

# Without Conceivable Beginning

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*In the Secret Doctrine, HP Blavatsky tells us that the plan of evolution is one of "progressive development of everything, worlds as well as atoms; and this stupendous development has neither conceivable beginning nor imaginable end" (1888-a). In this article an attempt is made at comparing images about this inconceivable beginning as given in the Prologue of the Gospel according to St. John, the Book of Dzyan -on which the Secret Doctrine is largely based- and a Hermetic text known as Poimandres, sometimes referred to as Pymander; the text used in this article is from G.R.S. Mead's book, Thrice Greatest Hermes (1906).*

In the context of the progressive development of everything, the idea of the Ladder of Life may be postulated, where each rung represents a stage of development or kingdom in nature. We are able to perceive some rungs below and some rungs above humanity's position on this endless ladder, but further down and higher up these rungs vanish into the mists of the unknown. This ladder should of course not be taken literally, but is symbolical of the endless process of involution and evolution.

Without taking the involutory path into consideration, the ladder would not be endless on its lower side. The Esoteric Doctrine has it that the commencement of experience in the mineral kingdom -forming a rung on this ladder of life- is the turning point between the involutory and evolutionary processes for a so-called unit of life. Immense periods of further development in the plant and animal kingdoms succeed this sojourn in the mineral kingdom before the human stage is reached. So too, the many kingdoms, or rungs, forming the involutory path leading to the mineral kingdom are but abstract concepts of which little is known.

The path from the Absolute to the densest manifestation, which is that of consciousness encased in the mineral kingdom, is without conceivable beginning. Yet seers have ever tried to leave impressions of this process as a pointer to the inquisitive mind. Anyone seeking to understand the purpose of life invariably poses the question as to how the cosmos, or our solar system, came to be.

Let us commence with the words from the Prologue in the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and

the life was the light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not". (John 1:1-5)

The first question is, of course: "In the beginning of what?" Our thinking is conditioned by time and space, which makes the concept of the Absolute -in which neither time nor space as we know it exist- abstract to the extreme. Esoteric tradition has it that everything manifests according to the law of periodicity. This means the cyclic appearance, growth, fulfillment, decay and disappearance of everything that manifests; as reflected by day and night, ebb and flow, birth and death. The cycle of individuals, civilizations, continents, planets, solar systems, galaxies, universes and the cosmos all follow this periodical tendency. Just as we humans require a period of rest -sleep- interspersed at regular intervals with activity -waking-, so too does the cosmos, the universe and our solar system have periods of activity and rest. For our solar system the Eastern traditions call these the Days and Nights of Brahma. The general Sanskrit terms are *manvantara* and *pralaya*, often predicated by an adjective to indicate to what level is being referred.

*In the beginning*, which could describe creation at any level, probably refers to the beginning of a period of activity of a universe. A universe in the singular, as the esoteric tradition holds that millions of universes come into being and disappear periodically from the Absolute. *In the beginning* is described poetically in the first two stanzas of the Book of Dzyan, which book is the basis around which H.P. Blavatsky wrote her opus magnum, *The Secret Doctrine*. For example: "...and the Universe, the Son of Necessity, was immersed in Paranishpanna, to be outbreathed by that which is and yet is not" (Stanza 1, sloka 6). The Sanskrit word *Paranishpanna* can best be rendered simply as *beyond absolute perfection*. Thus the Universe -a child of the Unknowable- is born of necessity and makes its appearance in the dimension of relative objectivity. Relative, as at this beginning stage only the essence of time and space seem to exist as a sort of primordial archetype. (The word *archetype* is interesting when one considers the Greek text of the Prologue of St. John, which commences with: 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ - "En archê", literally meaning "in beginning". Archetype is therefore the original pattern that existed before time.)

From this perspective the Word of the first verse is therefore the Unmanifested or First Logos, symbolically the point within the circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. This is also alluded to in verse 6 of Poimandres, from the Corpus Hermeticum: "That Light, He said, am I, thy God, Mind, prior to Moist Nature which appeared from Darkness".

In the second verse, the Logos is referred to using the words *The same*. However, the second verse is not a repetition of the first. No longer is *the Word was God* but it is only *with God*, implying some form of limitation. The Word that was with and was God of the first verse, is the unmanifested

archetype of the Word of the second verse, which was with God but no longer in the Absolute - the so-called Second Logos.

"Darkness alone was Father-Mother, Svâbhâvat, and Svâbvâhat was in Darkness", it says in Stanza 2, sloka 5 of the Book of Dzyan. The word *Svâbhâvat* could best be rendered *the body of the Soul* or simply as *being*. The idea of limitation into Father-Mother is already present, but it is still in Darkness, hence not yet manifested. This is the major attribute of the second Logos, the bridge between the unmanifest and the manifest. Expressed in verse 6 of Poimandres: "the Light-Word that appeared from Mind is Son of God... Know what sees in thee and hears is the Lord's Word; but Mind is Father-God. Not separate are they the one from other; just in their union is it Life consists".

Continuing with the third verse, the aspect of creation is brought in: *All things were made by him*. Interestingly, the Greek text uses the word ἐγένετο - "egeneto", literally meaning to become, in contradistinction to "be made" as the King James translation has it. The same goes for δι' αὐτοῦ - "di autou", literally "through him" rather than "by him". This third verse is a reference to the so-called Third or Creative Logos, reflected in verse 9 of Poimandres by: "And God-the-Mind, being male and female both, as Light and Life subsisting, brought forth another Mind to give things form..." and in Stanza 3, sloka 10 of the Book of Dzyan: "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..."

Summarizing the first three verses using the words of Barborka (1961): "Yet another illustration, describing the emanation of the three Logoi, may be more understandable. Consider the sounding of a word. Before actual utterance, there must be (1) the *thought* about it: that is, what word should be uttered, and that which concerns the meaning of the word. When this is well determined, then there proceeds (2) the *formulation*, concerning the mode of pronouncing the word. When this is established (3) the *sound* of the word is made: the word is spoken. That which was unmanifested has become manifest". Or more succinctly by Blavatsky (1888-b), in reverse order: "...the Second Seven...produced by the Three (*Word, Voice and Spirit*)."

The creative aspect is emphasized in *and without him was not anything made that was made*, where the word *made* should be replaced by *become*. Note that this confirms that all parts of the creation are in essence divine. It goes further: The whole idea of "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) and "For of him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36) concur and convey a deeper truth than may be inferred on face value. The idea of the human body might assist in explaining: Whilst in incarnation, our bodies (i.e. our physical, etheric, astral and lower mental bodies) are made up of millions of lives. All these smaller lives together make up the vehicles that are used by a higher being - a human being in this case. So too is the Solar System the home

for millions of smaller lives, which together and *in toto* form the vehicle in which the consciousness of this (higher) being may express itself in this world of matter. So too is the Universe the home for millions of smaller lives, which are the various solar systems.

It is interesting to note that the concept of light and darkness is only brought into play in the fourth and fifth verses of John 1. The strange thing about light, even in physical sense, is that without beholding its source it is invisible unless it is reflected off some object. Total darkness and Absolute light in this sense are interchangeable terms. So in the Book of Dzyan spirit is referred to as the light of the one darkness - darkness implying unknowable and therefore absolute light. The light of the one darkness is therefore a reflection of this absolute light and matter is referred to as the shadowy end of this reflected light.

This theme is also implied in the words of St. John. Firstly note that it is said that *in him was life, and the life was the light of men*. What is being said is, in fact, that what is referred to in the fifth verse as light shining in the darkness is not this absolute light at all, but the highest aspect we as humans can conceive of light, which is life. Note too, that it is said that *in him* is life (the masculine pronoun is used for convenience only, in that it is also used in the Gospel narrative). That is, he (the Third Logos) isn't life, but that life is expressed through him.

That the *light shineth in darkness* can be interpreted several ways. Looking at darkness as being the unknowable and therefore the Absolute, Life -which is the light of men-, exists in the Absolute and not outside of it. The Cosmos plays its part as the movie screen on which the Absolute projects its archetypes. In this image the screen is the Third Logos, the lens is the Second Logos, the film the First Logos and the source of light the Absolute. Life is then the rays of light issuing from the Absolute, passed through the film that embodies the archetypes of all-that-is-to-become, concentrated and limited by the lens and projected on the screen that is the cosmos. Note, however, that the Absolute cannot be limited. In the symbolism of the image above, the owner of the movie house, all the movie-goers, together with the light, the film, the lens and the screen are all in the Absolute but aren't the Absolute!

That *the darkness comprehended it not*, where *comprehend* should be read in the nuance of grasping rather than understanding, explains that the two aspects, light and darkness, belong to different dimensions. Physically seen, light shining through a void has no effect on the void, as the void contains nothing that can absorb or reflect the light. Conversely, as the void contains nothing, nothing can be aware of the fact that light has passed through it.

Of course, the story does not end here. From here the seven builders play out their roles and actually execute the plan. It is irrelevant whether we call these

the Seven Spirits before the Throne of the New Testament, the Elohim of the Old Testament or the Seven Luminous Sons of the Book of Dzyan.

Of what use is it to consider the creation of the universe? It could be pure inquisitiveness. It could also be contemplative, in which we attempt to see the largess of it all and truly behold the divine plan in wonder and in all its glory. We do this during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist too, especially with the words "by him were all things made, yea all things both in heaven and earth, with him as the indwelling life do all things exist and in him all things live and move and have their being".

Another reason is proffered by the Hermetic doctrine, in which it is said that all above is reflected in all below. By studying what the ancients tell us of the creation of the universe, we can reflect this down into the life of our solar system and even into our own lives. So the Christian Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost may be paralleled to the Solar Logos -the spirit of our solar system- who in his three aspects reflects the universal three aspects. Similarly the triple spirit active in the human being is a reflection of this same creative process on the miniscule scale of the individual.

The interdependence of everything with everything, the immanence and the transcendence, all point to that which unifies rather than separates us from one another. Perhaps we may see our own lives from a different viewpoint, as a stage being experienced that commenced in long forgotten ages that will be continued in ever-greater magnificence in a yet unimaginable future. Development, evolution, growth, call it what you may, has no conceivable beginning or imaginable end.

### **Bibliography**

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