

Truth Is One by Geoffrey Farthing

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by Geoffrey A. Farthing

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In the Christian scriptures there is a story that King Herod asked Jesus, "What is Truth". He got no answer but for ages before that, and ever since, men, philosophers and thinkers, have been asking it. Traditionally a distinction has been made between absolute and relative Truth, and Truth has become synonymous with Reality. The first part of the article contains thoughts arising from information contained in our theosophical literature. The second part is made up of extracts from that literature, all by H.P. Blavatsky in her Collected Writings, particularly from an article in Vol. IX, "What is Truth?" and some from Vol. XI, "The Beacon Light of Truth".

It has been said that Truth is *what is*. That is probably a truism, but discovering 'what is' opens up a large field of enquiry into objective and subjective realms. In our theosophical literature the story of the Cosmos begins with the ABSOLUTE. This is the subject of the first fundamental Proposition in the S.D. [Secret Doctrine] "It is beyond the range and reach of thought", inexpressible by any similitude because any such would limit it. "It is an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible...". We can assume that this ABSOLUTE always is. This means "It" is everlasting, timeless, constituting absolute Truth or Reality.

The second Proposition tells us that somehow, periodically, our manifest universe comes into being as an out-breathing of Brahma. Everything and anything that may have been prior to this out-breathing was Parabrahm, locked in unknowable mystery.

The processes whereby the Cosmos began and in particular our Earth are fully described in *The Secret Doctrine*. It makes wonderful reading because it tells us how everything, from atoms to worlds, including all the denizens of the four kingdoms of Nature, come to be, and even to be as they are. This last statement, "things as they are", brings us to the present, a different scene now from the original One which was 'contained', unimaginably, in a state of non-being, eternally in the ABSOLUTE. Now, however, Cosmos and Nature are all around us, here and now, although everything is temporary. Because of this transience the pundits have declared that it is maya, illusion, ephemeral, even insubstantial; it can only be relative truth. Only the ABSOLUTE is absolute Truth. Nevertheless, at any time, there is the Cosmos, either passive or active. In terms of what *is*, like the Absolute, what emanates from it exists; it *is*, and must be regarded at least a present time reality or truth.

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Each period of existence, of activity, or Manvantara, is succeeded by a period of passivity or rest: Pralaya. This alternation applies throughout Nature, to everything great and small, to all processes, at all levels. All is according to Universal Law. When a period of Manvantara is over, a Pralaya begins; whatever there was previously now reverts to a passive, even dormant state. This cycle of alternate activity and rest, however, is a complete cycle. It is this whole cycle which is temporary. This means to say that even the pralayaic condition has a time limit and cannot therefore really be reality or truth, and certainly not the ABSOLUTE. The ABSOLUTE emanates periodically these cycles of activity and rest from Itself. They can have no other source. During the rest period the experience gained during an active period is assimilated; there is not nothing then going on. As an example, our active lives come to an end, we retire into a post-mortem condition where the experience of our lifetime is assimilated, passively. We are in a world of effects, not causes. This post-mortem condition being temporary, is therefore not Absolute. Analogously this process applies throughout the whole Cosmos, from atoms even to the Universe of universes. What comprises a complete cycle of both the active and passive states is, for the time being, what *is*. By our definition therefore the cycle is real or true. Whereas each cycle may not be everlasting THAT from which the alternating periods emanate is everlasting; it is this that is acknowledged to be Truth or Reality. So there are three, not two, aspects to truth: a) the unknowable Absolute, b) active manifestation (Manvantara), c) inactive manifestation (Pralaya).

One of the prime tenets of our theosophical teachings, is the evolutionary process. Unmanifest existence has two aspects: inactivity and latent activity. Active manifestation also has two aspects: form and consciousness. All forms are the aggregates of lesser lives. The theosophical teaching is that every life has a form and consciousness (sentience) plus memory and will. This applies however small the entity may be, even down to what are referred to as life atoms (not physical atoms) which are not only infinitely small at physical level but exist on non-physical planes as well. For example, they aggregate to form the 'Elementals', the life forces in Nature. They do, however, aggregate to become the life forms in all their variety with which we are familiar, each of them being possessed of a consciousness to the extent of its evolutionary development. The limit of this development on our physical earth is man, who is unique among all species, having attained self-consciousness. The significance of this is that, although the whole evolutionary process may be regarded as temporary and therefore illusory, *it is Nature's only means for generating and developing* not only consciousness as such but self-consciousness. It is the only means whereby man, and presumably a post-human being, can become aware of himself – as well as but apart from his surroundings. Without these periods of 'mayavic' manifestation the whole cosmic process would be sterile; in effect there would be no process. To this extent whatever *is* during Manvantara, however temporary, must be real and therefore true. This applies equally to the periods of rest, to Pralaya.

In the nature of things consciousness is ubiquitous. It becomes individually manifest only through a vehicle, i.e., something temporary. In this way consciousness is also temporary but it is innate in the whole cosmic process. Consciousness is a dynamic which equates to life, and ultimately to Spirit – both temporary in manifest existence. They are nonetheless 'real', for the time being, and therefore true.

This consciousness or life, albeit not ABSOLUTE, is an essential aspect of the total cosmic process without which there would be 'nothing' for ever. Nevertheless the Absolute, although beyond the "reach and range of thought", must be potentially that ultimate state wherein inherently are absolute consciousness and all other aspects and attributes of life.

By logic there must be that in it which relates to time and which is responsible for periodical

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manifestations through which all that has being during a Manvantara/pralaya cycle comes to be. There must be a potentiality to contain this everything. Metaphysically this could be referred to as the ALL-containing ABSOLUTE. The process of coming and going, is Universal Law in action. This Law never is not.

The ABSOLUTE may be meaningless to our thinking minds but something cannot come from nothing, even if that NO-THING is in a state of NON-BEING! It is the BE-NESS of the first fundamental Proposition.

The point of this analysis is to show that, as everything stems from the same source (the ABSOLUTE) which may be no-thing or non-being, it is certainly not 'nothing', or nothing could issue from it. Therefore whatever is, is always so in the cyclic 'component' of the Absolute. It is potentially both subjective, i.e. of spirit and consciousness, and objective, i.e., related to form or the vehicles of consciousness. All these, however, are within the Eternal IS-NESS, whatever that may be. They are therefore worthy of the name of Truth. Manifest, Pralaya or Eternal, everything is One and so therefore is Truth.

No matter what one may study in the S.D. let the mind hold fast, as the basis of its ideation to the following ideas: "*The Fundamental Unity of all Existence ...*" – existence is ONE THING ... Fundamentally there is ONE BEING. The BEING has two aspects, positive and negative. The positive is Spirit, or CONSCIOUSNESS. The negative is SUBSTANCE, the subject of consciousness. This Being is the Absolute in its primary manifestation. Being absolute there is nothing outside it. It is ALL-BEING ... Therefore it is clear that this fundamental ONE EXISTENCE or Absolute Being must be the REALITY in every form there is. (Bowen Notes, 8)

Apart from these philosophical thoughts on Truth, there is a whole new dimension to it as it applies to ourselves and our individual consciousness. In this connection we have to remember that in our total Being we reflect the whole of Nature.

Man is the Microcosm. As he is so, then all the Hierarchies of the Heavens exist within him. But in truth there is neither Macrocosm nor Microcosm but ONE EXISTENCE. Great and small are such only as viewed by a limited consciousness. (Bowen Notes, 9-10)

In Vol. IX of the Collected Writings in the article "What is Truth" there are the following passages: The greatest adept living can reveal of the Universal Truth only so much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate, and no more.... In proportion as our consciousness is elevated towards absolute truth, so do we men assimilate it more or less absolutely.... Still each of us can relatively reach the Sun of Truth even on this earth, and assimilate its warmest and most direct rays,... On the physical plane we may use our mental polariscope [instrument for showing phenomena of polarised light]; and, analyzing the properties of each ray, choose the purest. On the plane of spirituality, to reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature.... once aroused ... the highest spiritual senses and perceptions grow in us in proportion, and develop *pari passu* with the "divine man".... *absolute* truth is not on earth and has to be searched for in higher regions,...

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We are all at different stages of development. For many of us the apprehension of the higher octaves of Truth is quite beyond us. Even in discussing the most elevated and abstruse subjects H.P.B. could not resist some humour. Here is an example.

To return to our subject. It thus follows that, though “general *abstract* truth is the most precious of all blessings” for many of us,... we have, meanwhile, to be satisfied with relative truths. In sober fact, we are a poor set of mortals at best, ever in dread before the face of even a relative truth, lest it should devour ourselves and our petty little preconceptions along with us. As for an absolute truth, most of us are as incapable of seeing it as of reaching the moon on a bicycle....

As physical man, limited and trammelled from every side by illusions, cannot reach truth by the light of his terrestrial perceptions, we say—develop in you the *inner* knowledge. From the time when the Delphic oracle said to the enquirer “Man, know thyself,” no greater or more important truth was ever taught. Without such perception, man will remain ever blind to even many a relative, let alone absolute, truth. Man has to *know himself*, *i.e.*, acquire the *inner* perceptions which never deceive, before he can master any absolute truth. Absolute truth is *the symbol of Eternity*, and no *finite* mind can ever grasp the eternal, hence, no truth in its fulness can ever dawn upon it. To reach the state during which man sees and senses it, we have to paralyze the senses of the external man of clay. [A first essential is] *love of truth for its own sake*, for otherwise no recognition of it will follow.

Outside a certain highly spiritual and elevated state of mind, during which Man is at one with the UNIVERSAL MIND — *he can get nought on earth but relative truth, or truths, from whatsoever philosophy or religion*. Were even the goddess who dwells at the bottom of the well to issue from her place of confinement, she could give man no more than he can assimilate. Meanwhile, every one can sit near that well — name of which is KNOWLEDGE — gaze into its depths in the hope of seeing Truth’s fair image reflected, at least, on the dark waters. This, however, as remarked by Richter, presents a certain danger. Some truth, to be sure, may be occasionally reflected as in a mirror on the spot we gaze upon, and thus reward the patient student. But, adds the German thinker, “I have heard that some philosophers in seeking for Truth, to pay homage to her, have seen their own image in the water and adored it instead.”

It is to avoid such a calamity — one that has befallen every founder of a religious or philosophical school — that the editors are studiously careful not to offer the reader only those truths which they find reflected in their own personal brains. They offer the public a wide choice, and refuse to show bigotry and intolerance, which are the chief landmarks on the path of Sectarianism. But, while leaving the widest margin possible for comparison, our opponents cannot hope to find *their faces* reflected on the clear waters of our *Lucifer*, without remarks or just criticism upon the most prominent features thereof, if in contrast with theosophical views.

This, however, only within the cover of the public magazine, and so far as regards the merely intellectual aspect of philosophical truths. Concerning the deeper spiritual, and one may almost say religious, beliefs, no true Theosophist ought to degrade these by subjecting them to public discussion, but ought rather to treasure and hide them deep within the sanctuary of his innermost soul. Such beliefs and doctrines should never be rashly given out, as they risk unavoidable

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profanation by the rough handling of the indifferent and the critical. Nor ought they to be embodied in any publication except as hypotheses offered to the consideration of the thinking portion of the public. Theosophical truths, when they transcend a certain limit of speculation, had better remain concealed from public view, for the “evidence of things not seen” is no evidence save to him who sees, hears, and senses it. It is not to be dragged outside the “Holy of Holies,” the temple of the impersonal divine *Ego*, or the indwelling SELF. For, while every fact outside *its* perception can, as we have shown, be, at best, only a relative truth, a ray from the absolute truth can reflect itself only in the pure mirror of its own flame—our highest SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS. And how can the darkness (of illusion) comprehend the LIGHT that shineth in it?

From Collected Writings Vol. XI, 249:

Happy are they who remain blind to these deceiving lights, more happy still those who never turn their eyes from the only true Beacon-light whose eternal flame burns in solitude in the depths of the waters of the Sacred Science. Numerous are the pilgrims who desire to enter those waters; very few are the strong swimmers who reach the Beacon. He who would get there must cease to be a number, and become *all numbers*. He must have forgotten the illusion of separateness, and accept only the truth of collective individuality [The illusion of the personality, of a separate ego, placed by our egotism in the forefront. In one word, it is necessary to assimilate all humanity, live by it, for it, and in it; in other terms, cease to be вѢньоневѢќ, and become вѢњallвѢќ or the total. ] . He must see with the ears, hear with the eyes [A Vedic expression. The senses, including the two mystic senses, are seven in Occultism; but an Initiate does not separate these senses one from the other, any more than he separates his unity from Humanity. Each one of the senses contains all the others. ] , understand the language of the rainbow, and have concentrated his six senses in his seventh sense. [Symbology of colours. The language of the prism, of which вѢњthe seven mother-colours have each seven sonsвѢќ, i.e., 49 shades or вѢњsonsвѢќ between the seven, are so many letter of alphabetical characters. The language of colours has, therefore, fifty-six letters for the Initiate (not to be confused with an adept; see my article вѢњA Danger SignalвѢќ). Of these letters each septenary is absorbed by the mother-colours, as each of the seven mother-colours is finally absorbed in the white ray, Divine Unity symbolized by these colours. ]

The “beacon-light” of Truth is nature without the illusory veil of the senses. It can be reached only when the adept has become absolute master of his personal self, able to control all his physical and psychic senses by the aid of his “seventh sense”, through which he is gifted also with the true wisdom of the gods – *Theosophia*...

We have now entered the realms of Mysticism (or Occult Science) because it is there – and there only – that Truth abides. No wonder that Jesus did not reply to King Herod!