I turn to the specific procedures of the Agnicayana ritual. In brief, the Agnicayana begins with the slaughter of the animal victims and then concerns itself with the construction, or generation, of an immense fire altar. This order of events reverses that of the traditional Vedic format, in which the sacrifice of the victim represents the culmination of the rite. This reversal is emblematic of how the Agnicayana ritualists alleviated the problem of the sacrifice. As Hubert and Mauss observed: "If he [the sacrificer] involved himself in the rite to the very end, he would find death, not life."⁴² The reverse order of the Agnicayana leads the sacrificer, as he builds the altar and links his own existence to that of the cosmos, from the realm of death to the realm of life.

The Construction of the Fire Altar

The Agnicayana ritual consists of two phases: the building of the altar, and its utilization in a Soma sacrifice. According to the ritual system's classification, the Soma sacrifice constitutes the main part of the Agnicayana ritual, while the building of the fire altar represents an ancillary part of the rite.⁴³ The authors of the Satapatha Brahmana's Agnicayana section exhibit an overwhelming concern with describing the construction of the altar and seem only nominally interested in describing the main Soma ritual. Thus, the Agnicayana section, which consists of four books (*kanda*), devotes three books to building the fire altar, and one to the Soma ritual.⁴⁴

To a certain extent, this disproportionate emphasis on the Agnicayana's fire building rite reflects the considerable technical knowledge required to complete the altar. Frits Staal has recently estimated "that the extent of specialized knowledge needed to put

page_81

Page 82

the altar together ritually is on a par with the extent of technical knowledge required to build an aeroplane." ⁴⁵ In general, however, the authors of the Brahmanas did not concern themselves with detailed discussions of the technique of the ritual. As Jan Gonda has noted of the contents of these texts: "Though viewing almost all topics discussed from the ritual angle the authors generally supposed their audiences to be well acquainted with the course of the ritual, its terminology and technicalities. Many particulars are stated only in outline or omitted altogether."⁴⁶ Gonda rightly observes that the aim of the Brahmanas is to "explain the origin, meaning, and *raison d'être* of the ritual acts to be performed."⁴⁷ Moreover, these explanations expound a unique world view; in them the ritual, when properly understood, can represent an otherwise unknowable reality.⁴⁸ And, because words represented the means for penetrating into the realm of truth and reality,⁴⁹ the discussions in the Brahmanas often attain an inordinate length. Accordingly, in the Satapatha Brahmana, the Agnicayana section's protracted discussion of the building of the fire altar appears primarily to be a reflection of what this rite reveals, at least potentially, about reality itself rather than an indication of its technical complexity. Similarly, the relatively brief discussion, which appears in the Agnicayana section, of the Soma sacrifice implies that for the Agnicayana ritualists this rite did not hold out the same sort of potentiality as that contained in the ritual construction of the altar.

While the building of the fire altar does not seem originally to have been part of the Vedic ritual corpus, its association

with the Soma sacrifice, which belongs to the oldest stratum of the Vedic rites and stands at the highest level of the ritual system's hierarchy, placed this rite at the acme of the Vedic ritual system. However, the Satapatha Brahmana's overwhelming emphasis on the "ancillary" rite of building the fire altar gives the main Soma sacrifice the appearance of an afterthought. In fact, even in the part of the text devoted to the Soma sacrifice, the authors are still preoccupied with the symbolism of the fire altar. Yet, to claim a position within the ritual system, the building of the fire altar had to be relegated to the position of an ancillary part of the Soma sacrifice, a problematic relationship given the ritualists' consuming interest in the fire altar. Accordingly, the Agnicayana's authors are painstaking in

page_82

Page 83

referring to the intimate relationship of the Soma ritual and the construction of the fire altar 50 and in asserting the precedence of the former over the latter.⁵¹

The unusual relationship between these two aspects of the Agnicayana rite is emblematic of the relationship between the fire altar rite and the Vedic ritual tradition in general. The act of constructing the fire altar proposes certain ideas that threaten to break out of the carefully delimited boundaries of the Vedic ritual form. Yet, the established ritual form represents the only means through which the Agnicayana's authors can express these new ideas. Here the attachment to the Soma ritual serves as a constant reminder of the fire altar's dependence on though not subordination to the Vedic ritual.

The building of the fire altar begins with a preliminary rite in which five animals are supposed to be sacrificed: a man, horse, sheep, bull, and goat.⁵² These five animals are said to be "all the animals,"⁵³ a reference to the inclusion in this select group of the five prototypical animal victims used in the Vedic sacrifice. On the one hand, the sacrifice of this group of five clearly suggests that the Agnicayana represents the culmination of all the Vedic sacrifices. On the other hand, however, the use of these ritual substitutes, and the death and destruction to which they are subjected, represents the aspect of the Vedic ritual that the Agnicayana seems most anxious to overcome. This preliminary rite thus manifests the Agnicayana's peculiar conflict between the structure of the Vedic ritual form and its own unique ideas.

The parameters of this conflict manifest themselves immediately as the ritualists explore several alternatives to the actual killing of the five sacrificial animals. The first of these alternatives proposes the use of animals that are already dead.⁵⁴ However, those who adopt this procedure are said to become themselves "dead bodies," and to support this contention, the authors recall that there was an ancient ritualist by the name of Asadhi Sausromateya, who followed this procedure and "died quickly after that."⁵⁵ This obviously undesirable result leads to the suggestion of another alternative, which proposes the substitution of five gold or clay models for the live animals.⁵⁶ In support of this practice the ritualists reason: "Of all that which has decayed [the earth is] the resting place, and these animals have decayed [in the past]; so from

page_83

Page 84

whence these animals have gone, we shall collect them." ⁵⁷ However, this technique is disdained, as the authors declare that this practice is followed by "those who do not know the [correct] method and meaning regarding this [animal sacrifice]," and as a consequence of following this incorrect method, these ritualists are themselves said to "become decayed."⁵⁸ The discussion of these alternatives to the animal sacrifice expresses a fundamental principal of the Vedic ritual view: *the nature of the activity of the rite manifests itself in the results*. Thus, the use of an already dead animal in the ritual results in the immediate death of the sacrificer, and the use of decayed animals results in the sacrificer's own decay.

Having dismissed these two alternatives the ritualists explore a third option, which proposes the slaughter of one animal in place of all five. The ritualists choose the goat for this role, and thus they describe how the goat is equivalent to all the five sacrificial animals man, horse, bull, sheep and goat:

Regarding why he slaughters this animal: in this animal indeed exists the form of all animals. As it is hornless and beardless, so it has the form of a man, for man is indeed hornless and beardless; as it is hornless and possessed of long hair, so it has the form of a horse, for the horse is indeed hornless and possessed of long hair; as it is eighthoofed, so it has the form of a bull, for the bull is indeed eighthoofed; as its hoof is sheep-like, so it has the form of a sheep; as it is a goat, so it [has the form] of a goat. Now when that [goat] is slaughtered by him, indeed

all the animals are slaughtered.⁵⁹

The Vedic animal sacrifice (*pasubandha*) normally utilized a single goat as its sacrificial victim;⁶⁰ in part, the reduction of the Agnicayana's five victims to one goat appears to be an attempt to represent the Agnicayana, at its outset, as the quintessence of the Vedic rites. And, because it accomplishes the original purpose of the rite without too much bloodshed the ritualists accept the sacrifice of the single goat as an alternative to the sacrifice of all the five animals.⁶¹

The peculiar relationship between the two aspects of the Agnicayana rite the building of the fire altar and the Soma sacrifice leads the ritualists to question how this preliminary animal sacrifice relates to the rest of the rite. Although the Soma ritual

page_84

Page 85

includes an element of the animal sacrifice, ⁶² in the Agnicayana this preliminary rite occurs before the main action of the Soma sacrifice and cannot be correlated with the Soma ritual's animal sacrifice.⁶³ In the Satapatha Brahmana the ritualists are depicted as asking if the animal sacrifice represents a complete sacrifice (that is, a *Pasubandha* wholly separate from the Soma sacrifice), which would then require the giving of a sacrificial gift (*daksina*),⁶⁴ or if it is a preliminary (that is, an aspect of the initiation [*diksa*]) to the Soma ritual, which would then require the sacrificer to abstain from both eating meat and having sexual intercourse.⁶⁵

This sort of questioning is a subterfuge; in fact, the Agnicayana's preliminary animal sacrifice, having apparently originated outside the sphere of the classical ritual, is neither a *Pasubandha* nor a Soma initiation. However, by calling upon these two categories of the classical ritual, the ritualists create an either-or situation to which the only answers, a *Pasubandha* or a Soma initiation, lie within the larger structure of the ritual system.

The Agnicayana's animal sacrifice resembles the *Pasubandha* more closely than it does the Soma rite's initiation, which does not include an animal sacrifice.⁶⁶ However, if this preliminary event is represented as a *Pasubandha*, and thus a complete sacrifice, then an untenable situation arises: the Agnicayana ritual, which has hardly begun, would be abruptly ended. In the words of the ritualist: "Lest in the beginning [of the ritual] I should dismiss the gods; lest I should cause the [entire rite] to be completed."⁶⁷ And, to emphasize the preliminary nature of this animal sacrifice the ritualists prohibit at this time the giving of a *daksina*,⁶⁸ without which any single ritual event is said to be incomplete.⁶⁹ Thus, the outward resemblance of the preliminary animal sacrifice to the classical *Pasubandha* is another subterfuge. What appeared to be an either-or situation does not present a real choice; for the Agnicayana ritual to continue the animal sacrifice must be viewed as an initiation.

Yet, the preliminary animal sacrifice does not appear to have any of the characteristics of the classical Soma initiation, a situation that leads the Agnicayana ritualists to declare: "In no way is this a *diksa*; for there is no girdle and no black antelope skin."⁷⁰ The purpose of an initiation is to place the sacrificer, who is on his way to being transformed in the ritual, in a liminal state;⁷¹ in the

page_85

Page 86

case of the Vedic ritual this is partly accomplished by the prohibitions against eating meat and engaging in sexual intercourse. ⁷² The Agnicayana ritualists meet the requirements of the Vedic initiation by declaring that the performer of this preliminary rite must refrain from sexual intercourse. However, in this instance, the prohibition against eating meat is modified to a prohibition against eating honey,⁷³ and thus the ritualists acknowledge that this preliminary animal sacrifice is distinct from the usual initiation rite. Moreover, this modified prohibition ensures that the animal sacrifice does not interfere or is not confused with the proper *diksa* that, as a part of the Soma sacrifice, will occur later in the course of the Agnicayana performance.⁷⁴ Thus, despite its formal dissimilarity to the Vedic initiation rite, the preliminary animal sacrifice becomes a sort of "preinitiation" initiation rite; its prohibitions replicating the function of the initiation, without infringing on the place of this rite in the performance of the Agnicayana's Soma ritual. At the same time, by transforming this animal sacrifice into an initiation, the ritualists have, in a certain sense, removed this preliminary rite from the realm of animal sacrifices; for, as already noted, the Soma initiation does not include an animal sacrifice. Through subtly redefining this preliminary rite the Agnicayana ritualists have once again bridged the problem of death in the sacrifice.

The second phase in the construction of the fire altar is fashioning the fire pan (*ukha*).⁷⁵ Although the fire pan is used in several ways in the Agnicayana, its principle function is to transfer the consecrated fire (*agni*) from the old ritual fireplace, which is used for lesser rites, to the newly built fire altar.⁷⁶ As the vehicle of the fire the fire pan is identified as the "self" (*atman*) of the fire altar.⁷⁷ And, as such, the fire pan is said to give birth to the altar.⁷⁸ The integral relationship of these two is expressed concretely in the burying of the pan within the bottom layer of the altar.⁷⁹ Of equal importance to this relationship is the relationship between the sacrificer and the fire pan, for the fire pan is also identified with the sacrificer; after it is fashioned and before the altar is built, the sacrificer straps the fire pan to himself for a period of one year.⁸⁰

The Satapatha Brahmana likens fashioning the fire pan to a birth process. The first stage of this process is that of an impregnation, as a lump of clay is dug up and then placed in a hole for "this [earth] is a womb, and that [clay] is seed."⁸¹ The clay is then dug

page_86

Page 87

out of the hole and placed in a black antelope skin, ⁸² which in many Vedic rituals symbolizes the covering of the womb. Thus, in one ritual, when the sacrificer seats himself on a black antelope skin with the statement "I touch you," the Satapatha Brahmana tells us that he actually means, "I enter into you," and instructs the sacrificer to close his hands, for "embryos have] [their] hands closed."⁸³ In another ritual context, that of the cremation rite, the body of the deceased is placed on a black antelope skin: "Thus he is caused to be born from [his] own [sacrificial] womb."⁸⁴

The lump of clay and its antelope skin covering are then placed on a lotus leaf, which, like the antelope skin, represents the covering of the womb:⁸⁵ "He puts it on a lotus leaf; indeed the lotus leaf is a womb, and thus the seed is emitted in the womb. When the seed is emitted in the womb that becomes procreative."⁸⁶ The lump of clay is then worked with water and foam, since "it was emitted from these forms in the beginning, from these it is now born."⁸⁷ These three elements—water, foam, and earth (represented in the lump of clay)—represent the two foundations of the cosmos's existence, and the intermediate or unifying state between them. Fashioning the fire pan thus replicates the events of the cosmogony.⁸⁸

With the same clay that the sacrificer uses to make the fire pan, the sacrificer's wife fashions the first eight bricks for the fire altar.⁸⁹ Whereas the use of this clay first used to fashion the fire pan establishes an essential connection between the altar and the fire pan, the employment of the sacrificer's wife to perform this act establishes an intimate relationship between the sacrificer and the altar; for, the bricks that will be used to build the altar now become the sacrificer's "offspring": "Now he makes the fire pan; he makes it to be his own self. Then he makes the 'all-light' bricks; the 'all-light' bricks are his offspring. . . . That which is clay he makes from his self, then he creates these offspring . . . he makes these offspring manifest from his [own] self."⁹⁰

Although for the most part, the sacrificial ritual was a male enterprise, the ritualists occasionally refer to a man's "incomplete" nature, which apparently refers to his inability to procreate by himself. Thus, in one of the few instances in which the wife participates in the rite, the Brahmanic authors explain: "The wife is indeed half of his self; for as long as he does not obtain a wife, that

page_87

Page 88

is how long he is not born, and for that long he is not whole. Now when he obtains a wife then he becomes whole." ⁹¹ In Vedic mythology, the half nature of man is explained as having resulted from the cleavage of an androgynous primordial being, whose two halves then became husband and wife.⁹² In the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, Yajñavalkya is reported to have commented that, as a result of the division of the primordial being, "this own [body] is like a half portion, and so a woman fills this space."⁹³ Through joining together with his wife in the fashioning of the bricks and the fire pan, the sacrificer recreates the androgynous state of the primordial being. However, with this one act the active participation of the sacrificer's wife in the construction of the fire altar is ended; and thus, it seems that man, the sacrificer, having attained this state of primordial androgyny, is capable of (ritually) procreating on his own. This notion finds support in one passage in the Taittiriya Samhita, which states that when building the fire altar the sacrificer should not engage in sexual intercourse, at least with women, for the text intimates the sacrificer is engaged in a sexual act with the altar.⁹⁴

The fire pan is then placed on the old offering fire (*garhaptaya*). Here, the fire pan is described as a maiden (*yosa*) and the fire as a potent male (*vrsan*): "Indeed the fire pan is a maiden and the fire is a potent male; when the male heats thoroughly in the maiden then the seed is placed in her."⁹⁵ The fire pan is here identified as a womb, with *muñja* grass and hemp as its inner and outer membrane; ghee apparently as its embryonic fluid; and the kindling stick as its embryo.⁹⁶ The coals of the old offering fire cause these highly flammable materials to ignite. Creating the consecrated fire in this way again points to this rite's connection with the larger body of the Vedic rituals, as the new fire is born out of the old ritual fire. However, at the same time, being newly created this fire expresses the Agnicayana's distinct identity.

A one year hiatus in the ritual proceedings follows the creation of the fire pan and the fire. During this time the sacrificer, who has now placed a gold plate around his neck, carries the lit fire pan.⁹⁷ The year is a gestation period,⁹⁸ at the end of which the altar will be born with its characteristic bird shape: "He now forms (*vi- /kr*) that [matter in the fire pan] into that having wings and a tail; in whatever manner the seed forms it in the womb, so it is

page_88

Page 89

born, and what he there forms into having wings and a tail will be born in the future as having wings and a tail." ⁹⁹

The year is also identified with death,¹⁰⁰ and one of the goals of the construction of the fire altar is to reach beyond all that is governed by the year to the immortal world.¹⁰¹ The one year hiatus in the ritual, which takes the sacrificer beyond the year, thus represents a way of exceeding the realm of death. At this stage of the ritual, however, the sacrificer has not entirely gone beyond death but may be said to be at the threshold of this attainment. In particular, wearing the gold plate, which represents the sun, suggests that the sacrificer now stands "in between" the mortal and immortal realms. In the Satapatha Brahmana, the sun, which measures the year, is depicted as the point of bifurcation between the mortal and the immortal sphere: "Indeed, that one who burns there is death; therefore, those people who are on this side die; but those who are on the other side are the gods, and therefore immortal."¹⁰² Accordingly, while the sun is identified with death, it is said to be "within the immortal [realm]."¹⁰³ As the ritual continues, the sacrificer will cross this threshold to that which is on the other side of the sun.

The next phase of the ritual is the construction of a "domestic hearth" (*garhapatya*), which represents a reconstructed version of one of the three hearths (*ahavaniya*, *daksinagni*, *garhapatya*) used in all the Vedic *srauta* rites. The construction of this hearth is again likened to a birth process. Here, the womb is said to be the earth, and the embryo inside the womb is identified as having both the shape of a man and the shape of a bird, which is the shape of the completed fire altar.¹⁰⁴ The Garhapatya thus represents the earthly foundation of man and the fire altar, both of which will be (ritually) born during the course of the Agnicayana's performance. To express this connection the Garhapatya, which traditionally has a round shape, is made to the same measure as a man or the distance between a man's outstretched arms (*vyamamatra*), and its shape is said to symbolize the roundness both of the womb and the earth.¹⁰⁵ However, the text makes it clear that there is a generative relationship between the sacrificer, the Garhapatya, and this world, which goes beyond this symbolic correspondence in size, as the sacrificer (*yajamana*) is said to emit his "real semen" (*retas bhuta*) into the fire pan: "Then this sacrificer emits [his] real semen, [his]

page_89

Page 90

self, into the fire pan, the womb. Indeed the fire pan is the womb. In one year a foundation forms for him. In it he causes this world here to be born indeed the Garhapatya is this world." ¹⁰⁶ Through emitting his semen into the fire pan a union that yields the Garhapatya the sacrificer invests his own self into the earth, which the Garhapatya represents.

During the course of the ritual the sacrificer will be going forth at least symbolically into the unknown cosmos. However, because the sacrificer is not yet ready to permanently leave this world (a situation desirable only at death), he must ensure that he will be able to return at the end of the ritual performance. This sort of journey and return is a characteristic of many Vedic rites,¹⁰⁷ and as a reflection of the dangerous nature of journeying into the unknown, it is sometimes called the *difficult* ascension (*durohana*).¹⁰⁸ In these rites the sacrificer depends on the officiating priests to guide his return to this world.¹⁰⁹ The image presented in the Satapatha Brahmana that exemplifies this is that of the sacrifice as a heaven-bound ship with the priests as its oars.¹¹⁰ However, the Agnicayana's emphasis on individual performance

implies that the sacrificer will not be able to depend on the officiants to guide him back to this world. Here, the sacrificer's act of emitting his semen into the fire pan which establishes an inextricable relationship between an aspect of the sacrificer's own self and the Garhapatya that is created by this act releases the sacrificer from this dependence on the officiants. The Garhapatya, which represents the earth, is said to serve as the sacrificer's foundation, thus ensuring that he does not become lost during his journey outward into the larger cosmos:

Now regarding why he stands just there; indeed, the Garhapatya is this world. The foundation is this [earth] and indeed the Garhapatya is the foundation. Now when he goes in that direction, it is that which is without a path as it were. But he stands on his world, that which is the foundation, this [Garhapatya]. Thereby he returns to this [earth]; so he establishes himself on this foundation.¹¹¹

Following the construction of the Garhapatya, the sacrificer prepares the site upon which the fire altar will be erected. The sacrificer first plows eight furrows: two from west to east, one from east to west, two south to north, one north to south, one northwest

page_90

Page 91

to southeast, and one southwest to northeast. ¹¹² After the furrows are plowed, the sacrificer pours jars of water on the altar site; "thus he puts rain on it."¹¹³ And, following the water, all types of seeds are sown on the site.¹¹⁴ The plants that arise from these seeds are said to provide not only food but also medicine (*bhesaja*), which serves to "heal" (*/bhisaj*) the altar.¹¹⁵ The chief purpose of the fire altar is to effect a unification between man and cosmos. The wholeness achieved through this process recreates Prajapati's primordial state and, as such, represents the realization of man's original state. As medicine, the plants assist in "healing" this relationship.

The Satapatha Brahmana's authors preface the actual construction of the fire altar with the enigmatic statement that the sacrificer "inciting the fire [altar] takes [it] into [his own] self; indeed, from [his own] self he causes him to be born, and how he sees (*/drs*) it, it is born now having just that appearance."¹¹⁶ As a result of this process, the sacrificer ensures that he does not "give birth to a man from a man, to a mortal from a mortal," but "having taken the fire [altar] into his own self . . . he gives birth to the immortal from the immortal."¹¹⁷ The ritualists here express the idea that the mental process, as the sacrificer takes the altar into his own self and views it in his mind's eye, represents a level of perfection that far exceeds that which can be accomplished in the physical construction of the altar. And, in fact, the altar that is about to be built bears little physical resemblance to the cosmos and the cosmic man (Prajapati) that it is supposed to represent. Henceforth in the rite, this mental picture, which presents the altar in its ideal form, will guide the sacrificer in establishing the identity of the fire altar.

The construction of the altar proper begins with placing a lotus leaf in the center of the altar site.¹¹⁸ As noted earlier, the lotus leaf represents a womb, and in placing it on the altar site the authors identify it as such.¹¹⁹ On top of the lotus leaf the sacrificer places the gold plate that he has been wearing around his neck for the past year. And, on top of this he places a gold man (*hiranya Purusa*). The gold man is identified as both Prajapati and the sacrificer (*yajamana*), as well as the fire altar (Agni).¹²⁰ The primary identification, however, is between the gold man and the sacrificer, and thus the sacrificer "sings over the [gold] man and [so] puts [his own] virility (or semen) (*viryā*) into the man."¹²¹ The sacrificer then places two offering spoons, which are said to represent arms,

page_91

Page 92

next to the gold man. ¹²² Along with the offering spoons he places two bricks that are identified as "seed-shedders" (*retahsic*).¹²³ These bricks are said to be the (sacrificer's) testicles. To whatever new existence the construction of the fire altar leads the sacrificer, with his offering spoons and testicles, he will at least be able to continue his characteristic (and closely related) activities of performing the Vedic rites and procreating.¹²⁴

On top of the gold man the sacrificer places the first of the "naturally perforated" bricks (*svayamatrṇna*). In the completed altar there will be three of these bricks, one each placed on the first, third, and fifth levels. These three bricks are identified with the three levels of the Vedic cosmos: earth, heavens, and atmosphere. The perforations in these three bricks allow the sacrificer to pass through the otherwise solid altar in his symbolic ascent through the cosmos. In this first layer of the altar the sacrificer also places a tortoise, which represents the heavens (the upper shell), the earth (the lower

shell), and the atmosphere (what is inbetween the two shells); the fire pan, which represents a womb; and a mortar and pestle, which represents a penis in the womb.¹²⁵ Along with these various objects the sacrificer places bricks in specific areas, and the shape of the altar begins to manifest itself. The authors describe this shape as that of an animal, with certain bricks representing its head, neck, breast, back, and hips, and thus they declare: "That animal which is the fire [altar], even now has a form complete and whole."¹²⁶

The sacrificer next places in the fire pan the heads of the five sacrificial animalsgoat, sheep, cow, horse, and manor, if the sacrificer followed the alternative procedure, the head of the single goat that represents them. The sacrificer then throws seven gold chips in each head: "The vital airs (*prana*) are gold, and from these ritually slaughtered animals the vital airs went out; when he throws these chips [into the heads], he puts the vital airs [back] in them."¹²⁷ This act thus represents the sort of reuniting or "healing" that is the particular aim of the Agnicayana. And, because in Vedic ritual thought the animals stand in the place of the sacrificer, the placement of the gold chips in the mouths of the animals also represents the "healing" of the sacrificer.

Placing the vital breaths into the sacrificial animals is enacted on a larger scale as the sacrificer puts down a series of bricks that

page_92

Page 93

are identified as the "breath-holders" (*prana-bhut*).¹²⁸ These bricks represent the vital breaths that, in the Agnicayana's creation myth, were said to arise as a result of the Rsis' exertions. These vital breaths came together to form Prajapati's body and then, in their essential forms, "removed themselves upwards" to form Prajapati's head.¹²⁹ In the creation myth this sequence of events apparently occurred *in illo tempore* and initiated the conditions necessary for Prajapati's, and hence the cosmos's existence. As a part of the altar's first layer, and thus its foundation, the placement of the *pranabhut* bricks seems to serve this same purpose; in particular, the placement of the vital breaths will provide an animating force for the otherwise lifeless bricks of the fire altar: "These limbs the vital breath does not reach . . . indeed that becomes withered, it decays. Therefore he should place the [breath-holder bricks] in contact with the [altar's] enclosing stones."¹³⁰

After this point, the construction of the altar entails the continued placing of bricks until all five levels are completed. The fire altar described in the Satapatha Brahmana requires 10,800 bricks: 1,950 bricks on each of the first, second, third and fourth layers, and 3,000 bricks on the fifth layer.¹³¹ Many of these bricks are individually identified, either as parts of Prajapati's body (fingers, toes, vital breaths, and so forth) or as parts of the cosmos (the seasons, quarters, worlds, deities, and so forth). These identifications define each layer in relationship to the spheres of the cosmos and to the cosmic body of Prajapati. The basic image presented here correlates the altar's five levels to Prajapati's feet, legs, waist, chest, and head and to the pentadic cosmos of earth, intermediate space, atmosphere, intermediate space, and heavens (see Figure 1).¹³² And because the sacrificer generated the altar out of his own self, these identifications between altar, cosmos, and cosmic man are implicitly identifications to the sacrificer's own being.

A significant expression of the relationship between the altar, Prajapati, and the cosmos is seen in the location of the two foundations, the material earth and the immaterial *brahman*, in the fire altar. The first level of the fire altar, which is correlative to the earth and to Prajapati's feet, is also said to be Prajapati lying on his back.¹³³ The placement of the tortoise, which represents the three spheres of the cosmos, on this level implies that Prajapati rounds all material existence on this level, a notion supported by

page_93

Page 94

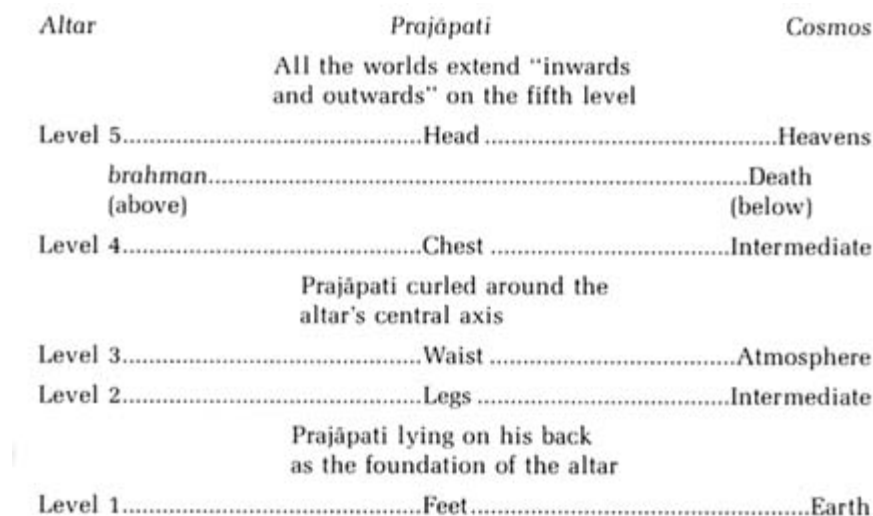


Figure 3.1
The five levels of the fire altar and their relationship to the body of Prajapati and the cosmos.

the identification of this level as a "complete" animal. On the other hand, immaterial existence appears to be founded on level four, which is identified with the *brahman*. The cosmic man mythology (that of both Purusa and Prajapati) represents this immaterial level of existence through the image of the head, which seems to contain the entire cosmos in its animate and essential form. 134 In the symbolism of the fire altar this notion of an all-inclusive realm is expressed in the fifth level that is, the level that rests on the *brahman* which is identified as the head of the altar. 135 The all-inclusive nature of this level is seen as it appears to contain all the worlds, seasons, regions, and so forth that are apportioned vertically on the first four levels of the cosmos. 136 On the fifth level these various elements are said to extend "inwards" (*arvañc*) and "outwards" (*parañc*), an image that clearly exceeds the boundaries of any sort of material representation of the cosmos. 137

The relationship between the "head" and the "body" of the fire altar is exemplified in the notion that the fourth level is not only the *brahman* but also death (*mṛtyu*). 138 In passing above the fourth layer, the sacrificer exceeds material existence, with its inevitable decay, and enters the realm of immortality. The nature of this

page_94

Page 95

journey and the difficulty of the passage from one realm into the other is expressed in a myth found in the Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana, a text roughly contemporary with the latest stratum of the Satapatha Brahmana. 139 The myth first describes how, after death, an individual travels through the various realms of the cosmos: earth, atmosphere, seasons, quarters, moon, and so forth. At each stop on this journey the sacrificer receives an aspect of his own being a process that obviously reverses the cosmogony, in which the primordial man created the cosmos out of his own self (and implicitly reverses the activity of the Agnicayana rite, in which the sacrificer, following Prajapati's model, generates himself into the cosmos). He receives his "foundation" from the earth, his hearing from the quarters, the joints of his body from the months, and so forth, as he continues his journey. When the deceased reaches the moon he asks to be taken to the world of *brahman*, which is apparently the highest station. Instead of granting his request, he is taken to the sun, where he had been before going to the moon, and so he asks again: "He says to the sun: 'Carry me forth.' 'To what?' 'To the world of *brahman*.' It carries him forth to the moon. He thus wanders to and fro between these divinities (*devata*). This is the end. There is no carrying forth beyond this." 140 The individual remains within this lower cosmos and, according to the text, eventually descends to the earth and another birth (and consequently, another death). 141

In the world of the ritual, the sacrificer does not encounter this problem of denial during his passage into the higher realm of the cosmos. The controlled environment of the Agnicayana allows the sacrificer to complete his ascension vertically through the cosmos as he completes the construction of each level of the altar. Thus, with the completion of this fifth level, "the sacrificer, having covered completely all these worlds, enters the heavenly world (*svarga loka*). " 142

Conclusion: Man and Cosmos in the Fire Altar

At the outset of the Satapatha Brahmana's Agnicayana section the authors of the text pose the question, "To [attain] what object (*kama*) is the fire [altar] built?" The initial response to this is that the altar "having become a bird shall convey me [the sacrificer]"

page_95

Page 96

to heaven." 143 This statement indicates that the bird-shaped fire altar was seen as a representation of the Vedic sun-bird, who was occasionally identified with Agni and who would thus be capable of conveying the sacrificer to the heavenly realm in which it had its abode. 144 And, in fact, in constructing the fire altar the sacrificer establishes this identification with the Vedic sun-bird on several levels; a gold disk, which is identified with the sun, is placed in the base of the altar; the altar is itself oriented so it is "towards the right, [because] the sun moves around these worlds from there;" 145 and, most obviously, the altar is built in the shape of an eagle, which seems to have been the type of bird meant by the Vedic sun-bird.

However, in this same discussion of the object of constructing the fire altar, the authors of this text disparage the sacrificer "who should think in this manner," believing that the altar is merely a bird that might convey him to the heavenly realm. They state that the sacrificer should build the birdlike altar to attain the same form as Prajapati, for it was in the form of a bird that he became immortal (*amṛta*). 146

This discussion reflects the underlying conflict of the Agnicayana; that is, the problem generated by its need to remain within the boundaries of Vedic ritual thought, while striving to express its own unique ideas regarding the purpose of the rite. Thus, the choice of an eagle shape is clearly a concession to the norms of Vedic thought; though the Satapatha Brahmana mentions other shapes such as those of a bucket, a chariot wheel, or a heron for the construction of the altar, the authors disdain their use. 147 Moreover, through endorsing only a single form for the altar namely, the eagle shape that undoubtedly represents the Vedic sun-bird and would certainly be recognized as such by the performers of the rite the Agnicayana's authors establish this ritual within the mainstream of the Vedic tradition. Yet, they are not interested in applying what would appear to be the traditional function of the sun-bird to their definition of the larger purpose of the Agnicayana. Thus, rather than assert that the altar is built with the expectation that it might fly the sacrificer to the heavenly world, as its representation in the form of the Vedic sun-bird would seem to imply, the ritualists declare that the altar is built to attain the same form

page_96

Page 97

that Prajapati had when he created the cosmos, which incidentally was that of a bird.

The authors of this text thus make it clear that the innovative nature of this rite lies in its potentiality to recreate the conditions of Prajapati's being. To understand what these conditions are and how the Agnicayana ritualists perceived the construction of the fire altar to lead to their attainment, it is necessary to return briefly to the creation myth that initiates the Satapatha Brahmana's discussion of the Agnicayana ritual.

After Prajapati completes his creation of the cosmos, he is said to "fall apart," (*vi- / srams, srams*). 148 The chief characteristic of this state appears to be the loss of Prajapati's vital airs (*prana*): "From him fallen apart, the vital airs [that were] amidst him went out, [when the vital airs] in him went out, so too the gods left." 149 Although in the Agnicayana's creation myth, the vital airs are represented as constituting both aspects of Prajapati's being after emerging from the *Rsis* they first transform themselves into the gross parts of Prajapati's body and then, in their essential form, concentrate themselves in his head 150 they chiefly represent the inner or animate aspect of existence. And, the gods referred to here apparently are those beings (*Agni, Vayu, Aditya, and Candramas*) Prajapati employs as his agents in placing the animate and essential aspect of existence into the cosmos. 151 The notion that Prajapati "falls apart" after the creation thus seems to express a notion of disjunction that applies specifically to Prajapati's separation from the inner or animate aspect of existence, in terms not only of his own being but also in relationship to his creation, the cosmos.

As a result of Prajapati's condition he asks Agni to restore him. Although the details of this restoration are obscure, this process seems to entail the replacement of Prajapati's vital airs:

He [Agni] said: "What do I place [you] on?" He [Prajapati] replied: "On the foundation (*hita*). The vital airs are the foundation; indeed the vital airs are the foundation of all that lives. And just as he placed him on the foundation, so people [now] say: "I will place [it]; I am placing [it]; I place [it]."

They say: "What is the foundation (*hita*), and what is [its] condition (*upahita*)?" Indeed the vital airs are the foundation and speech is the

page_97

Page 98

condition. This speech is indeed founded on the vital airs. And so too the vital airs are the foundation and the limbs are the condition; for indeed on this foundation of the vital airs the limbs are founded. 152

The symbolism of the fire altar clearly reflects this replacement of the vital airs in Prajapati; for, the vital airs are preeminent among the various entities with which the sacrificer identifies the bricks and other implements used to construct the altar. 153

Although the event of Prajapati's reconstruction presents a paradigm for man's own attainment of wholeness, it poses the troubling question of why Prajapati, whose being seems to represent an ideal state, falls apart as a result of his creative activity. In particular, what does Prajapati's "falling apart" mean for the human sacrificer who reenacts the cosmic man's activity in his own ritual performance?

To answer this question it is important to delineate clearly the stages of Prajapati's career. In the first stage, Prajapati creates the cosmos; the correlation between his own being and that of the cosmos represents a state of wholeness. In the second stage, Prajapati falls apart; his separation from the vital airs and the gods represents a state of fragmentation, the polar opposite of his original state of wholeness. And, in the third stage, Prajapati is restored; the reunification with his vital airs implies the reattainment of his original state of wholeness. These stages suggest the cycle of generation, death, and regeneration that characterizes the Vedic ritual; as Heesterman has noted: "In the sacrifice are summed up the two opposite poles of the cyclical rhythm of the cosmos: birth and death, ascension and descent, concentration and dispersion." 154 In reenacting the cosmic man's primordial activity through the construction of the fire altar, the human sacrificer may be said to approach the ritual in a state of fragmentation that is, already at what in the creation myth is the second stage of Prajapati's career and only through completing the altar does he attain a state of wholeness.

In the performance of the Agnicayana, these ideas are partly expressed through the peculiar sequence of the ceremony, which places the animal sacrifice (which is a beheading) before the actual construction of the altar. The main part of the ritual thus employs

page_98

Page 99

animals described as being already detached from their vital airs, 155 and reconnecting these vital airs represents an important aspect of the ceremony. 156 The Vedic ritual tradition links inextricably the animal victims to the human sacrificer; they are, in fact, his representatives, and the sacrificer's career mirrors that of the victims. Accordingly, the sacrificer's state, as he embarks on the construction of the altar, may be said to be one of fragmentation; that is, detached from the vital airs that represent the essential aspect of his being.

The notion that the sacrificer approaches the ritual performance in a state of fragmentation reflects the Vedic notion that man is born into this world as an incomplete being; as Brian Smith has observed: "The creation of an ontologically viable person is the result of ritual work, the constructive activity which makes form out of formlessness." 157 The ritual performance was thus said to represent the sacrificer's second birth, 158 a process that completed what was left unfinished by the sacrificer's natural birth: "As long as a man does not sacrifice, for that long he remains unborn (*ajata*). It is through the sacrifice that he is born; as an egg broken too early (*prathama*), that is how he is [before sacrificing]." 159 To express this notion that the ritual represents a process of birth, during the ceremony the sacrificer assumes several attributes of an embryo; 160 thus, the sacrificer imitates an embryo's mode of existence as he restricts his movements, 161 remains in a womblike enclosure, 162 and keeps his hands closed, "since embryos have their hands in a closed manner." 163

When the sacrificer emerges from this embryonic state, he is ready to embark on the ritual journey to the world of the gods. This attainment represents the goal of the Vedic rituals:164 "Whoever sacrifices, he sacrifices [saying], 'Let there be a share for me in the world of the gods!'"165 To accomplish this goal the sacrificer makes an offering which is in lieu of his own self to please the gods: "He who sacrifices pleases the gods with this sacrifice . . . and having pleased the gods becomes one cohabiting among them."166 The offering, which in the symbolism of the ritual is bound to the sacrificer, leads him to the world of the gods.167 However, the relationship between the sacrificer and the offering is not a direct one, but one that is mediated through the officiants: "that sacrifice of his goes to the world of the gods, after it goes the

page_99

Page 100

daksina, and holding on to the *daksina* which he gives [to the officiants] is the sacrificer." 168

In presenting itself as a rite that should not be performed for another, the Agnicayana unravels this circuitous route to the heavenly world. The Agnicayana ritualists thus excise one of the elements—namely, the employment of the various ritual specialists—that distances the sacrificer from the ritual performance and, of course, from its benefits. Moreover, the traditional notion that the sacrificer attains the heavenly realm through "pleasing" the gods, as he exchanges life in the form of a victim from this world for life in the other world is not apparent in the Agnicayana ritual. In fact, if the construction of the fire altar is separated from the Soma sacrifice, to which it is attached for what appear to be only formal reasons, then it becomes apparent that there is no real "sacrifice" in this ritual. In other words, there is no victim that, when the altar is completed, serves as an offering to please the gods. Although the slaughtering of the animals at the outset of the ceremony presents a semblance of an offering, their death is not viewed as an exchange that brings new life into this world, but rather, like the bricks, they are simply a part of the altar's construction. Without any real offering, the construction of the fire altar, unlike those rituals that call on and require the participation of the gods, is a self-contained activity. Based on the paradigm of Prajapati's creative activity, building the altar seeks to re-create the anthropomorphic cosmos that signifies a state of wholeness and immortality.

In both the Agnicayana and the traditional Vedic ritual format, man, the sacrificer, is represented as being in an incomplete state. And, in both instances, this state seems to be attributed to the loss of an original wholeness. In the mythology underlying the traditional Vedic rituals, this state of wholeness is represented as a time when men and gods coexisted, a relationship that, for certain reasons, was broken: "In the beginning the gods and men were here together. And whatever there was that was not for the men, those [men] importuned the gods, 'This is not ours, give it to us!' Then those gods, disliking these requests, disappeared."169 The traditional Vedic format attempts to bring man back into contact with the gods: "Indeed, [by the sacrifice] both gods, men and fathers drink [together]; this is their meeting. In the past they drank [together] in a visible manner; now they [drink] invisibly."170

page_100

Page 101

In the Agnicayana, on the other hand, Prajapati presents the paradigm for man's original state of wholeness. Here, wholeness is defined through a correlation to the existence of the cosmos; that is, the unique events of the cosmogony define an original state of existence wherein man and cosmos are equated on both the planes of "outer" (the physical body, the spheres of the cosmos) and "inner" (the mind and senses, the animate constituents of the cosmos) existence. These two planes represent two poles of existence, the mortal and the immortal: "In the beginning Prajapati was both mortal and immortal; his vital airs (*prana*) indeed were immortal and [his] body (*sarira*) was mortal." 171 That Prajapati "falls apart" after his creation—that is, his vital airs, his "immortal part," leave his material body, and he is cut off from the larger cosmos—reflects the notion that Prajapati is paradigmatically a man. For man, whose realm is the material earth, is characterized by his mortal nature.172 The purpose of constructing the fire altar is to reunify man's material being with the essential aspect of existence and thereby regain the original state of wholeness: "By this ritual work, by this proceeding, he [the sacrificer] makes his own self (*atman*) uniform, undecaying, and immortal."173 The Satapatha Brahmana's many discussions of the symbolism of the fire altar make it clear that the self (*atman*) that the sacrificer constructs in the ritual act is "uniform, undecaying and immortal," because it not only brings together the two aspects of human existence but also because it brings together the two aspects of the cosmos's existence; and thus "the sacrificer becomes founded in this all."174

The construction of the fire altar represents a "ritual" solution to the problem of sacrifice, for it still contains its activities

within the abstract world of the ceremony. As J. C. Heesterman has noted: "The place of the sacrifice is conceived of as a replica of the universe and the course of the sacrifice corresponds to the course of the universe;"¹⁷⁵ accordingly, the attainments of the sacrifice are merely replication (though in the case of the Agnicayana it is replication enacted on a scale of enormous complexity), symbolic of a larger experience.

The occasion on which the sacrificer finally moves out of the limited sphere of the ritual is his death. For the sacrificer, however, the event of death has already been defined by the ritual

page_101

Page 102

experience, which, as the replication of the universe itself, enacts-in its limited arena all experience. And, this definition by ritual leads in the earliest stratum of Upanisadic thought to the articulation of the karma doctrine.

page_102

Page 103

4. From Death to Rebirth

Mircea Eliade, echoing a view that has long been held among Indologists, observed that "the Vedic and Brahmanic conceptions concerning postexistence in the beyond are complex and confused." ¹ In part, the apparent confusion that surrounds these notions is a reflection of the peculiar nature of the Vedic cosmography, which, over centuries of development, variously depicted the number of spheres and their relationship to one another in the cosmos.² These depictions ranged from the bipartite cosmos of heavens and earth, which was prevalent in the earliest period of the Rgveda's composition, to the multileveled cosmos consisting of such diverse members as units of time (days, months, seasons, and so forth) and the many worlds that are defined through their association with a particular group of inhabitants (gods, fathers, *gandharvas*, and so forth), which is seen in the Brahmanas.³ The Vedic cosmography was further complicated by the fact that these various cosmic images were not mutually exclusive; for example, the older bipartite and tripartite cosmic images were never entirely abandoned, but were incorporated in the newer pentadic and heptadic images in such a way that their presence was still strongly manifested.⁴ (This peculiar sort of consolidation is exemplified in the imagery of the fire altar, which at once represented a heptadic, pentadic, and tripartite cosmos.)⁵ The confusion that arose from the superimposition of the various cosmic images is apparent in one passage in the Satapatha Brahmana, which discusses a reference to the phrase "in the highest heaven" (*adhi naka*), a phrase that may have been drawn from a text that still employed a simpler depiction of the cosmos. Because the *highest heaven* might refer to any one of several spheres in the multileveled Brahmanic cosmos in particular, either the realm of the gods or the realm of the fathers, the authors of the text emend this reference by adding that "what he means to say is 'amongst the gods' (devatra)."⁶

page_103

Page 104

The expansion of the cosmos from a single otherworld, the heavens, to a multiplicity of otherworldly spheres, coincided with an increase in the number of places to which the deceased might go after leaving this world. And, just as this development in cosmography made it difficult to distinguish specific otherworldly realms, so, too, this increase made it difficult to ascertain precisely where the deceased went after leaving this world. ⁷ This problem is apparent in a discussion that appears in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, in which Yajñavalkya is questioned regarding the afterlife fate of the Parikṣitas, who were known in Vedic legend as performers of the horse sacrifice?⁸ Yajñavalkya's reply consists of an obscure description of this world and the next, after which he discloses the fate of the Parikṣitas:

[He said:] "This world (*idam loka*) is [equivalent to] thirty-two of a day's journey of the [sun] god's chariot; around that, covering twice as much [area], is the earth (*prthivi*); around that, covering twice as much [area], is the sea. Then as much as is the edge of a blade, or as much as is the wing of a bee, so much is there a space

inbetween. Indra, having become a bird, delivered them [the Parikṣitas] to the Wind (*Vayu*). The Wind, having placed [the Parikṣitas] in its own self, led them there where the performers of the horse sacrifice abide."9

Although Yajñavalkya's narrative implies a specific otherworldly realm exists to which the performers of the horse sacrifice go, it does not disclose its location or present precise cosmographic information that might distinguish it from the other realms in the cosmos. This lack of precision is especially apparent in the final statement of this passage, which purports to describe the place where the Parikṣitas abide. This description rests chiefly on a tautology, as Yajñavalkya tells his audience that the Parikṣitas, who were well-known as horse sacrificers,10 went "there where the performers of the horse sacrifice abide."

On the level of cosmography this description of the afterlife seems to exemplify the "complex and confused" character of these beliefs in late Vedic thought. However, on another levelnamely, that concerned with the attainments of the afterlifethe outlines of a coherent eschatology emerge from Yajñavalkya's narrative. In particular, Yajñavalkya's tautological description of where the

page_104

Page 105

Parikṣitas went expresses the notion that individuals attain specific otherworldly realms as the result of specific sorts of activities. This principle suggests that the various afterlife realms can be distinguished, or ordered, on the basis of the types of (ritual) activities that individuals perform before death. As such, this description of the Parikṣitas' fate may be said to represent an early formulation of the doctrine of karma, for it combines the traditional Brahmanic definition of karma as ritual action, while adding to it the notion, which appears prominently in the Upanisads, that the effects of ritual actions are realized in the conditions of the afterlife. Significantly, Yajñavalkya's discussion of the fate of the Parikṣitas immediately follows his statement of the doctrine that "one becomes good by good action and bad by bad [action]," widely considered to be the earliest formulation of the karma doctrine in the Upanisads. 11 Although this statement is depicted as a "secret" teaching, Yajñavalkya's discussion of the Parikṣitas' fate seems to represent a "public" declaration of the same doctrine.

The notion that certain acts lead an individual to attain a specific world in the afterlife is prefigured in the ritual sphere. This relationship between act and world is especially evident in a discussion of the results of the initiation, as the sacrificerthrough the activity of the riteis said to make (*/kr*) a world for his own self: "When he performs the initiation, he makes for it [his own self] that world beforehand (*purastat*); and when he becomes initiated he is born to that made world. Therefore they say: 'Man is born to the world that is made [by his own self]'. "12

The statement that occurs at the end of this passage, "man is born to the world that is made [by his own self]" has been interpreted by several scholars as a reference to the attainments of the afterlife. Julius Eggeling thus noted that this passage meant "man receives in a future state the reward or punishment for his deeds during this life."13 And though Jan Gonda observes that Eggeling's interpretation is "properly speaking, not the purport of the text,"14 he nevertheless states that this passage indicates that "in the future one will receive that form of existence and those circumstances in life which one has gained or brought on oneself before that future birth."15

The context in which this statement occurs implies that the sacrificer's "rebirth" follows not his physical death, but rather the

page_105

Page 106

sort of symbolic death associated with the ritual performance. The Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana clearly distinguishes between the event of an individual's actual death and his "death" in the ritual spherein particular, as an aspect of the initiation rite: "This [man] indeed dies for the first time when the emitted seed is produced. . . Then he dies for the second time when he becomes initiated. . . Then he dies for the third time when he dies." 16 In the symbolism of the Vedic ritual, the initiation represents a death to the world of ordinary experience, out of which the sacrificer is "born" into the world of the rite.17 This notion of a new birth is expressed through the identification of the sacrificer, as he undergoes the initiation rites, with an embryo.18 The "beforehand world," which man makes when he is initiated and into which he is born, is the world of the ritual. This world is prepared for the sacrificial performancejust as man isthrough the preliminary event of the initiation rite.

Nevertheless, the interpretation put forth by Eggeling and Gonda that the statement, "man is born to the world that is made [by his own self]," refers to the attainments of the afterlife is not entirely incorrect. This notion of rebirth bears an obvious resemblance to the later formulations of the karma doctrine and, as already noted, seems to prefigure the principle by which the Parikṣitas attained the afterlife realm of the horse sacrificers; namely, that the nature of an individual's afterlife existence is determined by the sorts of ritual activities that he performs during the course of his life. Moreover, the death and subsequent rebirth that occurs in the initiation must be viewed as a part of a continuum of death experiences, which, according to the Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brahmana passage quoted earlier, begins with conception and ends with the physical death that ends a single lifetime. In each instance, the principle that governs this experience—namely, the attainment of a world created through a certain set of acts—remains the same. Thus, although this statement that "man is born to the world that is made [by his own self]" is clearly intended to refer to the sacrificer's symbolic death in the initiation rite, there is little to distinguish it, *in principle*, from what occurs on the event of the physical death that marks the end of a single lifetime.

The idea that death does not occur once but rather several times in an individual's lifetime is an important factor in interpret-

page_106

Page 107

ing the late Vedic notions of the afterlife. In particular, the symbolic death that the sacrificer experiences in the ritual provides a model for the physical death that marks the end of his lifetime; the factors that lead the sacrificer to specific attainments in the ritual sphere operate in the same fashion when the individual embarks on his final journey to the otherworld. Moreover, this final journey is itself brought about through a ritual event, the funeral rites, aptly named the *final sacrifice* (*antyesti*). As David Knipe has pointed out, this final rite is also an initiation, through which the deceased enter the otherworld and join the community of the gods and ancestors. 19

The ritual journey to the otherworld, although it is said to place the sacrificer on a dangerous path,²⁰ can be faced with a greater degree of certainty than that which the individual confronts as a result of the final sacrifice. Although the sacrificer (*yajamana*) depended on a number of ritual specialists (*·rtvij*) to actually perform the sacrifice, he yet retained a measure of control through his active presence at the ordinary (i.e., nonfuneral) *śrauta* rites. In the final sacrifice, however, the *yajamana*, who is now on the funeral pyre, is limited to an entirely passive experience in the ritual performance. For the deceased the level of danger—that is, the possibility of not attaining a good existence in the otherworld—is thus markedly increased over that experienced in his other ritual activities. In this final sacrifice ritual mistakes cannot be corrected; that which previously was realized symbolically in the ritual gives way to a real and final experience in the otherworld.

The problem raised by the individual's lack of control in this final sacrifice is tempered by the amount of preparation he undergoes in life. This preparation consists of performing the *śrauta* rituals, which, at least symbolically, lead the sacrificer to the otherworld. The attainments achieved through the ordinary sacrifices thus create a model for the attainments of the afterlife. However, the *śrauta* sacrifices are not all the same but rather exist in a specific hierarchy so that "a person is in general only eligible to perform a later ritual in the sequence, if he has already performed the earlier ones."²¹ This ritual hierarchy resulted in a hierarchy of rewards, and these are clearly reflected in the attainments of the afterlife. However, the sequential nature of the Vedic rites meant that only those who had lived to a greater age could perform the

page_107

Page 108

higher rites, and attain their greater rewards; thus, a passage in the Satapatha Brahmana correlates specific afterlife existences to the age at which the sacrificer dies:

Those who depart before the age of 20 they become attached to the world of the days and nights; those who [depart] above 20 and below 40 [become attached] to that [world of] the fortnight; those who [depart] above 40 and below 60 [become attached] to that [world of] the months; those who [depart] above 60 and below 80 [become attached] to that [world of] the seasons; those who [depart] above 80 and below 100 [become attached] to that [world of] the year. Now only that one who lives 100 years or more indeed attains the immortal state. 22

The one who lives and, of course, sacrifices for 100 years effectively sacrifices his life away, and so he attains what in theory is the goal of the Vedic sacrifice. Because the Agnicayana stood at the zenith of the Vedic ritual hierarchy it is clear that the one who lives and sacrifices for 100 years would have performed this rite as his penultimate sacrifice (the final sacrifice was the funeral rite). The final sacrifice for one who had in life completed the Agnicayana possessed its own distinctive nature: called the *building of the burial place* (*Smasanacayana*), it was said to complete the building of the fire altar (*agnicayana*). As such it exemplifies the continuum between the ritual and the final journey to the otherworld.

In the following section, I examine how the *srauta* rites prepared the sacrificer for his journey to the otherworld and how they represented the model for this otherworldly attainment. This relationship is exemplified in the performance of the *Smasanacayana*; for it reenacts the Agnicayana. I then draw from this relationship some general principles regarding the movement from death to rebirth.

The Agnicayana and the Smasanacayana

Scholars have often noted the similarity between the construction of the Vedic fire altar (*agnicayana*) and the construction of the burial place (*Smasanacayana*) for one who has built the fire altar.²³ In fact, the many features shared by these two structures have even led to a modicum of discussion regarding the identity of

page_108

Page 109

several mounds constructed of bricks and clay that is, whether they represented the remains of fire altars or tumuli excavated at a pre-Mauryan site.²⁴ However, other than the observation that the fire altar and the burial place bear a remarkable resemblance, few suggestions have been made regarding the nature of the relationship between the two ritual complexes, the funeral rites and the ritual construction of the fire altar, which contextualize these structures.

Wilhelm Caland, who did consider the nature of the relationship between these two events, suggested that the *Smasanacayana* constituted a sacrifice to the fathers, whereas the Agnicayana constituted a sacrifice to the gods.²⁵ Caland's suggestion is a reasonable one, in view of the intimate association between the fathers and the funeral rites in Vedic thought.²⁶ In the Rgveda this association appears to define the limits of the fathers' participation in the sacrificial ritual.²⁷ Thus, although the fathers are called on to partake of the sacrificial offering in terms similar to those applied to the gods, the Agni who carries the oblation to them is the cremation fire (the "flesh-eating Agni") and is clearly distinguished from the Agni who carries the oblation to the gods.²⁸

The fathers' well-defined and delimited role in the Rgveda contrasts with their ubiquitous presence in the Brahmanas, which causes the authors of these texts to discuss the necessity both of keeping away from the fathers and maintaining a clear distinction between them and the gods even at rituals that traditionally do not appear to have been within the fathers' domain. Several passages in the Satapatha Brahmana thus warn the sacrificer to avoid the southern quarter of the ritual area "for that is the quarter of the fathers . . . and then the sacrificer would go quickly to the otherworld."²⁹ The fathers' presence at the nonfunerary rites led to a certain degree of confusion; the dual presence of the gods and the fathers blurs the traditional distinction between the oblations that call forth the fathers and the oblations that call forth the gods. In one instance this dual presence leads the ritualists to question the nature of fasting during the ritual.³⁰ After performing the Agnihotra the sacrificer was apparently permitted to take his evening meal; however, the ritualists wonder if this is improper, since the gods, who have been drawn to the ritual area by the activity of the sacrifice, may not yet have partaken of the oblation, which is their

page_109

Page 110

"food": "Now it would be improper if one were to eat before [other] men who had not eaten; but what then [the impropriety] if one ate before gods who had not eaten. Therefore, one should not eat." ³¹ As Yajñavalkya then points out, fasting is a feature of sacrifices to the fathers or of the funeral rites and thus, "if he does not eat [the sacrificer] becomes one who is sacrificing to the fathers."³² To resolve this conflict between offending the gods (by eating before them) and entering upon a sacrifice to the fathers (by fasting), Yajñavalkya proposes that "one should eat that which is

eaten [when] fasting."33 Although it is not entirely clear what type of food Yajñavalkya refers to here,34 the entire discussion underscores the confusion in Brahmanic thought between the role of the gods and the role of the fathers in the ordinary *srauta* rituals.35

This change in view from that of the Rgveda where the fathers' role is limited to the funeral rites to that of the Brahmanas, which sees them as being present at all types of rituals seems to be a part of a larger concern with the nature of death in the sacrifice. In particular, several passages in the Brahmanas suggest a certain discomfort over the necessary killing of the sacrificial victim. Among these are the story of Bhugu in the otherworld, where Bhugu sees cattle eating men, apparently in revenge for man's use of them as both food and the sacrificial offering,36 and the several myths that describe how cattle and men, who each possessed the sort of skin that the other one now has, exchanged their skins, for which the cattle getting the more durable skin agreed to allow men to use them for both food and the sacrificial offering.37 Such myths reflect what J.C. Heesterman has referred to as the Brahmanas' "obsessive concern about *himsa*, the killing required by sacrifice."38 This preoccupation suggests a discomfort that might only be resolved through the elimination of death and destruction from the sacrificial ritual.

According to Heesterman the elimination of death from the sacrifice was achieved through the "contrivance of ritual"; that is, by replacing the reality of death with a carefully constructed system of abstract identifications.39 As a result of this ritual solution, Heesterman notes, "the ritualists found themselves confronted with the problem of meaning; that is, they had to construct a way back to the lived-in world of mundane reality."40 The ubiquitous presence of the fathers at the Brahmanic rites implies that

page_110

Page 111

one method of reintroducing the reality of death back into the ritual was the identification of the death element, at whatever level of abstraction it may have been present, in all sorts of rituals, with the real death that was the subject of the funeral rites, the proper sacrificial domain of the fathers. In other words, by their presence at the ordinary *srauta* rites, the fathers made felt the reality of death in a sphere where death, though it was an essential part of the sacrificial experience, had largely been reduced to an abstraction.

The merging of the funeral rites with the ordinary *srauta* rites may underlie the close resemblance of the Agnicayana and the Smanacayana. 41 Although the Smanacayana does exhibit an overwhelming concern with the fathers, it is important, in view of its similarity to the Agnicayana, to question the precise nature of the relationship between these two rites. At the very least, the characterization that Caland suggested, that one of these rites constituted a sacrifice to the fathers while the other a sacrifice to the gods, does not seem to reflect adequately the many nuances of the relationship between them. The Satapatha Brahmana specifically states that the construction of the burial place completes the Agnicayana ritual.42 In view of this relationship it seems unlikely then that these two rites would have such markedly different orientations; that is, one to the gods, the other to the fathers. However, the two rites are clearly not the same, for they represent a continuum, as one rite leads into the other. This relationship between the Smanacayana and the Agnicayana is clearly expressed in one passage in the Satapatha Brahmana:

He makes the burial place of the one who has performed the fire altar building ceremony after the form (*vidha*) of the fire [altar]. When the sacrificer builds the fire [altar], by [this] sacrifice he completes a self for that other world. But, this sacrificial act [the Agnicayana] is unenduring if the burial place is not completed. Whoever makes the burial place of the one who has performed the fire altar building ceremony after the form of the fire altar he alone causes the fire altar to be completed.43

Here the idea that the burial place is made after the form (*vidha*) of the fire altar, apparently refers to the employment of several ritual techniques used in the Agnicayana, such as sweeping

page_111

Page 112

the burial site, 44 using enclosing stones,45 plowing and sowing seeds on the burial site,46 and finally, placing a series of bricks to form a bird's shape, "just like that of the fire [altar]," according to the Satapatha Brahmana, to form the burial mound.47 Just as such ritual techniques seem to have been used in the ordinary rites to lessen the reality of death, so, too, in this funeral rite these techniques temper the harshness of the situation by introducing an element of familiarity and

control into an otherwise unknowable experience. However, unlike the ordinary rites, where through the contrivance of ritual death seems to have remained merely an abstraction, in the funeral rites the reality of death could never be fully abrogated. This contrast between the funeral rite and the ordinary rite expresses how the Smasanacayana "completes" the Agnicayana. Whereas in the Agnicayana the sacrificer's death can only be symbolically realized, the Smasanacayana confronts this death as a concrete event.

Funeral rites concerned with burial (and not just cremation), other than the Smasanacayana, are referred to in the Rgveda and the Brahmanas.⁴⁸ In these rites the burial represents a secondary funeral rite that reconstructs, for an otherworldly existence, the body destroyed in an earlier cremation rite.⁴⁹ The burial rite for those who in life performed the Agnicayana differed from the rite for those who had not undertaken the ritual construction of the fire altar. In particular, the burial mound for one who performed the Agnicayana was constructed out of bricks, with which the deceased's bones were interspersed, and formed into the shape of a bird;⁵⁰ the tumulus for those who had not performed the Agnicayana was constructed out of an apparently formless mound of pebbles.⁵¹ The invention of a burial rite that so closely follows the Agnicayana, and the limitation of its use to those who had performed this rite, implies that the specific purpose of the Smasanacayana is to reenact the Agnicayana and thereby to reexperience the otherworldly attainments and rebirth that the sacrificer experienced through it. In other words, the Smasanacayana was made to resemble the Agnicayana to ensure that the same otherworldly attainments experienced albeit on a symbolic level through the ritual building of the fire altar are actually attained through this final ritual.

page_112

Page 113

The journey to the otherworld, and a resultant state of rebirth, represents a central aspect of the Vedic *srauta* rites.⁵² Thus, the sacrificer's experience in performing the various rites may be said to represent the "empirical" evidence of the attainments that he hopes to realize again though in a final way at the end of his lifetime. There are certain general principles on which the sacrifice operates that attest to the journey to the otherworld and the rebirth that results from it. In the Brahmanas there are several references to a cycle of generation and regeneration that starts with the smoke of the sacrifice rising upward to the otherworld. There the smoke becomes clouds, and returns to this world in the form of rain. The rain falls to the ground where it is transformed into plants. When the plants are eaten they become semen, and thus creatures arise. The creatures are then offered in the sacrificial fire, and continuing the cycle of generation, they rise to the otherworld in the form of smoke: "From this world this seed pours forth (*/sic*) as smoke, and that becomes rain in the otherworld. From there that [rain pours forth] as this rain. By this [going] between [creatures] are produced."⁵³

This theory does not represent an impersonal process. The oblation, whether it was a goat or a human being, was intimately identified with the sacrificer; at least symbolically, it was the sacrificer's own self that rose up to the otherworld in the smoke of the sacrifice. The effect this theory had on late Vedic afterlife beliefs is clearly seen in the Upanisadic description of the *pitryana*, which describes how the deceased is transported to the otherworld in the form of smoke (from the funeral pyre) and then becomes in turn a cloud, rain, rice and other grain, and semen.⁵⁴

Another principle of the Vedic rituals that appears to set a precedent for the attainments of the afterlife is the idea that the sacrifice was a birth process. I already noted that, to express this idea of birth in the ritual, the sacrificer in the course of the ritual performance assumes the attributes of an embryo. Just as this act of assuming an embryonic state suggests that birth from the mother's womb represents the model for the sacrificer's rebirth in the ritual, so it seems that the ritual rebirth stands as the model for the deceased's rebirth in the funeral rite. A passage in the Satapatha Brahmana thus refers to the continuum of a man's three births:

page_113

Page 114

"Indeed man is born three times. First he is born from his mother and father. Then that one who sacrifices, when the sacrifice is disposed (*upa-* /*nam*) to him, he is born a second time. And then when he dies, and they place him on the fire and when he arises from that he is born a third time."⁵⁵

In another passage the performance of a specific *srauta* rite is represented as a middle term linking an individual's natural birth with his birth from the funeral pyre: "When he dies and when he puts him on the [cremation] fire, then Agni burns his body, and from Agni that one is born. Just as he is born from his mother and father, so he is born from Agni. But

whoever does not offer the Agnihotra, indeed, he does not arise; therefore, one must offer the Agnihotra."56 Thus, while the cremation rite is likened here to the birth process, this similarity can only be realized through the performance during the course of one's life of the *srauta* rites, in this case the Agnihotra. Without establishing a precedent for a sacrificial birth, the individual cannot attain a rebirth from the final sacrifice.

These notions that, on the one hand, the sacrificer attained a new birth in the ritual sphere and, on the other hand, that he entered into a cycle of generation as the smoke of the fire became rain, were linked in the ritual process in the idea that the sacrifice was a journey to the otherworld.⁵⁷ As noted earlier, in the Agnicayana the construction of the Garhapatya served to orient the sacrificer in undertaking this journey and thus ensured his return to this world. In fact, the return, or descent, from the otherworld represented an essential component of the ritual journey. As Brian Smith has noted: "The Brahmanas are quite blunt in their warnings to those who spurn a round trip ticket and do not descend from the *svarga loka*."⁵⁸ Smith rightly points out that the return from the otherworld is necessitated by the human condition; unlike the immortal, or more precisely, "undying" (*amṛta*) gods, who long ago made the journey to the otherworld and remained there, the mortal sacrificer would have to give up his life in the ritual to remain in the otherworld.⁵⁹

Although the return to this world is characterized as a return from the state that the gods enjoy to the state of being a man,⁶⁰ the mechanism of the sacrifice implies that the sacrificer emerges from this journey to a new state of existence or rebirth. In particular, the

page_114

Page 115

two processes of the sacrificer's symbolic transformation into an embryo and the physical transformation of the oblation as it turns into smoke and then rain with which the sacrificer is identified, complement this journey to the otherworld. There the sacrificer realizes a state of original wholeness, which according to Brahmanic mythology is achieved either through uniting with the gods or through the realization of one's own identity with the cosmos.⁶¹ Yet, this transformation appears to be a matter of degree, as the sacrificer, after his descent from the otherworld, is still much the same at least in terms of his physical being as he was before his journey.

There is one situation that would seem not to necessitate a descent from the otherworld; that is, the event of the sacrificer's death. Yet, although the (deceased) sacrificer is now free to remain in the otherworld, the model of ascent and descent, which was established through a lifetime of sacrificial performances, seems to remain effective in this final experience. The possibility of a return from the otherworld, after the event of the sacrificer's death, is seen in a passage in the Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana that describes the journey of the deceased. After journeying to the many spheres of the cosmos (including the worlds of the months, the seasons, the years, the *gandharvas*, the *apsaras*, the sun, and the moon), the deceased finds himself at the "end" (*anta*):

There is no carrying forward beyond this point. And all the worlds beyond this which have been discussed [here] are obtained; they are conquered. In them all he, who knows thus, moves as is his desire. If he should desire: "Let me be born here again," in whatever family he directs his attention, either the family of a brahman or the family of a king, into that he will be born. Indeed to this world he goes ascending (*abhy-a-/ruḥ*) again, as one knowing.⁶²

The return to another birth in this world seems to represent one of two types of existence after death that the deceased might pursue, for the text also implies that the deceased might remain in some sort of otherworldly state. The distinction between attaining a rebirth in this world and remaining in the otherworld, suggests (it may, in fact, be a precursor of) the Upanisadic notion of the two paths the *devayana* and the *pitryana* open to the deceased. The

page_115

Page 116

devayana leads the sacrificer to an indefinite sojourn in the world of Brahma, and the *pitryana* leads the sacrificer to a rebirth in this world.⁶³

Although these notions of the rain cycle, the attainment of a new birth in the sacrifice, and the journey and descent to the otherworld express principles that appear to operate in all types of *srauta* rituals, it is clear that the Vedic thinkers understood the performance of specific rites within the *srauta* corpus as leading to specific otherworldly attainments. In

particular, the Satapatha Brahmana seems to suggest a general distinction between the performance of the bulk of the *śrauta* corpus and the Agnicayana. Thus, in one passage the Satapatha Brahmana carefully delineates all the various *śrauta* rites, while it declares that "this building of the fire [altar] rite is that which is all these sacrifices"⁶⁴ a notion implying that it absorbs and perhaps transcends all the other rites. This distinction is also seen in the attainments of the afterlife, as the one who performs the Agnicayana is alone said to achieve a state of immortality:

Now regarding the vigor (*virya*) [gained] from the sacrifice. Whoever performs the Agnihotra eats daily in the otherworld; that is how much empowerment there is in this sacrifice. The Darsapurnamasa sacrificer eats every half-month; the Caturmasya sacrificer every four months; the Pasubandha sacrificer every half year; and the Soma sacrificer every year. The one who builds the fire altar [eats] every century, as is his desire. In this way, according to his desire [he does] not [eat] for one hundred years as much as is immortality, unending, everlasting. Indeed whoever knows this, his [state] is immortality, unending, everlasting.⁶⁵

This state of immortality reflects the symbolic attainments of the Agnicayana performance. Thus, in constructing the fire altar the sacrificer is said to make "his own self, uniform, undecaying, and immortal."⁶⁶ To ensure that, on the event of his actual death, the performer of the Agnicayana again attains this state of immortality-albeit as a concrete attainment the Smasanacayana for the performer of the Agnicayana recreates the fire altar: the tumulus is built of brick and shaped in the form of a bird.⁶⁷ Yet, unlike the fire altar, the bricks of which only symbolically represent the sacrificer, the funeral mound actually incorporates the deceased sacrificer, for

page_116

Page 117

the mound is built up through interspersing bricks with the bones of the deceased. ⁶⁸ This final event thus realizes the goal of the Agnicayana (and so, as the text expresses it, it "completes" the Agnicayana); that is, in its construction man and fire altar become a single entity: the bond between man and cosmos attained symbolically in the construction of the fire altar is now concretely and finally realized by the sacrificer in the burial mound.

At the same time, the symbolic bond between man and altar that the Agnicayana first establishes leads to the assertion that the attainments, in the afterlife, of this rite exceed the attainments of all the other *śrauta* rites. For, unlike the other *śrauta* rites, the connection between the Agnicayana and the Smasanacayana is established on the basis of a particular type of knowledge. In contrast to this, the general Brahmanic principle that the performance in life of specific *śrauta* rites leads after death to the attainment of specific afterlife realms suggests that the sacrificer need not concern himself with understanding precisely where the ritual will lead him, for the correct performance of the rite ensures its own attainments. A passage in the Satapatha Brahmana exemplifies the unimportance of the sacrificer's knowing where he will go, since the ritual act, when correctly performed, imparts its own knowledge: "[At the Asvamedha] they hold the tail [of the horse] from behind to [gain] knowledge for the attainment of the heavenly world. Man indeed does not know [the way to] the heavenly world, but the horse truly knows [the way to] the heavenly world."⁶⁹

For the Agnicayana ritualist, the ceaseless mental identifications that establish the correlations between cosmos, cosmic man, sacrificer, and altar establish a precedent for the final event in which the sacrificer becomes joined physically with the funeral mound. Just as, in constructing the fire altar, the altar's physical form is superseded by the sacrificer's vision of the altar: "how he sees it, it is born now having just that appearance"⁷⁰ and in this way a nearly shapeless mound (its bird shape was covered by layers of earth) becomes the cosmic man, too, in this final experience, the sacrificer can expect to attain a state that exceeds the funeral mound's physical form. In the Agnicayana the particular knowledge that allows the sacrificer to move beyond the ritual form to see in it the existence of the cosmos allows the sacrificer in the Smasanacayana to move beyond an afterlife existence

page_117

Page 118

based strictly on that form and thus to achieve a state of coexistence with the cosmos.

The notion that the performance of specific rites in life leads the sacrificer, upon death, to the attainment of specific afterlife realms seems to underlie the several Upanisadic passages identified as the earliest formulations of the doctrine of karma and rebirth. Thus, the Upanisadic description of those who follow the *devayana* and those who follow the *pitr̥yana* centers on a distinction between two types of ritual activity. On the one hand, those who after death attain the *devayana*

are said to "worship in the forest thinking 'faith is austerity'," on the other hand, those who attain the *pitryana* are said to "worship in the forest thinking 'giving [to the priests who perform the sacrifice] is [for the purpose] of storing sacrificial merit in the other world'." 71 However, the afterlife attainments described here are not based on specific ritual activities, but rather on a general principle that distinguishes two types of ritual activities. The performance of what has been called the *interiorized sacrifice*, which follows the model of Prajapati's primordial creative activity and centers on the individual sacrificer, leads to the attainment of the *devayana*, whereas the performance of what may be termed the *traditional sacrificial format*, which employs ritual specialists on behalf of the sacrificer to call on the gods, leads to the attainment of the *pitryana*. Similarly, Yajñavalkya's statement that "one becomes good by good action (*karman*), bad by bad [action]" describes the fate of the individual not on the basis of a specific ritual act but as the result of a type of ritual activity: here, the notion of the dissolution of the deceased on the funeral pyre the breath into the air, the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon, and so forth suggests the cosmic man paradigm.⁷² In these Upanisadic passages the notion, found prominently in the Brahmanas, that specific rites lead the sacrificer to the attainment of specific afterlife realms is transformed into a general principle; that is, the attainments of the afterlife follow a type of activity: one type based on the traditional sacrificial format, another type based on the format modeled on Prajapati's primordial sacrifice.

The distinction presented in the oldest Upanisads between the two types of ritual activity, which then lead to two types of afterlife existences (*pitryana*, *devayana*) represents the first stage in

page_118

Page 119

generalizing the Brahmanic doctrine of the afterlife effects of specific ritual acts into what may be termed a doctrine of karma. The bridge between the specific and general principles expressed here may be found in the Agnicayana's emphasis on coupling performance with knowledge. Here a certain type of knowledge allows the sacrificer to move beyond the limitations of the ritual form; in Upanisadic thought this principle leads to the view that any rite in the Vedic corpus (and even mundane actions such as eating and breathing) when properly understood allows the sacrificer to reenact the events of the cosmogony. The contrast between those who possess this knowledge and those who do not, seems in Upanisadic thought to underlie the general distinction between those who follow the traditional sacrificial format, and accordingly attain one type of afterlife existence (*pitryana*), and those who follow the model of Prajapati's sacrifice, and accordingly attain another type of afterlife existence (*devayana*). The emergence in the Upanisads of the attainment of two generalized afterlife paths, the *devayana* and the *pitryana*, thus represents a watershed in Vedic thought, for it elicits from the wealth of ritual structures established in Brahmanic thought a view of the relationship between an act in this life and its effects in the afterlife that could be, and finally was, extended beyond the ritual sphere. In the form of the karma doctrine, these principles pervaded nearly all subsequent Indian thought.

Conclusion: The Karma Doctrine in the Context of Brahmanic Thought

In the first chapter of this book, I noted that A. B. Keith distinguished the thought of the Upanisads from that of the Brahmanas by the presence, in one of these textual milieus, of a doctrine of transmigration:

The distinction [between the Brahmanas and the Upanisads] corresponds, we may fairly say, in the main to a change of time and still more to a change of view. The Upanishads hold in some degree at least the doctrine of transmigration, and though not in a developed condition the pessimism which follows on it: these views are not those of the Brahmanas, which, taken all in all, know not transmigration. 73

page_119

Page 120

Keith's view reflects the biases that pervaded the work of many nineteenth century Indologists, as these scholars attempted to discount the significance of Brahmanic thought in the development of doctrines first articulated fully in the Upanisads, an enterprise in which the doctrine of karma and rebirth was of especial importance. In an odd circular argument this doctrine was, by its supposed moral content, separated from the thought of the Brahmanas, while, by its supposed moral content, it delineated the thought of these two textual milieus. A reevaluation of this perspective is long overdue; as David Knipe has remarked: "It is imperative for historians of religion to review the Vedic substrata and perceive essential religious structures and meanings, especially since large areas of the Vedic corpus have lain fallow, neglected by hermeneutics, after a rough century's harvesting with the implements of the textual critics." 74

In the case of the Upanisadic karma doctrine the essential structures that must be attended to in the Vedic substrata are the Brahmanic notions of the ritual process that leads the sacrificer, during the course of the ritual performance, to the attainment of specific otherworldly realms, for the correlations that are established in the ritual world albeit on a symbolic level eventually lead the sacrificer, upon death, to the attainment of an afterlife existence in the real cosmos. The distinctions between these two levels of attainment the symbolic attainments of the ritual world and the actual attainments brought about by the individual's death may represent the primary distinction between the Upanisadic karma doctrine and the Brahmanic principles that precede it. While the Brahmanas exhibit an overwhelming concern with the ritual world, the Upanisads look outward to the larger cosmos. The Upanisadic thinkers did not, however, abandon the principles that are the hallmark of Brahmanic thought: to look outward from the carefully delimited boundaries of the ritual world, they simply extended the principles that governed the ritual. This extension is exemplified in a passage in the Chandogya Upanisad that describes the various aspects of a person's life (eating, procreating, and so forth) as a participation in the sacrifice: "When one hungers and thirsts, and when that one has no pleasure, these are his initiatory rites. And when one eats and drinks, and when that one enjoys pleasure, he undergoes the Upanisad ceremonies. Then when he

page_120

Page 121

laughs and eats, and has sexual intercourse, then he joins in the chants and recitations." 75

This passage concludes by relating the sacrificer's death to the final bath,⁷⁶ for, as the event that concluded the ritual performance, the bath represents the conclusion of a life understood as the sacrifice itself. Underlying this correlation is the key to how the Upanisadic thinkers moved from the carefully delimited world of the Brahmanic ritual to the larger cosmos. In the Brahmanas the overwhelming concern with death led to the development of innumerable ritual devices, exemplified, in particular, in the immensely detailed technique of the Agnicayana rite. These ritual devices allowed the Brahmanic thinkers to transform the necessary event of an actual death in the sacrifice into an abstract and largely symbolic experience. The institution of such devices seems to have allowed the Upanisadic thinkers to confront the realities outside the world of the ritual sphere. Here, the correlation between death and the final bath of the ritual implies that for the Upanisadic thinkers the event of one's death could be faced with a certain degree of assurance; as this otherwise unknowable and dangerous experience was seen to be merely an aspect of the ritual performance, and thus one that had been experienced at least, symbolically many times. The Brahmanic abstraction of death in the ritual sphere thus seems to have provided the Upanisadic thinkers with the ability to confront death, in whatever context it may have occurred, in the same "unreal" way in which it was experienced in the context of the ritual performance. This ability, which also allowed the Upanisadic thinkers to move beyond the specific confines of the ritual arena, reflects a process of generalization, as the structures, paradigms, and principles long established in that arena, were carried outward to a larger world of experience.

J. N. Farquhar once remarked of the Brahmanas that "It seems as if the men who composed these interminable gossiping lectures had left realities far behind them, and were living in a dreary realm of shadowy gods and men and topsy-turvy morality and religion, in which nothing belongs to the world we know except the sacrificial meats, drinks, and the fees paid to the priestly dreamers."⁷⁷ To the nineteenth century Indologists, whose views Farquhar here represents, the concern with the sacrificer's real death in the Upanisadic karma passages may have signified a

page_121

Page 122

movement away from this supposed dream world. The karma doctrine, however, operates on the same principles as those that underlie the Brahmanic ritual theories, merely extending them from the ritual world outward to a larger world of experience. Thus, rather than a movement away from the ritual orientation of the Brahmanas, the Upanisadic concern with the sacrificer's actual death may simply reflect an absorption of reality itself into what Farquhar called the "dream world" of Brahmanic ritual thought.

page_122

Page 123

Abbreviations of Vedic Texts

AB	Aitareya Brahmana
ApSS	Apastamba Srauta Sutra
AV	Atharva Veda (Samhita)
BAU	Brhadaranyaka Upanisad
CU	Chandogya Upanisad
HSS	Hiranyakesin Srauta Sutra
JB	Jaiminiya Brahmana
JUB	Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana
KathB	Kathaka Brahmana
KathS	Kathaka Samhita
KathU	Katha Upanisad
KB	Kausitaki Brahmana
KBU	Kausitaki Brahmana Upanisad
MS	Maitrayani Samhita
MuU	Mundaka Upanisad
PB	Pañcavimsa Brahmana
RV	Rg Veda (Samhita)
SB	Satapatha Brahmana
SV	Sama Veda (Samhita)
TB	Taittiriya Brahmana
TS	Taittiriya Samhita
VS	Vajasaneyi Samhita
VSS	Vaitana Srauta Sutra
YV	Yajur Veda (Samhita)

page_123

Page 124

Notes

Introduction

1. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, p. 3.
2. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, p. 227. The notion of the world egg is already intimated in the Rgveda (10.121), and is well established in the mythology of the Satapatha Brahmana (see, e.g., 11.1.6.12; 6.1.2.2 ff.).
3. O'Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities*, p. 203.
4. See Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, pp. 2829.
5. SB 7.2.1.4; 9.2.3.4.
6. In Hindu thought death represents a necessary prelude to any sort of creation: cf. Wendy O'Flaherty's remark that "all the karma texts on rebirth *begin with death*, and then proceed to describe birth" ("Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Puranas," p. 5).
7. See, Heesterman, "The Ritualist's Problem," passim.
8. BAU 3.2.13.
9. See, e.g., the interpretations of BAU 3.2.13 set forth by Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 330 and Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 573, and cf., Hume's suggestion that the doctrine presented here

was Buddhist in origin (Hume, *The Thirteen Principle Upanishads*, p. 6). In a recent treatment of this passage David Knipe emphasizes its relationship to the Vedic cosmogony of the primeval anthropomorphic sacrifice (Knipe, "*Sapindikarana*," p. 113).

10. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, p. 23.

11. See the section, "The Upanisads and the Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine" in Chapter 1.

12. As Paul Horsch points out this lack of understanding is seen in the impasse (*Sackgasse*) scholars reached during the past 150 years in their research into the origins of karma (Horsch, "Vorstufen der Indischen Seelenwanderungslehre," p. 99).

13. By this statement I do not mean to imply that the origins of karma are to be found only in the Vedic ritual sphere. See "The Vedic Origins of the Karma Doctrine," later in this Introduction.

14. See, especially, Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xiii.

15. Heesterman, "Veda and Dharma," p. 87.

16. See, e.g., SB 1.3.1.25; 7.4.2.22.

17. O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth*, p. xvii.

18. Ibid.

19. Nineteenth century scholars generally believed that the early Vedic texts contained a level of Indo-European belief closely related to that of their own ancestors, a notion that, according to one scholar "might readily strike disagreeably one who, living among the late posterity of such an ancestry, has to struggle against their weaknesses and vices" (Von Roth, "On the Morality of the Veda," p. 333). The transformation of the Indian tradition was attributable to the increasing admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan. Certainly, the ancient texts, which represent the Aryan viewpoint in what was believed to be a pristine form, were of greater interest to nineteenth century Indologists than was India itself, which represents a thorough mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan. Edward Said writes that "it is reported of some of the early German Orientalists that their first view of an eight-armed Indian statue cured them completely of their Orientalist taste" (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 52).

20. See SB 7.4.2.22; cf., 1.3.1.25.

21. Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 32.

22. Both the Satapatha Brahmana and the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad are attached to the White (*sukla*) Yajurveda. The Yajurveda, which comprises two textual traditions, the Black (*krsna*) and the White (the former has attached to it several Brahmana texts; the latter only the Satapatha Brahmana), is the "Veda of ritual *par excellence*" (Staal, *The Science of Ritual*, p. 10).

23. Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 116.

24. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 352.

25. Although European libraries had already acquired many of these texts in manuscript form, it was not until after 1870 that critical editions of a significant number of Brahmanas were published. A notable exception, however, was Albrecht Weber's excellent Sanskrit edition of the Satapatha Brahmana, which was published in 1855.

26. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 204.

27. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, pp. 113. This remark was made in a review of Martin Haug's translation of the Aitareya Brahmana, published with the Sanskrit text in 1863, and thus one of the first editions of a Brahmana that would have been available to a general readership.

28. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, p. 114.

29. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 204.

30. Müller's legacy regarding the Brahmanas is discussed further in Chapter 1. See also, Wendy O'Flaherty's discussion of the views held by Müller

page_125

Page 126

and his contemporaries and their "tendency to parrot one another's terms of abuse," in their discussions of these texts (O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*, p. 5).

31. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 1, p. ix.

32. O'Flaherty, *Siva*, p. 12.

33. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, p. 113.

34. The Sacred Books of the East Series, fifty volumes edited by Max Müller, employs a particularly unusual system of transliteration, the so-called Missionary Alphabet (each volume contains a table explaining the system). W. D. Whitney remarked that the system was "a mixture too awkward and ugly to be tolerated" and that "it was certainly a grave error of judgement on Müller's part to impose its use upon the wealthy Clarendon Press" (Whitney, "Eggeling's Translation of the Satapatha Brahmana," p. 410).

35. In a review of Eggeling's translation, W. D. Whitney pointed out that Eggeling often bridges the Satapatha Brahmana's many lacunae (a feature of its style) with interpolations of uncertain origin. Whitney generously attributed this to the possibility that Eggeling had in his possession either an unpublished commentary, or another recension of the text (Whitney, "Eggeling's Translation of the Satapatha Brahmana," pp. 396, 403). These interpolations are, for the most part, superfluous additions to the Sanskrit text, and thus, the translations from the Satapatha Brahmana in this book do not make use of them.

36. A. B. Keith's biography illustrates this. Eggeling's student at Edinburgh and Macdonell's student at Oxford, Keith is reported to have outdistanced any previous candidate in the Home and Indian Civil Service Examination by over a thousand marks. His prodigious record of Indological publications (critical editions, translations, treatises on Indian philosophy, drama, literature and mythology, and the monumental India Office Library Catalogue of Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts) was matched by a remarkable output of works on British constitutional law (Keith was for the last thirty years of his life Great Britain's leading expert on constitutional law). (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 194150, s.v., "Keith, Arthur Berriedale.")

37. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 4.

1. The Problem of Karma and the Textual Sources

1. Dubois, *Hindu Manners*, pp. 55657. Dubois cites what he calls the *Bhagavata* here; it is not clear whether he refers to the Purana or to some other popular text.

2. See, Dubois, *Hindu Manners*, pp. 40115, 173. Though Dubois died in 1848, as Max Müller noted in a prefatory note to the third edition of

page_126

Page 127

Hindu Manners: "The Abbé belongs really to the eighteenth century" (ibid., p. v); that is, to the period before Indologists began to study systematically the Hindu textual tradition.

3. See, e.g., Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 71.

4. Sharma, "Theodicy and the Doctrine of Karma," p. 359.
5. Cf. Wendy O'Flaherty's report of the proceedings of a series of conferences devoted to the notion of karma: "Much of our time at the first conference . . . was devoted to a lively but ultimately vain attempt to define what we meant by karma and rebirth. The unspoken conclusion was that we had a sufficiently strong idea of the parameters of the topic to go ahead and study it, in the hope that perhaps *then* we would be able to see more clearly precisely what we had studied . . ." (O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth*, p. xi).
6. A. L. Basham, "The Indian Doctrine of Transmigration," lecture delivered at the University of Chicago on April 29, 1983.
7. See, O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth*, p. xi, and Horsch, "Vorstufen der Indischen Seelenwanderungslehre," p. 100. Also cf. Chapple, *Karma and Creativity*, p. 3, which discusses a recent (though decidedly minority) trend among some scholars to view karma and rebirth as wholly discrete terms.
8. The importance of context in the interpretation of karma is especially apparent in the several studies collected in O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth*. See also Gerow, "What Is Karma (Kim Karmeti)?" which explores karma chiefly as a grammatical problem (though one that establishes a paradigm for many other aspects of Indian thought).
9. See "The Earliest Notice of the Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in the Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanisads."
10. Whitney, *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, p. 61.
11. Horsch, "Vorstufen der Indischen Seelenwanderungslehre," p. 99; cf. O'Flaherty, *Karma and Rebirth*, pp. xi-xii.
12. H. T. Colebrooke's essay, "On the Vedas or Sacred Writings of the Hindus;" (first published in 1805) was the first realistic depiction of the Vedic texts to appear in the West. (For British scholarship on the Vedas prior to Colebrooke, see Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 1920.) The next clear account of the Vedic texts by a Western scholar was Rudolph von Roth's *Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Weda* (published in 1846). This hiatus of several decades following the appearance of Colebrooke's essay has been attributed to several factors; in particular, the generally poor quality of the Indian manuscripts (containing many corrupt readings, omissions, and often in a state of material deterioration) and the sudden death in the 1830s of the first Western scholar to attempt a translation of the Vedic hymns, Frederich Rosen. Colebrooke's essay, the first to depict the Vedic texts with any degree of accuracy, has often been cited as an important factor contributing to the lack of

page_127

Page 128

progress in the first half of the nineteenth century in Vedic studies. Colebrooke concluded his essay by stating that the Vedas "are too voluminous for a complete translation of the whole; and what they contain would hardly reward the labor of the reader; much less that of the translator" (Colebrooke, "On the Vedas," p. 476). In the opinion of W. D. Whitney (and this view has been repeatedly expressed by Indologists): "This prophecy was doubtless in some measure the cause of its own fulfillment" (Whitney, "On the Main Results of the Later Vedic Researches," p. 292). However, Colebrooke has been unfairly burdened in this matter; after all, his remarks were also directed to the Upanisads, which, even without an accurate translation, were embraced by Western scholars during the first half of the nineteenth century.

13. Published in Paris in 1801, the *Oupnek'hat* was based on a Persian translation of fifty Upanisads and other apparently Upanisadic-like texts (among them Rgveda 10.90), which were first translated into Persian in the seventeenth century. (For the history of the Persian text and a specimen of Anquetil-Duperron's translation, see, Müller, *The Upanishads*, pt. 1, pp. lvii-lix.) Anquetil-Duperron first translated the Persian into French and then into Latin. Nineteenth century scholars thus had before them a text that could have been only a shadow of the original. Despite this, in attestation to its popularity, in 1882, the *Oupnek'hat* was translated into German and so represented an edition of the Upanisads four times removed from the original Sanskrit.

14. While attending Schelling's lectures at Berlin in 1844, and apparently under Schelling's influence, Max Müller undertook his first studies of the Upanisads. (Müller, *The Upanishads*, pt. 1, p. lxxv.) Schopenhauer's influence on later Vedic studies is clearly seen in the work of Paul Deussen, whose *Die Philosophie der Upanishad's*, though no longer

considered to be authoritative, has not been surpassed as a detailed examination of Upanisadic thought.

15. Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, p. xiii, cited by Müller, *The Upanishads*, pt. 1, pp. lix-lx. Cf. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, pp. 5556.

16. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 150.

17. Müller, *Natural Religion*, p. 18. This is Müller's account of a conversation with Schopenhauer. While the early Vedic texts were not available to scholars in the West at this time, the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, *Asiatick Researches*, as well as several of Colebrooke's books were available, and these seem to have been especially popular among German scholars (Kopf, *British Orientalism*, pp. 34, 88).

18. Whitney, "On the Main Results of the Later Vedic Researches," p. 316.

19. Von Roth, "On the Morality of the Veda," p. 347. This view of an ancient people whose behavior differs markedly from India's contemporary inhabitants is in accord with what David Kopf has called, "the Jones-

page_128

Page 129

Colebrooke portrayal of the Vedic age to which a Müller would add the finishing touches, and which today is widely accepted" (Kopf, *British Orientalism*, p. 41). Cf., also, Dubois, *Hindu Manners*, p. 105.

20. Dubois' *Hindu Manners*, published in 1816 with the sanction of the East India Company and recommended by one colonial governor as "the most correct, comprehensive and minute account extant in any European language . . . of the Hindus" (Dubois, *Hindu Manners*, p. xiv), exemplifies the colonial experience of Hinduism. Although Dubois described all Hindus in terms of their "untrustworthiness, deceit and double dealing," he was especially contemptuous of the Brahmins: "The priests of the Hindu religion, although too enlightened to be blinded by the follies which they instil into the minds of their weak fellow-countrymen, are none the less zealous in maintaining and encouraging the absurd errors which procure their livelihood, and which keep them in that high estimation which they have wrongly usurped" (ibid., p. 575; cf., p. 292).

21. Von Roth, "On the Morality of the Veda," p. 346.

22. In part, these scholars seem to have modeled their approach to the history of ancient India on the cyclical interpretation of history that was characteristic of eighteenth century classicism. David Kopf notes that: "To the men of the Enlightenment . . . the history of civilizations did not show uninterrupted progress toward Utopia, but was, on the contrary, cyclical in its discontinuous movements from greatness to decline" (Kopf, *British Orientalism*, p. 24). Having glorified the antique past, these eighteenth century historians were profoundly sensitive to the decline of the classical world. However, this decline represented a necessary event in the cycles of history; it was only after a period of decline that the spirit of the golden age of antiquity could reemerge in a Renaissance, an event for which these scholars were "exuberantly optimistic" (ibid., p. 24). There is an obvious correspondence between this view of history and the views of the nineteenth century Indologists, who saw a golden age in the beliefs of the Rgveda, its decline in the Brahmanic period, and a Renaissance in the thought of the Upanisads.

23. Whitney, "Hindu Eschatology and the Katha Upanishad," p. 13.

24. This notion is most often associated with Max Müller, who "believed that religion was subject to inevitable decline under the dead hand of institutionalism" (Sharpe, *Comparative Religion*, p. 39). The belief, held by several Indologists, that the rise of the priesthood in the Brahmanic period had a deadening effect on the Vedic religion suggests this same view of priestcraft; see Whitney, "On the Main Results of the Later Vedic Researches," p. 314; Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 44; Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 199.

25. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 199.

26. Ibid., p. 181; cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 586.

27. Some Western interpreters even refused to believe that the sacerdotalists who composed these texts were entirely serious in the treatment of

their subject. Keith thus remarked that the Brahmanas "abound in their explanations of rites with all sorts of absurdities, which we need not accuse the priests of being so foolish as not to recognize as absurdities" (Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 440). Cf. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 188.

28. See Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, pp. xiv-xv; and Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389.

29. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 339. Cf. Tsuji, "On the Relation between Brahmanas and Srautasutras," p. 187; and Burnell, *Samavidhanabrahmana*, p. ix.

30. See Chapter 3; and also Gonda, *The Haviryajñah Somah*, pp. 7173.

31. Bloomfield, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 44. These sentiments have been expressed repeatedly by Western Indologists (see especially, the numerous citations compiled by Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 342, n. 17). Whitney, e.g., remarked that: "While they contain valuable fragments of thought and tradition, they are in general tediously discursive, verbose and artificial, and in no small part absolutely puerile and inane . . . they contain no elaborated and consistent system, either of religious or of philosophical doctrine" (*Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, pp. 6870). See also, Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 1, p. ix (quoted earlier, in the Introduction); Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 210; and Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 27.

32. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 210.

33. This view of the Brahmanic period as an ancient Indian dark age seems to have led scholars to question whether or not the Brahmanas should even be preserved, let alone studied. Thus, Müller remarked that "there is much curious information to be gathered from these compilations. In spite of their general dreariness, the Brahmanas well deserved to be preserved" (Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* p. 225). In fact, scholars seemed to believe that before their own "discovery" of the Brahmanas, the Indians themselves had little concern with the perpetuation of these texts, attributing their preservation to "priestly folly." As E. W. Hopkins commented: "There is some compensation on reading such trash in the thought that all this superstition has kept for us a carefully preserved text, but that is an accident of priestly foolishness, and the priest can be credited only with the folly" (Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 201).

34. Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, p. 113. This is the well-known passage (repeated in almost the same words in his *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 204205) in which Müller refers to the Brahmanas as "twaddle, and what is worse theological twaddle."

35. Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 228. Cf. Whitney, *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, p. 69; and Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 7.

36. Lanman, *A Sanskrit Reader*, p. 357.

37. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 27.

38. Max Müller remarked that: "It is only when the divine and infallible character of the whole Veda had been asserted by the Brahmins, and when the Brahmanas also, in which these claims were formulated, had been represented as divinely inspired and infallible, that a protest, like that of the Buddhists, becomes historically intelligible" (Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, p. 138; and cf. *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 17).

39. Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, p. 340. Cf. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 396.

40. See, Deussen, *Philosophy*, pp. 6263, 39697; and Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 51314.

41. BAU 1.4.10.

42. Deussen *Philosophy*, p. 396, referring directly to this passage; cf. Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, p. 396.

43. SB 11.2.6.1314.

44. Nonetheless, Keith and Deussen, attempting to show the Upanisadic authors' implicit derision of offering to the gods, discussed the comparison of such sacrificers to animals (*pasu*) at BAU 1.4.10 by translating the Sanskrit term, which generally indicates cattle but can mean any domestic or sacrificial animal, as "housedogs." According to Keith: "with a certain mockery . . . the relation of the ordinary worshipper is compared with that of housedogs" (Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 514; cf. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 62). Similarly, Deussen noted that the use of *pasu*, which he translates "brute beasts," at BAU 3.9.6 to describe the essence of the sacrifice "sounds very contemptuous" (Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 62). Even in the Brahmanas, however, the sacrifice is likened to the sacrificial animal; see, e.g., SB 2.2.4.13.

45. See, e.g., Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 166; Deussen, *Philosophy*, pp. 4, 23. The correspondence between Upanisad and Brahmana is that generated by the existence of separate Vedic schools (*sakha*). Thus, e.g., both the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad and the Satapatha Brahmana belong to the school of the White Yajur Veda. See, further, Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, pp. 21718.

46. See, Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 4.

47. Cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 492, regarding Deussen's view.

48. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 4.

49. E.g., the Upanisad of the Satapatha Brahmana, which is extant in two recensions, is titled *Brhadaranyaka-Upanisad* in the Kanva recension and was also known as *Vajasaneyi-brahmana-upanisad* (Colebrooke, "On the Vedas," p. 36). The colophon to the Madhyamdina recension of the text, however, refers to the Upanisad portion as the *Madhyamdina Satapathabrahmana-upanisad*, and in the colophon to Dvivedaganga's commentary,

page_131

Page 132

it is called the *Madhyamdina-Aranyaka*. Also cf. the title of the Jaiminiyas' (a school of the Samaveda) *Aranyaka*, *Jaiminiya-upanisad-brahmana*, and the name of the Kausitakins' (a school of the Rgveda) *Upanisad*, *Kausitaki-brahmana-upanisad*.

50. BAU 5.2.1.

51. BAU 5.2.23.

52. SB 2.4.2.1.

53. SB 2.4.2.45.

54. The existence of a set of terms specific to the Brahmanic-Upanisadic milieu was long ago recognized by Franklin Edgerton; see, his proposal for an "Index of Ideas of Vedic Filosofy" (Edgerton, "Sources of the Filosofy of the Upanisads," p. 203).

55. Such passages occur with great frequency; see, e.g., BAU 3.9.1 ff.; CU 3.5.1 ff.; SB 10.3.3.1 ff.

56. Such lists tracing the line of tradition occur at BAU 2.6; 4.6; 6.3.712; 6.5; CU 3.11.4; MuU 1.1.2. The link these lists establish between the Upanisads and the Brahmanas is perhaps incidental to their larger purpose; namely, to place the Upanisadic teachings as an integral part of the body of the "heard" Vedic texts (*sruti*) and hence establish them as a part of reality itself. Thus, BAU 2.6.3 ultimately traces the teaching of the doctrine to Brahma; BAU 6.5.4, to Prajapati and Brahma.

57. According to the list of teachers that appears at BAU 6.5.3 (cf. 6.3.7), Yajñavalkya received the doctrine from Uddalaka Aruni, who is referred to as an authority on ritual matters throughout the SB. See, further, Macdonell and

Keith, *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Uddalaka Aruni."

58. Although a definitive chronology regarding the composition of the Vedic texts has not been established (see Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, pp. 27288, and Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, pp. 2025), it is possible to estimate the relative ages of the Brahmanas and Upanisads, based on differences in style, language, and content.

59. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, p. 7.

60. Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Yajñavalkya." Cf. Hermann Oldenberg's remark that Yajñavalkya's teachings in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, "falschlich auf ihn übertragen sein" (Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 33, n. 1).

61. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 17; cf. p. 396.

62. Cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 49495; Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, pp. 21314; Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 53; Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 31. As early as 1916 Edgerton advanced arguments he thought might put an end to "the strange theory advanced by Garbe and accepted by Deussen, that the philosophy of the Upanisads is a product of the warrior caste and is genetically

page_132

Page 133

cally unrelated to the ritualistic speculations of the Brahmins" (Edgerton, "Sources of the Philosophy of the Upanisads," p. 202). Nonetheless, the idea of a Ksatriya origin still appears in discussions of the origins of the Upanisads; see, e.g., Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 34; Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 34.

63. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 396.

64. Ibid., p. 21.

65. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 515.

66. Müller, *The Upanishads*, pt. 2, pp. xix-xx.

67. Ibid., p. xix.

68. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 441.

69. Ibid., pp. 44142.

70. See Hopkins, *Religions of India* p. 530, n. 3; Griswold, *The Religion of the Rigveda*, p. 313; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 571.

71. RV 10.16.3 (O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, p. 49); cf. AB 2.6, which discusses the fate of the sacrificial victim; SB 10.3.3.67, which discusses the fate of the sacrificer, apparently after death.

72. See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Transmigration," by Garbe; Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 2324; and Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 571.

73. Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 23; cf. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Transmigration."

74. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Transmigration."

75. Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 24.

76. Cf. Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 254.

77. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 405.

78. See especially, SB 13.8.3.1 ff.; cf., SB 10.3.3.67; AB 2.6.

79. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 57172. Cf. Deussen, *Philosophy*, pp. 31516, 410; Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, pp. 25559.

80. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 329.

81. See JB 1.45; cf. SB 11.6.2.610.

82. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 575.

83. Ibid., p. 573; Deussen, *Philosophy*, pp. 32930; Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 34; Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge der Buddhismus*, p. 109.

84. The CU is roughly contemporary with the BAU and so represents the same strata of Upanisadic literature. (See Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 71). In fact, a considerable amount of material is common to these texts: parallel passages can be found, e.g., in BAU 1.3.121 and CU 1.2; BAU 1.3.22 and CU 1.6.1. See further Haas, "Recurrent and Parallel Passages in the Principal Upanisads and the Bhagavad-gita," pp. 52235.

85. BAU 3.2.1013.

page_133

Page 134

86. This motif first appears at RV 10.16.3. As David Knipe has pointed out, the dissolution of the deceased into the various parts of the cosmos "is an obvious reversal of the cosmogonic process outlined in the Purusasukta (RV 10.90.13)" (Knipe, "*Sapindikarana*," p. 113). As such, this Upanisadic passage has its most important antecedents in Brahmanic ritual theory, according to which the sacrificer replicates the cosmogonic activity of Prajapati (the Brahmanic equivalent of Purusa) in his own ritual activity. As noted earlier, in their discussions of the origins of the Upanisadic karma doctrine, scholars tended to dismiss the importance of this Rgvedic passage and related passages in the Brahmanas, seeing in them an indication of animistic belief.

87. BAU 3.2.10.13.

88. BAU 3.2.13: punyo vai punyena karmana bhavati papah papena.

89. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 330; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 57374.

90. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 330.

91. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 46881.

92. Ibid., p. 468.

93. Ibid., p. 476; cf. p. 338.

94. See Mackie, *Ethics*, p. 59.

95. SB 2.3.4.18.

96. Mackie, *Ethics*, p. 106.

97. SB 1.3.1.21. Cf. Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, vol. 1, p. 480, for a discussion of the meaning of *parah pumsa* in this passage.

98. Lévi, *Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 10. At least one passage in the Satapatha Brahmana implies that it is better to sacrifice, even if done incorrectly, than not to sacrifice at all. Thus, the sage Aruni is quoted (SB 4.5.7.9): "Why should he sacrifice who would think, 'Worse [am I] by the miscarriage of the sacrifice.' Indeed, I think I am better even by the miscarriage of the sacrifice."

99. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 479.

100. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 35.

101. BAU 3.2.13.

102. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389.

103. Ibid. See also Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xv; cf. Knipe, "*Sapindikarana*," p. 113.

104. Gonda, *Loka*, pp. 11530, has conducted an exhaustive survey of these terms in the Vedic literature.

105. Ibid., p. 125.

106. Ibid., pp. 126 ff.

107. Cf. TB 3.3.10.2, where the world of merit (*sukrtasya loka*) is equated with good deeds (*punyam karman*). Gonda, in regard to this TB passage, notes that: "The only question which it not explicitly answered is that as

page_134

Page 135

to the character of the 'good karma,' how and by what activities it was acquired. The context itself points, of course, in the direction of ritual performances" (Gonda, *Loka*, p. 129).

108. See, e.g., Horsch, "Vorstufen der indischen Seelenwanderungslehre," p. 100; cf. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 34.

109. See Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 573; cf. Deussen, *Philosophy*, pp. 33031.

110. BAU 4.4.4. The Madyhamdina version (SB 14.7.2.5) adds man (*manusa*) to this list.

111. BAU 4.4.5.

112. Gonda, *Loka*, p. 56. An important aspect of the connection with the sacrifice here is that this text refers to seven spheres of beings: that of man, the fathers, *gandharvas*, gods, Prajapati, Brahma, and others. (Cf. the Madhyamdina text, SB 14.7.2.5. The Kanva [BAU 4.4.4] omits man, but, this sphere is obviously assumed as the fate of man is under discussion here.) What appears to be an arbitrary list of beings here may have been arrived at to fulfill the Brahmanic notion that equates the body of Prajapati with seven spheres of the cosmos. This equation is established in the Agnicayana rite, which dominates the SB (the text to which the BAU is appended). In this ritual the seven layers of the altar represent the totality of the cosmos, which is the body of Prajapati. SB 9.5.2.8, e.g., equates seven worlds of the gods with the seven layers of the fire altar.

113. Gonda, *Loka*, p. 113.

114. O'Flaherty, "Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Puranas," p. 18, quoting from the Markandeya Purana. Despite the absence of this notion in BAU 4.4.4, Keith asserted "clearly they [evildoers] would take on at best the forms of beings inferior to themselves, perhaps men of lower degree, animals, etc." (Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 574). This assertion reflects Keith's view of the scope of karma, in its early appearances in the Upanisads, as an ethical system applying to all actions.

115. Gonda, *Loka*, pp. 12629.

116. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 328; cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 575.

117. BAU 6.2; CU 5.310.

118. BAU 6.2.914; CU 5.49. The minor differences between the BAU (in both the Kanva and Madhyamdina recensions) and the CU are pointed out by Deussen, *Sechzig Upanisad's des Veda*, p. 138.

119. BAU 6.2.916; CU 5.10.

120. SB 11.6.1.610; JB 1.456. These are the Brahmanas to which the BAU and the CU are most closely related. The BAU is physically appended to the SB and, although the CU and the JB are not of the same schools (*sakha*) the CU

belongs to the Kauthuma school, the JB to the Jaiminiya school they are both Samavedic texts. That the CU and the JB

are not of the same Samavedic school is not a significant factor in evaluating the proximity of their thought. The CU perhaps stood independently in the Samavedic tradition; the term *Chandogya* does not refer to a particular Samavedic school but, in a general sense, to those who chant the Samaveda. Moreover, the text to which the CU is appended appears to be a late and artificial Brahmana, the Mantra Brahmana, which contains mantras for special domestic rites.

121. The first three levels correspond to the tripartite Vedic cosmology of heaven, atmosphere, and earth. See Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 810. On the addition of man and woman as the fourth and fifth spheres of the cosmos, see Knipe, "One Fire, Three Fires, Five Fires," pp. 2931.

122. CU 5.4.1, 5.8.1; cf. BAU 6.2.9, 6.2.13 (and the Madhyamdina recension, SB 14.9.1.12); SB 11.6.1.6; JB 1.45. In the CU, BAU, and JB each of the five fires is represented by a similar pentadic symbol (fuel, flame, smoke, spark, and coal). (For a comparison and analysis of these three texts, see Bodewitz, *Jaiminiya Brahmana* I, 165 pp. 11013.) The SB alone uses a triadic symbolism (offering fire, fuel, and pure libation) but presents the same basic motifs found in the other texts in relating the sacrificial fire to a particular sphere (e.g., the sun as an aspect of the sacrificial fire of the heavens, the womb as an aspect of the sacrificial fire of the woman).

123. Earlier expressions of this doctrine appear in SB 4.6.7.12; 1.3.1.25.

124. See BAU 6.2.14; JB 1.46. This contrast between a "real" sacrifice and a symbolic event is seen in the Brahmanas in the distinction between the funeral rites and the nonfuneral rites (e.g., the *Smasanacayana* and *agnicayana* as they are described in the SB) that both take man, the sacrificer, as the material of the offering. Since in the ordinary rites this would entail the death of the sacrificer, the ritual becomes a largely symbolic event. Only upon the sacrificer's death can a real sacrifice be enacted, the ritual at this point being a funeral. See further, Chapter 4 passim.

125. CU 5.10.1: tad ya ittham viduh ye ceme 'ranye sraddha tapa ity upasate. Cf. BAU 6.2.15.

126. CU 5.10.3: atha ya ime grama istapurte dattam ity upasate. Cf. the parallel passage at BAU 6.2.16: "they conquer those worlds [of the *pitryana*] by sacrificial gifts (*yajñena danena*)." For an analysis of the term "*istapurta*," see Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, p. 293.

127. See Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 11114.

128. See SB 1.9.3.1; 4.3.4.6; 4.2.5.9.

129. See, e.g., SB 9.5.2.1216.

130. See further, Chapter 3 passim.

131. CU 5.10.5.

132. KB 15.1; SB 4.3.4.56; 4.5.1.1112. See Heesterman, "Reflections on the Significance of the Daksina," pp. 24145.

133. SB 4.3.4.6; 1.9.3.1.

134. BAU 6.2.16; CU 5.10.3. A discussion in JUB of the path followed by the deceased, which closely replicates the description of the *pitryana* in these Upanisadic passages, supports this notion of the interaction of the priests and the sacrificer in the attainments of the afterlife; thus, according to this text, the journey to the otherworld begins when "the priests having placed the sacrificer in this [sacred] syllable, carry him up together to the heavenly world" (JUB 3.19.7).

135. See, e.g., SB 1.8.1.31; cf. SB 1.7.2.1, which describes the relationship between offspring and ancestors as a (sacrificial) debt (*rna*).

136. JB 1.46 (cf. 1.18), translation from Bodewitz, *Jaiminiya Brahmana* I, 165, p. 116.

137. BAU 6.2.16; cf. CU 5.10.4.

138. CU 5.10.5.

139. CU 5.10.1; BAU 6.2.15; cf. the role of knowledge in JB 1.50, 1.18.

140. See Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 11417.

141. SB 10.5.4.16.

142. JB 2.113; cf. SB 2.6.4.8: "who offers the Varuna *praghasa* becomes Varuna, then indeed, he attains a world, closely united, together with Varuna." See also Gonda, *Loka*, pp. 11314.

143. BAU 3.4.1.

144. BAU 1.5.23.

145. CU 2.24.116.

146. BAU 3.2.13; cf. 5.10.1.

147. BAU 4.4.4.

148. There appears in the Upanisads an equation between the impersonal Brahman (a term sometimes linguistically indistinguishable from the term used to refer to the figure of Brahmasee, Monier-Williams's *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v., "Brahman," "Brahma") and the figure of Purusa-Prajapati; see especially CU 3.18.2 ff., which presents a cosmology that replicates the Purusasukta (RV 10.90) replacing the figure of Purusa with Brahman.

149. CU 5.10.2. Radhakrishnan translates the phrase *brahma gamayati* as "he leads [him] to Brahma" (*Principal Upanisads*, Radhakrishnan, p. 431). However, *brahma*, which is in the accusative case here, is neuter and thus may refer to the impersonal Brahman, rather than to the world of Brahma (generally expressed as a masculine substantive); cf. CU 4.15.5.

150. SB 2.3.3.78. The point of bifurcation between these two realms is the sun (accordingly, the sun is both immortal and mortal; see SB 10.5.2.4); hence, the *pitryana* leads the sacrificer to the sun but not beyond it (see, CU 5.10.3; cf. JUB 3.2728) to the year, which is the immortal world (see, SB 10.2.6.35; cf. 11.1.2.12).

151. SB 10.1.3.2.; cf. 6.1.2.11.

page_137

Page 138

152. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389.

153. See, e.g., SB 1.1.1; cf., 1.9.3.23. Even in the Brahmanas, however, the idea is expressed that "whatever exists here on earth, all that takes part in the sacrifice" (SB 3.6.2.26). As R. S. Murthy has noted: "A patient perusal of the Brahmana reveals that the concept of sacrifice extends beyond the mere ritualistic form" (Murthy, "Vedic SacrificeA Conspectus," p. 116).

154. CU 3.16.15; cf. 3.17.

155. This passage occurs only in the CU and does not appear in the parallel text in the BAU. A similar passage, embedded within a discussion of the deceased sacrificer's journey afterlife, does occur in the JUB (JUB 3.28.4).

156. CU 5.10.7.

157. See, e.g., the description in the Markandeya Purana (quoted by O'Flaherty, "Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Puranas," p. 18) of how an individual "accompanied by his remaining sins and merits" is born in one of the four castes, a

higher being, or an inferior being.

158. The term *carana* (from the root *car* meaning "to move about, to conduct one's self") does occur in the Brahmanas referring to the performance of the sacrifice. As a past participle *carita* the term is sometimes compounded with *su-* and *dus-* to indicate the "right" and "wrong" performance of the sacrifice (see, e.g., SB 3.3.3.13). However, the terms *ramaniya*, "pleasant," and *kapuya*, "stinking," used in CU 5.10.7 suggest a valuation of action that exceeds "right" and "wrong" (ritual) conduct.

159. See SB 11.2.6.1314; 9.5.2.1213; cf., 1.3.1.26.

160. SB 11.2.6.13.

161. SB 9.5.2.1213.

162. As Heesterman notes: "The single sacrificer incorporates alone the whole universe, articulating by himself the cosmic process, like his prototype Prajapati, who is at the same time sacrificer, victim, and recipient of the sacrifice" (Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, p. 50).

163. This is in accordance with the notion that, in Brahmanic thought, the result of the poorly performed sacrifice seems to have been the diminution of the sacrificer's otherworldly *loka*. (See Gonda, *Loka*, pp. 12829.) This passage thus implies that the sacrifice performed for another was simply incorrect.

164. CU 5.10.7. Cf. JUB 3.28.4, which describes the deceased (who, according to JUB 3.19.7, had been led to the otherworld by the priests; i.e., followed the traditional sacrificial format) as returning to this world after a journey through the various cosmic spheres (in which he is denied the world of Brahman): "If he should wish: 'May I be born here again, in whatever family he fixes his thoughts, either a *brahman* family or a king's family (*raja-kula*),' into that he is born."

165. Deussen, *Philosophy*, p. 332.

2. The Cosmos as Man: The Image of the Cosmos in Vedic Thought

1. See, e.g., SB 2.2.4.18; 2.6.4.8; 3.7.1.25; 5.2.2.14; 11.4.4.2; 11.6.2.2; cf. JUB 3.20.6 ff.; Gonda, *Loka*, p. 114.

2. SB 2.6.4.8.

3. Gonda, *Loka*, p. 49.

4. SB 7.2.1.4; 9.2.3.4. Cf. TB 1.5.9.4.

5. Cf. Mircea Eliade's well-known observation that: "Every mythical account of the origin of anything presupposes and continues the cosmogony . . . the cosmogony becomes the exemplary model for the creation of every kind" (Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 21).

6. See Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xix.

7. The motif of the creation of the cosmos from the body of a primordial man first appears in RV 10.90. The Rgveda's tenth book (*mandala*) contains, for the most part, material that was composed much later than that found in the other books of this collection; see, further, Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, pp. 1113.

8. See further Kuiper, "The Basic Concept of the Vedic Religion," pp. 11011.

9. See, e.g., SB 2.2.4.1; 4.1.1.16.

10. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, p. xix; cf. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 22425, regarding the coordination of the older rites in the creation of the Rajasuya.

11. See, e.g., Edgerton, "The Upanisads: What Do They Seek, and Why?" p. 99.
12. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xvi.
13. See, e.g., RV 1.162.6.
14. See Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 29; cf., p. 98.
15. TS 6.3.4.1. Cf. SB 1.3.2.1; 3.1.4.23; 3.9.32; all of which identify the sacrifice (*yajña*) as being the same size as man. See also Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 27.
16. Gombrich, "Ancient Indian Cosmology," p. 112.
17. See especially RV 1.160, 1.185, 6.70. (Translations of these hymns appear in O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, pp. 203207.) Several references to the cosmic image of heavens and earth in the Vedic literature are cited by Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 12627.
18. The many references to this image in the RV are cited by Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 810.
19. W.N. Brown, "Theories of Creation in the Rig Veda," p. 23; Gombrich, "Ancient Indian Cosmology," p. 112; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p.125

page_139

Page 140

20. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 10.
21. The atmosphere is also known as *rajas*, "[the sphere of] vapor or mist," which may refer to either the clouds or the dust particles that reflect the sunlight; see Wallis, *Cosmology of the Rigveda*, p. 113.
22. See, e.g., RV 5.60.6; 1.108.910; Wallis, *The Cosmology of the Rigveda*, p. 114; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 9.
23. RV 6.9.1; 7.80.1; 5.8.4; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 10; Wallis, *The Cosmology of the Rigveda*, pp. 11517.
24. Cf. Bodewitz, "The Waters in Vedic Cosmic Classifications," p. 45. On the significance of three in Rgvedic thought, see Hopkins, "Numerical Formulae in the Veda and Their Bearing on Vedic Criticism," pp. 27677; and Gonda, "Triads in Vedic Ritual," pp. 17 ff. Cf. also the speculative study by Stella Kramrisch, "The Triple Structure of Creation in the Rgveda," pp. 14075; 25685.
25. This image is especially apparent in the Agnicayana section of the Satapatha Brahmana, books (*kanda*) 6 through 10. This section of the SB also refers to a seven-level cosmos (e.g., 8.4.7.12, 19) apparently as an elaboration of the image of the pentadic cosmos.
26. SB 8.2.1.2: yad urdhvam prthivya arvacinam antariksad.
27. SB 8.4.1.2: yad urdhvam antariksad arvacinam divas.
28. SB 9.2.3.13, 29.
29. Again, I refer primarily to the Agnicayana section of the SB, which describes the construction of the fire altar and its metaphysical implications. However, myths and legends that express the importance of the pentad are not limited to the text's Agnicayana section; see, e.g., SB 1.5.4.616.
30. Cf. Gombrich's remark that "the most discouraging feature of traditional Indian cosmology is not its fantastic and uncritical character but its complexity," as he notes that the most comprehensive study on this subject, Kirfel's *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, "has over 400 large pages with hardly anything more than bare quotations and tables" (Gombrich, "Ancient Indian Cosmology," pp. 11011).
31. Gonda, *Loka*, p. 110; cf. Gombrich, "Ancient Indian Cosmology," p. 116. A notable exception to this view is seen in the work of W.N. Brown, who, in several articles, presented the idea that the cosmology of the Rgveda is ordered around the central opposition of the two realms of the Existent (*sat*) and the Nonexistent (*asat*). See Brown, "The Creation Myth

of the Rig Veda," pp. 8598 passim; idem, "The Rigvedic Equivalent for Hell," p. 79; and cf. idem, "Theories of Creation in the Rig Veda," p. 24. Among recent studies, see Wendy D. O'Flaherty, "The Ethical and Non-Ethical Implications of the Cosmogonic Myth of the Separation of Heaven and Earth in Indian Mythology," which examines the influence of the problem of evil on the shape of the cosmos.

32. Knipe, "One Fire, Three Fires, Five Fires," p. 35.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., pp. 3336. Similarly, J. C. Heesterman has observed that, in the formation of the numbers that in Vedic thought symbolize such entities as the cosmos, "the outstanding feature is the principle of the element added to a totality," and that in many instances this extra element "summarizes and encompasses the totality of the number to which it is added" (Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 35).

35. O'Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities*, p. 143.

36. BAU 3.1.310.

37. RV 10.90.4.

38. RV 10.129.1.

39. RV 10.90.2: Purusa evedam sarvam yad bhutam yac ca bhaivam.

40. RV 10.90.7.

41. RV 10.90.11.

42. RV 10.90.11.

43. RV 10.90.14.

44. See Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 811.

45. In general, the Vedic world view expressed itself in terms of a triadic symbolism, whereas later Indian (or, as it is usually designated, Hindu) thought emphasized the fourfold nature of existence. (See, e.g., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Numbers [Aryan]" by Keith.) Although these two symbolic complexes are considered to represent two dissimilar Indian traditions, their synthesis (or, at least, the attempt to achieve their synthesis) is seen throughout the history of Indian thought. (See Potter "Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems," p. 266). On the most basic level, this synthesis was achieved through adding a fourth member to original Vedic triads. Thus, e.g., Hindu tetrads such as the four *varna*, the four ends of existence, and the four Vedas, represent simple extensions of Vedic triads. (See Ingalls, "Dharma and Moksa," p. 45). Though the Purusasukta is a Vedic hymn, it expresses itself in terms of a fourfold symbolism and includes several themes that are characteristically Hindu: e.g., the four *varna* (10.90.12); the four Vedas (10.90.9). However, its superimposition of Purusa's fourfold body on the Vedic tripartite cosmic image of earth, atmosphere, and heavens seems to be a case of a simple extension of the Vedic image and, thus, appears to have been made with the intention of synthesizing the two world views of the *trivarga* and the *caturvarga*.

46. See e.g., SB 8.2.1.8; 8.6.1.14 (which refers to five directions).

47. RV 10.90.13.

48. See Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, s.v., "Agni," "Vayu." In early Vedic mythology, the moon does not seem to have been associated with any particular region of the cosmos (see Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 12223). However, in the Brahmanas the moon is associated with the quarters (see, e.g., SB 6.1.2.4). Indra's association with Agni and Purusa's mouth appears to be an anomaly here: in Vedic mythology Indra is associated

with the atmosphere. Indra's appearance in the Rgvedic myth may be a concession to his importance in this text. Thus, Indra is not mentioned in the VS version of the Purusasukta, and Agni alone is depicted as arising from Purusa's mouth (VS 31.12).

49. The relationship of the winds to either the ear or the nose is seen in variant readings of this verse. The VS version of the Purusasukta replaces the RV's statement that "from his breath (*prana*) the winds were born" with "from his ear breath (*prana*) and wind were born" (VS 31.12). The KathB replaces *ear* with *nose* (see Whitney, *The Atharva Veda*, p. 905). However, the difference between these three statements is not great; in Vedic thought the term *breath*, *prana*, might represent either the ear, eye, nose, or mouth (see Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Prana"). Since the eye and mouth are already mentioned in RV 10.90.13, the *prana* that relates to the wind must be either the nose or the ear.

50. Various passages in the Brahmanas and Upanisads indicate the Vedic thinkers distinguished between the inner workings of the mind and the senses and the gross features of the body (see, especially, CU 6.5.13; cf. SB 10.1.3.4). Although the Vedic texts do not exactly represent the former as being "immaterial" and the latter as being "material," the inner or essential nature of the mind and senses is contrasted to the gross nature of the body.

51. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, p. 32.

52. Kuiper, "The Basic Concept of Vedic Religion," pp. 11011; cf. Brown, "The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda," pp. 9297. The Rgveda does not contain a single and consistent exposition of Indra's creative activities; Kuiper and Brown "reconstruct" the Indra mythology from several Rgvedic myths that refer to his exploits.

53. Kuiper, "The Basic Concept of Vedic Religion," p. 111.

54. Ibid., p. 115; Heesterman, "Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer," pp. 24; "Veda and Dharma," pp. 87 ff.

55. Though many older beliefs were displaced in the late Vedic period, as J. C. Heesterman has observed, beneath these new rituals "a different older pattern can be discerned" (Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, p. 27).

56. See, especially, Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xv; Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389.

57. Gonda, *Visnuism and Sivaism*, p. 27.

58. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 459; cf. Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, pp. 13233.

59. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 459.

60. See SB 1.7.2.16; 3.6.2.25; and cf. TB 6.3.10.5; and Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 133: "Les Brahmanas ignorent le suicide, peutetre de propos delibere; une forme si brutale du sacrifice rompaient violemment avec ces rites minutieux que les Brahmanas se plaisent a exposer."

61. Shende, "The PurusaSukta (RV 10.90) in the Vedic Literature," p. 45, cites the many occurrences of RV 10.90 in the ritual literature as an accompaniment to the Purusamedha; e.g., SB 13.6.2.12; VSS 37.19; ApSS 16.28.3; 20.20.2; 24.10.

62. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 347; idem, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School*, pp. cxxxviicxl; Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 5, pp. xlxliv. Gonda notes: "Whereas the *Brahmana* literature does not speak of the actual slaying of a man for ritual purposes, the human sacrifice (Purusamedha in SB 13, 6) being a mythical and symbolical rite, and TB 3, 4 (cf. VS 30, 522) confining itself to enumerating the victims, some srautasutras, viz., the comparatively recent ApSS (20, 24, 125, 2) and HSS (14, 6, 114), works that have much in common, describe it as a ritual reality, the arrangements of which are closely related to those of the preceeding horse sacrifice" (Gonda, *Vedic Literature: The Ritual Sutras*, p. 495).

63. Keith *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 347.
64. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 111.
65. On the nature of the breaths, see Ewing, "The Hindu Conception of the Function of Breath," pp. 250308 passim; Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, S.V., "Prana."
66. CU 5.1920.
67. CU 5.2123.
68. SB 13.6.1.1011.
69. SB 13.6.2.78.
70. See Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, pp. 18687.
71. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, xv, this point has been noted repeatedly by scholars. See, e.g., Keith, *The Veda According to the Black Yajus School*, pp. cxxvcxxvi (cf. idem., *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 44243); Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389; Staal, *Agni*, 1:115.
72. See especially, Gonda, "The Popular Prajapati," p. 147; Staal, *Agni*, 1:11325.
73. Gonda, "The Popular Prajapati," pp. 13543.
74. Ibid., pp. 14748.
75. See, especially, Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xiii; and also Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, pp. 38889.
76. See Staal, *Agni*, 1:73166.
77. SB 10.5.2.20.
78. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xv. See also Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 44243; cf. Staal, *Agni*, 1:11516; Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, pp. 18687.
79. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 369, referring to SB 10.5.5.1.

80. Gonda, *Notes on Names and the Name of God in Ancient India*, p. 7; cf. Gonda, "The Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas," p. 78.
81. Eggeling, *Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, xv; Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389; Staal, *Agni*, 1:115.
82. Various passages which identify the sacrificer with Prajapati are found throughout the SB; see, e.g., SB 4.5.5.12; 7.2.1.6; 7.4.1.15. (In the fire altar building ritual, this identification is achieved through the medium of the altar; see e.g., SB 6.4.1.3; 6.4.4.18; 6.7.3.12; 8.3.4.1113.) The ideology of this identification is clearly expressed in the oft-repeated phrase in the Brahmanas, "This [ritual act] done now is that which the gods did then [in the beginning]" (see, e.g., SB 9.2.3.4). Cf. Coomaraswamy "Atmayajña: Self-Sacrifice," p. 359; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 459; Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, p. 389; and Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, p. 230.
83. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, pp. xvxi. Eggeling's views are endorsed by Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School*, p. cxxvii.
84. This aspect of the Prajapati mythology seems to have led the great Indologist A. B. Keith to the conclusion that "The details of these stupid myths [of Prajapati's primordial activity] are wholly unimportant" (Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 442).

85. SB 6.1.1.16.1.3.20.

86. For example, the SB myth includes such cosmogonic motifs as the nonexistent (*asat*) (RV 10.129), heat (*tapas*) (RV 10.190), and the cosmic embryo (*hiranyagarbha*) (RV 10.121).

87. Wendy O'Flaherty has suggested that the authors of the Rgveda intentionally assumed a style of poetic discontinuitythe Rgveda's "one universal semantic feature" (O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, p. 18). This poetic style obscures the Rgveda's mythology, as individual hymns often contain a seemingly random assortment of brief mythological episodes. Thus, as O'Flaherty notes, although it may be founded on a solid mythological corpus, due to its peculiar style, the Rgveda itself "has no true mythology" (p. 18). (Cf. Louis Renou's suggestion that the Rgveda represents a "mythology in the making" [Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 12]; and see also Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 67.) The verbosity of the Brahmanas, on the other hand, is a natural corollary of their authors' purpose, which is "to understand the at first sight unintelligible bonds by which the various entities, beings, provinces of nature are united with the unseen world, and to gain an insight into the mystic relations of all existence," much of which resided in words and names (Gonda, "Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas," p. 78). The verbosity of these texts also seems to have resulted from their synthetic nature. The process of assimilating the culturally diverse beliefs and practices, which converged in the late Vedic period, was for the Brahmanic authors a verbally arduous

page_144

Page 145

one, involving the repetition of myths with only slight differences in each version, and a seemingly endless series of forced identifications.

88. Although the Purusasukta is cited as the model for a number of ritual activities, it does not appear to have been composed for a single ritual purpose.

89. SB 6.1.1.1: *asad va idam agre asit*.

90. This motif is most clearly represented in RV 10.129.1: in the beginning, "There was neither nonexistence nor existence." Even in the Brahmanas, which are dominated by the Prajapati cosmogony, this thought-provoking motif was capable of generating a unique (nonPrajapati) creation myth; see especially, JB 3.36061 (the problematic Sanskrit text is reconstructed and translated into German by Karl Hoffman, "Die Weltenstehung nach dem Jaiminiya Brahmana," pp. 5967); and also CU 6.2.1 ff.

91. RV 10.129.3.

92. In the final two verses of the hymn RV 10.129.67) the poet agonizes over the fact that the universe's original state of nonexistence denies the possibility of knowing the events of the creation and, finally, admits to a complete agnosticism: "Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen?"

"Whence this creation has arisenperhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did notthe one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knowsor perhaps he does not know" (O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, pp. 2526).

93. RV 10.129.4. O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, p. 25. Cf. RV 7.76.4, which, as Sukumari Bhattacharji has noted, presents the idea "that all creation would have lain enveloped in darkness had not the true-speaking Angirases . . . sung out the right kind of praise" (Bhattacharji, *Literature in the Vedic Age*, p. 19).

94. Whereas the SB creation myth refers to the Vedic sages as *Rsis*, RV 10.129.4 refers to them as *kavi*. However, *kavi* seems to have been a common designation for a *Rsi*; e.g., Kavi Usanas (see, Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, S.V. "Usanas Kavya").

95. SB 6.1.1.1.

96. See, e.g., SB 6.1.1.8.

97. See, e.g., SB 6.1.2.12.

98. SB 6.1.1.1. The idea of primeval nonexistence appears to be assumed in the Purusasukta; see, RV 10.90.2.

99. The heptadic symbolism employed here is an extension of the Agnicayana's more typical pentadic symbolism. This extension is a reflection of the nature of the fire altar, which was essentially a construct of five layers of brick. However, two extra layers, one of soil and one of gold

chips, bring the altar to seven layers. These two layers represent respectively either of the two aspects (mortal [soil] and immortal [gold]) that characterize the altar as a whole.

100. Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, S.V. "Rsi."

101. Ibid., S.V., "Prana," citing Sayana's commentary on the Aitareya Aranyaka 1.3.7. Cf. Ewing, "Hindu Conceptions of the Functions of Breath," p. 249.

102. See Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, S.V. "Prana."

103. The authors of the Satapatha Brahmana do not seem to have ever precisely defined the vital airs, perhaps because the subtle nature of their composition prohibited further definition. Thus, e.g., in SB 8.1.3.1 the question, "What are the vital airs?" receives the answer, "The vital airs are just the vital airs." Nevertheless, that the sense organs were referred to both as "vital airs" (*prana*, literally "breath") and as physical entities (eye, ear, etc.) implies that the Brahmanic thinkers distinguished the physical organs from their "essences," or their animate aspect, which they denoted with the term *prana*.

104. SB 6.1.1.2.

105. SB 6.1.1.3. The shape of this body appears to be that of a bird, which is the shape that the fire altar will take in the ritual.

106. SB 6.1.1.4; cf. 6.1.1.7.

107. SB 6.1.1.5: sa eva Purusam Prajapatir abhavat.

108. SB 6.1.1.8.

109. Cf. Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 18.

110. Kaelber, "Tapas, Birth, and Spiritual Rebirth in the Veda," p. 348.

111. SB 6.1.1.8.

112. See Narahari, *atman in Pre-Upanisadic Vedic Literature*, pp. 2343, for a discussion of the views held by scholars such as Bopp, Haug, Deussen, Keith, Oldenberg, Hillebrandt, Hertel, Charpentier, and Dumézil regarding the meaning of *brahman*. A less detailed (though more substantial) review appears in Gonda, *Notes on Brahman*, pp. 38.

113. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 115.

114. SB 6.1.1.810.

115. SB 6.1.1.8: Brahma asya sarvasya pratistha.

116. See Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*, pp. 37172. It is not clear whether the authors of the Brahmanas actually understood the content of the Vedic hymns. However, as Gonda points out, it was not the purpose of the Brahmanic authors to explain the hymns but "to establish a connexion with the wisdom of the Rsis and to corroborate their own views" (ibid., p. 369).

117. See Gonda, "Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas," p. 78.

118. SB 6.1.1.13. There appears between the creation of the *brahman* and this event a brief myth that utilizes the motif of the cosmic egg to describe

the creation (SB 6.1.1.912). Although in the Brahmanas this motif often appears independent of the Prajapati mythology (see, Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query," pp. 100101, who cites several such occurrences in these texts), in the version presented here Prajapati is represented as initiating the cosmogony by entering (*pra-* /*vis*) the primeval waters. Consequently, an egg (*anda*) arises, and the *brahman* and the earth are created from it. This creation is then depicted as returning to the waters: "All this joined into the waters; it then appeared as one form alone, [that of] the waters" (SB 6.1.1.12). The curious form that the well-known motif of the cosmic egg takes here reflects the efforts of the authors of the Agnicayana creation myth to assimilate a variety of cosmogonic motifs to the Prajapati mythology.

119. SB 6.1.1.13.

120. O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, p. 39, n. 7.

121. SB 6.1.1.13.

122. SB 6.1.1.15. From the modern viewpoint such etymologies appear to be entirely unfounded. However, as Jan Gonda has noted, these linguistic analyses were "for the Vedic thinkers an important means of penetrating into the truth and reality lying behind the phenomena" (Gonda, "Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas," p. 66).

123. SB 6.1.2.1.

124. These are the three spheres of heavens, atmosphere and earth found in traditional Vedic cosmography, plus the ubiquitous regions. The association of the moon with the quarters is perhaps attributable to the relatively undefined location of the moon in the traditional Vedic cosmographies; see, e.g., Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 12223.

125. SB 6.1.2.1.

126. SB 6.1.2.2.

127. SB 6.1.2.3.

128. SB 6.1.2.4.

129. SB 6.1.2.69.

130. SB 6.1.2.69. See, Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 130.

131. See, e.g., Keith *Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 22122.

132. SB 6.1.2.11.

133. The authors complete their narrative by establishing that this particular myth of Prajapati's creation represents the culmination of all Vedic cosmogonic speculation: "Now in which of many ways he created, so that was how he created. But Prajapati indeed emitted this all, and this is whatever there is" (SB 6.1.2.11). However, as a reflection of the "integrative" nature of this text, in the section (*adhyaya*) immediately following the presentation of the creation myth, another creation myth appears, which recounts parts of the narrative that proceeds it (SB 6.1.3.120). The purpose of the second creation narrative seems to be to establish a frame

for the identification of Rudra as an "all-god"; identifying him with the many deities that form the Rudra-Siva complex in later Hinduism (see Gonda, *Visnuism and Sivaism*, pp. 1833). That Rudra, whose "character lent itself admirably to splitting up into partial manifestations as well as to assimilation of divine or demonic powers of cognate nature, were they Aryan or non-Aryan" (*ibid.*, p. 5), is featured in this second creation narrative again attests to the

synthetic nature of the Agnicayana ritual.

134. SB 7.1.2.7.

135. SB 10.4.5.2.

136. See, e.g., SB 6.2.1.23; 6.2.2.9; 7.1.1.37; 7.4.1.15; 8.3.4.1118.

137. See, SB 8.7.4.12; 8.7.4.19; 9.1.2.3340; 10.6.1.211.

138. SB 6.1.2.16.

139. The building of the fire altar is replete with sexual symbolism; see, e.g., SB 6.2.2.27; 6.3.3.21; 6.4.1.7; 6.5.3.15; 6.6.1.24; 6.7.2.7; 7.2.1.6; 7.3.1.28; 7.4.1.1, and Chapter 3, "The Fire Altar (Agnicayana) as Man and Cosmos," *passim*.

140. SB 10.1.1.10.

141. It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the precise historic relationship between the Agnicayana and the Prajapati mythology that precedes it in the Satapatha Brahmana. Eggeling long ago observed that the rite seems to have been adapted to the myth (Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. xiii); however, in character with the spirit of these texts, the Brahmanas do not present the sort of single unequivocal version of the Prajapati myth that would preclude the possibility of an adaption of the myth to the rite.

3. The Fire Altar (Agnicayana) as Man and Cosmos

1. Heesterman, "Veda and Dharma," p. 87.

2. SB 10.1.3.1. Cf. SB 2.3.3.7, which describes the sun as the point of bifurcation between the mortal realm (the earth) and the immortal realm (the heavens).

3. SB 3.6.2.16.

4. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 459; cf. Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 133.

5. SB 11.7.1.3. Cf. CU 3.16, which represents the years of the sacrificer's life as the sacrificial offering.

6. SB 10.2.6.8.

7. SB 1.8.1.31.

8. SB 1.7.2.1.

9. Staal, "Ritual Syntax," p. 122.

10. SB 11.7.1.23.

page_148

Page 149

11. Regarding the relationship of the sacrificer to the sacrificial stake, see, TS 6.3.4.1; to the offering area, see SB 1.2.5.14, 10.2.1.2, and TS 5.2.5.1; and to the sacrificial spoons, see Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 1, p. 67, n. 2.

12. SB 1.3.2.1; 3.5.3.1.

13. In the Brahmanas such metaphysical connections were called *bandhu*, "association, connection," a term that is grammatically almost indistinguishable from *bandha*, "binding." Although the metaphysical *bandhu* defies a single definition (see, especially, Gonda, "*Bandhu*- in the Brahmanas," pp. 17), its application in the Brahmanas represents the ritualists' attempts to seek out the invisible, or "mysterious" (*paroksa*) connections between what at first seem to be disconnected entities.

14. SB 13.2.2.1.

15. Cf. SB 11.7.1.1, which describes how the sacrificer who sacrifices (that is, binds) cattle near his home causes a "binding of cattle to his home."
16. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 32.
17. SB 3.8.1.10.
18. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 25.
19. See, e.g., SB 4.3.4.14; 3.7.3.1; AB 2.6. Cf. the story of how men and cows exchanged skins in SB 3.1.2.1317 and JB 2.182 (discussed by Wendy D. O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*, pp. 4042). According to this story cows originally had the skin that man now has and man the skin of cows. The cows, unable to bear the elements and the insects, offered to exchange skins with man. To induce man to accept this exchange the cows offered themselves as food.
20. SB 3.7.3.6.
21. SB 3.7.4.5.
22. In view of this human chain that connects the sacrificer to the victim it is not surprising that this passage describes the sacrificer as touching the victim in an "imperceptible" (*paroksa*) manner (SB 3.8.1.10). The term *paroksa*, however, seems also to be employed here to indicate the existence of a metaphysical bond with the sacrificer; that is, although not being held physically or in a manner that is physically visible, the animal victim is yet held metaphysically, in an imperceptible manner.
23. Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 127.
24. SB 4.3.4.6; 1.9.3.1.
25. SB 4.5.1.16.
26. See, e.g., SB 13.4.1.6; 13.4.2.13; 2.2.3.28.
27. Heesterman, "Reflections on the Significance of the Daksina," p. 243.
28. Cf. Sylvain Lévi's observation that one of the essential components of the Vedic rites "is the sacrificer's indispensable conviction that, by a cuff-

ous deviation of causality, he will gather the fruits of the rites performed by the priests in his service" (Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, p. 113).

29. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 29.
30. SB 1.3.1.26.
31. SB 9.5.2.215. The text distinguishes between "building [the altar] for one self" (*cinute*) and "building [the altar] for another" (*cinoti*), through the use of the middle and the active voices. Although in later Sanskrit this distinction was lost, at one time the middle voice, or *atmanepada*, which literally means "word for oneself," denoted actions undertaken by the subject for his own benefit, whereas the active voice, or *parasmaipada*, which means "word for another" denoted actions undertaken for others. See further Speijer, *Sanskrit Syntax*, pp. 23538.
32. SB 9.5.2.13. The term *atman*, which appears here and throughout the Agnicayana section, denotes "one's own self" or "one's being," in the sense of that which represents the totality of a person's existence (both mental and physical) and should not be confused with the subtle *atman* that in later Hindu thought primarily refers to a "life essence" or "soul." In his edition of the Satapatha Brahmana, Eggeling vacillates in his translation of *atman*, employing both *body* and *self*. Unless otherwise noted, for the sake of consistency and for its wider connotations, *atman* is translated as "self" throughout this study.

33. SB 9.5.2.16.

34. SB 9.5.2.16.

35. SB 9.5.2.16.

36. In general, scholars have agreed that the Agnicayana is not a part of the early Vedic cult, as it is represented in the Rgveda. However, there is no consensus regarding whether this rite originated within the indigenous Indian culture or was brought into India by a second (i.e., after the establishment of the Rgvedic religion) wave of Aryan migrations. Hyla Stuntz Converse's article "The Agnicayana Rite: Indigenous Origin?" is the seminal article arguing for the Agnicayana's indigenous origin. This article provoked a sharp response in C.G. Kashikar's "Agnicayana: Extension of Vedic Aryan Rituals," in which the author refutes, point by point, Converse's argument. However, few scholars have taken Kashikar's position. More balanced views of the origin of this rite, in light of the textual, archeological, and cultural evidence are seen in Parpola, "The Pre-Vedic Background of the srauta Rituals;" Thapar, "The Archeological Background to the Agnicayana Ritual;" and Staal, *Agni* 1:73166 passim.

37. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. xxvixxvii.

38. See Staal, *Agni*, 1:4954.

39. As Julius Eggeling noted: "There seems, indeed, some reason to believe that it [the Agnicayana] was elaborated with a definite object in view, viz. that of making the external rites and ceremonies of the sacrificial cult the practical devotional expression of certain dominant theories of the

page_150

Page 151

time" (Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt 4. p. xiii). These theories are, of course, those that saw the rising of the cosmos, following Prajapati's primordial creative acts, occurring in correlation to Prajapati's own being.

40. SB 10.4.1.1. ff.

41. This notion is clearly represented in the well-known Brahmanic mythology of Martanda (the "dead embryo"), the last of Aditi's eight sons, whose "living" part is fashioned into Vivasvat, the first man and first sacrificer. See SB 3.1.3.2 ff.; MS 1.6.12; KathS 11.6; TS 6.5.6.1; Hoffmann, "Martanda und Gayomart," pp. 85103 passim; Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, pp. 18.

42. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 98.

43. Thite, *Sacrifice in the Brahmana Texts*, pp. 10910, 183.

44. The building of the altar is described in *kanda* 6 through 8 of the SB; the Agnicayana's Soma ritual is described in *kanda* 9.

45. Staal, *Agni*, 1:16.

46. Gonda, *Vedic Literature: Samhitds and Brahmanas*, p. 339.

47. Ibid.

48. The idea that the ritual is bound up with reality is expressed in the term *bandhu*, "connection, relationship," which occurs throughout the Brahmanas. (See, especially, the many citations in Jan Gonda's "*Bandhu*-in the Brahmana-s," pp. 623.) Some scholars have suggested that, as a reflection of the purpose of the Brahmanas, the terms *Brahmana* and *bandhu* are interchangeable and that *bandhu* may have been an early designation for this class of texts. (See, Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 11; cf. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 175, n.2.)

49. See Gonda, "The Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas," pp. 66, 78.

50. The authors occasionally interrupt their description of the building of the fire altar to refer to an aspect of the Soma ceremony. Thus, in one instance, they turn from the fire altar to the ritual buying of the Soma, a central element in the

Soma ritual (SB 7.3.26). The authors use this opportunity to extol the intimate relationship between the Soma sacrifice and the building of the fire altar, comparing it to that between the body and the vital air (*prana*) or life-essence (*rasa*): "Thus he connects together the fire [altar] rite with the [Soma] rite" (SB 7.3.1.4).

51. See, e.g., SB 6.6.1.4, they declare that: "Indeed this is a rite both of [building] the fire [altar] and of the Soma sacrifice . . . first there is an approaching to the Soma sacrifice, then there is [an approaching] to the fire [altar]." Since the building of the fire altar actually precedes the Soma sacrifice in the performance of the Agnicayana, the authors' intention here is clearly to establish the hierarchical order of these two aspects of the ritual. (Accordingly, Eggeling, perhaps drawing from a commentary, interpolates at the end of this passage "for the rite of the fire is an accessory rite" [Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. 247].)

52. SB 6.2.1.16.2.2.40.

53. SB 6.2.1.15.

54. SB 6.2.1.36. The text laconically states: "But some in this manner, as it were" (*taddha eke iti*). Eggeling notes that according to Sayana "in this manner" refers to buying or otherwise obtaining the animals (Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. 170). In any case, the passage makes it clear that these animals are not killed within the confines of the sacrifice; they are thus called "[animals] without [sacrificial] oblations" (*anaprita*).

55. SB 6.2.1.37.

56. SB 6.2.1.3839.

57. SB 6.2.1.39.

58. SB 6.2.1.39.

59. SB 6.2.2.15.

60. See Staal, *Agni*, 1:49, regarding the prototypical form of the *pasubandha*.

61. See SB 6.2.1.39. In the Satapatha Brahmana the sacrifice of all five animals apparently remains a tenable option; see SB 7.5.2.910. It is worth noting that in a recent performance of the Agnicayana, which has been documented by Frits Staal, clay models are employed in place of the five animals (Staal, *Agni*, 1:306309).

62. In the hierarchy of the Vedic ritual system, the Pasubandha precedes (in complexity and importance) the Soma rituals. However, as Staal has pointed out, "each later ritual presupposes the former and incorporates one or more occurrences of one or more of the former rituals" (Staal, "Ritual Syntax," p. 125).

63. See, e.g., SB 3.7.3.1. ff. According to Keith, in the Agnistoma, which is the paradigm for all Soma rituals, animal sacrifices occur prior to the day of the Soma pressing, on the day of the pressing, and after the final bath (Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 327).

64. SB 6.2.2.38; cf. 6.2.2.40.

65. SB 6.2.2.39.

66. For a summary of the procedures in the classical *diksa*, see Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, pp. 35077.

67. SB 6.2.2.38.

68. SB 6.2.2.40.

69. See, e.g., SB 4.5.1.16.

70. SB 6.2.2.39.

71. See van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp. 1011, and 65115 passim.
72. Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, p. 21.
73. SB 6.2.2.39.
74. See SB 9.3.4.10.
75. SB 6.3.3.216.5.2.22. The actual fashioning of the pan is described in SB 6.5.2.712. On the possible indigenous origins of the techniques used

in making the fire pan, see Converse, "The Agnicayana Rite: Indigenous Origin?" pp. 8586.

76. The fire altar is added to the same ritual enclosure that is used for all the Vedic *srauta* rites. On the relationship of the fire altar to the other ritual fireplaces, see, Staal, *Agni*, 1:4455.
77. SB 6.5.3.45.
78. SB 6.6.2.16; 6.7.2.7.
79. SB 7.5.1.30 ff.
80. SB 6.7.1.1619.
81. SB 6.3.3.26.
82. SB 6.4.1.6.
83. SB 3.2.1.67. Cf. SB 3.2.1.11; 3.3.3.12; AB 1.3.
84. SB 12.5.2.13; cf. 12.5.2.7. In other contexts, the deceased is wrapped in the skin of a cow; see, RV 10.16.7; JB 1.49.
85. The Vedic texts often refer to the two coverings of the womb, the amnion and chorion (*jarayu* and *ulba*). See, e.g., SB 6.6.2.15; 3.2.1.11; TS 6.5.6.3; CU 3.19.2.
86. SB 6.4.1.7.
87. SB 6.5.1.3.
88. See Chapter 2. The identification of the *brahman* with water is made in SB 6.1.1.10.
89. SB 6.5.3.1.
90. SB 6.5.2.21.
91. SB 5.2.1.10.
92. Although such a state of primordial androgyny is not made explicit in the Agnicayana's creation myth, this notion is clearly represented in the interpretation of the Prajapati myth found in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (the Upanisad appended to the Satapatha Brahmana), in BAU 1.4.3. Cf. the separation of the *virag* (female principle) from the Purusa in RV 10.90.5.
93. BAU 1.4.3.
94. TS 5.6.8.
95. SB 6.6.2.8.

96. SB 6.6.2.15.

97. SB 6.7.1.128.

98. See Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, p. 28, regarding the year as the full term of pregnancy (cf. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, pp. xii ff.).

99. SB 10.4.3.1.

100. See SB 10.5.1.4; cf. 10.2.6.4.

101. SB 2.3.3.7; cf. 10.5.1.4.

102. SB 10.5.2.3.

103. SB 6.7.2.7.

page_153

Page 154

104. SB 7.1.1.1519.

105. SB 7.1.1.37.

106. SB 7.2.1.6. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. 320, ignores in his translation the implications of the adjective *bhuta*, "real, actual, existing," which modifies *retas*, "semen," here.

107. See, e.g. SB 1.1.1.46, which describes the vows undertaken at the beginning of the sacrifice as an entering into the world of the gods from the world of men. Then, at the end of the sacrifice when he divests himself of his vows, the sacrificer states that "I am that one who I really am," which apparently refers to a return to his normal state of existence in the realm of men. Jan Gonda, "Adhvara and Adhvaryu," *passim*, has argued that, based on etymological considerations, one of the terms for "sacrificial ceremony," *adhvara*, refers to the idea of the sacrifice as a journey, especially one leading to the realm of the gods.

108. See Lévi, *La Doctrine du Sacrifice*, pp. 8889; and Smith, "Resemblance, Hierarchy, and Ritualism," p. 151. Cf. SB 2.3.4.7: "Dangerous (*varana*) are the ways between heaven and earth; upon them [the sacrificer] now stands."

109. See, e.g., SB 5.1.1.510, which discusses how, by offering the Vajapeya, men ascend to the upper regions. However, the passage continues to state that one should not offer the Vajapeya because "one wins everything . . . he leaves nothing remaining here," apparently implying that it is impossible to return from the upper regions. The authors then state that, as long as the sacrificer has wise priests assisting him, the Vajapeya should be performed, apparently since these priests will be able to guide him back to this world.

110. SB 4.2.5.10; cf. 2.3.3.1516. Smith, "Resemblance, Hierarchy, and Ritualism," p. 150, has discussed the related image of the sacrifice as a chariot.

111. SB 7.2.1.19.

112. SB 7.2.2.912; 7.2.2.1421. The preference here for north and east (two furrows are plowed from south to north and two from west to east; one furrow is plowed from north to south and one east to west) reflects the Vedic notion that the north and the east represent the realm of the gods and the realm of men (these are often interchanged, see, e.g., SB 3.1.1.7; 3.6.4.12; 1.9.3.13; 1.2.5.17; 9.3.4.13), whereas the south is the realm of the fathers, or deceased ancestors (SB 1.2.5.17; 9.3.4.11). The region of the fathers is avoided during the sacrifice, "for the sacrificer would quickly go to that world [of the dead]" (SB 1.2.5.17; cf. 9.3.4.11).

113. SB 7.2.4.1. ff.

114. SB 7.2.4.14 ff.

115. SB 7.2.4.1419.

116. SB 7.4.1.1.

117. SB 7.4.1.1.

118. SB 7.4.1.7.

119. SB 7.4.1.711.

120. SB 7.4.1.15.

121. SB 7.4.1.24.

122. SB 7.4.1.36. As Eggeling notes the offering spoons are the length of an arm, with the size and shape of hands (Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. 373, n. 2).

123. SB 7.4.2.22.

124. See, e.g., TS 5.6.8.

125. SB 7.5.1.138.

126. SB 7.5.1.35.

127. SB 7.5.2.12.

128. SB 8.1.1.1 ff.

129. SB 6.1.1. ff.; see Chapter 2.

130. SB 8.1.4.1.

131. See, Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 4, p. 22, n. 1, and also SB 10.4.3.8 ff. The contemporary fire altar described by Frits Staal consists of 1005 bricks (Staal, *Agni*, 1:202).

132. The identification of each of the five levels with Prajapati and the cosmos appear in SB 7.4.2.30 (level one); 8.2.1.1 ff. (level two); 8.3.1.1 ff. (level three); 8.4.1.1 ff. (level four); 8.5.1.1 ff. (level five).

133. SB 7.5.1.35 ff.

134. See Chapter 2.

135. SB 8.5.2.817.

136. SB 8.5.2.817. This same notion is expressed in SB 9.2.3.13 ft., which refers to five regions above the sun and five regions below the sun.

137. SB 8.7.3.1517.

138. SB 8.4.1.18.4.4.12.

139. JUB 3.2028.

140. Oertel, "The Jaiminiya or Talavakara Upanisad Brahmana," p. 186.

141. JUB 3.28.4.

142. SB 8.6.1.23.

143. SB 6.1.2.36. The notion that the sacrificer might attain the heavenly world through assuming the shape of a bird is

seen in PB 5.3.5: "The sacrificer, having become a bird, goes to the world of heaven" (cf. PB 5.1.10; AB 3.25).

144. Regarding the Vedic sun-bird, see, e.g., R.V 1.163.6; 1.164.52; 7.15.4.

145. SB 7.5.1.37.

146. SB 6.1.2.36.

147. SB 6.7.2.8.

148. SB 6.1.2.12 ff.

149. SB 6.1.2.12.

page_155

Page 156

150. SB 6.1.1.14.

151. SB 6.1.2.11.

152. SB 6.1.2.1415.

153. See, e.g., SB 6.5.3.11; 6.6.2.7; 7.5.2.9; 8.1.3.6; 10.1.4.27.

154. Heesterman, "Reflections on the Significance of the Daksina," p. 245.

155. SB 7.5.2.8.

156. This is described in some detail in SB 7.5.2.837.

157. Smith, "Resemblance, Hierarchy and Ritualism," p. 118.

158. See SB 11.2.1.1; SB 2.2.4.8; JUB 3.11.

159. JUB 3.14.8.

160. The identification of the sacrificer with an embryo is, for the most part expressed during the initiation (*diksa*) rituals; see SB 2.3.1.3; 3.1.3.28; 3.2.1.6; 3.3.3.12; AB 1.3.

161. SB 3.1.3.28.

162. AB 1.3.

163. SB 3.2.1.6.

164. See Kashikar, "The Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning According to the Kalpa Sutras," p. 176;

165. SB 4.3.4.6; cf., 1.9.1.16; 1.9.1.3; 1.8.3.11; 4.6.9.12.

166. SB 1.9.1.3.

167. SB 1.8.3.1; 1.9.3.1; 4.3.4.6.

168. SB 4.3.4.6; cf. 1.9.3.1. Cf. SB 1.8.3.20, which describes the Adhvaryu and the Agnidhra priests as leading the sacrificer to the world of the gods.

169. SB 2.3.4.4.

170. SB 3.6.2.26.

171. SB 10.1.4.1; cf. 10.1.3.2.

172. See SB 10.1.3.5; cf. 14.1.2.24.

173. SB 10.1.4.1.

174. SB 10.2.4.5. Cf. SB 8.1.4.5; 8.7.4.12; 8.7.4.19; 10.1.3.45; 10.1.4.27; 10.6.4.1.

175. Heesterman, "Reflections of the Significance of the Daksina," p. 245.

4. From Death to Rebirth

1. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, p. 445. Cf. W. D. Whitney's view, expressed nearly a century ago, of the conversation between Naciketas and Death (KathU 1.1.21): "what we have to infer from it, doubtless, is the very unsettled state of opinion on the matter [of the afterlife], even among the advanced thinkers, at the time of our treatise" (Whitney, "Hindu Eschatology and the Katha Upanishad," p. cviii.) Also cf. Rodhe, *Deliver Us from*

page_156

Page 157

Evil, p. 113: "[in the Brahmanas] the ideas of the fate that will meet man in 'yonder world' are not very fixed."

2. See Chapter 2.

3. The bipartite cosmic image is the subject of at least three Rgvedic hymns RV 1.160; 1.185; and 6.70 (these hymns are translated by O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, pp. 203207 and is seen in several other Rgvedic hymns for relevant citations, see Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 810; and Wallis, *Cosmology of the Rig Veda*, pp. 11113). The image of a multileveled cosmos is especially apparent in the Brahmanic passages that describe the journey of the deceased; see, e.g., SB 2.6.4.7 ff.; 10.2.6.8; 10.3.3.8; JB 1.46; 1.4950.

4. Cf. J. C. Heesterman's observation that although the ritual texts represent "an effort of systematization . . . the ritualists were concerned with the preservation of obsolete diverging traditions . . . even at the price of contradicting the laboriously developed system" (Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice," p. 3).

5. The fire altar's five brick layers represent a pentadic cosmos (see SB 8.2.1.12; 8.3.1.12; 8.4.1.12; 8.5.1.12). However, two additional layers, one of soil and one of gold chips, are placed on top of the bricks and together with the five brick levels depict a heptadic cosmos (see SB 8.7.4.12 ff.; 9.5.2.9). Within the five brick levels are three "naturally perforated" (*svayamatrma*) bricks (placed on the first, third, and fifth levels) that represent the tripartite cosmos of earth, atmosphere, and heavens (see SB 7.4.2.1; 8.3.1.11; 8.5.4.9; cf., 9.5.1.58).

6. SB 1.2.2.14.

7. Cf. Steven Collins' statement that "we cannot look to the history of cosmology to find specifiable 'realms' of the living and the dead" (Collins, *Selfless Persons*, p. 45).

8. See, e.g., SB 13.5.4.3; and also Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Pariksita."

9. BAU 3.3.2.

10. See, e.g., SB 13.5.4.3.

11. BAU 3.2.13; see Chapter 1.

12. SB 6.2.2.27. The notion presented here that the initiation results in the establishment of a "world beforehand" reflects the place of the initiation within the larger ceremonial; just as the initiation precedes the ritual proper, so it results in the establishment of a "beforehand" world for the sacrificer.

13. Eggeling, *The Satapatha Brahmana*, pt. 3, p. 181, n. 1.

14. Gonda, *Loka*, p. 139.

15. Ibid., pp. 14344.

16. JUB 3.11.24.

page_157

Page 158

17. Cf. the statement found in SB 1.1.1.4; that the sacrificer, in entering upon the ritual, "passes from the [world of] men to the [world of] the gods."

18. See SB 2.3.1.3; 3.1.3.28; 3.2.1.6; 3.3.3.12; AB 1.3.

19. Knipe, "*Sapindikarana*: The Hindu Rite of Entry in Heaven," pp. 112 22 passim.

20. SB 2.3.4.37. Cf. TS 2.5.6: "The sacrifice is razor edged, and swiftly one becomes good (*punya*) or is destroyed (*prami*). The danger inherent to the ritual journey has been discussed by Smith, "Gods and Men in Vedic Ritualism," pp. 294 ff.

21. Staal, "Ritual Syntax," p. 125.

22. SB 10.2.6.8.

23. See Converse, "The Agnicayana Rite: Indigenous Origin?" p. 87; Parpola, "The Pre-Vedic Background of the Srauta Rituals," pp. 4950; Thapar, "The Archeological Background to the Agnicayana Ritual," pp. 1516; Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School Entitled Taittiriya Sanhita*, p. cxxv.

24. Bloch, who excavated this site at the turn of the century, identified the mounds as pre-Mauryan funeral tumuli and, believing that they predated even the ritual texts, attempted to interpret his findings through utilizing Rgvedic evidence (Bloch, "Excavations at Lauriya," pp. 12324). Caland, noting the similarity between Bloch's findings and the fire altar, then suggested that these mounds represented the remains of an Agnicayana altar (*De Archeologische vondsten in de heuvels van Lauriya*, cited by Thapar, "Archeological Background to the Agnicayana," p. 15). In her reevaluation of the work of Bloch and Caland, Thapar suggests that the Lauriya mounds represent the sort of funeral tumuli that the ritual texts describe as approximating the shape of the fire altar (Thapar, "Archeological Background to the Agnicayana," pp. 15 ff.).

25. Caland, *Die Altindischen Todten- und Bestattungsgebräuche*, p. 172 ff., cited by Parpola, "Pre-Vedic Background of the srauta Rituals," p. 50. Caland's view has been reiterated by Asko Parpola; however, Parpola refers to this point in passing and declares his agreement with Caland without citing any particular evidence to substantiate this view (Parpola, "Pre-Vedic Background of the srauta Rituals," p. 50).

26. See Knipe, "*Sapindikarana*," pp. 111-24 passim.

27. See RV 10.15, which is devoted to the fathers, and cf. the entire series of hymns RV 10.1410.18, which Horace Poleman has suggested reveals the general procedure of the Rgvedic funeral rites (Poleman, "The Ritualistic Continuity of Rgveda X.1418," pp. 27681).

28. RV 10.16.9. See also O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*, pp. 4651.

29. See e.g., SB 1.2.5.17; 3.6.4.12; 9.3.4.11.

30. SB 1.1.1.79.

31. SB 1.1.1.8.

page_158

Page 159

32. SB 1.1.1.9.

33. SB 1.1.1.9: sa yad eva asitam anasitam tad asniyad (literally, "one should eat that which eaten is not eaten").

34. SB 11.1.7.1, which continues this discussion (though it does not cite Yajñavalkya), clarifies Yajñavalkya's remarks by proposing that during this period of fasting "one should eat [only] forest [food]," apparently referring to uncultivated food sources.
35. See also SB 2.1.3.14; 2.4.2.11; 4.4.2.3; and KB 5.6, all of which express a concern with maintaining a separation between the gods and the fathers in performing specific ritual tasks and thus imply a confusion of the roles of these two classes of beings.
36. The story of Bhugu is told in SB 11.6.1.113 and JB 1.4244 (for an analysis of this tale, and references to other relevant secondary sources, see O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*, pp. 3237, 124).
37. SB 3.1.2.1317; JB 2.18.
38. Heesterman, "The Ritualist's Problem," p. 1.
39. Ibid., pp. 57.
40. Ibid., p. 6.
41. J. C. Heesterman has suggested that the Agnicayana might be "interpreted as a funerary tumulus for a high ranking kinsman," though he does not follow this line of investigation (Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, p. 53).
42. SB 13.8.1.17.
43. SB 13.8.1.17.
44. SB 13.8.2.3; cf. 7.1.1.11.
45. SB 13.8.2.2; cf. 7.1.1.12.
46. SB 13.8.2.6 and 13.8.3.1; cf. 7.2.2.6 ff. and 7.2.4.13.
47. SB 13.8.3.69.
48. See RV 10.18; JB 1.47.1 ff.; SB 13.8.4.11; and also Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, pp. 126 ff.; *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Death and Disposal of the Dead (Hindu)."
49. See Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, p. 46, and pp. 4243, regarding the Indian funeral rituals. (Cf. Huntington and Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death*, s.v. "secondary burial.")
50. SB 13.8.3.29.
51. SB 13.8.4.1112.
52. See Smith, "Gods and Men in Vedic Ritualism," p. 292.
53. SB 7.4.2.22; see also 1.3.1.25; 1.7.1.2; 1.7.1.18. This theory is also seen in the process by which the Soma ascends to the otherworld and descends, in the form of rain, from the otherworld (see, Schneider, "Upanisad Philosophy and Early Buddhism," p. 311).
54. CU 5.10.36. Cf. Frauwallner, *History of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 36 ff.

55. SB 11.2.1.1.

56. SB 2.2.4.8.

57. On the nature of this journey, see Chapter 3 and cf. the discussion in SB 6.1.2.36 of the idea that the sacrificer is conveyed to heaven by the bird-shaped altar.

58. Smith, "Gods and Men in Vedic Ritualism," p. 297.
59. Ibid., pp. 297-98.
60. See SB 1.1.1.6.
61. See Chapter 3.
62. JUB 3.28.34.
63. CU 5.310; BAU 6.2.
64. SB 10.1.5.1 ff.
65. SB 10.1.5.4.
66. SB 10.1.4.1.
67. SB 13.8.3.9.
68. SB 13.8.3.25. See also, Keith, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School*, p. cxxv.
69. SB 13.2.3.1; cf., SB 13.2.8.1.
70. SB 7.4.1.1.
71. CU 5.10.1 ff; BAU 6.2.15 ff.
72. BAU 3.2.13.
73. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 441.
74. Knipe, "One Fire, Three Fires, Five Fires," p. 32.
75. CU 3.16.17.
76. CU 3.17.5.
77. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 27.

Bibliography

Vedic Texts

- Atharva Veda*, ed. Rudolph von Roth and W. D. Whitney, 3d ed. Bonn: Ferd. Dummlers Verlag, 1966.
- Die Hymnen des Sama-Veda*, ed. Theodor Benfey. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968.
- Jaiminiya Brahmana of the Samaveda*, ed. Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra. Sarasvati-vihara Series, vol. 31. Nagpur: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1954.
- Jaiminiya or Talavakara Upanisad Brahmana*, ed. and trans. Hanns Oertel. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 16 (1896): 792-60.
- Kausitaki-Brahmana*, ed. E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968.
- Principal Upanisads*, ed. and trans. S. Radhakrishnan. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1953.

Rig-Veda Sanhita: The Sacred Hymns of the Brahmans, ed. F. Max Muller, 6 vols. London: Trubner, 184974.

Satapatha Brahmana, ed. Albrecht Weber. In *The White Yajurveda*, ed. Albrecht Weber, part 2. Berlin: Ferd. Dummler's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1855.

The Satapatha Brahmana in the Kanviya Recension, ed. W. Caland. Punjab Sanskrit Series, no. 10. Lahore: Motilal Banarsidas, 1926.

Vajasaneyi-Sanhita, ed. Albrecht Weber. In *The White Yajurveda*, ed. Albrecht Weber, part 1. Berlin: Ferd. Dummler's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1853.

page_161

Page 162

Secondary Sources and Translations of Vedic Texts

Allchin, Bridgett, and Raymond Allchin. *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Barth, A. *Religions of India*, trans. Rev. J. Wood. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1882.

Bendann, E. *Death Customs: An Analytical Study of Burial Rites*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930.

Bhattacharji, Sukumari. *Literature in the Vedic Age*. Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi and Co., 1984.

Bloch, T. "Excavations at Lauriya." In *Archeological Survey of India: Annual Report, 19067*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1909.

Bloomfield, Maurice. *The Religion of the Veda*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908.

Bodewitz, H. W. *Jaiminiya Brahmana 1, 165*. Orientalia RhenoTraiectina, vol. 17. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973.

. "The Waters in Vedic Cosmic Classifications." *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 4553.

Brown, George William. "The Sources of Indian Philosophical Ideas." In *Studies in Honour of Maurice Bloomfield*, pp. 7588. New Haven: 1920.

Brown, W. Norman. "The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62 (1942): 8598.

. "The Rigvedic Equivalent for Hell." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 61 (1941): 7680.

. "The Sources and Nature of *Purusa* in the Purusasukta (Rigveda 10.91) [sic]." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 51 (1931): 10818.

. "Theories of Creation in the Rig Veda." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965): 2334.

van Buitenen, J. A. B. "The Large Atman." *History of Religions* 4 (1964): 10314.

page_162

Page 163

Burnell, A. C., ed. and trans. *The Samavidhanabrahmana (being the third Brahmana) of the Sama Veda*. London: Trubner and Co., 1873.

Burrow, T. "Dravidian Studies VII: Further Dravidian Words in Sanskrit." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (1948): 36596.

. "Loanwords in Sanskrit." *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1946): 130.

. "Some Dravidian Words in Sanskrit." *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1945): 79120.

Caland, W. *Die Altindischen Todten- und Bestattungsgebräuche*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, 1:6. Amsterdam: 1896.

. "Over en uit het Jaiminiya Brahmana." *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* 5 (1915): 1106.

, trans. *Pañcavimsa Brahmana: The Brahmana of Twenty-five Chapters*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931.

Chapple, Christopher. *Karma and Creativity*, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1986.

Colebrooke, H. T. "On the Vedas or Sacred Writings of the Hindus." *Asiatick Researches* 8 (1805): 369476.

Collins, Steven. *Selfless Persons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Converse, Hyla Stuntz. "The Agnicayana Rite: Indigenous Origin?" *History of Religions* 14 (1974): 8195.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. "Atmayajña: Self-Sacrifice." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6 (1942): 35898.

Dandekar, R. N. *Select Writings I: Vedic Mythological Tracts*. Delhi: Ajanta Publishing, 1979.

Dasgupta, Surendranath. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922.

Deussen, Paul. *Die Philosophie der Upanishad's*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1899.

page_163

Page 164

. *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, trans. A. S. Geden. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906. Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1966.

, trans. *Sechzig Upanishad's des Veda*, 3d ed. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1938.

Drury, Naama. *The Sacrificial Ritual in the Satapatha Brahmana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

Dubois, J. A. *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, trans. Henri K. Beauchamp, 3d ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.

Dumezil, Georges. *The Destiny of a King*, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus*, trans. Mark Sainsbury. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Dumont, P. E. "The Special Kinds of Agnicayana." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 95 (1951).

Duperron, Anquetil. *Oupnek'hat*. Paris: n.p., 1801.

Edgerton, Franklin. "Sources of the Philosophy of the Upanishads." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 36 (1916): 197204.

. "The Upanishads: What Do They Seek, and Why?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 49 (1929): 97121.

Eggeling, Julius, trans. *The Satapatha Brahmana*, 5 parts. The Sacred Books of the East, vols. 12, 26, 41, 43, and 44. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 18821900. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963.

Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas*, trans. Willard Trask, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

. *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. Bollingen Series 56. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Ewing, A. H. "The Hindu Conception of the Functions of Breath." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901):

249308.

Farquhar, J. N. *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*. The Religious Quest of India series. London: Oxford University Press, 1920.

page_164

Page 165

Frauwallner, Erich. *History of Indian Philosophy*, trans. V. M. Bedekar, vol. 1. New York: Asian Humanities Press, 1974.

van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Gerow, Edwin. "What Is Karma (Kim Karmeti)? An Exercise in Philosophical Semantics." *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 87116.

Goman, Thomas and Laura, Ronald. "A Logical Treatment of Some Upanisadic Puzzles and Changing Conceptions of the Sacrifice." *Numen* 19 (1972): 5267.

Gombrich, Richard F. "Ancient Indian Cosmology." In *Ancient Cosmologies*, ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe, pp. 11042. London: Allen and Unwin, 1975.

Gonda, Jan. "Adhvara and Adhvaryu." *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* 3 (1965): 16377.

. "Bandhu- in the Brahmana-s." *Adyar Library Bulletin* 29 (1965): 129.

. *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*. Disputationes Rheno Trajectinae, vol. 9. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965.

. "The Etymologies in the Ancient Indian Brahmanas." *Lingua* 5 (1955): 6085.

. "Gifts and Giving in the Rig Veda." *Vishvesh-Varanand Indological Journal* 2 (1964): 930.

. *The Haviryajñah Somah: The Interrelations of the Vedic Solemn Sacrifices*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, n.r. 113. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1982.

. *Loka: World and Heaven in the Veda*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, n.r. 73. 1. Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1966.

. *Notes on Brahman*. Utrecht: J. L. Beyers, 1950.

. *Notes on Names and the Name of God in Ancient India*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van

page_165

Page 166

Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde. Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1970.

. "The Popular Prajapati." *History of Religions* 22 (1982): 12949.

. *Die Religionen Indiens*. Vol 1. *Veda und alterer Hinduismus*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960.

. "Triads in Vedic Ritual." *Ohio Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (1974): 523.

. *Vedic Literature: Samhitas and Brahmanas*. A History of Indian Literature, vol. 1., fasc. 1. Weisbaden: Otto Harrosowitz, 1975.

. *Vedic Literature: The Ritual Sutras*. A History of Indian Literature, vol. 1, fasc. 2. Weisbaden: Otto Harrosowitz, 1977.

- . *Visnuism and Sivaism*. London: Athlone Press, 1970.
- Griswold, H. D. *The Religion of the Rgveda*. The Religious Quest of India. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Guntert, Hermann. *Die Arische Weltkonig und Heiland*. Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1923.
- Haas, George C. O. "Recurrent and Parallel Passages in the Principal Upanisads and Bhagavad-gita." Appendix to *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, trans. Robert Hume, pp. 51662. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
- Hastings, James, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1908.
- Heesterman, J. C. *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*. Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae, vol. 2. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1957.
- . "Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer." *Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde Sud Ostrasiens* 8 (1964): 131.
- . *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- . "Reflections on the Significance of the Daksina." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 (1959): 24158.
- . "The Ritualist's Problem." Paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies, San Francisco, March 25, 1983.

page_166

Page 167

- . "Veda and Dharma." In *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, ed. W. D. O'Flaherty and J. D. M. Derrett, pp. 8095. London: S.O.A.S., 1978.
- . "Vratya and Sacrifice." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1962): 137.
- Hertz, Robert. *Death and the Right Hand*, trans. Rodney Needham and Claudia Needham. New York: Cohen and West, 1960.
- Hoffman, Karl. "Martanda und Gayomart." *Munchner Studien zur Sprachenwissenschaft* 11 (1975): 85103.
- . "Die Weltenstehung nach dem Jaiminiya Brahmana." *Munchner Studien zur Sprachenwissenschaft* 27 (1970): 5967.
- Hopkins, Edward W. "Modifications of the Karma Doctrine." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1906): 58193.
- . "Numerical Formulae in the Veda and Their Bearing on Vedic Criticism." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 16 (1896): 27581.
- . *Religions of India*. Handbooks on the History of Religions, vol 1. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1895.
- Horsch, Paul. "Vorstufen der Indischen Seelenwanderungslehre." *Asiatische Studien* 25 (1971): 9957.
- Hubert, Henri, and Marcel Mauss. *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*, trans. W. D. Halls. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- Hume, Robert, trans. *The Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, 2d ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
- Huntington, Richard, and Peter Metcalf. *Celebrations of Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Ingalls, Daniel H. H. "Dharma and Moksa." *Philosophy East and West* 7 (1957): 4148.
- Kaelber, Walter O. "The 'Dramatic' Element in Brahmanic Initiation: Symbols of Death, Danger, and Difficult Passage." *History of Religious* 17 (1978): 5476.
- . "Tapas, Birth, and Spiritual Rebirth in the Veda." *History of Religions* 15 (1976): 34385.

page_167

- Karmarkar, A. P. "The Purusa-Sukta (Rgveda X.90) and the Mystic Glorifications of the Human Victim." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Bombay Branch)* 18 (1942): 9193.
- Kashikar, C. G. "Agnicayana: Extension of Vedic Aryan Rituals." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 62 (1981): 12133.
- . "The Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning According to the Kalpa Sutras." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 2 (1979): 17287.
- Keith, A. B. *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, 2 vols. Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 3132. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970.
- . *Rig-Veda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas of the Rigveda*. Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 25. Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920.
- . *The Veda of the Black Yajus School Entitled Taittiriya Sanhita*, 2 vols. Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 1819. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967.
- Kirfel, W. *Die Cosmographie der Inder*. Bonn: K. Schroeder, 1920.
- Knipe, David. "Sapindikarana: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven." In *Religious Encounters with Death*. ed. F. Reynolds and E. Waugh, pp. 11124. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977.
- . "One Fire, Three Fires, Five Fires: Vedic Symbols in Transition." *History of Religions* 12 (1972): 2841.
- Kopf, David. *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Kramrisch, Stella. "The Triple Stucture of Creation in the Rgveda." *History of Religions* 2 (196263): 14075; 25685.
- Kuiper, F. B. J. "The Basic Concept of the Vedic Religion." *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 10720.
- . "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query." *History of Religions* 10 (1970): 91138.

page_168

- . "The Genesis of a Linguistic Area." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10 (1967): 81102
- Lanman, C. R. "Mortuary Urns" Proceedings of the American Oriental Society, Boston, May 1891. (*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 15 [1893]: xcvi-c.)
- . *A Sanskrit Reader*. Cambridge: Mass: Harvard University Press, 1884.
- Lévi, Sylvain. *La Doctrine du Sacrifice dans les Brahmanas*, 2d ed. Bibliotheque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Section des Sciences Religieuses, vol. 73. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966.
- Lincoln, Bruce "The Indo-European Myth of Creation." *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 12145.
- Macdonald, A. W. "A Propos de Prajapati." *Journal Asiatique* 240 (1952): 32328.
- Macdonell, A.A. *Vedic Mythology*. Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, vol. 3. Strassburg: Karl J. Trubner, 1897.
- . *A Vedic Reader for Students*. Madras: Oxford University Press, 1917.
- Macdonell, A. A., and A. B. Keith. *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, 2 vols. London: 1912. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.
- Mackie J.L. *Ethics*. Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1977.

- Marshall, Peter J., ed. *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: University Press, 1970.
- Mitra, Rajendralala. *Indo-Aryans: Contributions towards the Elucidation of Their Ancient and Medieval History*, vol. 2. London: Edward Stanford: 1881.
- Muir, John. *Original Sanskrit Texts*, vol. 5. London: Trubner and Co., 1870.
- Müller, F. Max. *Chips From a German Workshop*. Vol. 1. *Essays on the Science of Religion* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900.

page_169

Page 170

- . *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1926.
- . *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, 2d ed. London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1878.
- . *Natural Religion: The Gifford Lectures*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1889.
- , trans. *The Upanishads*, 2 parts. Sacred Books of the East, vols. I and 15. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879 and 1884. Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1962.
- Murthy, R. S. Shivaganesha. "Vedic Sacrifice A Conspectus." In *Charudeva Felicitation Volume*, pp. 11624. Delhi: Charudeva Shastri Felicitation Committee, 1974.
- Mus, Paul. *Barbudur: esquisse d'une histoire du bouddhisme fondee sur la critique archeologique des textes*. Hanoi: Impr. d'Extreme Orient, 1935.
- Mylius, K. "Die Ideenwelt des Satapatha Brahmana." *Wissenschaft Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universitat (Leipzig)* 16 (1967): 4755.
- Narahari, H. G. *atman in Pre-Upanisadic Vedic Literature*. Madras: Adyar Library, 1944.
- Oertel, Hanns. "Extracts from the Jaiminiya Brahmana Parallel to Passages of the Satapatha Brahmana and the Chandogya Upanisad." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 15 (1891): 23352.
- , tr. "The Jaiminiya or Talavakara Upanisad Brahmana."
- O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- . "The Ethical and Non-Ethical Implications of the Cosmogonic Myth of the Separation of Heaven and Earth in Indian Mythology." In *Cosmogony and Ethical Order*, ed. Frank Reynolds and Robin Loven, pp. 10539. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- , ed. *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

page_170

Page 171

- . "Karma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Puranas." In *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, ed. Wendy D. O'Flaherty, pp. 337. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- . *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- , trans. *The Rig Veda*. Hammondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1981.
- . *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. Originally published as *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- . *Tales of Sex and Violence: Folklore, Sacrifice, and Danger in the "Jaiminiya Brahmana"*. Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1985.

Oldenberg, Hermann. *Buddha: Sein Leben, Seine Lehre, Seine Gemeinde*. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche, 1920.

. *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge der Buddhismus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1915.

. *Vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft die Weltanschauung der Brahmana-texte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1919.

Parpola, Asko. "The Pre-Vedic Background of the *śrauta* Rituals." In *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal, vol. 2, pp. 4174. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983.

. "On the Proto-History of the Indian Languages in Light of Archeological, Linguistic and Religious Evidence: An Attempt at Integration." In *South Asian Archeology* 1973, J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw and J. M. M. Ubags, pp. 90100. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.

Poleman, Horace. "The Ritualistic Continuity of Rgveda X.1418." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 54 (1934): 27681.

Potter, Karl. "The Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems." In *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, W. D. O'Flaherty, pp. 24167. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

page_171

Page 172

Renou, Louis. *Religions of Ancient India*. London: The Athlone Press, 1953. Reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972.

Rodhe, Sten. *Deliver Us from Evil: Studies on the Vedic Ideas of Salvation*. Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1946.

von Roth, Rudolph. "On the Morality of the Veda," trans. W.D. Whitney. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3 (1853): 32949.

. *Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Weda*. Stuttgart: A. Liesching & Co., 1846.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

Schayer, St. "A Note on the Old Russian Variant of the Purushasukta." *Archiv Orientalni* 7 (1935): 31923.

Schneider, Ulrich. "Upanisad Philosophy and Early Buddhism." In *German Scholars on India*, vol. 1, pp. 30732. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1973.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1819.

Sharma, Ursula. "Theodicy and the Doctrine of Karma." *Man* n.s.. 8 (1973): 34764.

Sharpe, Eric. *Comparative Religion: A History*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

Shende, N. J. "The PurusaSukta (RV 10.90) in the Vedic Literature." *Journal of the University of Poona (Humanities Section)* 23 (1966): 4551.

Smith, Brian K. "Resemblance, Hierarchy and Ritualism." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1984.

. "Gods and Men in Vedic Ritualism: Toward a Hierarchy of Resemblance." *History of Religions* 24 (1985): 291307.

Speijer, J.S. *Sanskrit Syntax*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1886. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973.

Staal, Frits. *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, 2 vols. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983.

. "The Ignorant Brahmin of the Agnicayana." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Research Institute* 6869 (197778): 33748.

- . "Ritual Syntax." In *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honor of Daniel H. H. Ingalls*, ed. M. Nagatomi et al., pp. 11942. Dordrecht, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1980.
- . *The Science of Ritual*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1982.
- Suave, James L. "The Divine Victim: Aspects of Human Sacrifice in Scandanavia and Vedic India." In *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. Jaan Puhvel, pp. 17391. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
- Thapar, Romila. "The Archeological Background to the Agnicayana Ritual." In *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. Frits Staal, vol. 2, pp. 340. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983.
- Thite, Ganesh U. "Animal Sacrifices in the Brahmana-texts." *Numan* 17 (1970): 14361.
- . *Sacrifice in the Brahmana-Texts*. Poona: Poona University Press, 1975.
- Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, vol. 1. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.
- Tsuji, Naoshiro, "On the Relation between Brahmanas and Srautasutras." *Toyo Bunko Ronso A* 33 (1952): 183247.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969.
- Vira, Raghu. "Sakhas of the Yajurveda." *Journal of Vedic Studies* 2 (1935): 6177.
- Wallis, H.W. *Cosmology of the Rig-Veda*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1887.
- Weber, Albrecht. *History of Indian Literature*, trans. J. Mann and T. Zacharie, 2d ed. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1904.
- Werner, Karel. "On Interpreting the Vedas." *Religion* 7 (1977): 189200.
- Whitney, W.D., trans. *The Atharva Veda*, ed. C. R. Lanman. Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 78. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1905.

- , "Eggeling's Translation of the Satapatha Brahmana." *American Journal of Philology* 3 (1882): 391410.
- , "Hindu Eschatology and the Katha Upanisad." Proceedings of the American Oriental Society, Boston, May 1886. (*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 13 [1853]: ciii-cviii.)
- , "On the History of the Vedic Texts." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 4 (1854): 24562.
- , "On the Jaiminiya or Talavakara Brahmana." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 5 (1883) viii-xi.
- , "On the Main Results of the later Vedic Researches in Germany." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3 (1853): 289347.
- , "The Narrative Use of Imperfect and Perfect in the Brahmanas." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 23 (1892): 534.
- , *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*. New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1873.
- Winternitz, Maurice. *A History of Indian Literature*, trans. V. S. Sarma, vol 1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

Index

A

Adhvaryu, 75, 77, 78, 156n.168;

etymology of term, 154n.107

Adultery. *See* Wife

aditya. *See* Sun

Ādityas, 36, 67

Afterlife:

ascent and descent in, 115;

confusion regarding, 103, 156n.1;

determined by ritual, 2-3, 31, 36, 38-40, 50, 73, 105-108, 116, 118;

experienced in ritual, 113;

as integration with cosmos, 37, 40, 118;

spheres in, 32, 103, 104

Agni, 23, 36, 44, 52-53, 65-68, 97, 109, 114;

restores Prajapati, 97

Agnicayana, 4, 18, 68;

birth symbolism in, 89;

bird shape of altar, 88, 96, 155n.143;

complexity of 4, 18, 81-82;

controversies, 78, 85-86, 96;

and immortality, 116;

and knowledge, 56, 91, 117, 119;

number of bricks in, 93, 155n.122;

numeric symbolism of, 103, 145n.99;

officiants in, 78-80, 100;

origins of, 79, 150nn.36, 39, 152n.75;

place of in Vedic tradition, 56-57, 108, 116-117;

and Prajapati, 4, 58, 70, 93, 148n.141, 151n.39;

and representation of cosmos, 135n.112, 140n.25 157n.5;

and Soma rite, 79, 81-83, 100, 151nn.50, 51;

symbolic death in, 101, 112;

synthetic nature of, 18, 45, 147n.118, 148n.133.

See also Bricks; Cosmogony; Funeral Rite; Death; Healing; Satapatha Brahmana

Agnihotra, 29, 109

Agnistoma, 152n.63

anda. See Egg

Animals: as victims in sacrifice, 74-76, 81, 83-84, 92, 99, 152nn.54, 63.

See also Cow; Goat; Horse; *pasu*

Animism, 26, 134n.86

Anquetil-Duperron. *See* *Oupnek'hat*

antariksa, 48, 66

Antelope skin, 85, 87

antyesti. See Funeral rite

Aranyaka texts, 21-22, 131n.49

Artabhaga, 28, 31

Asadhi Sausromateya, 83

Ascent and descent. *See* Afterlife; Cycle of generation; Journey; Rebirth

Asiatick Researches, 128n.17

atman, 39, 78, 86, 101, 150n.32

B

bandha, 74, 149n.13

Bhattacharji, S., 145n.93

Bhrgu, 110, 159n.36

Birth:

continuum of, 113-114;

symbolism in Vedic ritual, 87, 89, 99, 106, 113, 156n.160.

See also Agnicayana; Death; Embryo; Funeral Rite; Sexual generation; Womb

Bloch, T., 158n.24

Bloomfield, M., 18

Brahma. *See* *brahman*

brahman:

- as cosmic foundation, 63-64, 66, 69, 93-95;
- identified with Veda, 64;
- meaning of, 64, 137n.148, 146n.112;
- world of (Brahma), 35, 37, 40, 95

Brahmana texts:

- and *bandhu*, 151n.48;
- contents of, 18, 42-43, 82, 120;
- depiction of cosmos, 103, 157n.3;
- emphasis on metaphysics, 17-18, 56;
- ethics in, 28-29, 30;
- etymologies in, 58, 65, 147n.122;
- history of in West, 125n.25;
- identifications in, 9, 18, 46, 64;
- importance of names in, 59;
- place of sacrifice in, 17;
- and popular belief, 27;
- syncretism in, 17, 58, 157n.4;
- style and compilation of, 9, 17, 70, 82;
- view of Veda, 64;
- Western deprecation of, 7-9, 16-19, 41, 121-122, 130nn.31, 33-34.

See also Brahmana and Upanisad texts Vedic texts

Brahmana and Upanisad texts:

- conjoint titles of, 22, 131n.49;
- continuity of, 21-22, 41, 118;
- distinction between, 120;
- idiom of, 3, 23;
- lineages in, 23;
- relationship of, 3, 7;
- relationship to Rgveda, 16, 19, 129n.22;
- Western view of, 3, 11, 13, 21, 41.

See also Brahmana texts; Upanisad texts; Vedic texts

Brahmans:

and Brahmanas, 27, 130n.27;

and appropriation of Vedic religion, 24;

British colonial view of, 129n.20;

profit motive of, 25, 27;

type of priest, 50

Breaths. *See prana*

Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, 7, 20, 23-24, 32, 35-36, 104, 133n.84;

Prajapati myth in, 153n.92.

See also Chandogya Upanisad; Satapatha Brahmana

Bricks:

breath-holders, 93;

perforated, 92;

as sacrificer's offspring, 87;

seed shedders (testicles), 92.

See also Agnicayana

Brown, W. N., 140n.31, 142n.52

C

Caland, W., 109, 111, 158n.24

Candramas, 23, 97.

See also Moon

carana, 138n.158

Chandogya Upanisad, 27, 32, 36, 38, 56, 120;

relationship to Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, 133n.84, 135n.118, 138n.155;

relationship to other Samavedic texts, 135n.120

Colebrooke, H. T., 127n.12, 128nn.17, 19

Collins, S., 157n.7

Converse, H. S., 150n.36

Cosmic man, 4;

as androgyne, 88;

Indic expressions of 45-46, 49;

and ritual theory, 4, 46.

See also Purusa Prajapati

Cosmogony:

according to Agnicayana, 60-69;

agnosticism regarding, 145n.92;

foam in, 64;

as model for sacrifice, 1, 45, 54;

Vedic motifs of, 61, 124n.2, 144n.86, 145n.90, 146n.118.

See also Indra; Rgveda; Ritual Sacrificer

Cosmology; correlation of man and cosmos in, 3-4;

and cosmography, 48-49;

problem of interpretation, 49, 103, 104, 140n.30;

transformations in, 47-49;

units of time in, 23, 103.

See also Rgveda; Satapatha; Brahmana

Cosmos:

anthropomorphic representation of, 50;

correlation to man, 52, 54-56, 68, 70;

division into mortal and immortal parts, 37, 72, 89, 148n.2, 157n.7;

dual nature of, 65, 68;

homologies of, 23;

inner nature of, 50, 53, 66-67;

man's integration with at death, 36-37, 134n.86;

spheres of (*loka*), 47, 48, 66, 92, 103, 135n.112, 136n.121, 140n.25, 147n.124, 155nn.132, 136.

See also Afterlife: Agnicayana; Brahmana texts; Cosmology; Death; Earth; Journey; Prajapati; Rgveda; Sacrificer; Satapatha Brahmana

Cow:

in the otherworld, 110;

skin of, 149n.19, 153n.84;

as victim in sacrifice, 72, 76, 83.

See also Animals

Cycle of generation, 98, 113, 159n.53;
linked to journey to otherworld, 114

D

daksina, 35-36, 76-77, 79, 85

Death, 101;

abstraction in ritual, 110, 112, 121;
and birth, 81, 124n.6;
circumvention of in ritual, 4, 46, 55, 56, 73, 80, 83, 110;
as a continuum, 106;
and dissolution into cosmos, 28;
in sacrifice, 1, 69, 75, 80, 106;
symbolism of in Agnicayana, 94;
and year, 89;
and this world, 72.

See also Agnicayana; Cosmos; Prajapati

Debt. *See rna*

Demerit. *See duskrta*

Deussen, P., 28, 128n.14, 131n.44;

view of Brahmanas and Upanisads, 20, 22, 24, 27, 42

devayana, 33;

and ritual activity, 34, 40-41, 115, 118-119

diksa, 18, 38, 85-86, 152n.66, 156n.160.

See also Initiation

Dubois, Abbe J. A., 12, 126nn.1, 2, 129n.20

duskrta, 31-32.

E

Earth:

as foundation of cosmos, 65, 69, 90;
as womb, 86

Edgerton, F., 132nn.54, 62

Egg, 99

cosmogonic, 65-66, 124n.2 146n.118

Eggeling, J., 9, 46, 58, 59, 79, 150n.39, 155n.122;

and translation of Satapatha Brahmana, 8, 10, 105-106, 126n.35, 148n.141, 150n.32, 151n.51, 152n.54, 154n.106

Eliade, M., 54, 55, 64, 103, 139n.5

Embryo, 33, 65, 87, 88, 99, 106, 113.

See also Birth Womb

Enlightenment: model of history, 129n.22

Ethics, 16, 29;

in Brahmanas, 13;

and origins of karma, 26-27.

See also Karma; Ritual

Evolution:

as theory of religion, 16, 26

F

Farquhar, 121-122

Fasting: nature of in sacrifice, 109, 159n.34

Fathers:

conflict with gods, 109-111, 159n.39;

condition of existence, 22;

realm of, 103;

sacrifices to, 109;

and south, 154n.112;

Fire altar. *See* Agnicayana

Fire pan (*ukh-a*), 86-88, 152n.75

Five fire doctrine, 33;

variants of, 136n.122

Foam, 64, 87

Funeral rite, 2;

and Agnicayana, 5;

birth symbolism in, 87;

as depicted in five fire doctrine, 33;

as initiation, 107;

and sacrifice, 107, 136n.124;

and secondary burial, 112, 159n.49.

See also Smasanacayana

G

garbha. *See* Embryo

Garhapatya, 89-90, 114

Gerow, E., 127n.8

Goat:

in Agnicayana, 83-84;

as prototypical victim, 84.

See also Animals

Gods:

conflict with fathers, 109-111, 159n.39;

immortal state of, 22, 114;

and north, 154n.112;

realm of, 103;

sacrifices to, 109

Gombrich, R., 140n.30

Gonda, J., 10, 30, 31, 37, 44, 54, 57, 59, 82, 105-106, 130n.31, 134nn.104, 107, 143n.62, 146n.116, 147n.122, 154n.107

Gosava rite, 29, 36:

supposed bestiality in, 30

H

Haug, M.:

edition of the Aitareya Brahmana, 125n.27

Head:

of animal victims, 92;

as microcosm of body, 53, 62, 68, 94

Heat, 60, 62, 63, 64, 80

Healing:

in Agnicayana, 81, 91, 92

Heesterman, J. C., 1, 5, 72, 77, 98, 101, 110, 141n.34, 142n.55, 157n.4, 159n.41

Hopkins, E. W., 130n.33

Horsch, P., 124n.12

Horse:

in sacrifice, 75, 83-84, 117.

See also Animals

Hubert, H., 75, 77, 81

Hume, R., 23, 124n.9

I

Indology: German, 128n.17;

nineteenth century, 10, 17, 27, 120, 121;

notion of Aryan, 6, 26, 125n.19;

and philology, 19.

See also Brahmana texts; Brahmana and Upanisad texts; Rgveda; Upanisad texts; Vedic texts

Indra, 44, 52, 141n.48;

and Rgvedic cosmogony, 54, 142n.52

Initiation, 38, 105-106, 157n.12. *See also* diksa

Interiorization. *See* Sacrifice Upanisad texts

Intermediate region. *See* antariksa

J

Jaiminiya Brahmana, 29, 33, 135n.120, 136n.122

Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana, 95, 106, 115, 132n.49, 137n.134, 138nn.155, 164

Journey: through cosmos, 95;

danger in, 158n.20;

to otherworld, 5, 114-115, 157n.3;

return from otherworld, 35;

in ritual, 90, 96, 99, 107, 113, 154nn.107, 109.

See also Cycle of generation

K

Karma: as doctrine, 6, 12, 102, 118;

classical formulation of, 31, 32, 39, 138n.157;

early statements of, 2, 7, 32, 37, 105-106;

elements of, 12;

extension beyond sacrifice, 39, 41;
 generalization of in
 Upanisads, 41, 118-119;
 origins in Brahmanas, 14;
 popular occurrence of, 12;
 problem of meaning, 12-13, 127n.5;
 role in separation of Brahmanas and Upanisads, 25, 27, 42, 119, 121;
 and sacrificial ritual, 30, 37, 134n.107;
 supposed moral content of, 16, 27, 28, 120, 135n.114;
 tribal origins of, 5-6;
 Western Indologists' view of, 2-3, 13, 124nn.9, 12.

See also Rebirth

Kaelber, W., 63

Kashikar, C. G., 150n.36

Keith, A. B., 24, 25, 26-30, 54, 119, 130n.27, 131n.44 135n.114, 144n.84, 152n.63;

biography of, 126n.36

Knipe, David, 49, 107, 120, 124n.9, 134n.86

Knowledge: and sacrifice, 20-21, 36, 38

Kopf, D., 128n.19, 129n.22

Ksatriyas: and origins of Upanisads, 24, 132n.62

L

Lanman, C. R., 19

loka. *See* Cosmos

Kuiper, F. B. J., 142n.52

Levi, S., 30, 54, 76, 142n.60, 149n.28

M

Macdonnel, A. A., 24

Mackie, J. L., 29

manas, 66.

See also Mind

Markandeya Purana, 138n.157

Martanda, 151n.41

Mauss, M., 75, 77, 81

Men: and east, 154n.112;

mortal condition of, 22, 99, 114;

original fellowship with gods, 100, 115

Merit, 35. See also *sukṛta*

Mind: and body, 50, 142n.50;

and vision of fire altar, 91

mithunam. See Sexual generation

Moon, 34, 36, 52-53, 65-68, 141n.48, 147n.124

Morality. See Ethics

mṛtyu. See Death

Müller, Max, 7, 9, 11, 19, 25, 126n.2, 128n.14, 129n.24, 130nn.33, 34.

influence of, 8, 125n.30.

view of Buddhism, 131n.38

page_178

Page 179

N

Naciketas, 156n.1

Nonexistence, 60-61, 145nn.90, 92-93

Numbers: in Vedic thought, 49, 141nn.34, 45

O

Oldenberg, H., 24, 132n.60

Oblation: movement between worlds, 5, 6. See also Cycle of generation Journey

O'Flaherty, Wendy, 1, 5, 64; 124n.6, 125n.30, 127n.127, 140n.31, 144n.87, 149n.19

and method of interpretation, 9

Oupnek'hat, 14, 128n.13

P

pañcagnividya. See Five fire doctrine

Parikṣitas, 36, 104-105, 106

parokṣa, 149nn.13, 22.

See also *bandha*

Parpola, A., 158n.25

pasu: mistranslated, 131n.44.

See also Animals

Pasubandha, 18, 84-85, 152n.62

Path of the gods. *See devayana*

Path of the fathers. *See pitryana*

pitryana, 33-35, 38, 113, 137n.150;

and ritual activity, 34, 40-41, 115, 118-119

Poleman, H., 158n.27

Prajapati:

androgyny of, 153n.92;

and Brahman, 137n.148;

cosmogonic motifs in, 61;

and death, 72;

displacement of Purusa, 4, 57-59, 63, 70, 80;

division into mortal and immortal parts, 37, 101;

and existent cosmos, 61;

falls apart, 97;

and levels of cosmos, 93-95, 155n.132;

meaning of name, 60;

and men, gods and fathers, 22;

as model for sacrifice, 18, 40, 70, 91, 98;

"popular" origin of, 57, 59;

phases of creation, 63, 97-98;

pregnancy of, 67;

resemblance to Purusasukta, 60;

and ritual theory, 17, 18, 30, 37, 2134n.86;

and sexual generation, 4, 59-60, 63, 65, 80;

unique character of, 4, 50.

See also Agni; Agnicayana; Brhadaranyaka Upanisad; Cosmicman; Purusa; Sacrificer; Satapatha Brahmana; Upanisad texts

prana, 23, 56, 62, 92-93, 97, 101, 142n.49; 146n.103

Priestcraft, 3, 15, 17, 19, 25, 129n.24

Priests. *See* Sacrificer; Adhvaryu

prthivi. *See* Earth

Purusa, 49-55;

and Brahman, 137n.148;

distinct from Prajapati, 4;

and ritual theory, 54.

See also Cosmic man

Purnsamedha, 55, 69, 143nn.61, 62

Purusasukta, 134n.86, 141n.45, 145n.98;

associated with Purusamedha, 55;

cosmic image in, 52-53, 68;

as model, 54-55, 69, 145n.88;

phases of creation in, 50-51;

in Vajasaneyi Samhita, 142nn.48, 49

Q

Quarters, 36, 53, 66-67, 141n.48, 147n.124

R

Radhakrishnan, S., 137n.149

Rajasuya, 139n.10

Rebirth, 95;

and caste, 39, 41, 115, 138n.164;

and cosmic man, 26;

and descent from otherworld, 115;

as dog or outcaste, 39;

as god, father or *gandharva*, 31-32, 37;

as plant or animal, 27, 31;

precursors of, 25;

in ritual, 30, 54, 105, 113-114.

See also Journey

Renou, L., 10, 144n.87

Rgveda, 45;

cosmogonies in, 54, 139n.7, 142n.52;

cosmology in, 47, 103, 140n.31, 157n.3;
 depiction of cosmos in, 47;
 funeral rites in, 112, 158n.27;
 hymn 10.129, 51, 60-61, 145nn.92, 93;
 mythology in, 144n.87;
 Purusa in, 49;
 tenth book of, 139n.7;
 triadic imagery in 47-48, 140n.24, 141n.45;
 Western exaltation of, 15
See

page_179

Page 180

also Brahmana and Upanisad texts

Ritual: cycles in, 98;

and disregard for ethics, 29-30;
 effects of, 29, 116;
 exactitude in, 30, 76;
 good and bad acts in, 29, 31, 134n.108, 138n.158;
 generalized into types, 118-119;
 hierarchy of, 107, 116, 152n.62;
 problem of meaning in, 110;
 as repetition of cosmogony, 1, 44-45;
 as self-contained world, 1;
 substitution in, 1, 77;
 symbolic death in, 106;
 theory of, 4, 44, 76, 84, 134n.86.

See also Sacrifice

rna, 72, 73

Rosen, Frederick, 127n.12

Roth, Rudolph von, 15, 16, 127n.12

Rsis, 61-62, 64, 145n.94;

identifies with non-existence, 61

rtvij. See Sacrificer Adhvaryu

Rudra, 23, 148n.133

S

Sacred Books of the East: and transliteration, 126n.34

Sacrifice:

accrual of benefits from, 33, 77-78, 107;

area of, 74, 78;

creative nature of, 44;

danger in, 46;

development of, 45;

and establishment of *loka*, 32, 45, 138n.163;

exchange in, 72, 80, 100;

expansion of, 38, 119-121, 138n.153;

implements in, 74, 91, 155n.122;

interiorization of, 34, 36, 40, 47, 118;

life as, 38, 120-121;

mistakes in, 29, 134n.98;

to please the gods, 99-100;

obligation to, 4, 55, 73;

patterns of, 20-21, 34, 39-40, 142n.55;

as replica of cosmos, 1, 101;

and sacrificer, 46, 139n.15;

substitution in, 74, 83;

synthetic nature of, 18;

theory of, 45, 55;

violence in, 72, 75, 110.

See also Ritual.

Sacrificer:

ambiguous position at sacrifice, 75-78;

identified with cosmos, 18, 80, 115;

identified with Prajapati, 18, 63, 68, 70, 91, 93, 118, 144n.82;

identified with sacrifice, 46, 80, 113;

identified with animal victims, 74, 77;

relationship to officiants, 3, 33, 42, 74, 77-78, 90, 107, 137n.134, 156n.168;

and replication of cosmogony, 60

Sacrificial gift. *See daksina*

Sacrificial stake. *See yupa*

Said, E., 15, 125n.19

saloka, 3, 32;

and sacrifice, 44, 69, 71

Sandilya, 24, 78

Satapatha Brahmana, 1, 8, 36, 74;

Agnicayana section in, 81-82 151n.44;

and Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, 7, 20, 22-23, 131nn.45, 49;

cosmology in, 49;

depiction of cosmos in, 48, 103, 124n.2;

dominance of Prajapati in, 58, 70;

interpretation of, 8;

pentadic imagery in, 48-49;

Purusamedha in, 55.

See also Eggeling, J.

Sayana, 62, 152n.54

Schelling, Friedrich, 14, 128n.14

Schopenhauer, Arthur, 14, 128n.17

Sheep: as victim in sacrifice, 84

Semen, 88;

and oblation, 113;

emitted into fire pan, 89-90;

of sacrificer, 91-92, 154n.106

Sexual generation, 63, 65;

of sacrificer and altar, 70, 86, 88.

See also Birth; Cycle of generation; Embryo; Womb

Sharma, Ursula, 12

Soma, 33, 152nn.62-63, 159n.53.

See also Agnicayana

Smasanacayana:

completes Agnicayana, 108, 111, 117;

form of, 112, 116-117;

incorporation of sacrificer in, 117;

reenacts Agnicayana, 112;

as sacrifice to fathers, 109.

See also Funeral rite

Smith, B., 99, 114, 158n.20

Speech. *See vac*

Staal, F., 81, 152n.61, 155n.122

Suicide:

in sacrifice, 55, 72, 142n.60.

See also Death Ritual Sacrifice Sacrificer

sukṛta, 31-32