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Léopold Lambert

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A.V.
(ANTHROPOCOSMOCOSMOGONIC VASTUPURUSHAMANISM)
BY DAN MELLAMPHY

“Bottle him! Have you bottled her?”
Samuel Beckett¹

“He sat naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak.
The corner in which he sat was curtained off from the sun.
Seven scarves held him in position.
Only the most local movements were possible.”
Samuel Beckett²

“The first volume of The Funambulist Papers is almost published, and I was coming back to you to know if your text for the second one will still be ready to be published around December as we originally talked about,” wrote Léopold Lambert in an October 2013 E-mail. “Taking the risk of being a bit redundant,” he continued, “I’d like to insist on the importance of addressing the question of the body, [...] as the essays will come from very different people and it would therefore be great to have [one] object of investigation with so many different approaches.” Also sprach der Seiltänzer: thus spoke the tightrope-walker, and in this way — ambulatorily, via agchibasien — was the funis (‘thread’) furnished for the present foray (this very brief essay).⁴

Let us begin, then, by binding the body with a tightrope, the better to parse its particular parts and inspect its peculiar prospects, as if submitting the latter to the hands of Hans Bellmer, perverse belle-mère of this essaié qua petit papier (this petit traité akin in some

³ Email conversation with Léopold Lambert (October 2013).
ways to Bellmer’s *Petit Traité* and *Petite Anatomie de L’Inconscient Physique*). The binding of the body in the works of both Bellmer and Francis Bacon is like that (the binding) of a butcher, or more frightening still of a murderer (*sacred,* or *profane,* sacrificial or straight-out homicidal). Writing explicitly of this webbing, constricting or binding in the work of Bellmer, Peter Webb wove together the following concrete and conceptual coordinates of these cases/encasements:

In Paris in 1946 [Bellmer] had made studies of women in relation to his [Donatien Alphonse] Sade and [Georges Albert] Bataille projects. Soon after that he had taken photographs of […] Unica Zürn naked on a bed and in a chair, tied up with string which creates extraordinary folds and shapes in her flesh. The inspiration for these images


6 Compare this with the opening description in Samuel Beckett’s first published novel, *Murphy* (a novel having to do with its titular protagonist’s Greek homonym, *Μορφή* — i.e.
comes from the photograph of a murder-victim described in [his *Pet-
tite Anatomie de L’Inconscient Physique*]: ‘A man, in order to trans-
form his victim, had tightly bound her thighs, shoulders and chest
with tight metal wire, criss-crossing in all directions, causing blisters,
irregular spherical triangles running along the folds of the flesh, unsa-
voury lips, creating multiple breasts in unspeakable settings.’

Switching for a moment from this Webb excerpt to an excerpt from a
study by Peter Kollar, one could note here that this binding is the bindu
(बिंदु), the point, of architecture — or more precisely the architectural
gesture: its pointing (in this case its pointing toward — to ward and
precinct — ‘man’). ‘Architecture ‘takes hold’ of man, whereas other
forms of art have to be ‘taken hold of’ by him,” writes Kollar, condens-
ing one line a whole thread from the *Vastu-Shastra*. A binding or
building-like ‘hold’ that, at first glance, might appear more loose and
à-l’aise than the bindings of Bellmer — but that is in fact just as rigor-
ous (nevermind rigorously mortal), as Gilles Deleuze amongst others
has shown — “the ‘cage motif’ which Bacon employs in the form of a
glass box or podium, as a shrine [or contemplative temple], as bed-
posts or simply as cordoned-off space” (“motifs such as ropes, cages,
podiums, glass boxes, curtains or rondelles”) is and are used both
“to isolate” a body “loaded with emotionality, pain, existential fear and
psychological depth [that would otherwise overwhelm — indeed de-
stroy — the work]” and to conduct all “attention” — indeed transduce
all tension[s] — “with regard to the essential figure” being figured.

“It is a very simple technique,” states Deleuze (“elementary, my dear
Watson,” as Holmes-sweet-Holmes ne’er did say): “putting the Figure
inside a cube, or rather, inside a parallelepiped of glass or of ice; stick-
ing it onto a rail […] as if on the magnetic arc of an infinite circle; or combi-
ning all these means — the round area, the cube and the bar — as
in Bacon’s strangely flared and curved armchairs.” This architectural
technique, the yantra (‘literally the ‘vessel of yoking’, […] [the] device,
sacred diagram, […] [that is] the foundation of the temple” according
to the *Vastu-Shastra*), “do[es] not consign the Figure to immobility but,
on the contrary, render[s] sensible a kind of progression, an explo-
ration of the Figure within the place or upon itself.”

with *form*[s] and *formation*[s], with *meta*morphosis and *morphogenesis*), an excerpt of
which appears as an epigraph of the present paper.

8 Peter Kollar, *Symbolism in Hindu Architecture as Revealed in the Shri Minakshi Sundar-
9 See for instance Dvijendra Nath Shukla’s translation, *The Hindu Science of Architec-
10 This by means of “a picture within the picture”: Barbara Steffen, “The Cage Motif,” in
Wilfried Seipel, Barbara Steffen and Christoph Vitali (eds), *Francis Bacon and the Tra-
11 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Daniel W. Smith (trans), Lon-
uppercase F in ‘Figure’ (and here, in addition, scare-quotes\(^{13}\)) serves to distinguish it from normative figuration[s]: an important distinction, since the ‘Figure’ in this case is, as Gilbert Simondon — formative influence (speaking of forms and formation) on monsieur Gilles Deleuze — puts it in his treatise *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, “the [F]igure of a [G]round,” as opposed to a figure *distinct* and *distinguished* from ground (hence we have here a “distinction” by way of *indistinction*, or again a “clarification” by *blurring*).\(^{14}\)

The ‘Figure’ here is, in its figuration of the ground or ground-figuration, an indistinct “*quidam quelconque*”\(^{15}\): “[a] quidam, [an] ‘unknown’,” which might be described as “a vast pre-individual field,\(^{16}\) an omnipresent yet essentially amorphous figure […] that, like the [in]famous ‘compound ghost’ of T.S. Eliot’s fourth and final *Quartet*, is both ‘intimate and unidentifiable.’ Identities emerge from this field ‘only in specific contexts’,” with and in the specific confines of *ropes, cages, podiums, glass boxes, curtains or rondelles* (as above,\(^{17}\) so below\(^{18}\)), each one “but a fragment, a particular façade, of the larval being” qua quidam quelconque “hovering vastly over the[ir] shoulders.”\(^{19}\) In the *Vastu-Shastra* this ‘Figure’ is the *Vastupurushamandala*, the subject of the present essay and of Stella Kramrisch’s landmark treatise *The Hindu Temple*.\(^{20}\)

“*The Vastupurusha is the Anthropocosmos [qua Pharaonic pr-aA]*”\(^{21}\) wrote Schwaller in “The Hindu Temple” subsection of *The Temple of Man*.\(^{22}\) Although anthropoid, this ‘Figure’ (the *Vastupurusha qua pr-aA* or *Anthropocosmos*) is not human — hence Schwaller’s observation that it “is anthropomorphized but never humanized;” Kollar calls it

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13 The scare-quotes (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/scare_quotes) that suggest the existence of a ghost in the shell (押井守).


15 Lifting this phrase from Samuel Beckett’s, *How it Is*, New York: Grove Press, 1964, 9..


17 See the epigraphs at the beginning of this essay.

18 Hear ‘here’.


21 The word Pharaoh (pr-aA) literally means ‘Great House’, i.e., an architectural principle; it is the principle (according to René Schwaller) of the *Anthropocosmos* qua Vastupurusha.

“superhuman,” and indeed it is in many respects Übermenschlich.23
“This is the raison-d’être of [architectural] symbolism in traditional civilizations, where the main preoccupations are directed toward [...] the knowledge and the attainment of certain states which are ‘superhuman’: symbolism is used to communicate, as far as this is possible, the nature of the states in question.”24 “In civilizations where the tradition is no longer effective or has become largely unrecognizable, symbolism is lost,” argues Kollar, “or what is worse, is subverted, since the chief preoccupation of the people shifts to the strictly human, even to the base-material or ‘subhuman’ level; traditional symbolism hence becomes ‘superfluous’ since all that is ‘worth’ communicating can be communicated in human terms.”25

The Übermenschlich Anthropocosmos qua pr-aA\Vastupurusha is, according to the Vastu-Shastra a primal, primeval and pre-individual unity (what Simondon would call a “primitive magical unity”).26

23 Ibid., 27, emphasis in the original. Kollar, Symbolism in Hindu Architecture, ix.
24 Kollar, Symbolism in Hindu Architecture, ix.
25 Ibid.
According to the many myths of Hindu tradition, the fall from unified being into separate existence” — or to wax Levinasian, from existence to existents27 — “has something frightening, asuric and undetermined in its nature. ‘Once there was some existing thing not defined by name, unknown in its proper form in blocked heaven and earth; seeing that, the Devas seized it of a sudden and laid it on the earth face-downward. In the same position as they were when they seized it, the Devas stayed on it where it lay. Brahma made it full of gods and called it Vastupurusha’. […] Only after this can ‘the existing thing undefined by name, unknown in its proper form’ receive its name, Vastupurusha, and its proper form, the square, [fourfold, or quadrature].”28

Here we have a mythic recounting or accounting of “the fundamental procedure from unity to quadrature,” from formless (i.e. unformed) chaos to a formal, four[fold]-element cosmos.29 The diagrammatic form (/mandala) of the existent (/vastu) entity (/purusha) reflects the quaternity of its elemental existential composition qua deposition — being fourfold like the four chymoi, stoicheia, purusharthas (humours, elements, “[anthropological] ends”) etc. — but in a ‘man’ner distinct from the later post-Pythagorean/post-’Pitha-guru’ and more importantly post-Purushan — hence human-all-too-human — models/mandalas such as those of Aristotle, the Stoics, and the whole Patristic Tradition that followed in the[ir] aftermath.30


29 Ibid., 52.

Whereas figures such as those outlined by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in *De Architectura* (his *Ten Books on Architecture*, circa 15 BC — specifically section 1:2-3 of *Book Three*, the book on temples and architectural orders), made famous after its revival in the Renaissance by Leonardo’s *mandala* (viz. ‘Vitruvian Man’ by Leonardo da Vinci, circa 1490), are based on a body with outstretched arms and legs, limbs extended to their maximum range (e.g., “the so-called ‘metrological relief’ in the Ashmolean Museum” which “shows the top-half of a man’s body with his arms stretched-out full”31), the V² or Vedic Vision by contrast is compact, compacted, confined by (rather than configuring) the *mandala* as such — unextended, in other words, rather than in a state of extension. Extension in the Vedic Vision (the V² *Vastupurusha mandala*) gives rise to the building that is based on, and grows out from, the basic *mandala* — a building that stands, according to Schwaller, as an extensive “symbol” of the latter; the *mandala* itself remains purely intensive (hence its association in this essay with the bound figures of Bacon and Bellmer, not to mention Beckett).32

Extension in the Vedic Vision takes the form of a *dismemberment* moreover, following Book Ten of the *Rig Veda*: as Rykwert explains, “the ninetieth hymn of the *Rig Veda* suggests the creation of the cosmos and of society through a sacrificial dismembering of Purusha, the first man.”33 The creation of the cosmos and of society is in other words (in the words of T.S. Eliot, author of *The Waste Land*, during the composition of that poem, in an essay for *The Egoist*) “a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction” of Purusha — Avast! — into a *Vastu*: an existent form, an existent formulation. Purusha as such is a pre-existent, pre-individuated “impersonality”: an “impersonality [...] surrendering [indeed sacrificing] itself wholly to the work to be done.”34 A Vastu, then, is its “objective correlative, in other words, a set of objects, a situation [or] a chain of events which shall be the formula for [its] particular [manifestation]” and its manifested *Grundstimmung*: its ultimate architectural effect qua affect.35

31 Ibid., 99.
32 Architecture in both the Vedic and Pharaonic traditions is “symbolic” according to Schwaller; that is, it is a matter of making symbolic structures—“symbols” as such—that articulate a vast synthesis, manifesting manifold dimensions of the diagrammatical *Vastupurusha*. At the beginning of his treatise on *The Temple of Man*, Schwaller confesses that within [t]his text he is obviously “obliged to use words, which, although they define the idea, are by that very fact misleading. Indeed to speak of the esoteric is necessarily to be exoteric. […] So, what can we do? We have to use words, but our aim is much higher; only the symbol can translate the synthetic sense of thought. It is a question of evoking that which can no longer be defined. It is thus a ‘feeling’ that we must bring into being, an ‘unexpressed intuition’, a ‘certainty’ for which the word-that-would-not-limit-it is lacking.” Schwaller, *Le Temple de L’Homme*, 16.
35 T.S. Eliot, in *The Athenæum* (September 1919), 940-941, emphasis in the original.
Following the diagrammatics of the *Vastupurushamandala*, the particular manifestation and particular architectural affect effected by the individualization of objective correlative vision “[is] such that” when all of the facts (“which must terminate in sensory experience”) “are given,” the latter affect and manifested effect “strike us” as if they were the inevitable outcome[s] of the initial gesture (the initiating diagram-mandala). Eliot likens this to the trajectory of all great tragedies (as did Nietzsche, in a way, throughout his *Philosophy in the Tragic Age*...
of the Greeks: his Philosophie im Tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen of the late 1870s); for example in the “most successful tragedies” of William Shakespeare “you will find [for instance] that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skillful accumulation of sensory impressions; [and] the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife’s death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series.”36 The difference in the case of the Vastupurushamandala is that the evoked “state” or ground-mood (Grundstimmung/“mood”/“mode”/“state [of mind]”) correlates not with an initial human impulse, impetus or catalyst, but rather with a gesture that — although “anthropomorphized” — is ultimately “never humanized” and that accords instead with what Kollar calls the “superhuman,” with the Übermenschlich Anthropocosmos qua Vastupurusha.37 This is the conundrum of Hamm in Beckett’s Endgame and of Hamlet in Shakespeare’s Hamlet: the correlations in these cases are beyond the bounds of the human-all-too-human, “in excess of the facts as they appear [to the latter]” and a matter instead of architectural gesture — architectural gesture, gestation and suggestion.

Each [architectural] structure, as the outcome of an [architectural] gesture, is according to Schwaller “an analyzed moment of the synthesis [or associated milieu]”38; one that arises as a ‘Figure’ — in the Deleuzo-Simondonian sense, hence the uppercase F39 — from what

38 Schwaller, Le Temple de L’Homme, 44.
39 “The [F]igure of a [G]round” as opposed to a figure distinct and distinguished from ground; Simondon, On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects, 113-114.
Kramrisch calls “the Germ of the temple.” The ‘Figure’ in some respects “hooks” and “catches” the background, bringing [an aspect or aspects of] this background “blackground” to light as this b[[]]ackground (“Ground”) in a sense flings it forth. Architect and theorist Paul Virilio touched on these ideas in his *Architecture Principe* and *Aube Crépusculaire* when he spoke of the concordant discordance and conjunctive disjunction of the hook and the whip, of brake-pedals/decelerators and the gear[s] of whip-lashed/far-flung acceleration. The fact that Virilio, in discussions with Deleuze, found the crossing of flinging/flailing whip and harnessing hook in the ‘Figure’ of Pharaonic metempsychosis (which Virilio then extended to Papal and Pontifical avatars) accords rather remarkably with the statements in Schwaller’s architectural study.

“Ten years ago I did this big exhibit on speed at the Cartier Foundation in Jouy-en-Josace,” Virilio explained to Sylvère Lotinger in *Crepuscular Dawn*: “and what image did I use at first? The Pharaoh. Why? Deleuze and I discussed it quite a bit.” It is a matter of allowing — indeed fostering, promoting, propelling — given gestures, given movements, while also engaging — hence harnessing or capturing


42 See, for instance, Paul Virilio, *Crepuscular Dawn*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2002, 65, where these are likened to the Pharaonic coffin/afterlife-raft complete with crossed arms bearing both whip and hook.

43 Ibid.
— them by hook or by crook, flailing and cracking the whip. Simply 
harnessing or simply fostering, simply catching-hold-of (be-getting) or 
simply letting-go-of (letting-be) would “be” ([be-]get/let[-be]) of no 
avail: nothing new would come of it. The Pharaoh with “the two hands 
crossed on his chest [...] holding on the one side a hook, and on the 
other a whip” (ibid.) is in this sense, like “the Pope [with his] hook or 
the Bishop [with his] cross” (ibid.) and like “Innocent X” — speaking 
of Popes — ‘X’ed or crossed by curtain-like lines, hooked by rope-
rails, caught-up as was Beckett’s Murphy in the Μορφή (“Figure”) of 
a chair (chair = flesh in French) in Bacon’s ‘Study after Velazquez’s 
Portrait of Pope Innocent X’, what Deleuze describes as the “non-rep-
resentative, non-illustrative, non-narrative” THERE IS IL Y A là, ici) of 
a [matter-of-]‘fact’ [qua quidam quelconque]:45 here (ici) there is (il 
y a) a ‘Figure’ flung from the ‘Ground’ as well as a ‘Ground’ flung forth 
and held there — hooked there, given place there — as a ‘Figure.’

“The relation of the Figure to its isolating place defines a ‘fact’: ‘the 
fact …,..., ‘what takes place is …, ‘writes Deleuze.46 In a sense, this is 
what makes Bacon’s Figures (not to mention those of Bellmer and/or 
Beckett) akin to Egyptian sculpture and/or architecture: “[indeed] 
there are many things that make Francis Bacon Egyptian” [and 
we might add here, Hindu, mightn’t we? oui, bien sûr!], states De-
leuze.47 Bacon himself, notes the latter, publicly declared “his love for 
Egyptian sculpture” (and perhaps privately also that of the Hindus48) 
what’s more. “A painting by Bacon has an Egyptian look to it” — all 
the more so because its anthropoid forms are inhuman: or rather, 
because their relation to “humankind is an accident” rather than an 
“essence.49” The essential is not the human-all-too-human: the latter 
is an after-effect — albeit an after-effect that brings into being the 
“analyzed moment” and its analytical monument. What gives rise to 
this moment and this monument is that “magical diagram” or “yan-
tra” described at length in The Hindu Temple for instance, and The 
Temple of Man, while only very briefly touched-upon in the present 
essay, as the yantra of the Vedic Vastupurushamandala and Phara-
onic pr-aA qua inhuman (pre-/post-human) Anthropocosmos.50