

## “God” in *The Secret Doctrine* by Helena Blavatsky

Anna Kaltseva

*Independent Scientist, BULGARIA*

Received: 3 November 2025 ▪ Revised: 15 December 2025 ▪ Accepted: 22 December 2025

### *Abstract*

Theosophical doctrine is often referred to as a “religion without a god,” and the founder of the Theosophical Society, Helena Blavatsky, has been accused of outright atheism. These accusations stem from a lack of understanding of Blavatsky’s seminal work *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as from centuries-long efforts by certain groups to reject and discredit her. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky repeatedly states that the One, all-pervading, absolute reality is the true Divine essence from which all phenomena – visible things – originate and to which everything returns once the period of cosmic rest begins. This article examines the central question of “God” according to *The Secret Doctrine* and related concepts such as “noumenon” and “phenomenon,” the cycles of rest and activity – Pralaya and Manvantara – as well as other elements within the broader theme of the Theosophical understanding of the Divine essence.

**Keywords:** Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, God, Divine Essence, One, noumenon, phenomenon, triad, Divine Mother, Divine Father, The Son, time, spirit, soul, duration.

### 1. Introduction

In theosophy, and specifically in Helena Blavatsky’s seminal work, *The Secret Doctrine*, the concept of God is referred to and defined by many names. At its core, it is non-anthropomorphic and is presented as the foundation and source of all things in the universe and all beings. It is called the Absolute and has dozens of other definitions – the One Reality, the Rootless Root of all that has been, is, and ever will be, Self-Essence, Absolute Cause, Root-Nature, the Eternal Mother Giver of Birth, Divine Essence.

Although such an interpretation is close to the polytheistic understanding of the world, Blavatsky has been accused of creating a religion without God and, in effect, denying the God of the monotheistic religions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The author of *The Secret Doctrine* is aware of these accusations and repeatedly attempts to explain that they stem from a misunderstanding of theosophical views, which differ from the anthropomorphic conception of God in Christianity or Judaism and are closer to pantheism.

Behind all these attempts and efforts lies Helena Blavatsky’s true goal of breaking the monopoly of materialism in science and society in her 19th century by revealing and proving the essence of man and life. Man is a unified, inseparable part of the Absolute, of the Divine essence, which he carries in the connecting link – the heart. It is the connecting link between the dense material shell and the finer spiritual essence, which is as immortal for man as the One Reality of the Absolute – the Theosophical God. And since man carries God within himself, he possesses divine qualities. However, their manifestation requires a high degree of self-awareness and

responsibility, so that the light and darkness within man are balanced and harmonized, enabling him to become a true co-creator of the Absolute. The whole of human history – known, unknown, hidden – is a manifestation of the opposition between light and darkness and of the efforts of one of the two sides to gain supremacy, which in essence are two manifestations of the One Reality, of God. Conscious personal change in humans, based on high morality and spiritual development, also leads to a change in the environment and society, which in its civilizational dimensions is currently at risk.

## 2. God is a Unified Reality

Theosophy is often called “a religion without God” (Nosovsky, 2012). Blavatsky is aware of these definitions and accusations. She repeatedly attempts to explain that the accusations stem from a misunderstanding of theosophical views, which differ from the anthropomorphized concept of God in Christianity or Judaism and are closer to pantheism.

The eternally existing Unified Reality, absolute and unchanging, is the God of theosophists or the Tao in Hinduism, the unmanifested Brahman as Parabrahman and Mula-prakriti simultaneously. Blavatsky constantly tries to explain this using various symbols and metaphors. The prologue to *The Secret Doctrine* is mainly devoted to these explanations. “It is ONE LIFE, eternal and invisible, and at the same time omnipresent, without beginning and without end, but periodic in its manifestations, between which reigns the darkness of the mystery of Non-Being” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 52), explains Blavatsky and continues: “The Deity is a secret, living (or moving) Fire, and the eternal witnesses of this invisible presence are Light, Heat, and Water”; this trinity contains everything and is the cause of all phenomena in Nature” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 52). One of the clearer explanations is this: “*The Secret Doctrine* says that at the beginning of the period of action, obeying the eternal and unchanging law, this Divine Essence spreads from the outside in and from the inside out, and the phenomenal or visible world is the end result of a long chain of cosmic forces, successively set in motion” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 54).

In the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky draws dozens of parallels to explain the non-anthropomorphic nature of the theosophical understanding of God, as opposed to the humanized concept of the Divine essence in the most widespread religions around the world. She responds to accusations of atheism by again using the ontology of Eastern teachings: “Esoteric doctrine, like Buddhism and Brahmanism and even Kabbalah, teaches that the unified, infinite, and unknowable essence has existed since Eternity, appearing passively or actively in harmonious succession. In Manu’s poetic phraseology, these states are called the Days and Nights of Brahma. Brahma either “wakes” or “sleeps.” The Svabhavikas, or philosophers of the most ancient school of Buddhism (still existing in Nepal), allow only speculation about the active state of this “Nature,” which they call Svabhava, and consider it reckless to discuss the abstract, “unknowable” Power in its passive state. Hence the nickname “atheists” given to them by Christian theologians and modern scholars, since none of them can grasp the depth of the logic of their philosophy” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 54).

Blavatsky does not deny the right of contemporary rational science to “welcome Buddhists and Svabhavists as ‘positivists’ of ancient times” (Blavatsky, 2005-I:54) and explains one of the most complex questions of Buddhist philosophy - the question of Buddha’s silence on topics such as “Creator,” “God,” and “Soul”: “If we adhere to the one-sided view of the materialists, they may be right from their point of view. Buddhists claim that there is no Creator, but only an infinity of creative forces, forming in their entirety the unified eternal Essence, whose nature is inexpressible and therefore cannot be the subject of speculative speculation for the true philosopher. Socrates always refused to discuss the mystery of the World Essence, especially since no one ever thought of accusing him of atheism, except those who wanted his destruction” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 54).

### 3. Unified Reality, Absolute, Divine Essence

Absolute, Unified Reality, Rootless Root of all that has been, is, and ever will be, Self-Essence, Absolute Cause – these and other names are given in *The Secret Doctrine* for one of the basic philosophical concepts – Absolute, with Blavatsky always capitalizing every word in the phrases. From Latin, Absolutus means “unconditional, unlimited, perfect” – the foundation of the world and everything that exists, unified, eternal, and unchanging.

Throughout all ages of human knowledge, “Absolute” and “Absolute” are concepts that are present in one form or another in both Eastern and Western cultures. In monotheistic religions, the Absolute corresponds to the concept of God. In ancient Indian teachings, the Absolute is Brahman in its identity with Atman. In the Vishnu Purana, Parashara tells Maitreya about “the supreme Brahma, imperishable, unborn, imperishable, eternal, his original image is one, always free from extinction, unblemished (...) the supreme Atman, dwelling in every individual Atman, devoid of distinctive features, form, color, (...) the cause of creation, existence, and destruction of the world (...) the source of beings (...) whose original image is Knowledge” (Vishnu Purana, 1995, II-7-8). “The true essence of Brahman is existence itself. It is that One, Tad Ekam from the Rigveda, which gives rise to all that exists,” points out Antoaneta Nikolova (Nikolova, 2022: 101) and notes that, to a certain extent, in Confucianism, Heaven can be viewed as the Absolute, while for Laozi, the Absolute is the natural order of the Tao. In Kabbalah, the Absolute is Ein Sof – unlimited, pure divinity.

The history of classical Western European philosophy discusses various aspects and levels of the concept of the Absolute. For Pythagoras, it is the One. For Parmenides, it is pure being. For Plato, it is the One, the Good. For Aristotle, it is the “form of forms,” the “ultimate goal,” the highest or pure entelechy. For Descartes, the Absolute is being, whose connection with self-consciousness manifests itself in the act of thinking. For Spinoza, the Absolute is substance, and for Leibniz, it is the Monad of monads, as shown later in this chapter. Gottfried Hegel discusses the Absolute as absolute spirit (Krichevsky, 2011: 10-68).

The One Reality, the Absolute, is the basis of theosophical doctrine. Helena Blavatsky presents over 30 definitions of the One Reality. In its ontological essence, it is the Absolute consciousness and Absolute being of the unmanifested universe, from which everything originates at the beginning of periods of active life and to which everything returns in periods of rest. The One Reality is the only unchanging essence, unlike visible life, in which, according to theosophy, everything is temporary, i.e., illusory. The unified reality is unconditional, eternal, genderless, and without attributes. Its two aspects are Absolute abstract space and Absolute abstract movement.

It is a self-essence that does not create or produce. But it contains the noumena of all things, and from it emanates, emerges, manifests itself the creative force (*Blavatsky calls it the Dual Force, Parabrahman and Mula Prakriti in Hindu philosophy*), which unfolds and becomes the basis for the manifested universe. At the end of the life of the manifested, visible universe, at the end of the manvantara and at the beginning of the pralaya (according to the Hindu terms used by Blavatsky), all things dissolve, return to their unchanging noumenal essence in the Absolute, the One Reality, to remain noumena throughout the entire period of pralaya and to manifest for a new life in the next manvantara, but now at a higher evolutionary level. The impersonal, non-anthropomorphic One Reality is the deity, the divine essence according to theosophy. In an attempt to bring the theosophical understanding of the Absolute closer to her time, Helena Blavatsky notes: “To present this idea more clearly to the reader, let him begin with the assumption that there is only One, Absolute Reality, which precedes all manifested and conditionally Existing. This is the Infinite and Eternal Cause, vaguely formulated in the ‘Unconscious’ and ‘Unknowable’ by contemporary European philosophy” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 64).

#### 4. Unified Reality and the Category of “Time”

Time does not exist; it is only a product of human consciousness. This statement is axiomatic for theosophy according to *The Secret Doctrine*. Blavatsky notes that “time” is only an illusion created by the successive alternations of our states of consciousness as we wander through Eternity, and that it does not exist, but “rests in sleep” where there is no consciousness in which Illusion can arise (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 7). This definition raises two questions. The first is “What is eternity according to theosophy?” and the second is “Where is there no ‘consciousness in which illusion can arise?’” The theosophical interpretation of “time” is based on Hindu concepts and is related to the understanding that the universe goes through periods of rest and action. These are the theosophical eternities, which are enormous in duration, but still finite.

Rest is called pralaya, a term borrowed from Hinduism. During pralaya, all visible, manifested, phenomenal worlds and beings are absorbed, dissolved into the Absolute unified reality. Only this reality exists. The period of action is called manvantara. During the manvantara, the visible universe manifests from the One Reality. The manifestation goes through seven periods called the “Seven Eternities.” From a human perspective, these are indeed eternities, as each of the seven periods is very long. Just as in the Vishnu Purana (Vishnu Purana, 1995, II-7-8) Parashara describes to Maitreya the creation with the alternation of the periods of rest and action, manvantara and pralaya, Days and Nights of Brahma, so Blavatsky writes about the duration: “One day of Brahma corresponds to 4,320,000,000 years of mortals. Each year of Brahma consists of 360 Days and as many Nights of Brahma, calculated according to the Lunar year” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 86). 100 years of Brahma constitute the “Great Age,” which equals 311,040,000,000,000 years. This is the duration of the period of action, of activity in the Universe, called manvantara. Equally long is the period of rest or pralaya, when all visible things, all phenomena, dissolve and are absorbed into the One Reality.

The answer to the second question – Where is there no “consciousness in which illusion can arise” – is related to the One Reality, to the Absolute, where there is no illusion. The One Reality exists both during the period of action – manvantara, and during the period of rest – pralaya. It is truly eternal and unchanging. It does not evolve because it is absolute and perfect, but from it manifest the creative forces that create the visible universe. Hence Blavatsky’s remark that “nothing on Earth has true, real duration, since nothing remains unchanged, or is so only for a billionth of a second” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 87). This also explains the theosophical axiom that time is only an illusion created by our consciousness. Blavatsky makes the following detailed clarification: “The sensation we get from the apparent division of time, known as the present, arises from the vagueness of fleeting perceptions or a series of perceptions of objects that our senses convey to us, insofar as these objects belong to the realm of ideal representations, which we call the future, and pass into the realm of memories, which we call the past” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 87).

In confirmation of the thesis that time is only an illusion, Helena Blavatsky notes: “A person or object does not consist solely of what is visible at a given moment, but represents a combination of all its different and changing states from the moment of its appearance in material form to its disappearance from our Earth. It is precisely “these aggregates,” existing eternally in the future, that gradually pass through matter to exist eternally in the past” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 87). This assertion is very close to Buddhist ideas, where “time is a construct of consciousness, since it is consciousness that must determine for itself both the sequence of moments of the objects that constitute its thinking, the series of moments of thinking, and the ‘intervals of non-thinking’” (Kamburov, 2011: 182). Victoria Lisenko emphasizes that “the entire development of the philosophy of ‘time’ in India after the Upanishads is a kind of conceptual shaping of the two images of Brahman – the unembodied and the embodied, and their polarization, which reached its peak in Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta. The focus of Buddhism is on “embodied” time, identical to the temporary and fluid existence of the elements (dharma). Advaita turns eternity into an absolute

value and declares time to be a product of maya, of illusion, as a distortion of the unchanging and self-identical nature of Brahman” (Lisenko, 1986: 106).

The understanding of time as a product of human consciousness and its connection with the concept of “eternity” is not a discovery of Blavatsky. In addition to ancient Indian thought, a similar understanding can also be found in Western philosophy. For example, in *Timaeus*, Plato (427-347 BC) says that “eternal nature served as the prototype of time, so that it might resemble it as closely as possible.” The founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus (204-270 AD), adds to Plato’s definitions the possibility of a psychological and transcendental interpretation of time, and in his *Confessions* St. Augustine (354-430) develops Plotinus’ understanding of time as “the life of the soul”: “In you, my soul, I measure time.” “Time is nothing other than the form of the inner sense, i.e., the visual representation of ourselves and our inner state,” says Immanuel Kant, adding: “Time is the formal a priori condition of all phenomena in general” (Kant, 1992: 113). Edmund Husserl introduces the concepts of “time of consciousness” and “time of vocation” in his *Lectures* (Husserl, 1994).

#### 5. Unified reality and the category of “space”

Space as a philosophical category in *The Secret Doctrine*, like time, belongs to the realm of metaphysics. In historical and philosophical terms, it is mainly related to the philosophy of the Indian Upanishads, where everything is Brahman, or the eternal unknowable essence from which life originates. According to theosophy, space is the soul of the One Reality, the noumenon, from which the Spirit is separated, through which the differentiation of the visible objective universe begins. Metaphorically, space is called “the Primal Mother - giving birth, hidden in her veils,” which Blavatsky comments on as follows: “The veils” mean the noumenon of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter. This is not the matter we know, but the spiritual essence of matter, which is eternal and even one with Space in its abstract sense” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 85). This spirit-matter (in *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky does not use the term spirit-matter. Only in *The Key to Theosophy*, where she attempts to explain the metaphysics of theosophy, does she call the One Reality spirit-matter) is called by Blavatsky “Root-Nature,” “the source of the most subtle, invisible properties in visible matter” and “the soul of the One and Infinite Spirit.”

The unified reality or Absolute is space as a unity of abstract spiritual matter, from which the spirit “the uncaused cause of both spirit and matter” emerges as the first differentiation. This spirit-matter is “neither boundless emptiness” nor “conditional fullness,” but is both. It has always been and always will be” (Blavatsky, 2005-I:85). Everything originates from the spiritual eternal essence of matter, i.e., all manifested, visible things, phenomena, which at the end of their existence “return” and are “absorbed” into this eternally existing spiritual matter. As Blavatsky notes, this is a metaphysical concept, a plane of consciousness, “a place (or rather a plane) where everything began and where all things dissolve” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 97). Thus, defined and explained with the complex symbolism of *The Secret Doctrine*, space is identified with the Absolute itself, with the One Reality itself as its basis, essence, and expression. It is noumenal essence in the Absolute and phenomenal in the manifested world. This definition of space is connected with two other theosophical symbols of the One Reality – its meaning as the One Element and the theosophical Divine Essence.

#### 6. Unified reality as a unified element

The absolute noumenal essence of the eternally existing spirit-matter of unified reality, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, is a unified universal element. “The Primary Primordial Matter, eternal and existing in space, ‘which has neither beginning nor end, is neither hot nor cold, but possesses a peculiar nature inherent in itself’ (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 135), notes Blavatsky. The

complex, convoluted explanations she gives are full of symbols, among which it is difficult to discern that the One Element is fire. But not the one that burns and smokes on Earth, but its much finer essence as a cosmic source of life. “The Vedas teach that 'Fire truly contains all deities within itself,’” Blavatsky comments, adding that “Shankara (*Shankara (788-820) was an Indian thinker and religious reformer who, based on the Upanishads, created the monistic system of Advaita Vedanta*), the greatest of India’s esoteric teachers, says that Fire means the Deity who rules time (Kala) (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 140).

And the One Element – fire, like everything else in *The Secret Doctrine*, is first a metaphysical concept in the One Reality, it is the One Reality itself, and second – in the phenomenal universe it gives rise to manifested life. From Blavatsky's extensive and not always clear comments in the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, it can be concluded that the first differentiation of spirit-matter-fire in the world of phenomena is the electromagnetism of nature, identified with a deity or deities in Blavatsky’s exposition. “All of them, ‘Light’, ‘Flame,’ ‘Cold,’ ‘Fire,’ ‘Heat,’ ‘Water,’ and ‘Waters of Life’ – on our plane are offspring, or as a modern physicist would say – correlates of Electricity” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 135).

### 7. Unified reality as non-being

Blavatsky strives to make the metaphysical essence of the Absolute, of Unified Reality, more understandable by presenting and describing it with different terms. However, this diversity of concepts is more confusing than helpful in understanding the essence of the Unified Reality. This approach is probably based on the assertion that “Omnipresent, Eternal, Infinite, and Unchanging PRINCIPLE no reasoning is possible, since it exceeds the capabilities of human perception and can only lose its value through human expressions and likenesses” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 64).

The transcendental metaphysics of the One Reality is difficult for the mind accustomed to rational assessments of the world and physical dimensions. The concepts of “Unity,” “Life,” “Eternity,” “Beginning and End,” “Light and Darkness,” “Periodicity and Infinity” are extremely intellectual in nature. In Blavatsky's theosophy, the One Reality, the Absolute, is an unchanging, constant essence and as such is called non-being. In contrast to it, everything in the visible universe appears, develops, and dies. Therefore, in Theosophy, as in all Eastern philosophy, the world is referred to as maya, a term that means “illusion.” It is everywhere because in the world of phenomena nothing is immutable, nothing is permanent. Only “Absolute Being, encompassing the noumena of all realities,” is unchanging and immutable, Blavatsky asserts. The existence of man, objects, and the entire visible world are only a relative reality, which is temporary and, accordingly, illusory. It is maya in comparison to the Unified Reality of Absolute Being. In the Unified Reality of non-being, there is liberation from maya.

The axiomatic reflection of this liberation is formulated by Blavatsky as a process in which our development proceeds through “apparent realities toward Absolute Consciousness” (Blavatsky, 2005-I:90). These apparent realities, as Blavatsky puts it, are the physical world and all its inhabitants. Here we find a direct connection and even identity with the unified Brahman of the Upanishads, where Brahman as an unmanifested and absolute principle is called nirguna (without qualities) or nirakara (without form), and Brahman as the manifested world is called saguna (with qualities), sakara (with form). These are two sides of the same reality described in the Upanishads: “The changing forms arise and exist only in the words of speech. In reality, forms do not exist, they are just an illusion in name, and only clay is reality,” says the Chandogya Upanishad. The Mundaka Upanishad adds specific dimensions to the unified Brahman: “Just as rivers lose their name and form when they flow into the sea, so everything, even the greatest sages, lose their form and name and merge with the Supreme, the Eternal, the Self-existent” (Nikolova, 2022: 71). In the most widespread doctrine of Vedanta - Advaita Vedanta - the manifested world

is unreal. When Shankara says that the world of objects (i.e., *the products of matter*) and thoughts (i.e., *the products of the mind*) is unreal, he does not mean that it does not exist. The visible world exists in our perception and mind, but in a state of true enlightenment, consciousness knows the other absolute reality and the manifested world ceases to exist. Shankara calls the manifested world maya (illusion), and only Brahman is reality" (Nikolova, 2022: 82).

According to theosophical doctrine, the process of cosmic and human evolution occurs in cycles, with everything that exists, i.e., everything in form dissolves into the non-existence of the One Reality and, after a long period of rest, manifests itself again to begin evolving anew, but on a higher plane, at a higher stage of evolution. This seemingly creates a paradox. The paradox can be described as follows: Is it possible for the One Reality to be unchanging and constant, since periodically – albeit with enormous intervals between periods - the forms and phenomena of the visible universe dissolve into it, after which, again after an enormously long period of time, the phenomena of the visible universe manifest themselves at a higher evolutionary level from the Unified Reality. How, then, does the Unified Reality, the Absolute, the Divine Essence remain unchanging, eternal, and omnipresent? The possible answer comes precisely from the absolute nature of the Unified Reality. The very concept of absoluteness means perfection, completeness, unconditionality, unlimitedness, immutability, unboundness, and infinity. In the Unified Reality, the noumena of all phenomena are part of the “body” of the unchanging and eternal Absolute. They are perfect and absolute always during the periods of pralaya, the rest of the universe. But in the manifested universe, perfection must be achieved. It is not a given.

The world of phenomena is ruled by impermanence, changeability, and imperfection. Immersed in these conditions, noumenal entities lose their absolute character and become part of the evolutionary process. They must immerse themselves in manifested matter and rise again to the next stage of the evolutionary cycle that follows the next pralaya. Only in the tranquility of pralaya do noumena – from the smallest infusoria to humans, in Blavatsky’s words – rest in the perfection of absolute light. When they become phenomena, noumena lose their perfection, and absolute perfection has no need to develop. That is why it is absolute, because it has already attained supreme essence. Therefore, the Absolute does not create by itself, because it contains within itself the perfection of all forms and phenomena. From it emanates the creative essence – the first Logos, Brahma of the Hindus, which becomes the basis of the next universal creation and creation of the visible world.

With regard to the noumenon of each human soul at the beginning of the manvantaric period, it begins its next long evolutionary path from that point, from those achievements with which the previous manvantaric cycle ended for it. In pralaya, the human soul is merged with the Universal Perfect Soul, with the Absolute of the One Reality, and its ego, its individuality, is dissolved in this reality. With the beginning of the new period of universal activity, the individual Ego or spark of the individual soul awakens to new life, to climb the ladder of evolution, whose ultimate goal is identity and eternal abode in the Absolute, in the One Reality, the nirvana of Buddhism. Having reached this point, our limited mind imagines an end to existence and movement, which has ended in the Absolute. But Helena Blavatsky repeatedly points out in *The Secret Doctrine* that movement and perfection are a continuous and unceasing process. Therefore, we are hardly in a position to answer how far evolution can go and which end of the visible universe will actually turn out to be the beginning of a new evolutionary cycle and new perfection. In this regard, Blavatsky notes: “Existence is an endless cycle within the One Absolute Eternity, in which countless internal cycles, conditioned and finite, move” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 286).

This affirmation leads to another conclusion: the Absolute always exists, and the fact that it remains invisible to the physical senses does not negate it. Its transcendental metaphysical essence and the visible world are that unity which can be called “Life” – always enduring and in countless forms and manifestations. Defining the One Reality as non-being, in which the noumena of all things are contained, Helena Blavatsky specifies that it is “rather Beingness than Being Sat

in Sanskrit” (Blavatsky, 2005-I:64). It has no constituent parts, no properties or qualities, i.e., it is devoid of any attributes – again a direct parallel to the Upanishads mentioned above. We cannot say that the One Reality is hot or cold, long or short, good or bad. Because it is everywhere and in everything, infinite and fundamental, it is not caused by anything. At the same time, it causes all things. “It is the Rootless Root of all that has been, is, and ever shall be” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 64), an omnipresent reality, and “its impersonality is the fundamental concept of the System” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 345). Another clarification is important, given by the following definition: “The Unified, Absolute, Abstract Eternal Essence is ‘THAT which ‘does not sleep’ and never awakens, because it is Sat or ‘Beingness’, not a Being” (Blavatsky, 2005-II: 398).

#### 8. Unified reality as the noumenon of the phenomenal world

The metaphysics of *The Secret Doctrine* is most clearly expressed in the description of the noumenal essence of Unified Reality, from which everything accessible to the five senses used by modern humanity manifests itself. Blavatsky calls it “Cosmos Noumenon” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 53) and tries to be clearer with an interesting example close to everyone’s heart: water as the noumenon of hydrogen and oxygen. Separately, the two elements are noetic entities, gaseous manifestations of their liquid unified essence, which is water. “The existence of oxygen and hydrogen in the form of water can be called Non-Being, which is a more real Being than their existence in the form of gases, and may, albeit to a small extent, symbolize the state of the Universe when it sinks into sleep or ceases to exist during the Nights of Brahma, only to awaken or manifest itself again when the Dawn of the New Manvantara calls it to what we call existence” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 106).

In the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky links the understanding of noumena to the cognitive abilities of the individual and emphasizes that everything, even people, exists or, more precisely, is part of the One Reality. But as phenomena of their noumenal essences in the Absolute, humans and everything that the human mind perceives as visible and material around them are temporary and illusory. Elena Blavatsky compares this “visible” and “material” to “shadows cast by a magic lantern on a white screen” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 90), emphasizing the illusory nature of the manifested universe, contrasting it with the Absolute, the One Reality. It is impossible to answer the question of whether Blavatsky consciously alludes to the shadows in the cave in Plato’s “Republic” (Plato, 1982) or whether the above quotation is merely her own idea. But given Blavatsky’s exceptional respect for Plato, which she emphasizes particularly in *Isis Unveiled* (Blavatsky, 1995, I-II), it is likely that the example of illusion, of maya, is dictated precisely by the episode in Plato’s Republic. After emphasizing the aforementioned comparison of the physical universe to the shadow of a lantern, Blavatsky, like Shankara, makes the reassuring clarification: “Nevertheless, everything is relatively real, since the knower is also a reflection, and therefore all the things he achieves are as real as he himself is” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 90).

#### 9. The Unified Reality as Absolute Light

In the field of metaphysics, which is the domain of theosophy, the Unified Reality, non-being, is Absolute Light, unattainable for the ordinary person and therefore defined as darkness. Blavatsky gives the following explanation of this paradox: “The Absolute is called Darkness, ‘because to our limited understanding it is perfectly impenetrable’”(Blavatsky, 2005-I: 108). Hence the identification of non-being with darkness. “The nature of Darkness is Absolute Light, therefore Darkness is taken as an appropriate allegorical representation of the state of the Universe during pralaya or the period of Absolute Rest or Non-Existence, as it is presented to our limited mind” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 122), Blavatsky clarifies and, as if to justify the abstract nature of what she is trying to explain, adds: “In the teachings of Eastern occultism, Darkness is a unified,

true reality, the foundation and root of the world, without which it could never manifest itself or even exist. Light is Matter, and Darkness is Pure Spirit. In its fundamental metaphysical basis, Darkness is subjective and absolute Light; while Light in all its radiance and brilliance is only a mass of shadows, since it can never be eternal and is only a mere Illusion or Maya” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 123). During pralaya, darkness fills the "Infinite All," and both darkness and light are phenomena of the same noumenon - the One Reality. The light of the Absolute, of the One All, is transcendental to the human eye at our stage of evolution, a rationally unattainable, a priori form. It is also called “Pre-eternal Light” and even more descriptively “the Self-Existing Lord” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 139).

A similar view exists in apophatic and mystical theology in Eastern and Western Europe. Through negation, the essence of the Divine is affirmed, and in this regard, Prof. Tsotcho Boyadziev points out that “Plato seems to be the pioneer, at least in the European tradition, of this approach to defining the first principle through negation rather than affirmation” (Boyadziev, 1995: 11). In the Eastern tradition, apophatic definitions are also used when attempts are made to clarify the nature of Brahman. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states that Brahman is “both light and non-light, desire and non-desire, anger and non-anger, law and lawlessness, both near and far, this here and that there.” This is because it is impossible to say what Brahman is, but it is possible to say what it is not. The Absolute is beyond any definition or assertion: “It is neither dense nor subtle, neither short nor long, neither luminous nor in shadow, neither dark nor attached, without passion, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without words, without mind, without breath, without mouth, neither internal nor external, neither feeding on anything nor eaten by anything,” says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Associate Professor Antoaneta Nikolova emphasizes that the emphasized impossibility of defining “the nature of Brahman does not mean that it does not have one, but that we cannot define it by the random manifestations we register, since they do not belong to its essence.” Similar to the idea in *The Secret Doctrine* of darkness as absolute light and the essence of the Absolute during pralaya, in the treatise “On Mystical Theology” Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (*Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite was a Christian theologian and philosopher who lived before the 6th century. His real name is unknown, as are details of his life, but his work is sometimes associated with Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of the Apostle Paul*) points out that Divine darkness “is primary and more than any negation and affirmation” (Areopagite, 1995: 345).

According to Areopagite, positive or cataphatic knowledge of God is imperfect because it leads to partial knowledge of God. In contrast, apophatic or negative knowledge is the only perfect and best way to the Unknowable, which is beyond the limits of all that exists; it is “superluminous darkness,” in whose silence simple and perfect mysteries are revealed. In order to approach Him, one must reject everything that is lower than Him, i.e., everything that exists (Lossky, 1991: 11). Areopagite’s apophatism creates a model of verbal expression that simultaneously denies and affirms the Unknowable: “The cause of all things, being above all things, and insubstantial, and lifeless, not speechless, not devoid of mind, and not a body; it has neither image nor form, nor qualities or quantities, or magnitudes; it dwells nowhere, invisible, without sensory perception; it does not perceive and is not perceived” (Areopagite, 1995: 361).

Several centuries after Areopagite, the German philosopher and theologian Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) continued the apophatic line of knowledge of God, saying: “This abyss is uniform silence, immovable in itself, but from this immobility all things receive movement, and from it all those ‘lives’ are conceived which led their own rational life” (Erhart, 1995: 162). In his sermons, Eckhart also expresses the idea of illusory nature arising from the temporary nature of the visible world: “If the soul wants to see God, it should not look at any temporary thing” (Erhart, 1995: 169). According to Meister Eckhart, knowledge of God is everywhere and in everything: “God is neither a being nor a rational being, nor does he know this or that. Therefore, God is free from all things - and precisely because of this, he is all things” (Erhart, 1995: 154).

## 10. Three symbols of the Unified Reality

### 10.1 *The Spirit – the world mind*

The unity, indivisibility, indestructibility, and wholeness of the Absolute is manifested through three symbols, Blavatsky comments in the spirit of transcendental paradoxes. One of the symbols is the Absolute Abstract Movement or “Pre-Cosmic Thought Foundation.” Blavatsky identifies it with the Parabrahman of the Vedantists and points out that this is the spirit of the One Reality, which is “Unconditional Consciousness” and “the Root of all individual consciousness” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 66). Movement never ceases in the One Reality, as well as in the manifested world. The spirit as thought and consciousness always exists in everything abstract in the Absolute and in manifold forms in the phenomenal Universe. The spirit is the world mind, and Blavatsky provides a clearer commentary on this comparison: “During the long night of Rest, called Pralaya, when all Lives have dissolved, the ‘World Mind’ remains as a constant possibility for mental activity or as an absolute and abstract thought, the concrete and relative manifestation of which is the Mind.” In the series of clarifications on “mind,” it is noted: “Mind” is a name given to a set of states of consciousness grouped around the determinants: Thought, Will, and Feelings” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 66).

### 10.2 *The Soul – Matter as Abstract Space*

The absolute abstract space in which the spirit or world mind never “sleeps or awakens” is the pre-cosmic substance, mula-prakriti of the Vedantists, aditi in the Vedas, and “that aspect of the Absolute which lies at the basis of all objective planes of nature” according to *The Secret Doctrine*. Absolute space is the soul of the One Reality. Blavatsky’s metaphorical imagery calls space “the Eternal Mother - giving birth, hidden in her veils” and explains: “The veils” mean the noumenon of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter. This is not the matter we know, but the spiritual essence of matter, which is eternal and even one with Space in its abstract sense” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 88). This spirit-matter is “neither boundless emptiness” nor “conditional fullness,” but is both. It has always been and always will be” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 85).

The spirit - the world mind - and the soul - Absolute space as pre-cosmic matter - are absolutely bound and inseparable in their essence as a Unified Reality. This unity is commented on by Blavatsky in the following way: “Regardless of the Cosmic substance, Cosmic Thought-base could not manifest itself as individual consciousness, since consciousness develops as “I am I” only through the conduit (upadhi) of matter - the physical basis necessary for the concentration of the Ray of Cosmic Mind upon reaching a certain complexity. In turn, separated from the Cosmic Thought-basis, the Cosmic substance would remain an empty abstraction and no emergence of Consciousness could take place” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 85).

### 10.3 *Duration*

As the third symbol of the One Reality, Blavatsky points to duration and emphasizes that “all our ideas of duration and time have arisen from our sensations, according to the laws of association” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 66). From a human perspective, duration is infinite and eternal, but according to theosophy, in the non-existence of the Absolute, these sensations disappear. The duration of the alternations between rest-noumenon and activity-phenomenon is infinite, indivisible, and eternal. And here we encounter a paradox: infinite indivisible duration is divided by the “Seven Eternities.” Similar to other aspects of the “Secret Doctrine,” in this case, the paradox is only a symbol. This is the name given to the alternation of rest with activity, of pralaya with manvantara. These are periods that are as infinite for human consciousness as they are limited against the backdrop of the eternity of the One Reality. According to Blavatsky, the term

“Seven Eternities” is “established in esoteric philosophy and divides the infinite Duration of unconditional Eternity and universal time (Kala) and conditional Time (Khandakala)” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 94).

### 11. The Unified Reality as a Triad

The Absolute, the Unified Reality, is characterized by impersonality, has no attributes, and does not create. So what kind of triad are we talking about, and doesn't such a statement contradict the theosophical axiom about the Absolute? In mentioning the triad, Helena Blavatsky introduces nothing unfamiliar or inconsistent with the ontological characteristics of the Unified Reality, but adheres to the typical mode of expression in Eastern philosophy – the symbolic. The triad as a concept is only a sign, a semiotic possibility for expressing in a different, or more precisely in yet another way, the two aspects of the One Reality – the Absolute abstract space and the Absolute abstract movement/consciousness – pre-cosmic matter and pre-cosmic spirit. “Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter should be regarded not as independent realities, but as two symbols or aspects of the Absolute” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 65), and the three together – the Absolute, Absolute Abstract Movement, and Absolute Abstract Space – form “a metaphysical triad as the Root from which everything manifested originates” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 66).

The elements of this triad have another direction of symbolic determinism: they are father, mother, son. The mother is matter, the Absolute abstract space of non-being. The father is spirit, the Absolute abstract movement/consciousness of non-being. The father and mother, spirit and matter, dwell in the darkness of non-being during the rest of the universe, the pralaya. Spirit and matter, father and mother, give birth to the son, light, at the beginning of the new period of activity, the new manvantara. The father cannot exist without the mother, spirit cannot exist without matter in which and through which to manifest itself. That is why in theosophy it is said that in the womb of the mother, of pre-cosmic matter, the father, the spirit, flashes, and the son is born, who is the universe, awakened to new life at a new, higher evolutionary stage in the new manvantara. Thus, the son appears as the third part of the triad - he is the body, born of the mother matter, fertilized by the father spirit.

During pralaya, they – mother, father, and son - are merged, they are one. Elena Blavatsky offers another perspective on the triad, noting: “Not Being, Emptiness, and Darkness are the essence of the Three in the One, and only They are self-existent and perfect” (Blavatsky, 2005-I: 93). The concept of “emptiness” refers to the absence of attributes, specific forms, and essences in the noumenal world of Absolute Reality. In its formlessness, everything that existed during the period of activity of the universe is dissolved and awaits the dawn of the new manvantara to manifest itself again from the absolute emptiness, from the non-existence of the absolute everything.

### 12. Conclusion

Following the theosophical understanding of God and the Divine essence, the conclusion of a non-anthropomorphic concept is necessary. Since civilization requires us to speak and think about God, theosophy says that this is not a being, but rather the universe and nature as a whole, of which humans are a natural and interconnected part. Next, Helena Blavatsky's theosophical doctrine rejects the perception of God as a lord and master to whom people must submit and who is considered an almighty being who gets angry and punishes. Blavatsky asserts that as an integral part of the Divine non-anthropomorphic essence, man is the bearer of this essence. As divine beings, humans possess the power, courage, light, and love characteristic of this essence, the One Reality or Absolute. The existence of evil in its various manifestations on Earth is a matter of insufficient awareness, spiritual and moral bondage, and ignorance. Man has

everything necessary within himself as an essence and qualities to overcome all this, to harmonize good and evil within himself, and thus begin to change the world around him. The realization of this inherent potential in every human being is one of the main tasks of Helena Blavatsky’s theosophical doctrine, and the goal is personal change that will transform the whole of society and civilization towards peace, understanding, and brotherhood.

#### Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

#### References

- Augustine, A. *Confessions*, Book 11–36. Available at: <http://friendsoftherainbow.net/node/1117>.
- Areopagite, D. *On the Divine Names. On Mystical Theology*. Saint Petersburg: Glagoly Publishing, 1995.
- Vishnu Purana*. Saint Petersburg: Russian Academy of Sciences Publishing, 1995, Chapter II, 1–17, pp. 7–8. Available at: [https://royallib.com/book/neizvesten\\_avtor/vishnu\\_purana.html](https://royallib.com/book/neizvesten_avtor/vishnu_purana.html).
- Blavatsky, H. P. *The Secret Doctrine*, Vols. I–II. Sofia: Astrala Publishing, 2005.
- Boyadzhiev, Ts. “Introductory Study.” In: *Meister Eckhart. Sermons and Treatises*. Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1995.
- Eckhart, M. *Sermons and Treatises*. Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1995.
- Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Publishing, 1992.
- Kamburov, I. *Classical Buddhist Philosophy*, Part I. Sofia: Avangard Prima Publishing, 2011.
- Krichevsky, A. *The Absolute Spirit through the Faces of the Trinity*. Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences Publishing, 2011, pp. 10–68. Available at: <https://iphras.ru/uplfile/root/biblio/2011/krichevskiy.pdf>.
- Lysenko, V. “*Philosophy of Nature*” in *India: Atomism of the Vaisheshika School*. Moscow: Nauka Publishing, 1986. Available at: [https://platona.net/load/knigi\\_po\\_filosofii/istorija\\_vostochnaja/lysenko\\_filosofija\\_prirody\\_indii\\_atomizm\\_shkoly\\_vaisheshika/14-1-0-4864](https://platona.net/load/knigi_po_filosofii/istorija_vostochnaja/lysenko_filosofija_prirody_indii_atomizm_shkoly_vaisheshika/14-1-0-4864).
- Lossky, V. *An Outline of the Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Moscow: Center SEI Publishing, 1991. Available at: <https://lib.pravmir.ru/library/book/1897>.
- Nikolova, A. *Philosophy of Dynamism*. Sofia: East-West Publishing, 2022.
- Nosovski, Yu. *Theosophy – A Religion without God*. Available at: *Literary World* (Литературен свят) <https://literaturensviat.com/?p=67584>.
- Plato. *Timaeus*. Available at: <http://psylib.org.ua/books/platoo1/27timei.htm>.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo Publishing, 1982. Available at: <https://chitanka.info/person/platon>.
- Husserl, E. *Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Internal Consciousness of Time*. Moscow: RIG Logos Publishing, 1994. Available at: [https://vk.com/doc-123708210\\_438338374](https://vk.com/doc-123708210_438338374).
- Upanishads. Sofia: East-West Publishing, 2018.

