



**THE
DEVIL
& THE
GODDESS**

Gyrus

THE DEVIL & THE GODDESS

MEDITATIONS ON BLOOD,
SERPENTS & ANDROGYNY

*That which an age feels to be evil is
usually an untimely after-echo of that
which was formerly felt to be good—the
atavism of an older ideal.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Published by Dreamflesh

BM 2374

London, WC1N 3XX

England

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First published as a booklet under the name Samuel Lawson, The Unlimited Dream Company, Leeds, 1997

Second edition (revised) published by The Unlimited Dream Company, Leeds, 1998

Third edition published by Norlonto, London, 2000

Thanks for inspiration and help: Chris Knight, Michael Dames, Phil Hine, Zwee, Julian, John Eden, the Neolithic residents of the Marlborough Downs & Rombald's Moor

INTRODUCTION

THE FOLLOWING WRITINGS began as a short article written in reaction to numerous interviews I had read with ‘Satanic’ or ‘black metal’ bands (in *Esoterra* magazine). I got very tired of their knee-jerk social Darwinism, their philosophy of “the strong over the weak”. Metal bands will never be the best exponents of any philosophy, and Satanism shouldn’t be judged according to their interviews. Nevertheless, their simplistic view of nature’s laws (which in any case should be seen as nature’s *habits*) encapsulate many quibbles I have with the social Darwinist shades of Satanism, and occultism in general. There are a lot of much more enlightened strains of the ‘left-hand path’, as these writings will hint at. These strains usually attempt to transcend the left/right dualism of occult morality, a false dichotomy where self-interest and concern for others are seen to be mutually exclusive.

While I’m not a Satanist, not even strictly a practising occultist, occultural philosophies have a deep influence on my world-view and life. I read widely on these subjects, and though I love toying with ideas, maps and models for intellectual amusement, I find that I’m with Nietzsche when he says, “I do not know what purely intellectual problems are.” So what began as a somewhat playful little jab at the shaky foundations of social Darwinism gradually evolved into an outpouring of the visions and intuitions that my recent experiences, research and reflection have led me to. It’s an exorcism of sorts, an attempt to externalize the insights, feelings and perceptions that I often find flooding into me, seemingly unbidden, but later seen to be exactly what I needed to shift my world-view out of a stale or narrow perspective. I find it’s only through externalizing these cascades of insight that I can make room for more to arrive.

My research is not strictly ‘scholarly’. Dreams, drugs, sex, conversations with truckers who give me lifts, synchronicity-laden trails that lead me to books I wouldn’t usually notice, trashy movies, walks in the countryside, emotional breakdowns, lazy days, playing with kids... all these play a more significant role in the evolution of my ideas than the traditional academic activities of ‘thinking’ and ‘reading’. And, when I really look at it, I can’t imagine that this is anything new. Life isn’t cut into categories in the way that the division of academia into different disciplines pretends it is. Everything influences everything else, and I think what I’m doing is just consciously recognizing this... and then writing.

That said, some of the material here is quite ‘dense’, laden with associations which might come to me, immersed as I am in it all, without much effort, but which may ask a lot more of the reader than passive word-by-word consumption. As far as this sort of writing goes, I try to tread a precarious path between making myself clear and passionately wanting to be a ‘sounding board’. I want to leave gaps, be oblique, allow space for the reader to enter into my thoughts, fuse with them to an extent, and come away with more than ‘information’. I’m not in the business of handing people complete, air-tight systems of ideas on a plate. I don’t think you can show something to someone that they haven’t already seen; but I know from my own experience that we’ve all seen a lot more than we often pretend. I want to try to help people remember this. Also, the nature of the areas dealt with here means that words can never present a view of them that is even close to being ‘complete’. All they can do is suggest, trigger, and point. Exactly what they will suggest, trigger

off or point to will depend on who you are and where you are. Ideally, you'll take more of yourself away from this than you will of me.

Many of the ideas here utterly contradict beliefs I held two years ago. I don't doubt that two years from now I'll be off somewhere else. As Alan Watts said, "I am not one who believes that it is any necessary virtue in the philosopher to spend his life defending a consistent position. It is surely a kind of spiritual pride to refrain from 'thinking out loud', and to be unwilling to let a thesis appear in print until you are prepared to champion it to the death." This doesn't mean I don't want people to criticize this writing. Yes, these are my present opinions, but they will change—and I only got *here* by having my opinions challenged, as well as 'confirmed' by experiences and other people. I never want this process to stop.

There are several different, but subtly related parts to these writings. I call them "meditations" because although there are clear conceptual threads weaving throughout the different sections, there is no attempt at a coherent 'argument'. Parts of it relate to and reflect off others parts in ways I never anticipated; no doubt many of the intended resonances will fall flat. As I said before, language, being linear, just can't accurately describe the ideas and modes of experience I'm dealing with. All I can do is spin words, my own and the sampled words of others, around these things, revealing a fragment here, a fragment there, but still leaving mere fragments. Each trying to describe the same underlying thing, each reflecting a different part of it, in the hope that a multitude of linear perspectives can come closer to representing this non-linear vision.

Firstly, there are some arguments about the philosophical underpinnings of what has come to be known as Satanism in modern occulture. This section, being the original seed-article, could stand on its own, but hopefully the reader will soon see its intimate relevance to the other meditations as they're unravelled. Then, taking its cue from the ubiquitous urge to uncover spiritual fertility buried beneath centuries of Christian domination, there is a speculative look at the genesis of the Devil—and what lies beyond.

THE DEVIL & THE TAO

AS FAR AS the philosophical underpinnings of Satanism go, one of the best places to start is with Friedrich Nietzsche. While he had nothing (consciously) to do with Satanism, his work is frequently cited by Satanists and modern occultists, and I think more than a few Satanists see themselves as 'Nietzschean'.

It has to be said before setting off that Nietzsche was acutely, probably painfully aware of how his ideas may be misinterpreted. He loathed the idea that people, "like plundering troops", may pick and choose titbits from his books to use for their own purposes, disregarding material contrary to their own agendas. The racist misinterpretations (far too weak a word!) of the German Nazi party are the most blatant case in point. That said, I disagree with some of his work. In the end Nietzsche was no 'system-builder'—he erected no edifice that must be accepted entirely or fall to the ground. He was an *experimentalist*, and perpetually played with and revised ideas. It is in this spirit that I read Nietzsche; and here I'm looking at him with an eye to reveal a few misinterpreta-

tions less obvious than those of the half-witted anti-Semites. No doubt I'll end up guilty of a bit of plundering myself, but I prefer judicious plunder to wilful misunderstanding.

Darwinism is the central concept to deal with. It amuses me to see 'black metal' bands asked in interviews if they believe in the (supposedly 'Nietzschean') philosophy of "the strong over the weak", "survival of the fittest"—as if this would provoke some new and interesting response! We're talking *social* Darwinism here of course, but let's look first at the biological argument.

Darwinian evolutionary theory often seems too obvious to bother arguing with, but this is precisely my problem with it. It's too bloody obvious. The nail was whacked on the head for me when I read Arthur Koestler's *Janus: A Summing Up*. Here he quotes C.H. Waddington, a critical neo-Darwinian:

Survival does not, of course, mean the bodily endurance of a single individual, outliving Methuselah. It implies, in its present-day interpretation [1957], perpetuation as a source for future generations. That individual 'survives' best which leaves most offspring. Again, to speak of an animal as 'fittest' does not necessarily imply that it is strongest or most healthy or would win a beauty competition. Essentially it denotes nothing more than leaving most offspring. The general principle of natural selection, in fact, merely amounts to the statement that the individuals which leave most offspring are those which leave most offspring. It is a tautology.

Further, Ludwig von Bertalanffy acutely observes that "It is hard to see why evolution has ever progressed beyond the rabbit, the herring, or even the bacterium which are unsurpassed in their reproductive capacities."

The so-called rationalism of modern—usually 'socially Darwinian'—Satanism rests on very dodgy philosophical ground, simply because when you bother to try and define the terms used in the idea of "the strong over the weak", you're invariably left with a sense of, "Yeah, *and...*?" It's like saying you believe in the philosophy of "winners beating the losers". Jello Biafra nicely undermined knee-jerk social Darwinism with his quip that "the strong prey on the weak, and the clever prey on the strong"; but in the end this just begs the question. Also, orthodox Darwinism inevitably holds that humanity is the latest in life's progressively 'better' attempts at creating organisms. Surely social Darwinism would hold a similar view about contemporary culture? This doesn't sit too well with the misanthropy, and contempt for the 'lowering of standards' in modern society, that is prevalent among many supposed social Darwinists. If the strong really do overpower the weak, why have we been dominated for so long by such a half-assed religion as Christianity? I think many Satanists, in claiming "strong over the weak" to be a universal principle of nature, are actually trying to say, "I'm harder than you and I could have you easily." Or at least, "I could out-stare you, mate." That's another argument. But as for universal principles—forget it. Evolution and history are far too complex and multi-dimensional to limit themselves to the strategies of a fight in a pub.

Nietzsche was definitely not a Darwinist, and had no faith in "survival of the fittest" as an 'explanation'. For him, his conception of the "will to power" was the driving force behind all life. It is essentially a conception of creativity, and has far more to do with creative self-mastery than power over others. Nietzsche's notion that creation must be destructive ("Who wishes to be creative, must first destroy and smash accepted values.") is often seen in limited terms. This is only the

first step. The second step, often left out, is that the new creation itself must again be destroyed. And the steps go on... Zarathustra is quite explicit on this: “And life itself told me this secret: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘I am that *which must overcome itself again and again...*’” The famous ‘Superman’ isn’t a concept of some inevitable evolutionary goal toward which humanity is inexorably moving (i.e. it’s not Darwinian). It’s a vision of an ideal *state of being*, of perfect self-mastery and perpetual re-creation, which Nietzsche believed some humans—Socrates and Goethe for example—had already, to an extent, achieved. Together with his doctrine of eternal recurrence, it’s a glorification of the moment, of total involvement in the turbulent flow of immediate experience. “*Not to wish to see too soon.*— As long as one lives through an experience, one must surrender to the experience and shut one’s eyes instead of becoming an observer immediately. For that would disturb the good digestion of the experience: instead of wisdom one would acquire indigestion.” (*The Wanderer and His Shadow*)

Comparison with Taoism is illuminating. While our cultural filters place Taoism in some ‘soft’ category, and see Nietzschean values as being essentially ‘hard’, the distinction blurs when you consider the supra-cultural state to which both aspire. Nietzsche used the word ‘hard’ many times in describing ideals, as in “all creators are hard.” (*Twilight of the Idols*) But I don’t think we can just accept this word unquestioningly. Its modern connotations evoke more of a mindless thug than a vibrant Superman. Words are subject to mutation; but even if the words themselves remain the same, their meaning is always mutating, for words are “pockets into which now this and now that has been put, and now many things at once.” (*The Wanderer and His Shadow*)

Before considering Taoism, I’d like to follow a little tangent about Nietzsche’s ‘hardness’. I always thought of Nietzsche (before actually reading him) as some grim Teutonic beast. He was actually vehemently opposed to the Germanic temperament, which he considered mediocre (when in a good mood). He repeatedly praised the southern European disposition, that of light-heartedness, exuberance and cheerfulness. A far cry from the fashionably serious and dreary poses of many modern ‘Nietzscheans’. A key influence on this popular misconception of Nietzsche is probably that famous portrait—the furrowed brow, the dark gaze, the amazingly bushy moustache. It doesn’t do much for his philosophy of light-heartedness. I was tempted to just put this image, of a very stern and worried-looking guy, down to his frequent bouts of illness. I recently found out that I was more justified in this temptation than I guessed. Nietzsche never grew such a moustache. These amounts of hair appeared on his upper lip only during his last ten years of life, during which he was helplessly insane. He was unable to care for himself, and this responsibility fell to his sister, who allowed the ‘tache to flourish and brought people in to do portraits. Poor Freddy had no choice. This picture of an intense mad-eyed walrus is probably not how Nietzsche would have liked to have been remembered! His sister, who managed to distort his work as well as his image, has a lot to answer for.

To return to Taoism... The Tao, usually translated as “way”, is seen as that force which underpins, interpenetrates, and flows through the universe. Actually, “flows through” is misleading, as it conjures up images of ‘things’ as vessels through which the Tao passes. Taoism admits of no such duality. And the Tao’s primary characteristic is that it cannot be defined. A definition of it, such as “the process of the universe”, may loosen our categories a bit in order to contemplate it, but categories ultimately have to be destroyed if that process is to be fully apprehended. I think Nietzsche

was too suspicious or ignorant of ‘mysticism’ to fully admit it, but I suspect any Superhuman state would involve a similar destruction—or transcendence—of categories.

So what is this process, or Tao, that we’re trying to apprehend? In Nietzsche’s words, it is “that *which must overcome itself again and again*”. Nietzsche’s conception of embracing this, of fully participating in the process of life, is shot through with an distinct emphasis on struggle—assertion, strife and conflict. Regarding modern occultural misinterpretations again, it is primarily in this sense that he intended his many references to war. Being anti-state and anti-political, Nietzsche in no way ‘advocated’ bloody economic and territorial battles between nations. He didn’t ‘condemn’ them either. Nietzsche was neither liberal nor fascist. He largely used the word “war” in the sense of resolutely striving for self-mastery without shrinking from—rather, embracing—the inevitable conflicts this quest entails. “I will not cease from Mental fight, Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand...” (William Blake, *Milton*)

It took me a while to reconcile this relentless struggle, which is obviously part of the path to self-perfection, with the supposed passive quiescence of Taoism. In the end, of course, it’s a false dichotomy, and Christopher S. Hyatt seems to have summed it up best in his book *The Tree of Lies*:

The concept of surrender has become so distorted that many believe that “surrendering” is in opposition to power, sex and self mastery. This is one of the greatest lies. . . . self mastery is not possible without surrender. This issue cannot be overemphasized. Magic and Mysticism—The Will To Self Mastery and The Will To Surrender—are two sides of the same coin. . . . when power or love are taken to their extreme they become one.

The Tao is a struggle of perpetual self-overcoming—*again and again*. But as Alan Watts ceaselessly points out, it is a struggle devoid of ‘anxiety loops’. In fully surrendering to the flow of life, one surrenders one’s resistance to the rolling process of destruction and creation, ‘war’ and ‘peace’, that true life constitutes. Passivity is often part of this resistance, as much as frenetic anxiety can be.

Satanism and Taoism are alike in that they are both deeply concerned with the hard/soft, strong/weak distinctions. Satanism seems to emphasize and value ‘strength’, while Taoism seems to emphasize and value ‘weakness’. I feel that both may learn from each other. Taoists who have made the clichéd image of the quiescent oriental sage their behavioural ideal would do well to meditate on the Tao at work in an ocean whipped up by a tumultuous thunderstorm, and see how close to ‘nature’ they really are. Hardened Satanists, intent on fortifying their unbending will, would do equally well to take a sword to a piece of solid wood, and then to a pond. The wood will splinter and be destroyed. The pond will passively accept the blade, and effortlessly flow back to perfection once it is withdrawn.

*I was made with a heart of stone / To be broken with one hard blow / I’ve seen the ocean
break on the shore / Come together with no harm done*

Perry Farrell, ‘Oceansize’

SATAN'S ANCESTRY

Those who point the finger at Satan, reveal Satan. Those who fight Satan, give him power.

Those who blame Satan, give him influence. Those who talk much of Satan, create him.

But those who worship Satan, tame Satan. Those who passively resist him, earn his respect. Those who accept him, diminish his influence.

And those who analyse him, learn his wisdom.

Lionel B. Snell, 'The Satan Game'

THE CHRISTIAN DEVIL, Satan, is an archetype. Whether one sees archetypes as creations of the human mind, genetically-rooted universal 'templates' of conscious experience, or fully independent spiritual entities, is irrelevant here. Even if archetypes are seen to be autonomous 'beings'—gods, goddesses, demons or spirits—they are inevitably experienced by means of our own bodies and minds. Our experience of them is filtered through whatever biological, cultural and psychological structures we happen to find ourselves equipped with to make sense of the world. Thus, if we're talking about the realms of human experience (and what else can we talk about in a useful way?), Satan may be seen to have a history, a mythical family line of descent. Certain universal facts of life, such as the processes of sex, birth & death, will be ever-present in most mythical figures; but the specific figures themselves evolve throughout human history to mirror the complex cultural interactions and upheavals that have ceaselessly manifested since the first time apes developed language, culture and myth—and became human.

IN THIS SPECULATIVE Satanic genealogy we shall obviously work backwards, climbing down from contemporary branches, down the trunk, and under the ground where the roots lay hidden. So to begin with, how is Satan conceived in contemporary culture?

Modern Christianity has lost much of the medieval iconographic vividness in its conception of Satan, as it is supposedly more 'sophisticated', and not given to simplistic anthropomorphisms (i.e. Satan as a reptilian, horned, cunning and wily beast-man dwelling 'down there' in his burning lair). The most significant manifestation of modern Christians' concern with their Devil is in the phenomenon known as the 'Satanic Abuse Myth'. 'Satanic Abuse', because the phenomenon centres around the conviction that the Western world is infested with invisible networks of evil Satanists, who ritually abuse and bloodily sacrifice people—usually children—in the service of their Dark Lord. 'Myth', because this conviction has uniformly been found, by government-commissioned investigations and independent researchers alike, to be false. Certain cases of abuse have been found where the perpetrators used the paraphernalia of occultism to terrify their victims into submission and silence. But not one case of genuine Satanists, occultists, or pagans harming children for the purposes of magickal ritual has ever been found. So we can see that these obscene Christian fantasies of blood-soaked orgies and child sacrifice are merely the modern version of the medieval equivalents, the witch-hunts (or of the Roman equivalent, where early Christians were accused of similar crimes...). The vividness of these modern scapegoating fantasies seems to have made the mythical figure of Satan himself less necessary. Who needs an image of a subterranean

Devil on which to project your repressed fears and desires when you can conjure up such horrifying scenes of ‘actual’ human activity?

Often at the forefront of the cultural panic around Satanism was the self-styled leader of California’s Church of Satan, Anton Szandor LaVey. He seemed amused as well as indignant about the latest bouts of witch-hunt scaremongering. He knew as well as any open-minded observer that more children have suffered abuse and molestation at the hands of trusted Christian priests than have even heard of the Church of Satan. And his codes of Satanic practice are there for all to read: “Do not harm little children. Do not kill non-human animals unless attacked or for your food.” (from ‘The Eleven Satanic Rules of the Earth’)

But for Satanists as well as Christians the actual mythical image of the Devil has become less central. LaVey states that Satan is “a representational concept, accepted by each according to his or her needs.” This seems mightily hazy without LaVey’s repeated reminders that ‘Satan’ roughly translates from Hebrew as ‘adversary’ or ‘opponent’. Satanism is based on the principle of opposition. This is usually seen as opposition to the *status quo*, specifically Christian morality. Satan is an emblematic concept presiding over the practice of all those wonderful un-Christian things: free sexuality, autonomy, indulgence, harmony with (instead of dominion over) nature, and anti-authoritarianism. Many Satanists seem to slip up on this last one, and it’s here that most Satanism as it stands loses my sympathies. Just as many people forget that Nietzsche’s ‘destructive-creativity’ is meant as a perpetual process, not just a one-off revolution, Satanism can often slip from being an expedient release from Christian programming into being a dogma in itself. It seems to find it hard to challenge itself as an institution. There are many parallels here with the ‘left hand path’ of politics, Marxism. Many unsophisticated Marxists still think that their beliefs could function wonderfully as they stand once capitalism is cast to the ground once and for all, not seeing that their present beliefs are conditioned by their capitalist context. If Western capitalism is ever ‘overthrown’, I think many Marxists will follow their historical predecessors and become the new despots, or just be at a loss as to what to do without ‘the opposition’. Substitute ‘Satanists’ for ‘Marxists’, and ‘Christianity’ for ‘capitalism’, and you have a wildly simplistic, but very revealing analogy.

The influence of Chaos Magick and all its kindred philosophies on modern occulture seems to be a useful counter to this tunnel vision of simple opposition. The heart of Chaos Magick is the practical implementation of Nietzsche’s vision of life overcoming itself again and again, and provides a good antidote to any sliding towards dogma, or dependence on a static adversarial figure.

To RETURN TO Satan, we can see that despite his modern transformations, the popular conception of the Devil still bears the unmistakable hallmarks of pre-industrial Christianity’s vivid image of him. He is almost always bestial. The horns and the cloven hooves are synonymous with the Devil, and a reptilian tail is often attributed to him. Related to this is his unmistakably sexual nature, often seen as a threatening or perverse sexuality, but definitely sexual. The conception of Satan as the rebel angel Lucifer is a bit of an anomaly here, and this figure seems like a more refined, sublimated and ‘humanized’ Devil, all ferality turned into stubborn pride, and sinister sexuality emerging as cunning seductiveness.

Pre-twentieth century Satanism, exemplified by people like Phillipe the Duc D’Orleans and

Sir Francis Dashwood, was the domain of rebellious and hedonic aristocrats. Their repudiation of the asceticism of Christianity often involved the kind of debauchery modern Christians are eager to pin on modern Satanists. There is evidence of child murder and ritual sacrifice. Many, however, penetrated beyond frenzied opposition to the Church and discovered the intimately related, but deeper roots of Satan in pre-Christian pagan gods. Bloody sacrifice was usually part of such old paganism, and we'll return to this later. For now it is sufficient to see that the figure of Satan cannot be separated from the nature gods of the older religions.

Modern Satanists are often quick to deny this connection as being necessary or significant, probably eager to hang on to Satan's supposed status as a god in his own right, independent of both Christianity and nature worship. I suppose they fear the potency of their god being quelled by his being subtly appropriated into the realm of 'neo-paganism', derided (in some cases accurately) by Satanists as wishy-washy. But the connections are there.

For a start, it's plain that the Christian Satan was evolved as part of the church's expansion into pagan or 'heathen' lands. This process was often complicated by unforeseen overlaps between Christianity and indigenous pagan practices, to a certain extent betraying *Christianity's* pagan origins. We see this clearly in Catholicized Central and South American countries, where many natives have blended the invading cosmology into their own. A vivid example of this is the fact that indigenous Mexican mushroom cults call their fungal sacrament *teonanácatl*, meaning 'flesh of the gods'. Those cults which survived the Spanish conquest could easily accept the god Jesus, who offers us his flesh to eat, and his mother Mary, who became the new bottle for the old wine of Earth-Mother goddess figures. Invading Christians spreading north over Europe consciously appropriated existing pagan festivals, and built their places of worship on ancient sacred sites to win over the populace. But they still needed to weed out the more overt paganisms. So the widespread Horned God or Goddess, who presided over pagan nature worship and fertility rites, was demonised. Through the installation of dualistic categories of good and evil, and the identification of pagan gods as evil, the gave themselves permission to trample paganism into the ground and a lot of spiritual clout with which to terrorize natives into obedience.

The greatest insights into Christianity and Satan can be gleaned from exploring the Greek god Dionysus. He is very typical of pagan nature gods: he is horned, signifying kinship with animals (like the closely related goat-god of the Arcadian pastures, Pan, another source of Satanic iconography); he is a 'dying-and-rising' god, reflecting the cyclic process of the seasons in nature; and he has a strong wild and untamed aspect, again like Pan, forming a bond with pre-civilised humanity. It's obvious how Satan, Christianity's repressed shadow, has derived from such an archetype. In its irrational suppression of sexuality, nature, cyclicality and the body, Christianity latched on to this archetype and pushed it so far away from human experience that it became alien, and we became alienated. The already feral, ego-shattering Dionysian godform became utterly evil and terrifying, a force to be held at bay at all costs.

Now things get confusing. Did not Jesus, like Dionysus, die and rise again? Both are intimately associated with vines and wine; both have been connected to the use of psychedelic mushrooms; the flesh of both is in some way eaten as part of their worshippers' rites; and both names, according to John M. Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, stem etymologically from the same Sumerian root. There's almost as much evidence connecting Dionysus with Jesus

as there is with Satan.

It's my feeling that we have here a crucial fork in the history of archetypes. Christianity appropriated the more abstract spiritual motifs of dying-and-rising nature gods (mainly supposed 'life after death') and up popped the mythical Jesus. The chthonic associations with the Earth, with sexuality and the body, were all repressed, compressed and demonised into Satan. In this division was lost all cyclicity, all the transformative and change-affirming power of nature's process. We descended into truly profane time; linear time instead of rhythmic, spiralling, sacred time. Norman O. Brown has noted that "the divorce between soul and body [analogous to the Jesus/Satan split] takes the life out of the body, reducing the organism to a mechanism". Likewise, the conception of an extra-terrestrial, eternal time (Heaven) as sacred renders the Earth profane, and binds us to the linear track of uni-directional historical 'progress'. We may see ourselves as moving towards this sacred time—but it is an ever-receding carrot-on-a-stick, and tears us away from omni-directional immersion in the moment. "No eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn." (Jim Morrison)

IN SATANISM, SATAN is seen as embodying the principle of division and duality, that principle without which manifestation—matter, flesh, bodies & sex—cannot occur. This is symbolized in the 'inverted' pentagram, where two points are directed upwards and one down. The dual realm of manifestation rules over the singular, united realm of spirit. In the 'normal' pentagram the spirit rules the flesh. Jesus is seen as opposing Satan, and embodies the spiritual principle of unity. So what are we to make of the actual historical beliefs and practices of the followers of these two figures? Christianity has turned out to be militantly dualistic, denying the body and ravaging the Earth, glorifying the 'spirit' and longing for some united heavenly kingdom. And Satanists, while obviously prioritising flesh over spirit, ego over collectivity, are inevitably involved in many practices which approach Dionysian revelry, serving to abolish individual distinction. Also, their emphasis on living for the moment instead of "spiritual pipe-dreams" could be seen to destroy the future-fixation of profane time, following Nietzsche into a whole-hearted immersion in the eternal present.

Our problems in analysing these contradictions betray our present evolutionary and cultural problems. In looking at the splitting of Dionysus, we're seeing the mythical reflections of a phase in the development of the human species where the increase of city-dwelling and changes in agriculture & economics began to erode our bond with the rest of the biosphere. City walls are the rigidification of human ego-barriers writ large. "When Christians first distinguished themselves from pagans, the word 'pagan' meant 'country-dweller'. For the first centres of Christianity in the Roman Empire were the great cities—Antioch, Corinth, Alexandria, and Rome itself." (Alan Watts, *Nature, Man & Woman*) In our quest to urbanize our existence, to become as independent as possible from the less comfortable and benign aspects of nature, we have become lost in a mire of confusion. Witness Blake's disgust at the industrial revolution in his phrase "dark Satanic Mills", and the fact that most of the mill owners were probably devout Christians. Protestantism has been intimately linked to the rise of capitalism by psychoanalytical historians; Satanists advocate material power. A church in Coventry recently held a service in thanks for the car industry; and Jesus advocated shunning possessions and said rich people would have a bloody hard time getting into

heaven. Such confusion seems to be the price for living under the sway of false dichotomies like Jesus/Satan, spirit/matter, collective/individual, intellect/instinct.

Culture and civilization are inseparable from material technologies, and things are no less confused in the technophile/Luddite debate. The real dichotomy to be tackled here is that of harmonious/unharmonious technology. Do our tools help us achieve our desires, or do they *become* our desires? Do you browse the web to kill time and boredom, like TV, or use it to help you do what you want to do in the real world? Is our technology harmonious with nature? In most cases today, the answer is a painful *no*. We have lost the vision of the first grand tool-using age of humanity, the Neolithic, where culture, agriculture and technology were used to work with and *intensify* the natural environment.

RECLAMATION

OUR SATANIC GENEALOGY has so far reached the figure of Dionysus, and if we delve further back, we find *his* roots in the pan-European Neolithic worship of the Great Goddess. In Greek myth, Dionysus' mother is identified as Semele, a mortal. She was, however, sometimes equated with Ge, the Thracian form of the Earth Goddess Gaia.

The male god, the primeval Dionysus, is saturated with a meaning closely related to that of the Great Goddess in her aspect of the Virgin Nature Goddess and Vegetation Goddess. All are gods of nature's life cycle, concerned with the problem of death and regeneration, and all were worshipped as symbols of exuberant life.

Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*

Now I shall lose the interest of yet more die-hard Satanists. I think it's possible to trace most of Satan's aspects and characteristics back to the Neolithic (and perhaps Palaeolithic) Great Goddess. It's true that if you gathered all available books on Goddess worship together, the vast majority of them—in their style, typography, illustrations and attitude—would probably be... well, *twee*. It's obvious why the figure of the Goddess is largely consigned to the realm of New Age Pap; but I think a serious, unromantic investigation of the religious and mythical complex termed 'the Goddess' will uncover something a lot more challenging, vital and *useful* than the trite New Age-isms we're usually presented with.

The Neolithic Goddess, like Satan, was invariably **horned**; the ox was one of her most revered forms. Being associated with the Earth itself she was often a chthonic (underworld) Goddess, this aspect entering Greek mythology in the story of Demeter and Persephone. It's worth noting that Heraclitus once said that Dionysus was another name for Hades, lord of the underworld. The whole chthonic goddess & son complex is the basis for our image of Satan ruling over a subterranean Hell.

Another strong link between the Goddess and Satan is the serpent. The serpent in Genesis' Garden of Eden is often associ-

This horned aspect is thought by some researchers to derive from the 'horns' of the womb, the Fallopian tubes—the form of which can potentially be propriocepted, or felt internally, in states of heightened consciousness.

ated with Satan, and Christianity usually extends this association to all snakes. The snake was, along with the ox, the animal most frequently associated with the Neolithic Goddess. The spiral, often symbolizing a coiled serpent, is one of the most common Goddess symbols. Archaic serpent myths from around the world are far too numerous to detail here. However, one extremely early myth (perhaps the earliest), which detours us to an extremely bizarre connection with Christianity, is well worth going into.

In his book *Blood Relations*, anthropologist Chris Knight proposes that human culture was the result of early female *Homo sapiens* synchronizing their menstrual cycles. This collectivity, he argues, empowered them to periodically ‘sex strike’ during menstruation—females basically refused sex with their partners (but possibly had menstrual sex with male kin) until the men went hunting and brought back enough meat to feed them and their children.

The full thesis is persuasive but very complex. It is enough for now to note that the hypothesized collective act of female synchrony was achieved through tidal and lunar observances, utilizing these natural, universal cycles with which widespread groups of women could ‘phase-lock’ and harmonize their own blood cycles. In the Australian Aboriginal myths of the Rainbow Snake, and its associations with menstruation, water, the moon and women, there is widespread acknowledgement that this ‘cosmic serpent’ (often androgynous) originally gave women *power*. Knight’s key argument is that this power is the power to periodically unite in saying ‘no’ to sex, to initiate sexual-political change (the Snake symbolizes the united body of ‘flowing’ women). At the same time, it is the powers of **shamanism and magic**, which Knight sees as evolving as a result of the first ‘proto-cultural’ groups of humans in Africa dispersing inland, away from their coastal origins. The females, robbed of the tide as one of their main cyclic guides, evolved moon-scheduled ritual activities—and thus symbolic culture—to synchronize social, psychic and bodily rhythms.

Somewhere along the line, as the myths and practices of many surviving hunter-gatherer tribes testify, this power was appropriated by men. Knight sees male initiation ceremonies involving cutting the penis or arm (found among Australian Aborigines and other indigenous cultures), together with the existence of extreme menstrual taboos, as evidence for a male take-over of female ritual power. One male Aborigine, speaking of their all-male rituals, told C.H. Berndt that “all the Dreaming business came out of women—everything; only men take ‘picture’ for that Julunggul [i.e. men make an artificial reproduction of the Snake]. In the beginning we had nothing; because men had been doing nothing; we took these things from women.” The surviving Snake myths, propagated by all-male initiation societies, portray the Snake as threatening to women. Part of this threat is derived from myths that describe the Snake swallowing women; Knight feels that this once symbolized the power of synchronized menstruation to unite women, together ‘in the belly of the Snake’. Male initiation societies utilizing the Snake mythology may see this devouring serpent as somewhat threatening, but still desire the womb-return, unity and rebirth of being swallowed. Much as Jonah is willingly cast into the sea to be swallowed, then vomited out by the “great fish” prepared for him by the Lord God.

Knight finds hard evidence of similar ‘Rainbow Snake’ myths across Africa and South

“The link of blood and magick can also be found in the German word for ‘sorcerer,’ which is ‘zauberer’. The word goes back to OHG *Zaubar*, MD *Tover*, OE *Teáfor* . . . All three words mean ‘red colour, red ochre, to colour in red!’” (Jan Fries, *Helrunar*)

America, all related closely to tides, rain, floods, menstruation and lunar cycles. The myths perpetuate these associations, but are often configured to make women see the Snake as a threat. There are some tribes, however, whose women still draw power from the Snake, and celebrate it in menstrual rites. Knight also interprets the myriad 'dragon' (i.e. mythical serpent-beast) legends as remnants of this archaic mythical conception of women's culture-forming menstrual synchrony, and of the male take-over. Many dragon myths speak of many-headed beasts (the Hydra for instance), and this is possibly an echo of the menstrual Snake which comprised many women in unison. Of course the classic dragon tale, across the world, says that valiant men *rescue maidens* from its clutches, *destroy* it, and gain *power*. Given Knight's theories, there could be no clearer mythical equivalent of a male usurpation of female power: overcoming a reptilian representation of their blood-unity and menstrual ritual potency.



Now, let's have a look at the Holy Bible. Turn to Revelations 12:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another great wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. . . . [She gives birth to a sort of second Christ, and flees into the wilderness. Michael casts the dragon out of heaven. The dragon persecutes the woman, who is given eagle wings to escape.]

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. [Aboriginal Rainbow Snake myths are connected with great floods in Australia's past.]

Very strange to find such a twisted distortion of what may be a primal human myth of *the beginning* (of culture) in the ravings of a religious visionary supposedly being granted a glimpse of *the end*. This vision corresponds in some way to the frequent 'male-appropriation' myths of modern hunter-gatherers: in depicting the dragon/serpent as threatening to a woman; and in the statement that the denizens of heaven "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11). The Lamb is Christ, and Christ is a man who bled from his arms (and, like all Jewish men, he presumably bled from his genitals, when he was circumcised as a child). Interestingly, one New Age commentator on Revelations believes that because the many-headed dragon "has several autonomous decision-making centers, [it] is therefore the very epitome of disorganization, of centrifugal or dispersive forces." (F. Aster Barnwell, *Meditations on the Apocalypse*) Think back to what Knight believes the original Rainbow Serpent represents, and compare.

And who was this blood-red, water-spewing, many-headed dragon? Saint John the Divine tells us that he was "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan...". A day or so after making this Rainbow Snake-Dragon-Satan link, I started reading *The Wise Wound* by Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove. They take a Jungian approach to the few systematic instances of menstruating

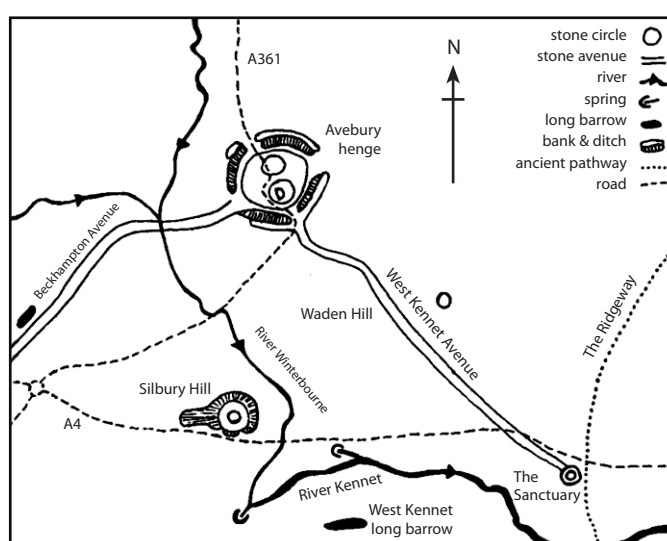
women's dreams being recorded. Apparently, some women's dreams at this time contain strong male figures, often threatening or sinister. Shuttle & Redgrove's idea is that menstruation can be a time of heightened sexuality and departure from conventions for women, hence its widespread repression and extreme taboo status. They see the appearance of a compelling male figure in menstrual dreams as the appearance of the animus, a Jungian word for the masculine principle in women. Talking about the repression of menstruation leading to a "negative animus", they say: "If the woman's menstruation is despised, that is, a deep instinctual process in her is ignored or hated, then its spirit will return with all the evolutionary power of those instinctual processes that grew us and continue to energize our physical being. You could say in this way that the Christian Devil was a representation of the animus of the menstruating woman, in so far as the Christian ethic has Satanized woman and her natural powers."

I WANT TO follow these Goddess/Serpent/Devil associations now by focusing on one specific place (which will also lead us to other areas I'm interested in): Avebury in Wiltshire, with its rich psychogeography and densely inter-related complex of Neolithic monuments.

Michael Dames has analysed the Avebury monuments, synthesizing archaeology, folklore & ethnography, to build a vision of a harmonious cycle of structures embedded in the local geography. They form a ritual landscape which reflects the cyclic narrative of the seasons and of human life. The monuments are seen to celebrate and embody the Great Goddess, conceived in the pervasive form of the Triple Goddess: Maiden, Mother & Crone. (Being three multiplied by itself, the number nine is frequently given a high status in Goddess-based religions. It seems no coincidence that modern Satanism has adopted this as its central number.)

The massive Avebury henge is approached from the south and west by two long, slightly winding stone avenues. Dames' contention is that these two avenues are processional serpentine pathways by which young men and women approached the henge for marriage and consummation ceremonies. The men's Beckhampton avenue, to the west, is largely destroyed. It seems significant, though, that the name Beckhampton derives from the Old English word meaning 'back'. Dames relates this to the spine, and to Tantric beliefs in the raising of the Kundalini serpent energy from the base of the spine.

Much more evidence survives in relation to the partly intact West Kennet avenue, beginning at the Sanctuary (the name for the remains of a circular wooden temple at the southern foot of Waden Hill). Comparisons with contemporary Neolithic symbolism and ethnographic studies show that the Sanctuary (corresponding to the springtime Maiden) was probably a site for the ini-



Avebury henge and surrounding monuments

tiation of young girls reaching puberty. This conjecture, along with the proposed serpentine nature of the processional avenue leading to consummation in the henge, is supported by Chris Knight's research. Aboriginal mythology equates the Rainbow Snake with the ritual dance through which women collectively synchronize their menstrual periods (or with which men are united in blood-letting initiatory rituals). As the onset of a girl's puberty is signalled by their first menstruation, Dames' theories about the function of the Sanctuary and the symbolic serpentine nature of the West Kennet avenue stand on quite firm mythical ground.

At the henge, the male and female snake-avenues conjoin. Dames argues that the so-called 'D' feature within the southernmost of the two stone circles inside the henge is a representation of the tip of the phallic Beckhampton avenue snake entering the henge. This is 'swallowed' by the females' West Kennet snake, whose gaping jaws may be seen to be symbolized by the southeast and southwest quadrants of the henge, the actual stones representing its teeth. The dual sexual symbolism of the serpent—penetrator and devourer—is not lost on Dames. He speaks of the Beckhampton avenue's "commitment to bisexuality" as it approaches ritual sexual union in the henge; we'll return to his androgynous Avebury Goddess later.

The vast stone standing at the point where the West Kennet avenue joins the henge is commonly known as the Devil's Chair. Also in the Avebury area we have the Devil's Den long barrow; and there are too many caverns and Neolithic standing stones in the British Isles named after the Devil to catalogue here. The demonisation of indigenous paganism that was such an integral part of Christianity's conquest of these islands is prolifically demonstrated in such folkloric names.

In 634 CE a Christian church was built up against the west bank of the Avebury henge. On its twelfth-century font is depicted a bishop, armed with a spiked crozier and a Bible, fending off two serpentine dragons. However, the battle waged against the powerful chthonic forces of nature glorified in the Avebury monuments wasn't some abstract war of symbols. In the fourteenth century most of the stones in the southwest quadrant of the henge were destroyed by Christian authorities trying to eradicate the many "superstitions and questionable practices" still connected with the stones. These bastards destroyed part of our heritage, in the name of Jesus.

In Dames' ritual landscape cycle we move from the henge southwards to the awe-inspiring Silbury Hill, a flat-topped conical mound of earth which stands as the largest man-made Neolithic structure in Europe. Known to have been built progressively over many years, added to each August (harvest time), it seems likely that this was the Neolithics' vision of the pregnant Earth Goddess made flesh. Natural breast- and belly-like hills and mounds were commonly worshipped in many archaic cultures, but the emergence of agriculture signified the rising importance in human *participation* in nature. Silbury Hill—the Mother Goddess labouring to give birth to the year's crops—is a monumental testament to a culture whose technology still harmonized with nature, working mythically and practically at precisely the same time.

Excavations have revealed that at the core of Silbury lies a circular wattle fence and stacked layers of turf forming an inner mound. The wattle fence has exactly the same diameter as the Sanctuary, and most projected reconstructions of the wooden temple at the Sanctuary reveal it to be identical in size and form to the inner Silbury mound. Silbury, then, is a fractal reflection of the Sanctuary, which is replicated within and then magnified eight times in the total mass of the Silbury mound. The springtime Maiden has matured into the life-giving Mother of the

harvest. A careful study of Dames' investigations into the harmonic fractal resonances within the Avebury complex (all monuments being based around natural units of measurement taken from the springs feeding into the revered River Kennet) is capable of pushing the rational mind beyond itself into a deep, awe-full respect for the powerful visionary precision of this 'primitive' culture.

Of course, being the most provocatively sensuous and voluptuous of all the Avebury monuments (go there!), Silbury failed to escape the demonisation of Christian folklore. There is a legend that the Devil was once on his way to attack Marlborough (just east of Avebury) by dumping an apron, or spade full of dirt on the town. The bishop of Marlborough apparently stopped him at the last minute; the Devil dropped his load, and Silbury Hill was formed.

The last monument in the cycle, before it completes a total gyration and feeds back into itself at the Sanctuary, is the West Kennet long barrow. It is located just southeast from Silbury and almost due east from the Sanctuary. This multiple burial chamber is the Goddess in winter: the Crone, the death-dealing Dark Goddess found (and so often repressed) in many religions. The barrow is constructed—like other European Neolithic burial chambers—to render yet another form of the Goddess' body. You go in through her stone vulva, and enter a small corridor with five small adjoining womb-tomb chambers.

Despite its belief that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will automatically transport his followers to an eternal realm of happiness, love & old friends on dying, Christianity is terrified of death. Most systems of belief promoting a simplistic, personal and linear form of immortality are—they deny death. "Hell, Luther said, is not a place, but is the experience of death, and Luther's devil is ultimately personified death." (Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*) Again we see that Christianity has ruptured, repressed & demonised the cyclic processes of nature. To cultures harmonized with the seasonal rounds, death precedes life just as death follows life. The Avebury cycle, where each distinct monument participates in the unified ritual landscape, suggests a culture where the principle of division has not yet been separated from the principle of unity; death is part of life.

Christianity, especially in rural areas with a deep pagan tradition, can never entirely purge itself of the past. In the parish church of Ilkley, West Yorkshire, there is a stone carving which is usually identified as the Romano-British goddess Verbeia (below). In her hands she holds two writhing snakes, resembling the famous Minoan snake goddess statuette found in Knossos, Crete. Verbeia is said to be goddess of the River Wharfe, which flows through Ilkley, forming the familiar goddess-serpent-water associations. However, one historian of Ilkley believes the goddess is only superficially associated with the river itself, and was once associated with the brooks flowing down from springs on the famous neighbouring moorlands. On these moors are numerous prehistoric rock carvings, stone circles, and traces of human settlement dating back to 7000 BCE; Verbeia is probably a survival of more ancient myths in the area. The historian notes the double snake symbol's connection with healing (look at the British Medical Association's symbol), and the long-standing reputation of the moor's waters for healing properties, which survived into Victorian times, when a renowned healing spa was set up near the edge of the moor.



The barrow was built around 3250 BCE, and remained open until around 2600 BCE, when a huge stone forecourt was erected, and the chambers were packed with a mass of chalk rubble, organic material, and bits of bone and pottery (resembling the chalk, soil and vegetable layering found in the core of Silbury, whose foundations are contemporary to the sealing of the barrow). During its 'active' time, the barrow was almost certainly used for ritual as well as burial purposes. Dames points out that "the belief that the living can find meaning and reality within putrefying chaos was once widespread", and rightly notes the possible parallels with Tantric practices.

The loving Goddess of Creation has another face. As she brings man into time and his world, she also removes him from it. So she is his destroyer as well. No-one can be a successful Tantrika unless he has faced up to this reality, and assimilated it into his image of the nature of the Goddess. There are many rituals, some of them sexual, carried out among the corpses in real (or symbolic) cremation-grounds, which bring this necessity forcibly home to the practising Tantrika. There, in the red light of funeral pyres, as jackals and crows scatter and crunch the bones, he confronts the dissolution of all he holds dear in life.

Philip Rawson, *Tantra: The Indian Cult of Ecstasy*

We can never know the exact nature of the rites enacted in the West Kennet long barrow, but many of skulls and thigh bones from the dead buried there were found to be absent. The obvious explanation for this is that they were used in Neolithic rituals, probably at the nearby causewayed camp on Windmill Hill, northwest from the henge, where many individual skulls were found. Dames notes that "the widespread use of skull and femur in fertility rites was maintained down to classical times, when the rotting flesh fell off to reveal the clean tools of a new sexuality, with skull acting as female container, encompassing the thigh bone-phallus." I'm also reminded of the use of skulls and thigh bones in various 'left-hand path' (i.e. frowned upon) cultic practices in Tibet. It's clear that any study of Neolithic Goddess-orientated cultures will fruitfully profit from comparisons with non-mainstream Asian religious beliefs.

"Although there is very little information concerning the megalithic monuments of the West, Hindu texts contain the entire ritual for setting them up, and for the orientation of sanctuaries, etc. All studies on European prehistoric religions should thus be based on the Indian documents available." (Alain Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*)

THE SNAKE GODDESS

A FEW YEARS ago, shortly after I had become interested in paganism, but well before I began any of the above research, I had a very bizarre dream. I dreamt I was an actor in the process of making a film whose director was a very sinister and shadowy figure. There was an unnerving atmosphere on the set, and I kept finding small, partially hidden pentagrams and other similar symbols—sewn into the undersides of cushions and so on. I became convinced that the script and set were devised so that the specific motions and gestures the unwitting cast made during filming would have the equivalent effect of a ritual to evoke the Devil. In the half-dream hypnopompic state before fully waking up, I had the distinct sensation of physical pressure around my anus. Dream logic

convinced me that this was in fact Satan. I was vaguely disturbed during the following day, but the dream quickly faded into the past.

Earlier this year, I was writing something about the idea that dreams and vision states are in fact the perceptual flip-side to interior bodily sensations. The two realms can be seen as two different ‘channels of perception’ conveying information about the **interior processes** of the human organism, from visceral energy streams to the sub-molecular goings-on in the brain. Going to sleep one night, having just finished the section on this particular subject, I had a hypnagogic experience that seemed to confirm my theory, and shed revealing light on the dream of the Devil a couple of years before.

I was in a pretty low state, and half-heartedly (pathetically actually) called on the Earth Goddess to visit me in my dreams that night. Soon after, I found myself getting up from the bed and walking across my room. I was suddenly overpowered by incredibly intense body sensations, and felt my mind ‘blacking out’ as if I was fainting. I instinctively ‘knew’ that this was the power of the Goddess overtaking me, and tried hard to surrender to it as I fell down (‘trying hard’ in these situations is a classic mistake!). I found myself lying on the floor, a huge lump obscuring my vision in my right eye. I heard the woman who lives across the hall from me trying to get in. My fall must have been *loud*, I thought. I took the lump on the right side of my face to be a result of the fall, and desperately tried to work out how I could get up to open the door and let the woman in. I couldn’t move, and feared that I’d really injured myself. At the same time I became aware of rattling noises in my kitchen. There was a distinctly female presence in there. Then I snapped out of it—I had been half-dreaming. I was still in my bed, and the ‘lump’ was a bit of the duvet against my face. I instantly connected the two instances of female presence, one seemingly trying to help me, with my vague plea to the Goddess.

Suddenly, immense surges of energy began to flow around my body, intense and strangely familiar streamings that pushed me into a delicious and frighteningly precarious balance between waking and dreaming. Then I *felt* pressure around my anus... and what followed can only really be described as being fucked by the, or at least a Goddess. A stupendous thrust of energy rushed up me, and I was immediately propelled into a highly vivid and intense lucid dream. I was flying high above a scintillatingly real landscape, a deep blue summer sky above me, a daytime sky yet dotted with stars. Part of the subsequent dream involved fishing a demonic-looking pike out of a lake—this seemed to be the culmination of a series of intense dreams I had recently had about seeing fish swimming underwater. The pike, once on land, turned into a cute brown seal.

I awoke from the dream after escaping from a very nasty situation by flying straight up through the building I was in, bursting through each floor successively and waking with a jolt on blasting out the top. It didn’t take much meditating on all the sensations and symbols to realize I had almost certainly just experienced a bizarre manifestation of the Kundalini serpent energy.

In *The Wise Wound*, Shuttle & Redgrove investigate the possibility that menstrual cycles have the potential to be affected by lunar cycles in that the pineal gland, which may also affect sexual development, can sense subliminal changes in light. Noting its traditional association with the ‘third eye’ of inner visions, they speculate that “Just as our visible eyes obtain visual information from the outer world, so does our invisible third eye, the pineal, convert into visual images experiences from within the body. This argument is supported by painstaking evidence.”

THE KUNDALINI SERPENT is envisioned in traditional Tantric yoga as being a coiled-up (spiral) reservoir of normally untapped psychosomatic energy, stored in the *Muladhara*, or base chakra. The base chakra is located in the perineum, just in front of the anus. Kundalini is a goddess at the same time as being a spiral snake energy. Kundalini Shakti is the female principle to Shiva's male principle in Tantra's erotic cosmology. The goal of Tantric practice is to awaken the dormant snake Goddess through various yogic methods, causing her to surge up the body and ecstatically unite with Shiva at the highest chakra. This rising can be seen clearly at either end of my dream (and body)—both in the energy thrust up me from my perineum just before sleeping, and in the climactic flight through the floors of a building, eventually out of the top, into waking consciousness.

Tantrism holds that the deities presiding over the base chakra are Brahman and Dakini—who is the red, menstruating goddess.

Many insights (and a tremendous feeling of well-being) flooded through as a result of my Kundalini dream. Firstly, there was the gnostic confirmation of my theories about Satan being (for me at least) a demonised remnant of a primal serpentine Goddess. My dream of a few years ago was undoubtedly the same Kundalini phenomenon, distorted by the Christian cosmology virus, and undeveloped. It seemed to be a 'confirmation', rather than being an experience *induced* by my research, because the Kundalini dream reflected so precisely back onto a dream I had long before any of my research began. And at the time of the second dream, although I had been looking into Goddess myths, I had not really looked at Kundalini. The fish symbolism seemed to flesh out my feeling that the Kundalini phenomenon is the prime model for looking at this experience. In Indian mythology, the fish symbolizes Kundalini's most primitive form. Interestingly, early Christians represented Jesus (eternal opponent of the serpent Satan) with a fish symbol. Jesus opposes fish to serpents in Matthew 7:10—perhaps yet another example of divisive Christian mythologizing.

The !Kung, a southern African tribe, describe their entry into trance (which they call *!kia*) in a way that strongly reflects Kundalini experiences. They believe that a primal supernatural potency, *n/um*, resides in the pit of the stomach or the base of the spine. Frenetic dancing causes the *n/um* to 'boil', and it ascends the body until it peaks in or near the skull—inducing full *!kia*, and initiating shamanic soul-flight. It is interesting that the social and ritual life of the !Kung has retained one of the most vivid emphases on menstrual puberty rites known. Also, they believe that the power of *n/um* is most efficiently transferred via the sense of smell. In Tantra, the *Muladhara* chakra is associated with this sense.

Kundalini has been connected by Gene Kieffer (a president of the Kundalini Research Institute in New York) to the UFO contact experience, after personal psychic activity that involved both phenomena. This connection and the sensations I experienced of pressure around the anus (or nearby perineum) inevitably brought to mind the infamous reports from supposed UFO 'abductees', who believe themselves to have been improperly probed up the arse by bug-eyed scientists from other planets. Are we looking here at spontaneous Kundalini vision states, either distorted through confusion or overlaid with a space-age clinical myth-structure?

My current belief that visions and the body's energy processes are complementary has given me a rough rule of thumb in understanding mythology: *all the most resonant and meaningful myths will reflect some aspect of biology and evolution*. As Shuttle and Redgrove say in *The Wise Wound*, "mythology and physiology are only two sides of the same thing, which is alive." Of course, evolutionary theory and the physical sciences can be seen as yet another myth-structure; and seen in

this way they should, if they are to relate to the general human experience of life, somehow echo the more primeval and recurrent mythologies and archetypes of our cultural ancestry. The idea that the Kundalini serpent, which ascends the spinal column, is the psychosomatic evolutionary force in the human body, can be seen to relate to the fact that we are vertebrates. Our common evolutionary inheritance, along with all mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes, is that we have a backbone. We have all physically relived the evolutionary journey of bodily mutation as we gestated in our mother's wombs. Human embryos, in their earliest stages of development, are successively indistinguishable from fish, reptile, bird and other mammal embryos—at one stage, recognizable gills emerge, and then atrophy.

Our individual lives begin in the amniotic ocean of the womb. Organic life on Earth began in the oceans. And humanity itself may have emerged from a partial return to the ocean. Many anthropologists believe that humans evolved on the shores of east Africa, as hominid apes returned to a semi-aquatic lifestyle. This is seen to account for our hairless bodies, the layer of buoyant fat beneath our skin, and possibly our upright posture (a distinct advantage if you're trying to keep breathing whilst wading through deep waters).

It seems quite fitting that Indian mythology should symbolize evolutionary power through the snake, the skeleton of which is basically a backbone, and the fish, the original spine, which still inhabits life's womb.

ANY FORM OF anal stimulation contains the possibility of ecstatic spiritual experience. Phil Hine has pointed out that Ramakrishna experienced Samadhi whilst having a dump on more than one occasion, and this is interesting in relation to Martin Luther's so-called *Thurmerlebnis* ("experience in the tower"), a revelation about faith that was to inaugurate Protestant theology. The 'tower' was where the toilet was located in Luther's Wittenburg monastery. "This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower." (Luther) In his analysis of Protestantism in *Life Against Death*, Norman Brown hones in on the centrality of the Devil to Luther's theology, and on the 'anality' (a Freudian term needing no explanation, for once) of the Devil. He documents Luther's numerous associations of the Devil with 'filth', 'blackness' and foul odours, and notes his methods of counter-attack to the Devil's assaults—at one revealing point he threatens to "throw him into my anus, where he belongs." These scraps of information, the traditional location of the base chakra, and my intuition that Satan may be related back through history to a primeval serpent goddess, seem to be no coincidence.

Many traditions, from male Aboriginal initiation ceremonies to Aleister Crowley's magick, recognize the power of sodomy to elicit altered states of consciousness, but this is mostly ignored in our own culture due to the extreme taboo associated with anal eroticism (and with altered states themselves). This taboo is clear in homophobia, but is equally present in heterosexuality. Often, sodomy is not merely tabooed, but actually illegal—such is the continuing power of old Judeo-Christian restrictions over modern secular prohibitions. Perhaps (as far as our own culture is concerned) the strength of the taboo against sodomy, and not necessarily the physical act in itself, accounts for its potential to induce powerful spiritual experiences. Spirituality is, at heart, a breakthrough

"In the human body, the strait gate leading to the earth-centre, or snake goddess, is the anus." (Alain Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*)

into a wider realm of consciousness, and is thus frequently associated (as in Tantra, Chaos Magick and Satanism) with breaking the conventions and laws that inevitably shape consciousness. The danger here, as ever, is that of becoming obsessed with the breaking of a single restriction. Once a restriction is overcome, new and different restrictions may fall into place. For instance, a Satanist who has endeavoured to break the traditional Christian taboo against rational self-interest and ego-gratification may find him or herself liberated in many ways. Eventually, though, this process of liberation may restrict that person from expressing spontaneous selflessness. The path of liberation has no end.

Sodomy, then, may well be a powerful step on the path of spiritual and sexual liberation, but rigid correlations and associations may eventually become obstacles. Regarding the association of the base chakra with the anus, Phil Hine has cautioned against the idea that chakras, or energy centres, have literal physical locations: "I'm working on a body-alchemy centred approach to the chakras at the moment, and the muladhra, for me, relates to one's physical sensation of the here & now. A great deal is made of the muladhra being the 'seat' of Kundalini-shakti—but again, too many people have interpreted Kundalini stuff in terms of getting away from the body, towards some kind of rarified 'spiritual' state. My own feeling is that the Tantric perspective is less about 'awakening kundalini' as though it were something static, and more about 'becoming aware' of kundalini's living presence in, and around us. This necessitates, of course, a change in how we perceive ourselves, and the world we are enmeshed in." (personal correspondence) Hine's first 'Kundalini' experience involved an influx of energy coming *down* his body. This 'contradiction' of the traditional experience can also be seen in Reichian therapy. Wilhelm Reich's theory of bodily 'armour' (rigidified musculature, seen to be arranged in sections like the head, throat, chest, etc.) corresponds well with the chakra system. But in opposition to the yogic assertion that one must work from the bottom up when opening the chakras, Reich advised therapists to work from the top down in undoing armour.

So, anal eroticism is merely one of many gateways to sexual and spiritual ecstasy. And while individual proclivities and specific cultural circumstances channel erotic bodily energy through particular pathways, any broad overview must take into account a holistic view of the body. The many 'maps' of the body, from the chakra system to Freud's anal, oral and genital organizations of sexual energy, are all ultimately limited. The least limited map of bodily energy, the map under which all others may be subsumed, is that described by Freud as 'polymorphous perversity' and by mystics as 'oceanic consciousness'. It is the chaotic, spontaneously self-organizing state a baby experiences before the narrower maps of its culture impose themselves on its body—and which anyone may experience in ecstatic release from cultural boundaries.

In *Love's Body*, Norman Brown has pointed out that the human body, in its deepest levels, is not as linear and static as our culture's vision of it suggests. There is a profound interconnectedness and interpenetration at work. The main component of our linear vision of the body is the divided polarity of the head and the groin, the brain and the genitals. But... "The word cerebral is from the same root as Ceres, goddess of cereals, of growth and fertility; the same root as *cresco*, to grow, and *creo*, to create. [Richard] Onians, archaeologist of language, who uncovers lost worlds of meaning, buried meanings, has dug up a prehistoric image of the body, according to which the head and genital intercommunicate via the spinal column: the gray matter of the brain, the spinal marrow,

and the seminal fluid are all one identical substance, on tap in the genital and stored in the head.” An aspect of this ancient model can be seen to derive from agricultural fertility symbolism. In corn, the seed is literally in the head of the plant.

Further, echoing our discussion of Kundalini, Brown remarks: “The classic psychoanalytical equation, head = genital. Displacement is not simply from below upwards; nor does the truth lie in simply reducing it all downwards (psychoanalytical reductionism). The way up is the way down; what psychoanalysis has discovered is that there is both a genitalization of the head and a cerebralization of the genital. The shape of the physical body is a mystery, the inner dynamical shape, the real centers of energy and their interrelation...” The ‘genital organization’ of sexuality, where the genitals are the prime channel for sexual energy, is seen by both Freud and Reich as the ‘healthy’, ‘normal’ mode of eroticism in humans. Neither could conceive of a culture that could withstand the dissolution of this pattern and support groups of polymorphous humans, people for whom sexuality pervades their entire body, and thus their whole lives. Evidently we’re still a long way off from such a culture, but it seems important to recognize that anything less is a limitation of our potential for generating, using and exchanging energies. Brown’s refutation of purely genital sexuality applies equally to all forms of restricted eroticism or spirituality:

Erect is the shape of the genitally organized body; the body crucified, the body dead or asleep; the stiff. The shape of the body awake, the shape of the resurrected body, is not vertical but perverse and polymorphous; not a straight line but a circle; in which the Sanctuary is in the Circumference, and every Minute Particular is Holy...

THE ANDROGYNE

MOST STRIKING, PERHAPS, is the sexual ambiguity of the goddess in my dream. She was definitely a feminine presence, yet the rising snake-energy nature of her conjunction with my body put her in the cock-bearing masculine role. This perception was given a bit of consensus validation when I visited a friend in Brighton, who I hadn’t related my dream experience to. He was skimming through another piece I wrote relating to the World Tree being seen as the spine up which the Kundalini serpent rises. Out of the blue, he said, “Oh yeah! I had a Kundalini thing once when I was tripping, lying on the ground at a festival. It was like being fucked by Mother Earth.” (I had related the Kundalini goddess to the Earth goddess myself—I had an strange experience of energy rushing up into me from the ground at a Dreadzone gig months before my dream. Also, the base chakra, where the Kundalini serpent is traditionally seen to be coiled and dormant, is connected in the chakra system to the earth element.) On the same journey, I visited a friend who I did tell my dream to. He quickly related it to an experience he had had while on mushrooms next to a vast boulder in the place where the sarsens (local sandstones) used to build the Avebury henge were taken from. He experienced it as a bolt of energy penetrating him from below, and nicely called it “an amphetamine pessary up the psychic jaxxee.”

The Goddess is an hermaphrodite.

In Neolithic thought, maleness was an aspect of the universal being, or vessel, which was regarded as female. How could it be otherwise, if she truly encompassed everything? An architectural expression of this view is often found in Indian temples, where the overall form displays the feminine creative shape, based on the womb cell which contains the Lingam or male element.

Michael Dames, *The Avebury Cycle*

On Windmill Hill near Avebury, the oldest structure to be found is a cluster of 32 pits dug around 3700 BCE. Dames points out that this pit grouping can be seen to form the outline of a goddess figure, squatting with upturned arms in the traditional stylization of a woman in labour. The pit corresponding to the vulva is “the largest and most fully furnished of all the pits”, containing pottery, worked flint flakes, hammerstones, and sarsen balls similar to others found beneath Silbury. However, if one does take the formation to be a squatting goddess, two of the central pits clearly form a penis shape. A small chalk slab, known as the Windmill Hill amulet, found in an adjacent ditch, bears a design similar to the pit goddess, and also displays lines apparently describing a phallus. Hermaphroditic motifs can be seen in two other carved chalk figurines found on the hill, and Dames also notes an androgynous Neolithic figurine found in Somerset and a Bronze Age goddess figure with a beard which was found in Denmark.

The heretical Knights Templar reputedly worshipped a ‘demon’ named Baphomet, most famously depicted by Eliphas Lévi as a goat-headed half-human deity, clearly male and yet breasted—with two intertwining snakes rising from his lap (an important image in Tantra). Baphomet was naturally taken by the Church to be Satan. The Templars were accused of Devil worship and sodomy, and in the early fourteenth century King Philip IV of France had 54 of them arrested, tortured and killed on heresy charges. Satan himself sometimes has shades of androgyny. Phil Hine has informed me that Robertson Davies, in his collection of short stories *High Spirits*, holds Satan to be an hermaphrodite. And the figure of the Devil in a seventeenth century drawing called *Witchcraft* (right), by Claudé Francoise Menestrier, clearly has big dangling breasts.



Dionysus, familiar to us here as precursor of the Jesus/Satan split and son of the Earth, was raised by women, often jeered at for his effeminate appearance, and referred to by a king in a text by Aeschylus as “man-woman”. Alain Daniélou presents copious documentation, in his book *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*, that Dionysus is almost precisely equivalent to the Indian god Shiva—from whom we may also derive another traditional aspect of Satan, the trident, which is closely associated with Shiva. One of Shiva’s principal aspects is the *Ardhanarâshvara*, the hermaphrodite. “The Prime Cause may be conceived as masculine or

feminine, as a god or a goddess, but in both cases it is an androgynous or transexual being.”

In Siberian shamanism, as in many shamanic traditions, ritual bisexuality is held to be a sign of sacred power, of dealings with other worlds. Daniélou also notes that the Etruscan prophetess wore a phallus attached to her girdle. **Kucumatz**, the supreme god of the Quiché Indians, is androgynous, both father and mother of all creation. Jewish mysticism elaborates on the creation myth of Genesis in the idea of the primordial androgynous being, Adam Kadmon, a perfect reflection of the divine (see Genesis 1:27—“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”). S/He is split into Adam and Eve to form humans.

Androgynous figures in mythology represent a state of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity that transcends the apparent opposition of sexes and genders. They are vivid, bodily images of a recurrent spiritual impulse to unite, but not leave behind the ecstatic interplay of opposites—without which unity would be a bland mess, with no contrasts, dynamism or fun. This impulse can be seen more abstractly in the Taoist yin-yang symbol, and the *coincidentia oppositorum*, or union of opposites, in medieval alchemy. Referring to androgynous motifs in mythology, Mircea Éliade says that this “nostalgia for primordial completeness . . . is found almost everywhere in the archaic world.”

So what does this mean for us? A recognition that, potentially at least, gender is less a barrier than a permeable membrane (to paraphrase Carol J. Clover in *Men, Women & Chainsaws*), and that this membrane may be a gateway to magickal consciousness. Whatever the sexual orientation involved, truly ecstatic sex (ritualized or not) can lead to a psychic intertwining and transmutation of sexual identities. Even in (or maybe especially in) the exploration of the *extremities* of sexual difference, this potential may emerge. As Chris Hyatt says, opposites taken to their extremes become one. Or—as in the yin-yang symbol, where at the extreme of dark yin we find light yang emerging, and vice versa—the **opposites become each other**.

Kucumatz is equivalent to the Mayan resurrection god Kukulcan and the Aztec culture-hero, moon-god and creator of humanity, *Queztalcoatl* (both these names mean ‘feathered serpent’). Hunbatz Men, a modern Mayan daykeeper and ceremonial leader, has attempted to reconstruct the initiatory sciences of the ancient Maya in his book *Secrets of Mayan Science/Religion*. In analysing etymology and surviving Mayan temples, he concludes that the Mayan religion was based around a system of seven energy centres, very similar to the Hindu chakras. In both systems, the realization of a divine serpent-power is the goal. In Tantra, it is Kundalini. In Mayan tradition, the serpent is Kukulcan, but there is also the Mayan word *k’ultaniilni* — built up from *k’u* (‘sacred’), *k’ul* (‘coccyx’, the base of the spine), *tan* (‘place’), *lil* (‘vibration’), and *ni* (‘nose’). This amalgamated word embodies the Mayan equivalent of a yogic tradition. Men also discusses a seven-headed serpent form carved on a monolith in Aparicio, Veracruz, Mexico (right), and notes that the Buddha was bitten by a seven-headed serpent while in the river of initiation. “This serpent is called *chapat* in India. Curiously, the people of the Yucatan, Mexico have the same word and it, too, refers to the seven-headed serpent, just as in India.”



“If no attempt is made to induce the orgasm by bodily motion, the interpenetration of the sexual centres becomes a channel of the most vivid psychic interchange. While neither partner is working to make anything happen, both surrender themselves completely to whatever the process itself may feel like doing. The sense of identity with the other becomes peculiarly intense, though it is rather as if a new identity were formed between them with a life of its own.” (Alan Watts, *Nature, Man & Woman*)

I once went to a talk by two practising process-oriented psychotherapists (therapy based on the work of Arnold Mindell), and the woman there responded to a question about Freud by deriding his ‘oppressive’ theory of ‘penis-envy’, the idea that women are all screwed up because they haven’t got that all-important cock. Later in the talk she got round to talking about sexual experimentation, and expressed tingling excitement about the possibilities raised by strap-on dildos. Now, I think Freud *was* pretty ridiculous in a lot of his thinking—but not always because he was necessarily *wrong*, just distorted and one-sided. The pendulum’s swung right across to the other side in many feminist circles, where ‘penis-envy’ is refuted because it’s ‘oppressive’, and then men’s ‘womb-envy’ or ‘menstrual-envy’ is given as an explanation for why men are all screwed up. Hang on! Learn from the androgyne. Maybe both these ‘envies’ exist. And maybe we can ditch that word ‘envy’, and all its associations with eternal frustration. Both Freud and the fundamentalist feminists base their theories on the supposedly unchangeable biological foundation of our sex. But these immutable biological ‘envy’ theories just seem to me to be signs of a lack of imagination. Change ‘envy’ to ‘desire’ and cross-dressing or role-playing may be sufficient to transcend biology, for a time, with enough imaginative energy. Strap-on dildos for women and arses in men need a little less imagination. Still further, there are the presently available surgical techniques of transexualism. And if the permanence of this step scares you off, perhaps soon the intelligent and creative application of new technologies, such as virtual reality or nanotech biomechanics, could offer us unlimited exploration of our inherent sexual plasticity and mutability.

FLESH

It is evident that certain rites and practices of ancient Shivaism or Dionysism, such as human sacrifices, could not be contemplated nowadays. Perhaps I should have avoided mentioning them, as they could easily be used as a pretext for rejecting the whole of Shivaite concepts, but, in my opinion, it was necessary to do so because they reflect tendencies of the human being and aspects of the nature of the world, which it would be imprudent to ignore. They form part of our collective unconscious and risk being manifested in perverse ways if we are afraid to face up to them.

Alain Daniélou, *The Gods of Love and Ecstasy*

GOING RIGHT BACK to where we started, let’s recall that the primary manifestation of the modern Church’s concern with the Devil is its fantasy of rampaging Satanists or pagans sacrificing animals and children to the Dark Lord. Modern human sacrifice is largely a **myth**; however, I see no reason for doubting that animal sacrifices occur, though not necessarily just by ‘Satanists’ (note Anton LaVey’s 10th Satanic Rule: “Do not kill non-human animals unless attacked or for your food.”). Almost all religions have a deep, intrinsic history of animal sacrifice, and some still practice it. The Massai of Kenya and Tanzania, though nominally Christian, continue to practice blood sacrifice. So do followers of Santeria, a combination of African religion and Christian symbolism, in the States. They regularly ignore U.S. laws (which prohibit the killing of animals except in licensed

butcheries and for animal experimentation) in order to practice their religion. The chief contemporary practitioners of ritual sacrifice seem to be Christians themselves, who slaughter and eat tens of millions of turkeys every year as part of their celebrations of the birth of their god.

Human sacrifice also has a long history. It seems to be the main element of Neolithic Goddess cultures that most modern popularisers of Goddess religions have neglected to deal with. Joseph Campbell has said that “human sacrifice is everywhere characteristic of the worship of the Goddess in the Neolithic sphere”; Avebury is no exception. Dames details many instances of human sacrifice in Neolithic Avebury: a prehistoric urn full of human bones was found in the southern inner stone circle of the henge; an adolescent male was found in the foetal position, with all bones broken, within the Sanctuary; other young men have been found buried along the West Kennet avenue. One was found with a thigh-bone jammed into his jaw—sexual/fertility symbolism which involves these sacrifices in one of the primary concerns of the Avebury monuments, the success of the crops. Dames speculates that the sacrificial victims could have actually been honoured to play this part: “For the victims, the opportunity to end their lives in physical incorporation with the Great Serpent [the West Kennet avenue] may have been regarded as an awesome privilege, an ultimate union with the godhead—son and parent united in divinity.” The overwhelming holism of the surviving monuments seems to suggest that life for these people may well have been so unified, and death so deeply intertwined with life in their psyches, that young men could have felt their death to be a privilege, an opportunity to spill their life-blood into the ground and magically give life to the crops and the community—as well as return to the womb of the Earth-Mother.

The idea of sacrifice, bloody or not, is at the heart of human religious life. Its basis is surely the food chain—the interdependence of all life on all other life, the fact that nothing lives save by another’s death. Alain Daniélou has called blood sacrifice “the sacralization of the alimentary function”, that is, the ritualisation of killing and eating. “The whole universe is really only food and eater.” (*Brihat Aranyaka Upanishad*) “The world as sacrifice; this world as food; to be is to be eaten.” (Norman O. Brown, *Love’s Body*) If the world is conceived of as one divine body, the process of life is divine autophagy—self-eating. It seems that all religious sacrifices may be derived from the recognition of this fact. Most practices are distorted to a greater or lesser degree, but the original function of sacrifice was probably part of the human urge to *intensify* the processes of nature. Vegetarianism and veganism do not negate the fact that life thrives on death—only an unmagickal, unholistic view of life would hold that plants are not living creatures like the rest of us. And while modern technology makes vegetarianism viable for us all (and meat-eating cruel, relying as it does on modern techniques of slaughter), the symbolism of sacrifice and blood are rooted in the consumption of animal flesh.

This myth is cleverly played upon in the early seventies horror film *The Wicker Man*, which on the surface seems to be a standard cash-in on these lingering suspicions about paganism. However, the way the Christian copper (who is eventually burnt) is lured into the trap is revealing. It’s only because he’s so repressed and suspicious of pagans that he falls for the bait. He comes to the island and is convinced that a ‘missing’ girl is going to be sacrificed — what else would these phallus-worshipping heathens who cavort naked around bonfires be up to? All the ‘evidence’ turns out to be carefully contrived to play upon his rampant Christian suspicions: the girl is part of the plot, he is trapped by his own projected fears, and sacrificed in a ritual for crop success. If this was real life, of course, all the islanders should be up on conspiracy to murder. As the piece of art that it is, the story works perfectly as a delicious example of poetic justice.

What do we actually mean by ‘sacrifice’? The dictionary definition is “the act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else more important or worthy.” Alan Watts says that it is an act which makes something holy (*sacer-facere*), arguing that “sacrifice is only accidentally associated with the cessation, death or mutilation of the offering because it was once supposed that, say, burning bulls on an altar was the only way of transporting them to heaven.” (*Nature, Man & Woman*) This idea is used to stress that ‘sacrificing’ one’s sexuality to God does not mean chastity, because if you’re not fucking, there’s nothing there to ‘sacrifice’, or ‘make holy’.

These two definitions, ‘giving up’ and ‘making holy’, seem to be at odds—you can’t make your cake holy and eat it—until we look at Shivaite (Shiva-worshipping) practices that forbid anyone to eat any flesh that is not the result of a ritual sacrifice. “One should not eat the flesh of living beings without killing them oneself, i.e., taking a conscious part in their slaughter and making the gods a party to it, since the world which they have created and uphold is itself a perpetual sacrifice.” (Daniélou) In a system where “the gods must be offered the first-fruits of the harvest, the first mouthful of all nourishment”, this practice makes an offering—gives something up—as well as making the act ‘holy’. In killing for food in the name of Shiva, the sacrifice forms a ritual intensification of nature, of divine autophagy. As in Dionysian rites, the animal is seen as a manifestation of the god, with whom the worshipper communes through the act of eating. You are what you eat. The pagan origins of the Christian communion should be plain. “Eating is the form of redemption. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” (Brown)

The practice of Shivaites, of only eating what you yourself ritually kill, seems diametrically opposed to the systems of hunting and eating taboos anthropologists have discovered among hunter-gatherers. Chris Knight postulates a primitive ‘own-kill’ rule: “Culture starts not only with the incest taboo, but also with its economic counterpart in the form of a rule prohibiting hunters from eating their own kills.” One’s ‘own blood’, in both senses of blood lineage and totem animal blood, is forbidden. This ‘rule’, he argues, is demonstrated by the fact that their exist so many methods of getting around it. Rules are there to be broken; their boundaries, and thus the rules themselves, are defined by how they are circumscribed. The ways of getting around this rule can be seen in its application only to a man’s ‘first kill’; in tribes where you can eat your own kill provided you apologize to the animal’s spirit; and in customs where you symbolically offer your kill to someone else first, whether it’s another person or a god. Knight sees the latter as the basis of most ‘sacrifice’.

His reason for postulating this ‘rule’ is that his model of the origins of human culture sees the first proto-human apes involved in an evolving system of menstrual, sexual, hunting and economic taboos. We looked earlier at how Knight envisions culture as emerging from women synchronizing their menstrual periods. Tied up to this is the idea that the time of menstruation, the dark moon, would be immediately followed by hunting trips, as the moon waxed. Because proto-human females were more burdened by their offspring (human infants take a lot longer to mature), they needed to secure a sure supply of food for themselves and their young. In short, they needed to make damn sure the males didn’t go off hunting, scoff the lot while they’re away, and only come back with scraps (as often happens in groups of apes). Knight believes that part of the women’s menstrual ‘sex-strike’ (against procreative, ‘domestic’ sex at least) involved a growing system of

associations between menstrual blood and the blood of game animals. The taboo against 'domestic' sex during menstruation would be psychically linked to a taboo against eating raw, bloody flesh. In Knight's model, the women control the fire hearth, and thus it is only through presenting their kills to the women that the men can have cooked flesh, free of the tabooed blood. This way, food for the women and children is assured. Survivals of this taboo system are found in most contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes. To take one example, hunters of the Urubu tribe in the Amazonian basin may not bring deer into the village. The hunter deposits his kill at the edge of the clearing, and sends a woman to get it. The Urubu believe that "a hunter who brought his own game into the village would be punished with a terrible fever and become *kaù*, crazy." Californian Indians even have a special verb, *pi'xwaq*, which means "to get sick from eating one's own killing".

Knight's model is interesting in that so many ecstatic nature-based religious cults *directly* contravene these postulated 'primeval taboos'. "Ancient Shivaite or Dionysiac ritual does not allow the cooking of the flesh of the animal victim, which had to be captured after a chase, torn apart and eaten raw." (Daniélou) If prohibitions against eating raw meat form part of the basis of human culture, these later ritual practices may be seen as *counter-cultural* forces. They evolved during times when human life was beginning to be urbanized, and 'culture' was becoming something very alienated from nature. Shivaism and Dionysism all stand against conventional civilization, and aim to ecstatically commune with the natural forces and spirits of the land.

Humans irrevocably evolved into cultural beings in eastern Africa long ago. Some development beyond animal existence was obviously necessary for 'culture' to exist at all; thus the raw/cooked, nature/culture, animal/human oppositions. But when the rural/urban opposition arose, as the great cities of Europe, the Middle East and Asia formed, something was slowly lost. Evolution was turned back on itself as human culture, a profound outgrowth of nature, began to isolate and alienate itself from its source. "The Dionysiac rite takes its followers back to a primitive stage, which is the antithesis of the city cults in which the victim is eaten cooked. Here we find a very ancient contrast between the two concepts of food and its associated rites. When Dionysus is himself the victim of the Titans who put him to death and boil and roast him, his being cooked implies that Dionysus, as the god of Nature, is the victim of the gods of the city." (Daniélou)

THE MENSTRUAL BLOOD and animal blood connection also reveals the second source of sacrificial blood symbolism: menses, the blood which women shed every month as part of their bodily fertility cycles. This may be the original 'human sacrifice', in that menstruating women 'give up' their womb-lining and their unfertilised egg.

It is possible that shamanistic practises of possession by articulate and helpful spirits originally came from the upsurge of energies at the period. There are indications that these spirits were sometimes seen not only as animals, but as the spirits of unborn children. That is, the blood of the period would come instead of the pregnancy, and the blood spoke with the spirit of the unconceived child. A distressing development of this would be in the rumoured cults where children were aborted for magical purposes: there would be no need for this

in a menstrual cult where the natural energies were listened to by women aware of their existence.

Penelope Shuttle & Peter Redgrove, *The Wise Wound*

Throughout history, many diverse groups have been accused of child murder or ritual abortion: Dionysian cults, medieval witches, early Christians, Jews in Nazi Germany, Satanists (and non-Satanic pagans) in the modern West. The widespread repression of menstrual power seems to be a good explanation for the projected fantasies that such accusations usually are.

Throughout Aboriginal Australia, there is no other way to arouse the Rainbow Snake than by bleeding, whether this is menstrual blood or the blood of men who cut themselves. The Snake is summoned by and attracted to blood. Perhaps this archaic myth-logic is the origin of the reasoning behind the modern occult theory of blood. Talking of *larvæ*, or elemental spirits, Eliphas Lévi, a nineteenth century French occultist, says that “such *larvæ* have an aërial body formed from the vapour of blood, for which reason they are attracted towards spilt blood [“hence come the histories of vampires”, he says later] and in the older days drew nourishment from the smoke of sacrifices.” In connection with this, he notes that “according to Paracelsus, the blood lost at certain regular periods by the female sex and the nocturnal emissions to which male celibates are subject in dream people the air with phantoms.” (Note that Paracelsus includes semen along with menses—both are in some sense ‘unborn children’, and both are highly valued in most sex-magickal traditions.) Blood is seen in such occult theory to contain the ‘life-force’ of the organism, and spilling the blood is thought to release this energy—usually to ‘feed’ a god or spirit, so that it can be manifested, or empowered to do the sorcerer’s bidding. Such sacrifice is part of many voodoo traditions.

Christopher Hyatt and Jason Black, in *Pacts with the Devil*, concisely reveal the modern double standards surrounding the issue of animal sacrifice.

Recently, on a national new broadcast, there was a segment taped in New York. The video showed ranks of cages containing sheep and chickens, with NYPD officers standing with military solemnity in front of them. The police, the commentator informed us, had just “rescued” these animals. Not from torture or some other form of lingering abuse, but from a place where a major Santeria festival was about to be celebrated. What was to be the fate of these livestock animals? They would be killed expertly and quickly by a Santero, the blood given to the Orishas as a gift, and most likely (depending on the ritual) the animals would be cooked and eaten that same evening by the men women and children at the celebration.

They point out that we live in a society where someone could be sat at home eating a steak (from an animal cruelly, sometimes slowly killed in a slaughterhouse), spy someone living next door swiftly killing a chicken as part of a ritual, and run terrified to the phone to inform the police about this ‘Satanist’, even if the ritualist ate the chicken later for dinner. Who is more humane? Hyatt & Black also note that all ‘kosher’ meat, drained of blood while a rabbi says a blessing, is by definition ritual sacrifice; yet this is legal. Now, I’m wholly and unreservedly against any animal being killed if it isn’t eaten (unless in self-defence). When it is eaten, I think this falls into the category of personal choice. It’s not my business if people want to eat animals without cruelty. Likewise, it’s not my business if they want to use the animal’s death for spiritual purposes before they eat it. Or

if they want to kill it cleanly, then rip it to shreds and eat it raw with their bare hands.

What Hyatt & Black show is the hypocrisy surrounding blood sacrifice in modern culture. I wonder how many fundamentalist Christians involved in spreading the anti-pagan ‘ritual sacrifice’ scam sit down at Christmas and happily chew the cooked flesh of poultry kept in appalling conditions and slaughtered profanely. Given the choice, I would rather the turkey’s death formed part of a Santerian ritual, and its flesh eaten afterwards by people fully conscious of its demise—and of the sacredness of life and death.

BLOOD

WHEN I FIRST read the evidence for the ‘own-kill’ taboo in hunter-gatherer tribes—which in some extreme cases extends to hunters believing that even having *seen their food alive* would lead to bad hunting luck—I thought immediately of the modern meat industry. Now we haven’t the *slightest* chance of seeing the creature we’re eating in its living state. But this modern taboo merely serves to isolate meat-eaters from the reality of death (as one would expect in a Christian-based culture). For hunter-gatherers, who still kill, even though they may not eat their own kills, the reasons are a bit more complicated, and a little less alienating.

As a general example of how the own-kill rule functions in hunter-gatherer societies, let’s look at what is commonly known as ‘totemism’. Say there are several clans of hunter-gatherers living in the same area. Each clan has a ‘totem animal’. For simplicity’s sake, let’s say that there’s the bear clan and the deer clan. Now, the own-kill taboo would work here by preventing the bear clan from eating bear flesh and the deer clan from eating deer flesh. Each clan would be responsible for the *hunting and killing* of their own totem animal, and for supplying the meat to the *other* clan. The own-kill rule therefore functions as part of a reciprocal gift-giving system of exchange. Such exchange systems form part of the basis for human culture and language. Sharing and swapping necessitates communication and agreed-upon behavioural guidelines; and the evolution of such guidelines and communication likewise facilitate more intricate systems of exchange. There is strong evidence that most hunter-gatherers link (or rather *identify*) this food taboo/exchange system—of which there are countless variations—with incest taboos. Thus, the Arapesh of Papua New Guinea equate the taboo against eating one’s own kill with the taboo against incest. When asked about incest by an anthropologist, a man from the Arapesh tribe said, “No, we don’t sleep with our sisters. We give our sisters to other men and other men give us their sisters.”

Not all hunter-gatherer exchange systems are based on inter-tribal marrying that is so male-dominated, as many early anthropologists tried to claim (to vindicate current patriarchy). But whoever controls inter-marrying between tribes, matrilineal kin and totem animals are equated as being tabooed for a very simple reason: *they are one’s own blood*. “To speak of someone as ‘my own flesh’ means, in many languages of the world, that the person is a close relative, usually by ‘blood’.” (Knight) To many tribes, whose word for ‘flesh’ is often the same or similar to their word for ‘kin’, this is more than a figure of speech. Malinowski, speaking of the Trobriand islanders, observed that when men learn that a sister has given birth, they rejoice, “for their bodies become

stronger when one of their sisters or nieces has plenty of children.” Likewise, a similarly concrete feeling of bodily connectedness is expressed by the Buandik of Australia when talking of totemic animals. When forced by hunger to eat such an animal, “he expresses sorrow for having to eat his *Wingong* (friend), or *Tumung* (flesh). When using the latter word, the Buandik touch their breasts to indicate close relationship, meaning almost part of themselves.”

In fact, the evidence suggests a cross-cultural pattern in which totemic food avoidances [and incest taboos] are in some sense avoidances of the self. If one's 'taboo' or 'totem' is not one's 'meat' or 'blood' or 'flesh' in the most literal sense, it is at least one's 'spirit', 'substance' or 'essence'. And the crucial point is that the 'self', however conceived, is not to be appropriated by the self. It is for others to enjoy.

Chris Knight, *Blood Relations*

‘Avoidance of the self’ shouldn’t be taken in the modern sense, like ‘running away from yourself’. Implied here is an avoidance of the *isolated ego*. The hunter-gatherers’ gift-giving and exchange systems imply a commitment to extending the **unity** an individual feels between himself and his clan or totem animal. This unity is felt so strongly that it need not ‘feed on itself’ to bind itself together—it can (and must) be shared with others. It *spills over*, forming reciprocal intertribal bonds of interchange.

Looking back to Shivaite ritual sacrifice, the eating of one’s own kill could be seen as an attempt to regain some personal identity in societies where individuality is suppressed and compromised not to maintain kinship and transcendent blood-unity, but to support an oppressive and unhealthy social structure. However, since the whole point of Shivaism is to transcend the individual, and commune with nature, perhaps new psychic structures are involved. As I said before, Shivaism is *counter-cultural*. Maybe as the original cultural systems became corrupted in crowded cities, the only tack available to oppose this corruption was to oppose the principles it was based on—however socially useful and healthy they may have been in the past.

I haven’t come across any information about sacrificial practices among hunter-gatherer tribes who practice the own-kill rule, and see common blood as the great unifier. But the whole idea of feeling yourself to be one with animals and other people—in a very tangible way—seems to me to have a strong bearing on blood sacrifice. Sacrifice, in the sense of “giving up something valued”, would be truest if one lived with this feeling. Offering the blood (as life-force) of an animal to a spirit would mean much less if the animal involved wasn’t felt to be part of one’s own body. If this feeling was present and real, the sacrifice would truly be a sacrifice.

Following this logic, why bother with animals or other humans at all?

“Union and unification is of bodies, not souls. The erotic sense of reality unmask the soul, the personality, the ego; because soul, personality and ego are what distinguish and separate us; they make us individuals, arrived at by dividing till you can divide no more—atoms. But psychic individuals, separate, unfissionable on the inside, impenetrable on the outside, are, like physical atoms, an illusion; in the twentieth century, in this age of fission, we can split the individual even as we can split the atom. Souls, personalities, and egos are masks, spectres, concealing our unity as body. For it as one biological species that mankind is one — the ‘species essence’ that Karl Marx looked for; so that to become conscious of ourselves as body is to become conscious of mankind as one.”
(Norman O. Brown, *Love’s Body*)

And as Deities demand sacrifice, one of men, another of cattle, a third of doves, let these sacrifices be replaced by the true sacrifices in thine own heart. Yet if thou must symbolize them outwardly for the hardness of thine heart, let thine own blood and no other's, be spilt before that altar.

Aleister Crowley, *Liber Astarte vel Berylli*

Crowley made exceptions to this 'rule' (as he had only one real rule, the often misunderstood "Do What Thou Wilt"); but the concept presented here—spilling one's own blood as a sacrifice—has interesting resonances. It echoes the idea expressed earlier that menstruation may be the original 'human sacrifice'. Chris Knight sees the emergence of all-male initiatory societies, involving self-mutilation and the spilling of blood, as a usurpation of female menstrual ritual power and solidarity. While we should obviously endeavour to release menstruation from the repression it has suffered—and all the evidence points to it being the most repressed and stigmatized human bodily function in history—the practice of ritual blood-letting in men today need not carry any of the associations with stealing women's power that it may have had in the past. I can imagine many a strident feminist deriding men cutting themselves as suffering from 'menstrual envy'. Well, we've already looked at this—I wouldn't consider it 'envy' so much as a desire to partake of the other sex. It is some sort to equivalent of women gaining erotic pleasure and insight through



It seems that the aboriginal populations who travelled across the Bering Straits from Siberia — those who were to become the native peoples of the Americas — developed the sacrifice of ritual blood-letting further. In his essay, 'A Fashion for Ecstasy: Ancient Maya Body Modifications', Wes Christensen details Mayan practices of tattooing, piercing, and blood self-sacrifice. As well as men mutilating their genitals, the piercing of the tongue was common, in men and in women. As Christensen says, "The psychological equation of the penis and the tongue needs little reiteration." His view is that the practice of "pulling spiny cords through holes in the tongue" may have been important for female Mayan ritualists: "If the wounding of the Male expresses the desire to own the magically fertile menstrual flow by mimicking it, the symbol seems less important than its function of linking the opposing forces of mother/father, sky/earth in one ritual practitioner. This way of looking at the rite is less male dominated, as well, as it allows for the pervasive influence of women in the ritual life of shamanistic village life. The tongue sacrifice, then, is the woman sorcerer's rite — a rite in which she symbolically imitates the male to achieve the same equilibrium."

using strap-ons.

Genesis P-Orridge, who was involved in quite extreme spontaneous self-mutilation as part of his performance art activities in the seventies, has been performing rituals for nearly twenty years, and claims that he never does one without cutting his skin. "I have to make at least one cut on myself, and it has to be a cut that will scar, no matter how small." (*Re/Search: Modern Primitives*) Obviously, scarification requires care, precision, and knowledge of how different parts of the body will react to incisions. But it could form part of the prime effort underlying all mysticism: *overcoming subject/object dualism*. Alan Watts has described this in terms of the idea, or feeling,

that one is an individual ego contained in a “bag of skin”. ‘I’ (the subject) am inside, and you and everything else (‘not-I’, the object) are outside. The *skin* is seen as the limit-point between these realms. Most people would see this as ‘common sense’. However, as Watts stresses, the skin is as much a bridge as a barrier. Many different forms of energy and matter—sweat, heat, sound vibrations—constantly cross this bridge, though we are usually unaware of it. We are inextricably bound up with the ‘outside’ world, to such an extent that we cannot exist without it. ‘Out there’ thus forms part of our identity, and our true body is the entire universe. “Originally the ego includes everything, later it detaches from itself the external world. The ego-feeling we are aware of now is thus only a shrunken vestige of a far more extensive feeling—a feeling which embraced the universe and expressed an inseparable connection of the ego with the external world.” (Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*)

“Staring open-eyed at the blazing sun, the blinding rays burning deep into your skull, filling it with unbearable brightness... Blowing on an eagle-bone whistle clenched between your teeth until its shrill sound becomes the only sound in the world... Dancing, dancing, dancing from morning to night without food or water until you are close to dropping in a dead faint... Pulling, pulling away at a rawhide thong which is fastened to a skewer embedded deeply in your flesh, until your skin stretches and rips apart as you finally break free with blood streaming down your chest... This is what some of us must endure in the sun dance.

Many people do not understand why we do this. They call the sun dance barbarous, savage, a bloody superstition. The way I look at it our body is the only thing which truly belongs to us. What we Indians give of our flesh, our bodies, we are giving of the only thing which is ours alone... It is only our own flesh which is a real sacrifice—a real giving of ourselves. How can we give anything less?

Some white men shudder when I tell them these things. Yet the idea of enduring pain so that others may live should not strike you as strange. Do you not in your churches pray to one who is “pierced”, nailed to a cross for the sake of his people? No Indian ever called a white man uncivilized for his beliefs and forbade him to worship as he pleased. The difference between the white man and us is this: You believe in the redeeming powers of suffering, if this suffering was done by somebody else, far away, two thousand years ago. We believe that it is up to every one of us to help each other, even through the pain of our bodies. Pain to us is not “abstract”, but very real. We do not lay this burden onto our god, nor do we want to miss being face to face with the spirit power. It is when we are fasting on the hilltop, or tearing our flesh at the sun dance, that we experience the sudden insight, come closest to the mind of the Great Spirit. Insight does not come cheaply, and we want no angel or saint to gain it for us and give it to us secondhand.” (John (Fire) Lame Deer, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*)

And yet the illusion of the skin as an impassable physical and psychic barrier persists. Thus, cutting the skin could be a very powerful way of shattering this illusion. Scarification can be a form of ego-dissolution. For a start, pain is an intense physical stimulus, and can serve to heighten consciousness. Spiritual practices such as flagellation, bodily restriction, ritual scarification and piercing amply testify to the potency of pain as an intoxicant. In the practice of self-scarification, this alteration of consciousness could shift one’s perception of the wound from being some ‘symbolic’ link between the inner and outer realms to being the concrete link which both physics and primitive tribes insist that it is.

Further, this theory opens up an understanding of many bizarre and perverse phenomena in human behaviour. Schizophrenics frequently lacerate their skin, something usually associated with mere self-destructive tendencies. But if we see this as self-destructive in terms of an attempt to overcome the illusion of separate individual existence (the isolated self, or ego), the practice of spontaneous self-mutilation can be seen as part of the healing process that many radical psychiatrists claim schizophrenia actually is. The ‘split’ in schizophrenia isn’t the popular caricature of ‘split

personality’ (which is found in multiple personality disorders), but the split between inner and outer, the retreat of the individual from the outside world. My own view is that this split is not an aberration found only in the ‘mentally ill’, but the standard psychic stance of ‘normal’ modern humans. Ego-dissolving catalysts like intense sex and psychedelic drugs wouldn’t be subject to the repression that they are in our culture if this wasn’t the case. Schizophrenia is thus the shock and confusion of spontaneous liberation from our aberrant ‘normality’, a descent into the depths of the psyche, an intensification of the inner/outer split through which one discovers the illusory nature of this division.

It is not schizophrenia but normality that is split-minded; in schizophrenia the false boundaries are disintegrating. . . . Schizophrenics are suffering from the truth. . . . Schizophrenic thought is “adualistic”; lack of ego-boundaries makes it impossible to set limits to the process of identification with the environment. The schizophrenic world is one of mystical participation; an “indescribable extension of inner sense”; “uncanny feelings of reference”; occult psychosomatic influences and powers; currents of electricity, or sexual attraction—action at a distance. . . .

Dionysus, the mad god, breaks down the boundaries; releases the prisoners; abolishes repression; and abolishes the principium individuationis, substituting for it the unity of man and the unity of man with nature. In this age of schizophrenia, with the atom, the individual self, the boundaries disintegrating, there is, for those who would save our souls, the ego-psychologists, “the Problem of Identity.” But the breakdown is to be made into a breakthrough; as Conrad said, in the destructive element immerse. The soul that we can call our own is not a real one. The solution to the problem of identity is, get lost. Or, as it says in the New Testament: “He that findeth his own psyche shall lose it, and he that loseth his psyche for my sake shall find it.”

Norman O. Brown, *Love’s Body*

THE DIVINE BODY

‘THE GODDESS’, LIKE all forms of deity, seems to me to be much more than the ‘personification’ of natural forces, or aspects of ourselves. As the previous discussion of personality and ego-consciousness shows, this is because my conception of a ‘person’ or ‘individual’ is, at root, gradually evolving beyond the atomistic and divisive conceptions I have been indoctrinated with. Our conception of divine *personifications* will (or should) change along with changes in our conception of *personality*. Since we can’t safely shift overnight to a chaotic, flux-based state of being, the traditional view of deities will still persist to an extent, as useful focuses for attention and energy; but just as any sexual channels must be subsumed under a broader polymorphic map, lest we become obsessed with any one channel, our relationship to ‘deities’ should be encompassed by a much wider conception of divinity. My brief teenage flirtation with Christianity collapsed mostly because I found the mental idea of God as an old bloke with a beard in the sky hard to get round—and very, very silly. I don’t

intend to let my present relationship with the Goddess fall prey to similar abstractions. Indeed, the foundation of my interest in this area is the shattering of abstract, monolithic, other-worldly conceptions of divinity.

MUCH AS MY ideas are preoccupied with balance, my present conviction that our 'physical' experience is the basis of all 'mythology' automatically places a distinct difference, an imbalance in emphasis, between those first two all-powerful beings we encounter—our parents. The physical root of my being is the fusion of a part of my mother with a part of my father, but this explosive cellular union is followed by nine months of incredibly rapid growth and development as part of my mother's body. Even after physical separation occurred at birth, my mother was probably more or less my 'world' for the first months of life, depending on circumstances. Freudianism seems to be right in saying that the primal shock of existence is separation from the mother, first physically and then psychically. I've no idea why this is the way things are, but such is the case, and I usually point this out to anyone whose knee jerks in dismissal as a reaction against the idea that the first human conceptions of divinity were female. Now, I think this view is overly simplistic, and should be tempered by the above discussions about androgyny and ego-consciousness, but let's explore it a bit and see what comes up.

Our earliest level of experience of this world is the experience of being unified with our mother in the ocean of the womb. Our nutrition and blood circulation in foetal existence depends utterly on our connection with our mother's body via the umbilical cord. We are separated at birth, the umbilical severed, but the new world we are delivered into, the 'external' world, is in a sense another womb. "Birth is to come out of a womb; and to go into a womb." (Brown) The idea that the material world is our mother is found in archaic Earth-Mother beliefs; in psychoanalysis, where exploration of the external world is seen as a symbolic exploration of the insides of the mother, where "Geography is geography of the mother's body" (Brown); and in language, where the word 'matter' derives from the Latin *mater*, mother.

Tantric cosmology sees the ground of existence as the union of the male and female principles, Shiva and Shakti. The manifest world is the product of their interplay, where Shiva is the static principle of consciousness and awareness, and the female Shakti is the dynamic principle of energy and manifestation. This is very similar to the Vedic idea of *maya*, or illusion. The 'material' world is seen as an illusion weaved by the goddess Maya (incidentally, this was also the name of the Buddha's mother), behind which lies the non-manifest reality of cosmic consciousness. We can also relate this back to the idea that Satan rules the world of manifestation—"The Devil is the lord of the world" (Luther)—and God rules the 'non-material' realm of the 'spirit'. Tantra's Shiva-Shakti cosmology is much more holistic, and does not treat the web of matter weaved by Shakti as 'illusory' in the sense of something to be overcome, some cosmic deception that inhibits us. It is seen as the basis of our spiritual quest, the 'raw material' with which we should work to transmute ourselves and the world.

We are, at present, part of the Earth. This planet doesn't 'stop' at the ground we stand on—its true boundary is the outer edge of the atmosphere, and we are thus *inside* the Earth. And, like the human body, the Earth's body doesn't really 'end' in an absolute way at its boundary, or skin. The atmosphere, like the skin, is a bridge as well as a barrier, mediating the transmission of many forms

of energy and matter—most notably light and heat—between the planet and the solar system, and the rest of the universe.

The transition from seeing our human mother as our Mother to seeing the world, or the Earth, as our Mother, is central to initiatory rites. In many tribal societies, pubescent initiates are isolated from their biological families. Mothers often grieve, seeing the initiation as a literal death of their child—and the birth of an independent adult. Many initiations take place in subterranean environments—caves or holes in the ground—from which the initiate emerges as a child of the Earth. It is from such underground wombs that mythologies involving the labyrinth as an initiatory complex emerge. In cultures where male-only initiatory societies emerged, the process often became a way of appropriating the power of the mother, and reveals another example of ritual androgyny:

“The young man is put into a hole and reborn—this time under the auspices of his male mothers.” Male mothers; or vaginal fathers: when the initiating elders tell the boys “we two are friends,” they show them their subincised penis, artificial vagina, or “penis womb.” The fathers are telling the sons, “leave your mother and love us, because we, too, have a vagina.” Dionysus, the god of eternal youth, of initiation, and of secret societies was twice-born: Zeus destroyed his earthly mother by fire, and caught the baby in his thigh, saying: “Come enter this my male womb.”

Norman O. Brown, *Love’s Body*

To a certain extent, though, all this is still abstraction. The transition from a ‘biological’ to a ‘spiritual’ mother is as useless and alienating as the Christian spiritual Father concept if our cosmic parent is envisaged in terms of an abstract deity. The importance of ‘rebirth’ is in the rebirth of awareness, the emergence of a feeling that we are fused with, and part of our environment. For the foetus, the fusion with the mother is an obvious fact that is not recognized with conscious clarity, because of an undeveloped sense of awareness and the fact that no other state has been experienced. Our fall from union seems to facilitate—via contrast and separation—a heightened awareness of reality, through which subsequent re-union with the environment may be experienced with greater intensity, “For I am divided for love’s sake, for the chance of union.” (Crowley, *The Book of the Law*)

Since we are dealing with the relationship between human consciousness and the environment, one of the most important areas of interest here is what is commonly known as earth mysteries. This is the investigation of human interaction with the natural landscape in terms of spirituality, especially regarding sacred sites, whether these sites occur naturally or are constructed. There is usually a dualism at work in the investigation of sacred sites, with the scientific disciplines of archaeology, anthropology and ethnography on one side, and paganism, psychology and spirituality on the other. The ‘subjective’ side (pagan investigators interested in the past and present use of such sites) is necessarily full of speculation and assumptions—my own writings included—but it does hold the key to approaching an understanding of stone circles, burial complexes, standing stones and all other such sites. That is, *the function of sacred sites cannot be understood without an understanding of (which must include an experience that approaches) the mind-set of the people who built them.* This task is probably impossible if taken to be a ‘perfectible’ scientific project, but we have

much greater access to archaic states of consciousness than we are led to believe.

In trying to convey the idea that the LSD experience can access different modes of consciousness from along the evolutionary line, Timothy Leary quotes the German anthropologist Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt, offering it for comparison with documented accounts of LSD sessions. Von Eickstedt is trying to describe his idea of the spiritual attitude of australopithecines, our early ancestors:

In the way of experience there is dominant, throughout, a kaleidoscopic interrelated world. Feeling and perception are hardly separated in the world of visions; space and time are just floating environmental qualities . . . Thus the border between I and not-I is only at the border of one's own and actually experienced, perceptible world.

In other words, for pre-hominid apes, and for the earliest humans, the definition of personal identity could be expressed as: I am my experience. This obviously includes the perceptible landscape, so any sacred sites and constructions that predate the evolution of ego-psychology in human cultures should be considered in these terms. This intertwining of human identity and nature is given a more roundabout, but somewhat fuller expression by Chris Knight in *Blood Relations*:

In this scheme of things [that of Australian Aborigines], human and natural cycles of renewal are mutually supportive and sustainable through the same rites. The skies and the landscape are felt to beat to human rhythms. Everything natural, in other words, is conceptualised in human terms, just as everything human is thought to be governed by natural rhythms.

. . . There seems no reason to discount the Aborigines' own belief that in their rituals they were drawing upon natural rhythms and harmonising with them to the advantage of their relationship with the world around them. It was not that man was dominating nature; but neither was it that human society stood helpless in the face of nature's powers. Rather, human society was flexible enough and sensitive enough to attune itself finely to the rhythms of surrounding life, avoiding helplessness by replicating internally nature's own 'dance'. Nature was thereby humanized, while humanity yielded to this nature. If the hills felt like women's breasts, if rocks felt like testicles, if the sunlight seemed like sexual fire and the rains felt like menstrual floods, then this was not mere 'projection' of a belief system onto the external world. This was how things felt—because given synchrony and therefore a shared life-pulse, this was at a deep level how they were.

Naturally, the experience of a psychedelic trip does not reproduce the *actual* mind-set of archaic humans. For us, a trip stands only in relation to our everyday, 'normal', experience of the world, and is quite different from the continuous, everyday experience of, say, a Neolithic Avebury resident, for whom such a world-view would be 'normal'. Nevertheless, such experiences, induced by chemicals or otherwise, should stand as the cornerstone of our understanding of sacred sites—and pre-civilised culture in general. And in any case, we shouldn't be interested in trying to replicate the mind-set of archaic humanity. Individual initiation isn't a simple one-way 'return to the womb', but a more highly evolved sense of omni-directional unity that follows the experience of division. Similarly, any attempt to re-engineer our culture's experience of the environment,

inspired by prehistoric and existing ‘primitive’ cultures, should be a return to a similar point, but higher up on the evolutionary spiral. “We are not interested in a return to the primitive, but a return *of* the primitive, inasmuch as the primitive is the repressed.” (Hakim Bey)

My conception of the Goddess, then, has less to do with a visualized representation of a vast cosmic woman, ox, or serpent than it has to do with my immediate, moment-to-moment experience of the world I am part of. Even in my Kundalini dream, the ‘presence’ of the Goddess was an intuited fact, not a confrontation with a manifest form. The two instances of feeling Her presence were both experiences of intense body sensations and energy rushes, accompanied by the self-evident dream-conviction that this *was* the Goddess. In waking life, this perception arises very much along the lines of Phil Hine’s idea that Kundalini is associated with “one’s physical sensation of the here & now”. This sensation is not a narrow feeling of mundanity, not the dissipation of mystery and numinosity that is usually associated with the apt phrase “down to earth”. It is exactly the opposite: a sense of the intense completeness and fullness of each moment; a paradoxical but perfectly natural feeling of being totally grounded, yet adrift in a vertiginous whirlpool of possibilities.

A related point that interests me is that investigations into the function and purpose of archaeological artifacts are nearly always governed by the sacred/profane dualism. Is this antler-pick just a common tool, or did it have ritual significance? Are these cave paintings just ‘art’ (in the modern, profane, sense of ‘representation’), or were they part of a system of hunting ‘magic’? It’s clear that *somewhere* the rigid distinction between the ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ arose. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be in the present situation where for most people the ‘sacred’ only exists in church on Sundays (if sacredness exists at all). According to Alan Watts, ‘profane’ didn’t always mean irreligious or blasphemous. It merely signified “an area or court before (*pro*) the entrance to a temple (*fanum*). It was thus the proper place of worship for the common people as distinct from the initiates, though here again the ‘common’ is not the crude but the communal—the people living in society. By contrast, the sacred was not the merely religious but what lay outside or beyond the community, what was—again in an ancient sense—extraordinary or outside the social order.” (*Nature, Man & Woman*)

Judging from this, the sacred/profane duality arose as a result of the increase in human populations. Beyond a certain point, it seems that the full power and mystery of existence, as felt by the earliest humans, could not be a constant fact of everyone’s experience if “social order” was to evolve. Even beyond this point, it can be seen from Watts’ argument that the sacred/profane distinction didn’t necessarily mean that everyday experience was utterly bereft of spiritual significance. This spiritual poverty, this rigid division of life into the sacred and profane (in their modern senses), has only been the norm of human experience for several hundred years, if that. And in their historical accounts, modern scientists have been projecting this division back in time for far too long. A re-vision of anthropology and archaeology is overdue, necessary and, I feel, imminent.

“Mariners sailing close to the shores of Tuscany heard a voice cry out from the hills, the trees and the sky: “The Great God Pan is dead!” Pan, god of panic. The sudden awareness that everything is alive and significant. The date was December 25, 1 AD. . . . The final apocalypse is when every man sees what he sees, feels what he feels, hears what he hears... The creatures of all your dreams and nightmares are right here, right now, solid as they ever were or ever will be...” (William S. Burroughs, *Apocalypse*)

It seems ridiculous that anyone could assume that prehistoric humans sectioned life into neat compartments, mundane and extraordinary, profane and sacred, with anything like the rigour and inflexibility that the modern West does. Only affluent cultures, where day-to-day survival is not really a pressing issue, can even *afford* such a distinction. For pre-civilised (i.e. before cities) societies, where existence was dynamic and unstable, life depended on crops and crops depended on weather, among other things. For pre-agricultural societies, life depended on the gathering of food and the hunting of animals, which are subject to even more unstable factors. And these things, agriculture and hunting, were the prime focus for ‘religious’ activity. Gods and goddesses of the hunt, gods and goddesses of the Earth and crops dominated their relationship with the divine. What we consider the ‘mundane’ bits about life, like fuelling our bodies and keeping warm, were for these people projects loaded with importance and significance. In such a society, there’s nothing more significant than staying alive. Thus food, shelter, hunting, farming, communication, the sharing of knowledge and skills, all were imbued with what we would consider ‘spiritual’ significance.

The figure of the shaman, “technician of the sacred”, stands as the first step in the progressive division of life into the sacred and the profane, but the first shamans could only have stood “outside the social order” in a shallow sense. Early shamans would have depended on the social order for basic support and a purpose for their path’s numerous trials, and the society would have depended on them for communication with deities and spirits, or forces of nature—more often than not for the governing and aiding ‘mundane’ projects like hunting and farming.

In short, life was a unity. Everything depended on everything else. The body was divine, and experience of the body included the environment. For ourselves, living in a culture where the dominant spiritual institutions have insisted not only on separating themselves from everyday life, but directing their spiritual aspirations *outside this world*, it’s evident that a new vision of spirituality more directly concerned with life, the Earth, our bodies and *survival* is needed. We cannot live on bread alone, but I don’t want to try to live without it. It’s no coincidence that it took an affluent society like our own, where day-to-day existence is taken for granted, to produce a device capable of utterly destroying the biosphere.

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The Holy Bible edited by the Christian Church
Meditations on the Apocalypse by F. Aster Barnwell
The Supernatural by Colin Wilson
The Wise Wound: Menstruation & Everywoman by Penelope Shuttle & Peter Redgrove**
Men, Women & Chainsaws by Carol J. Clover
Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions by John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes
Yoga: Immortality and Freedom by Mircea Éliade
Gods of Love and Ecstasy: The Traditions of Shiva and Dionysus by Alain Daniélou*
Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons by Manfred Lurker
Secrets of Mayan Science/Religion by Hunbatz Men
The History of Magic by Eliphas Lévi
The Psychedelic Reader edited by Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Gunter M. Weil
Dead City Radio by William S. Burroughs (spoken word cassette)
T.A.Z. by Hakim Bey (spoken word CD)

* recommended in relation to the ideas discussed in this essay

** bloody essential

RELATED FILMS

The Wicker Man directed by Robin Hardy

The Divine Horsemen by Maya Deren

Videodrome by David Cronenberg

Crash by David Cronenberg

Santa Sangre by Alejandro Jodorowsky

Carrie by Brian de Palma

Alien³ by David Fincher

The Exorcist by William Friedkin

The Last Temptation of Christ by Martin Scorsese

Dracula by Francis Ford Coppola

The Hunger by Tony Scott

Picnic at Hanging Rock by Peter Weir

Journey to the Centre of the Earth by Henry Levin

Ginger Snaps by John Fawcett

