

"I will create worlds:" thus HE created these (various) worlds. . . .

HE thought, "there are indeed worlds; I will create guardians of worlds." Thus HE drew from the waters and framed, an embodied being (*Purusha*, a human form).

Whitman's religious zeal for procreation which is "just as divine as spirituality,"⁸⁹ may have been reared on the foundations of such thought of the *Aitareya Aranya* of the *Vedas* as the following:

This (living principle) is first, in man, a fetus, or productive seed [that "flowed" from the "generative organ" of "Purusha" framed by the Supreme being], which is the essence drawn from all the members (of the body): thus the man nourishes himself within himself. But when he emits it into woman, he procreates that (fetus): and such is its first birth.

It becomes identified with woman; and being such, as is her own body, it does not destroy her. She cherishes his own self, thus received within her; and, as nurturing him, she ought to be cherished (by him). . . . Since he supports the child before and after birth, he cherishes himself: and that, for the perpetual succession of persons; for thus are these persons perpetuated. Such is his second birth.

This (second) self becomes his representative for holy acts (of religion): and that other (self), having fulfilled its obligations and completed its period of life, deceases. Departing hence, he is born again (in some other shape): such is his third birth.

This was declared by the holy sage. "Within the womb, I have recognized all the successive births of these deities. A hundred bodies, like iron chains, hold me down: yet, like a falcon, I swiftly rise." Thus spoke VAMADEVA, reposing in the womb: and possessing this (intuitive) knowledge, he rose, after bursting that corporeal confinement; and ascending to the blissful region of heaven . . . became immortal.⁹⁰

Whitman's acceptance of, nay, more, insistence on sex is not merely the result of its physical joy—he is not the poet of sex in that sense—but of the recognition that it is the "living principle" of things. There is in it, besides, an awareness that sex is "for the perpetual succession of persons":

I draw you close to me, you women,
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake,
but for others' sake,
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.⁹¹

And that is why he swore "the oath of procreation" to "produce boys to fill" his place when he is "through."⁹²

The same extract from *Aitareya* cited above declares the following on the nature of the soul:

What is this soul? that we may worship him. Which is the soul? Is it that by which (a man sees)? . . . hears? . . . smells . . . ? . . . utters . . . ? . . . discriminates . . . ? . . . the heart (or understanding)? . . . mind (or will)? Is it sensation? or power? or discrimination? or comprehension? or perception? or retention? or attention? or application? . . .

All those are only various names of apprehension. But, this (soul, consisting in the faculty of apprehension) is BRAHMĀ; . . . these gods . . . the primary elements, earth, air, the ethereal fluid, water and light: these, and the same joined with minute objects and other seeds (of existence), and (again) other (beings) produced from eggs, or borne in wombs, or originating in hot moisture, or springing from plants; whether horses, or kine, or men, or elephants, whatever lives, and walks or flies, or whatever is immovable (as herbs and trees): all that is the eye of intelligence. . . .

Whitman's lines in "Starting from Paumanok" bear a startling resemblance to the above passage.

Was somebody asking to see the soul?

See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances,
beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.⁹³

All that is, is the soul, said the *Veda*; and Whitman, "having look'd at the objects of the universe," finds "there is no one nor any particle of one but/has a reference to the soul."⁹⁴

As regards God, Whitman announces: