



Samson (II)

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We stated from the beginning that we have to forget any schematic and limited interpretations and have to understand the variety of the symbolic viewpoints. Cutting the hair, and becoming bald, contains a manifold symbolism, yet again the triad, Cosmos – Year – Man, permits us to organize the significance for our rational thinking.

On the one hand, cutting the locks expresses the *Fiat Lux*, when “God divided light from darkness” (Gen. 1:4). The primordial “cutting” represents the separation into manifestation (“one thousand feet”) and non-manifestation (“without feet”), into Earth and Heaven, into “powers” and “impotence,” into fertile and unfertile. It is the primordial Sacrifice illustrated by the beheaded dragon. It is not fantastic to assume that hair cutting is, in some respect, a substitute for beheading. Perseus, the solar hero, instead of cutting the serpents-hair, beheads the dragon Medusa. The dragon’s head becomes the turning sun of the new Cosmos, with “one thousand” rays (Coomaraswamy, *La doctrine*, pp. 26, 32). The rest of the body remains “emptied of creatures” (“beardless”) and without “powers.”

On the other hand, the cosmogony implies the birth of Year (Time) and the evolvement of the cosmic cycle as a gradual corruption to its end. In Siouan mythology, the sacred buffalo, which loses one hair every year, illustrates the decay of the world (Brown 9); we can expect that at the end of time the buffalo will be hairless. Cutting the hair means implicitly the death of the World. Any mundane birth contains the seed of death. Cutting the

seven locks implies a progressive separation from the source that feeds the hair, and in time those “powers” will decay. Thus, baldness is the characteristic of the king changed into dragon at the end of time, when the hair, apparently lost into the World, is actually withdrawn back into the Imperishable.¹ To be bald, from a cosmic point of view, illustrates the wasteland and the darkness at the end of time, the lack of hair being identical with the lack of water, vegetation, and light (Coomaraswamy, *La doctrine*, p. 143).

In fairy tales, the bald and beardless character is an aspect of the Dragon. It is interesting that in one of these fairy tales the hairless evil character is the one who beheads the solar hero.² Beheading the hero means a spiritual sacrifice, the supreme step of the initiation, similar to the hair cutting. It is the “ritual death” belonging to the initiatory process, followed by a resurrection, “the second birth.” Indeed, the Virgin (the emperor’s daughter) will place back the head of *Harap Alb* and the hero will be resurrected; that is how Ganesha got his elephant head full of wisdom. At the same time, with the hero’s revival, the hairless character is

¹ The kings of different civilizations used to wear impressive beards, even fake sometimes. The beard is a divine sign of “power” in contrast with beardless, which represents the “impotent” dragon.

² See “The Story of the White Arab” where the hero is called *Harap Alb*, the “White Moor” or the “White Arab” (Folk Tales from Roumania, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952).

Samson (II)

punished (killed). The bald and beardless man is not only an aspect of the cosmic dragon, he is also the dragon dwelling within us, the *ego*, whose “missing” hair represents the ties of passions and appetites and desires. Sacrificing the hair is equivalent then with killing our *ego*, making our bald and beardless individuality lose for good its mundane hair, and replacing it with the invisible golden curls of the Self.³

A “frame of knots” sustains the Cosmos, described as a texture. Untying the knots means the death of the World. The “vital knots” keep Man, in the same way, as an organized aggregate. The Hindu tradition compares human death with the process of cutting those knots. The hair could be such a “vital knot.” Thus, hair-cutting is “self-sacrifice” and a “cosmic-sacrifice.” Beheading the dragon (or cutting the locks) ends a cycle and starts a new one. Beheading the *ego* (or cutting the hair) ends the body-soul bondage and starts the spiritual bondage (the “divine Knot”).⁴

Samson, as an archetypal solar hero, an *avatâra*, has to play all the scenarios. He has to be the divine king who reigns over a cycle of existence and changes gradually into a dragon. He has to be the dragon at the end of time. He also has to be the hero embarked on the initiatory path.

Coming back to Timna, Samson fights a young lion and God helps him kill the beast without using any weapons. The fight is a ritual wrestling match, a spiritual effort.⁵ After a while, visiting Timna again, Samson looked “at the carcass of the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in the lion’s body, and honey. He took up some honey in his hand and ate it,” (Judges 14:9). This event sanctions Samson as “Lord of the World.”

³ The hair represents one end of the Man; the other end, the opposite one, is the heel. The hair and the heel, indicating the two poles of Man, correspond in macrocosmic order to Heaven and Earth. The hair is Samson’s “strength.” The heel is Achilles’ “weakness.” Yet from a spiritual point of view, the hair represents the mundane ties that have to be cut, and the heel is the Sundoor, the “eye” to immortality. Achilles suffers the “ritual death” being killed by Apollo’s solar arrow in the only vulnerable place, the heel. Actually he is hanged in an inverted position, like the “Hanged Man” of the Tarot, with the “Golden Chain” piercing his heel. We have to think in “countercurrent.” In traditional doctrines, the Man’s head corresponds to Heaven and the soles to Earth. On the other hand, Man’s divine position is the reverse one, with the feet planted in Heaven. In this second case, the heel becomes the real capstone. Thetis, in order to make her child, Achilles, invulnerable, dips him into the water of Styx, holding him by the heel. We see that again Achilles is in an inverted position, the heel actually being his tie with the “spiritual paternity.” Homer calls Achilles “Achilles of the swift feet.” A legend says that his mark was not the heel, but the anklebone that was replaced with one taken from the giant Damysos, a very fast runner. In Hindu tradition, the head usually is the one replaced, like in the case of Ganesha. The anklebone replacement refers to a similar symbolism.

⁴ Besides the hair, there are other parts of the human body symbolizing the “vital knots,” as the anklebone or the heel or the key bone. For a building the knots are the nails that keep the edifice together. In Latin, *clavus* means “nail,” a word closely related to *clavis*, “key.” From Latin *clavis*, *clavus*, the French language got its *cheville*, meaning nail, plug, but also ankle. The English language used those words to name the clavicle, the “key bone”. In Greek mythology, the giant Talos, the guardian of Crete, has the same vulnerable place as Achilles, the heel. A plug stopped his heel up. This plug is actually the “key,” the “nail.” In French, *chevillage* means to stop up with a plug.

⁵ In Greek mythology, Hercules *strangles* the Nemean lion. Theseus at the age of seven was ready to attack the Nemean lion-skin (Pausanias I.27.8). Jacob wrestled with the angel (Gen. 32:26); it is interesting that the angel “seeing that he could not master him, struck him in the socket of his hip, and Jacob’s hip was dislocated as he wrestled with him.” Jacob appears lame, “one-footed.” The “socket” of Jacob’s hip is, of course, a “vital knot” that was untied by the angel in exchange for a “divine knot.”

Samson (II)

Wrestling the lion, Samson acquires its attributes. The lion is a well-known emblem of the Sun; the zodiacal *Leo* is the house of the sun. At the highest level, the lion symbolizes the supreme Principle. It is also the spiritual father.⁶ On a lower level, the lion is an emblem of the justice and of the warrior-king. Killing the lion, Samson obtains the temporal power. The golden honey is an eminent symbol of divine wisdom. It is the solar nurture, the spiritual immortal food. Honey represents the transformation of multiplicity, of mundane existences into celestial Unity, the leap from ignorance to knowledge. The way the bees change and unify the different nectars of the multicolored flowers into one kind of honey illustrates the spiritual transformation. The honey is found inside the lion as the sacred kernel is found inside the profane skin. The spiritual wisdom is in the cavity of the heart; the temporal power is the concealment, which safeguards the wisdom. Eating this honey, Samson obtains the sacerdotal power.

Samson becomes the *Sphinx*, half wiseman-half lion.⁷ At the same time, Samson accomplishes the “Supreme Identity,” celebrating a holy wedding with a Philistine girl. After Samson’s miraculous birth, the Bible tells us right away about this first escapade. Samson went to Timna and saw a Philistine girl and he wanted badly to marry her. The Philistines are the oppressors, the enemy, like Trojans are for the Greeks. The Philistine girl should then be compared with Helen or Andromeda to understand Samson’s attraction for a girl of his foes. Samson’s wedding is an impossible one from an earthly point of view and a *hieros gamos* from a celestial perspective. It is the story of Romeo and Juliet; it is the marriage between the Sun and the Moon. On the other hand, if Samson is viewed as a dragon, hiding the generative “powers” or the “initiatory secret,” the Philistine girl appears as a “captive virgin,” and Samson is the abductor.

While the world is getting older and falls from essence to substance, from quality to quantity, from spirituality to materiality, Samson changes slowly into a dragon whose “powers” are the procreative rivers or lights. Nonetheless, he looks forward to achieving Liberation and returning to the Principle’s bosom. Samson starts to govern the new cycle, the new world; simultaneously, the erosion of the “positive” by the “negative” starts to develop. The “erosion” is the normal illustration of the evolvement of a world. In Norse myths, *Axis Mundi* is the huge ash Yggdrasil (Guerber 12). An eagle is perched on its topmost bough, representing the solar “positive” principle, and a terrible dragon, emblem of the “negative” and tenebrous principle, continually gnaws at the roots; that is the “erosion.”⁸

⁶ “In the Middle Ages, everyone subscribed to the idea that the lioness brought forth the young which appeared to be still-born. For three days the lion cubs would give no sign of life, but on the third day, the lion would return and animate them with his breath.” See Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ*, Arkana, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 10. The lion represents the “spiritual paternity,” i. e., the solar fatherhood. Its breath is, conform Hindu tradition, the *sûtrâta*.

⁷ In the case of the *Sphinx*, the head is the spiritual authority and the body the temporal power. Dante (*Purg.* XXIX.108) compares Jesus Christ with another kind of *Sphinx*, the *Griffon*, thinking about Christ’s two natures, the divine and the human one. A *Griffon* has the fore parts of an eagle and the hind parts of a lion. The eagle is a solar emblem and symbolizes the spiritual wisdom.

⁸ In Chinese tradition, during a cosmic cycle, from the Golden Age to the Iron Age, the male principle, the “positive,” will be eroded by the female principle, the “negative.” The traditional commentary of Kâu hexagram says: “A negativity being born, it will increase gradually, and the positive has to decline. That who marries a young girl wants his union to last a long time; or, here, the negativity increases and develops gradually, and will wipe out the positive. It is impossible such a union to last long” (Le Yi: King, I, p. 200, and I Ching, p. 154). In the Hebraic tradition, Eve starts the same process of erosion.

Samson (II)

The unifying wedding that reflects the One-and-only as principle of multiplicity and source of the cycles marks the beginning of the World. The unity has to split into duality, into Heaven and Earth, to permit the cycle to evolve, and at the end of time Heaven will be so far away from the Earth that a cosmic divorce is expected, as the *I Ching* states it. Therefore, in the end, Samson repudiates his wife (Judges 14:20).

The whole process is presented twice; this unveils another sure sign of esotericism. In the *Iliad*, the fighting to rescue the abducted virgin is present more than once. In the *Odyssey*, each of Ulysses' stations is similar. In fairy tales, you have the feeling that the same story is told and retold. That is the way a sacred writing describes the initiation or the process of the cosmic cycles, each step being analogous with the previous one. In Samson's case, there is a "minor cycle" and a "major one," both very similar.⁹

⁹ The two cycles could be compared with the *Lesser* and *Greater Greek Mysteries*.