



The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

M. Capruta

Before resorting to the ancient Greek sources concerning Hyperborea, we must indicate the universal symbolism of the Pole (is)land. What one should see when considering such topic is the direct projection of the Celestial Ray on the Inferior Waters. It has to be stressed that *island* means literally *land in water* or, more exactly, *land surrounded by water*, since the prefix *is-* stands as a contraction of the Latin *in salo* (*within/in the sea*). But it seems that *island* was spelled differently in the Old English. The *s* lacked, in its place being a *g*. *Igland* means accurately *isle (ig) land*, while *ealand* stands for *water (ea) land*.¹ Microcosmically, the projection takes place, symbolically, in the smaller ventricle (Sans. *guhā*) of the heart.² This is also confirmed by the origin of the word, since *ventricle* comes from the Latin *venter* (*belly*), which, together with the Latin *uterus*, comes from the Indo-European radical *udero*. The fact to be noted, therefore, is that the cavity of the heart is equivalent, from this perspective, with the primordial receptacle (Gr. *chora*, Sans. *prakriti*).³ As Guénon notices, the symbolism of the mountain (the island) has a much more primordial character than that of the cave, which represents the occultation of the polar projection.⁴ Nevertheless, *that* which lies bare in the open (Gr. *a-*

¹ We wonder whether this may shed a new light on the issue of the Grail's deposition in Britain.

² See Guénon, *Man and his becoming according to Vedānta*, chap. 3. The Sanskrit word *guhā* means also *cave*, *cavity* and *hiding place*, and *gūhati* signifies *to hide*, *to conceal*. In its latter significance, it is perfectly equivalent with the Greek *lēthe*, although this one also possesses the meaning of *oblivion*, *forgetfulness*. But there is no contradiction in this, on the contrary.

³ However, the cavity of the heart bears both the aspects of the Goddess. Guénon writes in this context of *Aphrodite Anadyomene* (See "Some Aspects of the Symbolism of the Fish", in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*). There are some observations to be made. *Anadyomene* is represented in iconography on a mussel shell, which is more or less the same with the conch, of which Guénon speaks in the article we have just mentioned. The fact the She is literally the one on the surface of the waters suggests, on the one hand, that She emerged from the deluge (like Matsya-avatāra), and on the other hand, that her birth conquered the aquatic depths of *prakriti*, and that She, as Christ, is able to walk upon them (this clearly points towards the symbolism of the second birth, which in the macrocosmic order corresponds to the birth of the avatāra; see for this Guénon's "The Heart and the Cave", in *Symbols of Sacred Science*). Moreover, as projection of the Morning Star, She is the Grail Stone. It must be also remarked that, in Sanskrit, the name of the Morning Star is *Shukra*, which means *bright* and *lucid*. The name is very close to the word which the Sanskrit uses for *white*, *shukla* (which also means *bright*, *pure*, *spotless*).

⁴ See Guénon, "The Mountain and the Cave", in *Symbols of Sacred Science*. Microcosmically, we could make the following equations: the Celestial Ray enters through the fontanelle (Sans. *Brahmarandhra*; *randhra* means *cavity*, *hole*, *aperture*, in which case it is synonym with the Sanskrit *kha*), which is both

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

lathoi; Sans. *nirguna*) is the same with *that* which hides deep underneath (Gr. *lathoi*; Sans. *saguna*), and *that* is *luz*.⁵ In this light, the black stone of Agarththa is the same with the white stone of Delphi, and we must not forget that Leto is the mother of Apollo.⁶

the door of the gods (Sans. *Deva yana*) and the exit from the cave of initiation, the convexity of the cranium being thus the peak of the mountain or the roof of manifestation, while as concavity it is the vault of the initiatory cave or the superior half of the world egg. Then it meets the surface of the waters in the concavity of the heart. This is where the *Śabda-brahman* is heard (See for this Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power*, 1974, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, p. 120). This is where the Veda is heard (Sans. *śruti*, hearing, ear) (for the parallels with the Christian doctrine of the Divine Word, see Guénon, “Some Aspects of the Symbolism of the Fish”, in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*).

⁵ In the Islamic tradition, the state of *alētheia*, which we equate with *nirguna*, if the Greek term is understood in its strictest significance (that of un-concealment), is designated as *al-hadra al-qadīma* (the Primordial Presence), and it is the state beyond all qualifications (See Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, 2005, State University of New York, p. 63). The state of *saguna*, which we equate with *lēthe*, but only in as much as the Greek term is understood as *concealment*, is called *al-hadra al-ilāhiyya* (the Divine Presence). It is the state in which the divine qualities are manifested (See Akkach, *ibid.*, p. 67). The hidden one requires appellations, but the dis-closed reduces to silence. The new born image (the cosmogonic polar projection, the *avatarana*) is the coronation of the spiritual journey, being the return to manifestation, and since it represents the highest state, it is utterly and completely silent, its obviousness being supreme. Such a pregnant visibility corresponds to the mountain, as Guénon noticed, and to the primeval age of manifestation, the aeon (Sans. *yuga*) of truth/reality (Sans. *satya*) (see “The Mountain and the Cave”). And the mountain/island is, actually, both completely visible and all perceiving. It has to be mentioned at this point that, from this perspective, man and mountain are perfectly interchangeable, just as in the case of man and cave. This has also been suggested by Guénon when he has indicated that stone has been substituted by bread, and that bread identifies with flesh (see *Le Roi du Monde*, chap. 9, note 11). Therefore, under the New Covenant, the Covenant of Christ, the *betyl* is the man. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more (Mountain); but ye see me (Cave): because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you* (John 14; 16, 17, 19, 20). Saint Paul testifies for this: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are* (1 Corinthians 3; 16, 17). *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* (2 Corinthians 6; 16). We must remark that the expressions “the New Covenant” or “the Covenant of Christ” have a primordial significance, in the sense that there is nothing “new” in Christianity, but only *renewed* and *restored*. Another observation should be made: *luz* is perfectly equivalent with *Veda*, both of them expressing in different modalities one and the same principle, and from this viewpoint we can see the identity, in what concerns Her highest aspect, between the Virgin and Sophia. And then, it is perfectly coherent that the Star (*Stella Maris*) projects in the Holy Womb, which is the cave, and we must remark that, as projection, the Womb is exactly a *betyl*, a Divine abode, and we may go even further and justly consider that the Holy Womb is (or sheaths) a black stone. Guénon’s consideration that Christianity was, at the beginning, essentially esoteric and initiatic, can only validate our assertion (See *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, chap. 2). The black stone becomes blindingly white on the mountain: *And after six days Jesus takes unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain apart: And He was transfigured* (Gr. *metemorphothe*) *before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white* (Gr. *leyka*) *as snow* (Matthew 17; 1, 2).

⁶ According to Pausanias (*The Description of Greece*, X, 16, 3), the *omphalos* of Delphi was made of white stone. Guénon mentions that white is the “color” of Mount Mēru, considered in itself, and that one of its names is “the white mountain”. Mēru is located in the center of the seven *dwīpas* (islands, continents), but in relation to our present *dwīpa*, its position is polar, and more exactly, septentrional (See

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

Strabo's description of Delphi is the following: "Now although the greatest share of honour was paid to this temple because of its oracle, since of all oracles in the world it had the repute of being the most truthful, yet the position of the place added something. For it is almost in the centre of Greece taken as a whole, between the country inside the Isthmus and that outside it; and it was also believed to be in the centre of the inhabited world, and people called it the navel of the earth, in addition fabricating a myth, which is told by Pindar, that the two eagles (some say crows) which had been set free by Zeus met there, one coming from the west and the other from the east. There is also a kind of navel to be seen in the temple; it is draped with fillets, and on it are the two likenesses of the birds of the myth".⁷ Delos, the birth place of Apollo and his twin Artemis, is also envisaged as central in relation to the Cyclades (Gr. *kyklo*, around). In Strabo's account, Delphi occupies the median position of the East-West axis, which in relation to the solstitial alignment is horizontal.⁸ However, its centrality is valid in all the three dimensions of the cosmic cross (consequently, in all the three worlds), since Apollo travels back and forth from Delphi to the land of the Hyperboreans, as we will see below. Therefore, the site of the Pythian oracle is precisely pinned as central by the polar axis. On the other hand, according to the myth narrated by Pindar and retold here by Strabo, Delphi's position must be antipodal to that of Zeus', as we have already noted, given that both birds leave from the same point, but take separate routes just to reunite at the closing of the circumference thus marked. Pausanias writes that originally the oracle belonged to Gē (the Earth), and that she possessed it together with Poseidon (god of the sea depths). Gē bequeathed it to Themis (which is the Greek equivalent of *dharma*), and she bestowed it to Apollo.⁹ Gē must be understood as the primordial chasm, the primeval inferior

Le Roi du Monde, chap. 7). According to a *hadith*, Ibn `Abbas narrated that the Prophet said: "When the Black Stone came down from Paradise, it was whiter than milk, but the sins of the sons of Adam made it black." We see in this conveyance an indication of the concealment (Gr. *lēthe*) of *luz* (Leto is pregnant with Apollo). White also corresponds to *al-ahadiyya* (the state beyond qualifications) of the Islamic tradition (see Akkach, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66), and Guénon has noticed that it is the "color" of the supreme spiritual authority (*Le Roi du Monde*, chap. 7).

⁷ *Geography*, Book 9, Chapter 3.

⁸ There is also another way in which this description can be seen, because the birds could also mark the South-North axis, if departing from south, one flies eastwards, the other westwards, and both reunite at the northern pole. In this case the solstitial axis is horizontal in relation with the polar one.

⁹ See *The Description of Greece*, X, 5, 5-6. Aeschylus, who wrote some seven centuries before Pausanias, gives in *Eumenides* (verse 7) the same genealogy, with the only exception that Poseidon is out of the scheme, and that between Themis and Apollo, appears the "Titanian Phoebe". Phoebe traditioned it to Phoebus (Apollo, who bears her name: the *bright*, the *radiant*; just as the Sanskrit *Shukra*; in the *Argonautica*, Book 2, 700, of Apollonius Rhodius, Apollo is named "the Lord of Dawn", *Eoion Apollona*, and in this sense he is also Oriens; we remark the shift to a solar symbolism). In *Prometheus Bound* (verse 210), Aeschylus identifies Themis with Gaia: "one form of many names" (*pollon onomaton morphe mia*). Prometheus is her son (*ibid*, verse 209), and Deucalion is Prometheus' offspring (Hesiod, *Catalogues of Women*, fragment 1; Apollodorus, *The Library* Book 1, 7, 2; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, Book 3, 1082). We have here a genealogy of "founders", all of them being linked with the beginning of cycles. On the one hand they function as *dharma* givers, and on the other as children of Gē, that is, as seeds of the becoming (of dis-membering), as seeds of cyclic development. There is, however, in all these genealogies a strong flavor of *prakritian* perspective and an obvious predominance of feminine symbolism, which, as Guénon notices, corresponds with the mentality of the *kshatryias*. In this sense, it must be noticed that also Aeschylus insists (see *Eumenides*, verses 20-23) that Apollo is not only

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

chaos, and therefore she is *prakriti*. But Gē, as chasm, is also the cave, the *guhā*, and from this viewpoint she also marks the end of a cycle. The fact that the oracle is co-possessed by Poseidon clearly indicates its antediluvian origin and signals its submersion under the waters.¹⁰ And this means that Gē, before being cave, was once mountain. When the oracle is traditioned to Themis, her daughter, the birth of an avatāra is marked.¹¹ Our opinion is that the descent thus suggested is that of the first manifestation of Vishnu, the Matsya avatāra. Mount Parnassus is the primordial White Mountain and the Primordial White Island, completely equivalent with Mēru. The Pythian Apollo's reign over the Pole Land corresponds with a subsequent renovation, which is either one of a secondary cycle, after a period when what lay bare on the Mountain (in the "time" of Themis) withdrew in the Cave,¹² either with a main cycle that followed Satya Yuga, or with both, as we will

the first prophet (the fourth in the order of the very beginning) of Delphi, but that he is the first representing Zeus (the Sky, the masculine pole). Pausanias, quoting Boeo, mentions Olen, the hyperborean, as the first prophet of Apollo (*Description*, 10, 5, 8). Before Apollo, there were three prophetesses (Gaia, Themis and Phoebe), and the tragedian underlines that Themis and Phoebe are Gaia's daughters. Nevertheless, although they are daughters of Gaia, Themis and Phoebe are clearly avatāric expressions, their parentage and their names undoubtedly suggesting it. Euripides (see *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1245-1280) mentions that the transition from Gē's line of prophetesses to Apollo was not a peaceful one. Could this be an indication towards the restoration of Parashu-Rāma? When Apollo took the oracle from Themis, by killing the Serpent Python, Gē, in vengeance, focused her prophetic activity within the realm of mortal men's dreams. Apollo asks for help from Zeus, and receives it. Thus Phoebus secures his reign over Delphi, and puts an end to Gē's resentful activity. Euripides' convey states that Python is Earth's son, and suggests that Python is Themis at the end of the cycle (as we will also see below). But there is another particular fact in here that draws our attention: at the end of the cycle, we are told, when the final residues manifest, their field of action is the human psyche, and more specifically, the dream state.

¹⁰ The symbol speaks of the cosmogonic development, of the renovation of the cosmic cycles, and of the process of initiation.

¹¹ Themis is perfectly equivalent with *Aphrodite Anadyomene*. She is the daughter of Uranus and Gē, while Aphrodite is born from the union of Uranus and the Sea. Themis' emblem is the scale (Sans. *tūlā*) and the cornucopia (the Grail), but there is another thing that also makes of her the personification of the primordial tradition. Ovid tells us (*Metamorphoses*, Book I, 313-415) that after the deluge, Deucalion, on mount Parnassus (which was surrounded by waters), is instructed by Themis on how to restore mankind: he and his wife (the androgynous) have to scatter (to dis-member) the bones of their great mother (Gē). The bones are the stones, and the stones become flesh, just like in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Mount Parnassus clearly marks the site of the Delphic oracle. It must be also remarked, in connection with Themis' emblem, that the constellation Ursa Maior was once called the Scales (Guénon, "The Wild Boar and the Bear", in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*).

¹² The withdrawal is also suggested by the draconic presence of Python. Of the obscuration of Themis and of the guardianship of the Serpent we learn from Apollodorus (*The Library*, Book 1, 4, 1): "when the snake Python, which guarded the oracle, would have hindered him (Apollo) from approaching the chasm, he killed it and took over the oracle". The occultation of *dharma* is clearly indicated by the cave guarded by the dragon, and the descent of the god is also obvious. In the account of Apollonius Rhodius (*Argonautica*, 694-713) the Dragon is clearly placed within the cave: "once beneath the rocky ridge of Parnassus he slew with his bow the monster Delphyne, he, still young and beardless, still rejoicing in his long tresses". Here, as in Nonnus' depiction (*Dionysiaca*, 13, 22), the monster is transparently designated by the name of the fish (!): "Apollo mastered Delphyne, and then he came to live in the sky". And the same name is to be found in the *Souda Lexicon*: "The shrine of Apollo was called Delphi because the dragon Delphyne, whom Apollo killed, was located there". The occultation of the *dharma* given by the Matsya-avatāra is evidently suggested. But it is interesting to quote yet another description of the mythical event. One which clearly depicts the Serpent coiled around the axis: "And Apollo, yet in his mother's womb, was sore angered against them and he uttered against Thebe no ineffectual threat:

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

see below. Because the Pythian Apollo's renovation is only of a subsequent cycle, the White Mountain is represented by the omphalos,¹³ and the obviousness (*alētheia*) is veiled by the sibylline utterances coming from the Cave.¹⁴

*"Thebe, wherefore, wretched one, dost thou ask the doom that shall be thine anon? Force me not yet to prophesy against my will. Not yet is the tripod seat at Pytho my care; not yet is the great serpent dead, but still that beast of awful jaws, creeping down from Pleistus, wreathes snowy Parnassus with his nine coils". (Callimachus, Hymn 4, To Delos, 91). And Nonnus follows: "the place where the Pythian had noticed on a hill the ninecircling coil of the dragon's back, and put to sleep the deadly poison of the Cirrhaian serpent". (Dionysiaca, 4, 314). The nine coils symbolize the completion of a cycle, the tenth being the head of the serpent, the center or the re-turn to the beginning. Python is Themis at the end of the cycle, when she hides herself in the cave, and puts on the mask of hideousness. We can see here how the luminous aspect of the goddess reverts to the tenebrous one, symbolized by Gē, who, as their relation imply, is interchangeable with her luminous daughter. The fact the Themis is Python is also implied by the fact that Gē is the mother of the Serpent: "Python, offspring of Terra, was a huge dragon who, before the time of Apollo, used to give oracular responses on Mount Parnassus. Death was fated to come to him from the offspring of Latona. At that time Jove lay with Latona, daughter of Polus. When Juno found this out, she decreed that Latona should give birth at a place where the sun did not shine. When Python knew that Latona was pregnant by Jove, he followed her to kill her. But by order of Jove the wind Aquilo carried Latona away, and bore her to Neptune. He protected her, but in order not to make voice Juno's decree, he took her to the island Ortygia, and covered the island with waves. When Python did not find her, he returned to Parnassus. But Neptune brought the island of Ortygia up to a higher position; it was later called the island of Delos. There Latona, clinging to an olive tree, bore Apollo and Diana, to whom Vulcan gave arrows as gifts. Four days after they were born, Apollo exacted vengeance for his mother. For he went to Parnassus and slew Python with his arrows. (Because of this deed he is called Pythian.) He put Python's bones in a cauldron, deposited them in his temple, and instituted funeral games for him which are called Pythian" (Hyginus, Fabulae, 140). Let us make some observations. The identity Themis-Python is bluntly stated here ("Python,..., before the time of Apollo, used to give oracular responses on Mount Parnassus"). Leto (whose name is closely linked, if not identical with *lēthe*) "should give birth at a place where the sun did not shine". Python follows Leto in the same way in which the Holy Virgin is followed by the menace of Herod. The wind Aquilo is the Latin equivalent for Boreus. So the northern wind carries the pregnant Leto not only amidst the sea ("and bore her to Neptune"), but beneath it ("and covered the island with waves"; how more occult can it be?) on the island Ortygia. When the island reaches the surface of the waters ("Neptune brought the island of Ortygia up to a higher position"), it is called Delos. The twins are born under the tree.*

¹³ It seems that even though the cave of Delphi is within Mount Parnassus (the Corycian cave), the mountain was no longer visible for what it truly was, and therefore an explicit substitute was needed: the white stone.

¹⁴ In connection with the apollonian restoration we can mention (as far as the ancient Greece is concerned) the Orphism, the Pythagoreanism and the Platonism, the last spokesman of Apollo being Socrates, as we will see below. In what concerns Aristotle, Guénon suggests a Hindu influence in his writings on logic and metaphysics (see *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*, chap. 4). Orpheus' connection to Apollo is given by Apollodorus (*The Library*, Book 1, 3, 2): "Now Calliope bore to Oeagrus or, nominally, to Apollo, a son Linus, whom Hercules slew; and another son, Orpheus, who practised minstrelsy and by his songs moved stones and trees." According to Aelian (*Historical Miscellany*, Book 2, 26), "Aristotle says that Pythagoras was addressed by the citizens of Croton as Apollo Hyperboreus." And Iamblichus (*Life of Pythagoras*, chap. 2) affirms: "That Pythagoras was the son of Apollo is a legend due to a certain Samian poet, who thus described the popular recognition of the nobility of his birth. Sang he, «Pythais, the fairest of the Samian race/ From the embraces of the God Apollo/ Bore Pythagoras, the friend of Jove»." It must be remarked that both Orpheus and Pythagoras are described as being conceived like Jesus Christ. The earthly father is not the real father.

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

The very nativity of the Pythian Apollo suggests a secondary renovation. Just like Jesus Christ, he descended in a moment of the cycle's development when the circumstances required a veiled birth. Just like the Christ, he is born in the cave (and, we may say, outside the old law, like fugitives in exile), and the version of the myth (Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 140) which tells of Leto being chased by Python, while pregnant, suggests the underground/sub aquatic labor.¹⁵ If this is the case from the perspective of the cycle's development, this means that the Pythian Apollo's renewal was meant only for a specific part of humanity, and it must be considered that this apollonian restoration expresses one phase of the hyperborean descent from North to South, a quite recent one, although still in a time which for us is properly prehistoric, but which will show its last signs with the beginning of the sixth century BC and until the rise of the Christian tradition, as we shall see. The descent marks the solstitial line, as a reflection and symbol of the primordial *avatarana* that projected on the polar axis. It is remarkable that, as any true divine manifestation, the apollonian one is to be understood in all three keys of interpretation, that is, the Cosmos, the Year and the Man. Consequently, if from a cosmogonic standpoint the Pythian Apollo is the Celestial Ray (Phoebus, the Divine Archer, Gr. *toxophoros*, the bow bearer), in the light of the cyclic development, he marks a minor restoration (most properly, a re-turn), which is an immediate reflection of the primordial hyperborean descent.¹⁶ We have also briefly mentioned about the initiatic symbolism of his birth, a symbolism belonging to the third key of understanding: the Man. We have seen that the Mother of an Avatāra is chased by the old law (Sans. *dharma*), and now we should mention that she is neither welcomed by the world.¹⁷ The *Homeric Hymn 3, To Apollo*, (25-50) vividly presents it: "*Shall I sing how at the first Leto bare you to be the joy of men, as she rested against Mount Kynthos in that rocky isle, in sea-girt Delos – while on either hand a dark wave rolled on landwards driven by shrill winds – whence arising you rule over all mortal men? Among those who are in Krete, and in the township of Athens, and in the isle of Aigaina and Euboia, famous for ships, in Aigai and Peiresiai and Peparethos near the sea, in Threikios [Thracian] Athos and Pelion's towering heights and Threikios Samos and the shady hills of Ida, in Skyros and Phokaia and the high hill of Autokane and fair-lying Imbros and smouldering Lemnos and rich Lesbos, home of Makaros, the son of Aiolos, and Khios, brightest of all the isles that lie in the*

¹⁵ The fact that Python's role, in this story, is the same with Hera's is obvious. In this version we have a parallel, mirror like reflection of the identity between Python-Themis-Gē. And we may even say that, from a certain standpoint, Leto is Themis at the end of the cycle, and hence Leto is Python (let us not forget that Python appears also by the name of *Delphyne*, and this is perfectly coherent with the fact that Themis is the Dragon, and with the circumstance of the underwater gestation and labor). Moreover, the analogy between Hera and Gē is also clear, each one of them representing the complementary aspects of the Goddess.

¹⁶ We believe that Apollo Lykos marks the primordial *avatarana*, while Apollo Pythios represents a subsequent descent, and more exactly that which begins to be visible, from the historical viewpoint, in the 6th century BC. This visibility, which properly corresponds with the Pythagoreanism and the Platonism, is preceded by an indefinite period in time corresponding with the Orphic tradition. Orphism, which could have been the original receptacle of Apollo Pythios, at the beginning of the sixth century BC, is a dying tradition.

¹⁷ Not only that Hera and Python, in concert, as one, and as representations of each other, are hunting the pregnant womb, in order to suppress the nativity, but also, there is no *opened place* in the world to receive. The petrified heart is also a symbol for the blind exotericism, as we will see below when we will speak of Socrates.

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

sea, and craggy Mimas and the heights of Korykos and gleaming Klaros and the sheer hill of Aisagia and watered Samos and the steep heights of Mykale, in Miletos and Kos, the city of Meropian men, and steep Knidos and windy Karpathos, in Naxos and Paros and rocky Rhenaia – so far roamed Leto in travail with the god who shoots afar, to see if any land would be willing to make a dwelling for her son. But they greatly trembled and feared, and none, not even the richest of them, dared receive Phoebus, until queenly Leto set foot on Delos (...). Delos, of all these lands, presents the most barren soil (Gr. *kranaipedos*, *ibid.*, 72), and it is “ill-spoken of among men” (*ibid.*, 64). The parallel with the Christian nativity becomes evident again.¹⁸ But this tribulation, surrounding the birth at Delos, is present also in relation to the foundation of the spiritual center on the solstitial line. From the same *Hymn* (215-285) we learn of the North-South apollonian itinerary: from Mount Olympus (the celestial pole), Apollo descends to Pieria (the Pierian Mountains, an equivalent or substitute for the Primordial White Mountain).¹⁹ From there, the route goes softly eastward in its southern descent, passing through Iolkos, then through Ceneae, in Euboia, then southern still on the same island, until the Lelantine plain. Then he turned west, towards where Thebe will be, and finally stopped at the foot of Mount Parnassus, in Crisa, where the foundation of the oracle was laid.²⁰ Afterwards, Apollo killed the she-dragon (Gr. *drakaina*) at the nearby spring.²¹ This *drakaina* is the foster mother of Typhon, Hera’s child (*ibid.*, 300-309).²²

¹⁸ *Kranaipedos* means *the skull level*. Magnificent landmark!

¹⁹ Aigai, the first capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia, is located at their foot. The place is connected with “the Macedonian Sun”, a symbol engraved on a golden ash chest discovered in 1977, in Vergina, Greece. The golden larnax is believed to have contained the remains of King Philip II of Macedon. The sun engraved on the lid has sixteen rays, as follows: four arms spring from the center in the cardinal directions; another four split in half each quadrant. The other eight rays, slightly smaller in size, split in half each semi-quadrant. On the map, Pieria is some 25 kilometers to the north of Olympus, but the Olympus whence Apollo descends is the celestial one. Its projection is therefore clearly marked. It is also interesting to note that according to Apollodorus (*The Library*, Book 1, 4, 1), Apollo learned the art of prophecy from Pan, and this god appears also in the form of Aigipan, the Goat Pan. Aigai means Goat. Aigipan is half goat, half fish, and he is the constellation Capricorn (see Hyginus, *Astronomica*, II, 28).

²⁰ If a map of ancient Greece is consulted, one could see that a quite vertical and straight line unites Pieria, Olympus and Parnassus. Apollo lays the foundation as the Grand Geometer: “Phoebus Apollo laid out all the foundations throughout, wide and very long” (*Homeric Hymn 3, To Apollo*, 294). The space (Gr. *chora*) is consecrated; it is measured in width and in length, the horizontal cross being marked. Through the center thus established, passes the polar axis suggested by Pieria, Olympus and Parnassus. The measuring of space is the same with killing the dragon, and the episodes follow each other immediately (*Homeric Hymn 3, To Apollo*, 294-311), even though in reality they are not subsequent, but simultaneous.

²¹ This can be a reference to the Castalian spring. The fact that the battle is placed here, might suggest an identity between the Naiad nymph Castalia and the *drakaina*. This would mean that once Castalia was the rightful prophetess of Parnassus. Therefore, she might represent Themis or Gaia. Also, we must not overlook the fact that the fight takes place at the source, in the center. The opening of the spring is equivalent with the cave or the chasm, and it is the crack whence fresh waters flow.

²² The analogy Gē-Hera is obvious again, since Typhon is presented by all the other ancient sources as being Gaia’s son. At one point, the analogy becomes identity, because Hera’s place is taken by Leto. She, Leto, is the one who stands near Zeus in the golden hall (see *Homeric Hymn 3, To Apollo*, 1-19). Clearly, Typhon is Python, and the *drakaina* alluded here is no other than Delphyne/Python. Let us add just one more fact: according to Apollodorus (*The Library*, Book 1, 6, 3), in his fight with Typhon, in Syria (!), Zeus lost his weapon, the sickle (!), to Typhon. The latter used it to sever the sinews (Gr. *neyra*) of Zeus’

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

But let us return to the cavern within Mount Parnassus, the Corycian Cave.²³ We have to restate that Apollo's connection with the Delphic oracle is directly linked with the cave,²⁴ and this is one of the main reasons (beside the traditional chain of the oracle: Gaia, Themis, Phoebe, Apollo) why we consider his renovation (of Apollo Pythios) to correspond with a secondary cycle, but a renovation which is, nonetheless, in complete accord with the primordial hyperborean manifestation. Diodorus Siculus (*Historical Library*, Book 16, chap. 26) is telling us that, according to tradition, the oracular shrine of Delphi was discovered by goats, and that the Delphians used these animals when consulting the oracle. *"They say that the manner of its discovery was the following. There is a chasm at this place where now is situated what is known as the "forbidden" sanctuary, and as goats had been wont to feed about this because Delphi had not as yet been settled, invariably any goat that approached the chasm and peered into it would leap about in an extraordinary fashion and utter a sound quite different from what it was*

hands and feet. Thus, Zeus was taken by Typhon, through the sea (!), in Cilicia, in the Corycian cave (!). The cave was guarded by the she-dragon Delphyne. Hermes and Aegipan (!) went into the cave (*avatarana*) and restored Zeus' sinews (Gr. *neyra*; could this be an allusion to the subtle anatomy?). According to Strabo (*Geography*, 9, 3, 1), there are two Corycian Caves: one in Cilicia, and one in Phocis, within Mount Parnassus. Even if we didn't have Strabo's testimony, the fact would have been obvious. Now, we may ask ourselves, is the descent of Hermes and Aigipan the same with Apollo's descent to Pieria? In Nonnus' version of the same myth (*Dionysiaca*, Book 1, 363 sqq.), Aigipan is replaced by Cadmos, disguised as a goatherd playing the panpipe. The replacement is a proper rite of investiture performed by Pan himself. Zeus utters the following word to Cadmos: *"Look alive, Cadmos, pipe away and there shall be fine weather in heaven! Delay, and Olympos is scourged! for Typhoeus is armed with my heavenly weapons. Only the aegis-cape is left me; but what will my aegis do fighting with Typhon's thunderbolt? (...) Become a herdsman for one day-dawn; make a tune on your mindbefooling shepherd's pipes, and save the Shepherd of the Universe (...) If the blood of Zeus is in you, and the breed of Inachian Io, bewitch Typhon's wits by the sovereign remedy of your guileful pipes and their tune! I will give you ample recompense for your service, two gifts: I will make you saviour of the world's harmony, and the husband of the lady Harmonia."* (Ibid, 377 sqq.).

²³ The geography we speak of is first of all symbolical. Therefore, even if the Corycian Cave is up the mountain, at a certain distance from Delphi (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 10, 32, 2), there is a certain close link between Delphi and the Cave. We must consider Delphi and Mount Parnassus as complementary representations of the same center. Apollo is related to the Corycian Cave also because he had a son, Lycorus, with the Naiad nymph Corycia (Pausanias, *Description*, 10, 6, 3). Moreover, the Corycian Cave of Parnassus was also consecrated to Pan (Pausanias, *Description*, 10, 32, 7), and we have seen the connection between Pan, the Matsya-avatāra (marking the primordial descent), the constellation of the Capricorn (marking the re-turn under the sign of this constellation), and Apollo. Of Lycorus it is said that he gave the name of Lycoreia to the city founded on top of Parnassus (Pausanias, *Description*, 10, 6, 3). Another version of the myth about the foundation of Lycoreia is that during Deucalion's deluge, a pack of wolves led those, who could escape the flood, on top of Parnassus (the connection with Matsya-avatāra is obvious), and because of this, the city was named thus (Gr. *lykos* = wolf) ((Pausanias, *Description*, 10, 6, 2). Both names, Lycorus and Lycoreia, are connected with the Mountain and not with the Cave. These names are formed by two Greek words: *lykos*, wolf, and *reia*, north. *Boreia* means *northern*. The connection between *lykos* and *leyke* (white) has been shown by Guénon (see "The Wild Boar and the Bear", in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*).

²⁴ We have to consider that the episode of Deucalion's deluge, and his stop on Mount Parnassus, corresponds with the manifestation of Matsya-avatāra, personified in this very case by Themis.

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

formerly wont to emit.²⁵ The herdsman in charge of the goats marvelled at the strange phenomenon and having approached the chasm and peeped down it to discover what it was, had the same experience as the goats, for the goats began to act like beings possessed and the goatherd also began to foretell future events. After this as the report was bruited among the people of the vicinity concerning the experience of those who approached the chasm, an increasing number of persons visited the place and, as they all tested it because of its miraculous character, whosoever approached the spot became inspired. For these reasons the oracle came to be regarded as a marvel and to be considered the prophecy-giving shrine of Earth.²⁶ For some time all who wished to obtain a prophecy approached the chasm and made their prophetic replies to one another;²⁷ but later, since many were leaping down into the chasm under the influence of their frenzy and all disappeared, it seemed best to the dwellers in that region, in order to eliminate the risk, to station one woman there as a single prophetess for all and to have the oracles told through her. And for her a contrivance was devised which she could safely mount, then become inspired and give prophecies to those who so desired.²⁸ And this contrivance has three supports and hence was called a tripod, and, I dare say, all the bronze tripods which are constructed even to this day are made in imitation of this

²⁵ Therefore, a transformation, a metamorphosis takes place. This change of nature is manifested through sound (*Śabda-brahman*). The renovation is triggered by peering into the deep. This is the source of the Delphic oracle in the time of Apollo. And this is why the manifested sound is cryptic to the world, but clear to the one whose heart is profound and open. Such a man is, in his turn, a cavern.

²⁶ We have already indicated that Gaia is both the primordial chasm (Gr. *chora*) and the underground cave which contains the kernel of immortality (Phoebus). In this latter aspect, the grotto is Leto, the mother of the *avatāra*. In the former, it is *prakriti* and Python, the dying *dharma*.

²⁷ In the Islamic tradition, a *hadith* of Abu Dawud states the following: “A Muslim is a mirror to a Muslim.”

²⁸ So, according to Diodorus Siculus, the tripod was meant to prevent the priestess from “leaping down” the chasm and disappear like the others. We must underline that the first people were giving oracles to one another, and later they started to leap down (Gr. *kathallomai*) and disappear. It is hard for us to know exactly whether Diodorus meant to say that they *fell* or that they *dove*. It could be that he meant both. And the difference is important, because it distinguishes between the seers who plunge into the depth and disappear, and those who cannot bare the chasm, get lost and fall. Of course, the third reading indicates the *avatarana* of the sign of Capricorn. It is quite possible that Diodorus was not at all aware of these things, and that he just recounted an old tradition. However this may be, the woman guarding the cave reminds us of the she-dragon Delphyne, but the woman is also the symbol of the receptacle. She is the visible chasm. The dwellers in the region, who acted to eliminate “the risk”, are Typhon who put the *drakaina* to guard the cave wherein Zeus lies powerless. From this perspective, it would seem that, according to the myth, one has to wear sheepskin in order to release the god. Plutarch tells us that “Certainly the voice of legend also is in accord with my statement; for they record that here the power hovering about this spot was first made manifest when a certain shepherd (Gr. *nomeys*) fell in (Gr. *empesontos kata*) by accident and later gave forth inspired utterances, which those who came into contact with him at first treated with disdain; but later, when what he had foretold came to pass, they were amazed. The most learned of the people of Delphi still preserve the tradition of his name, which they say was Coretas” (*De Defectu Oraculorum*, 42); see also Pausanias (*Description*, 10, 5, 7). But there is a complementary aspect to the understanding of the story (as we have already distinguished between the seers and he blind), so that the prohibition is not fully typhonian, although things are related. Thus, the establishment of the tripod suggests the foundation of the center for the outer world (there is no “visible” chasm at Delphi). And this is exactly what the story is telling: they stopped the people from leaping down (within), in order to safeguard the ones incapable of approaching the chasm without falling into it.

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

contrivance. In what manner, then, the oracle was discovered and for what reasons the tripod was devised I think I have told at sufficient length."

We have previously mentioned the myth of Lycoreus, the son of Apollo, and of Lycoreia, the city on top of Parnassus. Both these names link Apollo with the Mountain, and therefore, the presence of Apollo on Parnassus is older than the pythian renovation which corresponds with the Cave. But what does this mean? First of all, we have to show in more detail why these names attest a more archaic apollonian presence. Lycoreia is a much older settlement than Delphi, and this we know from Strabo: "*Situated above Delphi is Lycoreia, on which place, above the temple, the Delphians were established in earlier times. But now they live close to the temple, round the Castalian fountain*" (Geography, 9, 3, 3). In other words, the Delphians were first Lycoreians, and extrapolating, the present humanity comes from up the mountain and goes down the valley. We can say that Lycoreia is the insigne of the White City, the manifested Pole, just as Parnassus is the equivalent for the White Mountain. If Apollo's son gave the name to the city, then the *North Wolf* is the primordial manifestation of Apollo, a manifestation which precedes the one corresponding to the Cave and the Goat.²⁹ It is an *avatarana* of the White Island, the White City and the White Mountain. The other version of the myth, which tells about the preservation of the elite (the germs for the manifestation of the next cycle) through the help of the wolves, gives us a more precise indication about the identity between Themis and Lycoreus. So, until now, we could say we found, on the basis of the indications given by the quoted sources, three *avataranas* of Apollo: Lycoreus, the *North Wolf* on top of Parnassus, corresponding to Matsya-avatāra, the first manifestation of Vishnu; Apollo, the vicar of Zeus, in opposition with the line of prophetesses, corresponding with Parashu-Rāma, the sixth *avatāra* of Vishnu, who activated in Treta Yuga; and the Pythian Apollo, who learned the prophecy from Pan (who was worshiped in the Corycian Cave of Parnassus, cf. Pausanias, *Description*, 10, 32, 7), corresponding with the Buddha, the ninth *avatāra*, who activated in Kali Yuga. Christ, of whom we said it replaced the Pythian Apollo, corresponds, in His first descent

²⁹ The descent of Christ corresponds to this same cyclic development. And we can say that when Delphi was gone, Christianity replaced it for the same part of humanity. This is the divine mandate of the Pythian Apollo: "*I am minded to make a glorious temple, an oracle for men, and hither they will always bring perfect hecatombs, both those who live in rich Peloponnesus and those of Europe and all the wave-washed isles, coming to seek oracles*" (Homeric Hymn 3, *To Apollo*, 244-254). We remember the reader of the solar symbolism Apollo received already in the 3rd century BC, when Apollonius Rhodius wrote the *Argonautica*.

The Hyperborean Origin of the Platonic tradition (I)

with the Buddha, and in His apocalyptic aspect, with Kalki avatāra.³⁰ This latter equation is confirmed by Guénon.³¹

³⁰ Regarding the correspondence we've made between the Delphic Apollo and the Buddha, it must be noted that the first signs, we have, of Orpheus and the Orphism date from the sixth century BC, signs indicating the end of this apollonian tradition. Both the Buddha and Pythagoras were born in the same century: the former around 563 BC (see A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, 1916, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, p. 9), and the latter around 570 BC. Furthermore, Pausanias tells us that the fourth temple of Delphi was built in the first year of the fifty-eighth Olympiad (*Description*, 10, 5, 13). Since the first Olympiad was held in 776 BC, the temple was built in 548 BC.

³¹ See "Some Aspects of the Symbolism of the Fish", note 4; and "The Sword of Islam (Sayf Al-Islām)", note 10, in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*.