

## Astronomy Notes in Notebook VI.B.30

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The origins of *Finnegans Wake* in Irish myths is well known, as are the elaborations with which Joyce embellished his ever growing vision of the universality of his text. In the late stages of composition he turned to World myths and ancient visions of the Earth. Some entries in Notebook VI.B.30 in particular, are of interest and seem to derive from the works of Camille Flammarion (1842 –1925), who was a French astronomer and author. Joyce may have read his work in French, in translation,<sup>1</sup> or in one of the derivative works, e. g. John F. Blake's *Astronomical Myths*<sup>2</sup>. Gore's translation is the most likely source although the illegibility and obscurity of some of the notes makes it possible that there was a magazine article, drawing on this material. The short index is harvested on pages 068-069. We have not sourced the units on page 069 but the slightly old-fashioned expression 'millions of miles' (for 'million miles') is used frequently in Flammarion. Page 069 also contains a draft of Joyce's transformation of the time taken for Vulcan's anvil to fall (and maybe the '400 millions of miles' otherwise unlocated) into 'Heavystost's envil catacalamitumbling'.

For the genetic transcription we have used *Popular Astronomy*, quoted only for units (a) to (e) on page 068. To further illustrate Joyce's 'twelve pedestalled table' sitting on 'four wise elephants' (*FW* 513.35-6) we provide the reader with Blake's account of the ancients' view of the terrestrial world followed by two relevant images:

The Vedic priests asserted that the earth was supported on twelve columns, which they very ingeniously turned to their own account by asserting that these columns were supported by virtue of the sacrifices that were made to the [237] gods, so that if these were not made the earth would collapse.

These pillars were invented in order to account for the passing of the sun beneath the earth after his setting, for which at first they were obliged to imagine a system of tunnels, which gradually became enlarged to the intervals between the pillars.

The Hindoos made the hemispherical earth to be supported upon four elephants, and the four elephants to stand on the back of an immense tortoise, which itself floated on the surface of a universal ocean. We are not however to laugh at this as intended to be literal; the elephants symbolised, it may be, the four elements, or the four directions of the [238] compass, and the tortoise was the symbol for strength and for eternity, which was also sometimes represented by a serpent.

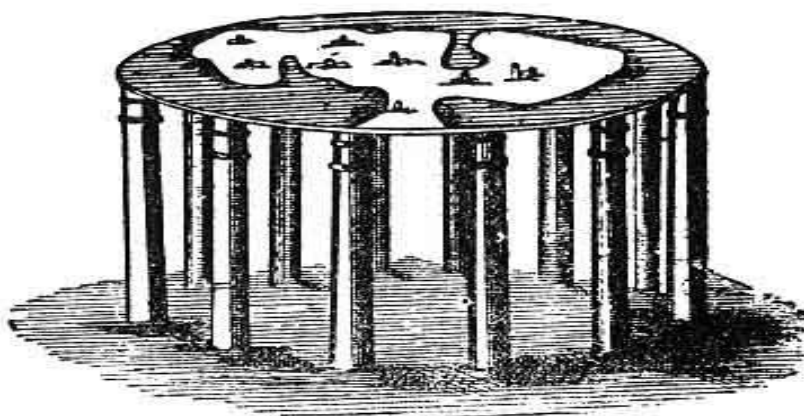


FIG. 27. – THE EARTH OF THE VEDIC PRIESTS. (*Astronomical Myths* 238)

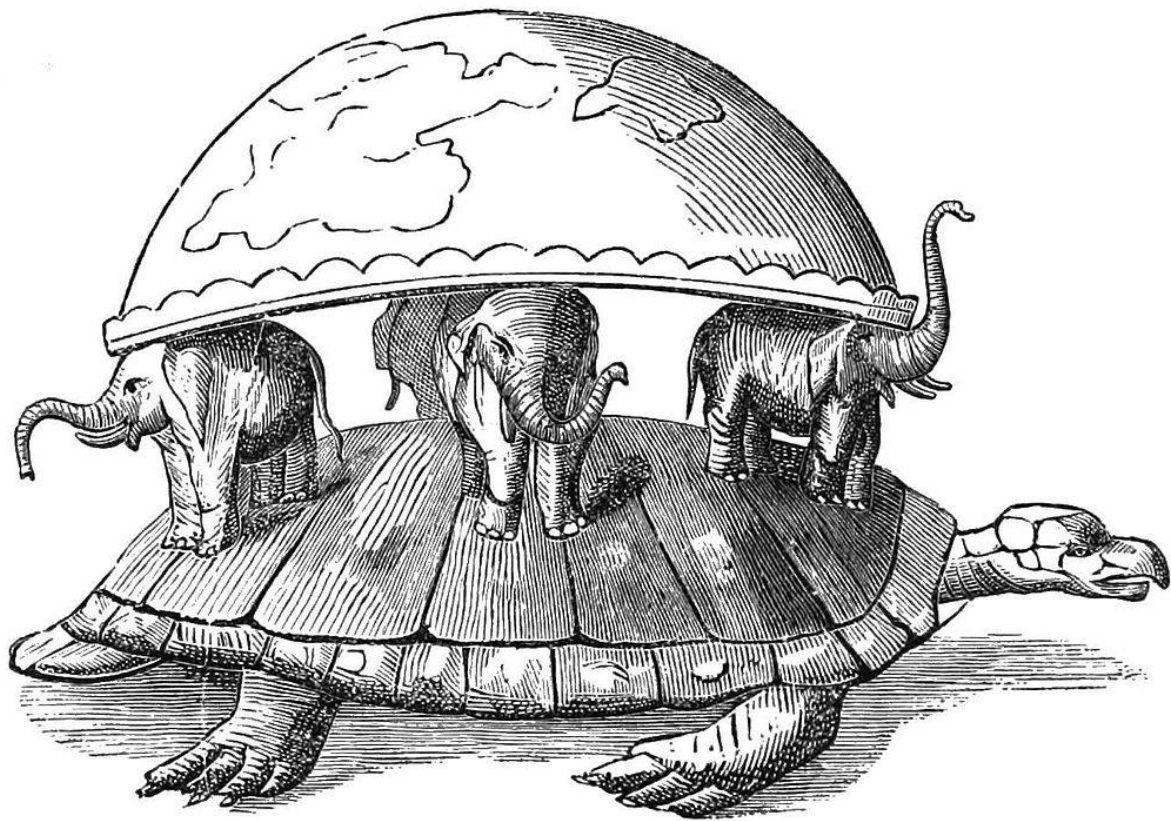


FIG. 28. – HINDOO EARTH. (*Astronomical Myths* 239)

These ideas have found a modern expression in the “Discworld” fantasy novels of Terry Pratchett.

(1) Camille Flammarion. *Popular Astronomy*. Trans. J. Ellard Gore. London: Chatto & Windus, 1907. Online at: <https://archive.org/details/PopularAstronomy>.

(2) John F. Blake. *Astronomical Myths, based on Flammarion's "History of the Heavens"*. London: MacMillan & Co, 1877. Online at: <https://archive.org/details/astronomicalmyth00blak/page/n6>.



POPULAR  
ASTRONOMY

FLAMMARION  
AND  
GORE

CHATTO & WINDUS

FLAMMARION'S ASTRONOMY



# ASTRONOMICAL MYTHS,

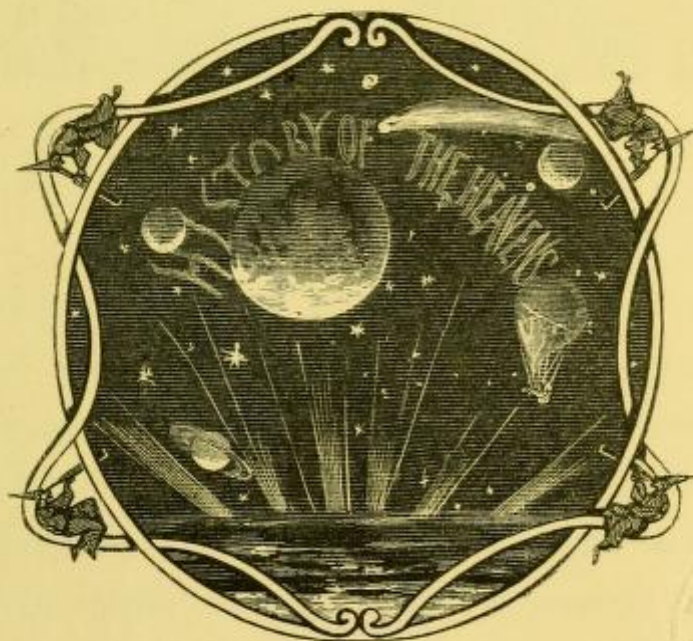
BASED ON

FLAMMARION'S

"HISTORY OF THE HEAVENS."

BY

JOHN F. BLAKE.



London :

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1877.

## VI.B.30.068

(a) <sup>g</sup>**Earth**

*Popular Astronomy*, 1: *THE EARTH*  
Chapter I  
The Earth in the Sky  
Not located in MS/FW.

(b) <sup>g</sup>**12 pillars >**

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+Like four wise elephants inandouting under a twelve-podestalled table+^ | *JJA* 62:396 | late 1938 |  
III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | *FW* 513.35-6

(c) <sup>g</sup>**4 elephants >**

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+Like four wise elephants inandouting under a twelve-podestalled table+^ | *JJA* 62:396 | late 1938 |  
III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | *FW* 513.35

(d) <sup>x</sup>**Hesiod >**

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+Punch ^+- Like Heavystost's envil catacalamitumbling. Three days three times into the. Vulcuum?+^+^ | *JJA* 62:396 | late 1938 |  
III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | *FW* 514.11-2

(e) <sup>g</sup>**9 days for / Vulcan's anvil**

*Popular Astronomy*, 6: They [many Greek astronomers] were soon forced to remark that the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars rise and set, and that during the hours which elapse between their setting and their rising it was absolutely necessary that the stars should pass under the earth. *Under the earth!* What a revolution is in these three words! Up to that time they had supposed that the world extended to infinity below our feet, solidly founded for ever, and, without comprehending this infinite extension of matter, they remained in ignorance and believed in the firm solidity of the earth. But when the curves described by the stars above our heads were continued, after they set below the horizon, to start again when they rose, it was necessary to imagine the earth pierced right through with tunnels large enough to permit the passage of the celestial torches. Some represented our abode under the form of a circular table borne upon twelve columns, others under the form of a dome placed on the backs of four bronze elephants; but the idea of supporting the earth on mountains, elephants, or columns would, of course, require to rest on some lower foundation. As, moreover, the sky seems to turn round us in one piece, the subterfuges invented in order to preserve for the earth something of its original stability at last disappeared by the force of circumstances, and they were obliged to admit that *the earth is isolated in all its parts*.

Hesiod, the contemporary of Homer, believed that the earth was supported like a disc midway between the vault of the sky and the infernal regions, a distance measured once, he claimed, by Vulcan's anvil, which took nine days and nine nights to fall from the sky to the earth, and the same time to fall from the earth to Tartarus. These ideas ruled for a very long time men's conceptions of the construction of the universe.

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+Punch ^+- Like Heavystost's envil catacalamitumbling. Three days three times into the. Vulcuum?+^+^ | *JJA* 62:396 | late 1938 |  
III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | *FW* 514.11-2

(f) **my[?]**

(g) **[outer] T —**

*Note:* Possibly Tartarus.

(h) **1 m    3[R] ½**

(i) **1 g[?]    33 m / h[?]**

## VI.B.30.069

(a) <sup>s</sup>400 milli[ons] / of miles

(b) S [bottle]

(c) [by massby]

(d) <sup>s</sup>kocked and / pucked

?MS 47487-142v, ScrTsLPA: ^+, ercked and skorned and grizzild all over,+^ | JJA 62:256 | late 1938 | III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | FW 514.33

(e) <sup>s</sup>Gaelic

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+^+And then the punch to Gaelicise it.+^ Gaa.+^ | JJA 62:396 | late 1938 | III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | FW 514.33

(f) <sup>s</sup>Heavysto[st]'s / envil / catacalamitumb / [ling]

MS 47487-213v, ScrTsLPA: ^+Punch ^+- Like Heavystost's envil catacalamitumbling. Three days three times into the. Vulcuum?+^+^ | JJA 62:396 | late 1938 | III§1A.13+/1B.4+/1C.10+/1D.13+//2A.14+/2B.12+/2C.14+//3A.11+/3B.18+//4.8+ | FW 514.11-2