

# The Secret Doctrine Symposium

## Part II

A Course for the National Lodge of  
The Theosophical Society in America

Compiled and Edited by David P. Bruce

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## Introduction

In choosing articles for Part Two of *The Secret Doctrine Symposium*, I have featured authors and topics not included in Part One. Since the articles are not arranged sequentially, it is not necessary to have taken part one of the *Symposium* in order to benefit from this collection of articles.

I have added discussion or study questions to each of the articles. When referring to a specific quote or passage within the article, the page number and paragraph are referenced in the following manner: (1.5) would indicate the fifth paragraph on page one, while (4.2) indicates the second paragraph on page four. A page number followed by a zero, *i.e.*, (25.0) would indicate that something is being discussed in the paragraph carried over from the previous page, in this case, page 24.

If the original article contained footnotes, they were retained. In some cases I have added my own comments in the form of endnotes, which are identified as “Compiler’s Notes.”

A few words on the editing process are in order: British spelling and punctuation have been changed to the American style; citations from various editions of *The Secret Doctrine* now refer to the 3-volume 1979 edition by the Theosophical Publishing House; in keeping with modern standards, the language has been edited, where possible, to be more gender neutral, but not at the sacrifice of good prose; and minor emendations have been made throughout as necessary. The compiler alone is responsible for any errors of judgment in the editing of these articles.

—David P. Bruce  
September 2012

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*THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

A Review by Henry Steel Olcott

*The Secret Doctrine* was published in October 1888. This book review appeared in the January 1889 issue of *The Theosophist*, only three months after its publication.

The personal relations existing between the author of this splendid production—one of the towering pinnacles of modern literature—and this magazine, make it more seemly that we should copy the criticisms of third parties rather than put forth our own. But we may at least say that however opinions may differ with respect to the philosophical and metaphysical value of the ancient esotericism, the unanimous verdict of our age must be that *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* are works of a phenomenal character. Whether we consider the advanced years of the author, the comparative rapidity of their composition, the varied erudition, and the boldness and originality of thought they display, the sparkling of their literary style, the strong light thrown upon some of the most recondite problems of symbology, mythology, and comparative theology, biological and psychological science, and evolution, the reader is struck with amazement at the several features of this intellectual “efflorescence” of our times.

To the intimate friends of Madame Blavatsky, who have been near her at the time when the two books were being written (1876-77 and 1886-88), their production has been clothed with all the interest of psychic phenomena of a class infinitely higher than the vulgar wonders of physical thaumaturgy.<sup>1</sup> Enfeebled by disease, and on several occasions pronounced moribund by the physicians, forced by them to leave India under warnings of probably sudden death by apoplexy, she has yet worked at her desk on *The Secret Doctrine* an average of about twelve hours daily, from 6:30 or 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and while the work was passing through the press, often read fifty pages of proof a day.<sup>2</sup>

To see the hundreds of references to other authors, one might naturally suppose her possessed of a very extensive library, whereas, in point of fact, neither for *Isis Unveiled* nor *The Secret Doctrine* had she access to more than comparative handfuls. Her quotations<sup>3</sup> have often been called into question by friends who had been permitted to read her MSS., but when they searched in the British Museum and American Libraries, her accuracy was vindicated.

A case in point: for a title-heading in one of her essays<sup>4</sup> she wrote a certain verse and credited it to Tennyson. Two persons—one an author of repute—who thought themselves familiar with every line that Tennyson had published, vehemently protested against her committing such a blunder, one sure to be detected at once. On Madame Blavatsky’s persisting that it had so come into her mind and must be right, a gentleman of great literary

experience—Dr. C. Carter-Blake—made a long search in the British Museum, which resulted in finding the verse *verbatim et literatim*<sup>5</sup> in a magazine of the year 1831, “The Gem,” long since dead and forgotten. For some reason or other, the poet had not cared to include it in any edition of his works.<sup>6</sup>

Opponents of a *calumnious diathesis*<sup>7</sup> have not scrupled to charge Madame Blavatsky with interested motives<sup>8</sup> in her Theosophical work. To such, the following circumstances should be interesting. The first edition of *Isis Unveiled* was, to the pleased surprise of its publisher, Mr. J. W. Bouton of New York, exhausted within ten days or a fortnight of appearance, and a second edition was demanded. Mr. Bouton came to Madame Blavatsky’s house and, in the presence of the present writer, made her the following liberal offer. If she would write another book, in a single volume, which should unveil *Isis* a little more, just enough to satisfy the mystical class of minds, he would bring out an edition of one hundred copies, sell them at \$100 each,<sup>9</sup> and give her \$50 per copy as author’s copyright. In short, he would pay her a splendid literary fee<sup>10</sup> of \$5,000 for a work which she could easily finish within a year. She refused on the ground that it was not permitted at that time to reveal more of the esoteric philosophy than had been given out in *Isis Unveiled*. Yet, just then she had not the money to pay her passage out to India!

There are some who say that the Book of Dzyan, upon whose majestic stanzas her work under notice is based, has no existence: that it is a literary fraud. Well, whether so or not, it is at least one of the most striking compositions in literature; its tone solemn and grandiose, like the organ peals through a cathedral, or the rythmic tone of Nature upon which ancient music is said to be founded. If it was written by her indeed, then a Hindu might be inclined to suspect that she is a reincarnation of some such sage as bequeathed to an admiring world the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana*, or other archaic classical works. It is not of the least consequence *per se* whether there is or is not a Book of Dzyan preserved in the hidden libraries of the Sages, whether or not there be any such libraries (though the writer has personal knowledge of the latter fact, and could, if he chose, point out the very spot of one of them from a railway carriage in passing). The book stands upon its own merits, and so solidly that it will take a mighty adversary to upset it. If there is one thing more hateful than another to the independent thinker, it is to have a book put forth as specially entitled to reverence because of its alleged infallible parentage, and apart from its intrinsic merits. A book is good or bad, sound or unsound, instructive or silly, *as a book*; and all the gods of Olympus, and Recluses of all the Holy Mountains or Deserts, cannot make falsehood truth or imbecilic nonsense Divine revelation. This is clearly Madame Blavatsky’s opinion also, as the special disclaimers of authority in her *Secret Doctrine* amply show.

The value of this book is so great to would-be Theosophists that if a single chapter or portion of a chapter were read at each meeting of a Branch<sup>11</sup> by someone who can read well and understand the text, they need seek no further for teachings or teachers in theoretical Occultism. It is a library in itself, unique, in the sense of a dictionary or an encyclopedia; and

if the Theosophical movement had produced only the two books of this author, it would, in the eyes of posterity, be regarded as an epoch-marking phase of human thought.

As no stress is sought to be laid upon the supposed primal source of Madame Blavatsky's inspiration—the school of Eastern Sages—so her friends are not disposed to excuse her for any of the literary faults of her books: her discursiveness, the unmethodical jumbling together of various topics, a plethora of proofs adduced in support of a given proposition after her ground has been covered, so to say, three layers thick; her frequent lack of exactness in presentation of scientific theories and conclusions, and her sometimes contradictory language. Conceding all these, it is still most certain that she is one of the most brilliant conversation-alists, most graceful and interesting writers of modern times, whether in her own Russian vernacular or in French or English—in which all three languages her pen seems equally facile.

The critics of 1877 have said that the prototype of *Isis* was the *Anacalypsis* of Godfrey Higgins,<sup>12</sup> but while the *magnum opus* of that erudite yet neglected author never reached its complete second edition,<sup>13</sup> and Mr. Bouton and Mr. Quaritch have still many unsold copies in stock—fifty years after its appearance in 1836—the first edition of *Isis Unveiled* was sold within a fortnight, and the first of *The Secret Doctrine* (of 500 copies) sold actually in advance of publication. The times are certainly changed for the better, and the number of minds capable of grasping these high themes much larger than in the generation that not only misunderstood but socially persecuted Godfrey Higgins.

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**Henry Steel Olcott** (1832-1907) was a co-founder of the Theosophical Society along with Madame Blavatsky and William Quan Judge. Olcott's administrative skills helped to shape the organizational structure of the TS in its early years. He was a tireless and devoted worker for the Theosophical Society, for which he faithfully served as president until his death in 1907.

## Compiler's Notes

1. Thaumaturgy: the performance of miracles; from the Greek, *thaûma* (miracle) and *érgon* (work).
2. Proofreading is a skill that requires sustained concentration and the ability to see what is actually on the printed page as opposed to what the mind thinks or assumes is on the document.
3. In his book *H. P. Blavatsky, the Light-Bringer*, Geoffrey Barborika calculates that *Isis Unveiled* contains 1139 citations, while *The Secret Doctrine* includes 1147.
4. See "Karmic Visions" in the *Collected Writings*, Volume IX.
5. *Verbatim et literatim*: Latin, meaning "word for word and letter for letter."
6. Tennyson's short poem reads as follows:

Oh sad *No More!* O sweet *No More!*  
Oh strange *No More!*  
By a mossed brookband on a stone

I smelt a wildweed-flower alone;  
There was a ringing in my ears,  
And both my eyes gushed out with tears.  
Surely all pleasant things had gone before,  
Lowburied fathomdeep beneath with thee, NO MORE!  
“The Gem,” 1831

7. *Calumnious diathesis*: a colorful term coined by Olcott, which is formed from “calumnious” (slanderous or defamatory) and “diathesis” (having a constitutional predisposition toward a particular state or condition, especially one that is abnormal or diseased).
8. Olcott’s use of the word *interested* is archaic; “self-serving motives” would be the current translation.
9. When adjusted for inflation, \$100 in 1889 dollars would be equivalent to \$2522 in 2012 dollars. Obviously, anybody who could afford to pay that price was financially well off.
10. Adjusted for inflation, a literary fee of \$5000 in 1889 dollars translates to \$126,214 in 2012 dollars.
11. The term “Branch” is synonymous with a Lodge of the Theosophical Society.
12. The full title of Godfrey Higgins’s work is a mouthful: *Anacalypsis: an attempt to draw aside the veil of the Saitic Isis; or, An inquiry into the origin of languages, nations, and religion*.
13. Only 200 copies of *Anacalypsis* were published in the original 1836 edition; a limited edition of 350 copies was later published in 1927.

—David P. Bruce

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to article are by page and paragraph.)

1. In what way does Olcott’s review of *The Secret Doctrine* diverge from the normal parameters of a book review?
2. *The Secret Doctrine* was published three months before Henry Olcott’s review appeared in the January 1889 issue of *The Theosophist*. Realistically, do you think Olcott had time to read the entire work before writing this review? And is it really necessary that a critic read every page of a book in order to write a proper review?
3. Do you think Olcott’s high praise for *The Secret Doctrine* is warranted?
4. Do you think his criticisms of the book are accurate?
5. What does Madame Blavatsky’s refusal to write another volume of *Isis* for a fee of \$5000 say about her moral character? (2.1)
6. Look up references to secret libraries in the Introductory of *The Secret Doctrine*.

EXCERPTS FROM *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*:

It has been claimed in all ages that ever since the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, every work of a character that might have led the profane to the ultimate discovery and comprehension of some of the mysteries of the Secret Science, was, owing to the combined efforts of the members of the Brotherhoods, diligently

searched for. It is added, moreover, by those who know, that once found, save three copies left and stored safely away, such works were all destroyed.

—Introductory [vol. 1, p. xxiii]

The sacredness of the cycle of 4320 . . . lies in the fact that the figures which compose it, taken separately or joined in various combinations, are each and all symbolical of the greatest mysteries in Nature. Indeed, whether one takes the 4 separately, or the 3 by itself, or the two together making 7, or again the three added together and yielding 9, all these numbers have their application in the most sacred and occult things, and record the workings of Nature in her eternally periodical phenomena. They are never-erring, perpetually recurring numbers, unveiling, to him who studies the secrets of Nature, a truly divine System, an *intelligent* plan in Cosmogony, which results in natural cosmic divisions of times, seasons, invisible influences, astronomical phenomena, with their action and reaction on terrestrial and even moral nature; on birth, death, and growth, on health and disease. All these natural events are based and depend upon cyclical processes in the Kosmos itself, producing periodic agencies which, acting from without, affect the Earth and all that lives and breathes on it, from one end to the other of any Manvantara. (2:73-4)

Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigor. (2:305)

The Law of KARMA is inextricably interwoven with that of Reincarnation . . . it is only this doctrine, we say, that can explain to us the mysterious problem of Good and Evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and *apparent* injustice of life . . . For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him, and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbor, with all his intellect and noble virtues—far more deserving in every way—perishing of want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him—that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men, as well as their supposed Creator. (2:303-4)

Our globe is subject to seven periodical *entire* changes which go *pari passu* with the races. For the Secret Doctrine teaches that, during this Round, there must be seven terrestrial *pralayas*, three occasioned by the change in the inclination of the earth's axis. It is a *law* which acts at its appointed time, and not at all blindly, as science may think, but in strict accordance and harmony with *Karmic* law. In Occultism this inexorable law is referred to as “the great ADJUSTER.” (2:329)

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METHODS OF APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

By Geoffrey A. Barborka

Transcribed from a talk given on July 17, 1956 at the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in America, and published in *The American Theosophist* in December of that year.

The subject of *The Secret Doctrine* is a vast one, as you all know. One wonders where to begin and what to cover in considering this theme. I thought that I would consider a practical approach, because I have been asked the question so many times: “You are studying *The Secret Doctrine*, are you not?” And after giving my assent, people would say, “Well, it is way beyond me. Isn’t there something you could do to help me—some advice that you could give so that I may approach the problem of reading *The Secret Doctrine* with greater understanding?” Therefore, I would like to present some methods for approaching the work, which are applicable to group study as well as to individual reading.

Most of you are aware that *The Secret Doctrine* is not written in the manner of a textbook, that is to say, in the manner of an author presenting a thesis where each point is expounded and made clear. On the contrary, *The Secret Doctrine* may be said to be written inspirationally; and because of that, its manner of approach must be quite different from the way one would read a textbook, or even an interesting novel.

First, I should like to present this idea for your consideration, namely that *The Secret Doctrine* is being presented from the Platonic rather than from the Aristotelian point of view. This calls for an explanation. Today, we are accustomed to studying any subject by considering as many known factors as possible, gathering together all the details, marshalling our facts, and then from these, attempting to form a picture, say, of the Universe or a concept of the Whole. This is known as the Aristotelian system. The Platonic system may be said to be the reverse of this process. Here the entire concept is presented first; that is to say, the Universe as a totality; and it is up to the student to fill in the details as he goes along pursuing his study. There can be no doubt that *The Secret Doctrine* is written from this Platonic concept. The student is given the concept of the Universe as a whole and he must correlate facts and see how they fit into the picture; depending upon his ability in correlating these facts, he becomes able to understand the subject in its entirety. Let me give an illustration, which will make this clear.

*The Secret Doctrine* regards the man as an evolving being—a *Saptaparna*, to use the technical expression, which means a seven-principled being.<sup>1</sup> And man is presented as originating with his top-most principle, the Atman, with all its other six principles evolved, or unrolled, so to speak, from the Atman. This would be an illustration of the Platonic concept, whereas the Aristotelian would regard man from below, as a physical body with six

principles one on top of the other, somewhat in the manner of a seven-layer cake. How could you get any idea of Atman from this point of view? It's practically impossible. The entire *Secret Doctrine* is presented from the standpoint of the Platonic method, so it becomes necessary to regard each concept that is presented in that manner.

As for the meaning of *Saptaparna*, this signifies a seven-leaved plant, or a seven-leaved lotus. At the present stage of human evolution, only three leaves or petals ("principles") are fully unfolded; the fourth petal is in the process of development.

In terms of study groups taking up *The Secret Doctrine*, it is well to establish whether it can be continued serially—that is, regularly—or irregularly. It is far better to study on a regular basis, every two weeks, for instance, than to study intermittently, with one meeting now and another five or six weeks later. Of course, the ideal situation would be to study every week. And it's not too important to have the group of the same opinion or of the same level of study in the teachings. It is far better, in fact, to have one or two members who are new to the study, so that they will ask provocative questions continuously.

The actual study may be approached in three different ways. Each of these three methods is effective and may be applied to three different categories of students. The first group, having little knowledge of the technical teachings of Theosophy would be considered beginners. I'm aware that people do not like to be considered as beginners, yet from the standpoint of the Dhyan-Chohans, all of us are beginners in this great study of the Ancient Wisdom. The second group would be those who are acquainted with some of the main teachings—an intermediate grade. And the third group would be those who have extensive knowledge of the teachings—an advanced grade.

It may be asked: "Is it really possible to present *The Secret Doctrine* to those who have little knowledge of the teachings?" My answer is, yes, it is possible, provided that the one who is conducting the class has a good knowledge of the scope of the work, not only being able to present the teachings, but in addition must have an aptitude for finding particularly applicable passages, which are so important in expounding the volumes.

THE FIRST METHOD of study, then, would be to present *The Secret Doctrine* by means of the key teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, spending not one evening but many evenings in pursuing each one of these jewels of wisdom, utilizing all the passages concerned with that particular teaching, and expounding the passages with a running commentary. For example, the first teaching to be considered might be rebirth. All phases would be dealt with, including palingenesis, metempsychosis, metempsychosis, pre-existence, reincarnation, re-embodiment, transmigration, and all the various aspects of the subject.

THE SECOND METHOD consists of a specialized study of the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, taking each sloka or verse in detailed examination, reading all the explanations furnished and all correlated passages in both volumes. Although this appears to be a simple method, it nevertheless entails a great deal of painstaking work by the person conducting the class.

THE THIRD METHOD would be a page-by-page reading, or rather, a line-by-line reading of the work with appropriate pauses, so that each participant may have an opportunity to ask questions or comment upon the reading.

Most importantly, instead of commencing the study of *The Secret Doctrine* with Volume I, as so many are apt to do, I would strongly recommend and advise that the study be commenced with Volume II.<sup>2</sup> While this may seem at first sight to reverse the intentions of the author, the reason for this will be made plain very soon. Volume II deals with anthropogenesis, the study of man, and this volume is readily understandable, providing a basic understanding for passages that are more difficult in the first volume, which deals with cosmogenesis. I can assure you that many students in reading Volume I—especially its opening pages—have had so much difficulty that they feel that the whole work is written that way. But that is not so.

The study of humanity, as presented by the Ancient Wisdom, is of the utmost importance, not only in solving the clue to our origin, but also in providing a key towards understanding the problems that occur in everyday life. The second volume lays the necessary groundwork for an understanding of the first volume. Studying mankind's origin and development *first* was one of the methods pursued in the ancient Mystery Schools. Remember the motto that was placed over the portico to the Temple of Delphi: "Man, know thyself." In reading *The Secret Doctrine*, we soon realize that the human being is a microcosm, a little universe. By understanding the little universe, we learn to understand the big universe, the macrocosm.

After finishing the study of Anthropogenesis (Vol. II), instead of commencing with page 1 of Cosmogenesis (Vol. I), continue with pages 151-299 of Volume I. The reason for this is that this portion of the work deals with our Earth. When this phase of study is completed, you will be able to tackle the abstruse portion of the first part of Cosmogenesis, which is primarily applicable to the Universe, and correspondingly to our Earth and Solar System.

Let us now consider the approach by an individual reader. It should be borne in mind that for long ages, the principal subjects dealt with in *The Secret Doctrine* have been regarded as esoteric knowledge and dealt with under the pledge of secrecy in the Mystery Schools of old. Although now given to the public in a published work, nevertheless it may be said to be still handled in the traditional ancient manner. That is to say, certain jewels of wisdom are given that the reader should endeavor to understand and correlate with other facets of the teaching, thus enabling one to obtain a deeper understanding of the whole. This is arrived at after repeated study; very seldom is it gained in a first reading. Therefore, the approach to *The Secret Doctrine* should be made with an open mind, with a willingness to withhold final judgment upon a theme until further illumination is obtained. In other words, the mind should be held in a responsive, fluid condition, rather than in a fixed or rigid manner, however determined one may be to grasp the meaning.

The same three methods of approach as outlined for classes may be followed by the individual student. The method of the first procedure is stressed, especially for a person to

whom the work is new. Of course, there is far greater leeway for one reading *The Secret Doctrine* individually than in a class, for one can choose one's own subjects. Suppose the subject of reincarnation is decided upon. Turn to the index and write down all the references that are made to reincarnation. After reading each one in turn, is the subject exhausted? Not at all; there are far better references to the subject of reincarnation under the heading of rebirth than under the word "reincarnation" itself. If one is willing to follow the idea of reading by means of subjects rather than page by page, one will soon have a very excellent knowledge of the key teachings of *The Secret Doctrine*.

A few words should be said about the strange terms to be found in this work. Unfamiliar words should be looked up by the individual reader as they are met with on each page. In a class, the instructor or facilitator should explain each term as it occurs, as well as give its correct pronunciation. This is really important. If the reader wishes to be still better equipped, there is H. P. Blavatsky's *Theosophical Glossary* or any of the other good glossaries which can be found in the Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library.<sup>3</sup>

In all likelihood, the following question has occurred to many readers: "Would it be possible to gain knowledge of the principal teachings of *The Secret Doctrine* by means of a selected number of pages, without being obliged to read both volumes in their entirety?" For those who wish to have such a list, the following particular pages contain, in my opinion, the most important key teachings of *The Secret Doctrine*:

- Volume I, pages 14-18 (Three Fundamental Propositions)
- Volume I, page 181 ("It now becomes plain . . . he now is.")
- Volume I, pages 151-160 ("With these verses . . . no more need be said of it here.")
- Volume I, pages 170-177 (Additional Facts and Explanations . . .)
- Volume I, pages 272-283 (Six numbered items; five proven facts)
- Volume II, pages 1-3 ("The Stanzas . . . disfigured by mistranslations.")
- Volume II, pages 109-110 (The evolution of the second race)
- Volume II, pages 167-168 ("We now come to . . . from an animal ancestor.")
- Volume II, pages 302-306 ("Questions with regard . . . of the false personality.")

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, for any number of lists could be made. But if a person can expound those pages fully, and really explain them to one who is new to the Ancient Wisdom, they will indeed have a mastery of *The Secret Doctrine*.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with few words of encouragement. When reading a passage that does not seem to make any sense, don't be discouraged. This is simply an indication that the preliminary "spade-work" has not been done on that particular theme. In this case, what should be done? My suggestion is to wait a while; take another subject, and in reading this new subject, possibly something may occur which will explain the one that was difficult before. Then read the passage that had troubled you once again; see if it now becomes clearer by reading it the second time, or maybe a third time, or even a fourth time, because *The*

*Secret Doctrine* gives one an ever-expanding horizon. It is like one who is at the foot of a hill; nearby objects are seen very easily, but the view is limited. In mounting the hill, one gets a larger and ever larger view the more one climbs.

Remember this: your goal should not be to see how quickly you can read *The Secret Doctrine*. The plan is not to read the book in the same manner you would read an instruction manual or a work of fiction, but to capture new ideas. When you have grasped the ideas behind the printed words, you will establish yourself in consonance with the archaic wisdom of the ages, which is the essential root of the same Wisdom taught by all the Saviors that have come to humanity. In this way, you will really come in contact with a continent of thought. This Wisdom is the heritage of the human race—but it has remained hidden, until brought to the Western world by H. P. Blavatsky.

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**Geoffrey A. Barborka** (1897-1982) was a devoted student of *The Secret Doctrine*. Many students felt the need for further explication of that profound text, so Barborka set himself to this task which ultimately resulted in his writing a fine book of commentary called *The Divine Plan*. His trade was that of a printer, but he distinguished himself as a scholar, author and lecturer on theosophical topics. His other books include: *The Peopling of the Earth*, *Pearl of the Orient*, and *H. P. Blavatsky, Tibet and Tulku*.

## Compiler's Notes

1. Refer to HPB's diagram on page 157 of Volume I for a comparison of the Septenary division in different Indian systems.
2. Barborka's original article referred to the seven-volume Adyar edition of *The Secret Doctrine*; all such references have been converted to the three-volume 1979 edition.
3. Geoffrey Barborka's *Glossary of Sanskrit Terms* may be purchased from Amazon and other sellers. An audio version is available on CD from Quest Books (product no. 8153).

—David P. Bruce

## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

1. What is the difference between reading and study? What are the different mental processes involved in each of those activities?
2. Can you read without thinking? Can you study without thinking? Does one generally involve more thinking than the other?
3. What do you hope to gain from your study of *The Secret Doctrine*?

4. What are the main differences between individual and group study? What are the advantages of each? Disadvantages?
5. What are some guidelines that might help maintain a harmonious atmosphere in a study group of Theosophists?

#### EXCERPTS FROM *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*:

##### Six Numbered Items

- (1) The Secret Doctrine is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, and its cosmogony alone is the most stupendous and elaborate system. (1:272)
- (2) The fundamental Law in that system . . . is the One homogeneous divine SUBSTANCE-PRINCIPLE, the one radical cause. (1:273)
- (3) The Universe is the periodical manifestation of this unknown Absolute Essence. (1:273)
- (4) The Universe is called, with everything in it, MAYA, because all is temporary therein, from the ephemeral life of a firefly to that of the Sun. . . . Yet, the Universe is real enough to the conscious beings in it, which are as unreal as it is itself. (1:274)
- (5) Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS: *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. (1:274)
- (6) The Universe is worked and *guided* from *within outwards*. (1:274)

No Entity, whether angelic or human, can reach the state of Nirvana or of absolute purity, except through aeons of suffering and the *knowledge* of EVIL as well as of good, as otherwise the latter remains incomprehensible. (2:81)

Between man and the animal—whose Monads (or Jivas) are fundamentally identical—there is the impassable abyss of Mentality and Self-Consciousness. (2:81)

Now there are three kinds of light in Occultism, as in the Kabala. (1) The Abstract and Absolute Light, which is Darkness; (2) The Light of the Manifested-Unmanifested, called by some the Logos; and (3) The latter light reflected in the Dhyani-Chohans, the minor *Logoi* (the Elohim collectively), who, in their turn, shed it on the objective Universe. (2:37)

*THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

By Ernest Wood

Adapted from a talk given at the Blavatsky Centenary Celebration at Adyar, August 12, 1931, and published that year in the October and November issues of *The Theosophist*.

There are perhaps two principal reasons why this book is not as widely read as it ought to be. One is the great length of it, which alarms busy people whose time is filled with a variety of activities. It's an interesting psychological feature of our present day that people like to get to the end of things and say, "Now that is done." They're not willing to *live* with a book, *i.e.*, to have at hand a book which they are not trying to finish, but which they enjoy, and which they can dip into whenever they feel inclined to read. They are perfectly willing to read ten books of one hundred pages each, but not one book of a thousand pages. Many years ago, when I was librarian of the Manchester City Lodge, I tried the experiment of rebinding each volume of *The Secret Doctrine* in three parts. I found that it became much more popular than before, and most of the parts were constantly in demand. This division was easily made in the two volumes, since each already contains three parts: (i) evolution, (ii) symbolism, and (iii) various discussions of the globes or worlds (volume I) and of the monads (volume II).

The second reason is that the book not only states its own message, but it also goes out of its way—hundreds, if not thousands of times—in order to show a great variety of students and scholars the doctrines that it presents are not new; that they can be found, if carefully searched for, among the traditions and the studies with which they are concerned. Those traditions and studies are often somewhat technical and rather recondite from the point of view of the average reader. It was part of Mme. Blavatsky's humility of character that she tried to meet all enquirers—and even her opponents—upon their own ground. Instead of saying, "I have brought you something very precious, but you can take it or leave it," she would go to endless trouble to make it easy for whomsoever she might be addressing to approach her truth from his or her point of view. *The Secret Doctrine* therefore presents a most heterogeneous collection of traditions, myths, and symbols; we shall understand the book and its purpose better if we remember that it is not *directly* concerned with those relics, and that there is no occult advantage to be gained by knowing a lot about them.

It requires some careful thought to distinguish the relations between the writer and the reader of *The Secret Doctrine*. The writer makes it perfectly clear that she herself is not a speculator with regard to these doctrines, but is a purveyor of teachings about which she has conclusive convictions. Although she quotes Montaigne<sup>1</sup>—"I have here made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them"—she also mentions that these flowers have been so neglected in recent centuries that to most

people they will present something entirely new, and that would be an understanding of the laws of life, nature, and humanity. The study of these teachings will release people from the materialistic conceptions which have distorted almost every branch of modern thought: religious, philosophic, scientific, and even social. She makes no claim to a perfect personal knowledge of the facts behind the doctrines she presents, but asserts that she has been instructed by others—Initiates or Masters who have that knowledge—a body of Adepts who have verified the facts themselves, have kept a consistent record of them, and have from time to time announced these truths in the world, only to have them again and again misunderstood, and therefore distorted and overlaid with errors. Therefore she says that these truths appear in every system of thought and philosophy worthy of the name.

She claims no authority for her statements on the ground of such superior tutelage, but holds that these truths would easily prove acceptable to any person who could be persuaded to examine them in the calm light of reason, setting aside the clinging to privileges, and the fears that accompany crystallized traditions and obstruct the free working of the mind. It is not by setting aside traditions as such, but by admitting reason as applied to traditions that these teachings may find acceptance, for there is scarcely a tradition or a symbol coming from antiquity which does not enshrine some great truth. Therefore, Mme. Blavatsky writes in the Proem:

Once that the reader has gained a clear apprehension of them [the basic conceptions of *The Secret Doctrine*] and realized the light which they throw on every problem of life, they will need no further justification in his eyes, because their truth will be to him as evident as the sun in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

The source of those teachings—*The Stanzas of Dzyan*—is described as an ancient book, of which the only remaining copy is in the custody of the Adepts. It contains a record of the formation of our solar system and of the progress of humanity from its beginning. From that book, Mme. Blavatsky takes seven stanzas as the basis of her first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. They address the formation of the worlds, or what she sometimes calls the “doctrine of the globes.” In her second volume, she takes twelve stanzas as the basis for describing the evolution of living forms, which enshrine what she has alluded to as the “doctrine of the monads.” These two doctrines cover the study of life and form, but these are realized to be but a limitation of ONE PRINCIPLE which is beyond all description, because the unseen whole can never be described in terms of a visible part of that whole.

*The Stanzas of Dzyan* are not very attractive to the modern reader. At first glance, their style shows a resemblance to some of the Vedic and Puranic writings. They are quite archaic in form and in her translation Mme. Blavatsky explains that she has often found it necessary to give a sentence or a phrase in place of a word. But when we turn from the stanzas to her commentaries upon them, then we are in the realm of perfectly modern language and expression, perfectly modern explanation and discussion, showing no literary foibles and no attempt at dramatic effect. I am hard pressed to name any other writer who can make state-

ments upon metaphysical truths with greater clarity and simplicity than she does in these pages.

The story begins with a reference to the state of things before the universe came into being. She speaks of the Eternal Parent slumbering in her “ever-invisible robes,” a metaphor which symbolizes the mystic root of all matter. After a few pages on the subject of space and time, in which she stretches the mind of the reader by a conception of “duration” as the timeless container of all limited time-quantities, she comes to the crucial idea that Universal Mind has to appear *before* there can be manifestation. She further makes the point that initially there was not even Universal Mind, until the collective hosts of spiritual beings were ready to contain it. This is all in the first stanza, but much further on she describes the Logos as “a compound unity of manifested living Spirits.”<sup>3</sup> Thus we find that mind is behind matter, and that the universal mind is the collectivity of the spiritual beings or monads, every one of which is indispensable to it.

But she quickly passes on, for HPB will never tire her reader with any prolixity. I cannot, of course, give even the least outline of the picture that she now paints. But it is possible to pick out certain points of thought, and thereby show what is the general modification in modern thinking that would result if *The Secret Doctrine* were widely accepted. For example, it would be clear that all forms arose from mind and not from matter. She writes: “We see that every *external* motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by *internal* feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind.”<sup>4</sup>

Herein, no doubt, we have a clue to her intense dislike for the frequent allusion, especially by spiritualists, to the subtle forms of departed persons as “spirits,” and the cause of her break with the spiritualists; she could not induce them to see that they were only dealing with very external and imperfect forms, and not with the spirit or life of the persons with whom they communicated. This outlook also explains her rooted antipathy to materialism in all its forms, religious as well as scientific.

THERE ARE THREE DOCTRINES which one might cull from these pages, and which were new in Europe at the time of her writing. One is the doctrine of *involution*, which implies that the life expresses, or shows itself less and less, as it associates itself more and more with material forms, so that expression is not really expression, but the lack of it. This is a psychological principle very easy to understand. For example, when a person reads a book, he is manifesting less of himself than if he was running around with a red flag. Or if a bee goes down into the heart of a flower, it is not displaying itself as much as if it were flying about in the field. But psychologically there is a benefit to be gained by such deliberate limitations. In fact, the whole process of involution may be summarized by these three stages: (1) concentration or limitation to something comparatively small, *i.e.*, involution; (2) the experience gained as a result of that limitation; (3) the fruit of that experience, which leaves the life stronger in some way for having been through it. If you merely call this

process “descent into matter,” the psychological principle is at once lost to sight. We can hardly speak of mere descent into matter if she is correct in the following statement: “Matter, after all, is nothing else than the sequence of our own states of consciousness, and Spirit an idea of psychic intuition.”<sup>5</sup>

In short, the theory of involution puts forward the process of concentration, or limitation, followed by the process of experience; this is followed by liberation from the limitation, accompanied by increased power. We may infer that all material processes are directly or indirectly the result of this psychological process, and therefore all worlds and all forms are temporary in character. All the cyclic processes of globes and races and men, which HPB describes at great length in both volumes, have their birth, their life, and their decay in a process of the Divine Mind, a process that is fundamental. This same process appears in the mind of every human being, in every one of its complete actions, and in the cyclic progress of each human life. She speaks repeatedly of the law of analogy: “The Law of Analogy is the first key to the world-problem.”<sup>6</sup> This is no mere parallelism or duplication, no casual external symmetry, but the perpetual outcropping of the cause which is in the root, just as all leaves on a tree are of the same type. “As above, so below”—which she quotes so often—appears for the same reason; for the “below” is still the “above,” though that “above” is very much covered up. To HPB, therefore, the whole universe, though imbued with intelligence, represents only that involution of the life which is the first stage in the history of all forms.

A SECOND DOCTRINE with which Mme. Blavatsky was closely associated was also quite a novelty in the modern world—her conception of heaven or *swarga*, for which she used the Tibetan word *devachan*, meaning literally “the place of happiness.” It should not be confused with the Sanskrit word *deva*.<sup>7</sup> She declared that the heaven world, which nearly all persons enjoy for some time and in some degree after death, and which is a state of undiluted happiness according to the capacity of the person concerned, is a subjective stage, but at the same time an objective state. This is not the contradiction in terms that it appears to be. It simply means that it is a state in which the mind produces its environment according to its own subjective materials, that is, according to its own thoughts and feelings, not hampered by the degree of rigidity of time and space limitations which we find in the physical world. In that state of being, or in that “plane,” the dead person, having ceased to be attracted by carnal pleasures and limitations, has around him the things and persons whom he likes and loves. This is declared to be a state even more real than the physical state.

THIRDLY, even the physical world is produced by the same mind process; only it works more slowly, having to use the instrumentality of hands and feet, and the agency of karmic law. It is the same process of each person making their own world, albeit a slower process with more collective activity. Thus it appears clear that to HPB the material worlds were very seriously incomplete, and that the worlds of mind and what is beyond mind were richer and fuller, and contained all that is in the world and very much more. I think it is because of this that she laid so much stress upon metaphysics. In one place she wrote<sup>8</sup> that there had

been much perplexity about the doctrine of the monads and the doctrine of the globes, because they had not been sufficiently examined from their metaphysical aspect. In reference to this, she quotes one of her Teachers, who said in this connection: “[Why] this preaching of our doctrines, all this uphill work and swimming *in adversum flumen?*” Concluding that point, she wrote: “Outside of metaphysics, no occult philosophy, no esotericism is possible. It is like trying to explain the aspirations and affections, the love and hatred, the most private and sacred workings in the soul and mind of a living man, by an anatomical description of the chest and brain of his dead body.”<sup>9</sup>

It seems very clear that Mme. Blavatsky was anxious that the world should regard everything from the standpoint of life and that by metaphysics she was not referring merely to finer grades of matter, but to that which in its very nature is not material, but is living everywhere and in relation to all forms. Our being and our treasure are really there, while the forms are merely temporary playthings. This was HPB’s doctrine of *maya*, or illusion.

The Secret Doctrine<sup>10</sup> is thus declared to be the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, compiled by generations of seers whose flashing gaze saw the soul of things where the ordinary observer could see only the external work of form. Its central teaching, around which all else gravitates, is one omnipresent, homogeneous, divine, impersonal SUBSTANCE-PRINCIPLE, the radical cause of all. Of this, the universe is a periodical manifestation, which has been called a *maya*, or unreality (like a dream), because of the evanescence of its forms. The universe is worked and guided from within outwards, and everything in it is conscious. There is no dead matter and no blind or unconscious law, but the Living Ones, who embody the law, who have no longer fleshly bodies and do not say “I am myself and no one else,” and are not ministering or protecting angels. Humanity cannot propitiate them, but by eating the fruit of knowledge we may arrive at a realization of non-separateness from the One Self, and so reach their plane. All these disembodied beings either have been human, or they are elementals who will be human in the future, and all nature shows a progressive march towards higher life. Men and universes are thus but the reflections of realities behind the snares of the great illusion.

In conclusion, I must say a few words about the relation of the book to its writer. She has been the subject of much recent literature, a large part of it produced by people not interested in the theosophical movement. It has been shown that she displayed a richness of imagination when writing books such as *The Caves and Jungles of Hindustan* and in *The People of the Blue Mountains*. Critics ask if there may not be something of the same dramatic talent in *The Secret Doctrine* itself, in its allusion to the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and its lost language, and even to the personalities of her unseen assistants. I would suggest one ultimate reply to all such questions, namely that the reader should resort to the advice of Mme. Blavatsky herself, by studying the doctrines and considering their reasonableness and coherence. What we have to avoid is personal authority and personal criticism, which only confuse the issue and

easily arouse prejudice, fondness, hate, personal pride and fear, which cloud the vision and impede the mind.

We must rest the case for *The Secret Doctrine* strictly upon its merits, as judged by unbiased and educated minds. Only such a method of presenting it can win the attention and respect of those who respect themselves, and can help towards the spread of that knowledge in the world which it was the intention of its author or authors to promote.

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**Ernest Wood** (1883-1965) was born in Manchester, England, but spent nearly forty years studying and teaching in India. He is the author of more than thirty books, including *Concentration: An Approach to Meditation, Mind and Memory Training, The Pinnacle of Indian Thought*, and *The Seven Rays*. Wood served as International Secretary of the Theosophical Society during the presidency of Annie Besant.

### Compiler's Notes

1. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) was a philosopher of the French Renaissance whose essays are still widely read.
2. Blavatsky, H. P. *The Secret Doctrine*. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1979, vol. 1, p. 20.
3. Ibid., p. 573.
4. Ibid., p. 274.
5. Ibid., p. 542.
6. Ibid., p. 604.
7. *Deva*, literally meaning "shining one," is derived from the verbal root *div*—to shine. It is also used in a general sense for various grades of spiritual beings.
8. Blavatsky, vol. 1, p. 169.
9. Ibid., pp. 169-70.
10. Here, HPB is referring to the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition, not the title of her book.

—David P. Bruce

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to the article are by page and paragraph.)

1. In this course, the citations are from the 3-volume 1979 edition of *The Secret Doctrine*. Not counting the index, Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis account for over 1600 pages. Has the length of *The Secret Doctrine* been a factor in your deciding whether to read it or not? (13.1)
2. While there are many reasons why a person chooses not to read a particular book, would you rule out the possibility of reading any of these books based solely on their size? *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (3000 pgs.); *The Iliad* (700 pgs.);

*Isis Unveiled* (1471 pgs.); *Les Misérables* (1400 pgs.); *Lord of the Rings* (1200 pgs.); *Shogun* (1152 pgs.); *Sironia, Texas* (1731 pgs.); *War and Peace* (1594 pgs.).

3. Why is reading *The Secret Doctrine* page by page, from start to finish, not a good idea?
4. “There is scarcely a tradition or a symbol coming from antiquity which does not enshrine some great truth.” Can you find any examples of this? (14.1)
5. Does Blavatsky’s description of the Universal Mind surprise you in any way? (15.1)
6. Briefly summarize the doctrine of involution. (15.4)
7. How can *devachan* be both a subjective and an objective state? (16.2)
8. Why is it important to judge the teachings found in *The Secret Doctrine* on their own merit, rather than on the personal authority of H. P. Blavatsky? (17.3)

#### EXCERPTS FROM *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*:

The doctrine of the septenary chains of worlds . . . is briefly thus:

1. Everything in the metaphysical as in the physical Universe is septenary. Hence every sidereal body, every planet, whether visible or invisible, is credited with six companion globes. The evolution of life proceeds on these seven globes or bodies from the 1st to the 7th in Seven ROUNDS or Seven Cycles.
2. These globes are formed by a process which the Occultists call the “rebirth of planetary chains (or rings).” When the seventh and last Round of one of such ring has been entered upon, the highest or first globe, “A,” followed by all the others down to the last, instead of entering upon a certain time of rest—or “obscuration,” as in their previous Rounds—begins to die out. The “planetary” dissolution (*pralaya*) is at hand, and its hour has struck; each globe has to transfer its life and energy to another planet.
3. Our Earth, as the visible representative of its invisible superior fellow globes, its “lords” or “principles,” has to live, as have the others, through seven Rounds. During the first three, it forms and consolidates; during the fourth it settles and hardens; during the last three it gradually returns to its first ethereal form: it is spiritualized, so to say.
4. Its Humanity develops fully only in the Fourth—our present Round. Up to this fourth Life-Cycle, it is referred to as “humanity” only for lack of a more appropriate term.
5. Every life-cycle on Globe D (our Earth) is composed of seven Root-Races. They commence with the Ethereal and end with the spiritual on the double line of physical and moral evolution—from the beginning of the terrestrial round to its close.

6. The first Root-Race, *i.e.*, the first “men” on earth (irrespective of form) were the progeny of the “celestial men,” called rightly in Indian philosophy the “Lunar Ancestors” or the Pitris, of which there are seven classes or Hierarchies. (1:158-60)

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To make things plainer, without touching upon the mathematical aspects of the doctrine, the teaching given may be expanded and some obscure points solved. As the evolution of the Globes and that of the Monads are so closely interblended, we will make of the two teachings one. In reference to the Monads, the reader is asked to bear in mind that Eastern philosophy rejects the Western theological dogma of a newly-created soul for every baby born, as being as unphilosophical as it is impossible in the economy of Nature. There must be a limited number of Monads evolving and growing more and more perfect through their assimilation of many successive personalities, in every new Manvantara. This is absolutely necessary in view of the doctrines of Rebirth, Karma, and the gradual return of the human Monad to its source—*absolute* Deity. Thus, although the hosts of more or less progressed Monads are almost incalculable, they are still finite, as is everything in this Universe of differentiation and finiteness. (1:170-71)

But at this point—and on this Fourth Round in which the human stage will be *fully* developed—the “Door” into the human kingdom closes; and henceforward the number of “human” Monads, *i.e.*, Monads in the human stage of development, is complete. For the Monads which had not reached the human stage by this point will, owing to the evolution of humanity itself, find themselves so far behind that they will reach the human stage only at the close of the seventh and last Round. They will, therefore, not be men on this chain, but will form the humanity of a future Manvantara and be rewarded by becoming “Men” on a higher chain altogether, thus receiving their Karmic compensation. (1:173)

AN OUTLINE OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, PART I

By C. Jinarajadasa

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## UNIVERSAL NIGHT

*The Secret Doctrine* begins by contemplating the Universe as withdrawn from its condition of manifestation into the latent state in which it sleeps during the recurring periods of Universal Night, when time is absorbed in eternal duration.

For us, time is registered by the motions of the sun and stars, by the earth's rotation, marking out each day from sunrise to sunrise; by the waxing and waning of the moon; by the earth's yearly journey round the sun; and by that greater year that the pole traces out among the constellations in the slow Precession of the Equinoxes.

But when, at the evening of each Universal Day, the earth and the moon have faded to pale shadows, and the sun and planets have melted back into the common source from which they have sprung; when all the stars—the clocks of the universe—have become invisible, then time as we know it ceases and vanishes into the bosom of eternal duration.

Even in the world of manifestation, Time has an uncertain, erratic life. In the waking world, minute drags after minute with the stiff rigidity of dense matter; solid forms remain unchanged, or imperceptibly unchanged, for hours or ages.

In the world of dreams—as real to itself as the world of day—minutes and hours have more fluidity; image succeeds image, melting, coalescing, transforming, with a rapidity that would be startling in waking life, but seems quite natural in the dream-world, where an hour of day may be an age of dream.

In those clearer worlds to which spiritual vision penetrates, long vistas of being are concentrated into a moment; past and future draw nearer each other and a “thousand years are as one day.”

In the highest world of all, where vision becomes divine, the lives of all beings are perpetually visible; the transformations of time have no existence there; the infinite past and the infinite future have become blended in the Eternal Now.

When, from manifestation in objective life, the Universe has receded through all the planes of being into this highest divine world, then time as we know it is at an end, vanished and absorbed into eternal duration.

When the myriad worlds have thus faded away, and the boundless realms of space—from the lowest material plane to the threshold of the divine—are left without visible inhabitant, either man, angel, or demigod; then, in the decrepitude of time, there is no longer height,

nor breadth, nor depth, for there is no longer anything to measure by these attributes. Space is transformed into Being, independent of the dimensions of Space.

Where are all the inhabitants of Space, from the most material world to the most ethereal, from the human and sub-human to the angel and demigod? Where are the manifold worlds in which they lived and moved and had their being?

To answer this we must ask: What are these worlds, and in what consists the life lived in them by man, angel, and demigod?

Looked at from one point of view, this life consists of an endless series of pictures and images, whether presented outwardly through the senses or inwardly in the mind, passing unceasingly before the consciousness, which takes note of image after image, picture after picture, observing all as a “disinterested spectator.”

Between Consciousness—the disinterested spectator—and the incessant world of sensations, images, and imaginings that pass before it, a great gulf is fixed. Consciousness remains unchanged on the one side, while the infinite picture-world unfolds itself unceasingly on the other. In this panoramic world of images, space adheres as an attribute, and time adheres as an attribute; space refers to the extent of the image and the portion of the whole panoramic world it fills; and time refers to the durability of each image or impression, as compared with other images more fleeting or more sustained. Time and Space therefore, as being but a part of the panoramic world that passes before Consciousness, cannot logically be attributed to the consciousness which observes them as external to and different from itself.

This is expressed by saying that Consciousness is eternal, *i.e.*, quite independent of and outside of time and space. Thus, from this point of view, we are led to divide the Universe into two entirely different, though related, powers. On the one side is Consciousness, eternal and free from the bonds of time and space; on the other is an endless panorama of pictures, images and perceptions, appearing either outwardly through the senses or inwardly through the mind. Between these two, Consciousness and the objects of Consciousness, there exists a great gulf which is bridged over by the magician Perception.

Before the neutral observer of Consciousness stretches a veil of images and sensations, more permanent and more closely adhering to Consciousness than the innumerable pictures and images that pass by in the endless panorama of the worlds. Through this veil the other images and pictures are seen, and from it they receive a more or less permanent coloring and disposition. This veil is the personality, the bundle of feelings, thoughts, and desires that make up the personal life.

And though Consciousness is a disinterested spectator, this adherent film of personality is, on the contrary, intensely interested in the panorama of pictures that pass before it, and receives from them (or attributes to them) alternate sensations of pleasure and pain, heat and cold, bitter and sweet, longing and satiety, love and hate, *i.e.*, the “pairs of opposites” which make up the sum of the feelings and sensations that fill the life of the personality.

This condition of things—Consciousness as a neutral spectator of the ceaseless panorama of pictures, with the personality as a veil between—is repeated on all the planes. But as we rise from the material to the more ethereal planes, certain changes appear. The veil of personality gradually becomes more luminous and lucent, till at last it becomes a barely visible, transparent film between consciousness and image; and then—no longer subject to the “pair of opposites” such as love and hate, longing and satiety, etc., but rather receptive of the single essences of which these are but the positive and negative poles—the purified personality begins to partake of spiritual and divine nature.

Along with this ennobling of the personality, a change passes over the panorama of life on the less material planes of being. What had seemed on the lowest level of manifestation to be a mere chaotic hurling of images—an erratic lawless passage of sensations, with no order or relation to the Consciousness to which they were presented—is seen on the higher ranges of manifestation to be an orderly procession, a steady progress full of disciplinary, educational value.

And on the plane of divine consciousness, it becomes apparent that the power that marshals and compels these images, these elements of discipline and development, is not foreign or isolated from consciousness, but is rather the eternal Will wedded to Consciousness, the expression of that eternal Self of which Will and Consciousness are twin powers. While these will-directed elements of discipline appear chaotic and random on the lower planes of existence, at the highest level of being they are seen not as foreign to Consciousness, but partaking of its essential nature. Here, subject and object mysteriously become a unity, which is neither of them, and yet is both of them.

When, after aeons of time, the pairs of opposites have gradually drawn together and coalesced into those single essences of which they are but the negative and positive poles; when throughout all the worlds the images and pictures, the elements of discipline (in which the spiritual Will, the twin brother of pure Consciousness, expresses itself) have gradually drawn closer and closer to Consciousness, the film between them growing ever purer and more pellucid; and when at last throughout all the world the twin brothers Consciousness and Spiritual Will (in which all manifestation has been absorbed) become once more one, then begins that true life which is veiled under the name of Universal Night or the Night of Brahma.

This reunion of the pairs of opposites, their slow re-absorption into spiritual Will, the divine parent of all manifestation, and the reunion of Will and Consciousness, along with the disappearance of all life as we know it—in reality the beginning of true life—this is the second element (or the second metaphysical aspect) of the mystery that we call the Night of the Universe.

There is yet a third side to this subject. Linked with Consciousness on every plane and range of being is a sense of moral life—an aspiration to, and dim perception of, a higher and more divine life above; this is coupled with a sense of obligation to, and relation with, the

cognate lives around us. On the lower range of being these two moral perceptions are dim and clouded.

As we rise higher and higher, entering deeper into the divine power that was first only dimly felt, side by side with this upward growth is an outward growth by which the boundaries that had at first seemed hard and impassible, between us and the cognate souls round us, begin to soften and melt away; and at last on the great day, when we become one with the divine soul above us, we are no longer conscious of any distance between our own soul and the souls of humanity, then no longer men, but divine beings, at one with us, and at one with the divine.

This great “at-one-ment” (or atonement), which brings about the union of all humanities into one divine life, forms the final and highest aspect of the mystery of the consummation of life that ushers in that true being, that real life, which only human blindness calls Universal Night. This gradual growth to perfect fulfillment of our obligation and relation to the humanity around us, and to the divine above us, forms the third aspect of the mystery of the ever-recurring Nights of the Universe.

In reality, these three aspects or categories of being are not separate and isolated; their gradual unfolding does not constitute three different and distinct processes. All three are but phases or facets of the one Being in the evolution and involution of which consist the life of the universe.

When this Trinity in Unity is unfolded, expressed and manifested, the Universe passes to Universal Day. When the Trinity in Unity coalesces, unites and is re-absorbed, Universal Day gives place to Universal Night. In the latter, there are no separate existences, no separate lives, no separate attributes. Time, space, subjectivity, objectivity are no longer. From the standpoint of our thought there is nothing, because nothing is separate from the eternal, infinite All.

But behind this Universal Being which alternately expresses itself in manifestation, and re-absorbs itself into latency, there is another deeper mystery, so profound that human reason almost refuses to grasp it at all. This is the mystery of the Absolute.

As underneath the lump of metal, that in the jeweler’s hands takes many shapes—now melted to liquid, now hardened to solid—the mind conceives a certain quantity of gold, a quantity which remains unchanged, and which the mind regards abstractly as unchanging and unchangeable even though the lump be separated into many pieces, or alloyed with other metals, or even powdered to dust and scattered on the face of the earth; so behind this evolving and involving universal life, which alternately expands and contracts in Universal Day and Night, thought perceives the necessity of another universal being, the sum of the powers and forces of this (as the gold is the sum of the substance in the jeweler’s hands) and partaking neither in the evolution of this, but remaining eternally changeless, motionless, and without attributes in the everlasting mystery of absolute being. The Abstract Unity,

which contains within itself the potency of all life, but which has no life because it is all life; which contains within itself the potency of all consciousness, but has no consciousness because it is the totality of consciousness; which contains within itself the potency of all good and beauty and truth, but which is neither good nor beautiful nor true, because it is absolute good, beauty, and truth; which contains within itself the potency of all motion, all sound, color and sensation, but is without motion, sound, color, or sensation; which contains within itself the potency of all attributes; but is without attributes, because it is the totality of all attributes; this is the absolute Parabrahman; the unknown and ever unknowable God.

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to the article are by page and paragraph. For instance, “21.4” is the fourth paragraph of page 21, and “23.0” is a paragraph carried over from page 22.)

1. To what extent have you experienced the “uncertain, erratic” nature of time? (21.4)
2. Universal Day and Universal Night are often represented by two Sanskrit terms, which were not used in this article. Can you identify them? (24.5)
3. How do the “pairs of opposites” affect us in our daily life? (23.0)
4. Have you been able to detach yourself from life’s endless panorama of pictures and discover the “disinterested spectator” within? (22.4)
5. According to the author, how does our perception change as we rise from the lower (more material) to the higher (less material) planes of existence?
6. Why is the Absolute said to be “without attributes”? (25.0)

### STANZA I: The Night of the Universe

1. The eternal parent, wrapped in her ever-invisible robes, had slumbered once again for seven eternities.
2. Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration.
3. Universal mind was not, for there were no celestial beings to contain it.
4. The seven ways to bliss were not. The great causes of misery were not, for there was no one to produce and get ensnared by them.
5. Darkness alone filled the boundless all, for father, mother, and son were once more one, and the son had not yet awakened for the new wheel and his pilgrimage thereon.
6. The seven sublime lords and the seven truths had ceased to be, and the universe, the son of necessity, was immersed in supreme bliss, to be out breathed by that which is and yet is not. Naught was.
7. The causes of existence had been done away with; the visible that was, and the invisible that is, rested in eternal non-being—the one being.
8. Alone, the one form of existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep; and life pulsated unconscious in universal space, throughout that all-presence which is sensed by the opened eye of the purified soul.
9. But where was the purified soul when the store-soul of the universe was in the absolute reality and the great wheel was parentless?

#### Excerpts from HPB's commentary on Stanza I:

The "Parent Space" is the eternal, ever present cause of all—the incomprehensible DEITY, whose "invisible robes" are the mystic root of all matter, and of the Universe. Space is the *one eternal thing* that we can most easily imagine, immovable in its abstraction and uninfluenced by either the presence or absence in it of an objective Universe. It is without dimension, in every sense, and self-existent. Spirit is the first differentiation from THAT, the causeless cause of both Spirit and Matter. It is, as taught in the esoteric catechism, neither limitless void, nor conditioned fullness, but both. It was and ever will be. (1:35)

The Seven Eternities meant are the seven periods, or a period answering in its duration to the seven periods of a Manvantara, and extending throughout a Mahâ-Kalpa or the "Great Age"—100 years of Brahmâ—making a total of 311,040,000,000,000 of years; each year of Brahmâ being composed of 360 "days," and of the same number of "nights" of Brahmâ (reckoning by the Chandrayâna or lunar year); and a "Day of Brahmâ" consisting of 4,320,000,000 of mortal years. These "Eternities" belong to the most secret calculations, in which, in order to arrive at the true total, every figure must be  $7^x$  (7 to the power of  $x$ );  $x$  varying according to the nature of the cycle in the subjective or real world; and every figure or number relating to, or representing all the different cycles from the greatest to the smallest—in the objective or unreal world—must necessarily be multiples of seven. The key to this cannot be given, for herein lies the mystery of esoteric calculations, and for the purposes of ordinary calculation it has no sense. (1:36)

AN OUTLINE OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, PART II

By C. Jinarajadasa

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## UNIVERSAL NIGHT BEFORE THE DAWN

We have seen how Universal Night is brought about by the gradual, rhythmical coalescence into unity of all the opposing elements that make up objective existence.

It is impossible by any figure, picture, or simile to convey any conception of the condition of the Universe when thus withdrawn into latency, because every conception implies division into the conceiver and the thing conceived, while it is by the elimination of this very division, and by the absorption of the thing conceived into the conceiver, of the object into the subject, that Universal Night is produced.

Although we must regard the condition of Universal Night as essentially inconceivable by the intellect, still there are various considerations which, if intuitionally grasped, may throw some light upon the question of its nature.

If we compare the gradual, rhythmical passage of the Universe into full objectivity to the forward swing of a pendulum from the perpendicular line of rest, and the gradual rhythmical passage to re-absorption in latency, to the backward swing of the pendulum to the perpendicular; then it will be evident that, as the pendulum (if unimpeded) will swing backward an exactly equal distance behind the perpendicular; so, when the sum total of the potencies of the objective universe have reached the condition of latency at the end of each Universal Day, it is evident that there must be in these potencies a tendency to a further activity which will be, in every detail, the reverse or negative of the former activity.

This is why *The Secret Doctrine* and the stanzas upon which it is based have defined Universal Night by a series of negative statements—"Time was not; Universal Mind was not;" etc.—by which we are to understand, not that the existent universe had dwindled down into mere non-entity, but that a form of activity had set in which was in every detail the reverse and negative of the activity of the existent universe, and hence inconceivable to us, or conceivable only as non-activity or naught.

We can arrive at the same result by the exactly opposite process of expressing in universal terms all forms of activity that we know of as limited and particular; thus, in Universal Night, universal perception is, because the perceiver has been universally blended with the object of perception; universal life is, because all the limits of particular life have vanished; universal consciousness is, because objectivity has been universally absorbed into consciousness; and universal bliss is, because all the barriers to bliss have disappeared.

Perhaps the best illustration of the form of activity we are considering is the mathematical

process by which a gradually diminishing series of numbers is carried down to zero (corresponding to the perpendicular line of the pendulum), and then beyond zero into a gradually increasing series of negative numbers, which mathematicians regard as equally important and equally capable of manipulation with the positive numbers.

If zero be the threshold of Universal Night, then the gradually increasing series of negative numbers may represent the negative activities which we have postulated as existent therein.

This is merely the metaphysical aspect of this mysterious question. It has also a moral and a spiritual side, but these cannot be expressed in words; a comprehension of them can only be reached by the actual practice of morality and spirituality. In other words, we can only prepare ourselves for that true spiritual comprehension of, and moral participation in, this mystery that will be ushered in at the end of this Universal Day, by gradually attaining absolute morality and spirituality during the gradual and rhythmic activities of this Universal Day.

To return to the illustration of the pendulum; when it has reached the farthest point of its backward journey beyond the perpendicular, it inevitably tends to swing forward again to the perpendicular, and, if free, will swing forward; and in virtue of the momentum thus acquired, it will not halt at the perpendicular point, but will swing forward again to the foremost point previously reached. And if the pendulum be entirely unimpeded, this backward and forward swing will repeat itself indefinitely; furthermore, the duration and extent of the pendulum's journey behind the perpendicular will be exactly equal to the duration and extent of its journey in front of the perpendicular.

Similarly, the extension of the Universe into objective existence and its re-absorption into latency, will tend to repeat themselves indefinitely; the Day and Night of the Universe will be succeeded by Day and Night in endless succession; and each will be of exactly the same duration; or, rather, would be of exactly the same duration if there were any common, continuous standard of duration to apply to both.

At first glance, it would appear that this expansion and re-absorption of the Universe, in the endless series of Universal Days and Nights, is a mere fruitless activity leading nowhere; just as, from an astronomical standpoint, the days and nights of the planets and our earth might seem a mere senseless repetition—aimless and endless; yet we know that this is merely apparent; that each day is fraught with momentous issues, that each day is richer than its predecessors, if only by the mere fact that it had predecessors; that each day is the heir of the ages.

And so it must be with the Universal Days. Each must have some peculiar worth of its own; must garner some harvest of hitherto inexperienced power or wisdom; must add something, if not to the total quantity of being in the Universe—for what can be added to the All?—then to the quality of that being, and to the quality of the life of the units that make it up.

As the sculptor's statue is first hewn out from head to foot, and then smoothed and

polished from head to foot; so, perhaps, the humanity which is only rough-hewn in one Universal Day, requires a second Day to polish and smooth it to perfection. Perhaps when we have fully learned perfection of individual life in the present Universal Day, we may find that this is only the preparation for a higher life in complex grouped personalities in some future Day of the Universe, and so on, ever to higher and purer perfections.

But into these secrets it is fruitless to pry; it is only profitable to note that the forces and tendencies which gave birth to previous Universal Days, tended, at the period we are considering—the waning of the Universal Night which preceded our present objective universe—to give birth to a new Universal Day, richer than its predecessors, and destined to garner a richer harvest than its predecessors had yet known.

We shall see that this harvest is prepared for by a grouping of the units of life into hosts and hierarchies, ruling over systems of suns and worlds; and, in the case of our own system, seeking a sevenfold perfection by a rhythmical, sevenfold progress through phases of life that, for want of a better name, have been called existence in the mineral, vegetable, animal, human, and superhuman kingdoms. We shall better be able to grasp the reasonableness of this rhythmical progress, if remembering that objective life is the disciplinary expression of the eternal spiritual Will, the twin-brother of Consciousness—we conceive these phases of life as picture-lessons, in which the unit of life has to seem a stone in order to learn something of the endurance of which a stone is merely the symbol; to seem a plant, in order to learn the grace and sweetness of a plant; to seem an animal to learn the active energy of an animal; and so through the human state to the demi-god and the divine; ever keeping in mind that that which seems to become these is the eternal spiritual unit, and that it thus seems, through the harmonious action of its twin powers, Will and Consciousness; and ever remembering that this unit is a part of the All; is, indeed, in one sense, identical with the All.

And thus we return to the conception of Universal Night, brooding in latency, awaiting the Dawn.

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to the article are by page and paragraph.)

1. Why can't we understand the condition of the Universal Night by using the intellect? (27.2)
2. Why is the intuition a better tool than the intellect in our attempt to gain some measure of understanding of the Universal Night? (27.3)
3. Why is a series of negative statements often used to describe Universal Night? (27.5)
4. Why are the "Universal Days and Nights" not an endless process of "fruitless activity"? (28.5)

## Stanza 2: The Idea of Differentiation

1. Where were the builders, the luminous sons of the evolutionary dawn? In the unknown darkness in their celestial supreme bliss. The producers of the form from no-form—the root of the world—the mother of the gods and root-substance rested in the bliss of non-being.
2. Where was silence? Where the ears to sense it? No, there was neither silence nor sound; naught save ceaseless eternal breath, which knows itself not.
3. The hour had not yet struck; the ray had not yet flashed into the germ; the mother-lotus had not yet swollen.
4. Her heart had not yet opened for the one ray to enter, thence to fall, as three into four, into the lap of illusion.
5. The seven were not yet born from the web of light. Darkness alone was father-mother, root-substance; and root-substance was in darkness.
6. These two are the germ, and the germ is one. The universe was still concealed in the divine thought and the divine bosom.

### Excerpts from HPB's commentary on Stanza II:

The Secret Doctrine, in the Stanzas given here, occupies itself chiefly, if not entirely, with our Solar System, and especially with our planetary chain. (1:60)

The “Builders,” the “Sons of Manvantaric Dawn,” are the real creators of the Universe; and in this doctrine, which deals only with our Planetary System, they, as the architects of the latter, are also called the “Watchers” of the Seven Spheres. (1:53)

The “*Divine Thought*” does not imply the idea of a Divine thinker. (1:61)

The idea that things can cease to exist and still BE, is a fundamental one in Eastern psychology. . . . Existence as water may be said to be, for Oxygen and Hydrogen, a state of Non-being which is “more real being” than their existence as gases; and it may faintly symbolize the condition of the Universe when it goes to sleep, or ceases to be, during the “Nights of Brahmā”—to awaken or reappear again, when the dawn of the new Manvantara recalls it to what we call existence. (1:54-55)

To know itself or oneself, necessitates consciousness and perception. . . . Infinity cannot comprehend Finiteness. The Boundless can have no relation to the bounded and the conditioned. . . . Consciousness implies limitations and qualifications; something to be conscious of, and someone to be conscious of it. But Absolute Consciousness contains the cognizer, the thing cognized and the cognition, all three in itself and all three *one*. . . . We call absolute consciousness “unconsciousness,” because it seems to us that it must necessarily be so, just as we call the Absolute, “Darkness,” because to our finite understanding it appears quite impenetrable, yet we recognize fully that our perception of such things does not do them justice. (1:56)

The Primordial Substance had not yet passed out of its precosmic latency into differentiated objectivity . . . But, as the hour strikes and it becomes receptive of the Fohatic impress of the Divine Thought—its heart opens. It differentiates, and the THREE (Father, Mother, Son) are transformed into four. Herein lies the origin of the double mystery of the Trinity and the immaculate Conception. (1:58)

AN OUTLINE OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, PART III

By C. Jinarajadasa

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## THE DAWN OF A NEW UNIVERSAL DAY

This brings us to the point where the last hour of Universal Night<sup>1</sup> is passing into the dawn of a new Universal Day.<sup>2</sup> All the processes of involution that brought about the night are ready to be reversed. We have seen that when the evening twilight began to usher in the Universal Night, all human souls had been drawn together into one humanity, and the humanities of all the worlds had been drawn together—united with each other and united with the Divine. The twin powers of Will and Consciousness—the one, creator of all the forms of the universe and the other, observer of these manifold images and imaginings—had drawn together, coalesced, and become united, so that the difference between the worlds and the consciousness that knows the worlds had disappeared. Subject and Object had become ONE.

The movements that marked the evening twilight are now to be reversed in the dawn of a new Universal Day. The union of the evening is to become the differentiation of the morning; the involution of the evening is to become the evolution a new day.<sup>3</sup> This differentiation will separate again the united humanities, both from each other and from the Divine. However, this separation is not real, but merely apparent and the result of illusory manifestation.

If we compare the totality of being to a diamond, pure and incorruptible, then the differentiated humanities are the faces of the diamond, while the differentiated souls of each humanity are the separate facets of every face. Each facet appears to have a certain individuality and separateness. But each facet only exists through being a part of the diamond, and without the diamond it has no existence at all. It is therefore merely a phase of the diamond and not an independent being, yet it is a window into the pure heart of the diamond, an entry to the whole of its incorruptible light. And because of this, the facet is able to command the potency of the whole diamond.

And this is exactly the relation of the differentiated souls to the ONE (so far as any symbol can convey that relation). It is only in and through the Divine that these differentiated souls exist at all, as it is only through the diamond that the facets exist. Furthermore, each individual soul is an entry to the ineffable heart of the Divine, and when purified, can command the whole of its infinite Being and Power. Thus every individual soul is at once both finite and infinite.

In the perfect diamond there are three powers: (1) the diamond itself; (2) the differentiation, or margin of the facets; (3) and the facets themselves. So in the universe, when the

dawn comes and differentiation sets in, there are three powers: (1) the Being of the universe; (2) the differentiation; (3) and the individual souls that enter into separate life. These three powers of the diamond are analogous to the “father, mother, and son,” of the *Stanzas of Dzyan*.<sup>4</sup>

There is yet another aspect to the symbolism of the diamond. Each facet is not alone, but hemmed in and surrounded by other facets; and being inevitably bound to the other facets, it shares with them a real existence only through the diamond—to the interior of which, and to the whole of which, each and all of them are equally windows.

Each individual soul is not alone, but is surrounded by, and indissolubly bound to, all other souls. They have no real existence except through the ONE, of which they are all facets, and in the plenitude and power of which they equally partake—the plenary possession of one in no manner excluding or limiting the plenary possession of the others. In the same way, each group of souls is bound to other groups—divine hosts, hierarchies,<sup>5</sup> and powers—all of which exist only through the Divine, without which they are utterly void and non-existent.

At the dawn of the Universal Day, the ONE becomes the many, i.e., countless numbers of souls, each possessing the plenary power of the Divine, and bound together into groups and hierarchies and hosts, like the clustering facets of the diamond; and yet, though this differentiation takes place, the ONE remains a Unity.

This is the mystery of the relation of the Divine and the human, as far as that relation can be embodied in symbols and expressed in words, because symbols are powerless to express the majesty, the infinite fullness and complexity of the great Life whose only true symbol is life itself.

The first change that emerges at the dawn of Universal Day is the differentiation of the ONE into hierarchies, humanities, and individual souls; or to speak more precisely, the *tendency* to this differentiation, as this process is not completely developed until the noon of Universal Day is reached. At the risk of repetition, it should be pointed out that this process must in no way be conceived as impairing the eternal unity of the One Divine Life. And, as we shall note further on, this differentiation is always sevenfold, with hierarchies, humanities, and souls falling naturally into sevenfold groups.

The second change that marks the dawn of Universal Day is the reversal of the tendency of Consciousness and the images it observes to coalesce into a unity, which marked, as we saw, the evening twilight of the last Universal Day.

We have traced<sup>6</sup> the relation of Consciousness to the images and imaginings—the images presented outwardly through the senses, and the imaginings presented inwardly through the mind—on the most outward and material planes or phases of life; we have seen that these groups of sensations and feelings, these images and imaginings, follow on this most outward plane a course full of apparent disharmony and chaos, a seemingly cruel and relentless rush

of hostile and menacing forces.

Following this relation between consciousness and its objects through the less material planes and phases of life, we have learned that subject and object draw closer together on the inner, or higher, planes of existence; that the deep inherent harmony between them becomes gradually visible; and that at last it becomes obvious that the course of these images and imaginings is ruled and directed in disciplinary order by a power inherent in, and indissolubly bound to, consciousness—the power of spiritual will—which in the highest phase of life becomes one with consciousness; this union necessitating the disappearance of the objective universe, or its mergence in subjectivity; this disappearance of the objective universe being one of the co-ordinate causes of Universal Night.

At the dawn of a new Day, this union is reversed and the separation into subjectivity and objectivity takes place. Here again we have three powers produced from the ONE: (1) the subject, or consciousness; (2) the object, or the images and imaginings; (3) and the cognition that is produced from these two and which binds them together; these three are a second aspect of the “father, mother, and son” of the *Stanzas of Dzyan*.

Again it must be insisted that this separation is not real, not inherent in essential being, but merely apparent and illusory, a part of that gigantic world-illusion which brings about the manifestation of Universal Day; and that this illusory separation in no way impairs the essential unity of the ONE.

By a law similar to, and co-ordinate with, that which ordained that the hierarchies and humanities and souls should fall into natural groups of sevens, it further happens that the separation of subjectivity and objectivity is sevenfold; that subject and object are confronted in seven phases or planes of life, from the highest phase in which the two are united in one subject-object, one will-consciousness, to the lowest and most material phase, in which the vehicles of consciousness and objectivity are in perpetual strife, generating perpetual pain.

This sevenfold manifestation of the twins, Consciousness and Will, or subjectivity and objectivity, through seven phases or planes is, in one sense, what is meant in the *Stanzas of Dzyan* by the words: “The Radiant Essence becomes seven inside [subjectively] seven outside” [objectively].<sup>7</sup>

It must not be supposed that this sevenfold manifestation of objectivity, this sorting of images and imaginings into seven categories, phases, or planes, became suddenly complete when the hour struck for the dawn of Universal Day. As was the case with the differentiation of the One Life into hierarchies, humanities, and souls, this further separation of the one Subject-Object into cognizer, cognized, and cognition—and the repetition of this separation through seven phases or planes—is not complete and perfect till the noontide of Universal Day, till the pendulum has reached the foremost point of its swing, and is ready to return again towards and behind the perpendicular.<sup>8</sup>

It is the initiation of the tendency to sevenfold differentiation into subject and object, and

not the *completion* of that tendency, which marks the dawn of Universal Day; and it is this tendency of the One to separate into three—the cognizer, the cognized, and the cognition—thus *veiling* the real unity of the One; and the repetition of this tendency for every unit of being, for every facet of the One Divine Life: “Behold him lifting the Veil and unfurling it from East to West.”<sup>9</sup>

In the same stanza in this book, the “Luminous Egg which in itself is three”<sup>10</sup> is the symbol for each triad of cognizer, cognized and cognition; such threefold grouping being the cause and basis of manifested life through the cognate powers of subject and object. The “Luminous Egg,” the symbol of these groups, is not a single unit but infinite in number. To quote the *Vishnu Purana*: “There are thousands of thousands, and ten thousands of thousands of such world-eggs; nay, hundreds of crores of crores.”<sup>11</sup>

The first element, therefore, of the new dawn of Universal Day is the illusory differentiation of the One Divine Life into apparently separate hierarchies and humanities and souls; while the second element is the fission (or division) of these groupings into the seemingly opposed elements of consciousness and will, or subjectivity and objectivity. This will is the same power that brought into manifestation the ordered chains of illusory images and imaginings that make up the substance of the worlds, the objects of perception on the part of the myriad sentient beings, which, though seeming to be many, are really One.

But the differentiation of the One into the many does not violate the unity of the One Life; but that the many are bound together by indissoluble and inevitable bonds, springing from the nature of essential being; we are prepared to understand that the illusory chain of images and imaginings which make up the worlds are not generated by the isolated wills of individual souls without reference to and independent of the humanities and hierarchies to which they belong; but that they are the product of the united wills of the humanities and hierarchies, and that the congeries and series of illusions are welded together into seeming solidity and substantiality by the co-ordinate action of these united wills.

In addition to the One becoming the many, there is a third element in the genesis of Universal Day, which is the result of the eternal rhythmic tendency to alternate between manifestation and latency. Regarding the latent phase of this rhythmic tendency, we have seen that it is hardly profitable to enquire; but when in manifestation its nature and results are more intelligible.

In virtue of this tendency to rhythmic progression, the world-images are brought into a continual process of flux and flow, of waxing and waning, of incessant change from one form to another, from one phase to another; and just as the infinite number of individual souls are facets of the One Divine life, so the endless destruction and regeneration of forms is a reflection of this rhythmic tendency in the Divine, which is spoken of as Eternal Motion.

All aspects of manifestation pass through the three phases of beginning, middle and end; or creation, preservation, and destruction; personified as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer;

in terms of duration—Past, Present, and Future. Every creation was preceded by a destruction, and every destruction will be succeeded by a new creation. These are the dual aspects of the continual transformation to which everything in the manifested world is incessantly subject; as no illusory image is for more than an infinitesimal moment the same.

This will continue until the course of the Universal Day is ended, and the illusion of separateness and the illusion of differentiation have faded away; and all sentient beings lose the sense of their separation and realize their essential unity with each other and with the Eternal One; till the Sons “return into their Mother’s Bosom at the end of the Great Day, and re-become one with Her.”<sup>12</sup>

### Compiler’s Notes

1. Pralaya (Sanskrit)
2. Manvantara (Sanskrit)
3. Involution and evolution are opposite movements, yet complementary to each other.
4. See sloka 5 of Stanza 1.
5. The word “hierarchy” has a very different meaning in *The Secret Doctrine* from the way it is normally used as a term referring to the structure of ecclesiastical organizations. See the index of *The Secret Doctrine* for further references to hierarchy.
6. See parts I and II of “An Outline of *The Secret Doctrine*.”
7. See sloka 4 of Stanza 3.
8. The author introduced the pendulum as a symbol in part II of this series of articles.
9. The veil of Maya; see sloka 7 of Stanza 3.
10. See sloka 4 of Stanza 3.
11. Crore (Hindi): a unit of measurement equaling ten million.
12. See sloka 11 of Stanza 3.

—David P. Bruce

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to the article are by page and paragraph.)

1. How does the diamond serve as a symbol for the totality of Being? (31.3)
2. How does the diamond serve as a symbol for the unfolding of the Cosmos? (32.3)
3. In what sense are the forms and objects of manifestation illusory?
4. Explain the process of the One becoming three.
5. Find examples of the universal pattern of alternating periods of rest and activity.

### Stanza 3: The Awakening of Cosmos

1. The last vibration of the seventh eternity thrills through infinitude. The mother swells, expanding from within without, like the bud of the lotus.

2. The vibration sweeps along, touching with its swift wing the whole universe and the germ that dwelleth in darkness, the darkness that breathes over the slumbering waters of life.
3. Darkness radiates light, and light drops one solitary ray into the waters, into the mother-deep. The ray shoots through the virgin-egg, the ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal germ, which condenses into the world-egg.
4. The three fall into the four. The radiant essence becomes seven inside, seven outside. The luminous egg, which in itself is three, curdles and spreads in milk-white curds throughout the depths of mother, the root that grows in the depth of the ocean of life.
5. The root remains, the light remains, the curds remain, and still father-mother of the gods is one.
6. The root of life was in every drop of the ocean of immortality, and the ocean was radiant light, which was fire, and heat, and motion. Darkness vanished and was no more; it disappeared in its own essence, the body of fire and water of father and mother.
7. Behold, O disciple, the radiant child of the two, the unparalleled refulgent glory, bright space; son of dark space, who emerges from the depths of the great dark waters. It is father-mother of the gods, the younger, the \* \* \*. He shines forth as the sun, he is the blazing divine dragon of wisdom; the one is four, and four takes to itself three, and the union produces the seven, in whom are the seven, which become the thirty, the hosts and the multitudes. Behold him lifting the veil, and unfurling it from east to west. He shuts out the above, and leaves the below to be seen as the great illusion. He marks the places for the shining ones, and turns the upper into a shoreless sea of fire, and the one manifested into the great waters.
8. Where was the germ, and where was now darkness? Where is the spirit of the flame that burns in thy lamp, O disciple? The germ is that, and that is light, the white brilliant son of the dark hidden father.
9. Light is cold flame, and flame is fire, and fire produces heat, which yields water—the water of life in the great mother.
10. Father-mother spin a web whose upper end is fastened to spirit, the light of the one darkness, and the lower one to its shadowy end, matter; and this web is the universe, spun out of the two substances made in one, which is root-substance.
11. It expands when the breath of fire is upon it; it contracts when the breath of the mother touches it. Then the sons dissociate and scatter, to return into their mother's bosom, at the end of the "great day," and re-become one with her. When it is cooling, it becomes radiant. Its sons expand and contract through their own selves and hearts; they embrace infinitude.
12. Then root-substance sends the fiery whirlwind to harden the atoms. Each is a part of the web. Reflecting the "self-existent lord," like a mirror, each becomes in turn a world.

## THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS IN PRACTICE

By Mary Anderson

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It is now over a hundred years since the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*. This great work contains material more than enough for a lifetime of study. But the significance of its study does not lie in learning interesting facts or gathering mysterious knowledge, but rather in “exercising and developing the mind.”<sup>1</sup> Other studies that convey information and increase knowledge activate the so-called lower mind, whereas the study of *The Secret Doctrine* should awaken insight and wisdom, and activate the higher or enlightened mind.

Much has been said about the differences between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge concerns mostly individual facts, objects, and the differences between them. It deals with that which separates. Wisdom throws light on facts and objects in their relationships. It highlights that which unites. Knowledge emphasizes the many, wisdom the One. Knowledge is useful in daily life, but has its limits and should not become an end in itself. Human beings can extend their knowledge endlessly without any change taking place in their character or way of life. In spite of all its possible applications on the physical plane, knowledge remains psychologically theoretical. But wisdom is always practical; it is the blossoming of the spiritual. This blossoming expresses itself simultaneously as wisdom, love, and the will to do good. Where there is true wisdom, there is also pure love and the will to act accordingly. Wisdom is the awakening of the inner man which leads to a transformation of the outer man as well. Wisdom means the awakening of what lies deeper and is more comprehensive than the ‘I’. Such an awakening transforms the personality, the little ‘I’, so that it no longer insists on its own advantages, but joyfully puts itself at the disposal of the Universal and finds fulfillment in self-forgetfulness.

We are mostly attached to knowledge, not only in day-to-day matters where it is relevant, but also try to apply so-called exact knowledge to things spiritual, an attempt that cannot succeed and may lead us astray. Now and then, however, a certain wisdom may express itself through us when there is self-forgetfulness arising from deep inspiration, sacrificial love, or creative activity. To those attracted by the way of study, one cannot recommend too highly Commander Bowen’s Notes on Conversations with HPB<sup>2</sup> and the study of *The Secret Doctrine* in the light of those Notes. They proclaim that one has first to obtain a certain grasp of the Three Fundamental Propositions in the Proem, which form the basis and the heart of the whole system exposed in the book. A thoughtful study of the Propositions is not only indispensable, but may also awaken a certain innate wisdom in us and transform our outer nature, attitude, and actions in daily life.

The first Proposition<sup>3</sup> postulates “An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE” and—to make this clearer, as it is said—“one absolute Reality” or “Be-ness” as

the origin, the rootless root of “all that was, is, or ever shall be.” Concepts such as omnipresence, eternity, boundlessness, and immutability are superlatives and absolutes. There is nothing more eternal than the Eternal! And such concepts influence the mind in two ways. First, they overtax it: the mind can grasp only that which is limited in space and time; concepts such as eternity and omnipresence transcend the power of human conception. Here the mind is reaching the point where it knows that it knows nothing, and as a result, may start becoming wise. We speak of the lower and the higher mind but in reality there is only *one* mind which may be impure, *i.e.*, limited, or pure, *i.e.*, open to the boundless. As soon as the mind ceases to be blinded and clouded by its many conceptions, as soon as the thought waves are smoothed away, it becomes pure and receptive for the limitless. Secondly, absolute concepts such as boundlessness and immutability draw the mind towards the Infinite. They offer those “points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul.”<sup>4</sup> Reflection or meditation on such concepts broadens and deepens the mind in a way that cannot but affect our general attitude in daily life.

Be-ness is symbolized under two aspects: absolute abstract space—the source of substance, or matter; and absolute abstract motion—the source of intelligence, of consciousness or spirit. Thus spirit and matter—all that is in and around us—are based on that which is “unthinkable and unspeakable.” Spirit vis-à-vis matter can be compared to the two ends of a stretched elastic band. The ends are linked inseparably; one would be inconceivable without the other. And they seem to strive to get closer. The force drawing the two ends together, that bridge between spirit and matter, is called Fohat. No two complementary objects or phenomena can exist without that linkage. The two sides of a coin are inconceivable without the coin itself.

Here lies a key to the solution of the mystery tormenting Western civilization and driving it to schizophrenia: the mysterious relationship between spirit and matter. Although they are one in their origin and deepest being, they are different aspects of the one Be-ness. Spirit is material in its expression, however fine or coarse such matter may be, and matter is spiritual in essence. The one is inconceivable without the other. There can be no matter without spirit, and no spirit without matter. When this realization penetrates our consciousness, our attitude toward matter will change, so that we respect and love all forms of matter, realizing that they are vehicles of living beings, even so-called dead objects, atoms also being lives.

The second fundamental Proposition<sup>5</sup> is that the eternity of the universe is a boundless plane and periodically “the playground of numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing.” Here again, words like “boundless,” “numberless,” and “incessantly” are used to describe the infinity of time and space. Astronomers fail in their evermore frequent and penetrating observations of the heavens to find any limit or boundary. Space vanishes into unfathomable distances and time blurs into billions of light-years. Within this stupendous image of the boundless, there do exist, however, boundaries to individual universes inces-

santly appearing and disappearing. “The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.” The first Proposition was on the duality of spirit and matter. Here the duality is carried into a further dimension of periodicity, a constant alternation between day and night, life and death, sleep and waking, and so on.

A third element links the two opposites—the pendular movement between them. The realization of the law of periodicity drives home the truth that nothing is permanent. Everything passes away. The realization that pain and suffering are not eternal should make them easier to bear. That joy does not last forever should check our attachment to pleasurable things or personalities. The result of this realization should be patience, calm, serenity. As in the symbol of Yin and Yang, every phenomenon hides within itself the impulse towards its opposite. Thus we should no longer see things as being exclusively black or white, condemn them utterly or praise them unreservedly. We should be able to judge objectively. Such insight, leading to calm and objectivity, is unfortunately rare—also among Theosophists! But while it may be rare, it is attainable.

The third Proposition<sup>6</sup> deals with “the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul . . . an aspect of the Unknown Root.” The unity of all beings, not only with their origin in Be-ness, but also with each other, brings about the closest solidarity and affection between human beings—why, all living beings. But the indwelling unity is not outwardly visible. It is a “fundamental identity”—unity at the deepest, innermost level of being; a unity which cannot be visible or perceptible outwardly. Because we are separated, we have left our origin in unity to go on an “obligatory pilgrimage . . . through the Cycle of Incarnation.” This pilgrimage leads us from elementary forms of life, mineral, plant and animal, to existence as man, capable and obliged to make self-efforts towards the state of the “holiest archangel.” This pilgrimage is subject to “cyclic and karmic law.” Cyclic law reflects periodicity. We need not expound here the law of karma—the law of cosmic harmony which ensures justice by adjustment of cause and effect. “The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric Philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations.” The third Proposition teaches unity in the sphere of the Absolute, and evolution, reincarnation, and karma in that of the relative.

What such teachings can effect in us, once realized and lived up to, is clear: love, solidarity with all beings, patience and confidence, the absence of resentment or envy; a high motivation, a realization that, from the absolute point of view, our world is a passing illusion, all life being at most a joyous game. But let us not forget that this universe “is real enough to the conscious beings in it, which are as unreal as it is itself.”<sup>7</sup>

In sum, the principles expounded in the Three Fundamental Propositions are such as could free us from many restrictive ideas. Particularly so, in H. P. Blavatsky’s day, when people were confined to narrow religious dogmas and the coldly materialistic science of the time. Today it is no longer so, and the concept of the unity in all things is making its way.

Our outlook has become broader; we are also informed of what is happening in far-off places. But the scientific recognition of holistic ideas is perhaps too new to have penetrated individuals sufficiently to be expressed in their daily attitudes and actions. They still belong to the domain of the so-called lower manas; they are still theoretical. Only when they have become the object of true insight, wisdom and love, will it be possible for them to help transform the world.

There are, of course, widespread thoughts today which fly counter, towards personal satisfactions. And thoughts of unity may even prove counter-productive if they have not become wisdom, for we may be making lip-service to holism an excuse not to act in accordance with them. Our imaginary and purely verbal acceptance of such ideas may blind us to the fact that they have not been transformed into wisdom in us, and that they are by no means a spontaneous expression of the Higher. Only when people are so deeply conscious of unity that they no longer feel and act selfishly, can those wonderful concepts embodied in the Three Fundamental Propositions make their way in the world.

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**Mary Anderson** was introduced to Theosophy as a child while living in Scotland. She later moved to Basle, Switzerland where she worked as a trilingual secretary for forty years. Her service to the Theosophical Society includes six years as General Secretary of the Swiss Section, thirty years as Secretary of the European Federation, six years as International Vice-President (Adyar) and another six years as International Secretary. She has traveled the world giving lectures and courses in English, French, and German.

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1. Hoskins, Ianthe. *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy* (booklet). TPH, London, 1980, p.64
2. *Ibid.*, p.61
3. Blavatsky, H. P., *The Secret Doctrine*, TPH, Adyar, 1979, vol. 1, p. 14
4. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, Verse 114
5. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, pp. 16-17
6. *Ibid.*, p. 17
7. *Ibid.*, p. 274

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: (References to the article are by page and paragraph.)

1. Can you think of any other differences between knowledge and wisdom that were not mentioned in the above article? (37.2)
2. What are some practical benefits to pondering superlatives such as “eternal,” “immutable,” and “boundless”? (37.4)
3. What does the author mean when she says that “knowledge remains psychologically theoretical”? (37.2)

4. Can you cite any examples from history that illustrate the West's difficulty in reconciling spirit with matter? (38.2)
5. In what way have the basic ideas outlined in the Three Fundamental Propositions had an influence upon your view of the world and the way you act in it?

#### EXCERPTS FROM COMMANDER BOWEN'S NOTES:

She is telling us without a doubt not to anchor ourselves to her as the final authority, nor to anyone else, but to depend altogether upon our own widening perceptions.

Reading the *S. D.* page by page as one reads any other book (she says) will only end in confusion.

The first thing to do, even if it takes years, is to get some grasp of the "Three Fundamental Principles" given in the *Proem*. Follow that up by study of the *Recapitulation*—the numbered items in the *Summing Up* to Vol. I (Part I). Then take the *Preliminary Notes* (Vol. II) and the *Conclusion* (Vol. II).

Come to the *S. D.* (she says) without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than seeing how far it may lead TOWARDS the Truth.

This unity is a thing altogether different from the common notion of unity—as when we say that a nation or an army is united; or that this planet is united to that by lines of magnetic force or the like. The teaching is not that. It is that existence is ONE THING, not any collection of things linked together.

"Theosophy," she said, "is for those who can think, or for those who can drive themselves to think, not for mental sluggards."

The True Student of *The Secret Doctrine* is a Jnana Yogi, and this Path of Yoga is the True Path for the Western student. It is to provide him with signposts on that Path that *The Secret Doctrine* has been written.

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## SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: *Part 1 of 2*

By Geoffrey Barborka

Compiled from various issues of *The Canadian Theosophist* from 1964-1980.

QUESTION: Why should *The Secret Doctrine* be especially studied, rather than HPB's other literary writings?

ANSWER: Undoubtedly the question is being asked from the standpoint of a student, rather than from the viewpoint of the inquirer; therefore, it will be so answered. First, it should be stated, however, that HPB's other literary works are more appropriate for the inquirer to read than is *The Secret Doctrine*. The reason is this: Mme. Blavatsky's other works present Theosophical concepts in broad manner, dealing with doctrinal topics which may be readily understood by a reader. On the other hand *The Secret Doctrine*, based as it is upon the Stanzas of Dzyan, requires more than a cursory reading: it is not for one who runs as he reads (to use a common expression). The Stanzas make use of the traditional method of imparting the wisdom teachings—that is to say, symbol and allegory are used. These require to be interpreted by means of the student's own intuition. This applies also to the recondite subjects which are treated in the volumes. Because of this factor, then, the student must awaken his intuition and seek to interpret the hidden meaning which is present within the Stanzas, even though it is not apparent.

By seeking to evoke this intuitive understanding, one discovers that an effort is being made to expand one's consciousness; and this is the very procedure that must be maintained. In fact, a daily expansion of consciousness is of primal importance, more so even than mere study of the material conveyed in *The Secret Doctrine*. Indeed, it is imperative that one should obtain a larger vision and a wider horizon in order to understand this work. This expanding viewpoint must be striven for even when one thinks that an understanding has been gained of the principal concepts.

QUESTION: *The Secret Doctrine* was dedicated to “. . . all true Theosophists, in every country, and of every race . . .” Why, then, was it made so difficult that very few students study it?

ANSWER: This is not as simple a question as appears on the surface. In the first place, present-day Theosophists may not be aware of the fact that *The Secret Doctrine* was written under very great difficulties. HPB was physically ill, and was in constant mental turmoil. At times she was on the point of death, yet she labored on. At a crucial moment she was given the choice: of leaving the world and terminating her misery and torture; or continue the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*. She chose the latter; hence the dedicatory contains the words: “for them it was recorded”—that is, recorded for Theosophists. It is a wonder that we were able to get it! Nowadays, authors have secretarial assistance. They may dictate into machines or to a stenographer and do not have to write a line of the “copy.” HPB wrote every single word in

pen and ink—a tremendous task. Just try copying one page in pencil or pen and ink and see how long it takes. Then multiply the time by a thousand pages, and see the labor that is involved.

Pursuing the subject further. . . . It is not a question that *The Secret Doctrine* is difficult to comprehend, or that it requires simplification, rather is it a matter of unpreparedness. A little study *is* necessary before commencing its reading. When a person enters any field of endeavor, he realizes that he must first learn the terminology pertaining to the subject, whether it be science, mathematics, botany, chemistry, medicine, music, or even business. It is the same with *The Secret Doctrine*.

QUESTION: In your opinion, what should be a student's attitude when he runs across seeming discrepancies in *The Secret Doctrine*?

ANSWER: I am grateful for the opportunity of answering this question and I should like to respond in the manner of a "person to person call," indicating seven steps of procedure.

1. Do not be in hurry about formulating your opinion. You will fashion a *mental block* if you do so. Therefore, wait!
2. Get a sheet of paper. Draw a line down the middle of the sheet. Copy out *by hand* all the "pros" on the left-hand side, and all the "cons" on the right-hand side. (There is an occult process involved in copying difficult passages by hand.)
3. Look up in *The Secret Doctrine* all the passages you can find upon the "seeming discrepancies." Do not be satisfied with one or two references. Copy these out by hand, too.
4. Place all references in a prominent position on your table, but still do not formulate an opinion.
5. Now look up a subject directly opposite to the one you are in doubt about. For instance, if you are in doubt about Prakriti, look up Purusha. If you are in doubt about "Love," look up "Hate." Or, look up any other subject. You will be surprised what you will discover when searching for some other topic than the one you really want. Try this out!
6. Read over all your references every day for a week. But do not formulate an opinion.
7. Allow a fortnight to go by without thinking about the "seeming discrepancies." After two weeks' time, see if you do not have some new ideas upon the subject. Remember: the esoteric doctrine had more than one key for reading its lines: "it was interpreted and its mysteries unlocked . . . with *seven*, not two, or at the utmost, three keys" (S.D. II, 632).

QUESTION: While *The Secret Doctrine* speaks of three lines of evolution—the spiritual, the intellectual, and the physical—it would seem that the intellectual is greatly stressed.

ANSWER: It is true that in *The Secret Doctrine* we find that the intellectual aspect of evolution is stressed, especially in the volume entitled Anthropogenesis. This is primarily because the

crucial point of the *physical* aspect of the Grand Evolutionary Cycle has been passed. This may be best explained by referring to the fact that the mid-point of the Grand Evolutionary Cycle has been passed. In other words, the middle point of the Cycle occurred when the lowest point in the Arc of Descent occurred, namely at the three and one-half point in the Seven Round Cycle. The mid-point of the Cycle occurred during the middle period of the Fourth Root-Race of this Fourth Round of the Grand Evolutionary Cycle. As we are now pursuing the evolutionary cycle of the Fifth Root-Race, the intellectual phase of the Evolutionary Cycle is of great importance, and may rightfully be considered “as a higher mental business” (to use the words of the questioner). Thus, as the Arc of Ascent progresses, the intellectual aspect of evolution takes on more and more prominence over the physical aspect, although more evolutionary developments will yet occur for the physical aspect in due course of time.

It should be borne in mind that these three aspects of the evolutionary cycle are always operating and are concurrent, even though at present the physical aspect of the Grand Evolutionary Cycle may not be apparent.

QUESTION: Is not the Kama principle just as dual as is the Manas principle?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed. The principle of Kama is often regarded in a dual aspect: there is the “higher aspect” of the Kama principle, which gives rise to the feelings of spiritual love, compassion, and the yearning to perform noble deeds. Then there is the “lower aspect” which looms so large in human life. Consequently, abstention from the desire element is prescribed for disciples in order that the spiritual side of human nature may be stressed. Hence the injunction: “Kill out desire; but if thou killest it, take heed lest from the dead it should again arise” (*The Voice of the Silence*).

QUESTION: What is meant by the word “Logos” when it is used alone?

ANSWER: This is a term coming from Platonic as well as Stoic philosophy and adopted in Theosophical literature. Speaking generally, it signifies the hierarch of a system. Thus in speaking of the hyperaxis (i.e., the chief hierarch) of the Earth, this being would be referred to as the Planetary Logos of the Earth. As each system has its hierarch, when referring to the sun the term would be applicable to the solar orb and designated the Solar Logos.

The term comes from the Greek, derived from the verbal root *legein*, meaning to speak; thus *logos* originally signified the “word” by which the inward thought is expressed; the inward thought itself. Thus the philosophical concept in associating the term with the coming into being of a cosmos, or a system, is this: there must be a reason for the coming into being of a system, hence divine thought is instrumental in the process. With the formulation of the idea there must also be a means of expressing it, that is, carrying out of the idea. The same thing is present in the utterance of a word. Before the word may be produced as sound, there must be the ideation or thought of it; there must also be the desire of sufficient potency to produce the sound of it. When the idea is transmitted by means of the sound, the resultant

effect is the word—the Logos. Hence the Logos primarily represents that which has been produced or formulated, that is to say, the manifested aspect, or the creative aspect. To stress this it is often referred to as the Creative Logos, [but] more often as the Third Logos.

QUESTION: Please explain the difference between the First Logos and the Third Logos.

ANSWER: The First Logos represents the first aspect which leads to the awakening of a system and its consequent manifestation: it is that which causes the system to come into being as well as the focus for the energizing of the cosmos. The term is applicable to a planet or a sun. It may be regarded as the point within the Circle—to use the analogy given in the Archaic Manuscript (referred to in *The Secret Doctrine*). This First Point or First Logos does not come forth into manifestation; hence it is often referred to as the Unmanifested Logos. Nevertheless, the potentizing energy which radiates and emanates from the First Logos comes forth into manifestation by means of the Third Logos. Thus it is the Third Logos which acts as the focus for the energy and material from which all in the cosmos evolves and develops. This energetic stimulus is transmitted from the unmanifest center to the manifest by means of an intermediary—which is partially unmanifest and partially manifest: this is termed the Second Logos.

QUESTION: What is the difference, if any, between “Kosmos” and “cosmos”?

ANSWER: Generally speaking, in *The Secret Doctrine* the word “Kosmos” usually signifies the Universe whereas “cosmos” applies to our solar system.

QUESTION: Will you please explain the cosmos in relation to the universe and Space? Are they synonymous?

ANSWER: Since the dictionary definition of *synonymous* is equivalent, or similar in meaning, therefore the three terms are not synonymous. The correct term to us in connection with a cosmos and a universe is that they are *analogous*. Originally the Greek word *kosmos* signified order—good order—and in this sense the word is applied to a world, a universe. So as to make a distinction between an “orderly world” and an “orderly universe,” H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* adopted this method of designating a difference: *cosmos* is applied to a world or even a solar system; *kosmos* is applicable to a universe. Just as there are a great many solar systems in a universe, there are innumerable universes in Space.

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## SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: *Part 2 of 2*

By Geoffrey Barborka

Compiled from various issues of *The Canadian Theosophist* from 1964-1980.

QUESTION: It seems logical that an old soul would spend a much longer time in Devachan than a young soul and that the young soul would reincarnate much more often than an old soul. Please comment.

ANSWER: The length of the Devachanic interlude is determined by the individual's activities on earth, especially by a person's thought-life. This is the predominating and decisive factor, in so far as the after-death time-period is concerned and not whether an individual is regarded as a young soul or an old soul. Thus a philosopher or scientist will have a much longer period in Devachan than will a farm laborer.

QUESTION: In order to have a conscious life during the after-death states, we are told, one has to believe in that life. Why is that so?

ANSWER: The Esoteric Philosophy asserts that each individual "creates" for himself what his future life on earth will be, according to the manner he lives his present life. It also asserts that each person creates what he will experience in his after-death state in Devachan. This is accomplished by the thought-life he is daily creating. Therefore, in order to have a "conscious life," that is to say consciously live over, or experience, what he has created, an individual must have "believed it" with sufficient intensity during his life on earth. By so doing he has impressed the idea of it into his thought-stream, or the "web of life" which he is fashioning from day to day. It then becomes a reality to the individual in Devachan, when he passes into the after-death states.

QUESTION: What reincarnates?

ANSWER: Although the answer to this question may be given in as brief a manner as the query—in two words—the significance of the response is gained when the reason for it is supplied, namely, the reason for *The Secret Doctrine's* response, as well as the need for understanding the constitution of man—usually referred to as the seven principle of man. For this study has greater meaning than is usually suspected. Here is HPB's recommendation:

“. . . study well the Principles of both the Kosmos and ourselves, dividing the group into the permanent and the impermanent, the higher and immortal and the lower and mortal, for thus only can we master and guide, first the lower cosmic and personal, then the higher cosmic and impersonal. Once we can do that we have secured our immortality" (S.D. V, 489, Adyar 6-volume edition).

Following the advice, the *permanent*—consisting of the higher and immortal constituents, usually referred to as the higher triad—is first listed: Atman, the Divine Spark (the Monadic

Essence); Buddhi, the Discriminating Principle; Manas, the Mind Principle.

The *impermanent*—consisting of the lower and mortal constituents—the lower quaternary: Kama, the Desire Principle; Prana, the Life-Principle; Linga-sarira, the Model Body [etheric double]; Sthula-sarira, the Physical Body

QUESTION: How long a time is there between incarnations on earth?

ANSWER: It all depends upon how a life on earth is lived. The importance of the daily life is the significant factor, as well as the “thought-life.” To illustrate the point, a materialist will return to life on earth much faster than will a philosopher. Then, too, it will depend upon the *length* of the life on earth. Those who die in childhood return to earth-life quickly.

QUESTION: Is it correct to say that the evolution of man is halfway between the animal and the Divine?

ANSWER: It depends upon which frame of reference is associated with the word “divine.” If “divine” is equated to the *lowest* degree of the Dhyani-Chohanic Kingdom (sometimes referred to as Class III of the Dhyani-Chohans) then the response would be: Yes, the present stage of human evolution is past the midway period of three and one-half Rounds of the seven Round cycle. At the conclusion of this Manvantara (consisting of seven Rounds) the monads passing through the evolutionary stage of the Human Kingdom who are ready for graduation will be able to enter the evolutionary stage of the Dhyani-Chohanic Kingdom.

*The Secret Doctrine* refers to the status of human evolution in this manner:

“The evolution of man, the microcosm, is analogous to that of the Universe, the macrocosm. His evolution stands between that of the latter and that of the animal, for which man, in his turn is a macrocosm” (S.D. II, 177).

QUESTION: What is HPB’s definition of a plane?

ANSWER: As used in Occultism, the term denotes “the range or extent of some state of consciousness, or . . . the perceptive power of a particular set of senses, or the action of a particular force,” or the state of matter corresponding to any of the above. (From the Glossary of *Key to Theosophy*)

QUESTION: Is it correct to regard the three highest cosmic planes as *intermingling states* of consciousness, rather than to regard them as stratified planes?

ANSWER: First we should consider H. P. Blavatsky’s comment in regard to the three highest of the seven cosmic planes:

“. . . the three higher planes being inaccessible to human intellect as developed at present” (S.D. I, 200).

Nevertheless, it is not correct to regard them as *intermingling states* of consciousness, for this reason:

“Each of the seven fundamental planes . . . has its own objectivity and subjectivity, its own space and time, its own consciousness and set of senses” (*Key to Theosophy*).

Furthermore, in order to show that there is not an intermingling in the two states of consciousness in which we are able to function and cognize, namely the waking state and the dreaming state, HPB writes:

“We have a different set of senses in dream-life, have we not? We feel, talk, hear, see, taste and function in general on a different plane; the change of state of our consciousness being evidenced by the fact that a series of acts and events embracing years, as we think, pass ideally through our mind in one instant. Well, that extreme rapidity of our mental operations in dreams, and the perfect naturalness, for the time being, of all the other functions, show us that we are on quite another plane: (*Key to Theosophy*).

QUESTION: I am puzzled about the term Unmanifested Logos. How can a Logos be unmanifest?

ANSWER: It is a matter of understanding the idea associated with the term and not be caught up with the words. For instance, in connection with the word “idea,” can you logically say that the “idea” pertains to manifestation; is it not rather something that is unmanifested? It may be manifested in a particular kind of way to me, but not at all manifest to you. But when I tell you what the idea represents, then it may become manifest to you—provided that you understand it. If you do not understand the concept that is present, then it still is “unmanifest” to you.

Applying the concept to the three Logoi: the First Logos represents the idea; the Second Logos, the formulation and the means of expressing the idea through speech and words; the Third Logos, the expression of the idea by means of spoken words. And yet, even when the words have been spoken, the First Logos, or idea, is still “unmanifest.”

Pythagoras was the first to formulate the concept of the Logoi. He expressed it by means of numbers: the Monad, Duad, and Triad. The Monad first appears and emanates the Duad; when the Monad and Duad have emanated the Triad, the Monad retires into silence and darkness. Hence the Monad is named the Unmanifested Logos; the Duad, the Unmanifest-Manifest Logos (forming the “bridge” between non-manifestation and manifestation); the Triad is the Manifested Logos. In further exposition: the Unmanifested Logos represents the divine potency for the coming into being of a cosmos; the Unmanifest-Manifest Logos, the Primordial Substance; the Manifested Logos, the phenomenal world.

H. P. Blavatsky uses the third Stanza of Dzyan (sloka 1) to explain the Three Logoi: “The last vibration of the Seventh Eternity thrills through infinitude. The Mother swells, expanding from within without, like the bud of a lotus” (S.D. I, 28).

QUESTION: How does one explain in simple terms the Theosophical idea of God, especially the idea of Absolute being, unconditioned, without qualities or personality?

ANSWER: To give a response in as brief a manner as possible—from the Theosophical viewpoint: God is the unknowable deific essence. Elaborating the idea: this deific essence pervades

every animate being—for that matter, every atom in the universe. With regard to the Absolute: it is considered to be the ultimate basis of All Thought. Consequently as soon as one attempts to define the Absolute it is no longer unconditioned—a word signifying not limited by conditions of space or time or free from relation.

QUESTION: Do we lose our identity when we die?

ANSWER: Here is a question which would be asked by a person attending a Theosophical lecture for the first time and the lecture most likely referred to reincarnation. To answer such an inquirer would not be easy simply because the answerer would have to inquire what was meant by “we.” Is the physical body meant? Or is it the personality? There is a passage in *The Secret Doctrine* which covers the subject so very well:

“The Human Soul, lower Manas, is the *only* and direct mediator between the personality and the Divine Ego. That which goes to make up on this earth the *personality* miscalled *individuality* by the majority, is the sum of all its mental, physical, and spiritual characteristics, which, being impressed on the human Soul, produces the *man*. Now, of all these characteristics it is the purified thoughts alone which can be impressed on the higher, immortal Ego. This is done by the Human Soul merging again, in its essence, into its parent source, commingling with its Divine Ego during life, and re-uniting itself entirely with it after the death of the physical man. Therefore, unless Kama-Manas transmits to Buddhi-Manas such personal ideations, and such consciousness of its ‘I’ as can be assimilated by the Divine Ego, nothing of that ‘I’ or personality can survive in the Eternal. Only that which is worthy of the immortal God within us, and identical in its nature with the divine quintessence, can survive; for in this case it is its own, the Divine Ego’s ‘shadows’ or emanations which ascend to it and are indrawn by it into itself again, to become once more part of its own Essence. No noble thought, no grand aspiration, desire, or divine immortal love, can come into the brain of the man of clay and settle there, except as a direct emanation from the Higher to, and through, the lower Ego; all the rest, intellectual as it may seem, proceeds from the ‘shadow,’ the *lower mind*, in its association and commingling with Kama, and passes away and disappears for ever. But the mental and spiritual ideations of the personal ‘I’ return to it, as parts of the Ego’s Essence, and can never fade out. Thus of the personality that was, only its spiritual experiences, the memory of all that is good and noble, with the consciousness of its ‘I’ blended with that of all the other personal ‘I’s’ that preceded it, survive and become immortal” (S.D. V, 490-1, 6-volume Adyar edition).

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Extracts Taken From  
TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE

*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* was initially published in two parts, the first part in 1890 and the second in 1891. Based on a series of weekly meetings of the London Blavatsky Lodge during the early months of 1889, it features answers given by Mme. Blavatsky to questions put forth by members regarding the archaic stanzas of *The Book of Dzyan*. What is included in this Symposium paper is only a small portion of *Transactions*, and the student who wants to pursue this study further is advised to borrow a copy from the H. S. Olcott Memorial Library, purchase their own copy, or view one of the online electronic editions. — David P. Bruce

Sloka 1. THE ETERNAL PARENT (*Space*), WRAPPED IN HER EVER INVISIBLE ROBES, HAD SLUMBERED ONCE AGAIN FOR SEVEN ETERNITIES.

Q. Why is the Eternal Parent, Space, spoken of as feminine?

A. Not in all cases . . . but when it is so spoken of the reason is that though it is impossible to define Parabrahm, yet once that we speak of that first something which *can* be conceived, it has to be treated of as a feminine principle. In all cosmogonies the first differentiation was considered feminine. . . . We have to adopt the masculine or the feminine gender, for we cannot use the neuter *it*. From IT, strictly speaking, nothing can proceed, neither a radiation nor an emanation.

Q. Is the first differentiation from the absolute IT always feminine?

A. Only as a figure of speech; in strict philosophy it is sexless; but the female aspect is the first it assumes in human conceptions, its subsequent materialization in any philosophy depending on the degree of the spirituality of the race or nation that produced the system. For instance: in the Kabbala of the Talmudists IT is called AIN-SOPH, the endless, the boundless, the infinite (the attribute being always negative), which *absolute* Principle is yet referred to as *He!!* From it, this negative Boundless Circle of Infinite Light, emanates the first Sefhira, the Crown, which the Talmudists call “Torah,” the law, explaining that she is the wife of Ain-Soph. This is anthropomorphizing the Spiritual with a vengeance.

Q. What is the meaning of the term “Ever invisible robes”?

A. It is, of course, as every allegory in the Eastern philosophies, a figurative expression. . . . It is the non-differentiated substance or spiritual matter.

Q. Is it what is called “Laya”?

A. “Robes” and all are in the *Laya* condition, the point from which, or at which, the primordial substance begins to differentiate and thus gives birth to the universe and all in it.

Q. Are the “invisible robes” so called because they are not objective to any differentiation of consciousness?

A. Say rather, invisible to finite consciousness, if such consciousness were possible at that stage of evolution. Even for the Logos, Mulaprakriti is a veil, the Robes in which the Absolute is enveloped. Even the Logos cannot perceive the Absolute, say the Vedantins.

Q. What are the “Seven Eternities,” and how can there be such a division in Pralaya, when there is no one to be conscious of time?

A. The modern astronomer knows the “ordinances of Heaven” by no means better than his ancient brother did. If asked whether he could “bring forth Mazzaroth in his season,” or if he was with “him” who “spread out the sky,” he would have to answer sadly, just as Job did, in the negative. Yet this in no wise prevents him from speculating about the age of the Sun, Moon, and Earth, and “calculating” geological periods from that time when there was not a living man, with or without consciousness, on earth. Why, therefore, should not the same privilege be granted to the ancients?

Q. But why should the term “Seven Eternities” be employed?

A. The term “Seven Eternities” is employed owing to the invariable law of analogy. As Manvantara is divided into seven periods, so is Pralaya; as day is composed of twelve hours so is night. Can we say that because we are asleep during the night and lose consciousness of time, that therefore the hours do not strike? Pralaya is the “Night” after the Manvantaric “Day.” There is no one by, and consciousness is asleep with the rest. But since it exists, and is in full activity during Manvantara; and since we are fully alive to the fact that the law of analogy and periodicity is immutable, and, being so, that it must act equally at both ends, why cannot the phrase be used?

Q. But how can an eternity be counted?

A. Perhaps the query arises owing to the general misunderstanding of the term “Eternity.” We Westerners are foolish enough to speculate about that which has neither beginning nor end, and we imagine that the ancients must have done the same. They did not, however: no philosopher in days of old ever took “Eternity” to mean beginningless and endless duration. Neither the *Æons* of the Greeks nor the *Naroses* convey this meaning. In fact, they had no word to convey this precise sense. Parabrahm, Ain-Soph, and the *Zeruana-Akerne* of the Avesta alone represent such an Eternity; all the other periods are finite and astronomical, based on tropical years and other enormous cycles. The word *Æon*, which in the Bible is translated by Eternity, means not only a finite period, but also an angel and being.

Sloka 2. TIME WAS NOT, FOR IT LAY ASLEEP IN THE INFINITE BOSOM OF DURATION.

Q. What is the difference between Time and Duration?

A. Duration *is*; it has neither beginning nor end. How can you call that which has neither beginning nor end, Time? Duration is beginningless and endless; Time is finite.

Q. Is, then, Duration the infinite, and Time the finite conception?

A. Time can be divided; Duration—in our philosophy, at least—cannot. Time is divisible in Duration—or, as you put it, the one is something *within* Time and Space, whereas the other is outside of both.

Q. The only way one can define Time is by the motion of the earth.

A. But we can also define Time in our conceptions.

Q. Duration, rather?

A. No, Time; for as to Duration, it is impossible to divide it or set up landmarks therein. Duration with us is the one eternity, not relative, but absolute.

Q. Can it be said that the essential idea of Duration is existence?

A. No; existence has limited and definite periods, whereas Duration, having neither beginning nor end, is a perfect abstraction which contains Time. Duration is like Space, which is an abstraction too, and is equally without beginning or end. It is in its concreteness and limitation only that it becomes a representation and something. Of course the distance between two points is called space; it may be enormous or it may be infinitesimal, yet it will always be space. But all such specifications are divisions in human conception. In reality Space is what the ancients called the One invisible and unknown (now unknowable) Deity.

Q. Space is the objective and Time the subjective side of all manifestation. In reality they are the only attributes of the infinite; but attribute is perhaps a bad term to use, inasmuch as they are, so to speak, co-extensive with the infinite. It may, however, be objected that they are nothing but the creations of our own intellect; simply the forms in which we cannot help conceiving things.

A. That sounds like an argument of our friends the Hylo-idealists; but here we speak of the noumenal and not of the phenomenal universe. In the occult catechism (*Vide Secret Doctrine*) it is asked: “What is that which always IS, which you cannot imagine as not *being*, do what you may?” The answer is—SPACE. For there may not be a single man in the universe to think of it, not a single eye to perceive it, nor a single brain to sense it, but still Space *is, ever was, and ever will be*, and you cannot make away with it.

Q. Because we cannot help thinking of it, perhaps?

A. Our thinking of it has nothing to do with the question. Try, rather, if you can think of anything with Space excluded and you will soon find out the impossibility of such a conception. Space exists where there is nothing else, and must so exist whether the Universe is one absolute vacuum or a full Pleroma.

Q. But are eternal Space and Duration the only attributes of the Infinite?

A. Space and Duration, being eternal, cannot be called attributes, as they are only the *aspects* of that Infinite. Nor can that Infinite, if you mean by it The Absolute Principle, have any

attributes whatever, as only that which is itself finite and conditioned can have any relation to something else. All this is philosophically wrong.

Sloka 3. . . . . UNIVERSAL MIND WAS NOT, FOR THERE WERE NO AH-HI (*celestial beings*) TO CONTAIN (*hence manifest*) IT.

Q. Then the Ah-hi and Universal Mind are necessary complements of one another?

A. Not at all: Universal or Absolute Mind always *is* during Pralaya as well as Manvantara; it is immutable. The Ah-hi are the highest Dhyanis, the Logoi . . . those who begin the downward evolution, or emanation. During Pralaya there are no Ah-hi, because they come into being only with the first *radiation* of the Universal Mind, which, *per se*, cannot be differentiated, and the radiation from which is the first *dawn* of Manvantara. The Absolute is dormant, latent mind, and cannot be otherwise in true metaphysical perception; it is only Its shadow which becomes differentiated in the collectivity of these Dhyanis.

Sloka 4. THE SEVEN WAYS TO BLISS (*Moksha or Nirvana*) WERE NOT. THE GREAT CAUSES OF MISERY (*Nidâna and Maya*) WERE NOT, FOR THERE WAS NO ONE TO PRODUCE AND GET ENSNARED BY THEM.

Q. What are the seven ways to bliss?

A. They are certain faculties of which the student will know more when he goes deeper into occultism.

Q. Are Nidâna and Maya (the great causes of misery) aspects of the Absolute?

A. Nidâna means the concatenation of cause and effect; the twelve Nidânas are the enumeration of the chief causes which produce the severest reaction or effects under the Karmic law. Although there is no connection between the terms Nidâna and Maya in themselves, Maya being simply illusion, yet if we consider the universe as Maya or illusion, then certainly the Nidânas, as being moral agents in the universe, are included in Maya. It is Maya, illusion or ignorance, which awakens Nidânas; and the cause or causes having been produced, the effects follow according to Karmic law. To take an instance: we all regard ourselves as Units, although essentially we are one indivisible Unit, drops in the ocean of Being, not to be distinguished from other drops. Having then produced this cause, the whole discord of life follows immediately as an effect; in reality it is the endeavor of nature to restore harmony and maintain equilibrium. It is this sense of separateness which is the root of all evil.

Q. Is then Maya a collective term for all manifestations?

A. I do not think this would explain the term. Maya is the perceptive faculty of every Ego which considers itself a Unit separate from, and independent of, the One infinite and eternal SAT, or “be-ness.” Maya is explained in *exoteric* philosophy and the Purânas, as the personified active Will of the Creative God—the latter being but a personified *Maya* him-

self—a passing deception of the senses of man, who began anthropomorphizing pure abstraction from the beginning of his speculations. Maya, in the conception of an orthodox Hindu, is quite different from the Maya of a Vedantin Idealist or an Occultist. The Vedanta states that Maya, or the deceptive influence of illusion alone, constitutes belief in the *real* existence of matter or anything differentiated. The Bhagavata Purâna identifies Maya with Prakriti (manifested nature and matter). Do not some advanced European metaphysicians, such as Kant, Schopenhauer, and others, assert the same? Of course they got their ideas about it from the East—especially from Buddhism; yet the doctrine of the unreality of this universe has been pretty correctly worked out by our philosophers—on general lines, at any rate. Now, although no two people can see things and objects in exactly the same way, and that each of us sees them in his own way, yet all labor more or less under illusions, and chiefly under the great illusion (Maya) that they are, as personalities, distinct beings from other beings, and that even their *Se/ves* or Egos will prevail in the eternity (or sempiternity, at any rate) as such; whereas not only we ourselves, but the whole visible and invisible universe, are only a temporary part of the one beginningless and endless WHOLE, or that which ever was, is, and will be.

Sloka 5. DARKNESS ALONE FILLED THE BOUNDLESS ALL, FOR FATHER, MOTHER, AND SON WERE ONCE MORE ONE, AND THE SON HAD NOT AWAKENED YET FOR THE NEW WHEEL AND HIS PILGRIMAGE THEREON.

Q. Is “Darkness” the same as the “Eternal Parent Space” spoken of in Sloka 1?

A. Not at all. Here “the boundless all” is the “Parent Space”; and Cosmic Space is something already with attributes, at least potentially. “Darkness,” on the other hand, and in this instance, is that of which no attributes can be postulated: it is the Unknown Principle filling Cosmic Space.

Q. Is Darkness, then, used in the sense of the opposite pole to Light?

A. Yes, in the sense of the Unmanifested and the Unknown as the opposite pole to manifestation, and that which falls under the possibility of speculation.

Q. When does Light proceed from that Darkness?

A. Subsequently, when the first hour for manifestation strikes.

Q. What is the meaning of the sentence, “Father, Mother and Son were once more one”?

A. It means that the three Logoi—the unmanifested “Father,” the semi-manifested “Mother” and the Universe, which is the third *Logos* of our philosophy or Brahmâ, were during the (periodical) *pralaya* once more *one*; differentiated essence had rebecome undifferentiated. The sentence, “Father, Mother, and Son,” is the antitype of the Christian type—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the last of which was, in early Christianity and Gnosticism, the female “Sophia.” It means that all creative and sensitive forces and the effects of such forces which

constitute the universe had returned to their primordial state: *all* was merged into one. During the Mahapralayas naught but the Absolute is.

Sloka 6. THE SEVEN SUBLIME LORDS AND THE SEVEN TRUTHS HAD CEASED TO BE, AND THE UNIVERSE, THE SON OF NECESSITY, WAS IMMERSSED IN PARANISHPANNA (*absolute perfection, Paranirvana, which is Yong-Grüb*), TO BE OUTBREATHED BY THAT WHICH IS AND YET IS NOT. NAUGHT WAS.

Sloka 7. THE CAUSES OF EXISTENCE HAD BEEN DONE AWAY WITH; THE VISIBLE THAT WAS, AND THE INVISIBLE THAT IS, RESTED IN ETERNAL NON-BEING, THE ONE BEING.

Q. With reference to sloka 6, where it speaks of the “Seven Lords,” since confusion is apt to arise as to the correct application of the terms, what is the distinction between Dhyani-Chohans, Planetary Spirits, Builders and Dhyani-Buddhas?

A. As an additional two volumes of the *Secret Doctrine* would be required to explain all the Hierarchies; therefore, much relating to them has been omitted from the Stanzas and Commentaries. A short definition may, however, be tried. Dhyani-Chohan is a generic term for all Devas, or celestial beings. A Planetary Spirit is a Ruler of a planet, a kind of finite or personal god.

Q. If the “Causes of existence” had been done away with, how did they come again into existence? It is stated in the Commentary that the chief cause of existence is “the desire to exist,” but in the sloka, the universe is called the “son of necessity.”

A. “The causes of existence had been done away with” refers to the last Manvantara, or age of Brahmâ, but the cause which makes the Wheel of Time and Space run into Eternity, which is out of Space and Time, has nothing to do with finite causes or what we call Nidânas. There seems to me no contradiction in the statements.

Q. There certainly is a contrast. If the causes of existence had been done away with, how did they come into existence again? But the answer removes the difficulty, for it is stated that one Manvantara had disappeared into Pralaya, and that the cause which led the previous Manvantara to exist is now behind the limits of Space and Time, and therefore causes another Manvantara to come into being.

A. Quite so. This one eternal and therefore, “causeless cause” is immutable and has nothing to do with the causes on any of the planes which are concerned with finite and conditioned being. The cause can therefore by no means be a finite consciousness or desire. It is an absurdity to postulate desire or necessity of the Absolute; the striking of a clock does not suggest the desire of the clock to strike.

Q. But the clock is wound up, and needs a Winder?

A. The same may be said of the universe and this cause, the Absolute containing both clock and Winder, once it is the Absolute; the only difference is that the former is wound up in Space and Time and the latter out of Space and Time, that is to say in Eternity.

Q. The question really requests an explanation of the cause, in the Absolute, of differentiation?

A. That is outside the province of legitimate speculation. Parabrahm is not a cause, neither is there any cause that can compel it to emanate or create. Strictly speaking, Parabrahm is not even the Absolute but *Absoluteness*. Parabrahm is not the cause, but the causality, or the propelling but not volitional power, in every manifesting Cause. We may have some hazy idea that there is such a thing as this eternal Causeless Cause or Causality. But to define it is impossible.

Sloka 8. ALONE THE ONE FORM OF EXISTENCE STRETCHED, BOUNDLESS, INFINITE, CAUSELESS, IN DREAMLESS SLEEP; AND LIFE PULSATED UNCONSCIOUS IN UNIVERSAL SPACE, THROUGHOUT THAT ALL-PRESENCE WHICH IS SENSED BY THE "OPENED EYE" OF THE DANGMA.

Q. Does the "Eye" open upon the Absolute: or are the "one form of existence" and the "All-Presence" other than the Absolute, or various names for the same Principle?

A. It is all one, of course; simply metaphorical expressions. Please notice that the "Eye" is not said to "see"; it only "sensed" the "All-Presence."

Q. It is through this "Eye" then, that we receive such sense, or feeling, or consciousness?

A. Through that "Eye," most decidedly; but then one must have such an "Eye" before he can see, or become a *Dangma*, or a Seer.

Q. The highest spiritual faculty, presumably?

A. Very well; but where, at that stage, was the happy possessor of it? There was no *Dangma* to sense the "All-Presence," because there were as yet no men.

Q. The term light was, of course, never used for physical light?

A. Of course not. Here light is the first potentiality awakening from its *laya* condition to become a potency; it is the first flutter in undifferentiated matter which throws it into objectivity and into a plane from which will start manifestation.

Sloka 9. BUT WHERE WAS THE DANGMA WHEN THE ALAYA OF THE UNIVERSE (*Soul as the basis of all, Anima Mundi*) WAS IN PARAMARTHA (*Absolute Being and Consciousness which are Absolute Non-Being and Unconsciousness*) AND THE GREAT WHEEL WAS ANUPADAKA?

Q. Does "Alaya" mean that which is never manifested and dissolved, and is it derived from "a," the negative particle, and "laya"?

A. If it is so etymologically—and I am certainly not prepared to answer you one way or the other—it would mean the reverse, since *laya* itself is just that which is not manifested; therefore it would signify *that which is not unmanifested* if anything. Whatever may be the etymological vivisection of the word, it is simply the "Soul of the World," *Anima Mundi*.

This is shown by the very wording of the Sloka, which speaks of Alaya being in *Paramartha*—*i.e.*, in Absolute Non-Being and Unconsciousness, being at the same time absolute perfection or Absoluteness itself. This word, however, is the bone of contention between the Yogacharya and the Madhyamika schools of Northern Buddhism. The scholasticism of the latter makes of *Paramartha* (*Satya*) something dependent on, and, therefore, relative to other things, thereby vitiating the whole metaphysical philosophy of the word Absoluteness. The other school very rightly denies this interpretation.

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*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* is currently out of print, but the student who wishes to read it has several options:

1. Borrow it from the Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library –

Borrow online: [www.theosophical.org/library](http://www.theosophical.org/library)

Call library: (630) 668-1571, ext. 304

2. Purchase your own copy from Amazon, Alibris, or other used book sellers.
3. View an online copy –

United Lodge of Theosophists: [http://www.ultindia.org/study\\_class\\_texts.html](http://www.ultindia.org/study_class_texts.html)

Theosophical University Press: [www.theosociety.org/pasadena/ts/tup-onl.htm](http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/ts/tup-onl.htm)

## THE PATTERN OF *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

By Ianthe Hoskins

Originally published in the January 1971 issue of *The Theosophist*.

One cannot go far into the more serious study of Theosophy without coming to recognize the significance of numbers and of mathematical patterns and relationships in the structure and functioning of the universe. From Plato and the Mysteries, to modern astronomy and other sciences, the mathematics of Nature has been recognized and explored.

The unfolding of the universe, according to the Secret Doctrine, reveals a mathematical pattern that may be summarized thus:

In the beginning, ONE (the “one” on the plane of Emanation)  
 THREE Logoi (the Trinitarian aspect of Deity)  
 SEVEN Spirits (Rays, Dhyan Chohans)  
 TWELVE Orders of Creative Powers (Zodiac)  
 FORTY-NINE Fires (the seven-times-seven scale)

In short, the number pattern: 1—3—7—12—49

The various accounts of how *The Secret Doctrine* was written show that many hands and minds contributed to the finished work.<sup>1</sup> Principally and in essentials, it was the work of Madame Blavatsky and her Adept Teachers. But the sorting, rearranging, and transcription of the MSS., the checking of references, correcting and rewriting of passages, minor research, and proof reading—all this was left largely in the hands of a group of helpers, including Bertram and Archibald Keightley, the Countess Wachtmeister, G. R. S. Mead, Mabel Collins, and others.<sup>2</sup>

On HPB’s instruction, the Keightleys went through the entire MSS. she had brought to London from Ostend and—with some courage!—gave her their opinion and advice. “As a book,” they told her, “it is just a confusing muddle and jumble, without plan, structure or arrangement . . . The MS., unless it is to be *Isis Unveiled* worsened, must be thoroughly rearranged and recast on some definite plan.” When Mabel Collins endorsed their opinion, we are told, “HPB just handed over the whole stack of MS.—every single scrap of it—to A. K. and myself and told us to ‘go to Hell and get on with it.’” Later, as the work progressed, it appears that Bertram and Archibald “devised the plan finally approved and adopted by HPB,” that is, the division of the work into the two main volumes, Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis, each subdivided into parts.

This plan, however, was evolved in the final stages of the work when the much retyped MSS. were at last being prepared for the printers. It concerns the ultimate form of *The Secret Doctrine* as we now have it, rather than the presentation of the teaching itself. For an indica-

tion of the origins of the inner structure of *The Secret Doctrine*, we are directed to a significant entry in Colonel Olcott's diary for January 9, 1885, some three years before the Keightleys' proposals for the form of publication. HSO wrote: "HPB got from the [Master M] the plan for her *Secret Doctrine*. It is excellent. Oakley and I had tried our hands on it last night, but this is much better."<sup>3</sup>

What was this "plan" given by the Master M.? Again, a summary of the salient features of *The Secret Doctrine* is instructive.

The Secret Doctrine is *one*, a single tradition, "the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world."<sup>4</sup> This is the theme of HPB's *Introductory*, the first introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*.

Its essential elements are *three*, "the few fundamental conceptions which underlie and pervade the entire system"<sup>5</sup> of Theosophical thought. This is the theme of the *Proem*, the second introduction.

This new presentation of the Wisdom Religion takes the form of a translation, with commentary, of certain selected fragments of an archaic document, the *Stanzas of Dzyan*. The Stanzas thus *selected* for inclusion (out of an unstated number) treat two themes: *seven* stanzas on Cosmogogenesis (Volume 1) and *twelve* stanzas on Anthropogenesis (Volume II).

And now a curious detail is observed: The *slokas*, or verses, of the first group are numbered in the ordinary way, like the verses of the books of the Bible: Stanza 1, verses 1, 2, 3, . . . etc.; Stanza 2, verses 1, 2, 3, . . . etc. and so on through the seven Stanzas of Cosmogogenesis. But not so with the *slokas* of the second group, Anthropogenesis. Here the numbering of each successive set of *slokas* is continued from the preceding Stanza. Thus we find: Stanza 1, verses 1, 2, 3, 4; Stanza 2, verses 5, 6, . . . to 10; Stanza 3, verses 11 to 13; and so on to Stanza 12, verses 47, 48—ending with 49!

The pattern is unmistakable: 1–3–7–12–49.

Coincidence? Juggling with facts? Irrelevance? Or could it be that the plan offered by the Master M. for *The Secret Doctrine* was designed to unfold the teachings in such a way as to echo the unfoldment of nature? As HPB herself seems to draw attention to "the forty-nine STANZAS" (that is, *slokas*)<sup>6</sup> of the second group of fragments, maybe she thought to awaken the reader's observation of this carefully devised illustration of the Hermetic axiom, "as above, so below," "as in the Cosmos, so in the human world," "as in the Secret Doctrine, so in *The Secret Doctrine*."

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**Ianthe Hoskins** (1912-2001) was born in Florence. Her family left Italy for England as World War I was unfolding. She joined the Theosophical Society at the age of 23 and retired from her full time teaching job in her fifties to work full time for the Society.

During her Theosophical career, she lectured round the world, using her teaching skills to present Theosophy in a clear and concise manner to a wide audience.

### Compiler's Notes

1. Refer to "The Making of The Secret Doctrine" by Michael Gomes (National Lodge paper dated November 2011).
2. Refer to Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine by Countess Constance Wachtmeister et al.
3. Olcott, Henry. Old Diary Leaves. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1979, vol. 2, p. 208.
4. Blavatsky, H. P. The Secret Doctrine. Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1979, vol. 1, p. xxxiv.
5. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 13.
6. The original edition of The Secret Doctrine (vol. 2, p. 437) refers to "the forty-nine Stanzas." The editor of the 1979 edition, Boris de Zirkoff, apparently felt that this was an error and corrected it to read "the forty-nine slokas."

—David P. Bruce

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

When this article was republished in the spring 1995 issue of *The American Theosophist*, the author of this intriguing and provocative article added some additional questions that she thought might help to answer the primary one of whether the pattern she found was integral to *The Secret Doctrine* or was merely one of coincidence. The questions below are reprinted exactly as they appeared in the 1995 reprint.

1. Is there any information about the total bulk of the material out of which the stanzas were selected?
2. Does HPB say *she* selected them, or just that they "were selected," which might mean that one of her teachers did the selecting?
3. Was the original material already divided into chapters and verses or their equivalent, with or without numbers? HPB could hardly have made the divisions herself before she had been taught what it was all about. We understand that she had several helpers, any one of whom might have had the necessary scholarship to guide her in the translation, selection, and arrangement of the text.
4. Since the Stanzas are a selection only, was the division into seven and twelve stanzas fortuitous, or was it indeed by design, as the pattern would suggest?
5. Does the passage from HSO's diary about the Master's visit and suggestion of a plan lead anywhere, and are there other references to the occasion?

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## The Secret Doctrine

By Annie Besant

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In the early spring of 1889, Mr. W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, asked Mrs. Besant to review *The Secret Doctrine* for his paper. The review was published on April 25, 1889. Some of us who have struggled for decades to grasp the immensity of Madame Blavatsky's work, even under the guidance of experienced students, cannot fail to be astonished at the masterly survey presented in this review by Mrs. Besant after some few weeks only of reading. Her previous acquaintance with Theosophical writing was limited to A.P. Sinnett's *Occult World*, which she had read a year or two earlier. The grand Victorian language shows itself equal to the task of summarizing for the intellectual reader of her day the grand concepts here for the first time made available to the Western world.

It would be difficult to find a book presenting more difficulties to the reviewer with a conscience than these handsome volumes bearing the name of Mme. Blavatsky as author—or rather, perhaps it would be more accurate to say as compiler and annotator. The subject matter is so far away from the beaten paths of literature, science and art; the point of view so far removed from our occidental fashion of envisaging the universe; the lore gathered and expounded so different from the science or the metaphysics of the West, that to ninety-nine out of every hundred readers—perhaps to nine hundred and ninety-nine among every thousand—the study of the book will begin in bewilderment and end in despair.

Let it be said at once that the great majority of average easy-going folk will do well not to begin *The Secret Doctrine* at all. A certain mental position must be acquired ere any reading thereof can be aught save weariness and futility. The would-be reader must have an intense desire *to know*, and to know not merely the relations between phenomena, but the causes of phenomena; he must be eagerly searching for that bridge between matter and thought, between the vibrating nerve-cell and percipiency which the late Professor Clifford declared had never yet been thrown across the gulf that sunders them; he must be free from the preposterous conceit (that exists now as really for the psychical universe as it did in the days of Copernicus for the physical) that this world and its inhabitants are the only inhabited world and the only intelligent beings in the universe; he must recognize that there may be, and most probably are, myriads of existences invisible, inaudible to us, because we have no senses capable of responding to the vibrations that they set up, and which are therefore non-existent to us, although in full activity, just as there are rays at either end of the solar spectrum quite as real as the visible rays although invisible to us. If only the nerve ends of our eyes and ears could respond to higher and lower rates of vibration, who can tell what new worlds, more or less “material” than our own, might not flash into our consciousness,

what sights and sounds might not reach us from spheres interblended with our own? A deep-sea fish, aware that his comrades might explode if they are dragged to the surface, and knowing naught of life-conditions other than his own, might, if he were a rash deep-sea fish, deny the possibility of other intelligent beings inhabiting the upper regions of the sea or the land invisible to him. And so we may, if we are rash, deny all lives save those led on our globe at the bottom of our air-ocean, and human deep-sea fishes had better leave Mme. Blavatsky's volumes alone.

None the less is her book at once remarkable and interesting—remarkable for its wide range of curious and ancient lore, interesting for the light it throws on the religions of the world. For as she unrolls *The Secret Doctrine* we catch sight of familiar faces in the imagery that passes under our eyes—now Egyptian, and now Jewish; now Persian and now Chinese; now Indian, and now Babylonian—until slowly the feeling grows up that she is showing us the rock whence all these faiths were hewn, the complete cosmogony whereof these have presented disjointed fragments.

The first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* is divided into three parts—an exposition of Cosmic Evolution, of the Evolution of Symbolism, and of the contrast between Science and the Secret Doctrine. Of these the first will most repel and the third will most attract. For the first is a metaphysical treatise wherein the Hindu brain, subtlest and most mystic of all mental organisms, expounds Being and the beginning of beings in fashion that no Western intellect can rival. The causeless Cause, the rootless Root, whence spirit and matter alike differentiate, is the One Existence—hidden, absolute, eternal, indistinguishable by us from nonexistence in that it has no form that can enable us to cognize it. From this all that exists proceeds; in itself Be-ness—why not Existence?—then Becoming, and the Becoming alone can be intelligible to us. From this one primal element, whereof all phenomena are transmutations, and then a hierarchy of existences in linked order, the gradual evolution of a universe.

In reading this “origin of things” (as in reading all others) there is the constant feeling of unsatisfied desire for evidence, despite the sweep of conception and the coherency of the whole. Of course, the claim set up is that this Secret Doctrine comes from those who know, know with scientific certainty, not with mere guess and groping, from the Arhats, the Wise Ones of the East, whose disciple Mme. Blavatsky claims to be. But then we crave for some proof of these revealers. As regards the metaphysics, here again there is the feeling of the breakdown of language, the contradictions in which the mind is involved when it strives to grasp the ever elusive ultimates of being. However flexible and subtle in its shades of meaning Sanskrit may be, our occidental tongues, at least, stumble into maddening confusion amid the shadowy forms and no forms of the Thing in Itself, and when it comes to symbolizing existence as a boundless circle, using a word that implies limitation, and is empty of meaning without it, in connection with the absence of limitation, what can one do save admit that we have passed out of the region in which language is useful as conveying

concepts, and that before the mystery of existence silence is more reverent than self-contradictory speech?

Very briefly and roughly put, the idea is that Be-ness evolves spirit and matter, spirit descending further and further into matter in search of experiences not otherwise attainable, evolving all forms; it reaches the lowest point, commences its re-ascent; evolves through mineral, vegetable, animal until it attains self-consciousness at the human stage; then in the human being, with its sevenfold nature, it climbs upward, spiritualizing him as he evolves, until the grosser body and the animal passions are purged away, and the higher principles united to Atma, the spark of the divine spirit within him, reach their goal, the absolute existence whence they originally came, carrying with them all the gains of their long pilgrimage. This process implies, of course, manifold reincarnations for each human spirit as it climbs the many steps at whose summit alone is Rest. Only when a certain height is touched, comes memory of the past, and then the purified spirit can gaze backwards over the stages of its ascent.

Passing over Part II on Symbolism, we find Mme. Blavatsky, in Part III, in full tilt against modern science, not as against its facts but as against its more recondite theories. It is an easy task for her to show that great scientific thinkers are at issue with each other as to the constitution of the ether, the essence of "matter" and of "force"; and she claims that the Occultist has the knowledge after which the scientist is only groping, and that among the warring theories, Occultism may at least demand a hearing.

Some of the theories now put forward indeed come very near to occult views and make scientifically possible some of the startling manifestations of occult power. Newton's view for instance, that gravity must be caused by an agent acting constantly according to certain laws, is in unison with the Occultist's assertion that all the forces in nature are actions of Intelligences, working ceaselessly (though invisibly to us) in the universe; while much of the speculation of Butterof and Crookes almost touches Occult teaching. The Akasa of the Occultist is, as it were, the "matter-force" after which science is groping, the parent of all phenomena. Within our terrestrial sphere, on the plane of the universe accessible to our physical senses, science is accurate as to vibrations and so on; where it fails, says the Occultist, is in supposing that these are all, that on these lines of investigation can ever be discovered the nature, say, of light or color; there are planes above ours on which matter exists in other modifications, in other conditions; on those must be sought the causes whereof science studies the effects, the true nature of our physical phenomena. The Atom, that strange conception of the physicist, elastic yet indivisible, is to the Occultist a soul, "a center of potential activity" differentiated from the One Soul of the universe, "the first born of the ever-concealed Cause of all causes" building up the visible universe. Instead of matter "inert" and "inanimate," clashing through eternities, flinging up here a sun and there a world, and finally evolving thought, the Occultist sees Intelligence robing itself in matter, energizing, guiding, controlling, animating all that is. The antithesis could not be sharper,

and one or other solution of the problem of problems must be accepted by the philosopher. Which?

The second volume of Mme. Blavatsky's work deals with humanity, the first part being occupied with its genesis, the second with the symbolism of its religions, the third with the contrast between the occult and the scientific views of his evolution. Of these, the first will be met with the most furious and contemptuous resistance, for briefly this is the theory: Man as he is now, with his sevenfold nature—physical body, vital principle, "astral body," animal soul, human or rational soul, human spirit, divine spirit— was not created offhand complete. The First Race was created, breathed out of their own substance, by the beings who built our world, and was spiritual, ethereal, sexless, and of slight intelligence; the Second Race was produced by gemmation from the First, more material than its progenitor and asexual; the Third Race was produced oviparously and among these separation of the sexes appeared gradually, the earlier being androgynous, the later distinctly male and female; the intellectual development was still very low, for spirit had not yet become sufficiently clothed with matter for self-conscious thought. Of this race in its later stages were the dwellers in Atlantis and the Lemurians, among them the birth of religions, astronomical and sexual, and of these was born the Fourth Race, the giants, the "men of renown" in whom we touch the "purely human period." (A curious excursus on the "third eye" which occurs here receives remarkable confirmation from some of the latest scientific speculations on the pineal gland.) Now begins civilization and the building of the great rock cities, and the physical and intellectual nature of man develops "at the cost of the psychic and the spiritual"; the huge statues and other remains found in Easter Island, Bamian and other spots, bear witness to the size of their makers, as do the vast dwellings and the "enormous human bones" of Misorte. With the Fifth Race we pass into the domain of history, and to this the present races of men belong.

Far away as, at first sight, all this seems from Occidental science, yet the careful reader will mark the curious analogies between this occult view of human evolution and the scientific view of the evolution of living things on our globe, an evolution still shown in broad outline in the individual development of each human being from ovum to man. Mme. Blavatsky's views may not meet with acceptance, but they are supported by sufficient learning, acuteness and ability, to enforce a respectful hearing. It is indeed the East which, through her, challenges the West and the Orient need not be ashamed of its champion. We have here given but a few fragments of her lore, and injustice is necessarily done by such treatment to the whole. The book deserves to be read: it deserves to be thought over; and none who believes in the progress of humanity has the right to turn away over-hastily from any contribution to knowledge, however new in its form, from any theory, however strange in its aspect. The wild dreams of one generation become the common places of a later one, and all who keep an open door to Truth will give scrutiny to any visitant, be the garb of Asia or of Europe, the tongue of Paris or of India. If this counsel be of folly or of falsehood, it shall

come to naught, but if of Truth, you cannot overthrow it. Passing strange is it. Of the truth in it our superficial examination is insufficient to decide.

**Annie Besant** (1847-1933) was only five years old when her father died. Unable to care for her, Annie's mother sent her to live with a friend, where she was privately educated. At the age of 19, she married the Rev. Frank Besant and by the age of 23 had two children. When Annie began questioning her religious beliefs, Frank Besant ordered her to leave. The two divorced and Frank won custody of both children. Completely rejecting Christianity in 1874, Annie joined the Secular Society and began writing articles on marriage and women's rights for the radical *National Reformer*. She also joined the socialist group, the Fabian Society, where she became friends with Walter Crane and George Bernard Shaw. She then joined the Theosophical Society shortly after meeting Mme. Blavatsky and became its second international president in 1907, serving in that position till her death in 1933. Even while in India, she remained active in the women's rights movement and continued to write letters to British newspapers advocating women's suffrage.

#### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:

1. What does Annie Besant mean when she describes HPB as the "compiler and annotator" of *The Secret Doctrine* rather than its author? (63.1)
2. Why is it—according to Besant—that the vast majority of readers who attempt to study *The Secret Doctrine* end up frustrated and bewildered? (63.1)
3. Do you think the average modern reader is any better equipped to tackle *The Secret Doctrine* than those of Blavatsky's day?
4. What kind of mental disposition is required, according to Besant, in order approach *The Secret Doctrine* with any hope of gaining an understanding of this momentous work? (63.2)
5. How has your reading of *The Secret Doctrine* proved profitable to you personally?