

C R E A T I O N
from the Theosophical point of view

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The coming into being of Cosmos or the Universe is the question at issue here. Opinion on this matter is at this time divided. On the one hand there is the view of the orthodox religionist who sees God as the creator and then the governor of his universe. Another view is that in some form or another somewhere in the vast expanses of space there was rudimentary material and that this material had the power to aggregate and in so doing manifest various qualities from which, in the long run, by chance, and over a virtually endless period of time, the worlds and all that is in and on them came into being. Some of those who hold the second view, and amongst these are a number of scientists, would say that, as the various characteristics of matter and things were formed, so was the potentiality of intelligence. Eventually, according to this view, there blossomed man's mental and other appreciative faculties. In this second view, at no stage along the line was there room for any kind of creator, with a design for the overall scheme of things, nor of the detail of which that whole scheme is composed.

Theosophy provides a third line for consideration, but it requires us to be precise in our thinking. What do we mean by create? The dictionary definition is: to bring into being or form out of nothing; to bring into being by force of imagination; to make, produce, or form; to design; to invest with a new form, office or character; etc., etc. It would appear that those who hold the view that God created the universe are talking in terms of the first aspect of this definition, 'to bring into being or form out of nothing'. This raises certain philosophical difficulties. For example, is the universe to be thought of as infinite or is it limited in space or time? If it is limited in extent or duration, is there anything outside of it? If as a 'thing' it was created out of nothing, where was the creator and of what did such a creator consist? Whence his 'powers', bearing in mind that all these must have been there before the beginning of the universe and outside of it, and where in any terms could 'outside' have been?

The next aspect of our definition is: to bring into being by force of imagination, to make, produce or form, to design. The first of these involves imagination. Imagination is a creative, mental ability to produce subjective images, pictures. To invest God with imagination necessarily involves 'Him' having a mind, but then we have a further question, 'What is mind', in any sense that it could relate to an extra-cosmic deity? The other aspect of our definition, 'to produce, to form, to make, to design', all imply the fashioning of something, and something must have been there before it could have been formed into any particular shape or invested with any other characteristics.

The second view allows that matter itself, over a sufficient time, did in fact do this. In this view forms, in a cosmic sense, could have been self- formed. Some scientists argue that there was, in fact, pre-existing substance, a plasm, of a very rudimentary nature, but which

nevertheless contained the potentiality to become by aggregation and differentiation, the infinite number of 'things' with all their qualities that there are in the universe. This plasm provided the basic stuff, the elements of all existent things.

The theosophical view, in some respects, accords with this latter one, but it injects some further ideas which enable certain difficulties to be surmounted. First, the theosophical view is that there is never not something. In thinking about what this 'something' may be, we are entering into the realm of metaphysics and, certainly for most of us, of postulates. One of the postulates is that, whatever else it might be, the universal process is literally endless. It is infinite and basically beyond the reach of thought and therefore of man's comprehension. Somewhere behind all apparency and all manifestation, an Absolute, without attributes of any kind, is postulated. It is said that this Absolute is out of relation with any finite or manifest thing, but that without it there could not be any thing or 'being' of any kind. What gives rise to beingness, in any sense that we can conceive it, is the 'periodical' appearance on the vast stage of existence of a Unity, a One root of all beingness. It is necessary to keep in mind always that this One is an abstract as far as any thinking is concerned. It does not relate to anything in physical manifestation. It is a subjective 'idea'. This One, however, is essential to the process of any thing 'becoming' and, as is everything else in the manifested universe, its 'arising and setting' is cyclical, or its activity is periodical. Probably the first that we can begin to conceive of, in terms of any characteristic inherent in the One, is that of polarity and for thinking purposes, this polarity is that of an active aspect and a passive one. This duality reflects into what the metaphysical writers refer to as Spirit and Matter, where Spirit is the dynamic energetic 'power' principle and matter is the passive, receptive 'form' principle. It is only through and in the latter that Spirit can be effective.

Spirit, in the above terms, is regarded as the origin of consciousness, and Matter as the field of consciousness, of objectivity, as against the subjectivity of Spirit. We now have two basic factors in, or elements of, what we might regard as Life. These above ideas are absolutely fundamental to the idea of the origin of existence, in any shape, form or degree.

The theosophical view adds some other basic 'data' which help us to form a picture of the cosmic process. One of these is that, at a very early stage in the process of a universe coming into being, this primordial, homogeneous, basic Spirit-Substance duality becomes 'atomic', and each atom is invested with the same essential polarity. One aspect of its being corresponds to Spirit, i.e. its inherent energy, and the other to Matter, i.e. that which gives it 'identity' for the time being. There are technical names for the homogeneous, non-atomic 'stuff' and there is a name for it when it has become manifest or atomic in the sense that from it then can be derived all the substances which go to make up a universe. Another an important basic idea is that each of these 'atoms' of existence (which it must be noted are not 'physical' atoms) is a living thing; the two components of its being constitute a 'life'. The corollary to this is that there is nothing in the universe which is not 'alive', in this sense. The atoms are something referred to as 'the lives'.

Theosophy also gives us the concept of cyclic continuity. One of the best ways to understand this is to think of our ordinary days and nights. Our days are filled with activities and experiences which become our memories. At night we rest, and perchance dream in some subjective realm of activity. This alternating sequence of days and nights is reflected into the cosmic process. It too in all its departments enjoys its periods of rest and activity.

The periods of activity are those of causation and the periods of rest are those of effects, corresponding to the causes we set going during our days of activity when we 'do' things, and our night times when we rest. What we do has consequences, and during our rest we are restored and assimilate our experiences. Sometimes in our dreams we are conscious of reflections of everyday experience. This process is in one sense cause and effect. We should, however, notice that nothing in the whole Cosmos is isolated. All existent things are interrelated and interact, so that causation is infinitely complex, as indeed are the effects. The effects of previous causation themselves become causative agents in their turn. There is a great chain of interdependent happenings.

We see that the great flow of events is all the time modifying those things and beings in the stream. Those that have memory are accumulating memories. They are also being changed, but just as activity alternates with rest and is therefore cyclical, similarly the change wrought in things is by degree and stages. At our level of being change occurs at intervals of time; growth is by stages.

This process of change is therefore also cyclical; but there are cycles within cycles, small comprise larger ones, forming their axes. In this way change is progressive; daily changes, for example, will be cumulative over weeks, months, years, of his whole lifetime, until he dies as a very different being from when he started. This termination of cycles corresponding to our death is fundamental to theosophical thought; nothing goes on for ever. But the idea is extended, the total process does not cease. The individual that was enters a period of 'non-being', in the subjective realms of being, where as in sleep its experiences are assimilated. In springtime all nature burgeons and brings forth refreshed forms, re-enlivened, and so correspondingly, according to Theosophy, is that which survives of the man in the inner worlds reborn after its due period of rest. There are various processes to which the 'soul' is then subjected, in the after death states, but this is not the subject of this article. The point is that correspondingly what happens to man is what happens to worlds and universes, and as with individual men, so the coming and going of universes constitutes a continuous process. They too have their days and nights of activity and rest. It should be noticed, however, that this process is continuous, every stage starts from where the last stage finished. There is never a start to anything truly *ab initio* and therefore there is never anything made from nothing. Everything has antecedents. In Cosmos there is always a self-existent something ready to come into being in its proper season and this new being (even a universe or world) will be conditioned by what was before it in the chain of causation.

The conditioning of all things in a cosmos by reason of its period of life and activity is, as we have seen, cumulative; it is also collective in the sense that the totality of all experiences at any time are additive. There is, so to speak, a sum total of experience, a cosmic memory which is being added to during every moment of existence by all that constitutes a Cosmos. This cosmic experience is obviously infinitely rich. Everything in nature responds to its environment in all its moods of warmth and cold and wet and dry and so on. As we move up the scale of being this response can be in terms of hunger and thirst; the satisfaction of those appetites means some action, some effort resulting in an immensely rich emotional and, in man, intellectual activity. All these reactions, both physical and non-physical, are possible because potentialities to do so already existed in nature. They have been called forth and developed, in all their richness, in vast aeons of evolutionary time, and that as we can now appreciate, not only on our globe, our earth.

Another very fundamental idea is that of levels of being. We are all familiar with our objective world, which we know by way of our senses and through our bodies otherwise equipped to operate at physical level. There are other levels, some of which are evident to us. For example, we are all aware of motion everywhere in Nature. We know not only of the movement of clouds and water and so on, but of growth in animals and plants. The actual dynamic of this process, the force behind it, is invisible to us, even though we know the mechanism by which growth takes place through the multiplication of cells. We know something of the genetic machinery which determines the shape, colour and otherwise of plants and animals. There is, however, much that we do not really know; for example, what it is that stops growth at a particular time; how do plants select the nutriments they particularly require from amongst all those available to them in the soil; what is it that propels things from birth through all the states of growth to old age and death; what determines the length of their existence? There are invisible forces at work everywhere, behind the scenes. Other evidences of this hidden side of nature are in our subjective activities. Whence our instincts, our animal urges, our desires, our likes, our dislikes, our ambitions? Why do some people have more of one and less of another? Whence our ability to think, to imagine, to make decisions? Whence our will and determination? All these are indicative of modes of operation common throughout nature but which inherently are non-physical. Whence the enormous variety, shapes, forms, design, capability of the denizens of the kingdoms of Nature and their ability to co-operate with one another. As we go up the evolutionary scale these responses and faculties of creatures improve and increase in number and variety until in man we find the apex of development, in skill and faculty.

The theosophical teaching is that Nature comprises, on various levels of being, each with its own characteristics, and the teaching says that these levels proceed from inwards to outwards; the inmost are the most spiritual and the least material. The physical is the most material and the least spiritual. The other levels, the intermediate ones are graded between these two limits. For purposes of better understanding, Theosophy uses the kabalistic system to illustrate how the outer worlds are projected forth from inner models existing in inner realms. This system envisaged, for the planes of manifestation, four levels: the Archetypal, the general comprehensive idea of things; the Creative, where ideas become precise; the Formative, where things in the abstract take shape; the realm of Physical Being, where all the inner patterns are given concrete expression.

The theosophical scheme of things is complex. For example, not only are there levels of being, but within each level there are stages of development, the prototypes and the work-out designs which are exemplified in our kingdoms. The theosophical scheme says that there are ten kingdoms, not just the normal four of which we are ordinarily aware. There are three sub-material kingdoms and three post-human kingdoms, and the evolutionary chain is continuous from the lowest non-physical kingdom up to the highest and most spiritual. These levels of being really consist of beings having their existence thereon. The lowest levels are by far and away the most numerous and populous; the lives at those levels are known as elemental. The Elementals are invisible to us but they manifest a lowly degree of intelligence and play an essential part behind the scenes of our physical existence. The kingdoms above our normal four and man are, so to speak, super-human. They are peopled by entities who have passed through the human stage of development and they transcend human beings in all the subjective qualities. They correspond to the entities referred to in nearly all the scriptures

of the world. In the Christian ones they are the principalities and powers, the angels and archangels, and expressively that extends into "and all the company of heaven".

As we rise up through these kingdoms, expression is given to more and more of the infinite potentialities of spirit. These are in terms both of physical and other skills, and in terms of what might be called at lower levels instinct or animal wisdom. At the super-human states of being this wisdom rises to a level that we would have to regard as omniscience. The consciousness of the great beings at the highest level virtually embraces all there is to be known, not only of nature as she is at our level of being, but as she is at theirs. We really have no option but to regard such beings at the highest levels as divinities, but there is a mystery here. Even though there are such great beings, their 'being' is a collective one. They embrace in themselves many beings evolved enough to play a part at their level of being. They are great collective BEINGS, their constituent members having fitted themselves by aeons of effort and experience, and attained enough knowledge and power to be there. These beings have existences stretching far beyond the span allotted to an ordinary man during his physical lives. They are of immense, we might say, deific experience. It is in them that the experience of world lifetimes is stored. They know all the evolutionary processes and changes. They know the next stages of development, not only of individual beings and things but the whole species. They are, so to speak, cognisant of the grand evolutionary programme and, as there is no other power to do it, they 'supervise' it. All the hierarchies of being below them in their grades carry out the plan, and this applies right down to the Elemental lives of the lower three kingdoms who govern, say, the growth processes of minerals, plants and animals.

Everything operates according to Law. We see something of this Law in one of its aspects as that of cause and effect. It is the law of progression and evolution. It has a regulatory aspect. It governs the processes of Nature. It embraces, for example, all the natural laws, such as that of gravity which keeps the heavenly bodies in their places. It is a Law of harmony, of equilibrium, of balance, and were it not for this Law the universe would be self-destructive instead of self-preserving. All the foregoing is something that we must bear in mind when we are thinking about creation.

Creation then is a continuous process. It is evolutionary; it is cyclical; all things come, enjoy their period of existence and then go, having fulfilled their function on the stage of life. Everything contributes to this continuous process. It is one of expansion and growth in one direction and of contraction and death in the other. As we saw in the case of cycles, everything proceeds along a grand axis. Process is one of the actualising in time, at our level of being, of the infinite potentialities of Spirit. Everything is the expression of Life, a life and, at any given time, the means for developing these potentialities in the denizens of the planes of being culminating at physical level in our world. At any one time there is a finite number, albeit a very large one, of species and kinds of things, of minerals, plants, animals and the human stock, of this world. All these can only operate according to the qualities that they have so far acquired. They set the temporary limitations with which the Great Beings, the 'lords', have to operate in the overall grand scheme. In other words, progress has to be along certain lines depending on what has been brought forth by the denizens of universal creation at their level of being.

So in the beginning, as the saying goes, something happened. A seed was sown, a child was conceived, a world came into being, but no matter what it was, it came from what there was before and that was itself conditioned by what had gone before. In the same way human beings at physical level are conditioned by the chain of inherited characteristics which pass from one generation to another. There is a similar mechanism operating at the psychic levels and this determines a man's potentialities and the character he is born with. They also exemplify the lines of development available to us, or to whatever else it is in Nature or the Cosmos that is going to enjoy a lifetime of activity before the time for its demise and disappearance comes. Just as a man accumulates an individual memory, so, it is said, the Cosmos also accumulates a memory. In its way everything that now is manifests this memory in nature; it represents a frontier of development. It is the result of a vast 'experience'. So when things come into being there is behind them 'trailing like glory' as the poet says, this train of many lives of experience. For the time being, in their particular line of development, they are at the head of it. Looking into the future, the directions in which they can go are already set by their own established characteristics and limitations, but their potentialities are really inexhaustible. Present limitations, however, are an aspect of the Law. We may, for example, feel that we have free will and so, to a certain extent, we have, but we also suffer from our present powers and characteristics or their lack. We cannot operate, in the present, outside of these limitations, but we can eventually transcend them. Neither in the limit can we operate outside of the conditions imposed on us from outside. For example, however much a man might like to fly, he cannot do so without a balloon or an aeroplane.

So creation is really transformation, change. It is a continual changing from what was into what will be. Creation is certainly the making of something out of nothing because there never was nothing and there never will be nothing, nor is there anyone or anything to do the making, outside of the all-embracing universe itself.