

ET. 31. The rediscovery of ancient goddesses and related beings.

Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Oedipe" sans complex, in, J.P. Vernant/P. Vidal-Naquet, Oedipe et ses myths, ed. La découverte, 1986; Ed. Complexe 1988 et 2001, 9, situates the Oedipus figure not in the complex named after Oedipus (flagship of psychoanalysis) but in Eastern theogony (as Hellas scholars do).

The origin story in question begins with chaos, the all-encompassing void in which everything moves and lives in a disorderly or orderly fashion. But at some point (this term is a mythical term that only means a further aspect of what has already been mentioned, - timeless). Gaia, the all-encompassing mother who "gives birth" (again, a mythical term meaning "the existence of something being") to all that exists. She is steadfast (and therefore predictable). She gradually established order within the primordial chaos (mentioned above).

Note: she generates beings and order from within her own being. Without e.g. Eros, i.e. without sexual union with a male partner. So e.g. with Oeranos, who is generated by her alone. Oeranos does not appear in the reason for existence - just like Eros - of all that is. Behold the Eastern theogony in its absolute beginnings, - restored in part by e.g. the Greek poet-thinker Hesiod (-900/- 600).

With this we emphasize that our ancient Greek cultural heritage was far from being unfamiliar with the primordial goddess or omnipotent mother. We will not dwell on the other female deities and sacred beings here: for example, who has not heard of Aphrodite or the muses?

The range of the divine life force.

It suffices to mention the great titles of the table of contents of L. Graham, Déesses, Ed. Abbe-ville, New York, Paris, London, 1997 (orig.: Goddesses in art, New York, 1997) to carefully peruse the enormous role that primordial civilizations, around the planet, experienced in their lives. Creation-and-development of the universe (i.e. the harmony of opposites), androgine deity (the goddess who is at the same time god), the mother of some tribe, the patroness of all that is motherhood, the goddesses of animals, fields, flowers and plants, of love and sexuality, of health and healing, of war and victory, of knowledge and wisdom.

Note that the fourteen last "functions" as Usener taught to call them, exhibit the basic contradiction, i.e. creation-and-destruction. Thus goddesses both make sick and they heal.

The revival.

According to Graham, among a series of other writers, it was especially Maria Gimbutas, an archaeologist (with *The Goddesses and Gods of old Europe* (1974), and Merlin Stone, an art historian (*When God was a woman* (1976)), who started the turnaround in terms of attention (up to and including veneration), although both works are open to reservations of all kinds.

We now have solid grounds for assuming that prehistoric Europe assigned a dominant place to the great goddess which was supplanted by the later male culture of the Indo-Europeans.

Feminism.

The first intention of the feminists in the seventies was the emancipation of the modern woman in all areas of culture. But with time feminism discovered that in the East and in the West the sacred contained both female and male deities, - that female and male shamanism existed and still exists, - that the men of the West were both women and men, priestesses and priests.

An initial characterization.

According to Graham Steeds, archaeology, mythology, and linguistics show that goddess-serving cultures tend toward equal rights, Mother Earth worship (tellurism), and nonviolence.

The Black Spot in the West.

The reasons that led to minimize, indeed eradicate, femininity are complex. One of the main reasons is the destruction, for several millennia, of goddess-enhancing cultures by highly offensive Indo-European tribes who destroyed the ancient cities between Greece and India before building their own culture.

These savage people worshipped attacking sky gods (primordial animism) even to such an intense degree that feminine deities and what goes with them were thought outside the sacred. Joseph Campbell calls this "the patriarchal reversal." According to Graham (and many thought leaders), the biblical tradition from the church fathers onward is situated in the same masculinization of the sacred. Thus, women are still excluded from the priesthood in the Christian (especially the Catholic) churches.

Mother Earth. –

All over the world one finds the remnants of the telluric (or in Greek: chtonic) belief in the mother earth. C.J. Bleeker, *De moedergodin in de oudheid* (The Mother Goddess in Antiquity), The Hague, 1960, devotes a chapter to the subject: Mother Earth, o.c., 21/35.

Speaking meticulously (fluidically), at its basis lies (what Bleeker calls) the realization that man, if he remains connected to the earth, draws from a mysterious, i.e. sacred, source which provides life force and all that depends on it. With Gerh. van der Leeuw we call this the dynamic aspect of earth worship which we still find when the present Pope John Paul, at the beginning of a visit to a country, kisses the earth. This immediately reminds us that in the novels of F. Dostoyevsky the actors, if they want to handle special situations, kiss the earth as the Russians did at the time.

There is between man, insofar as he does not live desacralized, and the earth as the external sign of a sacred life force "a bond as primary, irrational, and indissoluble as the maternal bond. (o.c., 22). - With the basic life force, earth worship also gives life wisdom of course.

The earth as underworld.

Life experienced as God-given (plant, animal, human, invisible) "comes from the underworld" (o.c., 28). After all, the earth and its interior is the seat of the earth goddess who controls the realm of the dead within the earth and thoroughly influences life in its biotope around our planet.

Thus it is understood that the goddess-controlled culture, telluric oriented as it was, consulted the earth oracle in its many forms. Thus Gaia was not only the mother of the universe but also the goddess of the earth in ancient Greece, the oracle goddess who, for example in Delphi, used the Pythia, who sat on her sacred tripod where she absorbed the intoxicating vapors and acted as the goddess' medium when she was transported.

Now we know: the Delphian Pythia was consulted by society from low to high. - As Bleeker, o.c.,28, says, in the mind of the oracle-goddess there reigns another order than that of the people on earth, namely the demonic order, which thinks and governs good and evil, salvation and calamity (in the form of success and failure) differently, namely according to the goddess destiny, sometimes incomprehensible to earthly man as a language, but governing earthly life, which W.B. Christensen calls "harmony of the opposites".

The kumari religion

M.S. Boulanger, *Le regard de la Kumari (Le monde secret des enfants-dieux du Nepal)*, Paris, 2001, 196 ss., brings us closer to the true nature - as a religion type, that is - of the goddess religions.

In Nepal, the kumari, a virgin very young girl, selected according to typical tantric norms, is the mediator of the female life energy until her first period of menstruation because of the goddess Taleja Bhavani at the disposal of the king.

Writer, towards the end of her book, confesses that in time she begins to understand. We briefly explain how she sees it.

The eyes of the sacred girl are black surrounded with hollow, the lips are painted, the feet are reddened like those of the newlyweds; her sacred animal is the peacock, the typical symbol of the courtesans.

The royal kumari, according to Gerard Toffin, an ethnologist specializing in Nepalese culture, is first subjected to a series of magical operations, some of which are unknown, but a typical part of which is what follows.

The high priests wash the naked girl, in order to destroy what would hinder her future role, whereupon a rite follows that makes her - especially in her feminine physicality - a sign of the goddess energy of Taleja Bhavani who himself represents Shiva: the weathervane touches six anga, body parts, with a bundle of *Eragrotis cynosuroides kusa*, a cleansing plant: the eyes, the pubic cleft (vulva), the uterus, the navel, the breasts, the throat. As the ritual progresses, the young body takes on the red color of kumaris. The author refers to such acts as transgressions of the established order, mainly concerning sexuality. The we men are therefore called karmacarya, impure priests.

Yet they apparently do not question the established order; on the contrary: through those shameless acts they obtain from Taleju Bhavani (and from Shiva) "the real life force" (o.c., 199), recorded in mantras (i.e. formulas) that induce the very powerful goddesses to make shakti, the very active-efficient female energy, accessible.

As an aside, the writer also sees these transgressions in the large doses of alcohol and unauthorized foods that the kumaris have to deal with in the course of some rites.

Regal application.

"Thanks to the unification (note: through the kumari) with the goddess, the ruling king possesses supernatural powers that he needs to rule." (o.c., 198). The ruler immediately disposes of the mantras (magical formulas) associated with that unification that literally "manipulate" the goddess' life force (so that there is a kind of do ut des, I give that you may give).

Tantrism.

Tantric theology identifies the sacred as a couple who become one. This is the god and the goddess (the latter as Shakti). True salvation consists in an imitative presentation of these unifying deities. In which a strong (occult, by the way) feminism is active: the male aspect is undifferentiated (confused, disorderly) and passive; the female, Shakti, is order-giving and active, literally: providing an ordering life-force.

Mrs. Boulanger, who has searched with great difficulty to understand the phenomenon of the kumaris, concludes: "The kumari is indeed the embodiment in a feminine person of tantrism, a creative and deconstructive energy that rules the world. A force that is both feared and treated with reverence, - with its dark side, synonymous with disorder that incessantly threatens to destroy the world it gives birth to." (o.i., 197).

The devadasi.

Boulanger mentions, o.c., 209, the text of a Nepali (Jagadish) on the virgin girls (from one to sixteen years of age), C. Regmi Jagadish, *The Kumari of Kathmandu*, Heritage research, 1991, says viz: "The end goal of the worship of a young virgin is not finished but - it seems - the worshippers had to have sexual relations with those girls after the worship".

Boulanger adds: in India, the devadasi, the temple prostitutes, were famous for provoking - for the same reasons - the favor of the gods for the high castes who took advantage of them. This parallels the kumari' s: the right-believing brahmins considered them almost the outcasts and at the same time they were worshipped as goddesses, even by kings (o.c., 203).

To conclude: the primordial goddess expresses herself in a multitude of 'functions' (energy-shifting interventions in the universe), also not without emphasis in the function of sacrally-dubbed prosti-tution which favors the voluptuous goddesses across borders.

Note Bertrand Hell, *Possession et chamanisme (Les maîtres du desordre)*, Paris, 1999, formulates an axiom governing the world of disorder, over which the great goddess reigns with her creative and destructive life forces: "The more wild the spirits (note: active in possession and shamanic religions) are, the more violent they are, full of disorder, unpredictable, the greater is their life force. (o.c., 193).

Well, in deviant (and preferably very serious) situations with which the one who possesses takes over or with which the shamans are confronted, it comes down to "grasping the forces of disorder and dealing with them" (o.c., 331).

Consequence: both types deviate from the rules of established culture in order to restore order. Hence the dual valuation: one rejects them (as deviant); one seeks their help (as effective).

So also in the religion of god as we see in the religious interpretation of the devadasi and the theology concerning e.g. the kumari. The more dangerous the more useful.

In this the sexual deviations play an apparently fundamental role as e.g. Hell's work, 189/193 (*Les connotations sexuelles*) explains. Voluptuous minds want to be approached as voluptuous! See also Hell, o.c., 291/296 (*de la soumission au mariage*). But note: to undo disorder. Not to reinforce the primal disorder even more. Thus Hell, with Bastide, mentions a myth in which "union with the earth mother" is recommended.

Final Summary

So far some perspectives on an abundant material, - Shah-reskh Husain, *La grande déesse-mère (creation, fertilité et abondance: mythes et archétypes féminin)*, Köln, 2001 (orig. *The Goddess* (1997)), 156, says: "In India in the VII century, tantric mystical texts began to spread the concept of shakti, i.e., the feminine energy in its brutal form, the basic life force without which the gods (especially Shiva) would not work anything out. "The women are the deity. They possess the breath of life" says one tantra.

After centuries of male Indo-European worship, the goddess asserted her supremacy". That tantric feminine theology resurfaced last century in the 1970s in our modern and postmodern West.