

Some Letters of the Cambridge Ritualists

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I

Introduction

WHILE working in Great Britain in 1968 and 1969 on the Cambridge Ritualists (or Ritual Anthropologists, or more simply the Cambridge Group)—Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928), Gilbert Murray (1866–1957), Francis Macdonald Cornford (1874–1943), and Arthur Bernard Cook (1868–1952)—I came upon a small archive of unpublished letters written by and to the members of the group that are of interest not only to historians of classical scholarship but as well to those interested in the many important subjects on which these eminent scholars worked. The letters illustrate the remarkable way in which the Ritualists in fact did function as a group, working closely together on many of their major efforts, and of course they provide important biographical data on all concerned.

Such data have hitherto derived mainly from three sources: obituary notices in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*;¹ *Gilbert Murray, An Unfinished Autobiography* (London 1960), which unhappily breaks off before Murray came to know Miss Harrison and the others; and Jessie Stewart's *Jane Ellen Harrison: A Portrait from Letters* (London 1959—hereafter Stewart), which is invaluable in that it contains many letters that Miss Harrison wrote to Murray over the quarter century they worked together, but is unreliable in that it is unfortunately filled with errors of fact and typography. Thus the letters presented below will supplement these more or less public and 'official' sources with important and interesting new material, and will thus shed light on one of the more noteworthy scholarly collaborations of our century.

This is not the place to argue the worth of the contribution made by

¹ Gilbert Murray, "Francis Macdonald Cornford, 1874–1943," *ProcBritAc* 29 (1943) 421–32; Charles Seltman, "Arthur Bernard Cook, 1868–1952," *Proc BritAc* 38 (1952) 295–302; J. A. K. Thomson, "Gilbert Murray, 1866–1957," *ProcBritAc* 43 (1957) 245–70.

the Cambridge Group. There are some scholars who see their work as representing simply a blind alley—an interesting but misguided (because premature) attempt to apply the methods of comparative cultural anthropology and comparative religion to the study of Greek antiquity. There are others (admittedly a smaller number) for whom their work represents a pioneering and, even today, suggestive and useful effort in this direction. Whatever their place in classical studies, it is plain that their work (along with that of Sir James G. Frazer) has had a strong influence on literary criticism in that the ‘myth and ritual’ approach has been applied, with important (and controversial) results, to nonclassical literature and has given rise to what is known as ‘myth criticism’. I hope in the not too distant future to publish a general re-evaluation of their lives and work.

So far as the letters offered here are concerned, the collection in all comprises ten letters and one postcard printed in full along with extracts from nine more letters. The largest and most important group of letters is part of an extensive unpublished correspondence between Cornford and Murray, of which Cornford’s letters alone (with one important exception) are here presented. Their friendship, which began in their collaboration with Jane Harrison, endured over the whole of Cornford’s scholarly career and terminated only with his death. The earliest of their letters printed here dates from 1907 and the last from 1942, thirty-five years later and only one year before Cornford’s death. There are as well extracts from letters written by A. W. Verrall and A. B. Cook to Cornford on the occasion of the appearance of the latter’s first two scholarly books—*Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London 1907) and *From Religion to Philosophy* (London 1912). In addition there are two communications—one a long letter, the other a postcard—from Jane Harrison to Frances Darwin, later Mrs F. M. Cornford. The letter especially, of a somewhat personal nature, amplifies the account of a troubled period in Miss Harrison’s life that we already have in Stewart. Finally there are a group of extracts drawn from five letters written by Murray to Miss Janet Spens (1876–1963) which elucidate her virtually unknown rôle in the elaboration of the theory of ritual origins of drama with which the group was so closely identified.

Before getting to the letters themselves, it is my pleasant obligation to thank the many persons who have helped me: the librarians of the Bodleian Library for their courtesy; Professor E. R. Dodds of Oxford University, for his kindness in taking time out to talk with me of

Murray; and Miss Phyllis M. Cook of Great Shelford, Cambs., Professor Alexander Murray of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and Professor Christopher Cornford of the University of Cambridge for their generous permission to print the letters; and to Professor W. M. Calder III, of Columbia University, for his help in preparing this article and in general for introducing me to the spirit of classical scholarship. My especial thanks go to Professor Cornford and his family, who gave me access to the Cornford–Murray papers and then permitted me to go through the entire family archive, thus enabling me to turn up the items by Jane Harrison. With the exception of the Murray–Spens correspondence, which is in the Bodleian Library (Gilbert Murray papers, uncatalogued), all the letters are in the possession of the Cornford family.

II

The Background of the Letters

When the letters commence, with two items pertaining to Cornford's first important scholarly publication, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London 1907), the Cambridge Group had been in existence for some years. It is not exactly clear when they had all come together (probably around 1900), but it is plain that the center of the Group was Miss Harrison, and the others came to know one another through their friendship with her. By early 1903 Cornford had become close enough to Miss Harrison to have been entrusted with proofreading her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1903), and by 1907 they were in the full tide of their collaboration (e.g., *Thucydides Mythistoricus* was dedicated to her). By this time he had also come to know Murray (he cites an unpublished lecture of the latter's in *Thucydides Mythistoricus* p.239), but the somewhat more formal tone of letter 1 in comparison to that of the later letters may be said to bespeak a certain distance between them that was but natural considering the difference in their ages and circumstances. (Only Miss Harrison had the facility for ignoring utterly such differences: see letter xiv.) Letter 1 is written from Southwold, where he had gone with Miss Harrison after the latter had experienced a breakdown in health.² The reference to crowd psychology prefigures Cornford's growing interest in sociology, which issued in his extensive use of Durkheim and the

² Stewart 109.

Année Sociologique school in his next book, *From Religion to Philosophy* (London 1912). Concerning the reference to telepathy, it might be appropriate to recall that Murray was one of the many British intellectuals deeply involved in psychic research around the turn of the century,³ that he was twice President of the Society for Psychical Research (in 1915–16 and 1952–53), and that he was himself a noted ‘sensitive’ who figured in many experiments on extrasensory perception. (Mrs Verrall was an ‘automatic writer’, and one may include the Homerist Walter Leaf in the group.) A. B. Cook, while not so active as Murray, assiduously gathered reliable records of paranormal experiences which he noted down in several manuscript books collectively labeled “Explicanda” (now in possession of his daughter, Miss Phyllis Cook).

Item II, an extract, is noteworthy as it shows that recognition for Cornford was immediate (although far from universal). A. W. Verrall (1851–1912),⁴ although friendly with all the members of the Group (Miss Harrison met Murray at the Verralls), was not at all sympathetic to their archaeological and anthropological approach.⁵ It therefore must have heartened Cornford, who was then only an obscure Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, with an interest in the origins of philosophical thought, that his decidedly unusual speculations on Thucydides should have commended themselves to Verrall.

Items III and IV are the sole contributions to this collection by Jane Harrison: both display her characteristic wit and playfulness, and the long letter also shows her equally characteristic seriousness and passionate nature. Although different in mood, they both date from the same difficult period in her life. By 1908 the mainstay of her life was, and had long been, what might fairly be called a passionately intellectual friendship with Cornford (twenty-five years her junior); she had worked with him closely for more than five years. During 1908, however, their relationship came under severe strain as Cornford’s regard for his future wife, Frances Darwin, deepened. Mrs Stewart writes: “She treated him, he told Frances long after, as if he were a lover who had abandoned her. ‘And did it never occur to you’, Frances

³ See Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (New York 1968). Obituaries of Murray as a psychic investigator by E. R. Dodds and Helen deG. Salter in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 39 (1957) 150–57.

⁴ See the “Memoir” of Verrall by M. A. Bayfield in A. W. Verrall, *Collected Literary Essays Classical and Modern* (Cambridge 1913) ix–cii.

⁵ Stewart 56–57.

asked, 'that she might be in love with you?' 'No, never', he answered naively and in absolute sincerity. 'She meant a good deal to me, but she was old enough to be my mother'."⁶ In December 1908 her physical and emotional health collapsed and, as was her wont at such times, she took herself off to Aldeburgh to be healed by the ministrations of the sea. From there she wrote the deeply moving letter iv, in which she reconciled herself to Miss Darwin and the new order of things.

Letters v and vi date from 1911, when Cornford's next important work, *From Religion to Philosophy*, was being written. In letter v Cornford embraces Murray's invitation to lecture at Oxford as an opportunity to arrange his ideas on a reconstruction of the "conceptual scheme of the world which the philosophers had to start from." "Ridgeway" is of course Sir William Ridgeway (1853–1926), Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge and the leader of those at Cambridge who opposed the work of the Ritualists. Formidable and even unscrupulous in polemic⁷ (seemingly his natural mode of discourse), Ridgeway poured contempt and ridicule on the Ritualist explanations of myth and especially of tragedy that the Group was developing,⁸ preferring instead a euhemerist explanation for the origins of tragedy. Ridgeway saw tragedy arising from the funeral games held at the tombs of heroes,⁹ which is behind the reference to "funeral games" in the last line in letter v. Letter vi is a deft parody of Ridgeway's tactics modeled on the so-called 'Fixed Forms' of the "Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy" that Murray contributed to Miss Harrison's *Themis* (Cambridge 1912). In the Excursus Murray offered a sketch of the Dionysian ritual scenario that he believed to be the formal ancestor of tragedy. See also Cornford's subsequent reference to Murray's 'Fixed Forms' in letter ix.

⁶ Stewart 112.

⁷ The writer of his obituary notice, his friend and colleague R. S. Conway, writes: "In strict logic he was weak, especially from his way of using all kinds of evidence, strong and weak alike, in support of a theory of whose truth he was convinced. . . ." ("Sir William Ridgeway, 1853–1926," *ProcBritAc* 12 [1926] 328). In an unpublished letter to Jessie Stewart dated September 1901, Miss Harrison remarks: "I had a long letter from Professor Ridgeway pointing out that the really strong points in his book [*The Early Age of Greece* (Cambridge 1901)] were lucidity of statement, attractive presentation and a too amicable tone in controversy with what he elegantly and pacifically terms 'vermin'. That is all I get for my tactful admonitions."

⁸ For instance, Miss Harrison wrote to Murray on 16 February 1911 to report after her lecture "'a great to-do' between Ridgeway and ABC [Cook]."

⁹ See his *The Origin of Tragedy* (Cambridge 1910); see also Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy*¹ (Cambridge 1927) 138ff, 174ff.

In letter VII A. B. Cook gives his somewhat ambivalent reaction to Cornford's just-published *From Religion to Philosophy*. Although Cook was "perhaps the most erudite and fertile of [Miss Harrison's] helpers,"¹⁰ and although he worked closely with the other members of the Group as well, there can be little doubt that he was the most conservative of them all and in fact never agreed with them on several important points. For example, in an unpublished letter to Murray (in the Bodleian Library, Gilbert Murray Papers, uncatalogued) dated 23 August 1913, Cook expresses his disapproval of the key Ritualist phrase coined by Miss Harrison, 'eniautos daimon': ". . . but I daresay it is all a question of words. I hate 'daemons' of all sorts, and 'year-daemons' worse than any." See also *Themis*², p.49 ("Note to p.48"), where Miss Harrison refers to Cook's rejection in the second volume of his *Zeus* (Cambridge 1925) of the basic Durkheimian notion of the god as the projection of the worshipping community.

Letter VIII was written by Cornford to Murray on the occasion of the publication of *From Religion to Philosophy*. In letter IX Cornford requests permission to dedicate *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London 1914) to Murray. In it he also expresses in diagrammatic form his ideas concerning the probable genetic relationship between comedy and tragedy. Letters X and XI offer the only instance where both sides of an exchange between Murray and Cornford are available. In X Murray offers his first enthusiastic reaction to *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, which is valuable both in itself and because (contrary to Cornford's wish, expressed in letter IX) Murray seems not to have reviewed the book. It might be noted that Murray's delight with the book was shared by few besides the reviewer for the *Saturday Review*, for most of the other notices were negative, despite Cornford's early optimism.¹¹ Both Cornford and Murray refer in their letters to the important contribution to the ritual theory of tragedy made by Miss Janet Spens, which is explained in section XII.

Letter XIII offers Cornford's interesting ideas on the relation between the practice of excommunication and the figure of the scape-goat on the one hand and the striking regularity of the period of exile in Greek myth on the other. Cornford adduces a number of instances

¹⁰ Stewart 102.

¹¹ For the *Saturday Review* notice, see *infra* n.39; some other reviews, all negative, were: *TLS*, 14 May 1914; *Cambridge Review* (by J. T. Sheppard), 3 June 1914; *Athenaeum*, 6 June 1915; *Nation* (New York), 2 November 1915.

to show that this period is eight years (*ἐνναετηρίς* or the 'Great Year'), which in turn he connects with the eschatology of the mystery religions. This letter offers a sketch of what became sections 121–24 (pp.230–40) of *From Religion to Philosophy*. Letter xiv was written shortly after Miss Harrison's death in 1928. Her friends endowed an annual Jane Harrison Memorial Lecture, and Murray was the natural choice to give the inaugural address.

The last letter, xv, comes from 1942, only a year before Cornford's death. In it he evinces a revival of his older interests in myth, ritual, and the origins of Greek philosophical thought that had more or less been dormant during the twenties and thirties, during which time he had produced the work on Plato for which he is best known. But there can be no doubt that his posthumous work, *Principium Sapientiae*, edited by W. K. C. Guthrie (Cambridge 1952), along with several essays (e.g., "A Ritual Basis for Hesiod's *Theogony*") included in his posthumous *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays*, likewise edited by Professor Guthrie (Cambridge 1950), shows clearly that Cornford had returned at the end of his life to the questions that may fairly be said to have occupied him always. Professor Guthrie, in his Introductory Memoir to *The Unwritten Philosophy* (p.viii), quotes Cornford as having said "in his later years that it sometimes seemed to him as if he had been all his life writing one and the same book." Professor Guthrie specifies the theme of that book by quoting the following words from Cornford's inaugural lecture of 1931: "If we look beneath the surface of philosophic discussion, we find its course is largely governed by assumptions that are seldom, or never, mentioned. I mean the groundwork of current conceptions shared by all men of any given culture and never mentioned because it is taken for granted as obvious." Certainly letter xv is another bit of evidence to support this impression of overall unity that is discernible in Cornford's noble scholarly career.¹²

¹² A note on the editorial practices employed. The letters have generally been presented in chronological order except in the cases of the extracts from the Verrall letter and the Murray-Spens letters, where clarity is better served by slightly departing from strict chronology. The letters have been transcribed literally (that is, as literally as possible—the vagaries of Miss Harrison's handwriting do not always permit absolute assurance on this matter). Abbreviations have not been expanded: '&' indicates the Tironian sign for 'and'. So far as the extracts are concerned, ellipses indicate brief personal remarks that have been excised on grounds of irrelevance.

III

The Letters

I F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

5 North Parade
Southwold
June 18 1907

Dear Murray,

It was good of you to send me the review,¹³ which I had been anxious to see, It has made me feel proud & humble at the same time, as praise does, from a judgment one values. I never expected that you and JEH and AWW¹⁴ would all say nice things, but you all have.

Your point about a people pursuing a policy without knowing it is one which I have thought about often (with little result—as you point out!). I suppose I inclined, when I was writing that stuff, to the view that in such cases the real moving force is the quite conscious will of a few individuals, who somehow manage to carry the rest with them. But the other alternative—of a collective psychology in a crowd—may be the truer. If only we knew a little more about telepathy.

Miss Harrison is alarmingly nervous sometimes, but I think the sea air is beginning to do her good. We are staying on here till June 27 and coming back for July 8–29, probably.

I am getting stronger, rather slowly. The weather has kept me back.

Yours vy sincerely,
FMCornford

II EXTRACT, A. W. VERRALL TO F. M. CORNFORD, 5 MARCH 1907

On the main proposition of your first part, I think you clearly make out that the 'Western Policy' was entertained at Athens and affected Athenian policy much earlier than a reader of Thucydides would perceive . . . Now for the second part, which is more in my way of business. First, I cordially welcome your demolition of the exaggerated view, that Thucydides had fully developed [?] what we call the scientific view of human life and history . . . Second, I think you are right in making more definite the 'tragic' element in his conceptions.

¹³ *Sc. of Thucydides Mythistoricus*: Murray's review appeared as "History and Tragedy" in *The Albany Review*, n.s. I (1907) 467–70.

¹⁴ As indicated by the extract from the letter of Verrall *infra*.

III POSTCARD, J. E. HARRISON TO FRANCES DARWIN, 14 NOVEMBER 1908
 We seem to play at Box & Cox.¹⁵ I am just off to Oxford till Thursday or Friday next week. I am taking my Darwinian paper¹⁶ with me for M^r Murray to put in the Xianity which at present is rather to seek. I do hope you got picked up in Surrey & have come back ramping like a young lion.

Yrs,
 JEH

Whenever M^r Murray looks over a paper of mine he always says at the end, 'This is quite admirable, every word of it', then sits down & softly re-writes it all! The Bacchae was entirely me.

IV J. E. HARRISON TO FRANCES DARWIN

2 Grosvenor Place
 Aldeburgh
 Sunday
 [December 1908 or early 1909]¹⁷

[Inserted in Miss Harrison's hand atop page one]

I wrote this last night & now I find there is no Sunday post out.

My dear F,

About names—how strange & wonderful they are. I think one will always—in the New Jerusalem—have official names for public use & one's secret names for those who are near to one, known only to a very few. (*κειῶντα ὀνόματα*)¹⁸—a secret name should mean only just one's personal relation that no one else could have and the public name is just a label which you have in common with a [illegible]. 'Francis' will do quite well as a label for Francis—Comus¹⁹ cannot go on & 'Frank'

¹⁵ *Box and Cox* was a one-act farce by J. Morton (1847), the plot of which centers on the rental of the same room by two men. Hence, a Box and Cox arrangement is one by which two persons alternate. It is also the title of a curtain-raiser by Gilbert and Sullivan.

¹⁶ "The Influence of Darwinism on the Study of Religions," in *Darwin and Modern Science* (Cambridge 1909), the volume edited by A. C. Seward issued to commemorate the centenary of Darwin's birth.

¹⁷ Stewart 111–12, 128, places Miss Harrison in Aldeburgh in the second half of December 1908; she recuperated there until July 1909.

¹⁸ Eur. *Phaeth.* 226 Diggle.

¹⁹ Cornford was known as 'Comus' because he took the title rôle in a production of the masque presented as part of the Milton Tercentenary celebrations in 1908. For a fuller account see Stewart 107–09, and Christopher Hassall's biography, *Rupert Brooke* (New York 1964) 157–66.

I always flatly declined to call him. I don't like the name *in itself* & all its associations for me are round yr father²⁰—tho it expresses him as little as it expresses 'Francis'. In time I daresay I shall get used to saying the label name, & he had better label me in the family 'Jane' tho he has never called me that in his life. Long ago as I daresay he has told you he announced by letter (he always announces everything by letter)²¹ that he meant always to call me Shvah, wch is Hebrew for the Queen of Sheba.²² It was because . . . but you know yr Bible. So then I fell into calling him Shlomòh (accent on the last syllable) which is Hebrew for Solomon. So if you want to understand our signatures you will have to learn one Hebrew letter *ש*—he is very wise. Long before that when we were in Greece together²³ he got called the Bear²⁴—I will show you some-day the photograph that will explain why he was called that—& then Shlomòh became the name of the he[?]-Bear because it is soft & padding & fumbles and shuffles—but these names & great truths are known only to me & him & you.

I think you & I have felt about for names for each other & never found them. Frances doesn't somehow mean much to me. I think that is why I shorten it to F. But it means a remembrance as it was a great deal to yr mother. I shall perhaps some day find the right beast for you but it certainly isn't a bear. You haven't a scrap of one in you, wch is odd because yr father has.

Jane is a dignified label for me—but I want you to drop 'Aunt'.²⁵

²⁰ Frances Darwin's father was Sir Francis ('Frank') Darwin (1848–1925), third son of the eminent naturalist, and her mother was Miss Harrison's close friend Ellen Crofts (1856–1903). Miss Crofts is referred to again below as Miss Harrison's "friend whom I chose for myself." See Stewart 103–04, and Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece* (London 1952) 193–94. Another valuable source for information on 'classical' Cambridge in the late nineteenth century is the life and letters of Lady Jebb, *With Dearest Love to All* (Chicago 1960), by Mary Reed Bobbitt.

²¹ For instance, he asked Miss Darwin to marry him by letter—Stewart 109.

²² Nearly ten years earlier Professor of Hebrew the Rev. R. H. Kennett (1864–1932) had been prevailed upon to give a course in Hebrew to a select class: viz., Miss Harrison, Cornford, Cook and J. G. Frazer.

²³ The trip is nearly certainly the one Cornford and Miss Harrison made in 1904–05 to the eastern Mediterranean, which included attendance in Athens at the Congress of the History of Religions in 1905, as well as a stop in Crete on their return voyage during which Miss Harrison saw the inscription later called "The Hymn to the Kouretes," which had then just been unearthed by R. C. Bosanquet and which Miss Harrison was to make much of in *Themis*.

²⁴ Miss Harrison had a passion for everything ursine, and 'bear' and 'bearish' figure prominently as terms of high praise in the letters printed in Stewart.

²⁵ Cornford and Miss Darwin regularly referred to her as 'Aunt Jane': Stewart 109–10.

Aunt & Uncle have to me always a touch of comedy & even farce about them—perhaps you won't agree. You know not what being a real Aunt is. I don't think it is much of a relationship anyhow, I mean, I find that with my real nieces, I have to make separate friends with them individually or not if I am to have any real relation. Anyhow I am not yr *real* Aunt—& you are not my real niece—you are first & foremost the child of my friend whom I chose for myself & who is gone & *that* is more than any *unchosen* relationship & you are my friend for yr own sake—so let our label be Jane. One cannot always find a *real* name—it either comes or doesn't come & it is useless to hunt. I think very often just as the Greeks had Augenblicksgötter²⁶ who developed into permanent gods so the real names are flashes of sudden intimacy & contact, caught in a moment & then kept for always.

It is horrible cold blooded work labelling one's jumpots. I think that is why to me marriage has in it so much that is noisome. It brings about all sorts of official states & relations. Francis becomes suddenly 'Aunt-Maud's'²⁷ nephew & has to be rechristened & so on. By the by I suddenly warmed in my heart to Aunt Maud about a week ago. I saw that Gwen²⁸ was beautiful & that yet she was like her mother—the glow of Gwen's inward fire had burnt up all the physical commonness. & tho' the likeness was there it was a new creature.

About work. Yes the world *is* a ruthless place & sex the most ruthless thing in it. Thank you for seeing that. I am just now faced by the blank unalterable fact that for more than 6 months Francis has not cared & could not care at all for the work that has been for years our joint life & friendship—but I have faith to believe it may not always be so. While it *is* so it is better that he & I should *not* be together. I also absolutely believe that you reverence work—tho' you could as yet not understand nor can he how—late in life—work & friendship come to be the whole of life. I trust you always.

Jane.

²⁶ The term for a 'primitive' stage in the process of the 'formation' of a god, introduced by Hermann Usener, *Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung*³ (Frankfurt/Main 1948) 279ff (ed.¹ 1896).

²⁷ Mrs Maud DuPuy Darwin, Frances' aunt and mother of her cousin and close friend Gwen. See *infra* n.28.

²⁸ Gwen Darwin, later Mrs Jacques Raverat, whose informative and delightful memoir *Period Piece* has already been cited (*supra* n.20).

I think yr beast-name for Francis is really yr *own* name. You always seem to be crouching mentally waiting to give a splendid spring straight to the mark. That is why my dear one when I am weak tho you often delight me you never rest me. Someday I shall be stronger.

V F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
Feb 17 1911

Dear Murray,

You do me great honour when you ask me to lecture at Oxford. I would have answered immediately, but I had to consult Miss Harrison who had a sort of lien on my Easter vacation. She says I may accept; and I do so gladly.

With characteristic wiliness you have hit on a subject which is near my heart. I have some nebulous ideas which I shall be glad to formulate, if I can. You saw, I think, some rough notes of mine.

What to *call* the thing I don't quite know. It would *be* an attempt to reconstruct the (so to say) conceptual scheme of the world which the philosophers had to start from. 'The background of Early Gk. Philosophy'? Does that convey the meaning? ('Behind the scenes of phylozoism' sounds flashy & scandalous).

Thank you for thinking of me. It makes me all puffed up.

And it will be a pleasure to stay with you a night.

We are having fun with Ridgeway, who will celebrate my funeral games next Thursday.

Yours vy sincerely,
FMCornford

VI F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
Nov 29 1911

Dear Murray,

Thank you for your splendid entertainment. There is not the smallest doubt about it.

This is to point out the striking confirmation supplied by stereo-

typed ritual form observed in Ridgeway's speeches supporting votes of thanks:

- (1) *Paeon* (with cloak), short & leading quickly to
- (2) Complete *Peripeteia*, or change of emotion, from gratitude to something easily distinguishable.
- (3) Protracted *Agon* with a man of straw (degenerate Korn-dæmon)²⁹ ending in
- (4) *σπαραγμός* of the creature (in the most instructive cases, doubtful which antagonist has torn the other to pieces: no certainty in general confusion).
- (5) Epiphany of hero from tomb, followed by
- (6) Joyful outcry about grand old facts of human nature (such as head-punching), usually combined with
- (7) *πάθος ἀνάγγελον*, personal reminiscence of *ἀγῶνες* & *σπαραγμοὶ* among wild tribes of western seas.³⁰
- (8) Second *peripeteia* with faded (sadly faded) *ἀναγνώρισις* of the merits of the Korndaemon, but no attempt to put pieces together, because they cannot ever be found, being of negligible size.
- (9) Final pæan on grand old facts etc.
- (10) Apotheosis of the hero.

Yours,
FMCornford

VII EXTRACT, A. B. COOK TO F. M. CORNFORD, 12 MAY 1912 (on reading *From Religion to Philosophy*)

After saying that "I do not know of any book which in recent years has given me more acute mental enjoyment . . .," Cook continues: "Our viewpoints, I suspect, are different. But for pages together you carry me along with you, and through regions of absorbing interest. I had always taken kindly to the pre-Socratics; but you invest them with a new atmosphere, through which a whole vista of pre-pre-Socraticism can be seen—their 'views' become views indeed."

²⁹ 'Korndämon' (*i.e.*, the spirit supposed to be indwelling in the grain) was a term that had become familiar in anthropological-classical discourse largely as a result of J. G. Frazer, who in turn got it from the German ethnographer Wilhelm Mannhardt.

³⁰ 'The wild tribes of the western seas' are doubtless the Irish; Professor Ridgeway was of Irish descent.

VIII F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
June 3 1912

Dear Murray.

As I noted with pain that you did not quote long extracts from my later work, I am having a copy sent to you.³¹

Apart from this defeat, your lecture gave me very keen enjoyment & some ideas which I hope to reproduce as my own when I lecture next term on Greek tragedy. I wish I could have seen you both otherwise & because I want tips for this course. Can you tell me of any books which are really useful?

I enclose an extract from an examination paper to show that there is still virgin soil for your good seed.

If ever I write a tragedy, I shall have a *ρήσις* by the Master of Trinity³² after each act. He alone has the power of lifting us to the higher plane. Wasn't he *too* sweet—as I suppose you wd say, now that you are Americanized.³³

I was very sorry not to see Lady Mary: but I had a Marlowe Society meeting³⁴ which I could not possibly cut.

I really did enjoy your lecture immensely. I am still startled by *ἐνδαιμονία*, but my slowmoving & conservative mind may perhaps come round.

Yours ever sincerely,
FMCornford

³¹ *From Religion to Philosophy*, which had just been published.

³² Dr H. Montagu Butler (1833–1918).

³³ 'Americanized' because Murray had gone to the United States to deliver the Lane Lectures at Harvard in 1907 (which became *The Rise of the Greek Epic*¹), and then again in 1912 he had lectured at Columbia (these lectures became *Four* [later *Five*] *Stages in Greek Religion*).

³⁴ Lady Mary, of course, was the wife of Gilbert Murray. Cornford had remained active in student dramatic activities ever since the production of *Comus* in 1908 that gave him his short-lived nickname; he was the treasurer and faculty adviser to the Marlowe Society, the student dramatic organization: see Stewart 108.

IX F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
Feb 16 1914

Dear Murray,

I am passing for press the first sheet of 'The Origin of Attic Comedy'. Before I do so, I want leave to dedicate the book to yourself. It owes much to you, & is indeed a descendant of your Fixed Forms.³⁵ If you are not tired of being a dedicatee, it would be a great pleasure to me to have your name on a page by itself.

I hasten to add that it is not blasphemous within the meaning etc. and the percentage of obscenity is as low as decency requires in learned works.

I am very eager to know what you will think of it all, & I hope the dedication won't prevent you from reviewing it. It ought to be out before Easter. Nearly everyone will think it quite fantastic, and only a few who read it all through will be convinced. Yet I think it must be true.

It seems to me that tragedy will turn out like this:

Comedy		
Agon	— death & resurrection (rudiment in Comedy, emph ^d in Tragedy)	— marriage Kômos (emph ^d in Comedy.)
Aesch. Trilogy with happy ending		Satyrplay = fertility—marriage squeezed out into appendix

The original satyrplay theme was the *Marriage*. Aeschylus deliberately extruded this fertility element out of the tragic part & left it in the appendix, inventing the tetralogy. No satyrplays before him, because Thespian tragedy was still *κατυρικόν* & contained its own satyric element. Its *ἡθιοι*, *ἱερεῖς*, etc. being all but satyrs—the natural chorus of the Daemon mystery, only slightly varied. But this is a long story.

Yours,

FMCornford

³⁵ As noted *supra* (p.117), a reference to Murray's 'Fixed Forms' discussed in his Excursus in *Themis*. In the preface (p.vii) to *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, Cornford straightforwardly says that his thesis—that Old Comedy was derived from some preexistent ritual dramatic performance—was directly suggested by Murray's Excursus.

X EXTRACTS, G. MURRAY TO F. M. CORNFORD, 28 MARCH 1914

My dear Cornford,

That is a thundering good book and I am most proud to be associated with it. It raises so many lines of thought that I cannot write very coherently about it, but I will make such remarks as come into my head.

First, I think that the Ritual Origin of Comedy may be taken as proved. I suspect that your unfavourable critics will mostly begin by saying that no one ever doubted it and that, if they have not said it themselves, that was only because it was not worth mentioning. Also, the particular ritual must lie within the limits you have drawn. I suspect that in time we shall be able to specify it rather more closely . . . The explanation of the Parabasis was new to me and seems convincing, also the sacrifice and nut-throwing. The Alazon is most interesting, and your identification of him with the hero who commits hubris in tragedy—or rather the Alazoneia= Comic Hubris—is profoundly illuminating. In this connection you use the Pharmakos all right, but what about the Bomolochos? The word is always puzzling. Does it not originate in Comedy, to describe a stock character who lies in wait for, or licks, the Altar in the sacrifice scene? . . .

About the Stock Masks I think you must be right yet I am not satisfied in detail. I feel here some forcing of the facts to suit the formula—but only here in the whole book . . .

Sections 96ff are awfully good, about Plot and Character in Tragedy and Comedy respectively . . . About the ritual, I agree that it is mainly a difference of emphasis that produces Tragedy and Comedy; but I cannot help suspecting that the difference had already produced itself in the rites before they developed into entertainments. We know there were Mourning Rites—Adonis, Thammuz, Osiris, Dionysus—and I do not see why we should assume that they were late in origin. The Pathea of Dionysus are in Hdt.³⁶ Thus you would get, in the rites themselves, a differentiation which tended normally to Tragedy and Comedy, without leaving so very much for the individual initiative of Thespis or Aeschylus.

Did Miss Harrison tell you about Miss Spens's papers on the Pharmakos in Tragedy? I think she gets in a very important point that I have overlooked . . .³⁷ [Here follows a short list of minor *errata*.]

³⁶ See Hdt. 5.67.

³⁷ See the extracts from Murray's letters to Miss Spens, section XII *infra*.

XI F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Monastery Farm
 East Lulworth
 Dorset
 April 1 1914

Dear Murray,

Your letter, which took some time to reach me in this monastic retreat—a real monastery with a cemetery in the back garden—gave me great pleasure. With you and Cook as Aaron & Hur,³⁸ I can face the Moabites. The first flight of reviews [*sc.* of *The Origin of Attic Comedy*] are favourable, especially the Saturday,³⁹ who is intelligent & kind.

The Anodos may be, as you say, more integral than I have represented it. Cook has worked at this in Zeus—especially pointing out that one Anodos vase has Gaia in a *bridal veil*, with an Eros above—showing that she *does* rise for her Gamos.⁴⁰

I am glad you like the Parabasis part. It is a longish shot, but really seemed the only solution consistent with the position of the Parab. after the Agon.

I was doubtful about *βωμολόχος*. It doesn't seem to be a *technical* word in Comedy itself whereas Alazon has some claim to be so regarded. If it meant the altar-licker in Comedy, it ought to denote the Alazon; but it doesn't. It seems rather applicable to the hero-Eiron. But the word does look ritual somehow. Only I couldn't see how.

The Stock masks I have overemphasized, I suppose, because they are neglected. I feel that, though I may not have allowed enough for the individual traits which come in with the historic names, (Euripides especially), the characters are not individuals transferred on to the stage, but conventionalized to some preconceived pattern. Have

³⁸ Hur, with Aaron, held up Moses' hands in the struggle against the Amalekites: *Exodus* 17:10, 12; 24:14.

³⁹ [Anonymous], "Comedy Begins," *Saturday Review* 117 (28 March 1914), 404–05. See *supra* n.11.

⁴⁰ No illustration in vol. I of *Zeus* exactly fits Cornford's description. Since he was in close contact with Cook as the latter was writing *Zeus*, he might well have seen a picture of a vase that Cook at the last moment decided not to include. See for similar vases: J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena*² (Cambridge 1907) figs. 71 and 173. Dr D. von Bothmer confirms this *per litt.* (18 December 1970): "In this I must disappoint you, for I have no representation that would accurately describe the vase Cornford had in mind."

you read Süß, *De personarum Atticae comoediae orig. et usu*?⁴¹ He goes quite as far: indeed I followed him, with some qualms, but fortified by the reflection that he was not grinding *my* axe but a quite different one of his own. Socrates *does* in a way kill & resurrect Strepsiades; and Euripides at least closes [?] Tragedy. But 'Doctor' is of course too narrow a term for the medicine-man-Sophist.

Cook gave me the point about portraits in art. He was strongly inclined to condemn individual masks in V. cent as impossible fr. point of view of general development of art. And I don't believe they could have gone back to conventional masks in *realistic* New Comedy, if they had had individual masks in much more conventional Old Comedy.

I am very glad you like the last chapter which is a bit of what I have to say on the general subject of ancient drama.

I am quite ready to believe in a difference in the *rites* behind Trag. and Com. in the religious stage. My notion was that 'tragedy' at some time had been quite serious & quite probably predominantly sad, like the Adonis rites, as you say; but had somehow become degenerate & tended to satyric buffoonery as apparently always happens. I still cling to the idea (not mentioned in this book) that the Orphic movement from Epimenides to Peisistratus had some share in making tragedy serious again—some mystical reinterpretation & expurgation making the old daimon's death a serious thing once more. I hope to get clearer about this & to sort out the heroic element too, with W. Leaf's stuff to help.⁴²

I did hear from JEH something of Miss Spens' Pharmakos, which struck me as original & important. Indeed I shoved in a good deal more about the Pharmakos in consequence. We have neglected the apotropaic side in emphasising the fertility aspect; though both are so marked in Comedy—apotropaic in *ψόγος* and fertility in the sex element. I suppose Death is a riddance and atonement, not a mere prelude to resurrection,—more than we have allowed for.⁴³

Thank you too for minor errata. What silly mistakes one does make.

⁴¹ Wilhelm Süß, *De personarum antiquae comoediae Atticae usu atque origine* (Bonn 1905). For W. Süß see now: A. Thierfelder, *Gnomon* 42 (1970) 638–40.

⁴² Probably referring to the historical research of Walter Leaf (1852–1927) in *Homer and History* (London 1915) and other books.

⁴³ See the extracts from Murray's letters to Miss Spens, section XII *infra*.

It is hard to keep one's mind off politics. They never were so exciting. I hope this Army versus the People business will die down. Don't you think it would be a very risky cry for our side to take up? My hope is that Asquith going to the War Office will put an end to it.⁴⁴

Do people always say such utterly insane things at moments of excitement as one reads daily in the Times correspondence? I don't seem to remember any such outbursts of lunacy.

Thank you again for your kind words. I hope the reverberation of my book will turn into new things in your head, & better ones, as generally happens.

Yours ever sincerely,
FMCornford

XII EXTRACTS, G. MURRAY TO JANET SPENS, DECEMBER 1913–JUNE 1914

In 1913 Murray led a seminar on Euripides for advanced students. Among them was Professor E. R. Dodds, who told me (in 1969) that most of the meetings were taken up by rather rarefied colloquies between Murray and one of the students, Miss Janet Spens⁴⁵ (1876–1963; later Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall and a distinguished scholar on the poetry of Edmund Spenser). Miss Spens even then seemed to know a good deal about the ritual origins of drama and had views of her own on the subject. Out of the work of this course Miss Spens wrote a long paper that eventually became *An Essay on Shakespeare's Relation to Tradition* (Oxford 1916). That book does not directly concern us here, but among its main points was Miss Spens's most important and original contribution to the theory of ritual origins for tragedy—that the ritual of the dying and rising god had to be supplemented by the ritual of the scapegoat, or *φάρμακός*, in order to account for certain persisting themes and characters in tragedy. Such is the background for the following extracts from a series of letters from Murray to Miss Spens (the originals are to be found in the Bodleian Library, Murray correspondence, uncatalogued).

The exchange begins (29 December 1913) with Murray's comment on a draft version of what was to become *An Essay*: "Your second point, that Tragedy is essentially a ceremony of Katharmos or Katharsis is, I think, true and profoundly important." On 17 April 1914,

⁴⁴ A reference to the severe domestic political crisis that had arisen over Northern Ireland in 1914; it was resolved only by the outbreak of the First World War.

⁴⁵ An obituary of Miss Spens is to be found in the (London) *Times*, 6 January 1963.

Murray writes: "By the way, I have just been re-shaping a syllabus on the Religious Background of the Bacchae and found that the argument did not go satisfactorily. On working it over I found that it was—I think—because I had left out the Pharmakos from my scheme of tragedy. Just your point. I will think over Orestes as an outcast."

Only three weeks earlier he had written (28 March 1914): "I am sending you a copy of Cornford's new book on Comedy. I think in general it strengthens your case considerably, as showing the influence of the Mummers' Play on literary drama . . .⁴⁶ The Pharmakos turns up in Comedy as an Alazon, or Boaster apparently, at any rate as an unwelcome intruder, and has to be driven out." And the next day, 29 March 1914, he wrote: "I have just been invited by the British Academy to give its annual Shakespeare lecture this summer . . . It occurred to me that I might lecture on your sort of line, calling attention to your book.⁴⁷ I would chiefly run the Orestes-Hamlet business, and the effect of the Year Ritual on Drama as well as Religion."

Finally, Murray wrote to Miss Spens on 25 June 1914, two days after he had delivered the Shakespeare lecture: "By the way, I think the difference between Tragedy and Comedy is probably merely this: that Tragedy comes from a regular Trauerspiel, a Ritual Lamentation like the Adonis rite, and Comedy from almost anything else. The other things tend to be made comic or at least cheerful. And, I incline to think, even your Pharmakos can be made into a joke, if people want to do so. Like the kicking out of the Alazon in Cornford; or even the Guy Fawkes procession or the sawing in two of Judas.—What do you think? I should be sorry to upset your nice apple-cart, but it looks to me as if the Pharmakos was not in itself the special cause of Tragedy."

⁴⁶ See Roger J. E. Tiddy, *The Mummers' Play* (Oxford 1923). The publication date notwithstanding, the lectures that make up the book were in fact given in the School of English Literature in Oxford in the spring of 1914.

⁴⁷ At the start of his lecture ("Hamlet and Orestes," *ProcBritAc* 6 [1913-14] 389), Murray mentions the recent "course of lectures given at Oxford by Miss Janet Spens of Lady Margaret Hall on *The Scapegoat in Tragedy*, which I hope to see published next year." The reference was of course dropped when Murray incorporated the lecture into *The Classical Tradition in Poetry* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1927).

XIII F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Cambridge
May 11 1914

Dear Murray,

You are interested in Heaven & Hell, which I hear you connect with mystery religions. One or two things have struck me about this.

Mystery religions emphasise union & solidarity (1) of the communion of saints in the secrecy society (2) of Man with God. The penalty of sin is *excommunication*—sin, a breach in solidarity (like bloodshed of animals, who are solid with society at first).

Excommunication exists in a primitive state of society (as Glotz shows, *Solidarité de la famille*, chap. vi)⁴⁸ as a means of escaping collective responsibility of the whole clan. The clan expels its offending member, abandons him as outlaw to the avenger (*l'abandon noxal*). The mildest form is 'penal servitude' to the injured party, or to someone else. Apollo has to serve Admetus for killing Cyclopes; Heracles serves with Omphale, till he is *ἄγνός*, *Trachin.* 258 etc.). The interesting thing is that the period of such servitude is a *year* or a *Great Year* (*ἀπειναυτισμός*). Heracles serves Omphale for 3 years (*trieteris*?). Plato, *Laws* 868E *τριετείς ἀπειναυτήσεις* for murderer. Cadmus serves Ares for *αἰδίοις ἐνιαυτός* = 8 years = *ennaeteris*.⁴⁹ Apollo & Poseidon have to *θητευέμεν εἰς ἐνιαυτόν* to Laomedon.⁵⁰ Apollo for murder of Python is exiled for *ennaeteris*. Man who ate human flesh at Lycaean sacrifice becomes wolf for 9 years. So in Hesiod *Theog.*⁵¹ the oathbreaking god is exiled from the Gods for *nine years* & in the tenth mixes again with them. All the instances seem to be 1 year or *trieteris* or *ennaeteris*.⁵²

This links with Empedocles, whose daemons are exiled for oath-breaking & bloodshed, and are *φυγάδες θεόθεν καὶ ἀληταί* (outlaws, vagabonds).

Here we are in the cycle of *παλιγγενεσία* which is thus an *ἀπειναυτισμός*.

Cf. Pind. *Ol.* ii 75, *ὄσοι ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρίε*⁵³ etc. = 'trieteric' *ἀπειναυτισμός* of Soul.

The *ἀπειναυτισμός* for a Great Year seems to come into mystery

⁴⁸ Gustave Glotz, *La solidarité de la famille dans le droit criminel en Grèce* (Paris 1904).

⁴⁹ Apollod. 3.4.2.

⁵⁰ *Il.* 21.444.

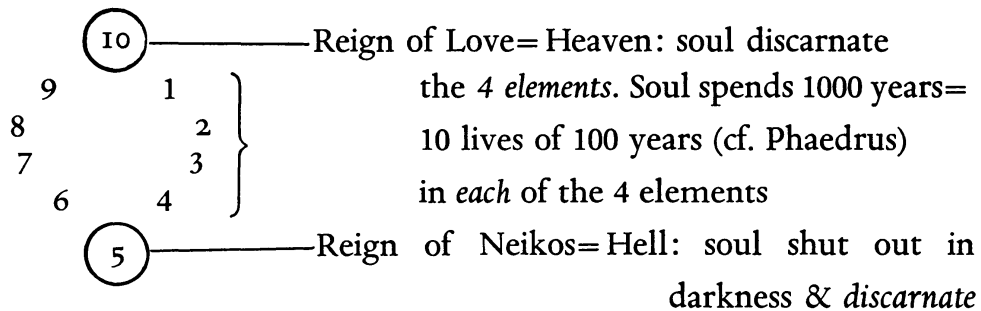
⁵¹ *Theog.* 793–804.

⁵² This sentence is written in the left margin.

⁵³ In fact, *Ol.* 2.68, *ὄσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρίε*.

doctrine for social custom, with the idea of *exile from communion with God*, as worst penalty for sin^a

I suspect that Empedocles' 30,000 ὄραι is to be taken literally. It would work out thus, if we take it to be the complete world period:— 30,000 seasons= 10,000 years= 10× 1000 years. The 10th thousand-years= the Reign of Love, when all souls are restored to communion & unity in God (Sphere). The other 9 are the years of exile, as in Hesiod. Put them in a circle:



Anyhow, the Great Year notion seems to be bound up with that of *exile* and 'abandon noxal'—that is a new point to me. It suits the prominence of the Great Year in mystical systems.

Heraclitus (10800 years= 360× 30 years. 30 years 'the time it takes to become a grandfather'= cycle of human life—a day in the Great Year)

Euriped. [sic] & Orphics

Plato.

I suppose the ἐνιαυτός (even if not derived from ἐνι-αὖ-τῶ)⁵⁴ is essentially the time when things come back to their starting point (annus-annulus). If you start from God, you return to him in an ἐνιαυτός.

Yours,

FM Cornford

⁵⁴ This etymology had been offered by Miss Harrison citing Prellwitz, in *Themis* (Cambridge 1912) 183 n.6. In fact, Prellwitz, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*¹ (Göttingen 1892) gives ἐνι + ἔτος?, while Prellwitz² (1905) gives ἐνι + αὖτῶ.

XIV F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
Oct 5 1928

My dear Murray,

I have very little but admiration for your lecture on J.E.H.⁵⁵ You have managed to say so many of the right things, & said them so well. I read it aloud to Frances. She stuck at only 2 things: (1) the opening sentence struck her as rather queer & abrupt for those not on familiar terms with Year Spirits.⁵⁶ But your audience will be on familiar terms—I don't think this matters. (2) p. 21 line 3 *lack of selfconsciousness*.⁵⁷ Is this the right word? I know what you mean; but wasn't it that she never felt the difference in age as relevant & so it didn't come into her mind? I often thought she treated me (25 years her junior) as if I were older than herself & made me feel she was the younger of the two. This was very remarkable & I am glad you have stressed it.

I think it is a splendid lecture & I have no criticisms.

Yours ever,
FMCornford

XV F. M. CORNFORD TO G. MURRAY

Conduit Head
Madingley Road
Cambridge
27 Aug. [1942]⁵⁸

My dear Murray,

I am most grateful to you for being willing to act as rhapsode for me, and delighted that my stuff appeals to you. I am doing it all out at length with much more evidence in the book I am trying to write.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ This was Murray's inaugural Jane Ellen Harrison Memorial Lecture, *Jane Ellen Harrison: An Address* (Cambridge 1928), delivered at Newnham College on 27 October 1928.

⁵⁶ Murray's lecture opens: "The Year Spirit, born young again every spring, has entered into your soul, and taught us all alike to feel ourselves the companions and sharers of your youthfulness." The quotation is from the address of farewell composed by Walter Leaf and sent to Miss Harrison when she left Cambridge for Paris in 1922.

⁵⁷ Murray changed his text here slightly in response to Mrs Cornford's criticism. The phrase is now "lack of any consciousness of age" (p.19).

⁵⁸ 1942 is nearly certain because Mrs Chadwick's book gives a *terminus post quem*.

⁵⁹ The book is Cornford's incomplete, posthumously published *Principium Sapientiae*, edited by W. K. C. Guthrie (Cambridge 1952).

Here is Mrs. Chadwick.⁶⁰ Her little book is based on a vast mass of material in the 3 fat volumes of the Chadwicks' *Growth of Literature* which I worked through.⁶¹ I found it very illuminating because it covers the Heroic Age and also the post heroic, i.e., it provides the whole background for Homer & Hesiod, which is missing in the Greek tradition & so leaves the poets in the air & inexplicable to scholars who won't look over the ledge. It is pathetic—the way that Bouché-Leclercq for instance in his *Divination*⁶² marshals every scrap of Greek evidence in a masterly way, but remains quite in the dark about much that becomes plain from the comparative evidence.

I used to be an anti-diffusionist, but the Chadwicks convince me that much that we call 'primitive' is really the degenerate & degraded remnants of ideas which have spread from the old centres of civilization, tho' it wd get contaminated with really primitive ideas. See *Poetry & Proph.* xiv–xv.

Thank you for your P.S. about Rosalind's theology.⁶³ This business is much in the air just now.

Yours ever,
FMCornford

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

February, 1971

⁶⁰ N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry & Prophecy* (Cambridge 1942).

⁶¹ H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, 3 vols. (Cambridge 1932–1940).

⁶² Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, 4 vols. (Paris 1879–82).

⁶³ Rosalind is Murray's daughter, then wife of Arnold J. Toynbee.