

# The Emergence of Saṃsāra in Vedic Thought

FRANCIS J. CORLEY, S.J.

*Saint Louis University*

Although the word "saṃsāra" is used once in a hymn of the Ṛgśaṃhitā in a compound form,<sup>1</sup> its first appearance as a discrete term does not occur until the Kaṭha Upaniṣad,<sup>2</sup> where it is fairly late in the total body of Vedic literature.

When the word first emerges in K.U. it already conveys a complex meaning. The basic sense of the word, etymologically, is that of a continuing movement, an "on-going."<sup>3</sup> A secondary meaning, corollary to the first and inseparably linked with it in Upanishadic thought, is that this endless "on-going" of being necessarily involves the return of man to life in this existence (reincarnation), together with the anguished notions of bondage (*bandha*) and misery (*duḥkha*).

The two ideas, however, are not absolutely inseparable, and, in fact, they appear to have emerged in Vedic life and sacred writings<sup>4</sup> at different times and under different cultural circumstances. The idea of a cyclic cosmology seems to be older, whether or not the further view of existence as involving metempsychosis is original to Vedic thought or derivative from the beliefs of Indian indigenes.<sup>4</sup>

Capable scholars have already examined the emergence of rebirth in Vedic thought several times,<sup>5</sup> but there seems to be no independent study of the circumstances under which the cyclic view of the cosmos came to be recognized. The present study, consequently, undertakes to examine the emergence of the first idea in Vedic thought. I shall prescind from the notion of metempsychosis and focus attention on a cyclic vision of time, metaphysics, and history.

There will be three parts to the inquiry. In the first part, I shall examine the emergence of all reality—gods and the manifested

world—from a sacrificial immolation of the primordial being, Puruṣa, as this is recounted in the Vedic hymn, X.90, the Puruṣasūkta. In the second part, the return movement, the converse of the outgoing movement from Puruṣa, will be considered as it is developed in the central portion of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where the elaborate ceremony for the construction of the sacrificial altar (Agnichayana) develops a mystical image of the total return of reality into Puruṣa. The third part of the paper will inquire into some further evidence of cyclicism in Vedic thought.

### I.

The Puruṣasūkta (which is R.V. X.90) is one of the important cosmogonic hymns in the last book of the Ṛgveda. It describes the emergence of the whole of reality—gods, manifested world, and man—by a kind of sacrificial emanation from the primordial being, Puruṣa.<sup>6</sup>

This originating being is a supreme Cosmic Giant, thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed, greater than the whole universe. Puruṣa is his own being, and he is, in addition, all else—whatever has been or is, and (what will have some significance for our purpose) whatever is yet to be (2a). The whole of reality is but a quarter of him; three quarters are the Immortal (3b). He is not the god of the sun, or the moon, or the wind, but (to this extent, at least, that he is its source) the god of the whole universe.

The sacrificial action is spoken of as total (*tasmād yajñāt sarvabhūtāḥ*), which appears to mean that one-fourth of Puruṣa was expended in producing the gods and the cosmos.<sup>7</sup> From this total sacrifice, the Vedas, i.e., the sacred wisdom of the Aryans, emerged; so also (although, as we shall see later, this is not expressly stated) did the four varṇas, brāhman, rājanya, vaiśya and śūdra, the four social groups into which the Aryans were originally organized. The moon sprang from Puruṣa's mind,<sup>8</sup> the sun from his eye; from his mouth Indragñi, i.e., gods Indra and Agni, were born, and his breath is the wind. Atmosphere, heaven, earth, and the quarters of the world were fashioned from navel, head, feet, and ear of Puruṣa (12-14).

The hymns of the Ṛgveda are not philosophical compositions, and their authors are scarcely philosophical thinkers. The so-called philosophical hymns are mythic in character, even though they do

respond, after the manner of pre-philosophical thought, to questions that are properly philosophical. As a consequence, it is not surprising that Rgvedic speculation, even in these hymns, does not fit nicely into the precise categories devised by philosophers, least of all into the rigid categories set up by Aristotle and developed in the long tradition of Western philosophy.

Nevertheless, some approximation to Western thought is desirable, at least for the purpose of communication and discussion. Thus, in the *Puruṣasūkta* all reality is said to come into existence from *Puruṣa*. In several instances, realities are said "to have been born" from him or from parts of his body. Thus, *Virāj* was born from him; the moon from his mind, etc. Again, the originating action is spoken of as a dismemberment: "When they divided *Puruṣa*, in how many different portions did they arrange him? What became of his mouth? what of his arms? What were his two thighs and his two feet called?" (v. 11; it may be noted, in passing, that the thousand heads and feet of v. 1 have been reduced here to the usual number). Finally, the entire process by which the cosmos came into existence from *Puruṣa* is spoken of in terms of sacrifice.<sup>9</sup>

For so ill-defined an emergence, vague in its formulation and vague, very likely, in Vedic conception, such precise terms as "creation" and "emanation" seem unsuitable—at least as these terms are understood in Western thought.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps for the present we can be content with an expression borrowed from A. N. Whitehead, namely, "a process of becoming,"<sup>11</sup> to designate the cosmogonic vision of the *Puruṣasūkta*. This is not to say that the immensely sophisticated cosmology of Whitehead is discoverable in Vedic literature, of course. But I know of no expression in English better adapted to express the impression conveyed by the central message of this hymn, provided the process be looked upon, for the present, as monodirectional, i.e., only emergent from *Puruṣa*.

This imprecise designation would conform, I think, to the generalized summary of "creation" accounts formulated by H. D. Velankar: "... we find that in these Creation Hymns of the XIth Maṇḍala (namely 72, 81, 82, 90, 121, and 129) the Supreme Creator is conceived as an intelligent Principle which produces out of itself the external world, either directly—or indirectly through the medium of a couple consisting of a Male and a Female principle."<sup>12</sup>



And, in the last analysis, I think we shall find that Whitehead's expression is a quite suitable way to express the full idea of *samsāra* as we shall see it emerging in Vedic thought long before the term itself formally entered into Vedic literature in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

What we find, then, in the *Puruṣasūkta* is a great cosmogonic vision in which all reality is seen streaming into existence from *Puruṣa*. This, as was remarked above, is a monodirectional movement, and it is unquestionable that the dominant thought in the *Puruṣasūkta* is precisely that. This is half of the total cyclic movement of reality, so to speak, and we shall see the reciprocal movement back into *Puruṣa* in the *Agnichayana* of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

Admittedly there is more in the *Puruṣasūkta* than this, and we shall return to this hymn later. But for the present the important element is the vision, fundamental to the Vedic understanding of the world, that all things exist in virtue of some kind of procession into existence from a primordial being. Whether we call this creation (*dham, takṣ*) or emanation (*śj*), "Puruṣa is both the essence of creatures and also the inclusive principle, the ruler, the immortal, the eternal."<sup>14</sup>

## II.

The second body of material to be considered is the central portion of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, which contains the ritual involved in construction of the fire altar and its mystical exegesis.

The *Brāhmaṇas* represent a later stage of Vedic life and religion than the *Puruṣasūkta*. The Aryans had moved across virtually the entire Gangetic plain by the end of this period and had transformed their economy considerably from that of migratory herdsmen to that of sedentary cultivators.<sup>14</sup> Their religion had also changed. Worship was no longer a matter chiefly of devotion to a pantheon of nature gods. An enormously complex and varied ritual, chiefly entailing numerous forms of sacrifice, was performed with meticulous care.

The *Brāhmaṇas* are the sacrificial manuals prescribing detailed directions for the performance of ceremonies and the recitation of sacred texts (*vidhi*) and exposition of the mystical interpretations

attached to ritual (*arthavāda*).<sup>15</sup> These works are also the best source of knowledge about Aryan life through a very long period and of the philosophical and religious belief and practice (of at least a significant part of the people.) They are, as Martin Haug declared a century ago, "a primitive theology and philosophy of the Brahmins."<sup>16</sup>

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is the longest and richest work of this type. It is also probably one of the latest. Although it is, like all brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda, an *adhvaryu* manual, intended to give directions and interpretations for his office as chief performer of ceremonies,<sup>17</sup> it contains much *hotri* material for the officiant who recited the appropriate sacred texts—possibly because the *adhvaryu* could, upon occasion, perform the latter function also.

The first five books of the Śatapatha, as well as books eleven to fourteen, are devoted to various forms of sacrifice, notably the Soma and various coronation sacrifices. The central portion of the work (books six to ten) are the ones with which we shall be chiefly concerned. This portion gives directions for constructing the fire altar (*agnichayana*) and further mystical explanations of this extremely elaborate process (*agnirahasya*).

The Śatapatha Agnichayana is given special importance in several ways. First, while the Brāhmaṇa as a whole expounds the ritual of sacrifice, more than one-third of it is devoted to the construction and mystical meaning of the altar. Secondly, this section "commences with a cosmogonic account so elaborate as is hardly to be met with anywhere else in Brāhmaṇa literature."<sup>18</sup> Thirdly, this portion of the Brāhmaṇa is attributed to a different author, Śandilya, from that of the rest of the work, Yājñavalkya. Finally, the Agnichayana is followed by a further detailed exposition of its symbolical meaning—in addition to that interspersed throughout the books of directives.

The Agnichayana, then, begins with an extended cosmogonic myth which "might almost be regarded as an exposition of the Puruṣasūkta."<sup>19</sup> In the midst of this cosmogonic account, the author recalls the identity of Puruṣa and Prajāpati, the name most commonly used in the Agnichayana: "That same Puruṣa became Prajāpati [lord of generation—or of creatures]. And that Puruṣa which became Prajāpati is this very Agni [fire-altar], who is now [to be] built" (VI.1.1.5).<sup>20</sup>

The altar, which is Puruṣa-Prajāpati mystically reconstructed, is to be built in the crude shape of a bird (VI.1.2.36; VI.1.1.2).<sup>21</sup> It is constructed chiefly of clay bricks of various kinds, with different names and varying mystical significances, notably men and earth. Many other materials are used also, e.g., the heads of animal victims, a gold plate, a gold man, gold flakes, ghee, a mortar and pestle, fire sticks, a lotus petal, a tortoise, curds, honey, food (VI.1.2.30). Each of the objects employed in building the altar has its proper significance, and cumulatively they represent the whole universe.

Construction is laid in five successive layers, each of which has a multiple significance. They are the five regions—the four quarters and the center (VI.1.2.19), that is to say, the whole of space. They are also the five seasons (VI.1.2.18) which comprise the year, that is to say, the whole of time. The five layers are likewise the five bodily parts of Puruṣa-Prajāpati: hair, skin, flesh, bone, marrow (VI.1.2.17). The building of the fire altar is the ritual rebuilding of Puruṣa:

And again, as to why he lays down these bricks. When Prajāpati became relaxed [an allusion to the dismemberment of Puruṣa] all living beings went from him in all directions.

Now that same Prajāpati who became relaxed is this very Agni [fire-altar] that is now being built up; and those living beings who went out from him *are these bricks*: hence when he lays down these [bricks], he thereby puts back into him [Puruṣa-Prajāpati] those same living beings which went from him [VIII.3.3.9-10; emphasis added].

Finally, the ceremonial construction of the fire altar requires a full year (X.2.6.1-5). Just as the infinite dimensions of space are reduced to seven times a man's height in the construction of the altar (X.2.2.5-8), so the infinite duration of time is reduced to its minimal circuit, the year, for its building (VI.1.3.20). Moreover, both the construction of the altar and, ideally, the sacrifice offered upon it are to occupy a full year each (*ibid.*). Since it is impossible for man, whose actions are discursive and sequential, simultaneously to build the altar and to sacrifice upon it, the twofold ritual reproduction of the great cosmic action imitates this element of the ceaseless ebb and flow of reality out of and into Puruṣa. Both periods represent the endless duration of time, but they mystically symbolize two different cosmic movements.



The building of the fire altar, then, is a ritual reconstruction of Puruṣa out of the scattered elements of the cosmos, which originally emerged from him. It expresses in sacred word and action the reciprocal cosmic process continually in train in the universe itself, that is, the return of reality into Puruṣa.

Moreover, in the Puruṣasūkta and the Śatapatha Agnichayana together we have a fairly clear vision of the Aryan view of the cosmic process. The mythic style of the Ṛgśaṃhitā and the inchoate philosophical thought of the Śatapatha give us an obscure, haltingly formulated view of a twofold movement. The first is that all of reality—gods, cosmos, and man—come into being from Puruṣa by a sacrificial process vaguely resembling what later philosophical writers of the West will call emanation. The second movement involves a return of all reality into Puruṣa.

The two together constitute the kind of on-going, endless circular movement of reality which will, from the time of K. U., be associated with the term "saṃsāra."

### III.

Many questions still remain unanswered. First, was the cosmic vision of a cyclic process, which (as will be seen) is discernible in the Puruṣasūkta and explicit in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, conscious in the Aryan mind at the time of the Puruṣa hymn, or is this something not yet emergent into consciousness and only read into the hymn by later thinkers? Second, what circumstances of Vedic culture or world view generated this cyclic cosmology? Third, is a cyclic cosmology discernible earlier in the Ṛgśaṃhitā than X.90? Fourth, while it is abundantly evident that the return of cosmic reality into Puruṣa is a continuous process, it is not so clear whether this can be said of the emergence of reality from Puruṣa. Let me allude to two Western philosophers, not to illuminate Vedic thought, but to illustrate my question. In the cosmology of Plotinus, the process of emanation of cosmic reality from the Absolute is eternal and unending.<sup>22</sup> For Henri Bergson, on the other hand, the creative evolution he describes is initiated by a unique propulsive action, which is never repeated.<sup>23</sup> Can it be determined which of these two ideas more closely resembles the Vedic idea of the cosmic process? Fifth, is it correct to say, as I have assumed, that the view

of a cyclic cosmic flux existed for some considerable time in Aryan life free of the corollary that man returns to earthly existence repeatedly—and free of the Upaniṣadic *Angś* which this thought engendered? Finally, can the cosmic vision of the *Puruṣasūkta* and the *Śatapatha Agnichayana* be somehow reconciled with other cosmogonic theories developed elsewhere in the body of Vedic sacred literature?

Obviously these complex questions cannot be discussed here. A few observations will be made about only the first of them, namely: Was the cosmic vision of a cyclic process, which is discernible in the *Puruṣasūkta* and explicit in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, conscious in the Aryan mind at the time of the *Puruṣa* hymn?

As far as the era of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is concerned, there can hardly be question about the existence of a cyclic cosmology. It is quite explicit, for the whole purpose of the *Agnichayana* is to do ritually what is in process in the world, namely, the constant reconstitution of *Puruṣa-Prajāpati*, who had been exhausted by the dissipation of his substance into reality.<sup>24</sup> While the case of the *Puruṣasūkta* is not so clear, several pieces of evidence seem to indicate that at this relatively early period also a cyclic cosmology was conscious in Vedic minds.

1. The celebrated *varṇa* stanza (*R.V.* X.90.12), in which the four groups, *brāhman*, *rājanya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*, are mentioned for the first time in Indian history, has frequently been understood as an explanation for the origin of the four basic social groups of the Aryans. But Paul Mus has effectively argued in a magisterial essay<sup>25</sup> that three of the four verses speak rather of the return of *brāhman*, *rājanya*, and *vaiśya* into *Puruṣa*, and that only the fourth stanza speaks of the *śūdra* as emerging from him. Within this single line, then, as early as the latest portion of the *Ṛgśamhitā* and in the very context of a cosmogonic account of the emergence of reality from *Puruṣa*, the sacred hymn recognizes the return of reality into him,<sup>26</sup> in effect recognizing the cyclic movement we have been talking about.

2. The line concerning *Virāj* (*R.V.* X.90.5), which has been the source of much discussion, may contain evidence that the *Ṛgvedic* author was aware of this cyclic process. The line reads: "From him [*Puruṣa*] was *Virāj* born; from *Virāj*, the evolved *Puruṣa*."<sup>27</sup> This has commonly been understood as speaking of two *Puruṣas*, only



the second of whom is sacrificed by the gods to produce the world.<sup>28</sup> Thus the Indian Vedic scholar H. D. Velankar comments: "From this all-pervading first Puruṣa a god, or rather, a pair of gods, is said to have arisen; [that] is Virāj and the second (born) Puruṣa."<sup>29</sup> The causality in this analysis is linear, that is to say, Puruṣa gives origin to Virāj; Virāj, in turn, produces a second Puruṣa, from whom the manifested world emerges by sacrificial action.

But this is not the kind of causality we see crudely described in Vedic expression. Causality is cyclic over and over again,<sup>30</sup> and this cyclic motion, as we have already seen in the example of the varṇa stanza, is not lost to the author of the Puruṣasūkta. Furthermore, the return of reality into Puruṣa is direct, i.e., into the "first" Puruṣa, not mediately, through a "second" Puruṣa and Virāj, as the Velankar interpretation would seem to imply.

Moreover, while Virāj is one of the obscurest beings in the entire Vedic pantheon, several pieces of evidence tend to confirm the suggestion of hymn 90 that the Puruṣa-Virāj-Puruṣa relationship is simply a compendious statement of the cyclic cosmology expressed in the formula: Puruṣa-manifested world-Puruṣa. That is to say that Virāj is a personified representative of the manifested world which emerges from Puruṣa and by which he is reciprocally replenished. If this is correct, then this single line of the Puruṣasūkta contains the most compendious statement of Vedic cyclic cosmology. Some of the evidence can be briefly examined.

In the Atharvan equivalent of the Puruṣasūkta, first of all, there is a curious reversal of the roles of Puruṣa and Virāj, even though the entire Atharvan hymn closely follows the thought and language of the Ṛg original. The Virāj verse in the Atharva saṁhitā<sup>31</sup> reads: "Virāj in the beginning came into being; out of Virāj, Puruṣa; it, when born exceeded the earth behind and also in front" (Whitney). This is as much as to say, "It makes no difference where you begin; you can say, 'Puruṣa produces Virāj,' or you can say, 'Virāj produces Puruṣa.' It's all one." If it is all one; if both productions are part of an eternal process without beginning or end, there is no problem.

Furthermore, one of the very few scholarly studies of the character of Virāj in Vedic and later literature, G. S. Leonard's "The Mythic History of the God Virāj,"<sup>32</sup> states that the deity "was worshipped in the form of the universal world" who "does not appear to have a

prior or separate existence of his own apart from nature, to entitle him to an independent entity and personality."<sup>41</sup> Thus, in the opinion of Leonard, Virāj is simply the manifested world personified. He emerged from Puruṣa, and he reconstituted Puruṣa (*adhi Puruṣa*) by the world's cyclic return to its source.

Finally, there is a passage in Wilson's notes to his translation of the hymns of the Ṛgveda<sup>44</sup> which I have not yet been able to pursue further. Wilson declares: "Sāyana and Mahādhara identify puruṣa with Virāj, the aggregate of all living things." If these two commentators on the Vedic hymns are found to affirm that Virāj is identical with all living things (even though this may not be quite the same thing as all manifested reality), this would go far toward confirming the opinion that even in the Virāj verse of hymn 90 a cyclic cosmology is verifiable.

Thus, the first part of the verse, "From him Virāj was born [*tasmād virāj ajāyata*]," would state the emergent movement of all reality from Puruṣa, while the second part, "from Virāj, the evolved Puruṣa [*virājo adhi puruṣah*]" concerns the return of manifested reality into Puruṣa. This would be a summary of the two visions given, respectively, in the Puruṣasūkta and in the Śatapatha Agnichayana.

3. Still further evidence of this cyclic awareness is discernible in v.2b of the same hymn, where Puruṣa is said to be the Lord of Immortality, "since he expands by food."<sup>45</sup> He is supremely immortal since, while he is eternally being exhausted (depleted)<sup>46</sup> by the emergence of reality from him, he is constantly replenished and fulfilled (*adhi Puruṣa*) by the cosmic return of reality into him—and by sacrifice (which is the source of reality in the Puruṣasūkta and the food of the gods par excellence).<sup>47</sup> If Puruṣa grows by food, this can only be by the sacrificial return of reality into him by the reciprocal of the cyclic process which initially depleted him.

#### IV.

If the Vedic authors were attempting to say, in language and thought categories altogether inadequate to the complexity and infinite scope of their vision, that the whole of reality is a single, limitless, and unending process, in which nothing is first, nothing last, nothing absolute, nothing uncaused, and everything a *totu*



*simul*, everything the cause of everything else, it seems hard to conjecture how these ideas could be more effectively expressed in mythic formulation. If this is what they were trying to say, then many of the apparent anomalies encountered by the Western mind, formed unconsciously on the dialectic of Aristotle, become less difficult.

If I lean three sticks against each other so that they support each other, forming a kind of framework for a tepee, it is impossible to say which is first or which is most important. Something like this does seem to be at the heart of the Vedic vision; everything is from the beginning: Puruṣa is eternally "begetting" the world by an endless act of sacrificial self-giving, and the world is eternally re-creating Puruṣa by a sacrificial return, which is his nourishment. This, at any rate, is the conclusion suggested in a much later work, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa:<sup>38</sup> ". . . this whole world is but a modified form of oblations."

And here we return to Whitehead's expression used at the outset of this paper, "a process of becoming." We see that a cyclic cosmology existed, vague and gropingly formulated, long before a word gained currency that could express it. And when the word did appear, its root meaning was inextricably entangled with the new ideas emergent in the Upaniṣads. Van Buitenen has remarked, "Transmigration was absorbed into a system that afforded room for it, but was not itself basically altered."<sup>39</sup> There were, however, two alterations in the system, one intrinsic and one extrinsic. It is difficult to find the same cosmology in the universe of brāhman, ātman, and māyā that one discerns in the vague cosmic process of the Puruṣasūktā and the Agnichayana. And the longing for release from the round of rebirths grew so obsessive that saṁsāra could no longer be seen without the anguished awareness of bondage and misery.

Nevertheless, the idea of an eternal flux (on-going) by which Puruṣa and manifested reality are involved in a ceaseless "process of becoming" appears to have antedated the cluster of new ideas that characterize the Upaniṣads.

## NOTES

1. R.V. IX.97.45 (saṁsārati); Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit-wörterbuch* (St. Petersburg, 1855-1875), VII, c. 484-86.



2. *Kātha*, [I] 3.7. It appears also in *Śvetāśvatara U.*, VI.16; *Maitrī*, I.4. The word is used often in *Manu*, in the great epics, and in purāṇic and kāvyā literature.

3. Böhtlingk and Roth, *Sanskrit-wörterbuch*, VII, c. 484-86, suggest "hindurchgehen" as the German equivalent of the literal meaning. Paul Deussen suggests the illuminating equivalent "der zum Ausgangspunkt zurückkehrende Lauf" (*Sechzig Upanishad's des Vedā* [Leipzig, 1897], pp. 908-909).

4. This idea is at least as old as Archibald Edward Gough, *Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics* . . . (London, 1882), pp. 24-25, who thinks that Indian metempsychosis derives from the aborigines because the idea has been found in many primitive societies. See also F. Otto Schrader, "Zum Ursprung der Lehre vom Saṃsāra," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 64: 333-35 (1910). The idea of reincarnation, however, is outside the scope of this paper.

5. Schrader, "Zum Ursprung der Lehre vom Saṃsāra"; A.-M. Boyer, "Étude sur l'origine de la doctrine du Saṃsāra," *Journal asiatique*, 159: 451-99 (1901); Sylvain Lévi, "La Transmigration des Âmes dans les croyances hindoues," *Annales du Musée Guimet* (Bibliothèque de Vulgarisation), 16: 85-118 (1904). These studies are preoccupied with the idea of reincarnation.

6. The Puruṣa theme recurs frequently in Vedic and later literature; it is later often associated with Prajāpati. See R.V. X.130; A.V. X.2; XI.8; X.7 and 8 (Skambha), and especially XIX.6; Ś.B. VI.1.1; X.5 and 6; Taittirīya Saṃhitā VII.1.1.4-6; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, II.5.34-38. Variations in several of these parallels throw useful light on the Puruṣasūkta.

7. K. R. Potdar, "Sacrificial Setting of the Philosophical Hymns in the Ṛgveda, *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, 12: 163-71 (1951).

8. Abel Bergaigne, *La Religion védique* (Paris, 1963), I, 15ff.

9. See Potdar, "Sacrificial Setting," pp. 167-68. Unfortunately, while we can learn a good deal about the later Vedic notion of sacrifice from the Brāhmaṇas, it is quite clear that these ideas are later than and quite different from the view of sacrifice in the Ṛg-saṃhitā, particularly the kind of sacrifice described in the Puruṣasūkta.

10. Potdar says, "In respect of the above considerations of the basis of creation, the metaphor of creation *ex nihilo* has no place" (*ibid.*; emphasis added).

11. The expression is implicit in much of Whitehead's thought; it is explicit in *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1969), p. 45.

12. "The Creation Hymns in the Ṛgveda. Maṇḍala X." *Proceedings and Transactions of the All India Oriental Conference* (17th Session, Ahmedabad, [1953?]), p. 65.

13. W. Norman Brown, "The Sources and Nature of puruṣa in the Puruṣasūkta, R.V. 10.90," *JAS*, 51: 108-18 (1931).

14. See the legend of Videgha, the Mathava, Ś.B. I.4.1.10-17, and Julius Eggeling, tr., Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Introduction, *Sacred Books of the East*, XXVI, xxix. Most geographical allusions in the Agnichayana, however, are to the region of the Panjāb.

15. Detailed though the Brāhmaṇas are, many actions are passed over in silence because they were so familiar to the officiants as to need no rubrication.

16. *The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa of the R̥gveda*, ed. and tr. Martin Haug (Bombay, 1865). Introduction, I, 3.

17. For this reason the most detailed accounts of the Agnichayana (the building of the fire altar) are found in the Yajurveda Brāhmaṇas, since this work was the responsibility primarily of the *adhvaryu*.

18. *The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, tr. Julius Eggeling, *S.B.E.*, XLIII, xiii.

19. *Ibid.*, p. xv, n. 1.

20. All references in parentheses in the text throughout this section are to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

21. The ground plan of the fire altar is described as the outline of a bird throughout Ś.B. (Ś.B. VI.1.1.6 and *passim*). The reasons for this appear to be, first, that Agni is often represented as a bird, e.g., R.V. I, 164-52 (See Bergaigne, *La Religion védique*, I, 144-45, 290-91, for reasons); second, because the bird enables Puruṣa-Prajāpati to fly to the world of heaven. (Ś.B. X.2.1.1) Arthur H. Ewing, "The Hindu Conception of the Functions of Breath," *JAOS*, 22: 249-308 (1901), says that the Ś.B. sometimes speaks of the altar as having a human or an animal shape. This is almost entirely incorrect. In all passages where man is mentioned, reference is to Puruṣa, who is being built, not to the shape of the altar. Of three passages in which an animal is referred to, the context of two (Ś.B. VIII.1.4.8 and 9) make it unequivocally clear that the animal is a bird. The single obscure passage is in the same brāhmaṇa (chapter) with these two (VIII.1.4.3). A. B. Keith, *The Aitareya and Kauṣṭhīyā Brāhmaṇas of the R̥gveda* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 35, says that in the Sūktāyana Āraṇyaka the altar is treated as a human figure. This has not yet been checked.

22. *Essai*, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Paris, 1959), V.1.12.

23. *L'Évolution Créatrice* (Paris, 1962), p. 99.

24. "... when that deity [Prajāpati] became relaxed (fell asunder), he flowed along this [earth] in the shape of his life-sap; and when the gods restored him (put him together), they gathered him up from this earth; this earth then is that one brick, for Agni is this earth, since it is thereof that the whole Agni is built up" (Ś.B. VI.1.2.29, tr. Eggeling, *S.B.E.*, XLI, 154-55).

25. "Du Nouveau sur R̥gveda 10.90? Sociologie d'une Grammaire," in Ernest Bender, ed., *Indological Studies in Honor of W. Norman Brown* (New Haven, 1962), pp. 177-82.

26. This is not to say that Vedic material does not assert the origin of varṇa from Puruṣa. Most of the parallel passages noted above, n. 6, state that all four varṇa emerged from Puruṣa. See especially Taittirīya Saṃhitā, VII.1.1.4 6; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, II.3.8.1; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, II.5.34-38. However, A.V. XIX.6.6 [= R.V. X.90.12] is similar to the R.V. counterpart.

27. *toṣṭāś cāśāś ajāpata cāśāś sādhi parāśāś* (R.V. X.90.7a).

28. John Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts* (London, 1872), V, 49-50; 369-70; Henry White Wallis, *Cosmology of the R̥gveda* (London, 1887), p. 87; Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (Cambridge, 1925), II, 438.

29. "The Creation Hymns in the R̥gveda, Maṇḍala X," p. 63.

30. The notion of causality remains vague throughout the period of the saṃhitās and brāhmaṇas, and Keith notes (*The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*

and *Upanishads*, II, 483, n. 28) that the term for cause, *kāraṇa*, does not appear. Mutual causality occurs several times: Dakṣa is born of Aditi; Aditi of Dakṣa (R.V. X.72.4). A.V. XIII.4.29-38 says that Indra was born of the day, night, atmosphere, wind, sky, quarters, fire, waters, ṛk verses, sacrifices, and that all these objects were born of him. A different kind of cyclic relationship occurs in Kauṣṭaki Brāhmaṇa, III.8: "Fire offers itself in the rising sun; the sun at evening offers itself in the evening fire; night offers itself in the day; and day is the night."

31. A.V. XIX.6.9 [= R.V. X.90.5].

32. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 46, 1: 126-48 (1877). Unfortunately, Leonard's study relies heavily on Vedantic and Puranic materials which are much later and vastly more complex than Vedic. At the same time it does appear true that if any common trait can be found in the profoundly obscure figure of Virāj, it is that of a close relationship with the cosmos.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 126 (emphasis added).

34. *Rig-Veda Saṁhitā*, tr. H. H. Wilson (6 vols.; London, 1888), VI, 280.

35. X, 90.2b: "ṛtīṁśtatāṅgeśāno yad āmṛśītrakati."

36. "This creation cannot be regarded as a simple, definite act; it is regarded as ever proceeding, and the year, the symbol of time, takes its part in that the three seasons, spring, summer, and autumn, form the ghee, the kindling sticks, and the oblation, undoubtedly an attempt to recognize and explain time in its relation to the universe" (Eggeling, tr., *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Introduction, S.B.E., XLIII, cxxvi; emphasis added).

37. The idea is commonplace, but see particularly Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, I, 278-84, n. 28, in which food and drink are examined as the fundamental Vedic sacrificial materials.

38. I.13.14: "kṛśīṁśo paritāno 'yaso yad etad akhīlāyo jagat."

39. "Dharma and Mokṣa," *Philosophy East and West*, 7: 35 (1957).