

On Space

Part 2 of 2

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We are here continuing the discussion of the question of how ‘space’ can be a symbol or representation of the Ultimate. One thing which will perhaps help us to understand this use of the conception of space is to consider this fact, which was discussed at some length in the first part, namely, that space is viewed by us as the container of all *things*. We can also say, viewing the problem from the psychological aspect, that consciousness is the container of all *objects*. Since the function of consciousness is here akin to that of space, I think we may see how the transition from consciousness to space is rather natural. But we’d have to recognize two aspects of space, namely, the *perceptual space*, which contains all *things* as entities, and the *conceptual space*, which is the space of the mathematician. But in both cases, we have the direct experience that our perceptual consciousness is the container of all *objects*—note that now we shift from the notion of *things* to *objects*; the notion of *things* being a representation of supposed independent existents unrelated to consciousness; a position which I believe to be demonstrably false, but, nonetheless, a position which persists in our habits of thinking. Likewise, the *conceptual space* of the mathematician is really the conceptual consciousness which is the container of the ideas of the mathematician. I think that perhaps here we have an indication of why consciousness should be so easily identified with the notion of space.

We’ll find that we have only proceeded part way in the identification of the Root Principle, and further quotation from *The Secret Doctrine* in the discussion of the first principle will help to introduce this point. So, I shall continue to quote:

Herbert Spencer has of late so far modified his Agnosticism, as to assert that the nature of the “First Cause,” which the Occultist more logically derives from the “Causeless Cause,” the “Eternal,” and the “Unknowable,” may be essentially the same as that of the consciousness which wells up within us: in short, the impersonal Reality pervading the Kosmos is the pure noumenon of thought. This advance on his part brings him very near to the Esoteric and Vedantin tenet.

Parabrahman, the One Reality, the Absolute, is the field of Absolute Consciousness, *i.e.*, that Essence which is out of all relation to conditioned existence, and of which conscious existence is a conditioned symbol. But once that we pass in thought from this (to us) Absolute Negation, duality supervenes in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object.¹

¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Adyar: The Theosophy House, 1888), 42.

One point made here that is interesting is this, namely, that “Parabrahman, the One Reality, the Absolute, is the field of Absolute Consciousness.” Here again, “field” is a reference that implies *space*. We may even speak of this Pure Consciousness, the Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, or Consciousness in the sense of *Rig-pa*, to use the Tibetan term employed in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is actually a *field consciousness*, not a *relational consciousness*; and as a *field*, it suggests right away the notion of *space*—that which is the container of entities and processes.

These conceptions are difficult for us because ordinarily we deal with contents rather than with the *container* of the contents. We shift into the dualistic kind of thinking, inevitably, which presents this Original Reality as consisting of two aspects, namely, “Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter,” or, in psychological terms, of the “Subject and [the] Object.” It is necessary to turn upon ourselves, in terms of our consciousness, so that we become aware of the Consciousness itself, rather than simply of the object of consciousness, and, as generally is the case, only inferentially of the subject of the consciousness.

Continuing with the quotations:

Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two symbols or aspects of the Absolute, Parabrahman, which constitute the basis of conditioned Being, whether subjective or objective.²

We have here, then, a further step. It is not simply Pure Consciousness, in the psychological sense with which we are here dealing in our view of Ultimate Reality, but of a compound notion which involves both “Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter”—Matter not being quite identical with the *object*, which is its psychological equivalent, but as, rather, identical with a Substance. In other words, Consciousness may be viewed as a Pure Essence; Matter as a Substance—a something which is rather more than a psychological *object*.

Let us continue with the quotation:

Considering this metaphysical triad [namely, the Absolute, and the Subject, and Matter] as the Root from which proceeds all manifestation, the Great Breath assumes the character of Pre-cosmic Ideation. It is the *fons et origo* of Force and of all individual Consciousness, and supplies the guiding intelligence in the vast scheme of cosmic Evolution. On the other hand, Pre-cosmic, Root-Substance (*Mulaprakriti*) is that aspect of the Absolute which underlies all the objective planes of Nature.³

We’ll notice at this point, we have not simply a duality, but a triad; we’ve introduced, here, the notion of *threeness*. And in this connection, I would like to remind

² Ibid., 43.

³ Ibid.

you of the great emphasis on *threeness* made by the Buddha. All important statements appear repeated three times by him, and, thus, emphasizing this point. Thus, the Ultimate is not to be viewed simply as one thing, or a compound of two aspects, but, ultimately, as a compound of three aspects. The third aspect now becomes clarified in further quotation:

Just as pre-Cosmic Ideation is the root of all individual Consciousness, so pre-Cosmic Substance is the substratum of Matter in the various grades of its differentiation.

Hence it will be apparent that the contrast of these two aspects of the Absolute is essential to the existence of the “Manifested Universe.” Apart from Cosmic Substance, Cosmic Ideation could not manifest as individual Consciousness, since it is only through a vehicle, in Sanskrit (*upadhi*), of matter, that consciousness wells up as “I am I,” a physical basis being necessary to focus a Ray of the Universal Mind at a certain stage of complexity. Again, apart from Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Substance would remain an empty abstraction, and no emergence of Consciousness could ensue.⁴

Now, here, the point is made still clearer that Universal Consciousness requires the presence of Universal Substance in order that there can be a manifestation at all. Universal Consciousness and Universal Substance by themselves are abstractions; they become actual only when viewed as interdependent and forming, thus, one entity. This suggests to us the psychosomatic conception which is familiar on a lower level; however much the psychosomatic conception may be inadequate on that lower level, yet, on the highest level, we must take this view if we are to understand this philosophy, namely, that there is no Consciousness without Substance and no Substance without Consciousness, that the two are ultimately inseparable.

Continuing the quotation:

The Manifested Universe, therefore, is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence of its EX-istence as “Manifestation.” But just as the opposite poles of Subject and Object, Spirit and Matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so, in the Manifested Universe, there is “that” which links Spirit to Matter, Subject to Object.⁵

This now leads to the introduction of the third element—this third element that is the factor in uniting these two: Universal Consciousness and Substance.

Quoting:

This something, at present unknown to Western speculation, is called by Occultists Fohat. It is the “bridge” by which the Ideas existing in the Divine Thought are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the “Laws of

⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁵ Ibid.

Nature.” Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the “Thought Divine” transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyan Chohans, the Architects of the visible World. Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our Consciousness, from Cosmic Substance the several Vehicles in which that Consciousness is individualized and attains to Self—or reflective—consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.⁶

What we have now is a triune principle as the Root of all. It is not to be regarded as a trinity of three elements, but rather as a Oneness which is triune in its total nature. The three aspects, thus, are: Consciousness, in the Root sense of a Pure Universal Consciousness which is not the consciousness of a self, and which is, in its purity, not a consciousness of a content, but a Root Consciousness; second, an aspect as Substance—it is a Consciousness-Substance, not Consciousness and Substance; and, finally, as the third facet of this Root, the principle of dynamism which, in the language of *The Secret Doctrine* is called Fohat, but which is the basis of the whole energetic side of Being. Its manifestation before us consists of all the forces in nature, including life, electricity, and all the other energetic side of the whole of manifested Being.

We have, then, three potential approaches to the Root. In addition to that approach which is through Consciousness, or the One Mind as in the case of the *sutra* written by Padma Sambhava, there is the potentiality of an emphasis upon the principle of Substance, and this we would see well exemplified in the tenth letter of *The Mahatma Letters*. On p. 56, in the middle of the page, we find the following sentence:

In other words we believe in MATTER alone, in matter as visible nature and matter in its invisibility as the invisible omnipresent omnipotent Proteus with its unceasing motion which is its life, and which nature draws from herself since she is the great whole outside of which nothing can exist.⁷

This would sound a good deal like a materialistic statement except for the fact that there is the reference to nature or matter, in its subtle sense, which has been identified as *mulaprakriti* or *akasha*. It is, therefore, the principle of Substance that is here emphasized; and the point would be that this is a line of development that is possible in that tri-unity consisting of Consciousness, Substance, and Dynamism or Fohat. A third point of view and a third possibility is a philosophical point of view that is oriented primarily to *life*, or *will*, or some other formulation of the principle of dynamism. All such philosophies would have to be construed as supplementary to each other, as standing by themselves as only partial—partial views of the whole. A totally comprehensive philosophic point of view would have to include all three approaches, namely, through an

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ A. T. Barker, ed., *The Mahatma Letters* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1923), 56.

orientation to a Universal Consciousness; second, an orientation to the principle of Substance; and third, an orientation to the principle of Dynamism, either under the conception of life, or of will, or of some other statement of the dynamic principle.

We now can draw certain conclusions. In the light of this statement, we can attach a meaning to the assertion frequently made, namely, that thoughts are things. Thoughts are, first of all, a conscious process; to say that they are things is to recognize the fact that connected with any conscious process there is also a Substance. Certain implications follow from this, namely, that every thought of every thinking creature is also a production of an object—an object not simply in the psychological sense, but also in the Substantial sense, because the other side of the thought is Substance. One could, therefore, assume that on the level of subtle perception every thinking creature would have a community of objective existences which were, in effect, his creations. Since many of these creations are manifestly impure, they impose a problem for such an individual; they could also be pure and productive, in a noble sense, and these would be the merits of such an individual. But while we could attach meaning to the statement that thoughts are things, no less would it be true to say that things are also thoughts, and the effect of this is to exalt matter into a more spiritual valuation. To say that thoughts are things, in a sense, is a degradation of thought, while, on the other hand, to say that things are thoughts is an exaltation of matter or thing-hood.

From the thesis as so far developed, certain practical consequences follow. Of these I will briefly consider three possibilities as follows: first, a new interpretation of the meaning of ‘projection’ as a modern psychological term; second, a theory of magic; and third, a statement of the reasons why control of thought becomes of premier importance.

First let us consider the implications concerning projection in the psychological sense. Ordinarily, I believe we view this projection as only psychological and quite insubstantial, that is, simply like the experiencing of ideas, considered only as ideas and insubstantial in themselves. Typically, a projection may be produced by imposing a prejudice, such as we may have, upon someone else, another race, or whatnot. An example of projection, in an important sense, is afforded in the discussion of what happens in the *bardo* as represented by *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and in the Theosophical eschatology as to the *devachanic* interlude which, it is said, occurs after death. If thought, if a conscious idea, invokes along with it an actual substance, then projections such as those which are said to be seen shortly after death in the form of the benevolent gods and the gods of wrath, are projections from our own consciousness, as we are warned that they are not real in themselves. But they are not wholly unreal in the light of our present theory, for these projected thoughts are real in the sense of consisting of actual substance, unreal in the sense of being independent existences. So we would have to speak of them as *real-unreal*; not merely a figment of the imagination, but something that has a kind of existence. The same would apply to the *devachanic* interlude in which one has an environment and, in that environment, all of his valued friends and relatives. But, those friends and relatives, along with the environment, are projections; again, in the light of our present thesis, real in a sense, namely, in the sense that they are composed of substance, unreal in the sense of being independent existences. They are, rather, the ideas or evaluations of such entities as given by the one who has entered into the *devachanic* interlude. We thus have a meaning attaching to the hyphenated concept of

real-unreal—real in that they are in some sense substantial, though substantial in a subtle sense, not in the sense of gross matter, but unreal in that they are not centers of independent consciousness.

Second, concerning a theory of magic: in as much as that which we think, in the light of the present thesis, is also an invocation, as it were, of a substantial aspect of the thought—in other words, since that which we think is also a substance even though we are not aware of it—then, by the power of thought we can create existences that are real in the substantial sense. This differs from projection in the sense that it is conscious, whereas the projection is an unconscious event. Now, this appears to be so easily done on some subtle levels of matter that no special equipment is required, or a special knowledge, in order to produce either unconsciously a projected environment, or even to create something consciously by conscious thinking. But, if we knew the difference between subtle matter, such as that which is experienced in the death stage or even in the dream stage, and that which is experienced objectively here, and we knew the step by which a subtle creation could be objectified, we would have a mastery of magic. And this would not in any way involve an abandonment of rationality; there would be nothing of miracle involved in it, but simply an appropriate action in accordance with law. We can see how, in principle, it might be possible to produce an object in the gross physical sense, if one only knew the step from the subtle object produced by thought to, what we might call, the *frozen* state of substance which is the form of matter as we know it here.

And, on the third point, concerning the importance of control of thought: if we produce entities, living or otherwise, unconsciously by our thoughts, so that they exist in a subtle form of matter, then when we pass into the *bardo* after death, we may expect to meet these. If our thoughts have been predominantly impure, then we could very well have prepared for ourselves an excruciatingly painful hell. On the other hand, if they have been pure and constructive and informative, then we could have produced a condition of very great satisfaction and delight. Control of thought, therefore, is highly important, and we can see why this is emphasized in *The Voice of the Silence*.

We have now, then, a rational approach to the whole possibility of these different types of possible experience. Indeed, we can see why it should be asserted, as Lord Northrop⁸ has pointed out, that the smoker after he has died smokes still, cigars that are mind-made; and the drinker drinks liquor that is mind-made; and, also, other activities like feasting, like building, like any kind of constructive activity can be projected creatively and consciously as an environment. We can see why it is in principle possible that the individual who has sufficient resources can produce a planet, which first would be a subtle construction, but which subsequently, by the process which we may call a certain freezing or objectivization, would become an actual planet, and he who created it would be its *Manu*.⁹ These are just a few suggestions concerning the possibilities that

⁸ The source of this reference is not known.

⁹ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, .93:

Let us now analyse the word or name Manu. Orientalists in their Dictionaries tell us that the term “Manu” is from the root *man*, “to think”; hence “the thinking man.” But, esoterically, every Manu, as an anthropomorphized patron of his special cycle (or Round), is but the personified idea of the “Thought Divine” (as the Hermetic “Pyramider”); each of the Manus, therefore, being the special god, the creator and

grow out from this fundamental conception that Consciousness, Substance, and Dynamism or energy is a threefold unity. The three parts, while separable for the purposes of thought, are not separable in reality; and, therefore, thought is a producer of things, and that becomes quite important.

fashioner of all that appears during his own respective cycle of being or Manvantara. Fohat runs the Manus' (or Dhyan-Chohans') errands, and causes the ideal prototypes to expand from within without—that is, to cross gradually, on a descending scale, all the planes from the noumenal to the lowest phenomenal, to bloom finally on the last into full objectivity—the acme of Illusion, or the grossest matter.