

Parabrahm

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Revised and enlarged by the Author
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If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me, are shame and fame

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I, the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred SEVEN;
But thou, meek lover of the good !
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

EMERSON

THAT which is at the same time both ego and non-ego, spirit and matter, subject and object, the cause and effect, finite and infinite, moment and eternity, all and nothing, might — if it could be named — be called Parabrahm. And yet it could not be said to *be* so, since it is both being and non-being. [Compare The Secret Doctrine, Vol I, 45, 53 and 54 (note)] To essay its praises would be a vain and impious blasphemy, were it not at once both that which speaks and that which hears and speech itself. [Ibid Vol I, 9, 11, 14 *et seq*, and 68]

Nothing! scarcely is the word — though in such favour with the philosophy of the times — out of our mouths than the expostulations of common sense and the anathemas of orthodoxy burst forth from every quarter. Optimistic respectability with its comfortable solutions will accuse us of being paradoxical, as if

the universe were aught less than one huge paradox. Content will bear us no good will for disturbing its slumber, and those grown-up children of hers, reserved for the whip of experience, will bid us seek in love the key to the mystery, a key with which the door of the marriage-chamber is locked for legitimized prostitution, [Page 4] safe from annoying visitors from the other world. Lastly, the faithful of a Christ once palpable and still digestible, specially descended on earth, the centre of the world, to save man, king of that earth, having seen the sun stand still to set Joshua at defiance, fossils brought to light to contradict Genesis, and science working miracles to defy God, will not easily be prevailed upon to lose their last revenge and willingly howl with De Maistre : " Rather eternal damnation than annihilation !" And yet this Jehovah of theirs, so firmly seated on a throne of smoke, was very father-like; all the birds of Heaven could make comfortable nests in his huge beard; and if so many horrors were committed in his name, no doubt the reason was that, worn out with amassing his fat fortune from so small a commencement and achieving the misery of the world in so short a time, he was sleeping and his lieutenants forgot to sound the *réveil*. Let him sleep on, a god whom his worshippers have made in their own image to pray to in carefully-warmed churches with knees on discreetly-stuffed cushions. Let him sleep on in peace, since his slumber has not sent the world asleep.

And yet it is in his name that so many learned missionaries and devout Orientalists have thundered against the atheism of China and the Buddhist Nirvâna, without being able to foresee the otherwise terrible nihilism to which their extreme anthropomorphism was bound to lead them. The materialistic scepticism which afflicts modern thought is the natural reaction of a theism which has so absurdly individualized divinity, just as the flaming sword of anarchy hanging over our civilizations is the inevitable consequence of our exaggerated individualism. The over bold speculations of the bank of indulgences, to which so many small shareholders used to carry their other world savings, has ended in disastrous failure, and the credit of "*le bon Dieu*" is dead from falsification. Science has judged this murder and failure, and has condemned man to perish utterly in the corruption of his corpse, without power to rebel against the heavens thus irrevocably void. Well was it worth the while of a Barthélémy Saint-Hilaire to mutter against the *monstrous* theories which preach annihilation in Parabrahm as the supreme goal of our aspirations, or of a Father Prémare, lost in the maze of his own contradictions, to cry in comic despair: "Reconcile Tchouhi with himself, if you wish his authority to be worth anything!" The missionaries would have done better to have kept their zeal for their more and more empty fold, than to raise collections from the faithful to build chapels in the style Jesuitical for infidels whose ancient and vast temples would have readily given a refuge to the god of the Westerns, had his Barnums shown themselves less exclusive. These scholars would have done better to widen their biblical prejudices than to violate thrice sacred books by churlish or untrustworthy translations, the majority of which have to be re-made. Our endeavour has been to force ourselves upon the nations of the East as masters rather than to make them our friends, without even inquiring if they were intelligent to think us ridiculous or proud enough to hate us. We have shown them our boundless pride before explaining the compass of our knowledge. We have begun by introducing [Page 5] disorganization into their social institutions before persuading them of the justice of our laws. We have laughed at their chronologies and traditions before discovering that our own were but a caricature of theirs. We have made of their art, literature and customs a detestable hotch-potch of colonial wares; but only in proportion as we widen our religious toleration and philosophical conceptions do we begin to suspect the scope of their old thinkers. If, however, these poor heathens had known the precept to render good for evil, they would long ago have sent missionaries to Europe to build pagodas. Their bonzes would have reminded our militant Christians of the Tycoon's answer to his Minister who was complaining of Jesuitical intrusion: " How many religions are there in Japan?". "Thirty-two, sire". " Well, that will make thirty-three". Their lamas would have been delighted to find in our churches their confessional altars, censors, bells, holy water, tonsure, dalmatics,

cofes and mitres, and even their Holy Virgin [Compare Abbé Huc, Marco Polo, Auguste, Keane, *Asia* and Elisée Reclus; *Nouvelle géographie universelle*, vii, 80] These Chinese would have shown us that the pinching of feet which prevents their women walking is better than the pinching of waists which prevents maternity in our own. Their opium smokers would argue that hashish which makes a man dream of paradise, is a worthier distraction of leisure than alcohol which turns him into a brute. Their pundits would have translated our sacred books, The Manual of the Perfect Christian, The Ritual of the Greek Church, and the Imitation of Jesus Christ, which M. Dumas would have done into verse for them. Some would have regarded our psychology as degrading, and our Bible as immoral. But others would have discovered that the history of Lot's daughters was a myth, probably solar, that even adultery was punishable by our codes, and that the West should be known before being laughed at. But most of all, these pious folk would have been astonished at hearing the names of nihilists and atheists applied to themselves in the sense that these words bear in the present epoch of anthropomorphic theology and scholarship.

Antiquity, whose history is divine rather than human, was not acquainted with the monstrous conception of nothingness. The mystic East is still ignorant of this inconceivable nightmare of a grossly materialistic age; nor do her temples, full as they are of symbolical deities, contain any fetish so rude as that of our tabernacles. M. Gustave le Bon has lately shown in the *Revue Scientifique* how poor the results of our policy seem beside the conquests of Islam in Asia and Africa. The reason is that the religion of Mahomet is already less materialized than that of the Christ; and, above all, because the Mussulman is practically pious, while the European is ideally sceptical. Nothing is more absurd than the illusion of colonizers who profess to force our industrial activity and democratic republicanism [It must of course be understood that the writer here points his criticism more directly against the French colonial policy] on a contemplative and apathetic people, ignorant of [Page 6] the social question, if it is not the overweeningness of frock-coated piety and clerical scholarship which, in the name of their philosophical littleness and apprehensive bigotry, upbraids the giants of archaic thought with the greatness of their conceptions and the superb daring of their logic; nothing more terrible than the deluge of missions with which we have flooded the ancient world, missions military, religious, scientific or commercial, if not the threat of future retaliation hinted at by such travellers and thinkers as Richtofen, Armand David, Vasililyer, Elisée Reclus, and Saint Yves d'Alveydre. As our international questions show signs of disappearing before the social question, so the latter may one day reveal a still heavier Karma behind it. What will be the outcome of this continental crisis, of this struggle between yellow and white, hereafter rendered almost inevitable by our past barbarity, by the present folly which makes us teach and arm our enemies of tomorrow, and by the over-population on the whole surface of the globe? Without doubt, such a disturbance of the human race as has not previously been heard of, of which those great invasions which always came from the East were the prologue, and of which the forerunners have already been felt in America. Perhaps, however, the equilibrium of interests would be more easily established, if the balance of ideas and passions were then less unstable than they are at present. The introduction of Theosophy, which arrived by a *Pacific and Orient* steamer, between a chest of adulterated tea and a crate of Indian pottery manufactured at Lambeth, has been attempted to make us less pessimistic. We may hope that the brotherhood to which our Himalayan brothers invite us will be "a new platform of progress for the whole human race, erected out of the truths of all civilization." [J.J. Jarves, *A Glimpse at the art of Japan*, Sect I.] But it is not our selfish activity which can avert the danger, much less our scepticism. "In vain, when the arbitrary Powers of European governmental anarchy shall once be shattered over the massacred bodies of their adherents, revolutionary destruction shall cry to invasion and howl to the deluge: "We are not Christians, we have no god — no master; what would'st thou with us?" The other social states will only have more contempt for it in their anger, in the name of their own faith, still more outraged by this universal

blasphemy than by the ignorant fanaticism of our cults and the ferocious politics of our States. And throughout our wasted civilization the bloody fruits of this fanaticism and international and colonial policy will be trodden under foot as a foul vintage". [Saint-Yves d' Alveydre, *Mission des Juifs*, pp 8, 11]

The tree of evil produces twin poisonous fruits — selfishness, which prevents our feeling the sufferings of others, and sways society under the guise of Herbert Spencer's favourite individualism, and pride, which prevents our understanding their thoughts, and is the keystone of both intolerance and materialism. The humbler ancients did not profess to force on existence the limits of their own intelligence, knowing that man ever stands between the attainments of the past and the unknown possibilities of the future; that the world as it appears to [Page 7] animal or inferior beings is but an insignificant conception compared to the view of it with which new faculties and perfected senses furnish us; knowing, in short, that the All grows, and is modified incessantly, they did not think *All* an expression satisfactory enough to express the beyond of any particular consciousness or partial existence; they annihilated their words, thoughts and prayers in the shoreless ocean where all intellectual knowledge acquired or possible for man, for humanity, or even for nebulae of collective humanities, represents but one insignificant drop. Pan was only a secondary divinity, and, as was said by John of Damascus, absolute Being, Eihieh contains the All in itself, like an infinite and indeterminate sea of substance. "*Totum enim in se ipso comprehendens ac veluti quoddam pelagus substantioe infinitum et indeterminatum*". Since the All which we can conceive is but an infinitesimal part of Being, the name of Nothing was given to this abyss, of which sacred conception our idea of Nothingness is naught but the monstrous and unthinkable antithesis. Poetical exaggeration, you say ! Nay, rather, the logic of the human mind, which recognizes its imperfections and feels its proper limits. For time and space, and every means we have of conceiving the infinite, are only modes of existence defined in intellect and matter, and Parabrahm, the source of each, is still beyond them both. Such conceptions have no doubt been made to baffle our materialists, already sacred by the infinity of matter, and seeking from this spectre, inoffensive though it be, the vain shelter of Positivism. But Occult Science has other deeds of daring to commit, and is reserving for them other surprises, for matter, or rather bodies, and the least ponderable forces, the sum total of the possible knowledge of modern science, embrace scarcely one of the four or two of the seven divisions of the totality of existence. There are other means of knowledge which will be acquired by humanity in the course of countless ages of transformations by which matter itself will become more sublimated: by these hypersensitive senses acquired at present by a few only, consciousness, of which our own is merely the matrix, will conceive existences of which our own is but the embryo. To explain such possibilities would require an angelic language which could explain all by one word or note; any words of ours are no better than a babe's puling.

The infinite, which has been called positive subjectivity transformed by the understanding into negative objectivity, can only be conceived indirectly or negatively; and therefore most of the terms formerly or still applied to the supreme principle are prefixed by a privative particle, e.g., the A-diti of the Vedas, the Ain-Soph of the Kabala, the A-peiron of Anaximander, the Ab-solute, etc. We can show what it is not, but scarcely say what it is, and almost all the names given to it are logically insufficient; the best, or rather, the least objectionable, representation of Parabrahm would be an indefinite figure like the circle, or a neuter term like the word *That* [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 77] or better still, a self-contradictory expression, as All-nothing. If we conceive a god as cause or sum of all existence, such a conception [Page 8] necessarily excludes every idea of partial or personal existence. To say that he is immeasurable, un-changeable, in-finitely good, is a prohibition, *à la lettre*, to appraise his greatness, power

or goodness. In the name of logic, Balzac made *Séraphita* say that, seeing God had created the world out of nothing, either he was not infinite before this creation, or else he ceased to be so, as soon as the work from which he has remained distinct came into existence. In the name of human misery, Stuart Mill maintained that if the Creator is omnipotent, he cannot be supremely good, and vice versa. And if theologians should ever extricate themselves from these dilemmas, a greater would remain to confront them: either their God is not absolute or else he possesses neither qualities nor personal existence. The attribution of quality to the Absolute is a limitation thereof, that is its destruction: but to attribute to it personality, the source of all restrictions, is the height of contradiction. The Absolute is all or nothing; monotheism should become pantheism, and Jehovah be re-absorbed in Parabrahm. Nay, more, the Absolute is all and nothing: for what indeed is the Absolute, if not that which is too infinite to be great, too eternal to have duration, too perfect to be either beautiful or good, in short, too everything to be anything? Spinoza demonstrated the existence of God by a famous proposition; god is conceived as perfection, but perfection implies existence, therefore God exists. It is easy to make this argument cut both ways: if God is perfect, he cannot exist, for all beings are impermanent in that they exist, and all beings are imperfect, in the very fact that they are beings. It cannot even be said that he exists or does not exist, since these two ideas are complementary. If he is conceived as pure spirit, he is limited by matter; if he is conceived as cause, he is limited by effect; and if he is conceived as absolute being, he is immediately annihilated in non-being. All reasonings ultimately end in pantheism, and the base of pantheism is the conception of being — non-being (negative existence).

As it were, through desert routes, with naught but the relics of perished caravans to point the track, let us steer to the Absolute by the failures of those who have trod the way before us. Kant was the first to denounce the antinomies of pure reason implied in the conception of time, space, matter and movement, and only reached an insufficient solution of the difficulty by his distinction between noumena and phenomena. Herbert Spencer, though exhaustively developing the series of contradictions, gives but an imperfect solution in distinguishing determinate from indeterminate consciousness. Of the intervening schools, the Scotch idealists, while loyally attacking the problem, have been led to the strangest conclusions. Hamilton, and his disciple Mansel, Dean of Saint Paul's, have recognized the contradiction in the terms infinite, absolute, first cause, and God, and the consequent necessity of faith without reason. Materialism, while wagging its head at the deduction, owes them its gratitude for exorcising the phantom of the Absolute, of which Kant had slain naught but the body. By an equitable adjustment of mundane affairs, the priests of an exaggerated idealism are found to have armed extreme materialism with its most deadly weapons. The jubilation [Page 9] of the latter, keen as it is, may, perhaps, be premature. If theism is no match for materialism, pantheism can meet it on equal terms, and the arena in this hand-to-hand conflict, which must end in the reconciliation of the combatants, has no bounds short of the universe itself. Far from demolishing the Absolute, the philosophers in question have made it invulnerable: false conceptions alone have gone down before their lances, and the precise arguments, they have used can be called upon in startling confirmation of our teachings.

Hamilton formulates in the following terms his so-called Law of the Conditioned: "All that is conceivable in thought lies between two extremes, which, as contradictory to each other, cannot both be true, but of which, as mutual contradictories, one must". Let us take, for example, space, of which we cannot, he says, help having conception, for space is a positive and necessary form of thought [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 14] and we cannot conceive of anything as outside space. We cannot then represent space as finite, as a sphere, for instance, which would itself be surrounded by space, nor yet

as infinite, for after darting our imagination beyond the solar system, the Milky Way, and even the universe itself, we have not advanced a foot. " It is in vain", says Pascal, "that we inflate our conceptions beyond imaginable spaces; we give birth to naught but atoms at the price of the reality of things. The infinite is infinitely incomprehensible". Nor any the more can the infinitely small be conceived, for a portion of space, however infinitesimal it is supposed to be, has necessarily extent, and is consequently divisible, even though such infinite divisibility cannot be represented. Again, if we take the still more universal and necessary idea of time, we can attribute to it neither beginning nor end as limits beyond which it would cease to exist. But the conception of unlimited time is equally impossible since the only means of arriving at such an idea is by the infinite addition of limited time — a process which would itself require an eternity. " The negation of a commencement of time involves likewise the affirmation that an infinite time has at every moment already run; this implies the contradiction that an infinite has been completed. . . . Triple contradiction of an infinite concluded, of an infinite commencing, and of two infinities not exclusive of each other! " . On the other hand, time of infinitely short duration is inconceivable, nay, the millionth part of a second, were it indivisible, would form no part of time. Therefore, space and time are comprised between the infinitely great or small on the one hand, and the finite on the other, and these two extremes are equally inconceivable. "The sum of what I have stated is, that the Conditioned is that which is alone conceivable or cogitable; the Unconditioned is that which is inconceivable or incogitable. The Conditioned or the thinkable lies between two extremes or poles; and these extremes or poles are each of them unconditioned, each of them inconceivable, each of them exclusive or contradictory of the other. Of these two repugnant opposites, the one is that of Unconditional or Absolute [Page 10] limitation; the other that of Unconditional or Absolute illimitation. 'The one we may, therefore, in general, call the Absolutely Unconditioned, the other the Infinitely Unconditioned; or more simply, the Absolute and the Infinite; the term Absolute expressing that which is finished or complete, the term Infinite that which cannot be terminated or concluded. These terms, which philosophers have confounded, ought not only to be distinguished, but opposed as contradictory. ... In other words, of the Absolute and Infinite we have no conception at all". [*Lectures on metaphysics*, ch xxxviii]

If the premises are unassailable, the conclusion is far from being so. First of all, the meaning of the word Absolute is very variable in philosophy. Some understand the term to mean that which exists by itself (Swayam-Bhuva) [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 61] and without relation to anything else, [Ibid, Vol I, 48]: (A-diti); [Ibid, Vol I, 53] and, it is to be remarked, that the Hindus apply it in this sense to matter and spirit alike. Others understand the Absolute to mean that which is perfect or the height of perfection. Hamilton, in using the word as a synonym of finite, falls into a contradiction of terms or a play on words, as we do in speaking of a perfect musician, a consummate painter, or a finished work of art. The terms which he opposes to one another, are in reality not the Absolute and Infinite, but the finite on the one hand and the infinitely great or small on the other. But are these two notions really contradictory, or simply super-impossible, and do they not impose themselves on us, rather than oppose one another? The infinitely great has for antithesis the infinitely small; and if these two extremes are synthesized into one term, the infinite, the finite is comprised in and not excluded from this synthesis. The finite is part of the infinite, and this part is itself infinite with respect to its subdivisions, since every quantity is infinitely divisible. So far, then, from being the Absolute, the finite is essentially relative; and Hamilton, in saying that we are incapable of conceiving time or space either as limited or exempt from limitation, endeavours to show that we cannot conceive either the relative as Absolute, or the Absolute as relative, a self-evident proposition.

The words themselves remind us that the infinite can be neither defined, explained, nor figured. It is impossible to perceive it, for all perception is the perception of a form; but every form is finite, and all that is finite has a form. We cannot conceive an infinite form: if we endeavour to imagine an infinite circle, we can only represent to ourselves a straight line, and an infinitely straight line is equally unimaginable; it has been shown that in infinity, dimensions re-absorb themselves. A form exists by its very limits, and is defined by the fact that it is distinguished from other forms; the finite, or conditioned, is that which is capable of representation or perception. The thought which inspired the Scotch philosopher is that the finite is unable to satisfy the human mind, but that the infinite transcends it. And if we put clearly [Page 11] before us the dilemma, the suspicion of which drove him to take refuge in the *credo quia absurdum*, we find ourselves before this alternative: either the infinite is a chimaera, and the human mind a capricious child; or form is an illusion, and we possess a higher faculty than perception.

The first solution is that which materialism offers. We have been enabled to hint, and shall proceed to explain that it contains a contradiction, and that the infinite forces itself upon us. There are two ways out of this difficulty; either to bathe one's humiliated brow in holy water, like Pascal and a host of other proud thinkers, and so throw one's self into the arms of anthropomorphic religions which revert to transcendental materialism; or else to become Epicurean and sceptic, and demand forgetfulness in the sleep of positivism, which is nothing but a religion in disguise.

The second solution is that which pantheistic monism puts forward; the transplendent conception of Parabrahm, with which antiquity was lighted, is the beacon which Theosophy is relighting to lead the human mind out of the maze of Mâyâ.

Vain, perchance, is the wish to define the source of cosmic manifestation, and to demand the cause of being, for how can we speak of that which gives birth to the word, and how express the cause even of the question? But of a surety, it is absurd to deny this first cause on the pretext that its last effects alone fall under our senses, and to insult eternal immensity in the name of our ephemeral insignificance. The disinherited might as well deny the existence of banknotes and content themselves with saying that riches do not constitute happiness. For the idealists of Scotland all existed by and in human consciousness: they never seriously maintained, however, that the infinite does not exist because it cannot be represented. "I can only be surprised at the importance attached to the character of inconceivability, when we know by so many instances that our capacity or incapacity to conceive a thing has so little to do with the possibility of the thing in itself, and is only an entirely accidental circumstance dependent on our habits of mind." [Stuart Mill, *Logic*, ii, v. 6]

It was strangely enough reserved to materialism, after demolishing the sovereignty of spirit over matter, to affirm that the unthinkable could not exist, a sophism contradicted, however, both by experience and reason. For facts are there to prove the infinite, and it is science herself with her telescopes and microscopes, that has allowed us to conceive this old word in a new and grandiose sense. Do they wish to bring us back to the azure vault and its golden nails? It is the ancients who could have discussed the hypothesis of the infinite, for it is they who worshipped its mystery. After the martyrdom of Galileo,

discussion is superfluous and criminal. The infinite is everywhere, within us as without, and, though we close our eyes to shut it out, it pursues us into the shadow and silence. When Zeno demonstrated that movement was logically [Page 12] impossible, Diogenes walked, and the Cynic had the best of the Sophist. If the infinite does not exist, find the limits of the universe. And though you should have found them, still would the fairest of human faculties protest against such imprisonment. For, though the human mind cannot depict the infinite, even so it cannot be prevented from conceiving it, or escape its proper nature to ever surpass its limits. We are told that the infinite does not exist, because we cannot imagine the universe as finite; equally well could we reply with the thought of Hamilton, that the finite does not exist because we cannot conceive the universe as finite. "The logical advantage of the atheistic alternative vanishes, as soon as we view the question from the other side, and endeavour positively to represent in thought the sum total of existence as a limited quantity. A limit is itself a relation; and to conceive a limit as such, is virtually to acknowledge a correlative on the other side of it. By a law of thought, the significance of which has not yet perhaps been fully investigated, it is impossible to conceive a finite object of any kind, without conceiving it as one out of many — as related to other objects, co-existent and antecedent. A first moment of time, a first unit of space, a definite sum of all existence, are thus as inconceivable as the opposite suppositions of an infinity of each. While it is impossible to represent in thought any object, except as finite, it is equally impossible to represent any finite object or any aggregate of finite objects as exhausting the universe of being. Thus the hypothesis which would annihilate the Infinite is itself shattered to pieces against the rock of the Absolute", [Mansel, Bampton Lectures, No.2] Moreover, it is not want of mental power that can prevent the existence of a host of things with which we are unacquainted: but a thing that could not exist, would be not only unnamable, but also unthinkable, and would be neither thing nor word; and the infinite, word or thing, has caused enough ink-shedding.

And let no one think to escape from the phantom by the substitution of *indefinite* for infinite, an excellent expression for sloth of thought, but of no avail against intuition. Either the universe has limits or it has none: if it is limited, scientific instruments are imperfect and intuition deceptive; if it is infinite, imagination is too weak, and the term indefinite is merely a statement of such imperfection. But this has already been stated by the negation contained in the word *in-finite*. Fundamentally, these two expressions come precisely to the same thing; and to be consistent with their after-thought, the positivists who shield themselves behind the frail rampart of a syllable, should point their bayonets not only against the infinite, but also against the indefinite, the universe and the world, and against everything of which the greatness troubles the narrowness of their brains. Fortunately, truth is not renounced so easily as political opinions.

The infinite is the indefinite sum of existing things, and yet they would suppress the whole in the name of the part. Strange logic to deny the Absolute in the name of the Relative, or even spirit in that of matter, as if the effect could [Page 13] exist or be conceived independently of the cause, or the subject independently of the object: it resembles those freethinkers who keep high holiday on Good Friday to protest against the precepts of the Church, without perceiving that to do so is a recognition of them. Materialism, denying the infinite in the name of the finite, and Hume denying matter in the name of spirit, represent two equally contradictory extremes. It is impossible to deny either the Absolute or the Relative, for one of the two at least implies the other, and in every case both exist simultaneously. The infinite is proclaimed equally by the impotence of human reason, to keep from conceiving it, and by the impotence of our senses to ever discover the confines of the universe. On the other hand, the infinite forces itself both on our conception and senses. Is it not then henceforth evident that the finite and infinite co-exist in

the universe, and that two kinds of faculties are active in us side by side, the one applied to the finite, formal and sensible, the other clasping the infinite in an unconscious embrace?

"Strike out from the argument the terms Unconditional, Infinite, Absolute, with their equivalents, and in place of them write 'negation of conceivability', or 'absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible', and you find that the argument becomes nonsense ...

"In such correlatives, it is obvious enough that the negative concept contains something besides the negation of the positive one; for the things of which equality is denied are not abolished from consciousness by the denial. . . . Our notion of the Limited is composed, firstly of a consciousness of some kind of being, and, secondly, of a consciousness of the limits under which it is known. In the antithetical notion of the Unlimited, the consciousness of limits is abolished, but not the consciousness of some kind of being. . . . The error consists in assuming that consciousness consists of nothing but limits and conditions, to the entire neglect of that which is limited and conditioned. . . . There must be a residuary consciousness of something which filled up their outlines; and the indefinite something constitutes our consciousness of the non-relative or absolute". [Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, ch. iv]

Herbert Spencer recognises that this "indefinite consciousness of some sort of being is a positive and indestructible element of thought, and goes so far as to attribute to it the reason for our belief in objective reality, a belief so deeply rooted in us that even the conviction of the imperfection of our senses is not sufficient to destroy it. For a modern, the affirmation that this subtle "something" is the one reality and existence, is apparently the resting of the pyramidal universe on the point of a sharp abstraction: for the ancients, it was precisely this point which was the world, and Parabrahm was the immeasurable and unchangeable base and substratum of all, even of illusion. For, if popular instinct is not wrong in taking the words image, form, appearance, etc., as synonyms of mirage, none the more is vulgar sensation deceived in testifying to us the positive existence of something exterior. When we say that the world of [Page 14] forms is illusory, we do not clearly mean that it does not exist, [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 10] but only that its reality is not its appearance, and this cannot be anything else but the appearance of some reality or other. It should be understood that Parabrahm is not only outside the universe, but also in its midst; that it is not an ultimate abstraction nor the residuum of conceptions which are mutually destructive, but an essential condition of thought and being — while, at the same time, it as much transcends thought as it is beyond existence. Thus we have seen that the finite, being infinitely divisible, is placed between the infinitely great and the infinitely small, and, consequently, contains the infinite in itself. Parabrahm is not only the awful reality of the infinite, but also the supreme reality, eternally and universally present beneath the finite. Duration is the primordial element of consciousness, [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 73, *in voc*, Sessa] and Parabrahm is the nought and infinity of duration, the present and the eternal. Space is the most direct object of perception, and Parabrahm is the beginning and end of space, both the point and the unlimited. "In nature nothing is great, nothing is small, and the structure of the minutest molecule which escapes our research can well be as complex as the formation of the planet which gravitates round our sun". [M Roscoe, *Progrès de la chimie moderne, Revue Scientifique*, 1st Oct, 1887] If each millionth of a second brought distinct sensations or new ideas to our consciousness, would the past moment be of less value to us than a century, and would the extent of the future be less conceivable ? If our world should suddenly be increased by millions of cubits, and

we ourselves experience a proportionate growth, what difference should we see in our environment, and would the dark depth be less pricked with less imperceptible points ? If all the choirs of heaven should come and sing our hymns, if every blast of the tempest should come to swell our curses, the great silence would none the less serenely hover o'er both blasphemies and hosannahs. The moment, a nothing placed between the past and the future, and that mathematical abstraction, the point, are non-existent for the same reason as time without limits and space without bounds, and these inconceivables are the signature of Parabrahm in the material world, and without them existence and thought are impossible. The whole of time is in each second, the whole of space in each atom, the least speck of dust is that centre of which the circumference is nowhere, [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 114] the fulcrum of all evolution. Human evolution is a copy of cosmic, personal incarnation images the development of the individual, and physical gestation reproduces the history of animal transformation. Molecule, cell, star, solar system, nebulae, and systems of nebulae, are the steps of an infinite, but infinitely regular, ladder and Parabrahm is the Alpha and Omega of this progression. [Ibid, Vol I, 120] For the antithesis between reason and faith, we substitute the distinction between soul and spirit: and to the perplexity of Hamilton between the absolute [Page 15] and infinite, we answer that these two terms without being mutually contradictory, exclude all comparison with the finite and relative: it was by opposing the finite to the infinite that Hamilton failed to escape from a contradiction conceived by himself. If metaphysical logic were still in fashion, it is thus that we should formulate the law of the conditioned: "everything which is finite, that is to say, which has form and is conceivable in thought, is placed between two extremes apparently contradictory but absolutely identical". The finite is comprised between the two infinities of greatness and smallness; but, fundamentally, no matter by what quantity it can be increased or diminished, it remains at equal distance from these imperceptible poles. The infinite is neither long nor short, neither infinitely great nor infinitely small; the infinite and measurement have nothing in common, and cannot be compared or opposed. It is an exaggeration to take the term infinite in the sense of extreme size. Extreme size, as also extreme minuteness, belongs to the infinite, and the infinitely great with its co-equal, the infinitely small, are absorbed in Omnipresence, which is the very condition of the existence of the finite, or that which is unchangeable under apparent variations of time and space.

In the same way the absolute, with a capital A, the Absolute understood absolutely, cannot be opposed to the relative. If the absolute could be compared to the relative, it would be its correlative, that is to say, relative itself. A thing which is relative, is only relative, and can only be compared to another relative. The absolute can be considered as the geometrical locus of all relatives; but it is still an exaggeration of language to generalize all relatives into a singular term (as if anything but the absolute could be unique) and to oppose this singular *relative* to the absolute, without even perceiving that the very generalization which has been employed to form this relative, has made of it the absolute! The absolute is the supreme synthesis of all pairs of relatives, the fixed point on which the equilibrium of all systems of levers depends. And, as every comparison supposes a common point, while a resemblance without difference does not necessarily imply comparison, so relatives imply the absolute, although the latter is independent of every particular relative. " By fusing a series of states of consciousness, in each of which, as it arises, the limitations and conditions are abolished, there is produced a consciousness of something unconditioned This consciousness is not the abstract of any one group of thoughts, ideas, or conceptions; but it is the abstraction of all thoughts, ideas or conceptions. That which is common to them all, and cannot be got rid of, is what we predicate by the word existence. . . . being, apart from its appearances. The distinction we feel between special and general existence, is the distinction between that which is changeable in us, and that which is unchangeable". [Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, chapter iv]

Far from being contradictory, the terms infinite and absolute, restored to their true sense, are super-imposable and identical. The infinite is the omnipresence [Page 16] common to all finites, the absolute that which is common to all relatives. And so, little by little, we see this great truth start forth, that Parabrahm is not only the incomprehensible, but also the base of all comprehension, not only non-existent, but also the very foundation of being. But here we stumble on the corpse of another false idea, that of the first cause. In the second of his Bampton Lectures, so famous in philosophy, Mansel, while thinking to destroy the absolute, killed for ever the hypothesis of creation. The fright of this believer who came into collision with pantheism on all sides, and ended by abandoning the thread of reason which could no longer lead him out of a labyrinth of inextricable contradictions both for materialism and theology, may put us on our guard against certain secular errors of Western thought, and help us to elucidate the true conception of Parabrahm. We seek no other excuse for the frequency or length of quotations.

"There are three terms familiar as household words in the vocabulary of philosophy, which must be taken into account in every system of Metaphysical Theology. To conceive the Deity as he is, we must conceive him as First Cause, as Absolute, and as Infinite. By the *First Cause* is meant that which produces all things, and is itself produced of none. By the absolute is meant that which exists by itself, and having no necessary relation to another being. By the Infinite is meant that which is free from all possible limitation — that than which a greater is inconceivable, and which consequently can receive no additional attribute or more of existence, which it had not from all eternity."

But these three conceptions, all equally indispensable, do they not imply contradiction to each other when viewed in conjunction as attributes of one and the same being ? A cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the absolute cannot, as such, be a cause. The cause, as such, exists only in relation to its effect: the cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is an effect of the cause. On the other hand, the conception of the absolute implies a possible existence out of all relation. We attempt to escape from this apparent contradiction, by introducing the idea of succession in time. The absolute exists first by itself, and afterwards becomes a cause. But here we are checked by the third conception, that of the Infinite. How can the Infinite become that which is not from the first ? If Causation is a possible mode of existence, that which exists without causing is not infinite; that which becomes a cause has passed beyond its former limits. Creation at any particular moment of time being thus inconceivable, the philosopher is reduced to the alternative of pantheism, which pronounces the effect to be mere appearance, and merges all real existence in the cause.

.....Let us, however, suppose for an instant that these difficulties are surmounted, and the existence of the absolute securely established on the testimony of reason. Still we have not succeeded in reconciling this idea with that of a cause; we have done nothing towards explaining how the absolute can give rise to the relative, the infinite to the finite. If the condition of causal activity is a higher state than that of quiescence, the absolute, whether acting voluntarily [Page 17] or involuntarily, has passed from a condition of comparative imperfection, to one of comparative perfection, therefore, was not originally perfect. If the state of activity is an inferior state to that of quiescence, the absolute, in becoming a cause, has lost its original perfection. There remains only the supposition that the two states are equal; and the act of creation, one of perfect indifference. But this supposition annihilates the unity of the absolute, or it

annihilates itself. If the act of creation is real, and yet indifferent, we must admit the possibility of two conceptions of the absolute, the one as productive, the other as non-productive. If the act is not real, the supposition itself vanishes, and we are thrown once more on the alternative of Pantheism.

Again, how can the relative be conceived as coming into being? If it is a distinct reality from the absolute, it must be conceived as passing from non-existence into existence. But to conceive an object as non-existent, is again a self-contradiction; for that, which is conceived, exists as an object of thought, in and by that conception. We may abstain from thinking of an object at all, but if we think of it, we cannot but think of it as existing. [Mansel, Bampton Lectures, No 2 (See Theosophist, Nov 1884)] It is possible at one time not to think of an object at all, and at another to think of it as already in being; but to think of it in the act of becoming, in the progress from non-being into being, is to think that which, in the very thought, annihilates itself; here, again, the Pantheists' hypothesis seems forced upon us. We can think of creation only as a change in the condition of that which already exists; and thus the creature is conceivable only as a phenomenal mode of the being of the creator". [We cannot, indeed conceive *an object* as non-existent, but the limits of our thought are not necessarily the limits of existence. We cannot conceive *nothing*, for the same reason that we cannot conceive *all*, because both are one, beyond the horizon of human thought on this plane]

"*The relative is a reality distinct from the Absolute*" here is the error; creation is a reality distinct from the creator; here we have anthropomorphism and its results. How can the relative, that is to say, the finite, the illusory, be a reality; and how can it be a reality distinct from the absolute, since the absolute is the necessary reason and foundation of the relative? The relative, in so far as it is relative, cannot be a reality, and the reality beneath the relative is nought but the absolute itself. We have not, then, to think of an object passing from non-being into being; in truth, such a conception would be impossible: we can only conceive that which is *something* becoming something else. But the absolute is not something: we must put a full stop after the word is, and say the absolute does not become, but IS.

The problem of causality is bounded by the relative, and cannot reach the absolute, any more than a sum of finites can reach infinity. Indeed, the equally disputed contradictions which surround these two problems, are equally embarrassing, because they are twin. Spectators and actors of the universal, becoming witnesses and factors of operations by which nothing is self-created, nothing self-destructive, we cannot conceive an absolutely [Page 18] original or absolutely final phenomenon apart from other phenomena; we cannot, without denying the very laws of existence, deny the precession of a series of causes, or the succession of a series of effects, culminating in every phenomenon or proceeding from it. And as our imagination refuses to embrace the infinite, equally so and consequently it refuses to understand these series as indefinite: hence we have the notion of first or final causes. But just as it is impossible for reason to conceive any duration or magnitude as exhausting the totality of being, so a first cause and a final effect are equally unthinkable. Fundamentally, so long as we speak of causes and effects, we think of phenomena and no more get clear of the relative, than we do of the finite in dealing with greatness and smallness. There is no phenomenon which is not both the cause of effects and the effect of causes; the incessant connection between these two series constitutes universal becoming; becoming supposes something which becomes, that is to say something which is. Beings and things are the objects of becoming, its real subject is the immutable or the omnipresent. Parabrahm has nothing to

do with the connecting causes to effects, [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, *sub voc*, Fohat] for this connection is under laws; and how can the Absolute be subjected to laws ?

The notion of causation is very complex, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between accidents or circumstances which are secondary causes, and the principal or antecedent cause, the efficient cause of Aristotle and the Schoolmen. We do not believe that there exists in our complex universe a single phenomenon due to only one cause; it is, however, sufficiently evident that the preponderance of such or such cause produces such or such phenomenon. In the growth of a tree the accidents are cultivation and the state of the soil or temperature; the antecedent is the virtuality in the germ. When a fruit falls from this tree, the secondary causes can be the wind, the diseased state of the stalk, etc., the true efficient cause is clearly gravitation. We must also distinguish in the chain of phenomena the simple succession in time of causality properly so called; two phenomena can follow one another without any necessary connection existing between them. The mysterious link which connects a cause with its necessary effect is that which we call *karma*, in the broadest sense of the word. We must finally distinguish material effects, produced by the co-operation of universal laws or causes, from the volitions of beings, continuous on more or less independent causes. But it requires no long reflection to perceive that all natural effects are produced by forces sent forth to animate and incessantly transform inert matter. Leibnitz expresses a great truth, when he says that: " There is not an existence, however humble, which is not a force, that is to say, a veritable cause. The notion of force is the very base of the notion of existence and of being, for every [Page 19] substance is a force and every thing which is, has a certain potentiality, a certain causative power." [Franck, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article *Cause*] Without admitting with Boscovitch that matter consists solely of centres of forces, we believe that no substance exists which is not the vehicle (*Upadi*) of universal force or life (*Jiv*). And although the divisions of the Macrocosm are, as we have said, purely logical, all activity is classed in the central column [See *Le Lotus*, April 1888. Article "*Le Macrocosme*"] of efficient volitions which includes the *Saktis* as well as the cosmic laws and the aggregate of individual volitions. But every activity, in addition to the object for which it is exercised or manifested, supposes a subject on which it depends or from which it emanates.

On this point the oriental doctrines demand all our attention. This subject which is cosmic or individual spirit, appears to act, think and enjoy, but in reality has nothing to do with the doings or sufferings of which it is a spectator. It appears active only from the objective, that is to say, illusory, point of view.

The Gnostics understood the mystery of the Holy Trinity, [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 58] for Psellus tells us in the commentary of his Chaldean oracles that, spirit, son of spirit, is intellect, the workmen of the fiery world; that is to say, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, that Philo calls wisdom, builder of the world; the source, beginning, and worker of all mental and empyrean operations, the fountain of life, that Hermes calls the crater. " When the Father, the first of the Trinity, had made the foundation of (*condidisset*) the universal creature, he delivered it to the spirit; it is the latter which the whole human race, ignorant of the Father's excellence, has named God. Our doctrine is different; it is the spirit (*mens*), the Son of the omnipotent Father, which has made the foundation of every creature and perfected it by his operations. For in the Mosaic scriptures, the Father shows the Son the form or idea of the productions of creatures; but it is the very Son that is the worker and founder of the created work." [Kircher, *Sphinx Mystagoga*]. We again find in the Indian and Kabalistic doctrines this idea of the creator

reabsorbed within himself, after the emission of a ray in space; it also appears in the myth of the mutilation of Osiris, and of the eternal fecundity of Horus, celebrated in the Book of the Dead; and in that of Zeus reigning in the stead of his dethroned sire. This emanated light is the androgyne Word or mystic Christ of the primitive Christians, represented in the catacombs as a being of double sex, and it is well understood that this second person of the Trinity has nothing to do with the Jesus of the Gospels. "The mystical Christ of the Gnosis of the pre-Christian types was a being of both sexes, as was the Egyptian [Page 20] Horus and other of the Messiahs. ... This is the Christ who appears as both male and female in the book of Revelation. And the same biune type was continued in the Christian portraits of the Christ. In Didrons 'Iconography' you will see that Jesus Christ is portrayed as a female with the beard of a male, and is called Jesus-Christ as St. Sophia." [Gerald Massey, "*The Logia of the Lord*"]

It is the bi-sexual Adonai, of which mention is made in the *Perfect Way*. Lastly, it is to it that are applied the opening words of the Gospel according to Saint John, which the Church repeats without understanding: "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 [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 70] comprehended it not."

Karma depends entirely on *Jiv*, and the cause of its existence disappears for the *Jiv-an-Mukta* who has once understood the identity of *Jiv* and *Brahman*. The cause of cosmic activity is Fohatic energy resulting from the blending of *Ishwara* and *Prakriti*, and producing the kaleidoscope of combinations between spirit and matter. But, correctly speaking, *Ishwara* cannot be called cause, nor *Prakriti* effect. The real subject and object sleep the eternal Parabrahmic sleep-waking, whilst their son, the androgynous Word, wakes and sleeps.

It is thus that the two breaths of universal respiration are effected. Brahma breathes, and Manvantaras follow Pralayas; evolutions, involutions; decay of empires, their greatness; wrinkles, the dimples of youth; vernal efflorescence, the circling of dead autumn leaves; and the silence of the night, the tumult of the day. Brahma breathes [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol 1, 70] and, therefore, we breathe. If we could place ourselves in the centre of the universe, at the attachment of that huge pendulum which is balanced in the infinite, perhaps we should see that, instead of returning on itself, it described in reality a circular orbit, that periodic is synonymous with cyclic, that every rhythm is a wave, that the *Naga* with its tail in his mouth, and the wheel of Brahma and his breathing are symbols of one and the same truth; we should, perhaps, understand that in Parabrahm is the true identity of primal causes with final, and we should be able to repeat what it alone can say, the why and how of the immense evolution of which it is the beginning and end. But the fond imagination makes incessantly towards absolute night, from solar Pralaya to nebulous Pralaya, and lost in the maze of these partial obscurations, which are ever contained in some vaster Manvantara, refusing to conceive even the possibility of a *universal* sleep, when the *universe* escapes from its embraces, drowned in [Page 21] immortality, screams with fear after death and only finds life ever more fatal and intense! The Adepts themselves declare that, the duration of a *Maha-kalpa* "baffles"[Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 21] even their powerful imagination. When space is no longer great, time no more long, when words no longer have sense, that which ought not to be said, can hardly be so. Moreover, as neither cause nor end can be assigned to this awful breathing, and since

we are compelled to lean on some starting-point, we can, without practical inconvenience, consider, from our objective point of view, the present Manvantara as eternal, or in every case, the sum of supercosmic principles as co-extensive and identical with Parabrahm, although, it is equally beyond its manifestations as in them; and although in it, as Subba Row says, such centres of energy are innumerable. Thus we shall see the Kabala sketch the triple ternary of the Sephiroths in the Absolute by means of the very names of the ineffable En-Soph.

All the modes of existence which we can know are reduced to three categories. Practically, there are only bodies endowed with properties, perceived by beings endowed with faculties. Theoretically, we attribute colour, weight, movement, and in general all the properties of bodies to the action of universal force or life, and we call the substratum of the properties Matter; on the other hand, the faculties of beings, consciousness, volition, instinct are equally manifestations of universal life, and form the contents of that which we call Spirit. Universal action determined by two other factors; we say determined, and not caused, to avoid the false notions with which the problem of causality is obstructed. Spirit is spectator of the drama which is enacted on the stage of Matter; Idealism and Materialism would persuade us that the public or scenery is the cause of action. At most, we can consider Spirit as the motive (*le motif*) of evolution, of which Force is the motor (*le moteur*), and Matter that which is moved (*le mobile*). These three parallel modes meet only in Parabrahm; that is to say, beyond the infinite. Their blending, of which universal illusion is the fruit, is not a combination; Spirit only becomes spirit, Force only produces force, Matter is only transformed into matter or, rather, Spirit and Matter remain pure from all mixture. [Our languages are so poor, philosophically, that we fear this will be misunderstood. The Emanations do not transform into each other, but the Manifestations do, and the three Emanations co-exist in all Manifestations. What we mean is, that *Purusha* does not transform into *Prakriti*: but both, united during the manifestations, pass through all transformations. The trinity is the substratum of the higher manifestations, as of the lower existences: essence of substance exists on the spiritual plane as well as on the material one. And the spiritual substance becoming the material substance, it can be said, in one sense, that spirit becomes matter: but Essence does not become Substance any more than matter can produce consciousness. Consciousness awakes in the material world, because it is already *latent* in every atom of matter. The Holy Trinity resides in the smallest grain of sand as well as in the highest heavens, and nothing happens, nothing exists without its co-operation. A triple cause is necessary to explain the universe, as well as to produce a child: that is, a father, a mother, and the love, attraction, or force that unites them. *Ishwara*, *Prakriti*, and *Fohat*] They only [Page 22] seem to become by the illusory action of Force: all light is determined by obscurity, all attraction by repulsion; occultly, it is the same with human affections, and one can demand, with M. Péladan, virtue from the Elohim of vices. This double attraction towards the two poles, Spirit and Matter, existing on all dynamic planes, Force, the source of all efficient causes, is self-destructive by virtue of its character of duality: it is because Shiva destroys eternally the creations of Brahmâ, that Vishnu preserves his apparent existence. Therefore, Force is only a powerful illusion. It cannot be taken for absolute cause; firstly, because it leans on the two other emanations as on a pair of crutches; secondly, because movement contains that other antimony discussed since the palmy days of Elaea and Megara. Rest exists nowhere in nature: everything moves, "everything flows", says Heraclitus. The instance cited by Herbert Spencer of a sailor walking on the deck of a vessel in motion, on the ocean, turning with the earth round the sun which is itself in motion, is too well known to be repeated; Hartmann reasons in the same way: "The ball is said to move towards the target; the target, however, could equally well be said to proceed towards the ball; and the resistance of the target to the ball is not so much the resistance of an immovable target, as the *vis viva* of a target in motion". But Parmenides objects that absolute motion is an absurdity, for movement supposes space and bodies : Zeno shows that swift-footed Achilles will never overtake the tortoise; Kant unmasks the relativity

of a displacement which, as it supposes fixed points, cannot exist in the unlimited; and according to Herbert Spencer, "it is impossible to represent to the thought the transition between rest and movement, for they seem to imply an interruption in the law of continuity, although such a flaw is inconceivable". Fundamentally, these contradictions, like the others, are purely apparent. There is in the universe more or less movement, as there is also more or less space and Time. To say that absolute rest does not exist in nature and that absolute movement is absolutely incomprehensible, is the continued assertion that the Absolute is not the relative. Rest and movement are correlatives with which the Absolute has nothing in common, poles apparently opposed, but absolutely identical. Absolute rest is beyond our conception, and also, according to occult science, beyond existence. This is the meaning of one of our first axioms, that nothing is dead in the universe: that there is not one atom of matter devoid of force, of capacity for motion, of life, of capacity for transformation; everything that exists changes, however slowly, and therefore lives. But if, starting from relative or apparent rest, such as we can conceive, we follow the increasing velocities of planets, electricity, light, and thought, where shall we land after this Course à *l'abîme*, if not in Omnipresence, that limit of rapidity, which no longer requires no time to pass from one point [Page 23] to another, however distant ? But this Omnipresence, this perfect motion, is it not the same as perfect rest ? Thus the two extremities of the scale of velocity unite in Parabrahm; round the six wheels of Fohat turns the great wheel of Brahma, invisible owing to its rapidity, which Democritus calls "the immovable mover", and of which Mencius says that "its calm commands movement".

Moreover, whatever emanation we endeavour to fathom, it's Protean form continually escapes us by more and more subtle transformations and more and more abstract simplifications. If we wish to seize Matter, it flees before our physical, astral and spiritual analysis successively, and with Spencer, we fold in our arms nought but the shadow of the Unknowable. If we study the nature of Spirit, its omniscience leads us finally to the Unconscious of Hartmann. The antinomy of these two primordial emanations is the base of all those which have troubled philosophy. From the side of the relative, it eludes human thought; from that of the Absolute, we might say that it does not exist, if we could say anything.

Once established that for Parabrahm there is neither subject nor object, we ought logically to conclude that there is neither cause nor effect, beginning nor end, and that the conceptions of cause of existence and goal of attainment exist only in connection with evolution. Our ideas of perfection are perfectly inapplicable to the Absolute, and it is only our imperfection which makes us ask whether it deteriorates in giving birth to the relative. Such an act, if it were real, could be neither unconscious and necessary, nor conscious and voluntary. Consciousness, being a relation, cannot be conceived as the end of cosmic activity, and only represents a means or incident therein: omniscience being for us identical with unconsciousness, these two poles of existence should unite in a superior and inconceivable identity. In the same way, all our ideas of fate presuppose free-will, and the greater or less liberty is determined precisely by the less or greater correspondent necessity. Parabrahm is independent of these qualifications; for if, on the one hand, every fatality is a limit, on the other, all liberty to choose supposes the possibility of choosing the worst, that is to say, of self-deception. Lastly, our idea of perfection depends on the apparent contrast between good and evil. This antinomy of pure sentiment having been disposed of by a more competent pen than our own, [See in *Le Lotus*, No.10, an article by H.P. Blavatsky on "the origin of evil". The author there refutes the theories of Dr. Maitlander, according to whom evil arises from the very laws of nature and from the infinite divisibility of matter, by showing that this dissolving force is constantly counterbalanced by a universal tendency to synthesis] we will limit ourselves to indicating how it is connected with the apparently inexplicable co-existence of Spirit and

Matter. It is the fashion to father on Eastern mysticism the pessimism of German schools: but the mystic [Page 24] only despises his present life because he has glimpses of a mode of existence infinitely superior, whilst the materialistic nihilist, caught in the net of illusions, can only aspire to a useless and impossible suicide. We are very ill-placed to judge of the value of good and evil; Theosophy widens to a singular degree our horizon, by teaching at the outset that the sorrows of physical life are largely compensated by proportionate joys in *Devachan*, secondly, that if evil predominates at present in the world, it is because we are passing through an inferior period of evolution and are in the inauspicious age of the *Kali-yug*, but that the age of gold will return and humanity will know spiritual states proportionately exalted, so as to blot out the evil dream; lastly, that every evil comes from ignorance, from selfishness and desire; that is to say, from attachment to matter, but that there exists within ourselves a principle of knowledge, love and happiness. *Duhkham* is a property of *Prakriti*: evil is the good of matter; evil only exists in connection with consciousness; further, the consciousness even of evil is, itself a blessing. There is something grand in sympathizing with the sorrows of another or in observing one's own sufferings. It was not without inward satisfaction that Hartmann and Schopenhauer wrote their philosophic lamentations. It is because Spirit, the centre of all consciousness, is naturally *Ananda*, blessed; *Ananda*, we repeat, not *Suhkham*. This blessedness can no more be applied to our highest joys than to our deepest sorrows. "In intense pain a point is reached where it is indistinguishable from its opposite pleasure. This is, indeed, so, but few have the heroism or the strength to suffer to such a far point. It is as difficult to reach it by the other road. Only a chosen few have the gigantic capacity for pleasure, which will enable them to travel to its other side. Most have but enough strength to enjoy and to become the slave of the enjoyment." [Through the Gates of Gold, page 109] It has been observed that the acme of pleasure is forgetfulness of self: he is no artist who has never experienced that dead faint of contemplation, when, all else forgotten, our very being, charmed and fascinated, is drawn out of ourselves into the realized ideal, whether truth embodied in prose or verse, Galatea vivified in marble, or the music of the spheres imprisoned in instruments. Unconsciousness is the unconscious goal of our most enthusiastic aspirations, as of our never-ending pursuits through over-frequented and muddy roads. The very sentences we use, "killed with joy", "lost in rapture", "beyond oneself with pleasure", etc., show once more that popular sayings are very wise indeed when not absolutely nonsensical.

So that joy no more than sorrow, virtue than vice, and generally good than evil, can be considered either metaphysically or practically as ends in themselves; they are simply means to raise us to heights from which we [Page 25] shall be able to view them as identical, and consequently non-existent. Thus the nightmares of the bitter hours of darkness and the sweetness of love dreams disappear before the reality of the dawn.

The error, therefore, of idealism as of materialism, of atheism as of anthropomorphism, consists in taking an extreme for a supreme principle. The dogma of creation arbitrarily cuts the knot of one difficulty to give rise to a thousand. Positivism does not solve the problem; it refuses to see it by wrapping itself in a veil of illusion, thinking to escape the danger, like the ostrich, by putting its head under its wing. Western metaphysics, in persisting in taking for real existence that which is only relative existence, and consequently absolute illusion, and professing to assign a real cause to this illusory effect, is lost in a labyrinth of contradictions which even philosophers, apparently the least idolatrous, have not been able to reconcile. We therefore see a thinker like Hartmann, after maintaining that the Unconscious is forced to give birth to evolution by a feeling of transcendental pain or inner discomfort, expiating this original impiety by the monstrous and fatal corollary of universal suicide. Less repugnant are the theories of

Hegel and Schelling, [Compare The Secret Doctrine, Vol I, 50, 51] who suppose in pure Being a desire to become conscious, for they are not more difficult to understand, in spite of their involuntary absurdity, than the conception consciously symbolized in the revolt and fall of the angels, or in the theft and punishment of Prometheus. But the only philosophically satisfactory interpretation is the insignificance or even the non-existence, from the Parabrahmic standpoint, of universal illusion. And when we have completed this conclusion by showing that, from the relative point of view, it is the Absolute which is non-existent, we shall understand that the justification of antinomies consists in the fact that they are indispensable not only to reason which examines them and to consciousness, but also to very existence. And if, then, we were asked the *raison d'être* of existence, we could answer that such a question, besides being useless and absurd even to sacrilege, if there could be any sacrilege therein, seems at least ridiculous from beings in whom the desire of living is so deeply rooted. The reason of being is non-being; and the reason of non-being is being. The means of all knowledge is to identify oneself with universal unconsciousness. Mystery is necessary for him who cannot comprehend the incomprehensible. It is evident, in all cases, that everyone should seek in himself an answer that can only come from the inmost depths of our being. Theosophy has this advantage that, while it declares such problems insoluble from the side of the relative, it shows us the means of solving them by self-identification with the Absolute.

"We ought to begin with pure Being, because it is both pure thought [Page 26] and *immediate*, simple and indeterminate, and because a beginning, although incapable of being made a middle term, should be able to be ultimately determined. This pure being is only pure abstraction, and consequently absolute negation, which, considered in its immediate state, is non-being. Non-being in so far as it forms a thing immediate and identical to itself, does not differ from Being..... If, when it is maintained that the unity of being and nothingness is incomprehensible, it is meant that it cannot be represented, even then it is so much the farther from the truth that in the infinite number of representations there is not one which contains this unity; and in saying that it is impossible to represent it, nothing else can be meant but that the notion is not found in each particular representation exemplified, if we may use the term . . . Philosophical comprehension is not ordinary understanding, neither is it arrived at by the methods commonly employed in the other sciences. ... A man, perhaps, represents to himself pure Being by the image of pure light, and pure Nothingness under the image of pure night. But if this sensible representation is applied to Being and Nothingness, we shall be easily convinced that in absolute brightness we can only see as much or as little as in absolute night. Pure light and pure darkness are two equally empty determinations. It is only in determinated night, and light is determined by darkness, as the latter is by light, that anything can be distinguished; because obscured light and lightened obscurity contain a difference which gives them a determinated existence", Hegel [*Logique (traduction de A.Véra)*] adds that the truth of being and non-being is in the unity of the two, and this unity is Becoming. We say that Becoming, or Illusion, is the opposition or fusion of the two, while their unity, incomprehensible to thought, but not to intuition, constitutes the supreme reality, Parabrahm. But it is interesting to see Western philosophy returning by a circuitous path to the ancient conception of being — non-being (negative existence).

Another of the *nature philosophers*, perhaps the greatest, although the least understood, William Oken, whose only fault was to be born before Darwin, expresses the same truth in a mathematical form: "The identity of all multiples, or of all things, with themselves and supreme unity constitutes the *Essence* of things ; the limitation or definition of the Ideal is their Form: this limitation is only an ideal relation. All

plurals are identical to themselves and the supreme principle in essence ; in other words, all singulars are united by essence to the supreme One. All diversity of plurals lies simply in their form, limitation or manifestation.

"There is only one essence in all things, the O, [Compare The Secret Doctrine, Vol I, 94] the supreme identity, but there is an infinite number of forms. The ideal nought is absolute [Page 27] or monadic unity, not a singularity, like an individual thing or the number 1. but an indivisibility or absence of number in which can be discovered neither the 1 nor the 2, neither line nor circle, a pure identity. The mathematical nought is the eternal. It is not subjected to any definition of time or space, it is neither finite or infinite, neither great nor small, neither at rest nor in motion, but it is and is not all these. The eternal is the *nothing* of nature.

" The origin of the singular is nothing else but a manifestation of the Eternal. Thereby unity, splendour, homogeneity, are lost and turned into multiplicity, obscurity, diversity.

" (+ —) is nothing else than the definition of O. This duality is the monad itself under another form. In multiplication it is the form alone which changes. The Eternal becomes the real by a dual division of itself. Once manifested, it is either positive or negative. Nought differs from infinite unity only because it is not affirmed.

" + presupposes O; — presupposes + and O; but O presupposes neither + nor —. Purely negative quantities are a nonentity, for they can only be connected with positive magnitudes. — is the retrogression of + into O.

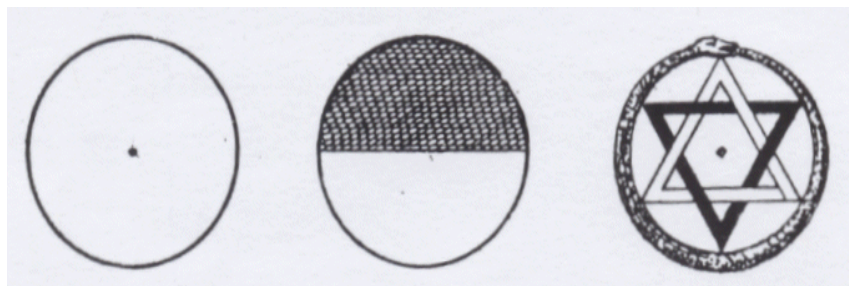
" The nothing becomes a something simply by positing itself. The nothing is simply the neglect to posit itself. The something (+ —) has not, then, started or emerged from nothing; the nothing has not produced a correlative: (x —) is not something else than nothing; all the undivided nothing has become unity. The nothing, once posited as nothing, equals I. In this case, we cannot speak of production or evolution, but of the complete identity and uniformity of the nothing with the something; it is a product innocent of birth.

"Generally speaking, there is no nothing. Even nothing is something. While numbers are, in a mathematical sense, positings and negations of *nothing*, they are, in a philosophical sense, positings and negations of the *Eternal*. The essence of numbers is nothing else than the Eternal. [Compare The Secret Doctrine Vol I, 66, 98] The Eternal alone is or exists, and nothing but it exists in the existence of a number. There is nothing, therefore, real but the Eternal. [Oken understands by *real* the universe, and by *eternal* Parabrahm. This phrase is, therefore, the translation of the Sanskrit. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman*. (Ibid Vol I. 48] The singular is nothing by itself, but the Eternal is in it. The existence of the

singular is not its own existence, but that of the Eternal. There exists nothing but nothing, nothing but the Eternal; and every individual existence is only an illusory one.

"As soon as O exists, it is + —. The realization of the Eternal is a complete antagonism of itself. The Being of the Eternal is, therefore, a [Page 28] self-manifestation. Every act of self-manifestation is double: it is a manifestation (=+), but a manifestation of itself, and consequently a retrogression into O (+ —). It is by negation that the finite is united to the Eternal. Every disappearance of the finite is a return to the Eternal." [Oken, *Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie; Erster Theil Mathesis, I Buch, Theosophie* (Jena 1809)].

Thus we have returned to our starting-point. Beyond All there is Nothing, and absolute being cannot be distinguished from Non-being. We have reached the limits of our thought and even of our existence, and we ought to conclude in all humility that of absolute Being we can say nothing. Parabrahm exists only by the existence of the finite; and in the absence of the latter, it cannot be said to exist; and this is the reason of existence. But existence is only an illusion, and, from the standpoint of Parabrahm, does not exist. In other words, Parabrahm can be viewed under two complementary and perfectly symmetrical aspects, like as the two halves of a picture in a kaleidoscope are always perfectly opposed to one another, however they may be altered by the turning of the instrument. The first of these aspects represents perfect non-existence, or rather does not represent anything, that is to say, does not exist. The second aspect represents perfect existence, and should consequently contain all the elements of existence.



These two halves are separated by the horizon of eternity. The beyond of this horizon is as unknowable to us as the other side of the moon. And as the bright side of the moon does not shine with its own, but with a reflected light, so the intelligible side of Parabrahm is only intelligible by the reflection of the unintelligible in the mirror of illusion. These two sides are intimately united and the one only exists by the other. Absolutely, Parabrahm can neither be comprehended nor represented: it is the white sheet of every figure, the ineffable, which silence alone can praise. As the substance of illusion and nothing else, Parabrahm is equally incomprehensible, for the two limit-lines of existence are parallel, and the point where they meet is without existence as it is beyond thought; hence the impossibility of conceiving it as first cause. But if we consider it at the same time both as pure existence, that is to say, non-existence, and as substratum of the relative, that is, the absolute, we can represent it by the old symbol of Hermes

Trismegistus, the point in the [Page 29] circle. The point will then be the potentiality of manifestation, and will represent, compared to the circle, a quantity which can be neglected and which is non-existent. The circle, in comparison with the point, will be nowhere. And as an infinity of points can be taken in the circle, so Parabrahm can be the substratum of an infinity of illusions. Hartmann reproaches Schopenhauer with denying *a priori* the possibility of having other modes of existence than thought and extent, and we can suppose, with Subba Row, that other centres of force exist in Parabrahm besides the Cosmic Logos. If the number of like centres were unlimited, however awful this conception of an infinity of universes might be, it would repair the difficulty which we experience in understanding Parabrahm as potential, a difficulty, however, for which our humanity alone is responsible; these universes would not be necessarily co-existent, but Parabrahm would always exist by at least one of them; the area of existence in Parabrahm would be represented, at every given moment, by a certain circle determined by a certain radius, which circle, the instant after, would be reabsorbed into its centre to sleep the sleep of Pralaya, after transmitting its potentialities of expansion and contraction to another point. [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 172] This would explain why we cannot conceive the idea of universal Pralaya, but can only represent Parabrahm as the limit of all existence. It should be remarked that, in this awful eternity, the chances for the same point reawakening are $1/\infty$ that is to say, none, and then we should understand the depth of the occult doctrine which teaches that the universe exists eternally, [Ibid, Vol I, 16] as potentiality, in Parabrahm, and that, although subject to successive periods of activity and rest, it never begins its evolution again on the same level.

We must not, however, forget that this expansion and contraction are purely negative. The breathing of Brahma only exists for those who listen for it, plunged in sacred sleep. Brahma's self knows not of the breathing. The two aspects of Parabrahm are aspects of one and the same reality. It is this which Indian philosophy explains when saying: "*Brahm and Kutâstha* are ever one", and: "*Tat-wam asi*", that is to say, thou art that, or that is thou. *Ishwara* is Parabrahm, *Sakti* is Parabrahm, *Mulaprakriti* is Parabrahm. The visible side of Parabrahm is the whole of spiritual manifestation; and the trinity which reduces itself to unity, the triangle [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 113]. which represents this primordial manifestation is summed up in one point, in which is contained the triple potentiality of the entire universe. The point represents the only form under which the universe exists externally for and in Parabrahm. The point, in [Page 30] developing the circle, does none the less remain the point, the centre of the circle, in the same way as the potentiality of the germ, asleep in the egg, subsists after the development of the animal, since the latter possesses, in its turn, the power of generation. Compared with the Absolute, the grain is not distinguished from the fruit, nor the effect from the cause ; compared with the Infinite, point and circle are identical. One of the Masters writes: "The circle indicates the bounding, circumscribing quality of the *all*, the universal principle which from any given point expands so as to embrace all things while embodying the potentiality of every action in the Kosmos. As the point is the centre round which the circle is traced, they are identical and one, though from the stand-point of Maya and Avidya (illusion and ignorance), one is separated from the other by the manifested triangle. . . ." And further, "Pythagoras had a reason for never using the useless figure 2, and for altogether discarding it. The one can, when manifesting, become only three. The unmanifested, when a simple duality, remains passive and concealed. . . . The duality could never tarry as such, and would have to be re-absorbed into the *One*." The circle is the symbol of the infinite, and the straight line of the finite. But even the circle contains three elements — centre, surface and circumference; and it is impossible to make a finite figure of two straight lines, the simplest rectilinear figure being the triangle. The symbol of Parabrahm, therefore, as base of manifestation, will be the six-pointed star, the Hindu *Sri-Antara*, or the *Chakram* [Compare *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 114, 215] of Vishnu, the buckler of David, or Solomon's seal. He who can decipher this figure, the synthesis of all occult science, knows the secret

of life and death, of the knowledge of good and evil, of the philosopher's stone, of the ineffable Word, and of the quadrature of the circle, as well as the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The double aspect of Parabrahm is therein shown by the dark triangle, the reverse of the white or uncoloured triangle, the illusory reflection of invisible reality. These complementary triangles represent also, the male and female principles, triple spirit and triple matter. Attraction or gravity break this equilibrium; the two triangles, sliding in opposite directions, lose the equality of their sides. The fall into matter is accomplished, and the square inscribed in the circle gives us the algebraical formula of the law of the conditioned: [Page 31]



Instead of + and —, we could put being and non-being, spirit and matter, greatness and smallness, good and evil, light and darkness, etc., the result would be always correct. But the convergence of these extremes in the upper half of the circle will remain always incomprehensible for us, until the mystery of redemption shall atone for that of incarnation, and the four extremities of the world disappear with the cross, together with the two illusions called God and Devil. And such is the grace I pray to be upon you.

AUM !