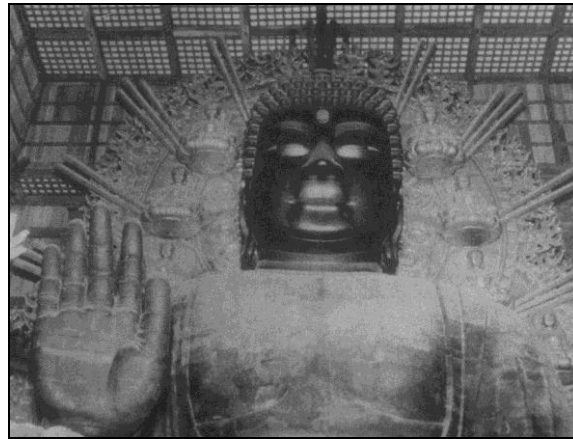


# ***The Black God and the Ancient Mysteries***

Or,

## ***Why is Vishnu Dark Blue?***

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Black Buddha in ancient Temple at Nara, Japan

### ***1. Introductory Summary***

The religious texts of the ancient East and India, i.e. the hieroglyphic writings of ancient Kemet (Egypt), the cuneiform writings of ancient Sumer (Chaldea/Mesopotamia), and the Sanskrit writings of ancient India, record the history of God as a divine Black man. According to these texts, God was originally a luminous, formless essence hidden within a primordial\* substantive darkness called 'waters'. At some point, this divine luminosity concentrated itself within the darkness and produced the atom or first particle of distinct matter, the 'golden egg' of ancient myth\*. From this first atom there emerged many atoms, which the God used to build up his own luminous body. This body was anthropomorphic and thus this God was the first man in existence, a self-created man. This was a brilliantly luminous man, represented by the so-called 'sun-gods' of ancient myth. Indeed, the sun in the sky was said to be only a sign of the luminous anthropomorphic body of the creator-god.

This God's initial attempts at creation proved unsuccessful, as the brilliant luminosity of the divine form scorched material creation. As a solution the God veiled his luminosity with a body made from that same primordial dark substance from which he initially emerged. This divine black body refracted the divine light as it passed through the hair pores covering the body. This black body is therefore referred to in later literature as God's 'shadow' as it shades creation from the scorching heat of the 'sun' or luminous body of God. As the light passed through the hair pores of this divine black body it produced a dark-blue iridescence or glow. The ancients symbolized this visual effect by the semiprecious stone sapphire or lapis lazuli, which was a dark blue stone with golden speckles throughout. The God's body at this stage was thus depicted dark blue and said to be made of sapphire/lapis lazuli. Veiled in this (blue-)black body, the God successfully produced the material cosmos. The creator-gods of ancient myth were thus often painted dark blue.

Animals were used by the ancients to represent or symbolize various characteristics or attributes of the gods. The so-called 'attribute animal' of this black-bodied creator-god was the black bovine,\* usually a bull. The bull symbolized the strength and fecundity of the creator-god. It also associated the God with the primordial dark waters, which the bull was believed to personify. As the God's black body was made from this primordial darkness, the black hide of the bull represented the black skin of the creator-god. This black

body of God symbolized by the black bull was at the center of the ‘mystery of God’ in the ancient Mystery Systems. In ancient Kemet (Egypt), for example, the greatest mystery concerned the union of the sun-god Rē, i.e. the luminous body of God, with the black god Osiris, the personification of the divine black body.

## 2. *The Black God in Antiquity*

Godfrey Higgins, in his still prodigious work, *Anacalypsis*, observed:

We have found the Black complexion or something relating to it whenever we have approached the origin of nations. The Alma Mater, the Goddess Multimammia, the founders of the Oracles, the Memnon of first idols, were always Black. Venus, Jupiter, Apollo, Bacchus, Hercules, Asteroth, Adonis, Horus, Apis, Osiris, and Amen: in short all the...deities were black. They remained as they were first...in very ancient times.<sup>1</sup>

Though made over a century ago, current History-of-Religions scholarship only confirms Higgins’ observation. The major deities of Egypt, India, Asia, the Near East, Greece and Central and South America were indeed black. Of special note we may mention, in addition to those listed above, Min of Egypt,<sup>2</sup> Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa India,<sup>3</sup> Buddha of Asia,<sup>4</sup> ‘Il/’El/Al of the Near East,<sup>5</sup> and Quetzalcoatl of the early Americas.<sup>6</sup> The blackness of these deities did not necessarily indicate that they were chthonic (associated with death and the underworld) or in any way malevolent. Indeed, in the various ancient traditions, it was the king of the gods, the creator deity himself, who was black.<sup>7</sup> The blackness of the creator deity, that is to say the creator deity’s black *body*-how it originated, of what substance(s) it was composed, why it was black, etc.-was at the center of the ‘mystery of God’ in ancient Egypt, India, and Sumer/Akkad. We will analyze this “mystery of the black god” and explore its relation to biblical myth and theology.

<sup>1</sup> *Anacalypsis, an Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis, or, An Inquiry Into the Origins of Languages, Nations, and Religions* (1836; Brooklyn: A&B Book Publishers, 1992) 286.

<sup>2</sup> On Min and black gods of Egypt in general see Terence DuQuesne, *Black and Gold God: colour symbolism of the god Anubis with observations on the phenomenology of colour in Egyptian and comparative religion* (London: Da’th Scholarly Services, Darengo Publications, 1996) *passim*, esp. 18-23; Edmund S. Meltzer, “‘Who Knows the Color of God?’” *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 11 (1996): 123-129; Jules Taylor, “The Black Image in Egyptian Art,” *Journal of African Civilization* 1 (April, 1979) 29-38.

<sup>3</sup> On Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa see below.

<sup>4</sup> See photos of black Buddhas and some relevant data in Runoko Rashidi and Ivan Van Sertima, *African Presence in Early Asia* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995 [Tenth Anniversary Edition]), e.g. 51-53, 82, 116, 118, 322, 335.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Daum, *Ursemitische Religion* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1985) and below.

<sup>6</sup> The anthropomorphic creator-god of Central Mexico, *Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl*, was black (Figure 8). See H. B. Nicholson, “The Deity 9 Wind ‘Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl’ in the Mixteca Pictorials,” *Journal of Latin American Lore* 4 (1978): 61-92; Eloise Quiñones Keber, “Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in Text and Images,” MA Thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1979; Fray Bernardino De Sahagan, *A History of Ancient Mexico*, trans. Fanny R. Bandelier (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1932) 1:26. It is necessary to distinguish the historical-legendary figure, *Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl* from the mythological-cosmological figure, *Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl*. The ethnic identity of the former has been a matter of speculation. While a number of scholars cling to the post-Conquest myth of the legendary figure as a “bearded, white” foreigner (e.g. Graham Hancock, *Fingerprints of the Gods* [New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995] 102-05; Thor Heyerdahl, “The Bearded Gods Speak,” in Geoffrey Ashe et al [edd.], *The Quest for America* [London: Pall Mall Press, 1971] 199-238; Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces* [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963] 33-47), the Tote ruler was likely either a native or maybe an African immigrant (B.C. Hedrick, “Quetzalcoatl: European or Indigene?” in Carroll L. Riley et al [edd.], *Man Across the Sea: Problems of Pre-Columbian Contacts* [Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1971] 255-265; Ivan Van Sertima, “Among the Quetzalcoatl,” in idem, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* [New York: Random House, 1976] 71-89; Negel Davies, *The Aztecs: A History* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980] 258-9). But regardless of the ethnic identity of the legendary figure, the mythological creator-god, *Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl*, was black, as is shown, for example, in the cosmological narrative of Vindobonensis Obverse and the Codex Vaticanus. See Jill Leslie Furst, *Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I: A Commentary* (Albany: State University of New York, 1978) 100, 123-26; Eduard Seler, *The Tonalamatl of the Aubin Collection: An Old Mexican Picture Manuscript in the Paris National Library* (Berlin, 1901) 45-7; idem, *Codex vaticanus nr. 3773 (codex vaticanus B) eine altmexikanische bilderschrift der Vatikanischen bibliothek* (Berlin, 1902) 1:7 figure 1. Indeed, according to post-Conquest pictorial representations, the historic-legendary figure, as Tote priest, often dressed up as the god *Ehecatl*. In so doing, he painted his body black. See De Sahagan, *A History*, Back; Keber, “Topiltzin,” 65, 79, 86. On pre- and post-Conquest pictorials of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl see Eloise Quiñones Keber, “The Aztec Image of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl,” in J. Kathryn Josserand and Karen Dakin (edd.), *Smoke and Mist: Mesoamerican Studies in Memory of Thelma D. Sullivan* (BAR International Series 402[i], 1988) 329-343. On the relation of the two Quetzalcoatl see Henry B. Nicholson, “Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl vs. Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan: a Problem in Mesoamerican Religion and History” in *Actes du XLIIe Congrès international des américanistes. Congrès du centenaire: Paris, 2-9 septembre 1976* (Paris: Société des américonistes, 1976) 35-47.

<sup>7</sup> See below.

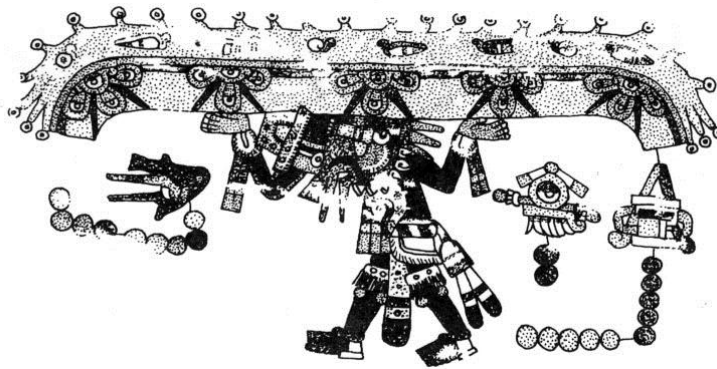


Figure 2

*Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, Black creator-God of Central America lifting the Primordial\* Sky*

### 3. The Black God and his Black Bull

In antiquity various aspects of the gods were represented zoomorphically. That is to say, different animals were used to symbolize distinct characteristics or attributes of a deity,<sup>8</sup> who was otherwise anthropomorphic. The paramount 'attribute animal' of the black creator-god was the black bovine\*, usually a bull. The bull represented potency, fecundity, and primordial materiality, all essential characteristics of the creator-god.<sup>9</sup> The color of the bull was not arbitrary. As René L. Vos pointed out, "Color reflected the nature of a god" and thus the skin color "constituted the vehicle of the divine nature of a sacred animal."<sup>10</sup> Over against the golden lion or falcon, which symbolized morning/midday sunlight, the black bovine symbolized night and materiality.<sup>11</sup> The black bovine was associated with the black primordial waters from which the creator-god emerged;<sup>12</sup> it thus came to symbolize the black material body that the

<sup>8</sup> On the 'attribute animal' of ancient Near Eastern religion see Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: the One and the Many* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 109-25; P. Amiet, *Corpus des cylindres de Ras Shamra-Ougarit II: Sceaux-cylindres en hematite et pierres diverses* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit IX; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1992) 68; "Attribute Animal" in idem, *Art of the Ancient Near East*, trans. J. Shepley and C. Choquet (New York: Abrams, 1980) 440 n. 787.

<sup>9</sup> On the symbolism of the bull see Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, translated by Rosemary Sheed (1958; Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) 82-93; Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (edd.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Leiden and Grand Rapids, MI.: Brill and Eerdmans, 1999) s.v. "Calf," by N. Wyatt, 180-182; *ERE* 2:887-889 s.v. Bull, by C.J. Caskell. See also René L. Vos, "Varius Coloribus Apis: Some Remarks of the Colours of Apis and Other Sacred Animals," in Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors and Harco Willems (edd.), *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years, Part 1. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oosterse Studies, 1998) 715, who notes that the bulls of Egypt "materialize upon the earth the creative forces of the hidden demiurge (creator-god)."

<sup>10</sup> "Varius Coloribus Apis," 711.

<sup>11</sup> Asko Parpola, "New correspondences between Harappan and Near Eastern glyptic art," *South Asian Archaeology* 1981, 178 notes: "Indeed, the golden-skinned hairy lion is an archetypal symbol for the golden-rayed sun, the lord of the day...Night...is equally well represented by the bull, whose horns connect it with the crescent of the moon." On the bull and the moon-god in ancient Near Eastern mythology see also Tallay Ornan, "The Bull and its Two Masters: Moon and Storm Deities in Relation to the Bull in Ancient Near Eastern Art," *Israel Exploration Journal* 51 (2001) 1-26; Dominique Collon, "The Near Eastern Moon God," in Diederik J.W. Meijer (ed.), *Natural Phenomena: Their Meaning, Depiction and Description in the Ancient Near East* (North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1992) 19-37. On the falcon as symbol of the sun-god see J. Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott. Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Hymnik I* (MÄS 19; Berlin, 1969) 170-1.

<sup>12</sup> Parpola, "New correspondences," 181 suggests that "the dark buffalo bathing in muddy water was conceived as the personification of the cosmic waters of chaos". In the *Rg Veda* the cosmic waters are cows (e.g. 4.3.11; 3.31.3; 4.1.11) and in *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa* 21.3.7 the spotted cow Śabalā is addressed: "Thou art the [primeval ocean]." On water and cows in Indic tradition see further Anne Feldhaus, *Water and Womanhood. Religious Meanings of Rivers in Maharashtra* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 46-47. The black bull (*k'km*) of Egypt, Apis, personified the waters of the Nile which was regarded as a type of Nun, the dark,

creator-god will form for himself,<sup>13</sup> the black skin of the bovine signaling the black skin of the deity.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the hide of the sacrificial bull of ancient Sumer/Akkad, which was required to be ‘black as asphalt (Figure 10),’ was ritually identified with the skin of the Sumerian/Akkadian creator-deity Anu.<sup>15</sup>



This association between divine and bovine skin is explicitly articulated, for example, in the Indic<sup>16\*</sup> scripture *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*<sup>17</sup> with regard to the black *tārpya* garment worn by the king during the Indic royal consecration ceremony called *Rājasūya*. During this ceremony the king ritually impersonated the creator-god and divine king Prajāpati-Varuṇa.<sup>18</sup> The black *tārpya* garment worn by the king represented the body of the royal creator-god (Prajāpati-Varuṇa) whom the king impersonated here.<sup>19</sup>

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primeval watery mass out of which creation sprang (See Émile Chassinat, “La Mise a Mort Rituelle D’Apis,” *Recueil de travaux relatifs a la philology et a l’archeologie egyptiennes et assyriennes* 38 [1916] 33-60; E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead (The Papyrus of Ani)*. *Egyptian Text Transliterated and Translated* [New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1967] cxxiii). See also the Babylonian Enki (Figure 9), called *am-gig-abzu*, ‘black bull of the Apsû (primordial waters).’ See W.F. Albright, “The Mouth of the Rivers,” *AJSL* 35 (1911): 161-195, esp. 167. The Babylonian Tiamat (primordial salt-waters) seems also to have been presented as a bovine in the *Enūma Elish*: see B. Landsberger and J.V. Kinnier Wilson, “The Fifth Tablet of Enūma Elis,” *JNES* 20 (1961): 175 [art.=154-179]. On the black bull and the black waters of creation see also Vos, “Varius Coloribus Apis,” 715, 718.

<sup>13</sup> Thus the Buchis bull of Armant, whose name means something like “who makes the *ba* dwell within the body.” See Dieter Kessler, “Bull Gods,” in Donald B. Redford (ed.), *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 30.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. the black skin of the Egyptian deity Min (Figure 14), the ‘creator god *par excellence*,’ and his black bovines (H.Gauthier, *Les fêtes du dieu Min* 2 vols. [Le Caire, 1931; IFAO. Recherches d’Archéologie] 2:55-57; *DDD* s.v. “Min,” 577 by K. van der Toorn; Veronica Ions, *Egyptian Mythology* [Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1968] 110; G.A. Wainwright, “Some Aspects of Amūn,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 [1934]: 140 [art.=139-53]), the black-skinned Osiris and the black bull Apis (Vos, “Varius Coloribus Apis,” 716; idem, “Apis,” *DDD* 70) as well as the Indic Yamā with his black skin and black buffalo [P. van Bosch, “Yama-The God on the Black Buffalo,” in *Commemorative Figures* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982] 21-64]. In contrast, but making the same point, see the white-skinned Śiva and his white bull Nandi.

<sup>15</sup> In one description of the Babylonian *kalū*-ritual the slaying and skinning of the black bull is mythologized as the god Bēl’s slaying and flaying of the god Anu, whose characteristic attribute animal was the black bull. See Daum, *Ursemitische Religion*, 204; E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* 2 vols. (Berlin-Leipzig, 1931) 1:29; C. Bezold, *Babylonisch-assyrisches Glossar* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1926) 210 s.v. *sugugalū*; Georgia de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet’s Mill: An essay on myth and the frame of time* (Boston: Gambit, Inc., 1969) 124. On Anu see further Herman Wohlstein, *The Sky-God An-Anu* (Jericho, New York: Paul A. Stroock, 1976).

<sup>16</sup> I will use ‘Indic’ throughout this work to refer to the traditions of ancient India, as opposed to ‘Indian,’ which is popularly, though erroneously, associated with the indigenous groups of the early Americas.

<sup>17</sup> Brāhmaṇas are Vedic texts dealing with priestly sacrifices and rituals.

<sup>18</sup> See J. Gonda, “Vedic Gods and the Sacrifice,” *Numen* 30 (1983): 1-34; Walter O. Kaelber, “‘Tapas,’ Birth, and Spiritual Rebirth in the Veda,” *History of Religions* 15 (1976): 343-386; Johannes Cornelis Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The rājasūya described according to the Yajus texts and annotated* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1957).

<sup>19</sup> See Heesterman, *Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* on the somatic significance of the ritual garments. Specifically, the black antelope skins represent the black skin of the divine king Varuṇa<sup>a</sup> who personifies the primordial waters. On the black skinned Varuṇa<sup>a</sup> see *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*<sup>11.6.1</sup>. On Varuṇa<sup>a</sup> and the black sacrificial garments see further Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedic Mythology*, trans. from the German by Sreeramula Rajeswara Sarma, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999; reprint) 2: 41, 44-45. On



Figure 9

Ancient seal depicting the Sumerian/Akkadian creator-god Enki/Ea (enthroned), the “black bull of the Apsû (primordial fresh-waters)”

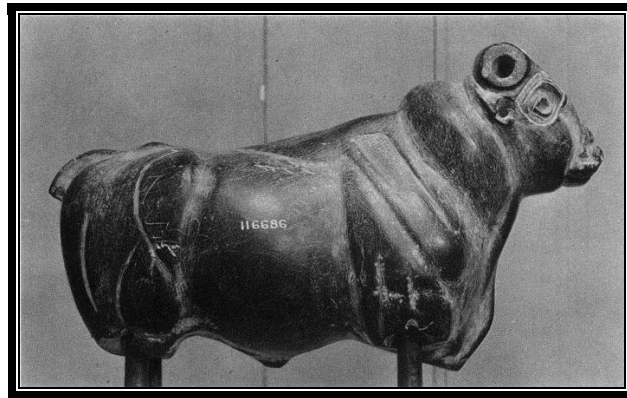


Figure 10

Image of Sacrificial Bull, “black as asphalt” used to represent the Sumerian/Akkadian king of the gods, An/Anu

Regarding the *tārpya* garment and by implication its divine counterpart, *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 3, 1, 2, 13-17 notes:

it (i.e. the *tārpya* garment) is indeed his (i.e. king’s) own skin he thereby puts on himself. Now that skin which belongs to the cow was originally on man. The gods spake, ‘Verily, the cow supports everything here (on earth); come, let us put on the cow that skin which is now on man; therewith she will be able to endure rain and cold and heat. Accordingly, having flayed man, they put that skin on the cow, and therewith she now endures rain and cold and heat. For man was indeed flayed; and hence wherever a stalk of grass or some other object cuts him, the blood trickles out. They then put that skin, the (*tārpya*) garment, on him; and for this reason none but man wears a garment, it having been put on him as his skin...Let him, then, not be naked

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Varuṇ<sup>a</sup> in Indic mythology generally see *ibid.* 2:1-47; Alain Daniélou, *The Myths and Gods of India* (1964; Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1985) 118-121; F.B.J. Kuiper, *Varuṇ<sup>a</sup> and Vidūṣaka. On the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama* (Amsterdam/Oxford/New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1979); Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony: A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology From the Vedas to the Purāṇas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) Chapter One.

in the presence of a cow. For the cow knows that she wears his skin, and runs away for fear lest he should take the skin from her.<sup>20</sup>

In explaining the relation between the black ritual garment and the black cow skin, it is here recalled that the latter actually was once man's own skin, who lost it to the cow (man was 'flayed'). This black bovine skin apparently once covered man's fleshy skin as an exterior layer, according to this mythical account. In place of this lost exterior layer, man was given the black *tārpya* garment. Now whenever the cow sees a naked man it flees in fear of him trying to retrieve his original 'garment,' the black skin that now protects the cow from inclement weather. It must be kept in mind that the Vedas are the literary work of the invading Indo-Aryan tribes, and this description of the flaying of man's black skin reflects the actual experience of the indigenous 'black, snub-nosed' Dasyus tribes who were indeed flayed by the Aryan hordes. This historical flaying is mythologized in the *R̥g Veda* (I. 130-8) where the Aryan deity Indra is described as tearing off the black skin of the Asura, the gods of the pre-Aryan black tribes.<sup>21</sup> In this *Rājasūya* or consecration ritual the human king is impersonating the divine king, God, whose skin is represented by the bovine skin. The black garment/bovine skin represents the black skin of the pre-Aryan black gods. Asko Parpola has demonstrated that both the *tārpya* garment and its divine analogue, the 'sky garment' of the gods (i.e. the divine body), are associated with the skin of the mythic 'bull of heaven.'<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. The Blue-Black Creator-God

In his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (III, 115a, 7) the fourth century church historian Eusebius of Caesarea quoted from Porphyry's (ca. 233-309) lost work, *Concerning Images*, a note on an Egyptian view of the Creator: "The Demiurge (creator-god), whom the Egyptians call Cneph, is of human form, but with a skin of dark blue, holding a girdle and a scepter, and crowned with a royal wing on his head."<sup>23</sup> While we have by now come to expect the divine human form, the dark blue skin requires some explanation. Indeed, the leading gods of the ancient Near East were not just black, but blue-black. This dark 'blueness' of the divine body had profound significance. It was not just any blue, but sapphire blue.<sup>24</sup> In biblical tradition and in ancient and medieval texts generally the term 'sapphire' denoted the semiprecious stone lapis lazuli.<sup>25</sup> Considered the "ultimate Divine substance," sapphire/lapis lazuli possessed great mythological significance

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<sup>20</sup> Trans. J. Eggeling, *The Śatapatha- Brāhmana according to the text of the Mādhyandina school*. I-V. *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford, 1882-1900) II: 9f.

<sup>21</sup> On the historical conflict between the invading Aryans and the indigenous black tribes of India, and its mythic portrayal in the Vedas as the conflict between the Devas and the Asuras, see Ram Sharan Sharma, *Sūdras in Ancient India. A Social history of the lower order down to circa A.D. 600* (Delhi: Molilal Banarsidass, 1980) Chapt. II; Daniélou, *Myths and Gods of India*, 139-146. On the racial background of the Asuras see also R. Ruggles Gates, "The Asurs and Birhors of Chota Nagpur," in T.N. Madan and Gopāla Śarana (edd.), *Indian Anthropology. Essays in Memory of D.N. Majumdar* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1962) 163-184.

<sup>22</sup> *The Sky-Garment: A Study of the Harappan religion and its relation to the Mesopotamian and later Indian religion* (SO 57; Helsinki, 1985); idem, "The Harappan 'Priest-King's' Robe and the Vedic Tārpya Garment: Their Interrelation and Symbolism (Astral and Procreative)," *South Asian Archaeology* 1983, vol. 1, 385-403. On the garments of the gods in ancient Near Eastern tradition see A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Golden Garments of the Gods," *Journal of Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 8 (1949): 172-193; Herbert Sauren, "Die Kleidung Der Götter," *Visible Religion* 2 (1984): 95-117; David Freedman, "Šubāt Bāstī: A Robe of Splendor," *JANES* 4 (1972): 91-5. See also Alan Miller, "The Garments of the Gods in Japanese Ritual," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5 (Summer 1991): 33-55.

<sup>23</sup> Trans. E.H. Grifford, 1903.

<sup>24</sup> The dark blue skin of the anthropomorphic deities of Egypt was *jrtyw* or *hsbd* (lapis lazuli), which is a blue-black: See Caroline Ransom Williams, *The Decoration of the Tomb of Per-Nēb* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932) 52f; J.R. Harris, *Lexicographical Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961) 226.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 7, 21f; *The Interpreter's dictionary of the Bible: an illustrated encyclopedia identifying and explaining all proper names and significant terms and subjects in the Holy Scriptures, including the Apocrypha, with attention to archaeological discoveries and researches into life and faith of ancient times* 5 vols. (George Arthur Buttrick et al [edd.]; New York: Abingdon Press, 1962-76) s.v. "Sapphire," by W.E. Stapes; *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1988) 497, s.v. "Jewels and Precious Stones," by J. Patrick and G.R. Berry.



in the ancient Near East.<sup>26</sup> In its natural state lapis lazuli is dark blue with fine golden speckles<sup>27</sup> recalling the “sky bedecked with stars”<sup>28</sup>; thus the visible heaven is often said to be sapphiric.<sup>29</sup>



Amun, Sapphiric God of Kemet

This sapphiric heaven, called the ‘sky- garment’ of the gods,<sup>30</sup> was associated with the divine body,<sup>31</sup> ‘garment’ being an ancient and widespread metaphor for body.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the leading deities of the ancient

<sup>26</sup> F. Daumas, “Lapis-lazuli et Régénération,” in Sydney Aufrère, *L’Univers minéral dans la pensée Égyptienne*, 2 vols. (Le Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1991) 2:463-488; John Irwin, “The *Lāṭ Bhairo* at Benares (*Vārāṇasī*): Another Pre-Aśokan Monument?” *ZDMG* 133 (1983): 327-43 [art.=320-352].

<sup>27</sup> On Lapis Lazuli see Lissie von Rosen, *Lapis Lazuli in Geological Contexts and in Ancient Written Sources* (Partille: Paul Åströms förlag, 1988); idem, *Lapis Lazuli in Archaeological Contexts* (Jonsered: Paul Åströms förlag, 1990); Rutherford J. Gettens, “Lapis Lazuli and Ultramarine in Ancient Times,” *Alumni de la Fondation universitaire* 19 (1950): 342-357.

<sup>28</sup> See Irwin, “*Lāṭ Bhairo*,” 332.

<sup>29</sup> Exod. 24:10; Ez. 1:26 (LXX); William Brownlee notes “This dome (of heaven) was thought of as sapphire in color, and as crystalline and transparent.” *Ezekiel 1-19* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 13. Nut, the ancient Egyptian sky goddess, “glistens like lapis lazuli.” See Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder*, 314ff. text III 4. The association of the heavens with precious stones is found in Babylonian cosmologies as well, which may have influenced biblical cosmology. According to W.G. Lambert, the Babylonians associated their three heavens (upper/middle/lower) with stones, the lower deriving its blue from the jasper stone (“The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon,” in Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe (edd.), *Ancient Cosmologies* [London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1975] 58). In rabbinic literature, the firmament is often made of crystal, whence the heavens derive their light (See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* [7 vols; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1911, 1939], vol. 1, 13).

<sup>30</sup> See especially Parpola, *Sky-Garment*; idem, “Harappan ‘Priest-King’s’ Robe”; Oppenheim, “Golden Garments.” This designation arises from the golden star-like ornaments or appliqué work sewn into the garment recalling the star-spangled night sky.

<sup>31</sup> Amun-Re is “beautiful youth of purest lapis lazuli (*ḥwn-nfr n-ḥsbd-m3*)” whose “body is heaven” (*ḥt. K nwt*). See J. Assmann, *Sonnenhymnen in thebanischen Gräbern* (Mainz: a.R., 1983) 5, #6:5; 124, # 43:14; A.I. Sadek, *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom* (Hildesheim, 1987) 14. See also Grey Hubert Skipwith, “‘The Lord of Heaven.’ (The Fire of God; the Mountain Summit; The Divine Chariot; and the Vision of Ezekiel.),” *JQR* 19 (1906-7): 693-4 and illustrations in Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World. Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1978) 33-4. In Manichaean tradition, the Mother of Life spread out the heaven with the skin of the Sons of Darkness according to the testimony of Theodore bar Khonai, *Liber Scholiorum* XI, trns. H. Pognon in *Inscriptions Mandaites des coupes de Khouabir*, II (Paris: Welter, 1899) 188. In the *Greater Bundahishn*, 189, 8 the cosmic body is said to have “skin like the sky.” See also the anthropomorphic body of Zurvan,

Near East had sapphiric-blue bodies. This is particularly the case with deities associated with fecundity or creation.<sup>33</sup> In Egypt, “The traditional colour of (the) gods’ limbs (was) the dark blue lapis lazuli.”<sup>34</sup> The ancient Near Eastern cult statue, which was considered the earthly body of the deity,<sup>35</sup> was ideally made of a wooden core platted with red gold or silver, overlaid with sapphires,<sup>36</sup> all of which signified substances from the body of the deity: “his (i.e. Rē’s) bones are silver, his flesh is gold, his hair genuine lapis-lazuli.”<sup>37</sup> But the hair too was a metaphor for rays of light emanating from the hair-pores covering the body<sup>38</sup> and lapis lazuli was considered ‘solidified celestial light’.<sup>39</sup> The deity’s whole body was therefore depicted blue.<sup>40</sup>

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called *Spīhr*, which is associated with both the blue firmament and a blue garment: see R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford, 1955; rep. 1972), 11f. 122. The stars covering the garment signified rays of celestial light emanating from the hair-pores of the divine skin (see below). Thus, in some depictions of this ‘sky-garment,’ the garment itself is missing and the stars are painted on the very skin of the anthropos. See e.g. the golden statue found in Susa and published by R. de Mecquenem, *Offrandes de fondation du temple de Chouchinak*, (Paris, 1905) vol. II, Pl. XXIV 1a. See also Oppenheim, “Golden Garments,” 182 Fig. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Geo Widengren, *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichaean Religion* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1945) 50-55, 76-83; J.M. Rist, “A Common Metaphor,” in idem, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 188-198; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There is no Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 23-25.

<sup>33</sup> John Baines, *Fecundity Figures: Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre* (Wiltshire: Aris & Phillips and Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1985) 139-142.

<sup>34</sup> Lise Manniche, “The Body Colours of Gods and Man in Inland Jewellery and Related Objects from the Tomb of Tutankhamun,” *Acta Orientalia* 43 (1982): 5-12 (10). On the color of the god’s skin as indicative of its status and role, with the sapphiric-bodied deity as ‘king of the gods’ see Robins, “Color Symbolism,” in Redford *Ancient Gods Speak*, 58-9; Monika Dolínská, “Red and Blue Figures of Amun,” *Varia aegyptiaca* 6 (1990): 5-6 [art.=3-7]. On the association of a deities skin color and character see also John Baines, “Color Terminology and Color Classification: Ancient Egyptian Color Terminology and Polychromy,” *American Anthropologists* 87 (1985): 284 [art.=282-97]

<sup>35</sup> On the ancient Near Eastern cult of divine images see Neal H. Walls (ed.) *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* (American Schools of Oriental Research Books Series 10; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2005); Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Michael B. Dick (ed.), *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999); idem, “The Relationship between the Cult Image and the Deity in Mesopotamia,” in Jiří Prosecký (ed.), *Intellectual Life of the ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Prague, July 1-5, 1996* (Prague: Oriental Institute, 1998) 11-16; T. Jacobsen, “The Graven Image,” in P.D. Miller Jr., P.D. Hanson and S.D. McBride (edd.), *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) 15-32, esp. 16-20;

<sup>36</sup> When King Nabu-apla-iddina of Babylon (ca. 887-855 BC) restored the image (*šalmu*) of the god Shamash, it was made of “red gold and clear lapis lazuli”: L.W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum: With Atlas of Plates* (London: British Museum, 1912) 120-127, #36 IV 20. Lugal-zagesi, *ensi* (governor) of Ummah, during his sack of Lagash (ca. 2340 B.C.E.) is said to have plundered the temple of the goddess Amageštin and robbed her “of her precious metal and lapis lazuli, and threw her in the well.” H. Steible, *Die altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* (Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 5; Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1982): Ukgagina 16:6:11-7:6. The reference is likely to the goddesses cult statue. See Michael B. Dick, “The Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity,” in Walls, *Cult Image*, 49. See also the lament of Ninšubur on the occasion of Inanna’s ‘Descent to the Netherworld’ (II. 43-46):

O Father Enlil, let no one in the Netherworld kill your child!

Let no one smelt your fine silver along with crude ore! (on the translation of this line see A.R. George, “Observations on a Passage of ‘Inanna’s Descent’,” *JCS* 37 [1985]: 109-13)

Let no one cleave your fine lapis lazuli along with the lapidary’s stones!

Let no one cut up your boxwood along with the carpenter’s timber!

Let no one in the Netherworld kill the young woman Inanna!

Inanna’s statue is thus made of boxwood (*taškarinnu*), platted with silver and overlaid with lapis lazuli. Cf. the *eršemma* of Ningirgilu (CT 15 23). On the above passage as a reference to Inanna’s cult statue see also Giorgio Buccellati, “The Descent of Inanna as a Ritual Journey to Kutha?” *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 3 (1982): 3-7. On Egyptian cult statues and lapis-lazuli see Daumas, “Lapis-lazuli et Régénération,” 465-67. On the materials used for the construction of divine images see Victor Hurowitz, “What Goes In Is What Comes Out – Materials for Creating Cult Statues” in G. Beckman and T.J. Lewish (edd.), *Text and Artifact – Proceedings of the Colloquium of the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania, April 27-29, 1998*, Brown Judaic Series, 2006 (in press).

<sup>37</sup> Gay Robins, “Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt,” in Walls, *Cult Image*, 6; idem, “Color Symbolism,” 60; Claude Traunecker, *The Gods of Egypt*, translated from the French by David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 44; Dmitri Meeks, “Divine Bodies,” in Dimitri Meeks and Christine Favard-Meeks, *Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods*, translated by G.M. Goshgarian (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996) 57; Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, 134.

<sup>38</sup> Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam and London: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1974) 39 s.v. Beard; Marten Stol, “The Moon as Seen by the Babylonians,” in Diederik J.W. Meijer (ed.), *Natural Phenomena: Their Meaning, Depiction and Description in the Ancient Near East* (North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1992) 255.

<sup>39</sup> On lapis lazuli as “solidified celestial light” see Robins, “Color Symbolism,” 60. On rays of light emanating from the divine hair pores see for example *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 10, 4, 4, 1-2: “When Prajāpati was creating living beings, Death, that evil, overpowered him. He practiced austerities for a thousand years, striving to leave evil behind him. 2. Whilst he was practicing austerities, lights went upwards from those hair-pits of his; and those lights are those stars; as many stars as there are, so many hair-pits there are.” Translation by Eggeling. See also below. On ancient Near Eastern parallels see Parpola, *Sky-Garment*, 74.



Mediating between the gold flesh and lapis lazuli ‘hair’ of the creator deity is the divine black skin signified by the bull hide. The black bull, Ad de Vries informs us, “mediated between fire (gold) and water (lapis lazuli), heaven and earth” (inserts original).<sup>41</sup> The light of the ‘golden flesh’ passing through the hair-pores of the divine black skin therefore produced a sapphiric ‘surrounding splendor.’<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.1. *The Self-Created Blue-Black Creator*

Before creating the cosmos, according to ancient Near Eastern tradition, the black god created himself, or, rather, his body: “O Rē who gave birth to righteousness, sovereign who created all this, who built his limbs, who modeled his body, who created himself, who gave birth to himself.”<sup>43</sup> Ancient Indic and ancient Egyptian tradition give fairly detailed mythic accounts of the self-creation of the black god.<sup>44</sup> Most amazing is the remarkable similarity of these accounts. While one nation deriving its account from the other is improbable, it is likely that the similarities evince a widespread ancient Near Eastern mythic tradition concerning a self-created black creator-deity.<sup>45</sup>

According to this mythic tradition there was in the beginning only darkness, material darkness universally described as ‘water.’<sup>46</sup> Hidden within this dark primordial water was the deity in a formless,

<sup>40</sup> Thus the blue bodied deity Amun. See Traunecker, *Gods of Egypt*, 44; Wainwright, “Some Aspects of Amūn”; Doliński, “Red and Blue Figures of Amun.”

<sup>41</sup> *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 69 s.v. Bull. As the ‘bull of heaven’ the bovine has sapphiric associations as well. See e.g. the statuette from Uruk, Jemdet Nasr period (c. 3200-2900 BC) with trefoil inlays of lapis lazuli: H. Schmökel, *Ur, Assur und Babylon: Drei Jahrtausende im Zweistromland* (Stuttgart, 1955), plate 8, top. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Old Babylonian Version, Tablet IV 170-3) the Bull of heaven has horns of lapis lazuli. Nanna-Sin, moon-god of Sumer and Babylon, is the ‘frisky calf of heaven’ and the ‘lapis lazuli bull.’ See Ornan, “The Bull and its Two Masters,” 3; Stol, “The Moon,” 255. On Nanna-Sin see further *DDD*, s.v. Sin 782-3 by M. Stol. See also the sapphiric bearded bull in Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: British Museum Press, 1992) 44 s.v. bison.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. A. Massy, *Le Papyrus de Leiden I* 347 (Ghent, 1885) 2 where an Egyptian deity is described as “robed in brilliance and wrapped in turquoise.” See further Meeks, “Divine Bodies,” 57.

<sup>43</sup> From Theb. Tomb 157: translation from J. Zandee, “The Birth-Giving Creator-God in Ancient Egypt,” in Alan B. Lloyd (ed.), *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society, in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths* (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1992) 175 [art.=168-185]. See also the hieratic Coffin Text 714: “I (Atum) created my body in my glory; I am he who made myself; I formed myself according to my will and according to my heart.” Translation from John D. Currid, in his *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 58.

<sup>44</sup> On theo-cosmogony in Indic tradition, see, besides the primary Indic texts: David Leeming with Margaret Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) s.v. Indian Creation, 139-144; Daniélou, *Myths and Gods of India*; S.S. Dange (ed.), *Myths of Creation. Papers read at the Seminar on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1985* (Bombay, 1987) Chapters 1-5; J. Gonda, “In the Beginning,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 63 (1982): 453-62; F.B.J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* (ed. John Irwin; New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983); Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Hindu Myths: A Sourcebook Translated from the Sanskrit* (London: Penguin Books, 1975); Bruce Lincoln, “The Indo-European Myth of Creation,” *HR* 15 (1975): 121-145; Bhattacharji, *Indian Theogony*; W. Norman Brown, “The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda,” *JAOS* 62 (1942): 85-98. In Egyptian tradition, besides the standard accounts in treatments of Egyptian myth: Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, translated from the French by David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002) Chapter Two (“Cosmogonies, Creation, and Time”); Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and the bible* (CBQMS 26; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994) Chapter Four; J.P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (YES 2; New Haven: Yale University, 1988). On Sumerian/Akkadian accounts of creation see Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, Chapters Two and Three; Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963); J. van Dijk, “Le motif cosmique dans la pensée sumérienne,” *Acta Orientalia* 28 (1964): 1-59; Morris Jastrow, Jr., “The Sumerian View of Beginnings,” *JAOS* 36 (1916): 122-135; idem, “Sumerian and Akkadian Views of Beginnings,” *JAOS* 36 (1916): 274-299.

<sup>45</sup> Speaking more broadly K.K.A. Venkatachari (“Babylonian, Assyrian and Other Accounts” in Dange, *Myths of Creation*, 34) notes: “The myths regarding the creation of the universe and life, as found in the literature of the ancient civilizations bear remarkable similarity which is not easy to explain away, considering the lack of communication in the olden days and the fact that there was no print or other media as we have now.”

<sup>46</sup> “At first there was only darkness (*tamas*) wrapped in darkness. All this was unilluminated water.” *Rg Veda* 10.129.1-6. An ancient Egyptian Coffin Text (Spell 80) mentions “the darkness (*kkyt*) of Nun.” See Helmer Ringgren, “Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion,” in *Liber amicorum. Studies in honour of Professor Dr. C.J. Bleeker. Published on the occasion of his retirement from the chair of the history of religions and the phenomenology of religion at the University of Amsterdam* (SHR 17; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969) 143 [art.=140-150]. On the waters in Indic tradition see H.W. Bodewitz, “The Waters in Vedic Cosmic Classifications,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 45-54. In Egyptian tradition see Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 101-104; R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959) 54-55. On the primordial waters in ancient myth see also Tamra Andrews, *Legends of the Earth, Sea, and Sky: An Encyclopedia of Nature Myths* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1998) s.v. Primordial Sea, 181-82; Eliade, *Patterns*, Chapter Five; Philip Freund, *Myths of Creation* (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc, 1965) Chapter Four.

luminous\* state.<sup>47</sup> This primordial ‘water’ was characterized by what the Indic texts call *jāmi*, the unproductive state of non-differentiation of its constituent elements. All potential dualities (e.g. light/darkness, spirit/matter, male/female), which are a prerequisite to the generative process, lay undistinguished and negatively homogeneous; the ancient Egyptians called it the “state in which did not yet exist ‘two things’.” Creation begins with the distinguishing and separation of these elements.<sup>48</sup> How long this primeval,\* homogeneous mass with its hidden divine luminosity existed is not indicated. At some point, however, God’s luminosity concentrated itself within the primordial waters into a single point, producing the first distinguishable particle of luminous matter,<sup>49</sup> the mythical ‘golden germ’ or fiery a-tom,<sup>50</sup> the quark of modern-day quantum physics.<sup>51</sup> This soon developed into an atom,<sup>52</sup> described mythically as the ‘golden egg.’

#### 4.1.1. *The Cosmogonic Egg and the Primordial Atom*

Ancient tradition described the primordial atom, in which everything (including God) was originally contained and out of which everything (including God) emerged, as an egg.<sup>53</sup> This ‘Cosmogonic\*’ or ‘Mundane’ Egg symbolized the key to the mystery of Origins. Manley P. Hall, world-renowned scholar of the Occult, in his book **MAN: The Grand Symbol of The Mysteries**, observes:

The whole mystery of origin and destiny is concealed in the symbolism of that radiant gold egg...It was declared that such as understood this mystery had risen above all temporal limitations.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> For example the spiritual and featureless Brahman (neuter), which existed within the Indic primordial waters, was “brilliant, without body, sinewless”: see E. Osborn Martin, *The Gods of India: A Brief Description of their History, Character & Worship* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. And New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1914) Chapter I; T.S Maxwell, *The Gods of Asia: Image, Text, and Meaning* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30; Kurian Mathothu, *The Development of the Concept of Trimurti in Hinduism* (Pali, India, 1974) 31-42. S.S. Dange, “Rgvedic Accounts,” in Dange, *Myths of Creation*, 10 notes: “In all the mythical accounts of Creation in the (Rg Veda), Water and Heat (i.e. a ‘ray of light’) seem to be the basic principles.”

<sup>48</sup> Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, “Patterns of Creation in Ancient Egypt,” in Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (edd.), *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (JSOTSup 319; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 174 [art.=174-178]; John Irwin, “‘Asokan’ Pillars: The Mystery of Foundation and Collapse,” in Gilbert Pollet (ed.), *India and the Ancient World: History, Trade and Culture Before A.D. 650* (OLA 25; Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1987) 87-93.

<sup>49</sup> Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt*, 51 note: “Matter was already in Nun, waiting to be coagulated to a point where the dry contrasted with the unformed matter.”

<sup>50</sup> In Indic tradition the *Hiraṇya-Garbha* or ‘Golden Germ’; see e.g. *Rg Veda* 10.121.7; *Atharva Veda* 10.7.28; *Matsya Pūraṇa* 2.25ff. On the golden germ see Daniélou, *Myths and Gods of India*, 237-38; J. Gonda, “Background and variants of the Hiraṇyagarbha Conception,” in Perala Ratnam (ed.), *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture*, III (Delhi, 1974) 39-54; Mircea Eliade, “Spirit, Light, and Seed,” *HR* 11 (1971): 1-30; Bhattacharji, *Indian Theogony*, 330-1; F.B.J. Kuiper, “The Golden Germ,” in idem, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, 22-40; F.D.K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ, An Introduction to Indian Symbolism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1960). On the cosmogonic egg in Egyptian tradition see Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 106, 112; Clark, *Myth and Symbol*, 56. On the Sumerian creator-god An/Anu planting the primordial seed see Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 26-29 and 39, where the author quotes an ancient Sumerian text entitled *Bird and Fish*, where mention is made of “the life-giving waters that begat the fecund seed.”

<sup>51</sup> The *Hiraṇya-Garbha*, according to Daniélou, *Myths and Gods of India*, 234, is a “ball of fire from which the universe develops” and Von Franz, in her discussion of cosmogonic “Germs and Eggs” appropriately describes the mythical germ as “an enormous concentration of energy in...one center,” *Creation Myths*, 232. These descriptions identify the ‘golden germ’ with the quark (a-tom) of modern physics, the fundamental particle of matter, which is also a “ball” and “center of (fiery) energy.” See Lawrence M. Krauss, *Atom: An Odyssey from the Big Bang to Life on Earth...And Beyond* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001); Leon Lederman with Dick Teresi, *The God Particle: If the Universe is the Answer, What is the Question* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1993); Isaac Asimov, *Atom: Journey Across the Subatomic Cosmos* (New York: Truman Talley Books, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> On the relation of the a-tom (quark) and the atom see sources cited above n. 502.

<sup>53</sup> On the cosmogonic egg see Marie-Louise von Franz, *Creation Myths* revised edition (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995), Chapter Eight (“Germs and Eggs”); de Vries, *Dictionary*, 158-9 s.v. egg; *ER* 5:36-7 s.v. Egg by Venetia Newall; idem, *An Egg at Easter: A Folklore Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971) Chapter One; Eliade, *Patterns*, 413-416; Anna-Britta Hellbom, “The Creation Egg,” *Ethnos* 1 (1963): 63-105; Robert Wildhaber, “Zum Symbolgehalt und zur Ikonographie des Eies,” *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 6 (1960): 7ff; H.J. Sheppard, “Egg Symbolism in Alchemy,” *Ambix* 6 (August, 1958): 140-148; Freund, *Myths of Creation*, Chapter Five; Martti Haavio, *Väinämöinen: Eternal Sage* (Helsinki, 1952) 45-63; Franz Lukas, “Das Ei als kosmogonische Vorstellung,” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* (Berlin, 1894) 227-243; James Gardner, *The Faiths of the World: A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Sects, their Doctrines Rites, Ceremonies and Customs*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co., 1860) 1:797-8 s.v. Egg (Mundane). In Indic tradition see further F.B.J. Kuiper, “Cosmogony and Conception: A Query,” *HR* 10 (1970): 100-104 [art.=91-138]; Gonda, “Background”; H. Lommel, “Der Welt-ei-Mythos im Rig-Veda,” *Mélanges Bally* (Geneva, 1939) 214-20. On the cosmic egg as *prima materia* see also C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 202. On the golden cosmogonic egg and the primordial atom see Freund, *Myths of Creation*, Chapter 15; True Islam, *The Book of God: An Encyclopedia of Proof that the Black Man is God* (Atlanta: All in All Publishing, 1999) 148-151.

<sup>54</sup> Manley P. Hall, *MAN - The Grand Symbol of the Mysteries*, 1972, 69.

Madame H.P. Blavatsky, Matriarch of Theosophy, says also:

The 'Mundane Egg' is, perhaps, one of the most universally adopted symbols...Whence this universal symbol? The Egg was incorporated as a sacred sign in the cosmogony of every people on the Earth, and was revered both on account of its form and its inner mystery...It was known as that which represented most successfully the origin and secret of being. The gradual development of the imperceptible germ within the closed shell; the inward working, without apparent outward interference of force, which from a latent 'nothing' produced an active 'something,' needing naught save heat; and which, having gradually evolved into a concrete, living creature, broke its shell, appearing to outward senses of all a self-generated and self-created being-must have been a standing miracle from the beginning."<sup>55</sup>

The Egg symbolized *prima material*,<sup>56</sup> that 'primeval\* substance in creation,'<sup>57</sup> or 'progenitive germ,'<sup>58</sup> from which the world evolved. As Philip Freund pointed out in 1965, this cosmogonic egg is the same as the 'primordial atom' of modern scientific theories on the origin of the universe.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the primordial atom, first proposed by Abbé Georges Lemaître, physicist at Louvain University, has since been called by scientists "Lemaître's Egg" in recognition of its relation to the cosmogonic egg of the ancients. Isaac Asimov, for example, in his ***Atom: Journey Across the Subatomic Cosmos***, describes the beginning of the universe from a scientist's perspective in a way that radically approaches the beginning as described by these ancient religious texts:

there was a time when the matter and energy of the Universe were literally squashed together into one exceeding dense mass. (The Belgian astronomer Abbé Georges Henri Lemaitre) called it the cosmic egg...If we consider the situation before the cosmic egg was formed, we might visualize a vast illimitable sea of nothingness...The nothingness contains energy...The Pre-Universe...had energy, and although all of its properties were otherwise those of a vacuum, it is called a false vacuum. Out of this false vacuum, a tiny point of matter appears where the energy, by blind forces of random changes, just happens to have concentrated itself sufficiently for the purpose. In fact, we might imagine the illimitable false vacuum to be a frothing, bubbling mass, producing bits of matter here and there as the ocean waves produce foam.<sup>60</sup>

Here we have a world-renowned scientist describing the pre-cosmic world in terms of a primordial ocean of matter and a cosmogonic egg, language deriving from the ancient mythic tradition.

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<sup>55</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* 1:65,365.

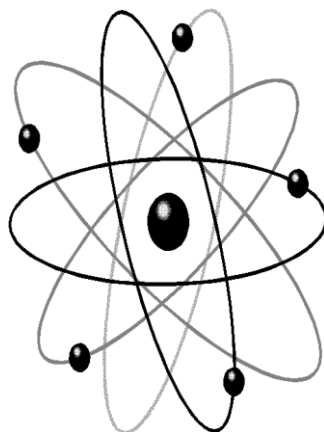
<sup>56</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 202.

<sup>57</sup> Hillbom, "Creation Egg," 64.

<sup>58</sup> Freund, *Myths of Creation*, 49.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

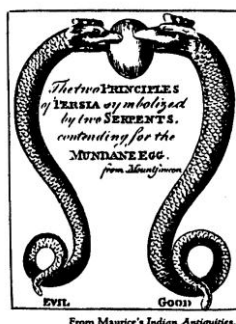
<sup>60</sup> Asimov, *Atom*, 304-310 On the congruence between modern quantum physics and ancient Eastern thought see the still insightful Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Boston: Shambhala, 1991).



Two different Eggs were recognized in ancient tradition. The first, the Universal Egg, was the black womb of Space in which existed that Primordial Energy – the Supreme All. The Sanskrit *Book of Dzyan* refers to it as the Eternal Egg.<sup>61</sup> Within this Universal Egg, the Supreme All self-fecundated and produced the Mundane or Golden Egg<sup>62</sup>; called “Golden” because the sparking of the Atom was the first visible manifestation of Light.

Proof that in fact the Golden Egg is a symbol for the A-tom from which the creator-God physically emerged is found everywhere. The *Egyptian Ritual* speaks of the “egg conceived at the hour of the great one of the Dual Force” (Sec. V., 2,3). The “Dual Force” is no doubt reference to the positive/negative polarity of the Primordial Energy which gave birth to the protons (+) and electrons (-) of the Atom. Occult philosophy depicts this Golden Egg with two poles, a positive on top and a negative on bottom.<sup>63</sup> The ancient Persians depicted two serpents, labeled Good and Evil, contending for the Mundane Egg (Figure 9). Hall notes that the ancients used the serpent to represent Electricity or Force.

Electricity was commonly symbolized by the serpent because of its motion. Electricity passing between the poles of a spark gap is serpentine in its motion. Force projected through the atmosphere was called The Great Snake. Being symbolic of universal force, the serpent was emblematic of both good (positive) and evil (negative).<sup>64</sup>



Mundane Egg of the ancient Persians

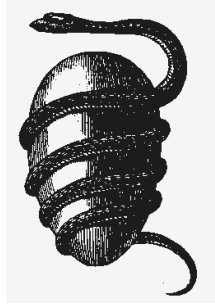
The two serpents contending for the Egg are therefore symbolic of the contending protons (+) and electrons (-) within the Atom. The Orphic Mysteries depict the Egg with the Great Serpent coiled around it (Figure 10) like a mother snake coiled around its recently laid egg. This Great Serpent, Hall informs us, represents the “Fiery Creative Spirit,” the God Force from which the Atom or Egg sparked.

<sup>61</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, I: 28.

<sup>62</sup> Hall, *MAN - The Grand Symbol of the Mysteries*, 72.

<sup>63</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, I: 556.

<sup>64</sup> Hall, *Secret Teachings of All Ages*, LXXXVIII.



The Mundane Egg (Primordial Atom) born from the Cosmic Serpent (Divine Spirit/Latent Energy/God-Force)

#### 4.1.2. *The Primordial Atom and the Birth of God*

According to these ancient texts this ‘egg’ or atom (also depicted as a lotus plant)<sup>65</sup> began rotating and moving ‘on the waters,’ which movement originated time.<sup>66</sup> Within this atom the creator-deity now resided and, eventually, from this atom he emerged as a luminous *anthropos* (man),<sup>67</sup> the so-called sun-god: Atum-Rē of Egypt (Figure 13)<sup>68</sup> and Prajāpati-Brahmā of India (Figure 14).<sup>69</sup>

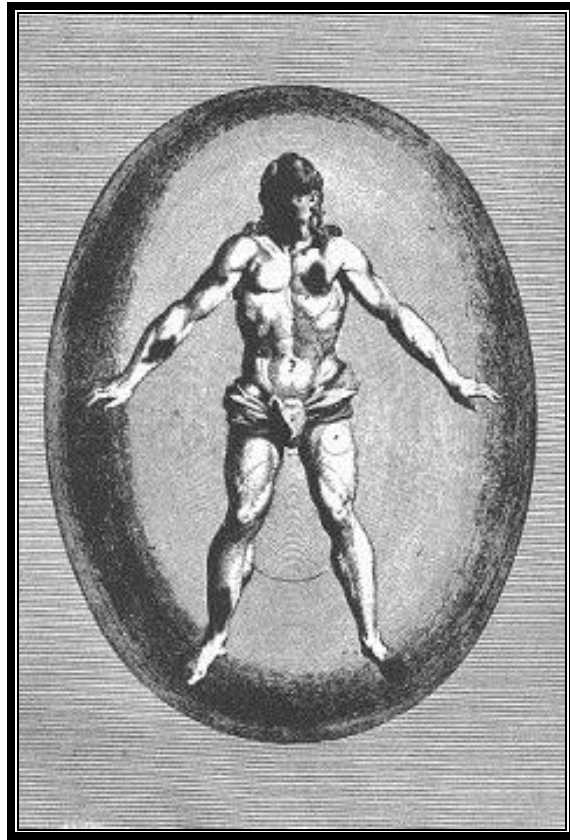
<sup>65</sup> See Bosch, *Golden Germ*, 56-57.

<sup>66</sup> On the birth of time in Egyptian cosmogonic tradition see Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt*, 64-70.

<sup>67</sup> As von Franz remarks: “the motif of the human form of the first creative being, an anthropos figure...is another very widespread archetypal motif in creation myths.” *Creation Myths*, 34. See also Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt*, 48: “This (creator-)god was autogenous...He modeled his own body, and we must say that this was almost always anthropomorphically”. See e.g. *Vādhūla-Sūtra* 6.4.109: “Brahman emitted [out of himself] Agni (the primordial spark of fire) and Prajāpati (a macrocosmic Agni) and he (Brahman) created the latter (viz. Prajāpati) in the form of a man.” In ancient Near Eastern and Indic tradition, cosmogony (birth of the cosmos), theogony (birth and evolution of God/gods) and anthropogony (creation of man) are all revealed to be the same evolutionary process described from different perspectives. Thus, in Egyptian and Indic wisdom embryogony, i.e. the development of the human embryo in the womb, recapitulates and therefore gives insight into the theo-cosmogonic process. See David Leeming and Margaret Leeming, *A Dictionary of Creation Myths* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 31-33 s.v. Birth as Creation Metaphor; Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom. Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism*, translated from the German by Anthony Alcock (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995) 175; Ragnhild Bjerre Finnestad, *Image of the World and Symbol of the Creator. On the Cosmological and Iconological Values of the Temple of Edfu* (SOR 10; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985); F.B.J. Kuiper, “Cosmogony and Conception: A Query,” *HR* 10 (1970): 91-183 [=Ancient Indian Cosmogony, 90-137]; Mircea Eliade, “Cosmogonic Myth and ‘Sacred History’,” *Religious Studies* 2 (1967): 171-83; Manly P. Hall, *Man: Grand symbol of the Mysteries. Thoughts in occult anatomy* Los Angeles: The Philosophical Research society, 1972). On the motif of the man-cosmos-God isomorphism see also Klaus Klostermaier, “The Body of God: Cosmos – Avatara – Image,” in Robert B. Crotty (ed.), *The Charles Strong Lectures 1972-1984* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987) 103-120; Alex Wayman, “The Human Body as Microcosm in India, Greek Cosmology, and Sixteenth-Century Europe,” *HR* 22 (1982): 172-190; Brenda E.F. Beck, “The symbolic merger of Body, space and cosmos in Hindu Tamil Nadu,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, n.s. 10 (1976): 213-243; Leonard Barkan, *Nature’s Work: The Human Body as Image of the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975); George P. Conger, “Cosmic Persons and Human Universes in Indian Philosophy,” *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* n.s. 29 (1933): 255-270.

<sup>68</sup> “there was in the beginning neither heaven nor earth, and nothing existed except a boundless primeval mass of water which was shrouded in darkness and which contained within itself the germs or beginnings, male and female, of everything which was to be in the future world. The divine primeval spirit which formed an essential part of the primeval matter felt within itself the desire to begin the work of creation, and its word woke to life the world, the form and shape of which it had already depicted to itself. The first act of creation began with the formation of an egg out of the primeval water, from which broke forth Rā, the immediate cause of all life upon earth.” Quoted from Budge, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, xcvi. See also Zandee, “The Birth-Giving Creator-God,” 182: “Atum is ‘complete’ as an androgynous god. He unites within himself masculinity and femininity. He possesses all conditions to bring forth the all out of him. He was a Monad and made himself millions of creatures which he contained potentially in himself. He was the one who came into being of himself (*hpr ds.f*), who was the creator of his own existence, the *causa sui*.” In a New Kingdom royal inscription Atum is described as he “who generates himself within the egg.” See Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 112. Another image used by the Egyptians to depict the primordial atom out of which the creator-god emerged is the primordial mound (*benben*) that raised out of the primordial waters at the beginning of creation (see Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 105-6). This mound was the “first solid matter”





Indic Creator God Brahṁā before emerging out of the Cosmogonic Egg/Primordial Atom (from Manly P. Hall, *MAN: Grand Symbol of the Mysteries*). The Indic text, *The Laws of Manu*, relates:

This universe was enveloped in darkness, unperceived, undistinguishable...Then the irresistible, self-existent Lord...seeking to produce various creatures...deposited in them (the primordial waters) a seed (quark). This (seed) became a golden egg (atom), resplendent as the sun, in which he himself was born as Brahṁā, the progenitor of the word...Being formed by that first

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brought from the bottom of the waters and it was identified with Atum himself (Traunecker, *Gods of Egypt*, 77; Irwin, “‘Asokan’ Pillars,” 92. On the Primordial Mound see further idem, “The Sacred Anthill and the Cult of the Primordial Mound,” *HR* 21 [1982]: 339-360; idem, “The Mystery of the (Future) Buddha’s First Words,” *Annali Instituto Orientale di Napoli* 41 [1981]: 623-664). It is no coincidence that this primordial atom is identified with and personifies Atum, the god born from that atom.

<sup>69</sup>See below and Martin, *Gods of India*, 86, 87; Kurian Manthothu, *The Development of the Concept of Trimūrti in Hinduism* (Pali, Kerala, India, 1974) 54; Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith, *The Laws of Manu* (London: Penguin Books, 1991): 3-4. On Prajāpati-Brahṁā and the cosmic man (Puruṣa) see *ER* 2:294 s.v. Brahman by Wendy Doniger; J.Gonda, *Prajāpati’s Relations with Brahman, Bṛhaspati and Brahṁā* (Amsterdam/Oxford/New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1989) Chapter IX; idem, “Beginning” 52-53; idem, “Background” 51-2; J.R. Joshi, “Prajāpati in Vedic Mythology and Ritual,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 53 (1972):101-125, esp. 114.

cause...that [Man (Puruṣa)] is called Brahmā...This egg, after the creator had inhabited (it) for a thousand years...burst open, and Brahmā, issuing forth by meditation, commenced the work of creation.

The 'bursting forth' of the Creator God out of the egg/atom signifies that the atoms were used to build up the Creator God's body.

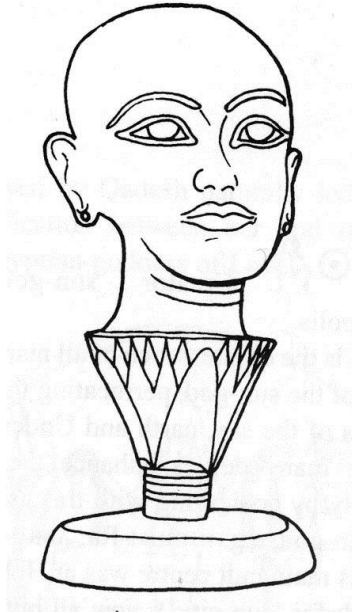


Figure 13

The anthropomorphic creator-god of Egypt, Rē, emerging from the primordial atom, shown here as the mythical Lotus Plant.

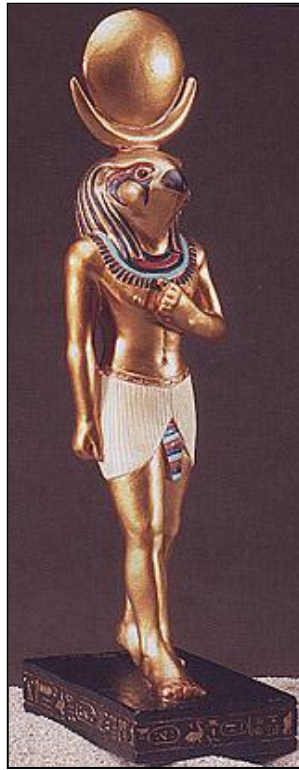


Figure 14

The Indic creator-god Prajāpati-Brahmā (white anthropos) emerging from the lotus plant (primordial “seed” or atom). The lotus is emerging from the navel of Viṣṇu (primordial, universal soul) who is reclining on the primordial serpent Śesa (matter), himself resting on the primordial waters. These images represent the birth of the creator-god out of the primordial matter: “The anthropomorphic figure (Viṣṇu), the serpent coils that form his bed, and the water on which this serpent

floats, are triune manifestations of the single divine, imperishable, cosmic substance, the energy underlying and inhabiting all forms of life.”<sup>70</sup>

When the creator-god first emerged, the ancient sources tell us, he lacked the black-body. Indeed, he was light that separated from and emerged out of the darkness.<sup>71</sup> His body, we are told, was originally a body of light described variously as white gold, yellow gold or red gold.<sup>72</sup> The brilliance of this body surpassed that of the sun, which the creator-deity (sun-god) created only as a sign and a ‘vicar.’<sup>73</sup>



Ra, emergent Sun-God of Kemet

This brilliantly luminous body proved lethal to his future creation. His creatures were perishing at the sight of it and his cosmos was being scorched.<sup>74</sup> The creator-deity decided to cloak his luminosity in a bodily ‘veil,’ which he made from the primordial waters out of which he emerged. That primordial matter, black

<sup>70</sup> Heinrich Robert Zimmer in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (New York: Harper, 1962) 92.

<sup>71</sup> See Ringgren, “Light and Darkness,” 141-42

<sup>72</sup> On the golden, anthropomorphic body of Prajāpati-Brahmā see *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 10.1.4.9; 7.4.1.15; Shanti Lal Nagar, *The Image of Brahṃā in India and Abroad*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1992), 113, 134-43, 361-370; Km. Rajani Mishra, *Brahṃā-Worship. Tradition and Iconography* (Delhi: Kanishka Publishing House, 1989) 50-57; Gonda, “Background”; The Egyptian sun-god is “the brilliant one (*h’y*),” “white light (*whh hddwt*.” See Ringgren, “Light and Darkness,” 145. Rē’ is “gold of the gods,” “white gold” with a body “cast ... from gold.” See Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 27, 94, 95.

<sup>73</sup> See Budge, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, xcvi.

<sup>74</sup> See for example the tales in the *Mahābhārat* (O’flaherty, *Hindu Myths*, 38-43) of Prajāpati-Brahmā’s scorching the primordial creation with his ‘fiery energy’ and in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (Ibid., 66-70) of the sun-god Vivasvat whose form radiated excessive heat, scorching the three worlds. On Egyptian parallels see below. On the lethality of seeing the god’s luminous body in Egyptian tradition see also Meeks, “Divine Bodies,” 58.

and aqueous, became the substance of his new body, which he wore over the luminous form like a garment, concealing its brilliance.<sup>75</sup>

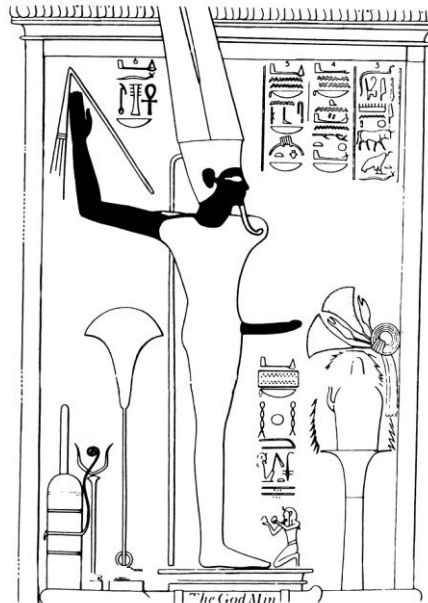


Figure 15

Min, Egyptian black ‘creator-god *par excellence*’, who emerged from the primordial dark waters, from which his black body was formed

But some of this brilliance shown through the hair-pores of the new black body,<sup>76</sup> and this produced a dark-blue iridescence or glow. The result was the sapphiric body of the creator-deity.<sup>77</sup> While the luminous,

<sup>75</sup> The luminous, anthropomorphic Indic creator-deity Prajāpati-Brahmā is said to have, after the initial creation, wrapped himself in the primordial waters (Vāk/Virāj; see G.H. Godbole, “Later Vedic and Brahmanical Accounts,” in Dange, *Myths of Creation*, 13). He then became *haritah śyāvah*, dark brown (*śyāvah*, like night, *Rg Veda* 6.48.6.) with a ting of yellow (a yellow glow, *haritah*). See *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.3.5.1; *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 6.2.2.2. On Vāk and the primordial waters see *ibid.*, 6.1.1.9; *Pañcaavemśa-Brāhmaṇa* 20.14.2; *Rg Veda* 10.125.3; *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa* 2.252 (Vāk as primordial cow); Bosch, *Golden Germ*, 52-53. On Vāk as primordial matter see Nagar, *Image of Brāhma*, viii; Joshi, “Prajāpati,” 113. On Prajāpati-Brahmā’s copulation with Vāk as a metaphor for the reuniting of fire (breath) with water see Mishra, *Brahmā-Worship*. 11. On the fiery breath (Agni) and the waters see further Kuiper, “Golden Germ,” 27-30; Bosch, *Golden Germ*, 57-62.

In Egypt, Rē transforms (*hpr*) his luminous body into a black body symbolized by the gods Atum and Osiris, both of whom had black bulls as their attribute animal; on Atum’s black bull Mnevis see George Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* [2<sup>nd</sup> edition; London and New York: Routledge, 2005] 95 s.v. Mnevis; Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 40). On Rē’s darkening and transforming into Atum see Ringgren, “Light and Darkness,” 150; Karl W. Luckert, *Egyptian Light and Hebrew Fire. Theological and Philosophical Roots of Christendom in Evolutionary Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) 73. Most often, Rē’s black body is identified with the black god Osiris (Figure 16), who represents the black primordial waters of Nun; see Chassinat, “Mise a Mort Rituelle.” On black Osiris as the netherworld body of Rē see Hasenfratz, “Patterns of Creation,” 176; Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, translated from the German by David Lorton (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2001) 41; *idem*, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, translated from the German by David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005) 188; Clark, *Myth and Symbol*, 158; Martin Lev and Carol Ring, “Journey of the Night Sun,” *Parabola* 8 (1983): 14-18; Albert Churchward, *Signs & Symbols of Primordial Man: The Evolution of Religious Doctrines from the Eschatology of the Ancient Egyptians* (Brooklyn: A&B Publishers Group, 1994, reprint) 63-66, 274-6, 322.

<sup>76</sup> See above and also *Mahābhārata* 5.129.11 which mentions “rays of light, like the sun’s, [shining] from [Kṛṣṇa’s] very pores.” Translated James W. Lane, *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahābhārata* (Vienna 1989) 134. Now Kṛṣṇa, whose name means ‘black’ (A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* [London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954] 305) is in many ways the paradigmatic blue-black god. As David R. Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute: Kali and Krishna. Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) noted, Kṛṣṇa with his blue-black complexion is the “quintessence of divine beauty”: “His appearance is redeeming in itself...Over and over again we read of his luminous dark complexion, large dark eyes, black curly hair. For devotees of Kṛṣṇa the image of their blue lord is the quintessence of divine beauty. The *Brahma-vaivarta-purāṇa*...describes Kṛṣṇa as emanating a blinding light...But Kṛṣṇa’s devotees see within that dazzling light to an even more dazzling and redeeming image of their darling... (the) lovely image of Kṛṣṇa located in the center of this light. He is blue like a new cloud.” The “dazzling light” is the light emanating through the hair-pores from the dangerously luminous form within

fiery body was 'terrible' and destructive, the blue-black 'sapphiric' body was beautiful and auspicious, a mercy to the creatures.<sup>78</sup> "Blue as the sky, dark as the rain-cloud...Viṣṇu was the personification of beauty."<sup>79</sup> The act of cloaking the divinely luminous form in a black body was considered a divine sacrifice<sup>80</sup> - a sacrifice that resulted in the first human being (Allah The Original Man) and which permitted the creation of the (more densely) material world.<sup>81</sup>

This blue-black body of the deity was the most arcane secret of the ancient mysteries. In Egypt it was the mystery of the unity of Rē' and his black body Osiris.<sup>82</sup> As one text from a New Kingdom royal tomb associated with the mystery rites reveals: "It is a great mystery, it is Rē' and Osiris. He who reveals it will die a sudden death."<sup>83</sup> According to the *Book of Gates* this is the "Mystery of the Great God."<sup>84</sup> In Vedic India, "the central theme of what can be denoted by no other term than Aryan mysticism"<sup>85</sup> is the secret of Agni (fire) hidden in water (Varuṇa), viz. the mystery of the luminous Prajāpati-Brahmā (creator-god) hidden

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the black body (his 'Universal Form', *viśvarūpadarśana*; see *Bhagavadgītā* 11; Lane, *Visions of God*, 135-141). The description "luminous dark complexion" nicely captures the divine paradox.

<sup>77</sup> Thus Viṣṇu (Figure 16) is "dark-hued, cloud-hued, sapphire-hued, gem-hued, ocean and sea-hued" (See S. Settar, "Vishnu-Krishna in Nammalvar's Tiruvaymoli [C.7-8<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D.]," in G. Kamalakar and M. Veerender [edd.], *Vishnu in Art, Thought, and Literature* [Hyderabad: Birla Archaeological & Cultural Research Institute, 1993] 225) and Varuṇa, the "cloud-dark Lord of aquatic creatures," when he appeared to Arjuna was "the color of lapis lazuli, lighting up every direction" (*Mahābhārata* 3.42.5-6). The Viṣṇu of the Purāṇic Trimūrti or Triad is the creator-god (Prajāpati-)Brahmā with the luminous body cloaked within an aquatic body made from the primordial waters. Therefore, as Viṣṇu, (Prajāpati-)Brahmā is called "he who dwells in the [causal] waters, *Nārāyaṇa*." By assuming this form (Prajāpati-)Brahmā showed mercy on creation. Thus, in his 'Viṣṇu' form he is called auspicious. On Viṣṇu see Daniélou, *Myths and Gods of India*, Chapters Eleven through Fourteen; Arvind Sharma, "The Significance of Viṣṇu Reclining on the Serpent," *Religion* 16 (1986): 101-114; Nanditha Krishna, *The Art and Iconography of Vishnu-Narayana* (Bombay, 1980); Kalpana S. Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu (In Northern India, Upto the Mediaeval Period)* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1973); F.B.J. Kuiper, "The Three Strides of Viṣṇu," in idem, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, 41-55; Bhattachari, *Indian Theogony*, Chapter Fourteen; Martin, *Gods of India*, Chapter Three; J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism* (Utrecht; N.V.A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1954). See also Wendy Doniger O'flaherty, "The Submarine Mare in the Mythology of Śiva," *JRAS* 1971 9-27 and below.

In ancient Egyptian tradition see e.g. the famous story of the Withdrawal of Rē' to Heaven. After incinerating most humans with his fiery fury personified as his daughter, the ferocious lioness Sekhmet (who, incidentally, got out of hand), Rē' re-entered the primordial water (he mounted the back of Nut-Nun personified as the primordial cow). He thus concealed his luminous body within Nut-Nun. He is now "(he) who conceals his image in the body of Nut," "who conceals his image in his heaven." (P. Leiden I 344 v50.I. 4 and viii.7 in J. Zandee, *Der Amunshymnus des Papyrus Lkeiden I 344*, 3 vols. [Leiden, 1992]. See also Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 70-72). By concealing his luminous body within the body of Nut, Rē' becomes the sapphire-bodied Amun-Re, described as "beautiful youth of purest lapis lazuli (*ḥwn-nfr n-ḥsbd-m3*)" whose "body is heaven" (*ḥt. K nwt*)." See above n. 31. In the Leiden Papyrus stored at the museum in Leiden (see Adolf Erman, "Der Leidener Amos-hymnus," *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 11 [1923]: 66ff) Rē's dangerously luminous body is described as his 'secret form' hidden within Amun (70-73). On the myth of Rē's Withdrawal see Robert A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2001) 87-89; Clark, *Myth and Symbol*, 181-186; Stephen Quirke, *The Cult of Ra: Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001) 35-6; Rudolf Anthes, "Mythology in ancient Egypt," in Samuel Noah Kramer (ed.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1961) 17-22. On Amun's sapphiric body see above.

<sup>78</sup> Śiva too has two forms, his fiery form born from the golden egg called his 'terrible form' and his aquatic form described as "auspicious." See *Mahābhārata* 13.146.4; *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*. See O'flaherty, "Submarine Mare."

<sup>79</sup> Devdutt Pattanaik, *Vishnu, An Introduction* (Mumbai, India: Vakils, Feffer and Simons, Ltd., 1999) 7.

<sup>80</sup> According to the cosmogonic account of Berossus, priest of Bēl-Marduk of Babylon, published in Greek ca. 250 BC, after cleaving the villainous primordial water (Grk. *Omorka*; Baby. *Tiamat*) and creating the cosmos, Bēl-Marduk's luminosity was unbearable for living creatures who were therefore perishing. Bēl-Marduk thus ordered a god to cut off his (i.e. Bēl-Marduk's) head (self-sacrifice); his blood was mixed with earth to form men and animals that could survive. See K.K.A. Venkatachari, "Babylonian, Assyrian and Other Accounts," in Dange, *Myths of Creation*, 36-37. See also Brian K. Smith, "Sacrifice and Being: Prajapati's Cosmic Emission and Its Consequences," *Religion* 32 (1985): 71-87; Gonda, "Vedic Gods and the Sacrifice"; idem, "The Popular Prajapati," *HR* 22 (1982): 129-149; Joshi, "Prajāpati in Vedic Mythology and Ritual."

<sup>81</sup> This sacrificial 'incarnation,' if you will, is often represented metaphorically as the creator-god (re-)uniting with his wife/daughter, the celestial ocean (primordial matter) depicted as the primordial cow. When Rē' as Bull begets with the Divine Cow, i.e. Nut-Nun, the material world with its planets and humans are produced. Thus, "we are all cattle" (see G.S. Bedagkar, "Egyptian, Hebrew and Greek Accounts," in Dange, *Myths of Creation*, 33). Prajāpati-Brahmā, (re-)uniting with Vāk (primordial water/primordial cow), produced the *idaṃ sarvaṃ* or "phenomenal, material world," beginning with Manu, the first human, which is only Prajāpati-Brahmā himself in the phenomenal, material world: *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* 6.6.1.19; 9.4.1.12; J. Gonda, "All, Universe and Totality in the Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa," *Journal of the Oriental Institute* 32 (1982): 1-17; Joshi, "Prajāpati in Vedic Mythology and Ritual."

<sup>82</sup> According to Jan Assmann "the most secret Arcanum known to the mysteries of the solar journey" is "the nocturnal union of Re and Osiris." Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 28; Idem, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. from the German by David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005) 186. On Osiris as the black body of Rē' see above.

<sup>83</sup> Assmann, *Search for God*, 79.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 189.

<sup>85</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper, "The Bliss of Aśa," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 8 (1964): 124 [art.=96-129;= *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, Chapter Four].



within the black and aqueous body.<sup>86</sup> The Akkadian ‘bull-ritual’ likewise associated the pelt of the black bull with the “mystery of Anu, Enlil, Ea(Enki) and of Ninmah,” i.e. the black gods of Sumer/Akkad.<sup>87</sup>

### The Mathematics of the Black God



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Osiris, black body of the Sun God Rē<sup>c</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Kuiper, “Bliss of Aša”; idem, “Remarks on ‘The Avestan Hymn to Mithra’,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 5 (1961): 36-60; idem, “The Heavenly Bucket,” in idem, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, Chapter 6.

<sup>87</sup> Wohlstein, *Sky-God An-Anu*, 118, 122.