



Vedic "Monotheism"

One only Fire is kindled manifold, one only Sun is present to one and all, one only Dawn illuminates this all: that which is only One becomes this all.

Rg Veda viii.58.2

Modern scholarship for the most part postulates only a gradual development in Indian metaphysics of a notion of a single principle, of which principle the several gods (*devāh*, *viśve devāh*, etc.) are, as it were, the powers, operative aspects, or personified attributes. But as Yāska expresses it, "It is because of His great divisibility (*mahā-bhāgyāt*) that they apply many names to Him, one after another. . . . The other gods (*devāh*) come to be (*bhavanti*) submembers (*pratyangāni*) of the One Spirit (*ekasyātmanah*) . . . their becoming is a birth from one another, they are of one another's nature; they originate in function (*karma*);¹ the Spirit is their origin . . . Spirit (*ātman*) is the whole of what a God is" (*Nirukta* vii.4). Similarly, BD 1.70-74: "Because of the magnitude of the Spirit (*mahātmyāt*) a diversity of names is given (*vidhiyātē*) . . .² ac-

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¹ It is, in fact, *Viśvakarmā*, the Doer of All Things, that gives their "names," that is to say, their individual being, to the gods, and is therefore called *dēvānam nāmadhāh*, x.82.3. [The functions are "merely the names of Brahma's acts," BU 1.47: "all functionalities arise from the Spirit," *ibid.* 1.6.3; "all action stems from Brahma," BG iii.5; cf. Meister Eckhart, Evans ed., II, 175].

² [Almost verbally identical with Jan van Ruysbroeck, "because of his incomprehensible nobility and sublimity, which we cannot rightly name nor wholly express, we give Him all these names," *Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, XXV. "For I deem it impossible that He who is the maker of the universe in all its greatness, the Father or Master of all things, can be named by a single name; I hold that He is nameless, or rather, that all names are names of Him. For He in his unity is all things; so that we must either call all things by his name, or call him by the name of all things," Hermes, *Aeternus* iii.20A.

"He alone has the spirit of Christ who has changed his forms and his names

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according to the distribution of their spheres (*sthānavibhāgēna*). It is inasmuch as they are 'differentiations,' 'presences' (*vibhūtiḥ*),³ that the names are innumerable. But the shapers (*ḥavayāh*) in their incantations (*man-trēsu*) say that the godhoods (*dēvatāḥ*) have a common source; they are called by different names according to the spheres in which they are established.⁴ Some say that they are participants therein (*tad bhaktāh*), and that such is their derivation; but as regards the aforesaid Trinity of world-rulers, it is well understood that the whole of their participation (*bhaktih*) is in the Spirit (*ātman*)."⁵

from the beginning of the world and so reappeared again and again in the world" (Clement, *Clementine Homilies* iii.20, cf. BG iv.8, *sambhavāmi yuge yuge*). "Each angelical prince is a property out of the voice of God, and bears the great name of 'God'" (Jacob Boehme, *Signatura rerum* xvi.5). Cf. JUB iii.1, where the Gale of the Spirit (*vāyu*) is called "the one entire godhood" (*eka . . . kṛtinā devatā*), the rest are "semigodhoods."]

³ [The Gale is omnipresent (*vāyur ākāśam anuvibhavati*), JUB iv.12.10; and so, as Krishna says, "There is no end to my divine presences" (*nāntōsti mama divyānam vibhūtinām*, BG x.40). It is to these "presences" or "powers" that the many names are given.]

⁴ [Cf. PB xx.15.2-2 where the spheres of action of Agni, Vāyu and Āditya are called their "lots" or "shares" (*bhaktih*).]

⁵ An ontology of this kind is not properly to be called pantheistic or monistic. This would only be legitimate if, when the essence has been analyzed into its many aspects, there were no remainder; on the contrary, the whole of Indian scripture, beginning with the *Rg Veda*, consistently affirms that what remains exceeds the whole of that which suffices to fill up these worlds, and that the source remains unaffected by whatever is produced from it or returned to it at the beginning or end of an aeon. The view that all this is a theophany does not mean that *all* of Him is seen; on the contrary, "only a quarter," so to speak, of his abundance (RV x.90.3, cf. MU vi.35, BG x.42) suffices to fill up the worlds of time and space, however far they may extend, however long they may endure.

Cf. Whitby in the preface to the English version of René Guénon, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le védanta* (Paris, 1925): "It is to be hoped that this book will give the *coup de grâce* to the absurd and well-nigh unaccountable prejudice which persistently depreciates the *Védic* doctrine on account of its alleged 'pantheism.' This parrot-cry . . . ; and Lacombe, in the preface to René Grousset, *Les Philosophes indiennes* (Paris, 1931) "Il ne faut pas conclure, à notre avis, que le Védanta soit panthéiste, ou même moniste, surtout au sens que ces mots ont chez nous. Il se nomme lui-même *advaita*, non-dualiste. Sa préoccupation d'assurer la transmission de Brahma non moins que son immanence, de maintenir l'intériorité de son Gloire, est manifesté. Position irréductible . . ."; and Coomaraswamy, *A New Approach to the Vedas: An Essay in Translation and Exegesis*, 1933, p. 42.

It may be added that similar objection can be made to the word "Monotheism" in the title of the present essay. *Tad ekam* in RV x.129.2 is much rather "Supreme Identity" than "only God." It is as "only God," with aspects as many as the points of view from which He is regarded, that "That One" becomes intelligible; but

The foregoing passages illustrate the normal method of theology in any discussion *de divinis nominibus*, when a recognition of the various operations of a single principle gives rise to the superficial appearance of a polytheism. In Christianity, for example, "we do not say the *only God*, for deity is common to several" (*Sum. Theol.* 1.31.2c); still, "To create beings belongs to God according to His own being, that is His essence, which is common to the three Persons. Hence to create is not peculiar to any one Person, but is common to the whole Trinity" (*Sum. Theol.* 1.45.6c); and it is well understood that "Although the names of God have one common reference, still because the reference is made under many and different aspects, these names are not synonymous. . . . The many aspects of these names are not empty and vain, for there corresponds to all of them one single reality represented by them in a manifold and imperfect manner" (*Sum. Theol.* 1.13.2 ad 2).⁶ [Cf. Śāyana on SB 1.6.1.20: Prajāpati is inexplicit because He is essentially all the gods and hence it cannot be said of Him that "He is this or that" (*ayam asāvīti*) but only that "He is." And also Hermes Trismegistos: "Are we to say that it is right that the name of 'God' (*θεός, deus*) should be assigned to Him, or that of Maker (*πρωτότης, kārya*) or that of Father (*πατήρ, pītr*, Prajāpati)? Nay, all three names are His; He is rightly named 'God' by reason of His power, and 'Maker' by reason of the work He does, and Father by reason of His goodness," *Lib.* xiv.4.] In the same way, Plotinus: "This life of the ensouled stars is one identical thing, since they are one in the All-Soul, so that their very spatial movement is pivoted upon identity and resolves itself into a movement not spatial but vital," *Enneads* iv.4.8.

That these conceptions of the identity of the First Principle with all its powers are current in the Brāhmanas and the *Atharva Veda* is well

what That One may be in itself can only be expressed in terms of negation, for example, "without duality." See Erwin Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (New Haven, 1940), p. 105.

⁶ [In "dividing Himself (*ātmānam vibhāṣya*) to fill these worlds" (MU vi.26, etc.), He remains "undivided in these divisions" (*avibhāṣta vibhāṣeṣu*, BG xviii.20, cf. xiii.16), "unmeasured, i.e., im-material, amongst the measured" (*vimīc'mīta*, AV x.7.39; *amātra*, BU iii.8.8, etc.); the immanent gods, the Spirations (*prānāḥ*), are "measures of Fire" (*tejo-mātrāḥ*, BU iv.4.1), viz. "the ever-lasting Fire, in measures being kindled and in measures dying out" (Heraclitus, *Fr.* 30). "In other words, there are not in Him many existences, but only one sole existence, and his various names and attributes are merely his modes and aspects" (Jāmi, *Lawātīh* xv).]

known. There may be cited, for example, ŚB x.5.2.16, "As to this they say, 'Is then Death one or many?' One should answer, 'One and many.' For inasmuch as He is That (Person in the Sun), He is one; and inasmuch as He is multiply distributed (*bahudhā vyāvīṣīṭh*) in His children, He is many," to be read together with verse 20: "As He is approached, even such He becomes (*yathōpāsate tad ēva bhavati*);"⁷ and AV viii.9.26, "One Bull, one Prophet, one Horse, a single Ordinance, one simplex Yakṣa in His ground, one Season that is never emptied out"; and AV 1.12.1, where Agni is described as "One energy whose procession is threefold (*ekam ojas tredhā vicakrame*)."

It is more often overlooked that the same point of view is so explicitly and repeatedly affirmed in the *Ṛg Veda* as to leave no room for any misunderstanding. A full discussion of the Vedic formulation of the problem of the one and the many would require an extended study of Vedic exemplarism (see Coomaraswamy, "Vedic Exemplarism" [in the present volume—ed.]), but we may call attention to the expression *viśvam ekam*, "integral multiplicity," in RV iii.54.8. All that we propose now is to assemble some of the most conspicuous of the Vedic texts in which the identity of the one and the many is categorically affirmed; adding that, even were none of these explicit statements available, the law expressed in them could have been independently deduced from an analysis of the functions attributed to the various powers, for although these functions are characteristic of particular deities, they are never entirely peculiar to any one of them.⁸

⁷ [E.g., AB iii.4, "In that one resorts to (*upāsate*) Him as one to be made a friend of (*mitrakṛtyava*), that is his form as the Friend (*mitra*)."] In the *Kāilyamālai*, Śiva is addressed as "Thou that take the forms imagined by thy worshippers" (see *Ceylon National Review*, January 1907, p. 285).]

⁸ Max Müller invented the term "henotheism" to describe this method, which he apparently imagined to have been peculiar to the Vedas. Christianity, as a matter of fact, is "henotheistic" in so far as it affirms that whatever is done by one of the Persons is done by all, and *vice versa*. A fully developed "henotheism" is even more characteristic of Stoicism and of Philo, cf. Émile Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1925), pp. 112, 113: "La conception de dieux myrionymes, d'un dieu unique auquel sous ses différentes formes s'adressent les prières des initiés était familière au stoïcisme . . . de même que dans les hymnes orphiques, la toute-puissance de chaque Dieu n'empêche pas leur hiérarchie, de même ici [that is, according to Philo] les êtres sont classés bien souvent hiérarchiquement comme s'il s'agissait d'êtres distincts." [And Plotinus, v.8.9, "He and all have one existence, while each again is distinct. It is distinction by state without interval: there is no outward form to set one here and another there and to prevent any from being an entire identity; yet there is no sharing of parts from one to another. Nor

Familiar passages, often dismissed as "late," include RV 1.164.46: "The priests refer in many different ways (*bahudhā vadanti*) to That that is but one, they call Him Agni, Yama, Mātariśvān: they call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, who is the heavenly eagle (*suparna*) Garutmān"; RV x.114.5, "Ecstatic shapers (*viprāḥ kavayah*) conceive of Him in many ways (*bahidhā kalpayanti*) the eagle that is one"; and x.90.11, where, after the First Sacrificers have divided up (*vyadadhuh*) the Person, the question is posed in *brahmōdaya* fashion, "How many-fold did they think Him out?" (*kaidhā vyaikalpayan*).⁹ It is precisely this goal (*artham*) of being made to dwell in many places (*bahudhā nivīṣta*) that Agni dreads, as He lingers in the darkness (*tamasī kṣeṣi*, x.51.4-5), although, in fact, even while He proceeds He still remains within (*anu agrām carati kṣeti budhnaḥ*, iii.55.7 = *kṣyne budhne*, iv.17.14 = *vṛṣabhasya nīḥ*, iv.1.12, etc.). As Eckhart expresses it, "the Son remains within as essence and goes forth as person . . . the divine nature steps forth into relation of otherness, other but not another, for this distinction is rational, not real." "To the Shapers He is manifested as the Sun of men" (*āvīr . . . abhavat sūryō nr̥ṣ*, RV 1.146.4).¹⁰ Cf. Plotinus, v.8.9, "He who is the one God . . . what place can be named to which He does not reach?"

Equally explicit, however, are the statements scattered through the other books. In particular, He is often said to have two different forms, according to His being in the Day or Night, and this is "as He wills" (*yathā vāsam*, RV iii.48.4, vii.101.3; cf. x.168.4 and AV vi.72.1). When this is expressed as "Now He becometh sterile (*starīr u tvad bhavati*) now begets (*sūte u*)," vii.101.3, the latter expression, like His designation as *sūh* in 1.146.5, is as much as to say *savitā bhavati*, "He becomes Savitṛ." Cf. iii.55.19 and x.10.5, where Tvaṣṭī and Savitṛ are identified by ap-

is each of these divine wholes a power in fragment . . . the divine is one all-power." The second passage might have been written of the Christian Trinity.] Here also, then, we meet with that superficial appearance of polytheism by which the apologist of some other religion than that under discussion is so conveniently deceived, the Muslim for example, when he calls the Christian doctrine of the Trinity "polytheistic."

⁹ Vāc, the Magna Mater, is similarly "divided" by the gods, and made to occupy multifarious stations (*mā devā vyadādhuḥ pururā bhūrīstātāvām bhāryā-veśy-antiṃ*, RV x.125.3). It is made abundantly clear throughout that the divine unity is essential, the multiplicity conceptual.

¹⁰ John 1:4, *et vita erat lux hominūm*. [The Spiritual Sun (of RV 1.115.1, etc.) is the "Light of lights" (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*, RV 1.113.1, BU iv.4.16, etc.); "The bright Light of lights is what the knowers of the Spirit (*ātma-vidāḥ*) know," Mund. Up. ii.2.10); the "Father of lights" (James 1:17).]

position. In RV iii.20.3 and viii.93.17, Agni and Indra are called polymorphous (*bhūrīni-nāma, puru-nāma*) and in ii.1, Agni is addressed by the names of nearly all the powers, and there are countless passages in which Indra is a designation of the Sun. In viii.11.8, Agni is "to be seen in many different places, or aspects" [cf. 1.79.5 and vi.10.2, Agni *purvanīkah*.] Although His semblance is the same in many places (*pururā hi sadṛṣṇ asi*, viii.11.8, 1.94.7), yet His becoming is manifold (*pururā . . . abhavat* 1.146.5), and He is given many names, for "Even as He showeth, so is He called" (*yādṛg ēva dādṛśē tādṛg ucyatē*, v.44.6),¹¹ of which SB x.5.2.20, cited above, is hardly more than a paraphrase. RV 1.146.5, cited above, is based on innumerable texts scattered throughout the *Ṛg Veda*, e.g., iii.5.4 and 9, where Agni is identified with Mitra, Varuṇa, and Mātariśvān; in iv.42.3, Varuṇa identifies Himself with Indra and Tvaṣṭī; similarly in v.3.1-2, Agni is identified with Mitra, Varuṇa, and Indra. Nor is this a matter of mere suggestion; the particular points of view from which the different names are appropriate is carefully stated.

[In the same way, if Agni as the Sun is the "face" or "point" (*anīkā*) of the gods (RV 1.115.1, vii.88.2, etc.), and at the same time logically "many-faced" (*pūrvanīkah*), "this does not put something real in the eternal God, but only something according to our way of thinking" (*Sum. Theol.* iii.35.5c), for "Men in their sacrificial worship have imposed upon Thee, Agni, the many faces" (*bhūrīni hi tvē dādhire anīkāgne devasya yājñavo janāsaḥ*, RV iii.19.4). The "faces" or "points" of the solar Agni are in fact his "rays," those very rays by which the Spiritual Sun supports the being of all things, but by which the solar Gateway is concealed (JUB 1.3.6), he who would enter in praying, accordingly, that the rays may be dispersed (Īśā Up. 15, etc.). Otherwise expressed, Agni is the Tree of Life (*vanaspati, passim*), "The 'other Fires' are thy branches" (RV 1.59.1): "all other Agnis stem from thee, O Agni"; "All these deities are forms of Agni" (AB iii.4).¹²]

¹¹ As in *Sum. Theol.* 1.13.1 ad 3, "Pronomina vero demonstrativa dicuntur de Deo, secundum quod faciunt demonstrationem ad id quod intelligitur, non ad id quod sentitur. Secundum enim quod a nobis intelligitur, secundum hoc sub demonstrationem cadit."

¹² E.g., AV xiii.3.13, "This Agni becomes Varuṇa in the evening; in the morning he becomes Mitra," etc.; JUB iii.21.1-2, where the Gale (Vāyu) blows from the five quarters—east, south, west, north, and above—respectively as Indra, Īśana, Varuṇa, Soma, and Prajāpati; JUB iv.5.1, where Agni, "Varuṇa's messenger," becomes Savitṛ at Dawn, Indra Vāikuṅṭha at noon, Yama at night; J iv.137, "Sujampati in heaven proclaimed, as Maghavā on earth is named."

In many cases the verb *bhū*, to "become," as it occurs in the *Bṛāhmaṇa* and *Nirukta* texts already cited, is employed in the *Rg Veda* to denote in the same sense the passing over from one name and function to another. For example, RV III.5.4, "Agni becometh (*bhāvati*) Mitra when enkindled, Mitra the priest; and Varuṇa becometh Jātavedās"; cf. IV.42.3, "I, Varuṇa, am Indra," and V.3.1-2, "Thou, Agni, art Varuṇa at birth, (*bhuvō varuṇo yad ṛtāya veṣi*, x.8.5), becomest (*bhāvati*) Mitra when enkindled. In thee, O Son of Strength, abide the Universal Gods; Indra art thou to the mortal worshipper. With respect to maidens thou becomest Aryaman, and as Svadhāvan bearest a secret name" (*nāma . . . guhyam*), probably as Trita of I.163.3, "Trita art thou by the interior operation (*asi . . . tritoguhyēna vratēna*)."¹³ Again, RV III.29.11, "As Titan Germ he hight Tanūnapāt,¹³ when born abroad is Narasāṅsa, when fashioned in the Mother he becometh Mātariśvān, the Gale of the Spiritus in its course" (*tānūnapāt ucyate garbha āsuro narasāṅso bhāvati yad viyāyate mātariśvā yad amimīta mātari vātasya sargo [garbha] abhavat sarīmanī*, cf. III.5.9). That Spiritus is indeed Varuṇa's own Essence (*ātma te vāta*, VII.87.2), and the breath of Vāc (x.125.8), a gale whose form is never seen, but is the Essence (*ātmā*) of all the gods, moving as it listeth (x.168.4).

To the foregoing passages, in which the diversified effects of what is really a single operation are considered, may be added RV VI.47.18, "He is the counterform of every form, it is that form of His that we should look upon; Indra, by virtue of His magic powers proceeds as multiform" (*rūpam rūpam pratirūpam babhūva tad asya rūpam cakṣanāya, indrō māyābhīḥ purūrūpa īyate*), a passage closely corresponding to Eckhart's "single form that is the form of many different things," resuming the scholastic doctrine of exemplarism. And whereas in x.5.1 Agni alone is *ṛtupati*, in RV VI.9.5, "The Several Gods with one common mind and common will unerring move upon the single season" (*ekam ṛtum*, cf. *ēka ṛtu* in AV VIII.9.26, cited above), closely corresponding to *Sum. Theol.* III.32, I ad 3, where what is done by one of the Persons of the Trinity is said to be done by all, "because there is one nature and one will."

SB VIII.7.3.10, "Yonder Sun strings these worlds upon his Spirit as upon

¹³ The name Tanūnapāt, "Grandson of Himself," formulates the well-known doctrine that "Agni is kindled by Agni" (RV I.12.6, VIII.43.14), according to which in ritual the new Gārhapatya must be lit from the old. Cf. *Sum. Theol.* III.32a ad 1, "the taking itself (i.e., the assumption of human nature, taking birth) is attributed to the Son," i.e., it is the Son's own (*ab-royerōs*) act as well as that of the other Persons.

a thread," BG VII.7, "All this is threaded upon me," and x.20, "I am the Spirit seated in the heart of all beings," merely repeat the thought of RV I.115.1, "The Sun is the Spirit (*ātman*) of all that is moving or at rest." In x.121.2, Hiranyagarbha (Agni, Prajāpati), is called the "giver of Spirit," (*ātmadā*), and it is in this sense that Agni in I.149.3 is "of hundred-fold Essence" (*śatātmā* [cf. *bhūri nāma vandamāno dadhāi*, v.3.10]. In x.51.7 Agni is called upon to give the gods their "share" (*bhāgam*); that is his particular function as priest.

It is thus clear enough that the *Nirukta* and the *Bṛhad Dēvatā* are fully justified in saying that the gods are participants (*bhākta*) in the divine Essence or spiration; even the phraseology of the Vedic *mantras* is retained by the expositors. The reference to "participation" leads us to the consideration of Vedic Bhaga, later *Bhagavān*. Bhaga is not a personal name, but rather a general designation of the active power in any of his aspects, as the "Free Giver" or "Sharer-out," who makes his *bhāktas* to participate in his riches. These riches can be only the aspects of his Essence, for assuredly we cannot think of deity as possessing anything more than what He himself is; "Sharing out himself, He fills these worlds full" (*ātmānam vibhāya pūrayati imān lokān*). This last is indeed an Upaniṣadic text (MU VI.26), but the concept is Vedic. Bhaga is, in fact, referred to by apposition as the "Dispenser" (*vibhakti*, RV v.46.6); and *bhāga* is "share" or "dispensation," as in II.17.7, addressed to Indra, "I pray thee, Bhaga . . . measure out, bring forward, give me that share (*bhāgam*) whereby the body is empowered (*māmaha*)," where *bhāgam* = *amṛtasya bhāgam*, in I.164.21; cf. also VIII.99.3, "Depending upon him, as upon the Sun, the Several (*viśve*, sc. *devah*) have participated in what is Indra's"; I.68.2, where in a laud addressed to Agni, the Several (*viśve*, sc. *devāh*) are said to "participate in thy deity" (*bhājanta devatvam*); VII.81.2 has the prayer at dawn, "May we be associated in participation" (*sam bhakṣēna gamemahi*). From these passages it is sufficiently plain that *bhāga* and *vibhakti* are the dispenser or giver, who bestows himself or his substance; *sambhāja*, the participant who shares in the gift; *bhāga*, *bhākṣa*, and *bhākta* the share that is given or received. While these are Vedic expressions, *bhakti*, the act of distribution, or making to partake of what is given, and *bhākta* as the synonym of *vibhakti*, the giver, occur only later.

The vexed problem of the "origin of the *bhakti* movement" need never, perhaps, have been posed, if renderings such as these had been retained

in the translation of later texts, especially that of *Bhagavad Gītā*. *Bhākta* in the *Rg Veda* may be either the share of "treasure" obtained by the sacrificer from the deity (iv.1.10, *ratnam devabhaktam*, etc.), or, conversely, the share that is given or appointed to the deities by the sacrificer (i.91.1, *pitaro . . . devesu ratnam abhijanta dhīrāt*), [and typically by Agni as sacrificial priest (*hotr*), "Convey thou graciously unto the gods their share (*bhāgam*) of the oblation" (x.51.7): *Ita missa est!*]. In the latter case the sacrificer or sacrificial priest is the *vibhakter*, and the substitution of *bhākta* for the Vedic *vibhakter* introduces no new conception.

Bhakti implies devotion, because all giving presupposes love: it does not follow that *bhakti* should be translated by "love." It is true that the *bhakti-mārga* is also the *prēma-mārga*, the passive "Way of Love," as distinguished from the *jñāna-mārga*, the active "Way of Gnosis"; but that the expressions *bhakti-mārga* and *prēma-mārga* have a common reference does not make them synonymous (expressions are only "synonymous" when they refer to the same thing *under the same aspect*). It can hardly be denied that the *pitaraḥ* who in RV i.91.1, *abhijanta*, were *bhaktas* in the later sense, or that theirs was a *bhakti-mārga*. We should render *bhakti-mārga* "Way of Dedication" or "Way of Devotion" rather than "Way of Love." It is true in the same way that "participation" implies "love," and *vice versa*, since a love that does not participate in the beloved is by no means "love," but rather "desire." Love and participation are nevertheless logically differentiated conceptions, each of which plays its own part in the definition of the devotional act; and when the two expressions are confused in an equivocal rendering, not only are these shades of meaning lost, but at the same time the evidence of the continuity of Vedic with later thought is concealed, and an unreal problem is evoked.

We then wish to express ourselves as in full agreement with the views of Franklin Edgerton, who concluded that "everything contained in at least the older Upaniṣads, with almost no exceptions, is not new to the Upaniṣads, but can be found set forth, or at least *very* clearly foreshadowed, in the older Vedic texts,"¹⁴ and those of Maurice Bloomfield, who argued "that *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa* are for the least part chronological distinctions; that they represent two modes of literary activity, and two modes of literary speech, which are largely contemporaneous. . . . Both forms existed together, for aught we know, from the earliest times; only the redaction of the *mantra* collections seems on the whole to have preceded the redaction of the *Brāhmaṇas*. . . . The hymns of the *Rg Veda*,

¹⁴ JAOS, XXXVI (1917), 197.

like those of the other three Vedas, were liturgical from the very start. This means that they form only a fragment . . . late texts and commentaries may contain the correct explanation";¹⁵ Bloomfield also, with reference to the oldest parts of the *Rg Veda*, calls it "the last precipitate, with a long and tangled past behind it of a literary activity of great and indefinite length."¹⁶

We are in agreement with Alfred Jeremias, when he says in the Foreword to his *Altorientalische Geisteskultur* (Berlin, 1929): "Die Menschheitsbildung ist ein einheitliches Ganzes, und in den verschiedenen Kulturen findet man die Dialekte der einen Geistesprache"; with Carl Anders Scharbau (*Die Idee der Schöpfung in der vedischen Literatur*, Stuttgart, 1932), "die Tiefe und Grösse der theologischen Erkenntnis des Rgvedas keineswegs hinter der des Vedānta zurücksteht";¹⁷ and finally with Sayana, that none of the Vedic references are historical.

It is precisely the fact that the Vedic incantations are liturgical that makes it unreasonable to expect from them a systematic exposition of the philosophy they take for granted; if we consider the *mantras* by themselves, it is as if we had to deduce the Scholastic philosophy only from the libretto of the Mass. Not that this would be impossible, but that we should be accused of reading into the Mass meanings that could not possibly have been present to the mentality prevailing in the "Dark Ages," of yielding, as Professor Keith expresses it (who cannot himself be accused of any such weakness), to "our natural desire . . . to find reason prevailing in a barbarous age." In fact, however, the *mantras* and the Latin hymns alike are so closely wrought, their symbolism is employed with such mathematical exactitude (Emile Mâle speaks of Christian symbolism as a "calculus"), that we cannot possibly suppose that their authors did not understand their own words; it is *we* who misunderstand, if we insist on reading algebra as though it were arithmetic. All that we can learn from literary history is that the doctrines which are taken for granted in the *mantras* were not, perhaps, published until after a certain amount of linguistic change had already taken place; we may find some new words, but we do not meet with new ideas. It is our own fault if we cannot see that Mitrāvarunau, of whom the latter is "the immortal brother of the mortal" former, are none other than the *apara* and the *para* Brahman to whom the Upaniṣads refer as mortal and immortal respectively.

¹⁵ JAOS, XV (1893), 144.

¹⁷ P. 168, n. 166.

¹⁶ JAOS, XXIX (1908), 288.

