**"Atlantis and Hyperborea", Rene Guenon, from "The Veil of Isis"**

*Atlantide et Hyperborée*, October 1929.

In *Atlantis* (June 1929), Mr. Paul Le Cour brings up the note in our article

in the previous May issue (The Thunderstones, p. 348), in which we affirm

the distinction of Hyperborea and Atlantis, against those who would

confuse the two and who speak of a ‘Hyperborean Atlantis.’ Truth be

told, although Mr. Le Cour does indeed hold this notion, we do not think

only of him when writing this note; it is also found in Herman Wirth,

author of an important book on the origins of mankind (*Der Aufgang der*

*Menscheit*) recently published in Germany, which constantly uses the

term ‘North Atlantic’ to designate the region that was the origin of the

primordial tradition. On the other hand, Mr. Le Cour is indeed the only

one, to our knowledge at the least, who has given us an affirmation of

the existence of a ‘Hyperborean Atlantis;’ if we had not named it in this

respect, it is because people’s questions matter very little to us, and the

only thing that concerned us was to warn our readers against a false interpretation,

wherever they might come from. We wonder how Mr. Le

Cour interpreted us; we ask ourselves now more than ever, because now

he is telling us that the North Pole, at the time of its origin, “was not that

of today, but a neighboring region, it seems to be Iceland and Greenland;”

how did he come up with this? We are absolutely certain to never have

written a single word about this, to have never made even the slightest

allusion to this issue, incidentally which is secondary to our point of

view, of a possible pole displacement from the beginning of our *Manvantara*;

79 it is even more so because of this that we have never specified this

in relation to the original issue, because, for a variety of reason, it is rather

difficult to define in relation to present-day lands.

Mr. Le Cour also says that, “in spite of our Hinduism, we agree that

the origin of traditions is Western;” we do not agree with this, on the

contrary, because we say that it is of a polar origin, and the pole, as we

know, is not more Western than Eastern; we continue in our thinking

that, as we said in the note referred to, North and West are two different

79 This question seems to be related to that of the inclination of the earth’s axis,

an inclination which, according to some traditional data, would not have existed

at the origin, but is a consequence of what is designated in the Western language

as the ‘fall of man.’

54 The Veil of Isis

cardinal directions. It is only at a time that is distant from the origin that

the seat of the primordial tradition, transferred to other regions, could

become either Western or Eastern, Western in some periods and Eastern

for others, in any case, surely recently it is Eastern and already well before

the beginning of the so-called ‘historical’ times (because they are the

only times accessible to the investigations of ‘profane’ history). Furthermore,

it is notable that it is not “in spite of our Hinduism” (Mr. Le Cour,

in using this word, probably does not believe it to be entirely accurate),

but on the contrary it is because of ‘our Hinduism’ that we regard the

origin of traditions as Nordic, and even more exactly as polar, since this

is expressly stated in the *Vedas*, as well as in other sacred books.80 The

land where the sun circled the horizon without going to sleep was in fact

much closer to the pole, if it is not the pole itself; it is also said that, later,

the representatives of the tradition moved to a region where the longest

day was double the shortest day, but this already relates to a later phase,

which, geographically, had obviously nothing to do with Hyperborea.

It may be that Mr. Le Cour is right in distinguishing between southern

Atlantis and northern Atlantis, although they should never have been

originally distinguished; but it is none the less true that northern Atlantis

was not hyperborean. What complicates the question greatly, we very

readily admit, is that the same designations have been applied in the

course of time to very different regions, and not only to the successive

locations of the primordial center of tradition, but also to secondary centers

that proceeded more or less directly. We have pointed out this difficulty

in our study on *The King of the World*, where, precisely on the very

page which Mr. Le Cour references (p. 115), we write this: “We must first

distinguish between the Atlantic *Thule* (the place of origin of the Toltecs,

which was likely located in northern Atlantis) and the Hyperborean

*Thule*; and it is the latter which, in reality, represents the first and highest

center for the whole of the present *Manvantara*; it was it which was the

‘sacred island’ par excellence, and its location was literally polar. All the

other ‘sacred islands,’ which are designated everywhere by names of

identical signification, were only images of this one; and this applies even

to the spiritual center of the Atlantean tradition, which governs only a

secondary historical cycle subordinate to that of the *Manvantara*.”81 And

80 Those who would like to have specific references in this respect can find them

in B. G. Tilak’s remarkable book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, which, unfortunately,

seems to be largely unknown in Europe, probably because its author was

an un-Westernized Hindu.

81 With regard to the Atlantean *Thule*, we believe it interesting to reproduce here

a piece of information which we noticed in a geographical chronicle in the *Journal*

*des Débats* (January 22, 1929), on the Indians of the Isthmus of Panama, and

René Guénon 55

we added in a note: “A great difficulty to determine the junction point of

the Atlantean tradition with the Hyperborean tradition, this is due to

certain substitutions of names which can lead to confusion, but the question,

in spite of everything, may not be entirely unsolvable.”

Speaking of this ‘junction point’ we thought first of all of Druidism;

and here it is precisely that, concerning Druidism, we find again in *Atlantis*

(July-August 1929) another note which proves how difficult it is to

understand. With respect to our June article on the ‘triple precinct,’ Mr.

Le Cour writes: “It is restricting the scope of this symbol to only make it

a druidic symbol; it is likely that it is older and radiates beyond the druidic

world.” But we are far from restricting it merely as a druidic symbol,

in this article, after noting, according to the work of Mr. Le Cour himself,

examples from Italy and Greece, we said (p. 397): “the fact that this same

figure is found elsewhere than among the Celts would indicate that there

were, in other traditional forms, hierarchies built on the same model,

which is perfectly ordinary.” As for the question of anteriority, it would

first be necessary to know at what precise time Druidism originates, and

it is probable that it goes back much farther than one believes usually,

especially as the Druids were the possessors of a tradition of which a

notable part was incontestably of a hyperborean origin.

We will take this opportunity to make another remark which is important:

we say ‘Hyperborea’ to conform to the usage that has prevailed

since the time of the Greeks; but the usage of this word shows that even

at this ‘classical’ time, it had already lost the meaning of its primitive

designation. Indeed, it would be sufficient to say ‘Borea,’ a word strictly

synonymous to the Sanskrit *Varaha*, or rather, when it comes to a land,

to its female derivative *Varahi*: it is the ‘land of the wild boar,’ which also

became the ‘land of the bear’ at one time, during the period of Kshatriyas

dominance that Parashurama ended.82

whose importance clearly escaped the author of this article: “In 1925, a large part

of the Kuna Indians rose up and deposed the Panamanian police who lived on

their territory and founded the independent republic of *Tule*, whose flag is a

swastika on an orange background with a red border. This republic still exists

today.” This seems to indicate that there is much more to the traditions of ancient

America than one might be tempted to believe.

82 This name of *Varahi* applies to the ‘holy land’ equated symbolically to a certain

aspect of the *Shakti* of *Vishnu*, which is considered especially in the third

*avatara*; there is a lot to say on this subject, and maybe we will return to it

someday. This same name has never been able to designate Europe as Saint-Yves

d’Alveydre seems to have believed; furthermore, we would have perhaps seen a

little clearer on these questions about the West, if Fabre d’Olivet and those who

followed him had not inextricably mixed the story of *Parashurama* and that of

56 The Veil of Isis

To conclude this necessary explanation, we have yet to say a few

words on three or four questions which Mr. Le Cour incidentally mentions

in his two notes; firstly, there is an allusion to the *swastika*, of which

he says that “we make as the sign of the pole.” Without affixing the least

animosity, we will here pray that Mr. Le Cour does not affix his case to

ours, for we finally we must say things as they are: we consider him to

be a ‘researcher’ (which is not to lessen his merit), which offers explanations

according to his personal views, which sometimes are a bit adventurous,

and this is his right since he is not attached to any tradition currently

alive and is not in possession of any data received by direct transmission;

we could say, in other words, that he does archaeology while

we do initiatic science, and there are two points of view for the two, even

when they touch on the same subjects, that cannot coincide in anyway.

We do not ‘make’ the *swastika* the sign of the pole; we say that it is, and

always has been, that this is its true traditional meaning, which is quite

different; it is a fact to which neither Mr. Le Cour nor ourselves can

change. Mr. Le Cour, who obviously can only make more or less hypothetical

interpretations, claims that the *swastika* “is only a symbol referring

to an ideal without elevation;”83 this is his way of seeing things, but

it is nothing more, and we are all the less disposed to discuss it, which,

after all, represents a mere sentimental appreciation; ‘elevated’ or not, an

‘ideal’ is for us something rather hollow, and, in truth, it is much more

‘positive,’ and we would say so willingly had this word not been abused.

Mr. Le Cour, on the other hand, does not seem satisfied with the note

we have given (in the June issue, p. 430) when speaking of the article by

one of his collaborators who was anxious to see opposition between East

and West, which showed quite clearly, vis-à-vis the Orient, a deplorable

exclusivism.84 He writes some astonishing things about this: “Mr. René

Guénon, who is a pure logician, cannot seek, both in the East and in the

West, other than the purely intellectual side of things, as his writings

prove; he again shows it by stating that *Agni* is self-sufficient (see *Regnabit*,

April 1926) and he ignores the *Aor-Agni* duality, which we often

*Ramachandra*, which is to say, the sixth and seventh *avataras*, which are distinct

in all respects.

83 We wish to assume that in writing these words Mr. Le Cour had in view the

modern and non-traditional interpretations of the *swastika*, such as those conceived

of by the German ‘racists,’ for example, who claimed to seize this emblem,

affixing to it the baroque and insignificant designation of *hakenkreuz* or ‘hooked

cross.’

84 Mr. Le Cour reproaches us for having said in this link that his collaborator

“certainly does not have the gift of languages,” and he finds that “this is an unfortunate

statement;” alas, he simply confuses the ‘gift of languages’ with linguistic

knowledge; what is at stake has absolutely nothing to do with erudition.

René Guénon 57

return to because it is the cornerstone of the building of the manifested

world.” Despite our indifference to what has been written about us, we

cannot say that we are a ‘pure logician,’ whereas we do not consider logic

and dialectic only as mere instruments of exposition, sometimes used in

this respect, but of an entirely external character, and without any interest

in themselves; we repeat ourselves only once more that anything

other than the initiatic point of view, and everything else, which is to say

all that is ‘profane’ knowledge is entirely devoid of value in our eyes. If

it is true that we often speak of a ‘pure intellectuality,’ it is because this

expression has a very different meaning for us than for Mr. Le Cour, who

seems to confuse ‘intelligence’ with ‘reason,’ and who considers on the

one hand, an ‘aesthetic intuition,’ whereas there is no other true intuition

than ‘intellectual intuition’ of a supra-rational order; that is something

more formidable than anyone who obviously does not have the slightest

suspicion of what ‘metaphysical realization’ may be, and who is probably

thinking that we are only a type of theoretician, which proves once again

that he has misread our writings, which oddly appear to irritate him. As

for the history of *Aor-Agni*, which we do not “ignore” at all, it would be

good to conclude once and for all with these reveries, which Mr. Le Cour

does not have a stake in: if ‘Agni is self-sufficient unto himself,’ it is for

this reason that this term, in Sanskrit, designates fire in all aspects, without

any exception, and those who claim the contrary prove simply by

this their total ignorance of the Hindu tradition. We did not say anything

else in the note of our article in *Regnabit*, which we believe necessary to

reproduce here, verbatim: “Knowing that the readers of *Regnabit* are

aware of the theories of a teaching whose work, though very interesting

and highly estimable in some respects, calls for some reservations, we

must say here that we cannot accept the use of the terms *Aor* and *Agni*

to designate the two complementary aspects of fire (light and heat). Indeed,

the first of these two words is Hebrew, while the second is Sanskrit,

and we cannot thus associate terms borrowed from different traditions,

whatever the actual concordances that exist between them, and even in

the innate identity that hides under the diversity of their forms; we must

not confuse ‘syncretism’ with a real synthesis. Furthermore, if *Aor* is exclusively

light, *Agni* is the igneous principle in its entirety (the Latin *ignis*

being the same word), so both as light and as heat, the restriction of this

term to the designation of heat is quite arbitrary and unjustified.” It is

scarcely necessary to say that, in writing this note, we have not thought

in the least bit of Mr. Le Cour; we thought only of the Hieron of Parayle-

Monial, to whom the invention of this odd verbal association is attributed.

We feel that we do not have to ignore a whimsy from the somewhat

fertile imagination of Mr. de Sarachaga, which is therefore entirely

58 The Veil of Isis

devoid of authority and not of any value from the traditional point of

view, to which we maintain strictly.85

Finally, Mr. Le Cour takes advantage of the situation to assert anew

the anti-metaphysical and anti-initiatic theory of Western ‘individualism,’

which, after all, is his affair and binds him; he adds, with a sort of

pride that shows there is, in reality, very little individual contingencies

present: “We maintain our point of view because we are the ancestors in

the domain of knowledge.” This pretension is really quite extraordinary;

does Mr. Le Cour really think that he is so old? Not only are modern

Westerners the ancestors of no one, but they are not even legitimate descendants

because they have lost the key to their own tradition; it is not

that ‘in the Orient there has been deviation,’ whatever those ignorant of

Oriental doctrines may say. The ‘ancestors,’ to use Mr. Le Cour’s words,

are the effective holders of the primordial tradition; there can be no others,

and at the present time they certainly do not exist in the West.

85