

Chapter 2 - Schemes of Evolution

Globe Planes / Counterparts

Positioning of the Planes of Nature

Leadbeater explains that the planes of nature are not 'above' or 'below' one another, in other words, a higher plane is not above a lower plane, but rather the planes interpenetrate one another and occupy the same space.

It is absolutely necessary for the student of Theosophy to realize this great truth, that there exist in nature various planes or divisions, each with its own matter of an appropriate degree of density, which in each case interpenetrates the matter of the plane next below it. It should also be clearly understood that the use of the words "higher" and "lower" with reference to these planes does not refer in any way to their position (since they all occupy the same space), but only to the degree of rarity of the matter of which they are respectively composed, or (in other words) the extent to which their matter is subdivided - for all matter of which we know anything is essentially the same, and differs only in the extent of its subdivision and the rapidity of its vibration. (DP - CWL)

Consciousness is focused on Plane

Man does not pass from one plane to another; rather his consciousness is focused on one or another.

It follows, therefore, that to speak of a man as passing from one of these planes to another does not in the least signify any kind of movement in space, but simply a change of consciousness. For every man has within himself matter belonging to every one of these planes, a vehicle corresponding to each, in which he can function upon it when he learns how this may be done. So that to pass, from one plane to another is to change the focus of the consciousness from one of the vehicles to another, to use for the time the astral or, the mental body instead of the physical. For naturally each of these bodies responds only to the vibrations of its own plane; and so while the man's consciousness is focused in his astral body, he will perceive the astral world only, just as while our consciousness is using only the physical senses we perceive nothing but this physical-world —though both these worlds (and many others) are in existence and full activity all round us all the while. Indeed, all these planes together constitute in reality one mighty living whole, though as yet our feeble powers are capable of observing only a very small part of this at a time. (DP - CWL)

Locality and Interpenetration of Worlds

A globe must not be imagined as occupying a position in space that is separate and distinct from its counterparts or principles. The globe and its corresponding planes are separate and distinct from other globes in the chain separated by the interplanetary ether. Consequently a physical globe, such as the earth, is not one world, but seven interpenetrating worlds, all occupying the same space, except that, as said, the finer types of matter extend further from the center than do the denser types.

It should be understood that none of the three lower planes of the solar system is co-extensive¹ with it except as regards a particular condition of the highest or atomic subdivision of each.

Each physical globe has its physical plane (including its atmosphere), its astral plane, and its mental plane, all interpenetrating one another, and therefore occupying the same position in space, but all quite apart from and not communicating with the corresponding planes of any other globe. It is only when we rise to the lofty levels of the buddhic plane that we find a condition common to, at any rate, all the planets of our chain. (DP – CWL)

Extension and Limits of the Higher Planes

The planes of a globe occupy identically the same position in space as the globe itself, with this reservation, that the spheres of higher or finer matter are larger than those of lower matter, for they interpenetrate and extend beyond the periphery of the lower matter spheres, just as a man's astral body interpenetrates and extends beyond the confines of his physical body, his mental body beyond that again, and so on.

The astral plane of our own earth interpenetrates it and its atmosphere, but also extends for some distance beyond the atmosphere. . . The mental plane in its turn interpenetrates the astral, but also extends further into space than does the latter.

Only the atomic matter of each of these planes, and even that only in an entirely free condition, is co-extensive with the interplanetary ether, and consequently a person can no more pass from planet to planet even of our own chain in his astral body or his mind-body, than he can in his physical body. In the causal body, when very highly developed, this achievement is possible, though even then by no means with the ease and rapidity with which it can be done upon the buddhic plane by those who have succeeded in raising their consciousness to that level. (DP – CWL)

¹ Coextensive - Having the same limits, boundaries, or scope

Globes Occupy Definite and Separate Positions in Space

Leadbeater clarifies the distinction between the mental plane of our physical globe and another globe that does not have a plane (or matter) that extends lower than the mental plane.

A clear comprehension of these facts will prevent the confusion that has sometimes been made by students between the mental plane of our earth and those other globes of our chain which exist on the mental plane. It must be understood that the seven globes of our chain are real globes, occupying definite and separate positions in space, notwithstanding the fact that some of them are not up in the physical plane.

Globes A, B, F, and G are separate from us and from one another just in the same way as are Mars and the earth; the only difference is that whereas the latter have physical, astral and mental planes of their own, globes B and F have nothing below the astral plane, and A and G nothing below the mental. (DP – CWL)

Cosmic Extent of the Planes

In some conditions, the atomic matter of each of these planes is cosmic in its extent.

Notwithstanding this, there is, as stated above, a condition of the atomic matter of each of these planes which is cosmic in its extent; so that the seven atomic sub-planes of our system, taken apart from the rest, may be said to constitute one cosmic plane - the lowest, sometimes called the cosmic-prakritic². The interplanetary ether, for example, which appears to extend through the whole of space - indeed must do so, at least to the farthest visible star, otherwise our physical eyes could not perceive that star - is composed of physical ultimate atoms in their normal and uncompressed condition. But all the lower and more complex forms of ether exist only (so far as is at present known) in connection with the various heavenly bodies, aggregated round them just as their atmosphere is, though probably extending considerably further from their surface. (DP – CWL)

Reference

Leadbeater, C.W. *The Devachanic Plane or The Heaven World - Its Characteristics and its Inhabitants*, Adyar, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1916

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