

## *Quotes on the One and the many*

When the eye sees, the ear hears, and the nose breathes, these sensations are referred to the mind. And it is the mind that brings forth every word, for the tongue only repeats the thought of the mind. Likewise everything has come into existence from the thought of God and His word.

(from the *Pyramid Texts*, Egypt ca. 2350-2175 BC)

Still, there are few great souls who know Me, and who take refuge in Me. [...] **They worship Me as the One and the many, knowing that all is contained in Me.**

*Bhagavad Gita*, 9:7-15

Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called 'the Source of the Universe.' I do not know Its name and simply call It "Tao" (the Way).

[...] The Tao that can be spoken of is not the absolute Tao. The Nameless [Tao] is the Father of heaven and earth; that which is named [Teh] is the Mother of all things.

Lao Tze, *Tao The Ching* 25, 1

Pythagoras declared the originating principle of the universe to be the unbegotten Monad and the generated duad [...] And he says that the Monad is the Father of the duad, and the duad the Mother of all things that are begotten [...] For the duad is generated from the Monad, according to Pythagoras; and the Monad is Male and primary, but the duad female [and secondary].

Hippolytus *Refutation of All Heresies*

Of all the wise philosophers whose discourses I have heard, I have not found any who have realized the one Intelligence (*Nous*) which is distinct from all things, and yet pervades all things. That **Intelligence is One**; and to know It is to know the Purpose (*Telos*) which guides things and is in all things. Nature (*Phusis*) has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the Divine. Without It, the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap. If we are to speak with intelligence, we must found our being on that which is common to all [...] for that Thought (*Logos*) which governs man is born of the One, which is Divine. It [the Divine] governs the universe by Its will, and is more than sufficient to everyone.

One should understand that **the world appears** by the opposition of forces; order exists in the world by this play of contraries. We would never have heard of "right" if we did not know "wrong;" whole and not-whole, united-separate, consonant-dissonant, -- all these are interdependent. [But] in the One, above and below are the same, [just as] beginning and end are one in the circumference of a circle. That which is in conflict is also in concert; while things differ from one another, they are all contained in the most beautiful Unity.

Moderation is the greatest virtue, and wisdom is to speak the truth and to act in accordance with nature, while continuously attending to one's own Self. [A man should see to his own character,] for **a man's character is his destiny.**

Heraclitus (adapted from various fragments).

The entire universe is the good soul's native land.

[ψυχηζ αγαθηζ πατριζ ο ξυμπαζ κοσμοζ]

*Psuches agathes patris ho ksumpas kosmos.*

Democritus

I have nothing left in the world to fear or hope for, and this leaves me in peace at the bottom of the abyss, a poor unfortunate mortal, but as unmoved as God himself.

Rousseau, from *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*

What strange beings we are! That sitting in hell at the bottom of the dark, we're afraid of our own immortality.

Jelaluddin Rumi, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi mystic poet

## **Philosophy: Is it purely “Greco-Judeo-Christian” or are there Egyptian and Indo-European roots?**

**by John Russey (2006)**

In his *Meteorology*, Aristotle describes the topology of the Nile in an elegant and detailed manner. However, whether he ever actually visited Egypt is debated. Moreover, Aristotle claims in his *Metaphysics* that “the mathematical arts were founded in Egypt” (Bk1, Pt1). In the Prologue to Proclus’ *Commentaries on Euclid’s Elements*, a disciple of Aristotle named Eudemus, who lived in the fourth century B.C., confirms: “we shall say, following the general tradition, that the Egyptians were the first to have invented Geometry, [and that] Thales, the first Greek to have been in Egypt, brought this theory to Greece.”<sup>1</sup> Further, in *On the Heavens*, Aristotle states that the Egyptians and Babylonians were the founders of the science of astronomy.

In his controversial work *A Lost Tradition: African Philosophy in World History*, Obenga claims that the ancient Greeks traced a number of inventions to the Egyptians, “from Calculus, Geometry, Astronomy, and Dice Games to Writing.”<sup>2</sup> Obenga further claims that, besides Thales, there is also evidence that Solon, Pythagoras, Hypocrites, Euclid, Diodorus, Archimedes, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, and even Socrates, among many other learned Greeks, studied at the Temple of Waset in Kemet, Egypt (later called Thebes by the Greeks and Luxor by the Arabs). The Temple of Waset was the site of an ancient Egyptian Mystery school.

We all are probably familiar with the famous words "know thyself," *Gnothi Seauton* (Γνωθι Σεαυτον) attributed to Socrates. This motto was ascribed over the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Delphi was the place where people came from miles around to be blessed by, and to consult, the Oracle, and to study the Mysteries. These mystical teachings, which have their origin in ancient Egypt, and are undeniably present in ancient Greece and in early Gnostic Christianity, were dedicated to the attainment of Gnosis, which meant the knowledge of self, i.e. the knowledge of “Who ‘I’ am.”

The ancient sages in these schools taught that every human being has a mortal lower self, called the *eidolon* and an immortal Higher Self (Soul) called the *daemon*. The *eidolon* is the embodied self, the physical body,

and ego personality. The *daemon* is the Spirit, the true Self, which is each person's spiritual connection to God. The Mysteries were designed to help initiates realize that one's eidolon is a false self and that one's true identity is the immortal *daemon*. The *daemon* is then the 'divine "I",' as Valentinus the Gnostic Christian sage, who lived in Alexandria in Egypt c. 100AD, put it. "Although it appears as if each person has their own *Daemon* or Higher Self, the enlightened initiate discovers that, actually, on the axial Pole of Being there is one *Daemon* shared by all, a universal Self, which inhabits every being. Each Soul is a part of the one Soul of God. To know oneself therefore is to know God."<sup>3</sup>

The Greek *daemon*, can in general be referred to as the analogue to the Latinized, Roman '**genius.**' We shall see the deep involvement of genius with the productive imagination in Kant's theory of aesthetic creativity. We shall also become aware of its relation to *eudaimonia* and to *phronesis* in Aristotle's philosophy. I shall also discuss Plato's references to *daemon*. But, for now, I would like to return to the notion of *Gnothi Seauton* in another context.

I will here advocate the position which postulates the relation of the Greek language to Sanskrit and to a more primordial Proto-Indo-European root - via a look at the root of the word *Gnothi*, i.e., 'gno-.'

What follows is a quote from Sir William Jones (1746-1794), who, while speaking to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, February 2, 1786, suggests a "common source" for Greek, Sanskrit and Latin:

The Sanskrit language whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong, indeed, that no philosopher could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.<sup>4</sup>

The support for his claim is evident in such words as 'mother,' and 'father' Thus 'mother' in English is similar to *matar* in Sanskrit, *metera* in Greek, and *mater* in Latin. The Sanskrit word for 'father' is *pitar*, which corresponds to *pater* in Latin, and *patêr* in Greek As Ross says, "This became the theory of 'Indo-European' languages, and today the hypothetical language that would be the common source for all Indo-European languages is called 'Proto-Indo-European.'"<sup>5</sup> Ross demonstrates one hypothetical version of the

interrelationships of various Indo-European languages via the following chart<sup>6</sup> - on the basis of the genealogy of the roots for “know”:



“Who” exactly the Proto-Indo-European root culture was, when and where they lived, and if we can even delimit ourselves to *one* root culture, are matters of dispute. And I am not prepared to go into detail on that topic here. I will only mention that it is generally agreed that “they” occupied the Steppe, or grasslands, that stretched between what is today Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

From the Second Millennium BC until well into the Middle Ages, movements back and forth across the Steppe, and especially off of it at the periphery, profoundly influenced the history of the surrounding lands in Europe and Asia, particularly Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India, and China. The most dramatic example of this in Ancient times was the descent of the Iranians into the Middle East and India. Introducing horses and chariots for the first time into these areas of earlier civilization, the Iranian invaders not only revolutionized warfare, but were the ones to reap the first advantages from the innovation. The occupation of the Iranian plateau established their permanent presence there, with the great successor kingdoms of the Medes and the Persians.<sup>7</sup>

There are also many correspondences in the thought of Greek, Indian, Middle Eastern (Persian and Semitic<sup>8</sup>), and Chinese civilizations that cannot be so easily brushed aside.

The undoubted transfer of ideas between Greece and India in the Hellenistic Period, and the export of Buddhism from India to China beginning in the Han Dynasty, provides us points of comparison with what, in the uninfluenced traditions, came before. The time when **Parmenides**, **Confucius**, and the **Buddha** all lived, the end of the 5th century BC, has been called the "axial age"; but it remains mysterious that such simultaneous and sometimes parallel development should have occurred.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, the belief in the basic cosmic elements and man's deep, *microcosmic* relation to the universe (*macrocosmos*) as a whole:

Two sets of correspondences lie at the basis of the theory of microcosm and macrocosm: (1) the equivalence between the different components of the material world and the various elements of the human body, which often amount to seven - hence the link with the astrological seven planets; and (2) the correspondence of the four cosmic elements (water, fire, air, earth) to the four bodily humors (blood, phlegm, red bile, black bile); the members within either group mutually contrast in the same fashion in respect to their qualities - humidity, dryness, heat, and cold.<sup>10</sup>

Further:

In Hindu cosmology, the outer world is a macrocosm of the inner world, which is its microcosm and is mystically larger and more complex than the physical universe and functions at a higher rate of vibration and even a different rate of time.<sup>11</sup>

These ideas of microcosmos-macrocosmos would seem to stem from alchemic principles. Isaac Newton, one of the most famous of alchemical practitioners, had a copy of an alchemical treatise (*An Open Entrance to the Shut Palace*) by his side for years.<sup>12</sup> He also translated the *Emerald Tablet*, a short text outlining the alchemist's creed attributed to Hermes Trismegistus,<sup>13</sup> composed of such pronouncements as, 'What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below, for the performing of the marvels of the one thing'; and '[...] separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, smoothly and with great cleaverness.'<sup>14</sup> But what is perhaps most astonishing is, once again, the hypothetical link of the "roots" of this "philosophy," or "proto-science," to Egypt.

The word *alchemy* comes from the Arabic *al-kīmiya* or *al-khīmiya*, which is probably formed from the article *al-* and the Greek word *khumeia* (χυμεία) meaning "cast together," "pour together," "weld," "alloy," etc. (from *khumatos*, "that which is poured out, an ingot"). Another widely reported etymology claims the Arabic word *al-kīmiya* literally means "the Egyptian [science]," borrowing the Coptic word *kēme* (or from the mediaeval Bohairic dialect of Coptic, which wrote the word *khēme*), meaning "Egypt." The Coptic word derives from Demotic *kmi*, itself from ancient Egyptian *kmt*. The ancient Egyptian word referred to both the country and the colour "black" (Egypt was the "Black land," by contrast with the "Red land," the surrounding desert), so it is thought that such a borrowing in Arabic was appropriate for "Egyptian black arts."<sup>15</sup>

One should remember the claim (of Obenga, above) that many of the most renowned learned men of ancient Greece trained for years in Egypt at what was then known as 'Kemet.' Also,

Legend has it that the founder of Egyptian alchemy was the god Thoth, called Hermes-Thoth or Thrice-Great Hermes (*Hermes Trismegistus*) by the Greeks. According to legend, he wrote what were called the forty-two Books of Knowledge, covering all fields of knowledge - including alchemy. [...] The "Emerald Tablet" or *Hermetica* of Thrice-Greatest Hermes, which is known only through Greek and Arabic translations, is generally understood to form the basis for Western alchemical philosophy and practice, called the hermetic philosophy by its early practitioners.<sup>16</sup>

Thoth is also accredited with the bringing of writing (via hieroglyphics) to mankind. Plato, Rousseau and Derrida refer to him thus in a Promethean fashion.

It is not by chance that in mythology, the Egyptian in particular, the god of sciences and technologies is also the god of writing; and that it is he (Thoth, Theuth, Teuthus or his Greek homologue Hermes, god of the ruse, of trade, and of thieves) whom Rousseau incriminates in the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*. (Plato had already denounced his intention of writing at the end of the *Phaedrus*).<sup>17</sup>

Why would Rousseau "incriminate" Thoth (i.e., the giver of science and writing to man)? From Rousseau's

*Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*:

An ancient tradition passed out of Egypt into Greece, that some god, who was an enemy to the repose of mankind, was the inventor of the sciences.\* [...] In fact, whether we turn to the annals of the world, or supplement with philosophical investigations the uncertain chronicles of history, we shall not find for human knowledge an origin answering to the idea we are pleased to entertain of it at present. [...] Their evil origin is indeed, but too plainly reproduced in their objects.

\* It is *easy* to see the allegory in the fable of Prometheus: and *it* does not appear that the Greeks, who chained him to the Caucasus, had a better opinion of him than the Egyptians had of their god Teuthus.<sup>18</sup>

Rousseau denounces Thoth (Teuthus) thusly because, like Prometheus, he led man from out of his natural state, or essence. What is the natural state, or essence of man according to Rousseau? Kant believed that Rousseau "did not so much wish that man should return to the state of nature as that, from his present position, he should look back upon his natural condition as a means of discovering in himself the universal - the essence of what he is, apart from the various distortions introduced by society."<sup>19</sup>

Thus science and writing would be the spring of those “distortions” which lead man away from his true self or universal nature. However, as Derrida points out, Rousseau amorously practices writing while playfully condemning it: “I shall set down in writing those [‘delightful contemplations’] which may come to me: each time that I reread them will give me new pleasure.”<sup>20</sup> Like Prometheus’ fire, writing gives man the chance to come out of himself, to express, or perhaps better, to re-express the fire within. And it also allows one to reflect, not only upon one’s own contemplations, but upon those of others, as well.

Plato, too, has a Promethean criticism of Thoth (Theuth) as the bringer of writing. In his *Phaedrus* Plato has Socrates narrate the myth about Theuth. In the myth, the god Theuth offers writing as a *pharmakon*<sup>21</sup> to King Thamus of Egypt. It is a *prescription* for both memory and wisdom. But Plato uses the myth as an indictment against writing since writing would replace living memory with a mnemonic (i.e., imitative or repetitive) device. King Thamus replies to Theuth upon his offer:

this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.<sup>22</sup>

However in his *Timaeus* Plato would seem to admit the necessity of writing in order for man to progress. There he quotes an Egyptian priest speaking to King Solon in the pre-literate times of ancient Greece, “You are like children, for you have no written tradition.”<sup>23</sup>

The point of all this is only that “Europe” is not so much the name of a “specific culture” or tradition as many would like to believe.<sup>24</sup> It is easy to focus on and to exaggerate the differences and diversities between cultures, but the ancestral roots of “Europeans” would not seem to be limited to “Greco-Judeo-Christian” roots. Is it possible, then, to expand the Western philosophical tradition to include “Eastern” philosophies, or to discuss them as not being completely Other to our own? Or does such an idea call into question the “roots” of “the Western philosophical tradition” which allows it to be what it claims to be?

- <sup>1</sup> T. Obenga, *A Lost Tradition: African Philosophy in World History* (Philadelphia: The Source Editions, 1995) p. 48.
- <sup>2</sup> Obenga, p. 47. This is obviously deduced from Plato's reference to the Egyptian god Theuth (Thoth) in *Phaedrus*, (274e).
- <sup>3</sup> T. Freke & P. Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: The Original Jesus Was a Pagan God*, London: Harper Collins, 1999.
- <sup>4</sup> R. McCrum, W. Cran, & R. MacNeil, *The Story of English*, (N.Y.: Viking, 1986), p. 51.
- <sup>5</sup> Kelley L. Ross, from his website < <http://www.friesian.com/cognates.htm> > (May 20, 2005).
- <sup>6</sup> Kelley L. Ross, *ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Kelley L. Ross, < <http://www.friesian.com/upan.htm#steppe> > (May 20, 2005).
- <sup>8</sup> Contrary to popular understanding, 'Semitic' does not refer to the Jewish people. Semitic refers to those who utilize a Semitic language structure. The Semitic languages are the northeastern subfamily of the Afro-Asiatic languages, and the only family of this group spoken in Asia.  
The most common Semitic languages spoken today are Arabic, Amharic, Hebrew, and Tigrinya - the official language spoken in Eritrea.  
< [http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/S/Se/Semitic\\_languages.htm](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/S/Se/Semitic_languages.htm) > (May 20, 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Kelley L. Ross, *ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> From the web site for *Encyclopædia Iranica*, a Columbia University project and prepared by its Center for Iranian Studies. Translation of P. Gignoux, "La doctrine du macrocosme-microcosme et ses origines greco-gnostiques," *Iranian and Indo-European Studies. Memorial Volume of Otakar Klima*, ed. Petr Vavroušek, Praha, 1994, pp. 27-52.  
< [http://www.iranica.com/articles/ot\\_grp5/ot\\_microcosm\\_20040616.html](http://www.iranica.com/articles/ot_grp5/ot_microcosm_20040616.html) > (May 23, 2005).
- <sup>11</sup> From < <http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Microcosm-macrocosm/id/60870> > (May 23, 2005).
- <sup>12</sup> Harpur, P. *The Philosopher's Secret Fire: A History of the Imagination* (London: Penguin Group, 2002) p 152. *An Open Entrance to the Shut Palace of the King* is written by someone who utilized the pseudonym Eireneus Philalethes. In his 1669 edition he claims to have achieved the philosophers stone (i.e., to have turned mercury into gold) at the age of 23.
- <sup>13</sup> Hermes Trismegistus is another name for Thoth, whom I will discuss shortly.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- <sup>15</sup> From < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy> > (May 23, 2005).
- <sup>16</sup> From < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy#Alchemy\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy#Alchemy_in_Ancient_Egypt) > (May 23, 2005).
- <sup>17</sup> J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, transl. by G. Spivak, (London: Johns Hopkins U. Pr., 1998) p.313.
- <sup>18</sup>  
*Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* [The Social Contract and Discourses by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, translated with an Introduction by G.D. H. Cole (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1913) p. 140]. Quoted in *Of Grammatology*, 313.
- <sup>19</sup> Beck, Intro, to CPrR, 7, quoted from Kant's *Anthropology*, II, E (Cassirer ed., VII, 326).
- <sup>20</sup> In *Of Grammatology*, 312. Quoted from Rousseau's *Reveries*, p.999.
- <sup>21</sup> *Pharmakon* means both 'poison' and 'remedy' in Greek.
- <sup>22</sup> *Phaedrus*, 274b-, B. Jowett transl.
- <sup>23</sup> *Timaeus*, 23a, quoted by Derrida, in "Khora," from *On the Name*, (Stanford: Stanford U. Pr., 1995) p. 114.

<sup>24</sup> See Visker's "UnEuropean Desires: Toward a Provincialism without Romanticism" (cited above, **fn18**) where he claims Europe "is as much the name of a specific culture as it is the name of a 'spiritual shape' which concerns all humanity." (p. 15)