

*Bestride the Bird of Life,
If thou would'st know*



Abstract and train of thoughts

Sixteen Mahavakyas

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The Desire-to-Be calls Kosmos into Being by inspiring Kalahamsa's wings to flutter.

Esoterically, Kalahamsa is a ray of Parabrahman. It expands from within without, ensouling a hamsa for its cosmic flight. The ray is the spirit of First Logos; Brahmā-hamsa or Third Logos, its soul and carrier. 6

Exoterically, Kalahamsa is portrayed as Brahmā mounting a hamsa. Brahmā is a personified creative energy of pseudo-infinite duration. He is the Life of the World. 8

But, in truth, there is no rider. Hamsa is Universal Soul, Brahmā the Spirit within. Hidden between the two, Fohat energises and propels them to a flight in Time. 8

Brahmā summed-up.

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From our Secret Doctrine's First Proposition Series. 21



Sixteen Mahavakyas¹

I am He

- Brahman is Consciousness.** (Prajnanam Brahma.)²
- I am Brahman.** (Aham Brahmasmi.)³
- I am myself Brahma or the Universe.** Just what every Brahmin and every Vedāntin says when repeating: *Aham eva parabrahma*, “I am myself Brahma or the Universe.”⁴
- I am Kala Hamsa, the Eternal Swan.**⁵ Consciousness’ flight *in* and *out* of Time and Space, “the flutter of whose wings produces life.”⁶
- (I) am He – Hamsa, Outward flight to the world.** (A-ham-sa) from Darkness to Light⁷ *i.e.*, of a “temporal deity,” Brahmā — “in Time.”
- He (is) I – Soham, Return flight “to its nest.”** (Sah-aham) from Light to Darkness *i.e.*, to Parabrahm — “out of Time.”⁸
- I am he who lives and dies.** — said of Zarathushtra.⁹



¹ Mahāvākyas or “great sayings” are certain utterances proclaimed by Śamkarāchārya to highlight the essential identity between human souls and the Supreme Soul: the former (Jivātman) is the highest principle in us or a “breath of life”; the latter (Paramātman) is Emerson’s “Over-Soul” or the “Ocean of Life.”

² *Aitareya Upanishad* III, i, 3 of *Rig-Veda*; (tr. Nikhilananda)

³ *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*, I, iv, 10 of *Yajur-Veda*; and *Mahanarayana U.*; [Nikhilananda translating *Bṛihadāranyaka U.* and citing Śamkarāchārya: “Even before the realization of its true nature, the self is Brahman and identical with all; ‘but owing to ignorance it superimposes upon itself the notion that it is not Brahman and that it is not all, and consequently thinks, through mistake, that it is a performer of action and the experiencer of its fruits, that it is happy or miserable, and that it transmigrates. But really it is Brahman, different from all these, as is all.’”]

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MISCELLANEOUS NOTES) IX p. 99; [re: “each unit of sentient creation *must* say, ‘*l’univers c’est moi.*’”]

⁵ “In this alone is contained the universal mystery, the doctrine of the identity of man’s essence with god-essence, for him who understands the language of wisdom. Hence the glyph of, and the allegory about, Kālahansa (or Hamsa), and the name given to Brahma, neuter (later on, to the male Brahmā), of ‘Hamsa-Vahāna’, he who uses the Hamsa as his vehicle. . . . the true mystic significance being the idea of a universal matrix, figured by the primordial waters of the ‘deep,’ or the opening for the reception, and subsequently for the issue, of that one ray (the Logos), which contains in itself the other seven procreative rays or powers (the Logoi or Builders).” *Secret Doctrine*, I pp. 78, 80

⁶ Cf. *Secret Doctrine*, II pp. 292-93; [quoting *Zohar*.]

⁷ Cosmogogenesis’ overview: The One becomes Two Ones, Parabrahman and (First) Logos. A Ray (Germ) from the latter begins radiating within primordial and undifferentiated matter (Mūlaprakriti), thus initiating a precosmic differentiation within the Eternal Egg (“Mother Swells . . . like the Bud of a Lotus”). But the Eternal “will become periodical only when the ray from the first Logos shall have flashed from the latent Germ in the Matri-Padma [Mother Lotus] which is the [Eternal] Egg, the Womb of the Universe which is to be.” Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE) X p. 353; [Commentary on Stanza II.3.]

⁸ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS SOPHIA) XIII pp. 55-56 & *fn.*

⁹ Cf. *ibid.* (ZOROASTER IN HISTORY AND SECRET RECORDS) III p. 455 *fn.*

“I am he whom you call the Son of the Father [Jupiter] and Maia. . . . Leaving the King of Heaven [the Sun] I come to help you, mortals.” — Mercury speaking through his oracles.¹

“I am the same to all mankind. . . . They who honestly serve other gods, involuntarily worship me.”² . . . If a man understands the self saying “I am He,” what could he wish or desire that he should pine after the body?³

I am, That I am . . .

Bestride the Bird of Life, if thou would'st know.⁴ . . . of the Biblical Jehovah, the “I AM WHO I AM,” or “Mazdao” of Ahura-Mazdhā in the *Zend Avesta*, etc. All these are names for the 7th principle in man.⁵

And so was Ormuzd, the Ahura-Mazda of the old Mazdeans. In this sense every man as much as every God can boast of his existence, saying “I am that I am.”⁶

Moreover, the *Tetragrammaton*, or Microprosopus, is “Jehovah” arrogating to himself very improperly the “Was, Is, Will be,” now translated into the “*I am that I am*,” and interpreted as referring to the highest abstract Deity, while esoterically and in plain truth, it means only periodically chaotic, turbulent, and eternal MATTER with all its potentialities. For the Tetragrammaton is one with Nature or Isis, and is the exoteric series of androgyne gods such as Osiris-Isis, Jove-Juno Brahmā-Vāch, or the Kabbalistic *Yāh-Havāh*; all male-females.⁷

Om Mani Padme Hum means I am, that I am. In other words, I am in thee and thou art in me. Thus the mystic sentence, “*Ōm Mani Padme Hūm*,” when rightly understood, instead of being composed of the almost meaningless words, “O the Jewel in the Lotus,” contains a reference to this indissoluble union between Man and the Universe, rendered in seven different ways and having the capability of seven different applications to as many planes of thought and action. →

¹ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 542; [quoting L.A. Cornutus, *Commentarius de natura deorum*, Cambridge, 1670, pp. 31-32; and Joannes L. Lydus, *De mensibus*, 1827, Bk. IV, ch. 52, p. 241.]

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE ROOTS OF RITUALISM) XI p. 68; [quoting Colonel Ingersoll, who by bringing “Jehovah and Brahma parallel with each other” makes the former speak “from the clouds and darkness of Sinai” to the Jews.]

³ *ibid.*, (GEMS FROM THE EAST) XII p. 446; [19th May. Full text in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁴ *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 20, p. 5

⁵ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FOOTNOTES TO “THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT”) IV p. 99; [appending *fn.* on “Ahamatma” to a review by T. Subba Row of William Oxley’s work, *The Philosophy of Spirit*.]

⁶ *ibid.*, (TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE) X p. 315

⁷ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 601

From whatever aspect we examine it, it means: "I am that I am"; "I am in thee and thou art in me." In this conjunction and close union the good and pure man becomes a god. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he will bring about or innocently cause to happen unavoidable results. In the first case, if an Initiate — of course an Adept of the Right-hand Path alone is meant — he can guide a beneficent or a protecting current, and thus benefit and protect individuals and even whole nations. In the second case, although quite unaware of what he was doing, the good man becomes a shield to whomsoever he is with. . . . Be careful, all you who read this: do not use these words in vain or when in anger, lest you become yourself the first sacrificial victim or, what is worse, endanger those whom you love.¹

Thou art *That*

This Atman [Self] is Brahman. (Ayam Atma Brahma.)²

Thou art that. (Tat tvam asi.)³

Thou art that Prakriti. . . . (essence), infinite and subtile, which bore Brahmā, in its womb.⁴

Thou art the Dhyāni-Buddhas, emanating from Third Logos. From this [Mundane] Plane of *conscious* Life shoot out, like seven fiery tongues, the Sons of Light (the *Logoi* of Life); then the Dhyāni-Buddhas of contemplation, the concrete forms of their formless Fathers — the Seven Sons of Light, *still themselves*, to whom may be applied the Brāhmanical mystic phrase: "Thou art 'THAT' — *Brahman*."⁵

Thou art Dhyāna Itself. The Dhyāna gate is like an alabaster vase, white and transparent; within there burns a steady golden fire, the flame of Prajñā that radiates from Atman.

Thou art that vase.⁶



¹ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. I) XII pp. 517-18

² *Māndukya Upanishad* 2 of *Atharva-Veda*; (tr. Nikhilananda)

³ *Chhāndogya Upanishad* VI, viii, 7 of *Sāma-Veda*; and *Kaivalya U.*; (tr. Nikhilananda)

⁴ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 527; [quoting *Vishnū-Purāna*, Bk. V, ch. ii, Wilson, Vol. IV, pp. 264-65.]

⁵ *ibid.*, I p. 572

⁶ *Voice of the Silence*, frag. III vs. 277-78, p. 64

The Desire-to-Be calls Kosmos into Being by inspiring Kalahamsa's wings to flutter.

Esoterically, Kalahamsa is a ray of Parabrahman. It expands from within without, ensouling a hamsa for its cosmic flight. The ray is the spirit of First Logos; Brahmā-hamsa or Third Logos, its soul and carrier.

Kalahamsa¹ is a ray- or spark-carrier of the Causeless One Noumenon of every phenomenal world. Though Its essence is forever concealed, unknown and unknowable even to Itself,² Its radiance becomes the life and light of every sentient being and, progressively, of the rest of the world in which we live in and have our being. Here is how HP Blavatsky accounts for the real meaning of this primeval symbol, an account which applies equally to all cosmogonic birds:³

Exoterically it is Brahmā who is the Swan, the “Great Bird,” the vehicle in which Darkness manifests itself to human comprehension as light, and this Universe. But esoterically, it is Darkness itself, the unknowable Absolute which is the Source, firstly of the radiation called the First Logos, then of its reflection, the Dawn, or the Second Logos, and finally of Brahmā, the manifested Light, or the Third Logos.⁴

Since time immemorial, migratory birds stood for the periodic pilgrimage of Ātmic Consciousness from Its realm of unconscious subjectivity down to the abyss of self-conscious objectivity. Birds, therefore, “moving on the waters of space” and soaring upwards into the night sky emblematised radiations of Parabrahman that, in Its perpetual quest for self-analysis, brings about circular flights of “Necessity.”

A creative ray or spirit of the universe is mystically known as hamsa-vahāna, *i.e.*, “he who uses the swan as its vehicle.” When “out of space and time,” the swan is black portraying the “Darkness” of Unconsciousness. When entering “space and time,” it turns white, thus inaugurating renewal during another “Day of Brahmā” or Consciousness; finally, at the end of time, it retires once more to its celestial abode for a period of rest or “Night of Brahmā.”

The “Wings” of the “Great Bird” flutter, the “Winged Globe” unfolds its pinions, preparatory to its flight. For is not the Infinitude of Space “the Nest of the Eternal Bird, the flutter of whose wings produces life”?⁵

¹ Kala (*Sk.*) means dark-coloured (black, dark blue); emitting a low, soft tone (melodious voice); announcing time for departure (action). Hamsa is a high-flying Indian goose (*Anser indicus*) and archaic solar symbol.

² [Consult “Unknown and Unknowable,” in our Secret Doctrine’s Second Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ Principally, migratory aquatic fowls, *e.g.*, ducks, geese, pelicans, swans, etc. See § “Air and Water is the dual element at the core of all cosmogonical symbols” below.

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE) X p. 379; also cf. “Saith the Great Law: — ‘In order to become the KNOWER of ALL SELF thou has first of self to be the knower.’ To reach the knowledge of that SELF, thou hast to give up *Self* to Non-Self, Being to Non-Being, and then thou canst repose between the wings of the GREAT BIRD. Aye, sweet is rest between the wings of that which is not born, nor dies, but is the AUM throughout eternal ages.” *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 19, p. 5

⁵ *ibid.*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS SOPHIA) XIII p. 62; [cf. *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 293.]

“A Yogi who bestrides the Hamsa (thus contemplates on AUM) is not affected by Karmic influence or crores of sins.”. . . — “The syllable A is considered to be its (the bird Hamsa’s) right wing, U, its left, M, its tail, and the Ardha-Mātrā (half metre) is said to be its head.” [*i.e.*, the head, being Consciousness, guides the pronunciation and, hence, the progress of Its mystic flight.]¹

Strictly speaking, hamsa is the high-flying Indian goose *Anser indicus*,² the “Bird of Life” flying up in the air “spreading its wings broad like a thousand days’ width.”³ The Trumpeter Swan⁴ below is a good example.



¹ *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I notes 10 & 12 to vs. 19 & 20, p. 5; pp. 74-75 in *glos.* of Chinese & Centenary eds.; [quoting *Nādabindu Upanishad*, tr. Kumbakonam Theosophical Society.]

² Perhaps, because of the unfortunate association of geese with silliness and incompetence, hamsa is often rendered into English as swan.

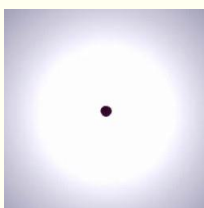
³ Cf. *Nādabindu Upanishad*, 5; (tr. Deussen’s Bedekar & Palsule)

⁴ [Black-billed *Cygnus buccinator*, named after its far-carrying low-pitched call. — ED. PHIL.]

Exoterically, Kalahamsa is portrayed as Brahmā mounting a hamsa. Brahmā is a personified creative energy of pseudo-infinite duration. He is the Life of the World.

But, in truth, there is no rider. Hamsa is Universal Soul, Brahmā the Spirit within. Hidden between the two, Fohat energises and propels them to a flight in Time.

Brahmā is a secondary deity, and like Jehovah is “*a mover of the waters.*” He is the *creating* god, and has in his allegorical representations four heads, answering to the four cardinal points.¹ He is the Demiourgos, the *architect* of the world. “In the primordial state of the creation,” says Polier’s *Mythologie des Indous*, “the rudimental universe, submerged in water, reposed in the bosom of the Eternal. Sprang from this chaos and darkness, Brahmā, the architect of the world, poised on a lotus-leaf float-ed [moved?] upon the waters, unable to discern anything but water and darkness.” This is as identical as possible with the Egyptian cosmogony, which shows in its opening sentences Hathor or Mother Night (which represents illimitable darkness) as the primeval element which covered the infinite abyss, animated by water and the universal spirit of the Eternal, dwelling alone in Chaos. As in the Jewish Scriptures, the history of the creation opens with the spirit of God and his creative emanation — another Deity.² Perceiving such a dismal state of things, Brahmā soliloquizes in consternation: “Who am I? Whence came I?” Then he hears a voice: “Direct your prayer to Bhagavat — the Eternal, known, also, as Parabrahman.”³ Brahmā, rising from his natatory position, seats himself upon the lotus in an attitude of contemplation, and reflects upon the Eternal, who, pleased with this evidence of piety, disperses the primeval darkness and opens his understanding. “After this Brahmā issues from the universal egg — [infinite chaos] as *light*, for his understanding is now opened, and he sets himself to work; he *moves* on the eternal waters, with the spirit of God within himself; in his capacity of *mover* of the waters he is *Nārāyana.*”⁴



First Logos is the “Voice of the WILL,” the point in “the circle to be” “attracting within itself the One Circle.”⁵

“The indivisible point, limitless and unknowable’ spreads itself over the endless space, and thus forms a veil (the Mūlaprakriti of Parabrahman) which conceals this Absolute point.”⁶



¹ Cf. The four “Maharajahs” of the Stanzas of Dzyan, who “square the circle” to a quaternary, Tetractys, or “*Chatur mukha* (the perfect cube) forming itself *within*, and *from* the infinite circle”; Cf. *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 465

² We do not mean the current or accepted Bible, but the *real* Jewish one explained Kabbalistically.

³ [M.E. de Polier, *La Mythologie des Indous* (Paris, 1809), Vol. I, pp. 162-63.]

⁴ *Isis Unveiled*, I p. 91

⁵ Cf. Mahātma Letter 59 (111), p. 341; 3rd Combined ed.

⁶ *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 346; [quoting *Zohar*, I, fol. 2a & 20a.]

Brahmā summed-up.

- Metaphysically, Brahmā is a tertiary emanation of a Parabrahmic ray or Third Logos. Brahmā, however, is a secondary deity, the same as Plato's "Second God."¹
- Allegorically, Brahmā is a temporary vessel (vahāna) or soul of *That Divine Ray*, destined to live for a "Day."

Hamsa is the soul of Brahmā and Brahmā is the spirit of hamsa. The manifested world is their body.

The obscuration of archaic, celestial Truths by terrestrial minds is widespread. Not a single symbol has managed to survive untainted, not even the Divine Hamsa. Popular belief personifies Brahmā as a kingly figure mounting a migratory bird. But, as the bird itself is Brahmā or "Heavenly Man" (Universe or Life, in other words), the whole thing is absurd and a symbologist's tautology. There is no rider, nor could there be one, for there is no-one and no-thing outside the Triune One-ness. See how HP Blavatsky separates the wheat from the chaff:

As to the name of Kāla-Hamsa being the supposed vehicle of Brahmā-Prajāpati, in the exoteric texts and translations of the Orientalists, it is quite a mistake. Brahma, the neuter, is called by them Kāla-Hamsa and Brahmā, the male, Hamsa-Vahāna, because forsooth "his vehicle or Vahāna is a swan or goose" (See the *Hindu Classical Dictionary*). This is a purely exoteric gloss. Esoterically and logically, if Brahma, the infinite, is all that is described by the Orientalists, namely, agreeably with the Vedāntic texts, an abstract deity in no way characterised by the description of any human attributes, and it is still maintained that he or it is called Kala-Hamsa — then how can it ever become the Vahāna of Brahmā, the manifested finite god? It is quite the reverse. The "swan or goose" (Hamsa) is the symbol of that male or temporary deity, as he, the emanation of the primordial Ray, is made to serve as a Vahāna or vehicle for that divine Ray, which otherwise could not manifest itself in the Universe, being, antiphrastically, itself an emanation of "Darkness" — for our human intellect, at any rate. It is Brahmā, then, who is Kala-Hamsa, and the Ray, the Hamsa-Vahāna.²

Kalahamsa righted and true Kalahamsa.

In the beautifully crafted portrayal of Kalahamsa below which is typical of Hindu faith and mythology, a four-faced Brahmā accompanied by Sarasvati rides an Indian goose. As already discussed, because hamsa is the soul of Brahmā, Brahmā "rides" inside it, not on top of it. Further, as the divine hamsa is "self-propelling," it needs no rider to control its motions. The saddle is proof of the burden of exotericism! For these reasons, the picture was turned upside-down to jolt minds out of the misconceptions that have obscured the power of this legend which, incidentally, dates "far back

¹ [Note to Students: Though First Logos radiates from "the centre of the disc," part of *That* radiation or "flash," will remain in the bosom of Parabrahman as Dark or Unmanifested Intelligence; Second Logos is a mere reflection of the First or Dawn of Intelligence; Third Logos is the Light of Divine Intelligence. — ED. PHIL.]

² *Secret Doctrine*, I pp. 79-81

in the mists of a forgotten past. . . [when] there was among the Hindus only ‘One Veda, One Deity, One Caste.’”¹

The Black Swan is a profound symbol by a contemporary American Artist² and the antithesis of its incongruous twin in more than one ways. It is the “Swan of Eternity,” a Ray of Parabrahman . . .

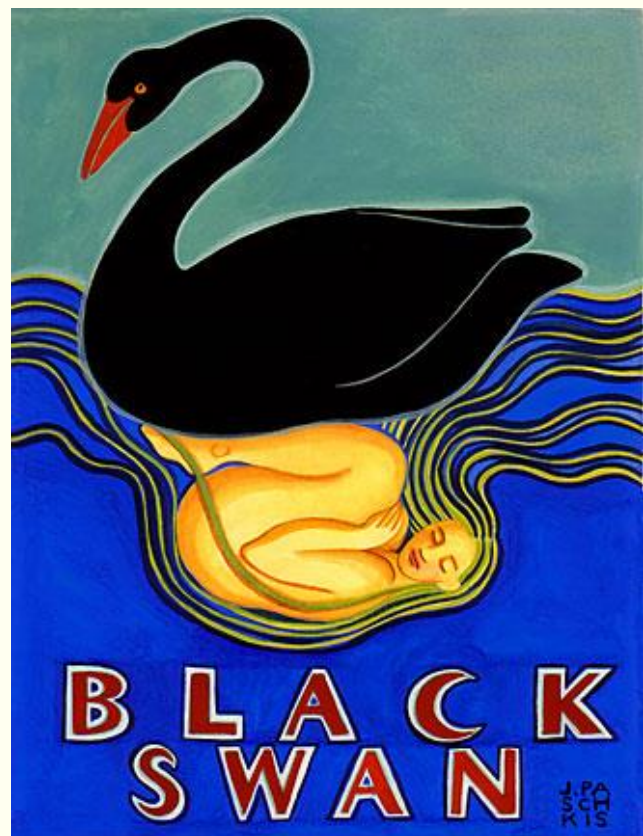
. . . who lays at the beginning of each Mahāmanvantara a “Golden Egg.” It typifies the great Circle, or O, itself a symbol for the universe and its spherical bodies.³ . . . The shadow of the deity, Kosmic and universal, of that which broods over and permeates the egg with its vivifying Spirit until the germ contained in it is ripe, was the *mystery* god whose name was unpronounceable.⁴

The unborn below the black swan is the Brāhmanical “Golden Egg resplendent as the Sun” (Hiranyagarbha), the Pythagorean “centre of the circle” and radiant essence of Divine Thought from within which will emerge the Logoi of Life. When the hour strikes, the “Swan of Eternity” will begin a majestic flight of self-discovery in the sunlight of a new universe, which is Itself.

Kalahamsa righted



True Kalahamsa



¹ *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 79

² “Black Swan” (2003) by Julie Paschkis, reproduced with permission. Other examples of her magnificent creations can be viewed at <http://www.juliepaschkis.com/paintings.asp?page=blackSwan>

³ *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 359

⁴ *ibid.*, I p. 367

Symbolism of the Black Swan.

The black swan suggests:

“ . . . that period when nascent vapours and Cimmerian darkness lay brooding over a fluid mass ready to start on its journey of activity at the first flutter of the breath of Him, who is the Unrevealed One. Him they [the ancients] felt, if they saw Him not. Their spiritual intuitions were not so darkened by the subtile sophistry of the forecoming ages as ours are now.”¹

The human foetus below the swan is self-analysing solar consciousness or man-to-be, “suspended by his three principal spirits in the matrix of the universe”:

The mediaeval Kabbalists give us in their writings the key to its meaning. “Man is a little world inside the great universe,” teaches Paracelsus. “A microcosm, within the macrocosm, like a foetus, he is suspended by his three principal spirits in the matrix of the universe.” These three spirits are described as double:

- 1 The spirit of the Elements (terrestrial body and vital principle);
- 2 The spirit of the stars (sidereal or *astral* body and will governing it);
- 3 The spirit of the spiritual world (the animal and the spiritual souls) — the *seventh* principle being an almost *immaterial* spirit or the divine Augoeides, *Ātma*, represented by the central point, which corresponds to the human navel. This *seventh* principle is the *Personal* God of every man, say the old Western and Eastern Occultists.²

Thus every mortal has his immortal counterpart, or rather his Archetype, in heaven. This means that the former is indissolubly united to the latter, in each of his incarnations, and for the duration of the cycle of births; only it is by the spiritual and intellectual Principle in him, entirely distinct from the lower *self*, never through the earthly personality. Some of these are even liable to break the union altogether, in case of absence in the moral individual of binding, *viz.*, of spiritual ties. Truly, as Paracelsus puts it in his quaint, tortured phraseology, man with his three (compound) Spirits is suspended like a foetus by all three to the matrix of the Macrocosm; the thread which holds him united being the “Thread-Soul,” *Sūtrātman*, and *Taijasa* (the “Shining”) of the Vedāntins. And it is through this spiritual and intellectual Principle in man, through *Taijasa* — the Shining, “because it has the luminous internal organ as its associate” — that man is thus united to his heavenly prototype, never through his

¹ *Isis Unveiled*, I p. 134

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE SIX-POINTED AND FIVE-POINTED STARS) III p. 321; [on the pentagram in the centre of the “Double Triangle” being an occult key of the Hermetic philosophers and Kabbalists.]

lower inner self or Astral Body, for which there remains in most cases nothing but to fade out.¹

Water stands for primordial cosmic substance or noumenon of matter:

This “primordial Substance” is called by some *Chaos*: Plato and the Pythagoreans named it the *Soul of the World* after it had been impregnated by the Spirit of *that* which broods over the Primeval Waters, or *Chaos*. It is by being reflected in it, say the Kabbalists, that the brooding Principle *created* the phantasmagoria of a visible, manifested Universe. *Chaos*, before — *Ether*, after, the “reflection”; it is still the deity that pervades all Space and things. It is the invisible, imponderable Spirit of things and the invisible, but [only] too tangible fluid that radiates from the fingers of the healthy magnetizer, for it is Vital Electricity — LIFE itself.

[Water is] . . . the first principle of things, according to Thales and other ancient philosophers. Of course this is not water on the material plane, but in a figurative sense for the potential fluid contained in boundless space. This was symbolized in ancient Egypt by *Kneph*, the “unrevealed” god, who was represented as the serpent — the emblem of eternity — encircling a *water-urn*, with his head hovering over the waters, which he incubates with his breath. “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”²

Air and Water is the dual element at the core of all cosmogonical symbols.

The genus of aquatic animals and plants, chosen by various symbolologists, is incidental.

- 1 When above, were not raised the heavens:
- 2 and below on the earth a plant had not grown up;
- 3 the abyss also had not broken its boundaries:
- 4 The chaos (or water) Tiamāt (the sea) was the producing mother of the whole of them. [This is the Cosmical Aditi and Sēphīrah.]
- 5 Those waters at the beginning were ordained; but
- 6 a tree had not grown, a flower had not unfolded.
- 7 When the gods had not sprung up, any one of them;
- 8 a plant had not grown, and order did not exist.³

This was the chaotic or ante-genetic period — the double Swan and the Dark Swan, which becomes white, when Light is created.⁴

¹ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (SOME REASONS FOR SECRECY) III p. 51

² *Genesis ii (Theosophical Glossary: Water)*

³ G. Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, 1876, pp. 62-63

⁴ The Seven Swans that are believed to land from Heaven into Lake Mānasarovara, are in the popular fancy the Seven Rishis of the Great Bear, who assume that form to visit the locality where the *Vedas* were written.

The symbol chosen for the majestic ideal of the Universal Principle will seem little calculated to answer its sacred character. A goose, or even a swan, may appear unfit, no doubt, to represent the grandeur of the Spirit. Nevertheless, it must have had some deep occult meaning, since it figures not only in every cosmogony and world religion, but even was chosen by the mediaeval Christians, the Crusaders, as the *vehicle* of the Holy Ghost supposed to lead the army to Palestine, to wrench the Tomb of the Saviour from the hands of the Saracens. If we are to credit Professor Draper's statement in his *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, the Crusaders, led on by Peter the Hermit, were preceded, at the head of the army, by the Holy Ghost under the shape of a white gander in company of a goat. The Egyptian God of Time, Keb, carries a goose on his head. Jupiter assumes the form of a swan and Brahmā also, because the root of all this is that mystery of mysteries—the MUNDANE EGG.

One has to learn the reason of a symbol before one depreciates it. The dual element of Air and Water is that of the ibis, swan, goose and pelican, of crocodiles and frogs, lotus flowers and water lilies, etc.; and the result is the choice of the most unseemly symbols among the modern as much as the ancient mystics. Pan, the great god of nature, was generally figured in connection with aquatic birds, geese especially, and so were other gods. If, later on, with the gradual degeneration of religion, the gods to whom geese were sacred, became Priapic deities, it does not stand to reason that water fowls were made sacred to Pan and other Phallic deities as some scoffers even of antiquity would have it;¹ but that the abstract and divine power of procreative nature had become grossly anthropomorphized. Nor does the Swan of Lēda show "Priapic doings and her enjoyment thereof," as Hargrave Jennings chastely expresses it; for the myth is but another version of the same philosophical idea of cosmogony. Swans are frequently found associated with Apollo, as they are the emblems of water and fire (sunlight also), before the separation of the Elements.

Our modern symbologists might profit by some remarks made by a well-known writer, Mrs. Lydia Maria Child.

"From time immemorial an emblem has been worshipped in Hindustan as the type of creation, or the origin of life. . . . Śiva was not merely the reproducer of human forms; he represented the fructifying Principle, the Generating Power that pervades the Universe. . . . The maternal emblem is likewise a religious type. . . . This reverence for the production of life, introduced into the worship of Osiris the sexual emblems. . . . Is it strange that they likewise regarded with reverence the great mystery of human birth? Were *they* impure thus to regard it? Or are *we* impure that we do *not* so regard it? But *no clean and thoughtful mind* could so regard them. . . . We have travelled far, and unclean have been the paths, since those old anchorites first spoke of God and the soul in the solemn depths of their first sanctuaries. Let us not smile at their mode of tracing the Infinite and the Incomprehensible Cause throughout all the mysteries of Nature, lest by so doing we cast the shadow of our own grossness on their patriarchal simplicity."²

¹ Titus Petronius, *Satiricon*, 136

² *Secret Doctrine*, I pp. 357-58; [quoting *The Progress of Religious Ideas*, etc., 1855, Vol. I, pp. 16-17.]

Karshipta is the Mazdean Kalahamsa.

Karshipta is the “holy bird” of the Mazdean Scriptures. It echoes its Sanskrit parallels Kalavingka, Karanda, and Kuravikaya, “the sweet-voiced” birds of immortality, the Voice of our Higher Self, the One Soul of All.¹ Says Zarathustra to Ahura-Mazdā:

“The bird Karshipta dwells in the heavens: were he living on the earth he would be king of birds. He brought into the Var of Yima, and recites the Avesta *in the language of birds*.”²

Karshipta is the human mind-soul, and the deity thereof, symbolized in ancient Magianism by a bird, as the Greeks symbolized it by a butterfly. No sooner had Karshipta entered the *Vara* or man, than he understood the law of Mazdā, or Divine Wisdom. In the *Book of Concealed Mystery* it is said of the tree, which is the tree of knowledge of good and evil: “In its branches [of the tree] the birds lodge and build their nests,” or *the Souls* and the Angels have their place!³ Therefore, with the Kabbalists it was a like symbol. “Bird” was a Chaldean, and has become a Hebrew synonym and symbol for Angel, a Soul, a Spirit, or Deva; and the “Bird’s Nest” was with both Heaven, and is God’s bosom in the *Zohar*. The perfect Messiah enters Eden “into that place which is called the Bird’s Nest.”⁴

The Zoroastrian hamsa is etymologically associated with two occult Persian terms:

(a) Khvarenah, Divine Grace or Compassion, corresponding to the innermost aspect of Astral Light (Ākāśa or Ālaya);⁵ and

(b) Fravashi,⁶ our Higher Self, Benefactor, and Guardian Spirit.⁷

Originally conceived as a “winged” sun,⁸ Karshipta’s outstretched “eagle-spread” wings are remarkably similar to those of the Kalahamsa in full flight. The king-like

¹ Cf. *Theosophical Glossary*: Kalavingka, Karanda, Karshipta

² *Bundadish*, XIX and XXIV; [commentary to a dialogue between Ahura-Mazda and Zarathushtra on Vara, Man of the Fourth Round.]

³ *Siphra di-Tseniuthā*, ch. v, 31. Cf. S.L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, p. 104

⁴ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 292; [& quoting *Zohar*, II, 8b. Cf. I. Myer, *Qabbalah*, p. 207.]

⁵ Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (NOTES ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN) XI p. 490

⁶ Fravashi (Avestan) is synonymous with Fravahr (Pahlavi), Feroher, Ferouer or Feruer (Persian). See our *Masque of Love Series*.

⁷ Cf. “In the Mithraic sculptures of Persia, the *feroher* [fravashu] is represented by a winged figure hovering in the air above its ‘object’ or body. . . . It is the luminous Self — the Ātman of the Hindus, our immortal spirit, who alone can redeem our soul; and will, if we follow him instead of being dragged down by our body. . . . And it is this *Nous*, *Augoeides*, *Feroher*, *Agra*, Spirit of himself, that the triumphant Job shall see without his flesh — i.e., when he has escaped from his bodily prison, and that the translators call ‘God.’” *Isis Unveiled*, II pp. 495-96; [referring to *Job* xix, 25-27 (KJV), tr. Douay.]

⁸ Cf. “The winged globe of the Egyptians, the Scarabæus, or ‘stellar disc;’ the circle or globe of the Phœnician Astarte; the Crescent of Minerva; the disc or *globe* between the two cow’s horns, on the brow of Isis; the winged disc, with pendant-crowned Uræi, carrying the cross of life; the solar globe or disc, resting upon the outspread horns of the goddess Hathor; and the horns of the Egyptian Amon; the deifying of the ox — all have the same meaning. . . . they are the emblem of the eternal divine power.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (AN IMPORTANT BIBLICAL ERROR) III pp. 130-31

figure often seen riding on the back of it, is the Ahura-Mazdā¹ of the Persian Magis, “whose body is of light and his soul is of truth” according to Pythagoras. He is Brahmā amongst Hindus, Īśvara amongst Indian Mystics, Third Logos amongst Theosophists. Marring the simplicity of such a majestic solar emblem by saddling it with a personified god is telling of the spiritually dark age in which we live in and where anthropomorphism reigns supreme.

The Fravahar on its own is Sun-god Shamash; with Ahura-Mazdā hopping on it, Assyrian god Assur. It is unclear whether the wavy streamers on either side of the disc ending in “claws” or “scrolls” stand for the bird’s legs or, perhaps, for the dual Cosmic Force that keeps “moving” universes into being.

Though a much older Egyptian symbol,² Karshiptas abound in the Achæmenian bas-reliefs of Darius’ Persepolis. Amongst modern Zoroastrians, the bird enjoys a renaissance which begun early last century. Variants of the “winged-sun,” otherwise known as Fravahar,³ have been liberally adopted and adapted by several esoteric organisations, sects, professional bodies, and even car manufacturers.

The traditional Karshipta reproduced below was selected not because of any undeclared significance but because it looks better than many of the stylised designs in circulation. The second one down, also stylised but without a rider, is from the *Theosophical Symbols Philaletheians*, a TrueType font.



¹ “Ahura-Mazdā (Ormazd) was the head and synthesis of the seven *Amesha Spentas* (or *Amshāspends*), and, therefore, an *Amesha Spenta* himself. . . . [He was] addressed only as ‘the Most Blissful Spirit, Creator of the corporeal World’ in the *Vendīdād*. ‘Ahura Mazdā’ in its literal translation means the ‘Wise Lord’ (*Ahura* ‘lord,’ and *Mazdā* ‘wise’). Moreover, this name of *Ahura*, in Sanskrit *Asura*, connects him with the *Mānasaputras*, the Sons of Wisdom who informed the mindless man, and endowed him with his mind (*manas*.” *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 608

² “[Disk-worship] . . . was very common in Egypt but not till later times, as it began with Amenoph III, a Dravidian, who brought it from Southern India and Ceylon. It was *Sun-worship* under another form, the *Aten-Nephru*, *Aten-Ra* being identical with the *Adonai* of the Jews, the “Lord of Heaven” or the Sun. The winged disk was the emblem of the Soul. The Sun was at one time the symbol of Universal Deity shining *on the whole world and all creatures*; the Sabæans regarded the Sun as the Demiurge and a Universal Deity, as did also the Hindus, and as do the Zoroastrians to this day.” *Theosophical Glossary*

³ For a scholarly essay on Fravahar, see:
<http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Religions/iranian/Zarathushtrian/fravahar.htm>

Jupiter is the Grecian Kalahamsa.

In classical mythology, Jupiter appears as a swan and unites with Lēda (Λήδα), Queen of Sparta, on the same night that she consorts with her husband, King Tyn-dareus. Two boys and two girls are hatched from two eggs: Helen and Pollux, being the progeny of the supreme god, are immortal; Clytæmnestra and Castor are mortal.

Lēda and the swan are the topos of an unprecedented interest in art and culture but, again, not a single dimension of their intensely spiritual association has remained pristine. They have been anthropomorphised and phallicised by degenerate religions and interests to the extent that they are now disfigured beyond recognition. Here is a summary of this occult allegory in the light of Theosophy:

Having infused Lēda or Soul of the World with a “Breath of Life,” Jupiter or Spirit of the World (First Logos) signals the dawn and drama of Consciousness by flying out of space “in time” as a “Bird of Life” (Third Logos).

Lēda’s twins are impersonal individualities embodied in self-conscious personalities, *i.e.*, the “Heavenly Man” who enlightened mindless men. This pivotal event begun in the early days of Lemuria, when seven “egg-born” Dioscuri (*i.e.*, the Dhyāni-Chohanīc Hierarchy of Compassion) begun informing the elect of the Third Root-Race’s androgynous humanity with their own mind — a process completed after the separation of sexes in the Fourth Race. Their Great Sacrifice has been immortalised by Prometheus, the pre-eminent Atlantean Hero and Philanthropist.¹

For the Mind is the Benefactor of the Souls of men,
And worketh to the proper Good.²

The Secret Doctrine provides valuable insights to this and to other, far older, solar myths corroborated by ancient philosophers and demythologised by HP Blavatsky’s masterly hermeneutics. Here is some food for minds that enjoy doing their own thinking.

Madame Blavatsky will now unriddle the story of Leda, mother of the Dioscuri, and her transformation into a white swan.

[On Stanza V.21c. THE OLD WING BECAME THE SHADOW, AND THE SHADOW OF THE WING.]

When the shadow retires, *i.e.*, when the astral body becomes covered with more solid flesh, man develops a physical body. The “wing,” or the ethereal form that produced its shadow and image, became the shadow of the astral body and its own progeny. The expression is queer but original.

As there may be no occasion to refer to this mystery later, it is as well to point out at once the dual meaning contained in the Greek myth bearing upon this particular

¹ [Look up “Prometheus, Indian Titan and Hierophant” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² Everard J. (Tr.). *The Divine Pyramider of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*. (1st ed. 1650); San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1994. (Secret Doctrine Reference Series); bk. 11, p. 72, ¶ 9; [full text in the same Series — ED. PHIL.]

phase of evolution. It is found in the several variants of the allegory of Lēda and her two sons Castor and Pollux, which variants have each a special meaning. Thus in Book XI, 298-304 of the *Odyssey*, Lēda is spoken of as the spouse of Tyndarus, who gave birth by her husband “to two sons of valiant “heart” — Castor and Pollux. Jupiter endows them with a marvellous gift and privilege. They are semi-immortal; they live and die, each in turn, and every alternate day; (*ετερήμεροι*).¹ As the Tyndaridæ, the twin brothers are an astronomical symbol, and stand for *Day* and *Night*; their two wives, Phœbe and Hilæira, the daughters of Apollo or the Sun, personifying the Dawn and the Twilight.² Again, in the allegory where Zeus is shown as the father of the two heroes — born from the egg to which Lēda gives birth — the myth is entirely theological. It relates to that group of cosmic allegories in which the world is described as born from an egg. For Lēda assumes in it the shape of a white swan when uniting herself to the Divine Swan.³ Lēda is the mythical bird, then, to which, in the traditions of various peoples of the Āryan race, are attributed various ornithological forms of birds which all lay golden eggs.⁴ In the *Kalevala* (the Epic Poem of Finland), the beauteous daughter of the Ether, “the Water Mother,” creates the world in conjunction with a “Duck” (another form of the Swan or Goose, Kalahamsa), who lays six golden eggs, and the seventh, “an egg of iron,” in her lap. But the variant of the Lēda allegory which has a direct reference to mystic man is found in Pindar⁵ only, with a slighter reference to it in the *Homeric hymns*.⁶ Castor and Pollux are in it no longer the *Dioscuri* of *Apollodorus*,⁷ but become the highly significant symbol of the dual man, the Mortal and the Immortal. Not only this, but as will now be seen, they are also the symbol of the Third Race, and its transformation from the animal man into a god-man with only an animal body.

Pindar shows Lēda uniting herself in the same night to her husband and also to the father of the gods — Zeus. Thus Castor is the son of the Mortal, Pollux the progeny of the Immortal. In the allegory made up for the occasion, it is said that in a riot of vengeance against the *Apharētides*⁸ Pollux kills Lynceus — “of all mortals he whose sight is the most penetrating” — but Castor is wounded by *Idas*, “he who sees and knows.” Zeus puts an end to the fight by hurling his thunderbolt and killing the last two combatants. Pollux finds his brother dying.⁹ In his despair he calls upon Zeus to slay him also. “Thou canst not die altogether,” answers the master of the Gods; “thou art of a divine race.” But he gives him the choice: Pollux will either remain immortal, living eternally in Olympus; or, if he would share his brother’s fate in all things, he must pass half his existence underground, and the other half in the golden heavenly abodes. This semi-immortality, which is also to be shared by Castor, is accepted by

¹ Homer, *Odyssey*, XI, 298-304; *Iliad*, III, 235-38

² Hyginus *Fabularum liber*, lxxx; Ovid, *Fasti*, 700. Cf. Decharme, *Mythologie de la Grèce antique*, p. 653

³ See Brahmā-Kalahamsa in Vol. I, Stanza III, p. 78.

⁴ Decharme, *op. cit.*, p. 652

⁵ Pindar, *Nemeanikai*, X, 80ff.; Theocritus, *Idylls*, XXII, 131

⁶ XXXIII, 1-7; XVII; Theocritus, *Idylls*, XXII, 1

⁷ *Bibliotheca*, III, x, 1

⁸ *ibid.*, III, xi, 1

⁹ Castor’s tomb was shown in Sparta, in days of old, says Pausanias (*Itinerary*, III, xiii, 1); and Plutarch says that he was called at Argos the demi-mortal or demi-hero, *μῆξαρχαγέτας*. (*Questiones Graecæ*, 23)

Pollux.¹ *And thus the twin brothers live alternately, one during the day, and the other during the night.*²

Is this a poetical fiction only? An allegory, one of those “solar myth” interpretations, higher than which no modern Orientalist seems able to soar? Indeed, it is much more. Here we have an allusion to the “Egg-born,” *Third Race*; the first half of which is mortal, *i.e.*, unconscious in its personality, and having nothing within itself to survive;³ and the latter half of which becomes immortal in its individuality, by reason of its fifth principle being called to life by the *informing gods*, and thus connecting the Monad with this Earth. This is Pollux; while Castor represents the *personal*, mortal man, an animal of not even a superior kind, when unlinked from the divine individuality. “Twins” truly; yet divorced by death forever, unless Pollux, moved by the voice of twinship, bestows on his less favoured mortal brother a share of his own divine nature, thus associating him with his own immortality.

Such is the occult meaning of the metaphysical aspect of the allegory. The widely spread modern interpretation of it — so celebrated in antiquity, Plutarch tells us,⁴ as symbolical of brotherly devotion — namely, that it as an image borrowed from the spectacle of Nature — is weak and inadequate to explain the secret meaning. Besides the fact that the Moon, with the Greeks, was feminine in exoteric mythology, and could therefore hardly be regarded as Castor — and at the same time be identified with Diana — ancient symbologists who held the Sun, the King of all sidereal orbs, as the visible image of the highest deity, would not have personified it by Pollux, a demi-god only.⁵

If from Greek mythology we pass to the Mosaic allegories and symbolism, we shall find a still more striking corroboration of the same tenet under another form. Unable to trace in *Genesis* the “Egg-born,” we shall still find there unmistakably the androgynes, and the first three races of the Secret Doctrine hidden under most ingenious symbology in the first four chapters of *Genesis*.⁶



¹ Pindar, *Nemeanikai*, X, 55 *et seq.*

² *Scholia in Euripides Orestes*, 463 (Dindorf). Cf. Decharmes, *op. cit.*, p. 654

³ The *Monad* is impersonal and a god *per se*, albeit unconscious on this plane. For, divorced from its third (often called fifth) principle, Manas, which is the horizontal line of the first manifested triangle or trinity, it can have no consciousness or perception of things on this earthly plane. “The highest sees through the eye of the lowest” in the manifested world; *Purusha* (Spirit) remains blind without the help of Prakriti (matter) in the material spheres; and so does *Atman-Buddhi* without Manas.

⁴ *Morals: Of Brotherly Love*, p. 484 *et seq.*

⁵ This strange idea and interpretation are accepted by Decharme in his *Mythologie*, etc. (pp. 654-55). “Castor and Pollux,” he says, “are nothing but the Sun and Moon, conceived as twins. . . . The Sun, the immortal and powerful being that disappears every evening from the horizon and descends under the Earth, as though he would make room for the fraternal orb which comes to life with night, is Pollux who sacrifices himself for Castor; Castor, inferior to his brother, to whom he owes his own part of immortality: for the Moon, says Theophrastus, is only another, but feebler Sun.” (Theophrastus, *De Ventis*, 17)

⁶ *Secret Doctrine*, II pp. 121-24

The metamorphosis of Leda.

The seminal painting of Lēda and her offspring is by Leonardo da Vinci who brought it to France in 1516. It was displayed in the royal apartments at Fontainebleau, was described by Cassiano dal Pozzo in 1625, but was subsequently lost. Da Vinci's preparatory pen-and-ink drawings, spanning almost ten years, inspired Giuliano Bugiardini (c. 1504), Raphael Sanzio (1506), Francesco Melzi (c. 1508), Cesare da Sesto (c. 1505-1510), and other pupils. Of several extant variants of the original, one by da Sesto, now in Wilton House, England, is thought to be original. This has been reproduced on the next page.

The variant below, also attributed to Cesare da Sesto, shows the Dioscuri only as toddlers, a white swan, and a far more detailed flora and fauna, perhaps to suggest that:

Man was the store-house, so to speak, of *all the seeds of life* for this Round, vegetable and animal alike.¹



¹ Cf. *Secret Doctrine*, II pp. 289-90

SECRET DOCTRINE'S FIRST PROPOSITION SERIES
LEDA METAMORPHOSED INTO A WHITE SWAN



Leda and the Swan (oil on panel, 695 x 737 mm) by Leonardo da Vinci
Earls of Pembroke, Wilton House, Salisbury, England



Suggested reading for students.¹



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- DIAGRAM 3 - THE IDEAL TRIAD AND ITS REFLECTION
- DIAGRAM 4 - THE WHEEL OF EZEKIEL
- DRAWING 0 - BESTRIDE THE BIRD OF LIFE
- DRAWING 1 - THE SEVENTEEN-RAYED SUN
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- INERTIA, THE GREAT OCCULT FORCE
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- LUNAR MYTH AND WORSHIP THROUGH THE AGES
- MAHANARAYANA UPANISHAD - TR. VIMALANANDA
- PROPOSITION 1 - AKASHA VS. ASTRAL LIGHT
- PROPOSITION 1 - CENTRE + CIRCLE
- PROPOSITION 1 - CHAOS TO SENSE, LATENT DEITY TO REASON

¹ Students should be fully conversant with the metaphysical concepts and learning aids set out in our Secret Doctrine's Propositions Series 2 and 3. — ED. PHIL.

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- PROPOSITION 1 - CROSS + FIRE
- PROPOSITION 1 - DAWN OF CHAOS-THEOS-KOSMOS
- PROPOSITION 1 - DESIRE PROPER IS BEING
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- PROPOSITION 1 - GOD DWELLS IN THE HEART
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- PROPOSITION 1 - NOAH IS LOGOS
- PROPOSITION 1 - ONE LIGHT FOR ALL
- PROPOSITION 1 - SUN IS THE MIRROR OF FIRE
- PROPOSITION 1 - THE INEFFABLE NAME
- PROPOSITION 1 - THE MYSTERY OF BEING
- PROPOSITION 1 - THE ROPE OF THE ANGELS
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- PROPOSITION 1 - TIME WAS NOT
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- THE MONADS OF LEIBNIZ ARE THE JIVAS OF OCCULTISM
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¹ Published under the title “How the Heavenly Snails clothed themselves in the Fabric of Darkness.”

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