

ET.14. W.B. Kristensens, to correct Mircea Eliade (12p.).

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1. Circuit (roman lustratio, cleansing).

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947, 233vv ... -

The subject is the rite that takes the form of a loop, a circular movement, as depicted especially by the Roman, Indian and Egyptian records. Although such a loop may sometimes be merely an urge of revelers, in many cases it is a sacred act. More to the point, a striking similarity provokes a common understanding. It is the latter that Kristensen seeks to expose.

Established interpretation.- At the end of the XIXth century it is stated that the wijlus consists in drawing around a central object - e.g. the Roman people - a magic circle that protects against unfavorable influences. The line drawn is then a border, an invisible wall. It is an apotropeian, i.e. unfavorable act.- This interpretation Kristensen questions.

Roman lustratio (cleansing).-

At the end of the census, instituted by Servius Tullius (king of Rome -578/-534), the citizens were marshaled as an 'exercitus' (army) on the Campus Martius. The king or his representative walked with sacrificial animals three times around the people, after which the animals were sacrificed to Mars, the god of war, with the vow that the lustratio would be repeated five years later (periodicity). Curiously, the highest magistrate drove a nail into the wall of the temple of Jupiter, Rome's supreme god. - The whole of these ordinances was called 'lustratio', cleansing.

At its core was the cycle.

Even the sacrifice could fall away, as shown in Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 8:42: at a circus race, the driver was thrown from the chariot. Whereupon his horses ran from the circus to the Capitolium and "cleansed ('lustrasse') the temple of Jupiter three times." Such was considered a great augurium (sacred sign). In other words: the loop repeated three times was in itself a cleansing. *Suetonius, De vita caesarum*, 7 (Vitellius), says that an eagle flying a circle above the banners of the army "cleanses" the banners.

Kristensen.

That such lustratio would be a magic circle that demarcates is not true. For one purifies

what is already contaminated (in unfavorable condition), not what is in danger of being contaminated.

To make this clear, Kristensen dwells on what an ordained loop meant.-The whole ceremony at the Campus Martius was called "lustratio" but also "lustrum," cleansing. The duration of the next five years was metonymically also called so.

Cleansing.- With many, the term evokes a negative meaning, i.e. washing away uncleanness. But in fact a ritual cleansing was first and foremost an act by which a sacred property (the property of the cleanser) was communicated. The many historical records (including those of the Egyptians and Greeks) confirm this interpretation.

Cleansing means that the beneficiary "rises" (acquires life force) from his "death" (state of exhaustion). For Kristensen, this is an application of his religio-historical concept of "totality," i.e. merging ("harmony") of opposites: everyday life is "life force/ exhaustion" and cries out for lustratio, supply of life force that saves from exhaustion.

Periodicity.

Each cleansing was performed "with a view to" the next because each time they solemnly promised a repetition, five years - lustrum - later. The prayer was about the life force of the people during the interval. So essential was the repetition that the duration of five years was not a profane duration but a sacred time. As, o.c., 242, Steller concludes, "Thus, too, the time circle of five years was a cleansing agent."

The local loop and the loop of time were closely related concepts in ancient consciousness. Ancient Greeks called both by the same name "periodos," circular motion and "period" (measure of duration). - A loop is a movement that ends where it begins. Periodicity implies that the end point is itself in turn beginning point: exhaustion is life force supply running into exhaustion which is itself in turn life force supply. Endless.

2. Circuit (year, saeculum).

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947, 243v .

The best known of all sacred periods is that of the year. All ancient peoples interpreted it as stated: the year is an introspective series of divisions. The end of the year is thereby closure but at the same time opening on the new, renewed year. Whereby Steller says: "The decline could just as well be called 'rising'" (o.c., 243).

The circle or loop thus pointed to after itself and already contained within itself the new loop. This was the sacred meaning: self-renewal, resurrecting energy.- The common Egyptian word for "year" was "renp-t," i.e., "the renewing (or rejuvenating)" written with the sign of a young stem with a bud attached.- Throughout antiquity, the year end was ritual as a celebration of resurrecting life.

Secular period.

In Rome this interpretation is particularly eloquent in the oldest dedications at the end of a "saeculum," a secular period. Such happy endings were recognized to extraordinary facts in nature and in the people.- So in -249: Rome was in great distress, near ruin as a result of miscalculations in the first Punic war. Troubling omens were also observed. All these pointed to the end of a saeculum and the beginning of a new saeculum. Such "transition" was celebrated with nightly games in honor of those who control Rome's destiny, the gods and goddesses of the underworld.

Axiom.

As the infernal deities had brought downfall, death, so they were to bring uprise, life. In the background, "The one who causes evil (death, ruin) shall restore it."

Dis and Proserpina, the underworld couple, was therefore celebrated in this sense. Dis, also Dis Pater, was - like e.g. Pluto or Saturn - the male god of the harmony (conjunction) of death-and-life (and thus of life-and-death). His being (i.e. first and foremost his life force) was - according to writers like Varro and Cicero the earth as a life force that causes everything to go up/undergo/rise/undergo ... endlessly.

Kristensen also calls this course "'the absolute life" (where 'absolute' means "beyond which there is no other"), in other words: the pre-Christian, pagan life. Proserpina (Kore) was the female deity of the harmony of opposites, death and resurrection.

The secular feasts (with the games) were first and foremost devoted to the main couple. "Their dual nature - says Steller - shows that the end of the old saeculum was equated with the beginning of the new: in the downfall one saw the ascent enclosed." (O.c., 244).

Periodicity.

What was once begun in the very first saeculum celebration (*note:* the mythical beginning), the basic secular energy, unfolds in the interrelated series of sacred times that

make the first or primordial time present again and again from saeculum to saeculum, from "century" to "century," i.e., from an in itself resting age to a new in itself resting age.

Thus in Rome the profane duration became a sacred time realized by rites. Even at the end of the celebrations, as in the five-year lustrum, the vow was made to repeat the feast at the end of the period in honor of the numina, the high deities, Dis and Proserpina "who closed-and-opened the period" (according to the author).

Concluding Observations.

Steller disputes the view that the transition from century to century would represent a magical boundary, "as is commonly believed," with the intention of preventing the old calamity from spilling over onto the new sacred age.

The basic idea was rather this: the calamity that is the end of the ancient saeculum is not actually an absolute calamity, i.e. a calamity without more. The premise here, as in all premodern religions, is that what was once instituted "in the beginning" as a rite will show itself again and again as a life force that emerges upon exhaustion. "The period was a temporal cycle and - like the local cycle - the form in which lasting life materializes. Through both forms, the local and the temporal, divine vivification, i.e. cleansing of the people, took place." (O.c., 245).

3. Circle (nail as distress mark).

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947,245/248.-.

The text deals with the consecrated nail as a present-day proposition of what the author calls "the gods of Fate."

Main Theorem.

Dis and Proserpina, the primordial couple, as the dreaded deities of the underworld (a.k.a. the dead), dispose of salvation but in such a way that their divine disposition "did not take into account human desires aimed at finite happiness" (o.c., 245). Their disposition included salvation but also calamity! It was harmony of opposites! "No one approaches that mystery without fear" (ibid.).

This fear was invariably there but at the end of a period - saeculum, lustrum, year end - this fear came out particularly strongly. Proof of this - says the author - is the ceremony with which the three periods were ritually closed: a nail was driven into the wall of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol. This was the final act at the New Year's celebration (Sept. 13), at the fifth anniversary and at the centenary.

The thorough importance of this rite is evident from "an ancient law written down in archaic letters" (*Liv.* 7:3,5), which stipulated that only the highest magistrate could perform it. - Moreover, the true background shows itself in the fact that this ceremony took place not only periodically but also in response to isolated events that caused great anxiety, such as contagious diseases or unprecedented crimes (*Liv.* 7:3, 3; 8:18, 12).

Fate.

In the period but also beyond, in great emergencies, the dreaded order of life that the deities established without regard to earthly 'human' interests showed itself. The Romans called such life and death order "Fatum," which we can render by "Fate."

In passing, the ancient Greeks called it "Moira," "Anankè," "Aisa. - The nail hammered into a rite was the visible and tangible present proposition of the inexorable determination which was the destiny disposed by the deities. The ancients did not understand this to mean what we moderns call 'natural law' (which also includes a kind of inexorable lawful nature) but rather the disposition of the deities who do not interfere with our earthly reason and its concepts and with our earthly moral law and its concepts.

In this well-defined sense, Kristensen calls the policies of the underworld deities "supra-rational" and "supra-ethical. "In nature and in history, the demonic Fatum revealed itself in the fearful moments when life was threatened with destruction" (o.c, 247).

Opm ... - The term "demonic" means the fact that deities and their policies are subject to the vicissitudes of rise and fall, of good and evil. The term is used here in the religious-historical sense.

A proof of his thesis is found by Steller in the reports of the celebration of the famous secular feast in the year -17 BC. As tradition dictated, nightly sacrifices were made on or near the subterranean altar of Dis and Proserpina but now also to the goddesses of Fate (the Moirai, the Eileithyia) and also to Tellus (the Earth) or Ceres or Demeter.

The new thing in this was that Fate was now mentioned by name, even though it was already represented in the nail. Demeter or the Eileithyia (goddesses of the life and death of the earth) spoke plainly.

Supreme magistrate.

What has been brought up above makes it understandable why only the supreme magistrate - praetor maximus, dictator clavis figendi causa - was authorized to perform the ceremony of driving in the nail. Whoever did so acted as executor of the dreaded Fate, yes, he was Jupiter, the Roman chief god, visibly and tangibly made present.

This he was both in periodic and non-periodic rites. For every calamity was caused by Fate, the inscrutable disposition of the deities, and made a condition of resurrected life.

4. Circuit (castle/city/wall/gates).

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947,253/266. -

Theme: the ancient city,

The ancient city, resp, its fortress as a visible and tangible representation of the underworld which in turn was signified as fortress and city. Steller takes as a sample of sacred geography the Egyptian city of Memphis with its "walls": "Ordinary walls cannot be meant. But, if we call them 'mythical walls,' what does that mean?" (O.c., 253). Steller provides an Egyptian model.

Kristensen argues that the main deities of Memphis were those of the earth and immediately the underworld. The city was its visible dwelling place but its "real" home was the underworld (and immediately the realm of the dead).

The circle around the walls is in that assumption the "image" (understand: visible and tangible present proposition) of the passage around the underworld (immediately the realm of the dead). This then makes intelligible the path that the dying and resurrecting Sun God follows Sokaris (Osiris) - like the Sun God - dies and rises and the faithful follow him on that path. So much for a sample of sacred cosmology.

Widen faith

Not only the Egyptians but also other ancient peoples lived through the underworld (the realm of the dead) as a fortress surrounded by walls. More than that, they designated their cities as "images" (representations) of the land of eternal life that was the underworld.

Earthly dwelling places were interpreted as reflections of "cosmic" (meaning extraterrestrial) situations. - We are dealing here with a religious geography that seems strange to us moderns and postmoderns alike, but was one of the fundamental components of the image of the universe of the ancients and was deeply grounded in their faith.

Ancient Greek Thebes.

As in Memphis, the mystery religion belonged to Thebes. Demeter was the main goddess. Alongside her were worshiped Dionysus, the Kabirs, the goddess Harmonia with her son Poludoros (Pluto or Dis Pater).

The temple of Demeter stood on the fortress, the Kadmeia, which - according to Hesychius - was called "the island of the Blessed." The fortress was considered the "cosmic" (mean: extraterrestrial) dwelling place of the goddess Demeter.

Inverted perspective.-The realm of the dead (the underworld) was a fortress enclosed by walls. The poet *Pindarus* (*Olymp. 2:77*) says that those who died beloved by the gods attain imperishability "in the fortress ('tursis') of Kronos (the primordial god) on the island of the Blessed."

The city of Thebes as a whole visibly and tangibly represented the underworld. In this

sense, one spoke of Thebes being located on the river of the underworld because the river Ismenos that flowed past the city was originally called 'Ladon' , i.e. Lethe, the river of the underworld, according to "tradition."

The city wall of Thebes

The wall of Thebes already as famous as the wall of Troy - according to the ancients showed the cosmic nature of the city. The myth recounted that it was not built like ordinary earthly city walls but was miraculously created: at the founding of the city, the stones had joined together to form a wall by the life force of the harmonic sounds of a seven-stringed lyre, which then let out its tones for the first time. The underworld goddess Harmonia had thus created the wall. She was mystery goddess. Meaning that she was worshipped in the closed setting of a group of initiates. Her wall - the Theban wall - was the wall of the underworld, the realm of the dead.

The city gates of Thebes

These were mythically the gates of the underworld. Demeter was worshipped as the main goddess in the seven-port Thebes. Greek cities called "Pulos," gate, were named after "the gates of hell. The wall was the division between the profane and sacred worlds, the gates being the transitions.

As one knows, Jesus once said of his church that "the gates of hell" would never overwhelm them.

5. Totality

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947, 272vv. (*The demonic gods of totality*)-.

Thesis.

The harmony (merging) of opposites (salvation/disaster; ethical good/ethical evil) was expressed by the ancients in the local and temporal cycle described above that expresses the idea of "imperishable life," understood as alternation of going down/rising and rising/going down, not as a uniform, monotonous continuance. The harmony of opposites was also expressed among the ancients in the idea of "totality. Steller dwells at length on the Babylonian totality.

The Babylonian myths

These formulate remarkably sharply the contradictory nature of the factors that collectively make up the "totality."- Anu was the universe god, "the Father of the Seven Gods. As such, he was the one who determined the fate of all things.- Well, in Anu all - the totality - life forces, good and evil, were united! "Salvation and calamity emanated from him." (O.c., 272). In this sense Labartu, the disease demon, was called "the daughter of Anu" (understand: of the same behavioral type as Anu). Anu's behavioral type was visible and tangible in the disease demon and the ailments caused by her.- In the same sense, the Seven Gods were his "sons": they showed the true behavioral type of their "Father" of whom they are "the children. Thus a text reads:

"Seven are the gods of the spacious sky; seven are the gods of the wide earth. Seven are the destructive gods; seven are the gods of the 'kissatu' (understand: totality). Seven are the evil gods (...): in heaven they are seven; on earth seven". Whereupon the author says, "The demonic nature of the gods of totality cannot be described more clearly" (o.c., 273).

Demonic.- Steller defines: they are demonic in the religious sense of the word, i.e., for the earthly reason and order of conscience supra-rational and supra-ethical. Rational behavior and conscientious behavior in the earthly-human sense are not a law for the deities of totality!

Just in the earthly-human sense they were not. Consequence: although they prescribed to men - rational and ethical - laws, their own conduct trampled them underfoot.

Contradiction

Such contradiction was obvious to ancient consciousness as evidenced by some of the most impressive religious texts. Thus the book of Job (*note: if one isolates it from its overall Biblical framework*), the Babylonian Lamentations, the Bound Prometheus.

The poets of such texts faced the riddle of divine demonization and, in the end, found no earthly-rational or earthly-ethical solution.

They submitted to such totality of "divine" reality despite all "human" objections. This type of deity was familiar to most ancient peoples. It was most evident when it came to the supreme deities. The god of Job, the Greek Zeus, the double Fortuna in Rome, the Indian

Varuna, once even Ahura Mazda insofar as he included - in one interpretation - both heavenly spirits, exhibit as sovereign (mean: elevated above earthly human laws of thought and action) determiners of actual destiny as experience gave it to be seen and undergone, the conduct of the Babylonian Anu as outlined above.

Kristensen determines further.

From such demonic deities ultimately came salvation (rise) and calamity (fall), the opposites that make up the enduring - understand: in a biblical sense eternal - life of the universe and humanity therein. They were the ultimate reason for what the Babylonians called "totality. "The will of these gods was Fate, the Moira, divine but inhuman "(o.c., 273).

The great crowd must have been well aware of this. It had its rational and conscience. In religious texts, the faithful dwell on this. But for all ancient cultures, wisdom (reason) and justice (conscience) were at the same time "cosmic" concepts, i.e. "divine" concepts that rose above their own earthly concepts.

Rightly says Kristensen who had the courage to go into that - which a lot of religion specialists don't - that those cosmic concepts were demonic concepts.

6. Dualism.

Bibl. st.: W.B. Kristensen, *Collected contributions to knowledge of ancient religions*, Amsterdam, 1947, 274v ... -

Steller feels that his demonism must deal with dualism. By "dualism" he means the attribution of evil to independent beings (powers, spirits) who are the enemies of humans and deities. More clearly expressed: there are good beings (deities, ancestors, spirits of all kinds) on the one hand and evil beings on the other. With perhaps beings who do not accomplish the choice between salvation and doom, between good and evil. Undecideds if one will.

Magic texts.

According to Steller, a kind of dualism occurs in magical texts and practices. Babylonian magic offers numerous models of this: repeatedly evil deities are conjured up by appealing to good - favored - deities. Immediately the impression arises - so Kristensen puts it - that the world of deities splits into two hostile camps. With the conclusion: there is dualism!

Kristensen's rebuttal.

The magical texts and practices are everywhere and always the same. While religions with their myths, worship services and allusions differ from one another as much as the cultures in which they belong, the magics are "strikingly similar everywhere in the world." Yes, Kristensen goes so far as to state that the monotony of magics is so great that there can hardly be any special Babylonian, Greek or Egyptian or contemporary magic: the evil powers and beings are the same everywhere and are always conjured up in the same way. A thesis that is something of a commonplace among a number of religionists.

Remark. - If this is true, then Kristensen has systematically neglected the differences of individual magics. Magics are very closely related in language, methods and axioms to the religions with which they are associated. One gets the impression that the author is not or not very versed in the practice of conjuring "evil." Thus, what is called a possessed person in Greece is something different from what Jesus is called a possessed person in the gospels. The whole religious context is so distinguishable that if one denies the distinctions, one does so a.k.a. willfully! Or rather "in the name of a predetermined proposition" which here is demonism.

Kristensen's truth.

In Babylonian religion Anu is the 'father', mean: the one who determines the behavioral type, of deities called 'good' or 'evil' within incantations. The goodness or anger is relative and depends on fortuitous circumstances that show partisanship - in themselves they are 'demonic', i.e. neither pure good nor pure evil: harmony of these opposites. It is only when within certain situations beings (deities, ancestors, spirits) come face to face with one another that they are 'angry' for the other party and 'good' for one's own.

Incantation consequence.

If the ancient Babylonian ends up in such a conflict situation and remains within the Anu-system, he has only one solution to conjure up evil, namely to appeal not to pure good

beings but to demonic beings who are willing to place themselves at the disposal of the conjurer. Kristensen therefore concludes with good reason: "The evil gods were for the religious feeling (understand: of the Babylonian who remained faithful to Anu) not simply enemies but, like their father Anu, also saviors, i.e. rescuers from the evil that came from themselves" (o.c., 274v.).

Remark. - One pays attention to what Kristensen says: "not enemies without more" because pure enemies are not even conceivable in his purely demonistic interpretation of Babylonian religion. He thinks in mere terms of mixed beings, not also in terms of pure choice accomplishing beings.

Decision.- Kristensen's demonism is undeniably a partial truth concerning the saving and moral roles of holy beings. Outside of Christianity, very many higher and lower beings never cleanly choose salvation or doom, conscientious or unscrupulous. They therefore remain "demonic" (mixed). But this is only partly true.