

Confusing the Esoteric with the Exoteric:

T. Subba Row on Advaita Vedānta

T. Subba Row is regarded by Theosophists as an authority on the esoteric teachings that constitute the Wisdom Tradition now known as Theosophy. However great his knowledge of the esoteric teachings may have been, his writings show a strange confusion regarding the exoteric or known teachings of his own tradition, Advaita Vedānta. He has inexplicably attributed the esoteric teachings to exoteric Advaita Vedānta. H. P. Blavatsky drew upon him as an authority in her own writings, which are the fundamental sourcebooks of Theosophy. This confusion has in this way entered her primary work, *The Secret Doctrine*. Advaita Vedānta has thus been seriously misrepresented in Theosophical writings, and has been taken to support esoteric teachings that it does not in fact support. No one appreciates having his or her beliefs misrepresented. This does an injustice to the adherents of Advaita Vedānta, and does a disservice to the teachings of Theosophy. But there is more.

As a result of this confusion between the esoteric and the exoteric, sometimes when Subba Row made statements that were in fact from the standpoint of exoteric Advaita Vedānta, they were taken by Blavatsky as esoteric due to his status as an authority on the esoteric. Again they entered *The Secret Doctrine*. This time it is the esoteric teachings themselves that have been misrepresented in Theosophical writings, when what are in fact exoteric teachings have been given as esoteric teachings. Much of this confusion could have been avoided, by simply keeping the esoteric teachings distinct from the exoteric teachings.

The writings of T. Subba Row are an important source of the esoteric teachings. When their esoteric content is properly distinguished from the exoteric content, they contribute greatly

to our understanding of Theosophy. They constitute a source independent of H. P. Blavatsky or the Theosophical Mahatmas, and a source reflecting the esoteric Advaita Vedānta perspective rather than the esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhist perspective. Yet we find the same distinctive esoteric teachings given in both. Thus, Subba Row denies the existence of a conscious, personal God, and upholds the existence of eternal, superphysical substance. This is fully consistent with the esoteric teachings given in other Theosophical sources. Unfortunately, Subba Row does this on behalf of Advaita Vedānta as such; that is, known or exoteric Advaita Vedānta. As it is known to its adherents all across India, however, Advaita Vedānta does not hold these views.

The most direct comparison of Advaita Vedānta teachings with those of Theosophy is found in a series of exchanges that took place on the pages of *The Theosophist* magazine for 1883, between the Advaita Vedāntin Paramahansa Swami of Almora and the Advaita Vedāntin Theosophist T. Subba Row.¹ In this controversy, the Almora Swami is repeatedly told by Subba Row that he does not know what he is talking about: “Our Swami’s second argument is extremely ridiculous.” “This is enough to convince me that the Swami of Almora knows as much about *Turiya Avastha* as of the features of the man in the moon.” “This is as illogical as his other arguments.” Reading this controversy now, the Almora Swami’s fault seems to be nothing more than that he expressed views held by virtually all Advaita Vedāntins in India. Subba Row’s arguments against these views are no doubt good ones, from the standpoint of the esoteric teachings. But Subba Row presents his position as what Advaita Vedānta itself teaches, not what it teaches esoterically. He then berates the Almora Swami for being ignorant of Advaita Vedānta, when it is actually Subba Row who is ignorant of how his own countrymen understand Advaita Vedānta. Today, this whole episode would be viewed by observers as reflecting poorly on Theosophy.

T. Subba Row, then, and H. P. Blavatsky following him, in their Theosophical writings wrongly depict Advaita Vedānta as not accepting the existence of a conscious, personal God, and as accepting that matter, however attenuated, is eternal. This is rather like it would be for Theosophists to depict Christianity as

accepting belief in reincarnation. But this has not been done by Theosophists, who have here been more careful to distinguish the esoteric from the exoteric. They say only that some early Christians may have believed in reincarnation, and that it would be accepted in esoteric Christianity. No one doubts the fact that belief in reincarnation is not accepted in exoteric or known Christianity. The same is true of the above-mentioned questions in Advaita Vedānta, one of which is discussed in the exchanges between Subba Row and the Almora Swami. Since they are of a rather metaphysical nature, it may be best to first take a more concrete example. The unreliability of Subba Row's statements regarding the exoteric teachings of Advaita Vedānta may be seen in his hard to explain lack of awareness of the known teachings of Śaṅkarācārya regarding Buddhism.

T. Subba Row in his article on "Sri Sankaracharya's Date and Doctrine," which is part of the important series of replies to "Some Inquiries Suggested by Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*,"² discusses the question of the alleged persecution of Buddhism by Śaṅkara. This is in response to statements made in A. Barth's 1882 book, *The Religions of India*. Subba Row begins by saying:

Mr. Barth has discovered some connection between the appearance of Sankara in India and the commencement of the persecution of the Buddhists which he seems to place in the 7th and 8th centuries.³

After briefly replying to this, Subba Row concludes that:

From these few remarks it will be clear to our readers that Sankaracharya had nothing to do with Buddhist persecution.⁴

In his preceding remarks he wrote:

But, what evidence is there to show that Sankara was ever engaged in this task? If the main object of his preaching was to evoke a reaction against Buddhism, he would no doubt have left us some writings specially intended to criticize its doctrines and expose its defects. On the other hand he does not even allude to

Buddhism in his independent works. Though he was a voluminous writer, with the exception of a few remarks on the theory advocated by *some* Buddhists regarding the nature of perception contained in his *Commentary* on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, there is not a single passage in the whole range of his writings regarding the Buddhists or their doctrines; . . .⁵

In Śaṅkara's *Commentary* on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, 2.2.32, however, we read, as translated by George Thibaut:

From whatever new points of view the Buddha [Buddhist] system is tested with reference to its probability, it gives way on all sides, like the walls of a well dug in sandy soil. It has, in fact, no foundation whatever to rest upon, and hence the attempts to use it as a guide in the practical concerns of life are mere folly.—Moreover, Buddha by propounding the three mutually contradictory systems, teaching respectively the reality of the external world [the Sarvāstivāda system], the reality of ideas only [the Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra system], and general nothingness [the Śūnyavāda or Madhyamaka system], has himself made it clear either that he was a man given to make incoherent assertions, or else that hatred of all beings induced him to propound absurd doctrines by accepting which they would become thoroughly confused.—So that—and this the Sūtra means to indicate—Buddha's doctrine has to be entirely disregarded by all those who have a regard for their own happiness.⁶

Subba Row apparently missed his passage, as well as the preceding ones by Śaṅkarācārya that refute the three Buddhist doctrinal systems referred to. While it is true, as Subba Row says, that Śaṅkarācārya has not left us any text specially devoted to the criticism of Buddhism, passages like this one from his most definitive work are quite enough for his followers to conclude that he pointedly rejected Buddhism. Again, while it may be an overstatement to speak of Śaṅkara's persecution of Buddhism, his popular biographies do show him defeating the Buddhists. This was understood to mean that he drove them out of India, as may be seen by the many references to this in Indian sources

today. His traditional biographies are known as Śaṅkara Vijayas, or Dig-Vijayas, “Conquest of the Four Quarters.” These depict him as incarnating to purify India of corrupt religious teachings that had arisen there, in accordance with the famous saying from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.7-8):

Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata!, and exaltation of unrighteousness, then I create Myself (incarnate myself in some form); For protection of the good, and destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.⁷

These Śaṅkara Vijayas show him defeating Buddhism and other teachings in India, and thereby restoring the true Vedic Hindu teaching, Advaita Vedānta. In the same article quoted above, Subba Row refers to these biographies, saying that while some of them are unreliable,

Vidyaranya’s *Sankara Vijaya* is decidedly the most reliable source of information as regards the main features of Sankara’s biography.⁸

In Vidyāraṇya’s Śaṅkara Vijaya, however, we read, as translated by Swami Tapasyananda:

Bhaskara had defeated and converted large numbers of Brahmanas who had broken away from the Vedic path, influenced by the deceptive teaching of the Baudddhas [Buddhists]. Even such renowned scholars were humbled by the great Acharya [Śaṅkara] and thus brought to accept the Advaita doctrine, for which the Vedas stand. Thus he uprooted all perverse sects. . . . The resounding drum-beat announcing the Acharya’s victory over Mandana had blown like a fierce wind through the forest of the ears of numerous atheistical sophists and then lit up a conflagration that became a fierce and roaring forest fire consuming all the wild growth of perverse doctrines therein. The Buddhists ran away pell-mell when confronted by him in controversy; . . . A mass of rain clouds showering the ambrosial down-

pour of Advaitic thought, the activities of this supreme teacher put an end to the spiritual famine caused by the misdeeds of Buddhist Bhikshus and the fierce summer heat radiating from the atheistic doctrines preached by some other sectaries.⁹

It would seem that Subba Row missed these passages as well, though they are found in the biography that he himself had pointed out as being “decidedly the most reliable,” because written by Vidyāraṇya (since shown to be the composite work of a later writer than Vidyāraṇya¹⁰). The great majority of Indians, however, did not miss these passages, or ones like them. Hence, the widespread belief among Indians today that Śaṅkarācārya drove Buddhism out of India. Strangely, Subba Row seems to be unaware of this. This idea was not an invention by the Western scholar A. Barth, as Subba Row portrayed it. No, it was, and is, the belief of most Advaita Vedāntins in India. So we are obliged to seek in Subba Row’s statements esoteric teachings about Advaita Vedānta, not a representation of Advaita Vedānta as it is actually found in India.

Subba Row was apparently trying to show that the original or Ādi Śaṅkarācārya was not responsible for driving Buddhism out of India. For here in this article he combats the idea that Śaṅkarācārya lived in the eighth century C.E., and says instead that Śaṅkarācārya was born in 510 B.C.E. His statement that “Sankaracharya had nothing to do with Buddhist persecution,” then, would pertain to this original Śaṅkarācārya who lived many centuries before the disappearance of Buddhism in India. However, this does not account for the existence of a later Śaṅkarācārya who lived in the eighth century C.E., when we do see the beginning of the end of Buddhism in India. This one is apparently the Śaṅkarācārya of popular belief who, as depicted in the Śaṅkara Vijayas, drove Buddhism out of India. Neither Subba Row nor other Indians distinguish two Śaṅkarācāryas, one earlier and one later. Nonetheless, there is good evidence that both existed.¹¹ Moreover, the later date for Śaṅkarācārya is not an invention of Western scholars, as Subba Row portrays it, but was put forth by Indians and is accepted by a majority of Advaita Vedāntins today.¹² So this later Śaṅkarācārya may well

have had a role in Buddhism's demise in India, as is popularly believed. Blavatsky writes of the departure of the Buddhists as being due to opposition from the Brahmins, and describes this as "persecution."¹³ That this came from within India is even the view of the Chohan, the chief of the Theosophical Mahatmas. In an 1883 letter, Blavatsky writes:

Ah if the old Chohan only but permitted our Masters to exercise their powers for one day! But HE will never interfere with India's punishment, its Karma, as he says, "for having killed so many Buddhists," though History does not mention such killing. But History was most probably written by "Jhut-Sing," when in another incarnation [i.e., is unreliable].¹⁴

In giving esoteric facts about the original or Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, then, Subba Row does not account for the factual basis of the exoteric belief that Śaṅkarācārya drove Buddhism out of India, namely, that it was driven out. According to both popular belief and Theosophical sources, it was driven out by Indians. The Muslim invasion would have only completed this task. This task may well have involved the later Śaṅkarācārya.

The Question of a Conscious, Personal God

Having seen that Subba Row's statements regarding the exoteric teachings of Advaita Vedānta may not be reliable, we may now turn to the more metaphysical questions. Subba Row represents Advaita Vedānta as not accepting the existence of a conscious, personal God. In doing so, he gives us a clear and direct statement of the esoteric teachings, since this is in full agreement with the primary Theosophical sources. But this is not the position of exoteric Advaita Vedānta on this. Just as the traditional biography of Śaṅkarācārya was widely known among Indians, so also did it become known to European scholars working with Sanskrit pandits in India, such as A. E. Gough. They did not miss the fact, shown in passages of Śaṅkara Vijayas like those quoted above, that Śaṅkara is seen by his followers as

refuting atheism and upholding theism. Nor did they have to rely only on the traditional biographies for this. The writings of Śaṅkarācārya again and again refer to *īśvara*, God. In what is regarded as his most definitive work, his *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtras*, he takes as his primary opponent the Godless creed of Sāṃkhya.¹⁵ He says that the world cannot have arisen from unconscious primary substance, as Sāṃkhya teaches, but can only have arisen from a conscious God. He then specifically extends this refutation to other such Godless creeds including Buddhism. This is not the picture of Advaita Vedānta that we get from the authoritative Theosophical writings of Subba Row, nor is it the picture that Blavatsky got from them. She wrote in an 1884 letter:

I could not (especially in my present state of nervousness) stand by and listen calmly to the astounding news (from Gough!!) that Sankara Charya was a *theist* and Subba Row knows not what he is talking about, without kicking myself to death; or that other still more astounding declaration that Masters are evidently “Swabhavikas”! Oh sweet Jesus, and shall I begin contending against the Goughs and Hodgsons who have disfigured Buddhism and Advaitism even in their exoteric sense, and risk bursting a blood vessel in London upon hearing these arguments reiterated? Not I. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Massey’s enormous powers of “clear and unimpeachable logic” but can only wonder that such a keen metaphysician hangs his faith—after rejecting the authority of *even* Subba Row—upon the flapdoodle *dicta* of the unutterably ignorant translation and dead-letter interpretations of the Gough and Co. *Vade retro Satanas*.¹⁶

Gough was not wrong in saying that Śaṅkarācārya was a theist. Gough did not disfigure Advaitism in its exoteric sense. In the exoteric sense, he was right that Subba Row does not know what he is talking about. All one has to do is pick up any of the hundreds upon hundreds of Advaita Vedānta books and translations by Swamis and adherents now available in English, and see whether or not there is reference to God in them. It will be found that belief in God is a basic tenet of the known or

exoteric teachings of Advaita Vedānta.¹⁷ It is true that the other schools of Vedānta are considerably more theistic, and hence have sometimes been designated as theistic Vedānta in contradistinction to Advaita Vedānta. But the latter's acceptance of a conscious *īśvara*, God, distinguishes it sharply from the truly non-theistic religions such as Jainism and Buddhism.

T. Subba Row addressed this question most directly in his 1883 article, "A Personal and an Impersonal God," written in reply to "H.X.," a pseudonym for A. O. Hume, and published in *The Theosophist*. His conclusion found therein was then quoted and incorporated into Blavatsky's 1888 book, *The Secret Doctrine*. Blavatsky there writes:

And here let the student be told at once, that in all such numerical divisions the ONE universal Principle—although referred to as (the) one, because the *Only One*—never enters into the calculations. IT stands, in its character of the Absolute, the Infinite, and the universal abstraction, entirely by ITSELF and independent of every other Power whether noumenal or phenomenal. IT "is neither matter nor spirit; IT is neither Ego nor non-Ego; and IT is neither object nor subject," says the author of "Personal and Impersonal God," and adds:

In the language of Hindu philosophers it is the original and eternal combination of Purusha [Spirit] and Prakṛiti [matter]. As the Advaitīs hold that an external object is merely the product of our mental states, Prakṛiti is nothing more than illusion, and Purusha is the only reality; it is the *one* existence which remains eternal in this universe of Ideas. This entity then is the Parabrahman of the Advaitīs.

Even if there were to be a personal God with anything like a material *upādhi* (physical basis of whatever form), from the standpoint of an Advaitī there will be as much reason to doubt his noumenal existence as there would be in the case of any other object. In their opinion, a conscious God cannot be the origin of the universe, as his Ego would be the effect of a previous cause, if the word conscious conveys but its ordinary meaning. They cannot

admit that *the grand total of all the states of consciousness in the universe* is their deity, as these states are constantly changing, and as cosmic ideation ceases during *Pralaya*. There is only one permanent condition in the universe, which is the state of perfect unconsciousness, bare *Chidākāśa* (the field of consciousness) in fact. When my readers once realize the fact that this grand universe is in reality but a huge aggregation of various states of consciousness, they will not be surprised to find that the ultimate state of unconsciousness is considered as Parabrahman by the Advaitis.¹⁸

Subba Row has here told us that in the opinion of the Advaitis, “a conscious God cannot be the origin of the universe.” When, however, we turn to Śaṅkarācārya’s definitive *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtras*, in the opening section where he lays out his basic position that will be elaborated throughout the rest of the book, we find, as translated by Swami Gambhirananda:

That omniscient and omnipotent source must be Brahman from which occur the birth, continuance, and dissolution of this universe. . . . Apart from God, possessed of the qualifications already mentioned [omniscient and omnipotent], the universe, as described, cannot possibly be thought of as having its origin etc. from any other factor, e.g. Pradhāna (primordial Nature) which is insentient, or from atoms, or non-existence, or some soul under worldly conditions (viz. Hiraṇya-garbha).¹⁹

The adjective “omniscient” (*sarvajña*) that is here applied to *brahman*, called God (*īśvara*), means conscious, as opposed to “insentient” (*acetana*) or unconscious, as the text explains. Śaṅkarācārya shortly thereafter takes this up in his fifth topic, translated by Swami Gambhirananda of the Advaita Ashrama as “The First Cause Possessed of Consciousness.” There quotations are given from the Upaniṣads showing that *brahman* can see or think, and is therefore conscious, not unconscious.

In other words, in direct opposition to what Subba Row said, *only* a conscious God can be the origin of the universe, in the opinion of the founder of Advaita Vedānta, Śaṅkarācārya

(or at least the Śāṅkarācārya taken to be him, namely, the one who wrote the now extant *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtras*). Subba Row has again given an esoteric interpretation of what Advaita Vedānta teaches as if it was the exoteric view held by all Advaita Vedāntins, and this misrepresentation has then entered *The Secret Doctrine*. The question here is not a semantic one due to Subba Row's describing *parabrahman* as a state of perfect or ultimate unconsciousness. For he tells us that this is only his way of translating *cidākāśa* or *cinmātra*,²⁰ which latter means literally "consciousness only," or "consciousness alone," and is usually translated today as "pure consciousness." To our perceptions, pure or absolute consciousness is the same as unconsciousness, being unlike any consciousness we can conceive of. But as said above, in exoteric Advaita Vedānta it is taught that *brahman* or *parabrahman* can see or think, and therefore has actual thinking consciousness. This is not pure consciousness in the sense of unconsciousness. *Brahman* or *parabrahman* is conscious in a real sense. It can thus be called *īśvara*, "God," and is so called many times by Śāṅkarācārya in his *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtras*.

In the second part of the above-quoted article, Subba Row acknowledges that the idea of a conscious God or *īśvara* might arise from the language used in the Upaniṣads. He advises us not to be misled by this, telling us that we should not construe these expressions literally:

The language used here and there in the Upaniṣads is apt to mislead one into the belief that such language points to the existence of a conscious *īśvara*. But the necessity for such language will be perceived on examining the following remarks. . . .

As is already indicated in my last article, the Āryan psychologists have traced this current of mental states to its source—the eternal *Chinmātra* [pure consciousness] existing everywhere. When the time for evolution comes this germ of *Prajñā* [consciousness as the capacity of perception] unfolds itself and results ultimately as *Cosmic ideation*. . . .

. . . And therefore the Advaitī philosophers have chiefly considered it in this light, and explained their cosmogony from a subjective point of view. In doing so, however, they cannot avoid

the necessity of speaking of a universal mind (and this is Brahmā, the Creator) and its ideation. But, it ought not to be inferred therefrom that this universal mind necessarily belongs to an Omnipresent living conscious Creator, simply because in ordinary parlance a mind is always spoken of in connection with a particular living being. It cannot be contended that a material *upādhi* is indispensable for the existence of mind or mental states when the objective universe itself is, so far as we are concerned, the result of our states of consciousness. Expressions implying the existence of a conscious *Īśvara* which are to be found here and there in the Upaniṣads should not therefore be literally construed.²¹

That is, we should take them esoterically. This certainly does agree with the other esoteric teachings we have on the existence of a conscious God, or the lack thereof. This is exactly what they teach. But this is not what is taught in exoteric Advaita Vedānta. Yet, when giving these views Subba Row assures us that “in the opinion of Advaitīs, the Upaniṣads and the *Brahmasūtras* fully support their views on the subject.” A couple of the Upaniṣads, namely the *Māṇḍūkya* with Gauḍapāda’s *Kārikā* thereon, and the *Nṛsimha-tāpanīya*, include statements that do support the views he gives as those of the Advaitīs.²² But the great majority of Advaitīs accept the statements found in the Upaniṣads on the question of God that he has just advised us not to take literally.²³

The Question of Eternal, Superphysical Substance

At the end of the above-quoted article, Subba Row gave us a valuable comparison of the Advaita Vedānta teachings (these would be the esoteric ones, as we must now expect) with the teachings of the esoteric Buddhist or Arhat cosmogony of the Theosophical Mahatmas. But we will not be able to derive full benefit from this until we familiarize ourselves with the other main question that was discussed, that of eternal, superphysical substance. Regarding this, a statement made by Subba Row in the passage given above, quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, espouses

what is the fully orthodox Advaita Vedānta position; namely, that *prakṛti* or cosmic matter is ultimately unreal, and *puruṣa* or spirit is the ultimate reality known as *parabrahman*:

Prakṛiti is nothing more than illusion, and Puruṣa is the only reality; it is the *one* existence which remains eternal in this universe of Ideas. This entity then is the Parabrahman of the Advaitīs.²⁴

But Subba Row will say just the opposite in an article the following month. In reply to a not unreasonable question from the Almora Swami, Subba Row rather haughtily writes:

To our utter amazement, we are called upon to prove that matter is indestructible; at any rate, that “matter is as eternal and indestructible as spirit”!²⁵

Here he tells us that *prakṛti* or cosmic matter is eternal, while *puruṣa* or spirit is non-existent without it; and further that this cosmic matter as undifferentiated, referred to as *mūla-prakṛti*, is the *parabrahman* of Advaita Vedānta:

And primeval cosmic matter, whether called Asat or Tamas, or Prakṛti or Śakti, is ever the same, and held to be eternal by both Hindu and Arhat philosophers, while *Puruṣa* is inconceivable, hence non-existent, save when manifesting through Prakṛti. In its undifferentiated condition, some Advaitīs refuse to recognise it as matter, properly so called. Nevertheless this entity is their PARABRAHMAN, with its dual aspect of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*.²⁶

This is the esoteric position. In fact, as far as can be judged by comparison to other Theosophical sources, the full quotation (given below) constitutes one of the most direct statements of the esoteric position on eternal, superphysical substance to be found in the Theosophical writings.

A few years later, however, Subba Row would again revert to the exoteric Advaita Vedānta position on this question, in his lectures on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In these he described *mūla-prakṛti*

or undifferentiated cosmic matter as a sort of veil thrown over the absolute reality known as *parabrahman*, and therefore not *parabrahman* itself, as he had earlier asserted it was in his debate with the Almora Swami. He said:

This *Mūlaprakṛiti* is no more *Parabrahman* than the bundle of attributes of this pillar is the pillar itself; *Parabrahman* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and *Mūlaprakṛiti* is a sort of veil thrown over it.²⁷

Thus, after expending much energy in trying to prove to the Almora Swami that *mūla-prakṛiti* is *parabrahman*, Subba Row here effectively undoes this. In these lectures, he avowedly gave his own views, not to be taken “as the views of any other authority higher than myself.”²⁸ In standard Advaita Vedānta, *mūla-prakṛiti* is not usually distinguished from *prakṛiti*, and both are equated with *māyā*, “illusion.” This *māyā* is taught as having two powers, that of veiling (*āvṛti*), and that of projecting (*vikṣēpa*).²⁹ What Subba Row presented here is the standard view, which regards *mūla-prakṛiti* as *māyā* and therefore as veiling the real.

This statement was then quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, in a footnote given in the Proem, while his esoteric statement about *mūla-prakṛiti* made to the Almora Swami was never quoted in that book. The above statement was there quoted with additional material, and deleting the first clause, as follows:

From its [the Logos’] objective standpoint, *Parabrahman* appears to it as *Mūlaprakṛiti*. . . . Of course this *Mūlaprakṛiti* is material to it, as any material object is material to us *Parabrahman* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and *Mūlaprakṛiti* is a sort of veil thrown over it.³⁰

A few pages later in the Proem, Blavatsky gave the three fundamental propositions of the Secret Doctrine, and shortly thereafter summarized the first one as:

The ABSOLUTE; the *Parabrahman* of the Vedāntins, or the one Reality, . . .³¹

But we must now wonder if this *parabrahman*, here equated with the Theosophical Absolute, is *puruṣa*, “the only reality,” where “prakṛiti is nothing more than illusion,” as Subba Row told us in February 1883, or instead if it is undifferentiated cosmic matter, without which *puruṣa* is non-existent, as Subba Row told us in March 1883. What should be a clear teaching is much confused by Subba Row first giving the exoteric Advaita Vedānta position, then giving the esoteric position, then reverting to the exoteric position by describing *mūla-prakṛti* as “a sort of veil thrown over” *parabrahman*. This phrase is repeated by Blavatsky several times in *The Secret Doctrine*, thereby perpetuating the confusion. The clear and repeated statements by the Theosophical Mahatmas, however, leave little doubt that the *parabrahman* equated with the Theosophical Absolute is undifferentiated cosmic matter whose life is *puruṣa*, the esoteric Advaita Vedānta position. The fullest statement we have is found in Mahatma letter #10:

If people are willing to accept and to regard as God our ONE LIFE immutable and unconscious in its eternity they may do so and thus keep to one more gigantic misnomer. But then they will have to say with Spinoza that there is not and that we cannot conceive any other substance than God; . . . —and thus become Pantheists. . . . If we ask the theist is your God vacuum, space or matter, they will reply no. And yet they hold that their God penetrates matter though he is not himself matter. When we speak of our One Life we also say that it penetrates, nay is the essence of every atom of matter; and that therefore it not only has correspondence with matter but has all its properties likewise, etc.—hence *is* material, *is matter itself*. . . .

. . . We are not Adwaites, but our teaching respecting the one life is identical with that of the Adwaites with regard to Parabrahm. And no true philosophically trained Adwaites will ever call himself an agnostic, for he knows that he is Parabrahm and identical in every respect with the universal life and soul—the macrocosm is the microcosm and he knows that there is no God apart from himself, no creator as no being. . . .

We deny the existence of a thinking conscious God, on the grounds that such a God must either be conditioned, limited

and subject to change, therefore *not* infinite, or if he is represented to us as an eternal unchangeable and independent being, with not a particle of matter in him, then we answer that it is no being but an immutable blind principle, a law. . . .

Our reasons may be briefly summed up thus:

(1) We deny the absurd proposition that there can be, even in a boundless and eternal universe—two infinite eternal and omnipresent existences.

(2) Matter we know to be eternal, *i.e.*, having had no beginning (*a*) because matter is Nature herself (*b*) because that which cannot annihilate itself and is indestructible exists necessarily—and therefore it could not begin to be, nor can it cease to be (*c*) because the accumulated experience of countless ages, and that of exact science show to us matter (or nature) acting by her own peculiar energy, of which not an atom is ever in an absolute state of rest, and therefore it must have always existed, *i.e.*, its materials ever changing form, combinations and properties, but its principles or elements being absolutely indestructible.

(3) As to God—since no one has ever or at any time seen him or it—*unless he or it is the very essence and nature of this boundless eternal matter, its energy and motion*, we cannot regard him as either eternal or infinite or yet self existing. We refuse to admit a being or an existence of which we know absolutely nothing; because (*a*) there is no room for him in the presence of that matter whose undeniable properties and qualities we know thoroughly well (*b*) because if he or it is but a part of that matter it is ridiculous to maintain that he is the mover and ruler of that of which he is but a dependent part and (*c*) because if they tell us that God is a self existent pure spirit independent of matter—an extra-cosmic deity, we answer that admitting even the possibility of such an impossibility, *i.e.*, his existence, we yet hold that a purely immaterial spirit cannot be an intelligent conscious ruler nor can he have any of the attributes bestowed upon him by theology, and thus such a God becomes again but a blind force. . . .

In other words we believe in MATTER alone, in matter as visible nature and matter in its invisibility as the invisible omnipresent omnipotent Proteus with its unceasing motion which is its life,

and which nature draws from herself since she is the great whole outside of which nothing can exist. . . .

The existence of matter then is a fact; the existence of motion is another fact, their self existence and eternity or indestructibility is a third fact. And the idea of pure spirit as a Being or an Existence—give it whatever name you will—is a chimera, a gigantic absurdity.³²

The unceasing motion of matter or substance, its life, is what is referred to as spirit or *puruṣa*. This is made clear in a follow-up Mahatma letter, #22. Being the very motion of substance, spirit cannot exist independently of it. Without something to move, there can be no motion. This is why the idea of pure spirit is untenable. Again, being the very life of substance, spirit is quite inseparable from it. The two are really one, the “one life.”

The conception of matter and spirit as entirely distinct, and both eternal, could certainly never have entered my head, . . . for it is one of the elementary and fundamental doctrines of Occultism that the two are one, and are distinct but in their respective manifestations, and only in the limited perceptions of the world of senses. . . . matter *per se* is indestructible, and as I maintain coeval with spirit—that spirit which we know and can conceive of. Bereaved of Prakriti, Purusha (Spirit) is unable to manifest itself, hence ceases to exist—becomes *nihil*. . . . Motion is eternal because spirit is eternal. But no modes of motion can ever be conceived unless they be in connection with matter.³³

The teaching given here in the Mahatma letters is that eternal, living, superphysical substance with its motion, which is its life, also called spirit or *puruṣa*, is the one reality. Consciousness only arises from the motion or life of substance. Thus, *parabrahman* is here not an absolute reality that may be designated “spirit,” to which *mūla-prakṛti* is material and “a sort of veil thrown over it.” Rather, *parabrahman* is identical with *mūla-prakṛti*, where *puruṣa* or spirit is the very life or motion of *prakṛti*. This is the meaning of Subba Row’s esoteric statement that *puruṣa* is non-existent without *prakṛti* or cosmic matter. Without the one, there cannot

be the other. So *parabrahman* cannot stand behind *mūla-prakṛti*, as in the common conception where it is more subtle, because the two are absolutely inseparable. They are one. They are truly *advaita*, “non-dual.”

This teaching of the Theosophical Mahatmas is the same as the teaching of Advaita Vedānta that Subba Row argued for with the Almora Swami, as may be seen in the fuller quotation referred to and partially cited above, which follows. Of course, we must call this the esoteric Advaita Vedānta teaching.

[The Almora Swami asks:] Will the Editor satisfy us by proving the assertion that “matter is as eternal and indestructible as spirit”? . . .

[T. Subba Row replies:] To our utter amazement, we are called upon to prove that matter is indestructible; at any rate, that “matter is as eternal and indestructible as spirit”! . . .

Our “assertion” then means the following: Undifferentiated cosmic matter or *Mūlaprakṛiti*, as it is called in Hindu books, is *uncreated* and eternal. . . . In every objective phenomenon perceived, either in the present plane of consciousness or in any other plane requiring the exercise of spiritual faculties, there is but change of cosmic matter from one form to another. There is not a single instance, or the remotest suspicion of the annihilation of an atom of matter ever brought to light either by Eastern Adepts or Western scientists. When the common experience of generations of Adepts in their own spiritual or psychic field of observation, and of the ordinary people in theirs—(*i.e.*, in the domain of physical science) points to the conclusion that there never has been the utter annihilation of a single material particle, we are justified, we believe, in saying that matter is indestructible, though it may change its forms and properties and appear in various degrees of differentiation. Hindu and Buddhist philosophers have ages ago recognized the fact that *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti* are eternal, co-existent, not only correlative and interdependent, but positively one and the same thing for him who can read between the lines. Every system of evolution commences with postulating the existence of *Mūlaprakṛiti* or *Tamas* (primeval darkness). . . .

[Subba Row then gives two quotations in Sanskrit to show this, one using *tamas*, “darkness,” and one using *asad*, “non-being”: *tama eva purastāt abhavat viśvarūpam*, literally, “darkness alone was the form of the all in the beginning” (compare “Book of Dzyan,” stanza I, verse 5: “Darkness alone filled the boundless all”); and *asad vā idam agra āsīt*, “this (universe) was verily non-being in the beginning.”]

. . . And primeval cosmic matter, whether called *Asat* or *Tamas*, or *Prakṛiti* or *Śakti*, is ever the same, and held to be eternal by both Hindu and Arhat philosophers, while *Purusha* is inconceivable, hence non-existent, save when manifesting through *Prakṛiti*. In its undifferentiated condition, some Advaitis refuse to recognize it as matter, properly so called. Nevertheless this entity is their PARABRAHMAN, with its dual aspect of *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti*. In their opinion it can be called neither; hence in some passages of the Upanishads we find the expression, “PRAKṚITILAYA” mentioned; but in all such passages the word “Prakṛiti” means, as we can prove—*matter in a state of differentiation*, while *undifferentiated* cosmic matter in conjunction with, or rather in its aspect of, *latent spirit* is always referred to as “MAHĀ-ĪŚVARA,” “Purusha” and “Paramapada.”³⁴

This is not, however, the teaching of known or exoteric Advaita Vedānta, despite Subba Row’s assertions that it is. The Almora Swami, whose views represent the orthodox teachings, was not wrong from this standpoint in doubting the idea that matter is eternal. He then replies that this is not the teaching of Advaita Vedānta, as Subba Row said it was, and tries to show this. The normal teaching is that *māyā*, “illusion,” also called *avidyā*, “ignorance,” and equated with *prakṛti* or *mūla-prakṛti*, is said to be indescribable (*anirvacanīya*) as to its existence. Although it is without beginning, it ends for a practitioner who reaches *mukti*, “liberation” or “emancipation,” through realizing *brahman*.³⁵ It is therefore not eternal. We must also note that *brahman* is the term normally used in Advaita Vedānta for the absolute reality, while Subba Row always refers to it as *parabrahman*. They are synonyms. With this background, we can now follow what the Almora Swami says in reply to Subba Row:

Now having done with the effect, *matter*, we come to its cause the Mūla-Prakṛiti, which is also called Avidyā or ignorance, the mother of Karma and the cause of Bandha [bondage]. So long as this Prakṛiti is not *layaed* [dissolved] into spirit by dissolving it into Sattva-guṇa, there is no emancipation. Mukti [emancipation] with Prakṛiti is no Mukti at all. Beyond Prakṛiti is emancipation. This is the conclusion of the whole of our Āryan Occultism. . . . (p. 154)

It is not our object, even if we could, to cite all the Āryan books, but we could desire you and your readers to read in continuation of our quotations all the numbers of the sixth Volume of 1882 of the Śad-darśana-Cintanika which will shew that not only Śāṅkarācārya, but also almost all the commentators and reformers and other great Ṛiṣhis, not to speak of the Upaniṣhads, have rejected the theory of the matter being as eternal as spirit, by which you are misled. . . . (pp. 154-155)

Nowhere throughout Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha and Bhāgavata do we find any statement which recommends this Prakṛiti to be known. On the contrary, every Āryan occultist, particularly Kapila in his lectures to Devahutī speaks against it. . . . (p. 159)

Puruṣha, according to Upaniṣhads, is Svayam Prakāśa, i.e., self-manifesting; therefore cannot be dependent on Prakṛiti only, for its manifestation. No *Advaites* will take Brahman with Prakṛiti or *guṇa* [attribute] or duality. Their Brahman is Puruṣha beyond the Prakṛiti, in other words, Akṣhara [imperishable]. Latent spirit is never referred to as *Mahā Īśvara*. . . . (pp. 159-160)³⁶

The normal teaching of Advaita Vedānta is that matter is not eternal, but is a veil of illusion or ignorance projected over the real that must be removed or dissolved in order to realize *brahman*. The Almora Swami shows this with many quotations from the scriptures, and sums this up as “Brahman is Puruṣha beyond the Prakṛiti.” This, as we recall, is just what Subba Row had said a few months earlier: “Prakṛiti is nothing more than illusion, and Puruṣha is the only reality,” and this was quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*. Agreeably then, this is what Advaita Vedānta teaches, exoterically speaking. But Subba Row had here argued otherwise, giving what is the esoteric teaching although without

saying so, and this is what the Almora Swami could not accept. Not only is *mūla-prakṛti* eternal, it is identical to *parabrahman*.

When Subba Row again reverted to the exoteric teaching a few years later, saying that *mūla-prakṛti* is a sort of veil thrown over *parabrahman*, and therefore not *parabrahman* itself, he did make it an eternal veil. He kept this much of the esoteric. But even this was too much for other Advaita Vedāntins, because they regard *mūla-prakṛti* as *māyā*, or illusory. It is an illusory veil. As such it cannot be eternal. In the introduction to a translation of the *Vāsudeva-manana*, “considered by the Pandits in Southern India as the standard compendium on Advaita philosophy,” published in a Theosophical journal in 1892, we read:

T. Subba Row, in his learned *Bhagavad Gītā* lectures, has postulated three eternal principles in the fourth state [Turiya]: viz., Mūlaprakṛiti; the Logos, or Īshvara, or Nārāyana; and the Light from the Logos, or Daiviprakṛiti, or Fohat. He also states that Nirvāna, or Moksha, is attained by merging into the Logos, which, as he says, has the veil of Mūlaprakṛiti between it and Parabrahman. But the Brāhmins in Southern India are loth to accede to this proposition in the light of this and other authorities, on the ground that there can be no Māyā in Nirvāna, whereas, according to T. Subba Row, there is Mūlaprakṛiti in that state which they consider to be Māyā.³⁷

The *Vāsudeva-manana* is one of the few Advaita Vedānta texts to use the term *mūla-prakṛti*, and specifically equates it with *māyā*, “illusion,” *avidyā*, “ignorance,” etc.³⁸ In his reply to the Almora Swami’s statements quoted above, Subba Row accepts that *mūla-prakṛti* is *māyā*, but not that it is *avidyā*. This is based on the fact that the texts distinguish these two as higher and lower, describing *māyā* as the pure *sattva* aspect (*guṇa*) of *prakṛti*, and *avidyā* as the impure *rajas* and *tamas* aspects (*guṇas*) of *prakṛti*.³⁹ Thus, says Subba Row, it is only *avidyā* or ignorance that ends for a practitioner who attains liberation through realizing *brahman*, not *māyā*. He goes on to say that *māyā* or *mūla-prakṛti* must be eternal because of the statements in the scriptures that “all is *brahman*,” and that *brahman* is both the ensouling spirit or

overseer (*adhiṣṭhātṛ*) and the underlying substance or material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*). He writes:

In truth, Prakṛiti and Puruṣa are but the two aspects of the same ONE REALITY. As our great Śaṅkarācārya truly observes at the close of his commentary on the 23rd Sūtra of the above-mentioned Pāda [*Brahma-sūtra* 1.4], “Parabrahman is Kartā (Puruṣa), as there is no other Adhiṣṭhātā [overseer], and Parabrahman is Prakṛiti, there being no other Upādāna [material cause].” This sentence clearly indicates the relation between the “One Life” and the “One Element” of the Arhat philosophers.⁴⁰

Here we are getting further esoteric statements following upon and confirming Subba Row’s major esoteric statement on this made to the Almora Swami a few months earlier, cited above in comparison with Mahatma letter #10. Subba Row in this passage translates as *parabrahman* the original term *ātman*, which is also used synonymously with *brahman*. A few pages further on in this article, Subba Row addresses the erroneous impression that he holds manifested or differentiated matter to be eternal:

If the Swami only pauses to consider the nature of “this one element” in its dual aspect, he will be able to see that it is but an aspect of Parabrahman. All the arguments advanced by him seem to show that he is labouring under the impression that we are contending for the permanency of this illusive world.⁴¹

Before saying this he had summarized and responded to the Almora Swami’s arguments, which tried to show that *prakṛti* is not eternal. In rebuttal of these, Subba Row’s first reason given was to distinguish *mūla-prakṛti* as undifferentiated from *prakṛti* as differentiated. It is the latter that is illusory, while the former, being undifferentiated and without attributes, is eternal:

[summary:] I. For certain reasons matter is not Spirit; Spirit is eternal and therefore matter is not eternal.

In reply to this argument I beg to state that the major premise is wrong in itself, and does not affect undifferentiated Prakṛiti as

the grounds on which it is based are not applicable to it for the following reasons:

(a) Mūlaprakṛiti has not the attributes enumerated, as the said attributes imply differentiation and Mūlaprakṛiti is undifferentiated according to our doctrines.⁴²

After giving five more reasons, he proceeds to take up the Almora Swami's second argument. In Subba Row's comments on this argument we will have to put aside his personal remarks in order to get his point about the teachings. The *turiya avasthā*, "fourth state," is the highest of the four states or conditions taught in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, those of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and the "fourth." It is the highest state that a person can reach, and is attainable in meditation. It is practically the same state as *mukti*, or liberation. So it is free from delusion. In it, one knows reality as it is.

Our Swami's second argument is extremely ridiculous. When stated briefly it stands thus:

II. The existence of matter is not known either in Suṣhupti [deep sleep] or Turiya ["fourth" or ultimate] Avasthā [state or condition], and therefore matter is not eternal.

This is enough to convince me that the Swami of Almora knows as much about Turiya Avasthā as of the features of the man in the moon. The learned gentleman is in fact confounding Avidyā with Māyā. Indeed, he says that Mūlaprakṛiti is Avidyā. I shall be very happy if he can quote any authority in support of his proposition.⁴³

As mentioned above, the *Vāsudeva-manana* equates *mūla-prakṛiti* with both *māyā* and *avidyā*. Subba Row apparently missed this passage, too. He then expands his point about differentiation:

I beg to inform him again that Avidyā laya [the dissolution of ignorance] is not necessarily followed by Prakṛiti laya [the dissolution of matter]. It is the differentiation of Mūlaprakṛiti that is the cause of Avidyā or ignorant delusion, and when the differentiated cosmic matter returns to its original undifferentiated

condition at the time of Mahāpralaya, Avidyā is completely got rid of. Consequently, Mūlaprakṛiti instead of being identical with Avidyā implies the absence of Avidyā. It is the highest state of *non being*—the condition of Nirvāṇa. Mukti [liberation], therefore, is beyond differentiated Prakṛiti and beyond Avidyā, but it expresses the condition of undifferentiated Mūlaprakṛiti.⁴⁴

To drive home his point about differentiation, at the same time making another personal remark, he adds further on:

Our opponent seems to think that as every Yogi is asked to rise above the influence of Avidyā, it must necessarily be assumed that Prakṛiti is not eternal in its undifferentiated condition. This is as illogical as his other arguments. Illusion arises from differentiation or, Dvaitabhāva as it is technically called; and absence of differentiation, whether subjective or objective is the Nirvāṇa of Advaita.⁴⁵

Returning to his conclusion of this argument, Subba Row gives a passage from the commentary on the *Nṛsiṃha-uttara-tāpanīya Upaniṣad* that indicates the existence of *mūla-prakṛiti* in the *turīya avasthā*.⁴⁶ He follows this with the astute observation that calling this element “matter” is no less reasonable than calling it “spirit.” He says:

It will also be seen from the passage above referred to that Mūlaprakṛiti exists even in the highest stage of Turīya Avasthā. The Swami is pleased to ask us why we should call this element matter if it is but an aspect of Puruṣa. We are obliged to use the word matter as we have no other word in English to indicate it; but if the Swami means to object to the word Prakṛiti being applied to it, it will be equally reasonable on my part to its being called either God, Spirit or Puruṣa.⁴⁷

At the end of this article, Subba Row repeats in other words what he had said to the Almora Swami in his previous article, quoted above, that *puruṣa* is inconceivable, hence non-existent without *prakṛti*. He caps this off with further reference to the

important quotation from Śaṅkarācārya's *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtra* given earlier in this article, also quoted above, on *parabrahman* being the only *adhiṣṭhātṛ*, or ensouling spirit, as well as the only *upādāna*, or underlying substance. Here he uses the synonym *puruṣa* in place of *parabrahman*.

I beg also to inform him that it is impossible to think of Puruṣa except in conjunction with Mūlaprakṛiti, Puruṣa can act *only through* Prakṛiti. . . . It is quite clear that an Adhiṣṭhātā [overseer] can never exist without Upādāna [material cause]. If, as is stated by Śaṅkarācārya, Puruṣa is Adhiṣṭhātā or Kartā [doer, operative cause], and if Prakṛiti is Upādāna [material cause], the necessary co-existence of these two aspects becomes inevitable.⁴⁸

That the two are one, being an esoteric teaching, is only implied by this statement. It is not directly stated here or elsewhere. Yet with the help of a word-index published in 1973, a more direct statement of this has been found in Śaṅkarācārya's *Commentary* on *Brahma-sūtra* 2.3.9, confirming Subba Row's point here.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, the term *mūla-prakṛiti* is not much used in Advaita Vedānta texts. It is found only once in Śaṅkarācārya's *Commentary* on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and only seven times in his entire *Commentary* on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Here is Śaṅkarācārya's statement that more directly equates *mūla-prakṛiti* and *brahman*, i.e., what Subba Row calls *parabrahman*, as translated by Swami Gambhirananda:

. . . unless a primary material cause [*mūla-prakṛiti*] is admitted, it will end in an infinite regress. And whatever is understood to be the primary cause [*mūla-prakṛiti*] will itself be our Brahman.⁵⁰

With this point, namely, that the two are one, Subba Row concludes his attempt to prove to the Almora Swami that matter is as eternal as spirit, and in fact is inseparable from it. That is, *mūla-prakṛiti* is *parabrahman* itself, and cannot be excluded from it. They are two sides of the one same coin. That one is truly *advaita*, or non-dual. What is actually an esoteric teaching was here presented as the exoteric teaching of Advaita Vedānta, and

argued for at length. But a few years later in his lectures on the *Bhagavad-gītā* he would paint a very different picture of the teaching of Advaita Vedānta on this question. What he argued for here, with such great assurance that he was right and the Almora Swami was wrong, was dropped.

This article was the end of the debate, since no more was published. Thus, we do not know if the Amora Swami replied to this or not. It seems, however, that Subba Row was unable to convince him of the error of his views. Nor was Subba Row able to persuade other Advaita Vedāntins, as we saw in the quotation given above from the introduction to the *Vāsudeva-manana*. He was not even able to convince fellow Vedāntin Theosophists. It is a well-known fact that, once formed, preconceptions are very hard to overturn, even by the best of reasonings. So even fellow Theosophists, who are sympathetic to the esoteric teachings, were not convinced by his arguments with the Almora Swami that *mūla-prakṛti* is eternal and one with *parabrahman*.

When Subba Row in his lectures equated *mūla-prakṛti* with *avyakta*, the “unmanifested,” as used in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he was criticized by a Vedāntin Theosophist for giving a Sāṃkhya interpretation to a Vedānta concept.⁵¹ In the Sāṃkhya system, *mūla-prakṛti* is taught as being eternal, unconscious substance. But this *avyakta* is taught in Vedānta as being *parabrahman*, i.e., pure consciousness as distinct from substance or *mūla-prakṛti*. Yet even the Theosophist who wrote a defense of Subba Row on this issue agrees with standard Advaita Vedānta that *mūla-prakṛti* is a temporary illusion, saying that “Mulaprakriti is simply an illusory veil thrown over Parabrahman,” and that Parabrahman was “existing anterior to it,” and “does not perish during the Cosmic Pralaya.”⁵² He used the very same phrase as Subba Row used in these *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures, that it is an illusory “veil thrown over Parabrahman,” as showing that *mūla-prakṛti* is not eternal and one with *parabrahman*. Subba Row had said:

This *Mūlaprakṛti* is no more *Parabrahman* than the bundle of attributes of this pillar is the pillar itself; *Parabrahman* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and *Mūlaprakṛti* is a sort of veil thrown over it.⁵³

There can be no mistake about what he means here, for later on in these lectures he says again that they are not the same:

I have also said that *Mūlaprakṛiti* should not be confounded with *Parabrahman*. If it is anything at all, it is but a veil of *Parabrahman*.⁵⁴

He distinguishes two kinds of *avyakta*, the “unmanifested,” used in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, one higher and one lower. The higher one is *parabrahman*, while the lower one is *mūla-prakṛti*. Here he uses the words that his defender quoted, describing *parabrahman* as “existing anterior” to *mūla-prakṛti*, and saying that *parabrahman* “will not perish even at the time of cosmic *Pralaya*.” It is the basis “even of this *Mūlaprakṛiti*.”⁵⁵ He here speaks of *mūla-prakṛti* as something different from *parabrahman* and less than eternal.

This gives us quite a different picture than what he argued for with the Almora Swami. If, as may be assumed, Subba Row was there arguing in full agreement with Mahatma letter #10, and therefore giving the esoteric teaching, *mūla-prakṛti* is one with *parabrahman*. It is eternal because *parabrahman* is eternal. They cannot in any way be separated, because *parabrahman* is the inseparable life or motion of *mūla-prakṛti*. Using the famous example of the moving firebrand from Gauḍapāda’s *Kārikā* on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, we would get a very different statement than the one he made in his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures.

The example is to take a burning torch, a firebrand, and whirl it in a circular motion. For an onlooker, this produces the illusion of a circle. This example is used to show the illusory nature of the manifested world. Motion produces this illusion, the motion of the firebrand. But that motion cannot exist by itself. It cannot be separated from the firebrand that is moving. Without the firebrand, something to move, there could be no motion. We can say that motion is what produces the illusion. An entire philosophy of illusion can be built solely on the basis of the idea of motion. But this would take for granted the idea of something to move, even if unspoken. The one could not exist without the other. We cannot say that motion is one thing, and what moves is another thing. Who would say that a moving

firebrand is two things? Even though we can speak of it and its motion, these two are inseparable. The moving firebrand is one thing; it is *advaita*, non-dual. Using this example would give us, in place of Subba Row's statement quoted above:

This *mūla-prakṛiti* is as much *parabrahman* as the firebrand is inseparable from its whirling motion; inseparable *parabrahman* / *mūlaprakṛiti* is an unconditioned and absolute reality, and the illusion of differentiated *prakṛiti* is a sort of veil thrown over it.

We must here apply in our reworded statement what Subba Row himself stressed to the Almora Swami: that what produces the veil regarded in Advaita Vedānta as illusory is differentiation, while *mūla-prakṛiti* is entirely undifferentiated. In Theosophical usage this undifferentiated cosmic matter has even been called "the noumenon of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter," in order to emphasize that "It is not matter as we know it, but the spiritual essence of matter."⁵⁶

Yet in this same Theosophical source, *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky also repeats Subba Row's phrase that *mūla-prakṛiti* "is a sort of veil thrown over" *parabrahman*. This phrase is repeated not only directly, as in the Proem footnote quoted above, but also indirectly, using its idea. Thus we read in that book:

. . . the impersonal, attributeless, absolute divine essence which is *no* "Being," but the root of all being. Draw a deep line in your thought between that ever-incognizable essence, and the, as invisible, yet comprehensible Presence (*Mūlaprakṛiti*), or Shekhinah, from *beyond and through which* vibrates the Sound of the *Verbum*, and from which evolve the numberless hierarchies of intelligent *Egos*, . . .⁵⁷

What shows us that Blavatsky is here using Subba Row's phrase indirectly, its idea, is the word Shekhinah. This word is defined in Blavatsky's *Theosophical Glossary* by W. W. Westcott as:

Shekinah being the veil of Ain-Soph, the Endless and the Absolute; hence a kind of Kabbalistic Mūlaprakṛiti.⁵⁸

This makes it clear that Blavatsky is here using *mūla-prakṛti* as the veil over *parabrahman*, following Subba Row's phrase, which had become well enough known that Westcott also followed it. This is as used in exoteric Advaita Vedānta, where *mūla-prakṛti* is not distinguished from *prakṛti*, so is regarded as differentiated, even if still invisible. As such, it is sharply distinguished from *parabrahman*. But of course, according to the esoteric teaching insisted upon by Subba Row to the Almora Swami, in agreement with Mahatma letter #10, there can be no line whatsoever drawn between *parabrahman* and *mūla-prakṛti*, since they are one. This is how *mūla-prakṛti* is used elsewhere in *The Secret Doctrine*, such as in Blavatsky's statement:

In its absoluteness, the One Principle under its two aspects (of Parabrahman and Mūlaprakṛiti) is sexless, unconditioned and eternal. Its periodical (manvantaric) emanation—or primal radiation—is also One, androgynous and phenomenally finite.⁵⁹

It certainly looks as though the phenomenally finite One of the second sentence is how she is using *mūla-prakṛti* in the previous quote, as the “invisible, yet comprehensible Presence (*Mūlaprakṛiti*), or Shekhinah,” while here she uses *mūla-prakṛti* in the first sentence as one of the two inseparable aspects of the One Principle, like usual in *The Secret Doctrine*. That this is in fact the case is made fully clear by another statement of Subba Row's from his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures. Blavatsky's altered usage and changed meaning of the term *mūla-prakṛti* in her previous quote was obviously adopted from him.

In my last lecture I tried to explain the mysterious connection between *Parabrahman* and *Mūlaprakṛiti*. *Parabrahman* is never differentiated. What is differentiated is *Mūlaprakṛiti*, . . .
 . . . But these attributes do not spring from *Parabrahman* itself, but from *Mūlaprakṛiti*, which is its veil, just as according to the Kabbalists Shekinah is the veil of Ain-Soph and the garb of Jehovah. *Mūlaprakṛiti* is the veil of *Parabrahman*. It is not *Parabrahman* itself, but merely its appearance. It is purely phenomenal.⁶⁰

This leaves no doubt that in Subba Row's often repeated phrase about *mūla-prakṛti* being a veil over *parabrahman* he is using the term *mūla-prakṛti* as here redefined. It is now used as something purely phenomenal that is different from *parabrahman*, and that is differentiated. This, as we well know, is exactly what he took the Almora Swami to task for doing. What happened to what he then so strongly argued for, to the doctrines he then followed?

Mūlaprakṛiti has not the attributes enumerated, as the said attributes imply differentiation and Mūlaprakṛiti is undifferentiated according to our doctrines.⁶¹

Of the places in *The Secret Doctrine* where Subba Row's veil phrase or idea is repeated, with its unacknowledged change in meaning of *mūla-prakṛti*, probably the most influential is in the "Summing Up." There Blavatsky recapitulates the teachings:

"Parabrahman and Mūlaprakṛiti" are One, in reality, yet two in the Universal conception of the manifested, even in the conception of the One Logos, its first manifestation, to which, as the able lecturer in the *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gītā* shows, IT appears from the objective standpoint of the One Logos as Mūlaprakṛiti and not as Parabrahman; as its *veil* and not the One REALITY hidden behind, which is unconditioned and absolute.⁶²

As we now see, this quote, less the initial phrase, is based on the usage of *mūla-prakṛti* as redefined by Subba Row in his lectures on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where it is differentiated. Anyone who has read this far will easily see what confusion this introduces into *The Secret Doctrine*. No one doubts that our dualistic conceptions cannot reach the one reality hidden behind the veil, but this is not the point. The veil referred to is something differentiated and purely phenomenal, as Subba Row redefined *mūla-prakṛti*. The veil is not undifferentiated *mūla-prakṛti* inseparable from *parabrahman*, as used previously. One cannot separate out a part of the partless and indivisible one reality and call it a veil. Not only would that give parts to the unconditioned and absolute, it would also make one part lower than the other part. When we

conceive of the one reality under two aspects, *mūla-prakṛti* or substance is not to be regarded as different from and lower than *parabrahman* or spirit. The two aspects of the one reality given in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine* are absolute abstract space and absolute abstract motion. It is not taught that absolute abstract motion is higher than absolute abstract space. They are equal. Nor is it taught that the latter veils the former. A veil can only be a differentiation, something in fact lower down the scale. This redefinition of *mūla-prakṛti* by Subba Row has greatly confused the simple statement that Blavatsky opened this quotation with, *parabrahman* and *mūla-prakṛti* are one in reality.

Nowhere in *The Secret Doctrine* has this new meaning and usage of *mūla-prakṛti* been acknowledged or distinguished from the previous meaning and usage. For most readers, then, it goes undetected. The presence of the two different usages can easily enough be explained by the piecemeal way in which this book is known to have been written. Once we are aware of them, clear examples of the opposing usages can be found. Following the new usage where *mūla-prakṛti* is differentiated, we have such statements as “from Parabrahman issued Mūlaprakṛiti,”⁶³ and “Parabrahman manifests as Mūlaprakṛiti.”⁶⁴ Following the earlier usage where *mūla-prakṛti* is undifferentiated and inseparable from *parabrahman*, we have “Mūlaprakṛiti, the noumenon, is self-existing and without any origin—is, in short, parentless,”⁶⁵ and “As *Mūlaprakṛiti*, it is undifferentiated and eternal.”⁶⁶

How can we explain these discrepancies in the meaning and usage of *mūla-prakṛti* by both Subba Row and Blavatsky? As noted above, Subba Row at the beginning of his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures took pains to make clear that these were only his own views, and not those of any authority higher than himself.

You will kindly bear this in mind, and not take my views as the views of the [Theosophical] Society, or as the views of any other authority higher than myself. I shall simply put them forward for what they are worth. They are the results of my own investigations into various systems of philosophy and no higher authority is alleged for them. It is only with this view that I mean to put forward the few remarks I have to make.⁶⁷

He no doubt stressed this because in the past he did sometimes speak for the Mahatmas, as did Blavatsky sometimes. Blavatsky, being herself ignorant of Advaita Vedānta, obviously took him as an authority on this subject. Whatever he said about it must be true. Witness her unquestioning acceptance of his statement about Śaṅkarācārya not being a theist, and her berating Gough for saying otherwise, when in fact Gough is not the one who was wrong on this. This explains, I believe, why this exoteric idea and statement of his, about *mūla-prakṛti* being a veil thrown over *parabrahman*, was brought into *The Secret Doctrine* by Blavatsky in several places. This is despite the fact that in many other places there we find statements contradictory to it.

As for why Subba Row himself reverted to giving exoteric ideas in his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures, lectures that were taken by the entire Theosophical community as esoteric because of his status as an authority on the esoteric, I think we find the answer in his almost proverbial reticence on esoteric matters. It is only with great reluctance that he earlier spoke of such things, even when asked to do so by his Master. His friend S. Subramaniam, in introducing these *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures when they were posthumously published in book form, there wrote:

As practitioners in the same Court, Subba Row and myself used to meet daily in the Court House. I was, therefore, a very close acquaintance of his, and he reciprocated my friendship to an extent which was to me a matter of deep gratitude. He used to drive in the evenings on holidays, and when there was no occasion to go to the Headquarters [of the Theosophical Society]. He talked about various things to me, but never about occult matters. He was so reticent on this question, that for the whole period he survived, some six years after I became acquainted with him, he never once mentioned to me the Masters or the two Masters connected with our Society. I think he even avoided answering questions regarding their existence.⁶⁸

Subramaniam also there described how Subba Row was persuaded by friends to give these lectures, lectures that he was obviously not at all inclined to give:

In December 1886, his discourses on the *Gītā* were delivered on four mornings of the [Theosophical] Convention of that year. There was much difficulty in persuading him to deliver the lectures. I was one of the three or four who put pressure upon him to deliver the lectures. A part of the condition of his undertaking to do so was that I should attend the session of the Indian National Congress, which was to take place in Calcutta that year. He persuaded me to go there, and I said I would do so, if he promised to deliver the discourses on the *Gītā*.⁶⁹

Subba Row believed that esoteric teachings should not be made public. His earlier articles were written because he was asked to do so by his Master, and he could not refuse.⁷⁰ About these, the Mahatma K.H. wrote in December 1883:

You are wrong in distrusting Subba Row's writings. He does not write *willingly*, to be sure, but he will never make a false statement.⁷¹

Later, however, he did make a false statement, based on his unwillingness to give out esoteric teachings. Blavatsky wrote in a letter in early 1885: "Subba Row repeats that the sacred science was desecrated and swears he will never open his lips to a European about occultism."⁷² Then in a letter of June 1885 we learn that, for this reason, he indeed made a false statement:

Such as Subba Row—uncompromising *initiated* Brahmins, will never reveal—even that which they are permitted to. They hate too much Europeans for it. Has he not gravely given out to Mr. and Mrs. C.O. that I was henceforth "a shell deserted and abandoned by the Masters?" When I took him for it to task, he answered: "You have been guilty of the most terrible of crimes. You have given out secrets of Occultism—the most sacred and the most hidden. Rather *that you should be sacrificed* than that which was never meant for European minds. People *had too much faith in you*. It was time to throw doubt into their minds. Otherwise they should have pumped *out of you all that you know*." And he is now acting on that principle.⁷³

Subba Row's attitude shown here is fully understandable, and it goes a long way in explaining the contradictions we have seen. His deep esoteric knowledge would no doubt have given him insights into the *Bhagavad-gītā* missed by others. In giving his own views on this subject, he has surely given us suggestions worthy of study. But it is unlikely that he has given us esoteric teachings, like he was obliged to give earlier.

This question of eternal, superphysical substance turned out to be more problematic than the question of a conscious, personal God. On the former question, some of Subba Row's exoteric statements were taken to be esoteric statements, and entered *The Secret Doctrine*. On the latter question, the esoteric statements he made, even though presented by him as exoteric statements, also entered that book. Here, supposedly exoteric teachings were used to support the esoteric teachings.

We have seen that much of what Subba Row represented as being the teachings of Advaita Vedānta was actually esoteric teachings, and not those of known or exoteric Advaita Vedānta. The situation is no different for many of the Buddhist teachings given in Theosophical writings. These, too, are often presented as being the teachings of known or exoteric Buddhism, when they are in fact esoteric teachings. For example, in the article, "Tibetan Teachings," we read:

Lamaists believe in the indestructibility of matter, as an element.⁷⁴

This is just like what Subba Row told the Almora Swami:

. . . primeval cosmic matter. . . is . . . held to be eternal by both Hindu and Arhat philosophers, . . .⁷⁵

This is no more the case for Lamaists, i.e., Tibetan Buddhists, than it is for Advaita Vedāntins. Nonetheless, the fact that this same teaching is attributed by different Theosophical teachers to exoteric systems, and in particular to the two exoteric systems that are regarded as being closest to the esoteric tradition, does provide good evidence that here we have a cardinal teaching of the esoteric tradition. This has its own value.

A Comparison of Two Esoteric Systems

We are now in a position to derive full benefit from the delineation of the esoteric teachings given by Subba Row at the end of his article mentioned earlier. Here he provides us with a summation of the esoteric Advaita Vedānta doctrine and with a very valuable comparison of this with the esoteric Buddhist or Arhat doctrine. Speaking of “the original and eternal *Cinmātra* [“consciousness alone”] which is the 7th principle in man and the *Parabrahman* of the *Advaites*,”⁷⁶ he writes:

This *Cinmātra* [pure consciousness, called unconsciousness by Subba Row] exists as it were at every geometrical point of the infinite *Cidākāśa* [field or “space” of consciousness]. This principle then has two general aspects. Considered as something objective it is the *eternal Asat* [non-being]—*Mūlaprakṛti* or *Undifferentiated Cosmic Matter*. From a subjective point of view it may be looked upon in two ways. It is *Cidākāśa* when considered as the field of Cosmic ideation; and it is *Cinmātra* when considered as the germ of Cosmic ideation. These three aspects constitute the highest Trinity of the Āryan *Advaites* philosophers. It will be readily seen that the last mentioned aspect of the principle in question is far more important to us than the other two aspects; for, when looked upon in this aspect the principle under consideration seems to embody within itself the great Law of Cosmic evolution. And therefore the *Advaites* philosophers have chiefly considered it in this light, and explained their cosmogony from a subjective point of view. . . .

This then is the purport of the *Advaita* philosophy on the subject under consideration and it is, in my humble opinion, in harmony with the *Arhat* doctrine relating to the same subject. The latter doctrine postulates the existence of Cosmic matter in an undifferentiated condition throughout the infinite expanse of space. Space and time are but its aspects and *Puruṣa*, the 7th principle of the Universe, has its latent life in this Ocean of Cosmic matter. The doctrine in question explains Cosmogony from an objective point of view. When the period of activity arrives, portions of the whole differentiate according to the latent

Law. When this differentiation has commenced, the concealed Wisdom or latent *citsakti* [power of consciousness] acts in the universal mind and Cosmic energy or *Fohat* forms the manifested universe in accordance with the conceptions generated in the universal mind out of the differentiated principles of Cosmic matter. This manifested universe constitutes a solar system. When the period of *pralaya* [dissolution] comes, the process of differentiation stops and cosmic ideation ceases to exist; and at the time of *Brahmapralaya* or *Mahāpralaya* the particles of matter lose all differentiation and the matter that exists in the solar system returns to its original undifferentiated condition. The latent design exists in the one unborn eternal atom, the centre which exists everywhere and nowhere; and this is *the one life* that exists everywhere. Now, it will easily be seen that the undifferentiated Cosmic matter, *Puruṣa*, and the ONE LIFE of the *Arhat* philosophers are the *Mūlaprakṛiti*, *Cidākāśa* and *Cinnātra* of the *Advaita* philosophers. As regards Cosmogony, the *Arhat* standpoint is objective, and the *Advaita* standpoint is subjective. The *Arhat* Cosmogony accounts for the evolution of the manifested solar system from undifferentiated Cosmic matter, and *Advaita* Cosmogony accounts for the evolution of *Bahih̥prajñā* [external consciousness] from the original *Cinnātra* [pure consciousness]. As the different conditions of differentiated Cosmic matter are but the different aspects of the various conditions of *prajñā* [consciousness as the capacity of perception], the *Advaita* Cosmogony is but the complement of the *Arhat* Cosmogony. The eternal Principle is precisely the same in both the systems and they agree in denying the existence of an extra-Cosmic God.⁷⁷

Here we have what only Subba Row could have given us: (1) a summary of the Advaita Vedānta teachings in terms of its highest trinity, something not found in other Advaita Vedānta works, so that we must regard it as an esoteric teaching; (2) a comparison of the Advaita Vedānta cosmogony, which we must again regard as esoteric, with the Arhat cosmogony, which can also only be the esoteric Buddhist cosmogony.

That these are not the teachings of the known or exoteric systems, even though attributed to them, may be seen from his

summary of the Advaita Vedānta teachings, where he gives *cid-ākāśa* as one of the three members of its highest trinity. What he means by *cid-ākāśa* can be seen in his statement given above that was quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, equating it with *parabrahman*, the absolute:

There is only one permanent condition in the universe, which is the state of perfect unconsciousness, bare *Chidākāśa* (the field of consciousness) in fact.⁷⁸

When, however, we turn to the standard Advaita Vedānta works, we do not find this term. It is not found in Śaṅkarācārya's commentaries on either the *Brahma-sūtras* or the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Nor is it found in the principal Upaniṣads.⁷⁹ These three, the *Brahma-sūtras*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the principal Upaniṣads, form the three pillars of Vedānta. Neither is this term found in Gauḍapāda's *Kārikā* on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, a text reported by Subramaniam to be a favorite of Subba Row's.⁸⁰ It turns out that *cid-ākāśa* comes from the *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha*. But there it is not used in the way Subba Row used it. Rather than designating one of the three aspects of *parabrahman* that form the highest trinity, and the one permanent condition in the universe, this term there designates the first manifestation of the absolute *brahman* or *ātman* or *cid*. As P. C. Divanji tells us:

Although it [the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*] does not discard the original terms 'Brahman' and 'Ātman' used for the supreme and individual souls in the scientific treatises, whenever it has to explain the whole or any part of its theologico-philosophical doctrine it employs the term 'Cid' to designate the Absolute and the term 'Cidākāśa' and its synonyms 'Cidaṃbara,' 'Cītkha,' 'Cinnabha,' 'Cidvyoma' &c., to designate the first manifestation thereof, which alone exists in various intangible and tangible forms.⁸¹

As a manifestation rather than the absolute itself, it is just like the *mūla-prakṛti* of known or exoteric Advaita Vedānta, and as used in Subba Row's *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures. The highest trinity of exoteric Advaita Vedānta would include neither *cid-ākāśa* nor

mūla-prakṛti, because these are considered to be manifestations. So Subba Row's summary of the Advaita Vedānta teachings in terms of its highest trinity would be an esoteric teaching, not the exoteric teaching.

In his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures of 1886, Subba Row no longer speaks of the three aspects of *parabrahman*. We no longer hear of *cid-ākāśa*, or of *cin-mātra*, while he now speaks of *mūla-prakṛti* as a manifestation. He now gives only the manifest trinity, saying that this one is the highest we are capable of understanding:

Now we see the first manifestation of *Parabrahman* is a Trinity, the highest Trinity that we are capable of understanding. It consists of *Mūlaprakṛiti*, *Īśvara* or the *Logos*, and the conscious energy of the *Logos*, which is its power and light; and here we have the three principles upon which the whole cosmos seems to be based.⁸²

Two prominent European Theosophists in December 1883 had written a harsh criticism of A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, a book in which the idea of eternal matter and its motion from Mahatma Letter #10 is given.⁸³ Subba Row and "another still greater scholar"⁸⁴ were obliged to reply to this, although their reply was published in Subba Row's name only. He there wrote, referring to one of the critics, President of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society Anna Kingsford, who thought that Sinnett had materialistically degraded the true idea:

Her strictures on Mr. Sinnett's use of the words "matter" and "motion," clearly show that she has woefully misconceived the nature of both, and that all her animadversions in this conception hang—like those of her co-worker—upon her own misconceptions.⁸⁵

In correction of these misconceptions, he says:

. . . there is a law which every will has to obey, because the nature of the ONE and only Substance in the Universe is the embodiment of that Law. I have stated the doctrine quite plainly, I believe, . . .⁸⁶

This experience was no doubt a major factor in his conclusion that esoteric teachings were never meant for European minds. Europeans obviously could not correctly understand the idea of eternal, superphysical substance with its motion. This may be why in his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures he described *mūla-prakṛti* as a manifestation, and placed it in the manifest trinity, while in his earlier articles it was not a manifestation, but instead was one of the aspects of *parabrahman* that form the highest trinity. Indeed, in this reply he states that it is one with *parabrahman* even more clearly than he did to the Almora Swami:

The Universal Spiritual Principle or Puruṣa does not certainly exist as a separate entity at the time of the Mahāpralaya, but is interblended with Prakṛiti (the Material Principle) and both exist in their eternal and ineffable state of Parabrahman.⁸⁷

This again indicates that it is in Subba Row's early article, extensively quoted above, where we get an esoteric teaching on the highest trinity of Advaita Vedānta. Likewise, the teaching he compares this with is an esoteric teaching, being quite unknown in the exoteric Buddhist teachings.

The summary given here of the esoteric Buddhist or Arhat cosmogony, as part of his comparison with the Advaita Vedānta cosmogony, is clearer than any found in *The Secret Doctrine*. He was in a unique position to provide us with a comparison of the two esoteric systems that can be relied on, and despite his great reticence on esoteric matters, he here did so. This is where we get the benefit of his esoteric knowledge.

Subba Row's delineation of the esoteric Advaita Vedānta and Arhat cosmogonies in terms of ultimate consciousness (or unconsciousness) and ultimate substance is, I believe, of great importance for understanding the two esoteric systems. If we wish to keep to the esoteric teachings, when speaking of pure consciousness or consciousness alone, we must be careful to never leave out its underlying substance, as is done in exoteric Advaita Vedānta, and as even Subba Row later did. Similarly, when speaking of substance or matter alone, we must be careful to never leave out its life or motion. We necessarily use dualistic

language and dualistic thought, but this need not prevent us from always keeping in mind the other side of the coin. With this in mind, we can indeed understand the two esoteric systems as being fully complementary, like Subba Row here portrayed them. Taking the one ultimate living substance, the esoteric Advaita Vedānta system has described the universe in terms of the life, or motion, or consciousness side, while the esoteric Buddhist or Arhat system has described the universe primarily in terms of the underlying substance side. They are indeed the two sides of the same coin. Together, they provide a valuable perspective on the teachings of the one Wisdom Tradition.

Appendix: Brahman as Substance

Subba Row, like others who may be called upon to give out esoteric teachings, was severely handicapped by being able to draw only on the exoterically available scriptures in support of them. Had these teachings been clearly spelled out in the extant texts, they of course would not be esoteric. So he was obliged to give out the esoteric teachings he knew with only the support of what could be found in the known texts. The fact that he presented these esoteric teachings as if they were the exoteric teachings accepted by all Advaita Vedāntins does not change this. Only the known texts were available to support the teachings he gave.

Under these circumstances, the case Subba Row made for *mūla-prakṛti* being eternal and identical with *parabrahman* could only be inferential. There are no statements in the known Advaita Vedānta scriptures that directly say this. Further, his case is not helped by the fact that *mūla-prakṛti* is not a native Advaita Vedānta term, but was apparently adopted from the Sāṃkhya system. It seems to me, then, that a much stronger case could be made in another way. What if, rather than trying to show *mūla-prakṛti* as an aspect of *parabrahman* or *brahman*, *brahman* itself could be shown as substance? It so happens that there is now good evidence that *brahman* was once so taught.

Bharṭṛ-prapañca was a well-known teacher of Vedānta who lived before Śaṅkarācārya. Today, the works of Śaṅkarācārya define Advaita Vedānta, and the other existing Vedānta schools developed later than him. The pre-Śaṅkarācārya Vedānta works have practically all disappeared, and Bharṭṛ-prapañca's writings are no exception. We know of him only because he is referred to at length by Śaṅkarācārya, and by Śaṅkarācārya's disciple Sureśvara, and is quoted by their sub-commentator Ānandagiri. From these sources we learn that *brahman* or *ātman* was taught by Bharṭṛ-prapañca as substance, *vastu* or *dravya*. Before going any farther, it may be well to look at what these terms mean.

To call the eternal soul a substance is nothing new in the religions and philosophies of India. The *ātman* is one of the nine substances or *dravyas* that make up the universe according

to the Hindu Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, and the *jīva* or soul is one of the six substances or *dravyas* that make up the universe according to the Jaina religion. The problem, then, is just what is meant by *dravya* or *vastu*, usually translated as substance.

Jagadisha Chandra Chatterji in his 1912 book in which he describes the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, *The Hindu Realism*, says that it is inappropriate to translate *dravya* as “substance”:

. . . that which we call the Universe consists . . . of nine classes of ultimate factors, with their various properties and relations. In Vaiśeṣika they are called Dravyas. We may translate the term by Realities or Entities, but *not* by Substances, as has hitherto been done.⁸⁸

This is because other Vaiśeṣika *dravyas* include time (*kāla*) and space (*dik*), and also mind (*manas*), to say nothing of *ātman*. We would not normally call any of these “substances.” Similarly, the Jaina *dravyas* also include time (*kāla*), as well as the medium of motion (*dharmā*) and the medium of rest (*adharma*), to say nothing of soul (*jīva*). Again, these are not what would normally be called “substances.” Nonetheless, translators have persisted in translating *dravya* as “substance,” no doubt because of what it means in other contexts. For example, in the 1991 book, *Theory of Reality in Jaina Philosophy*, Jogendra Chandra Sikdar writes:

In Jaina philosophy Reality has been conceived as a permanent, all-inclusive substance (Dravya) possessing infinite qualities and modes (guṇas and paryāyas)⁸⁹

So it seems that our only real choice is to expand our definition of “substance” to include such eternal and non-physical things as those mentioned above.

Calling *brahman* a substance is not why Śāṅkarācārya and his disciples criticized Bharṭṛ-prapañca. Rather, their critique was aimed at his teaching of *bhedābheda*, “identity in difference,” a teaching they rejected in favor of their *advaita*, “non-dualism.” M. Hiriyanna went through Śāṅkarācārya’s large commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and also Sureśvara’s even more

extensive *Vārtika* thereon, and gathered all the references to the teachings of Bharṭṛ-prapañca found in them. He published his findings in two articles in the early 1920s, which remain today our main sources on Bharṭṛ-prapañca.⁹⁰ In these two articles, the teaching of *brahman* as substance is not even mentioned.

Bharṭṛ-prapañca's teaching of *brahman* or *ātman* ("self") as substance is seen in this passage of Śaṅkarācārya's commentary:

atra kecid vyācakṣate | ātma-vastunaḥ svata evaikatvaṃ nānātvaṃ
ca yathā gor go-dravyatayaikatvaṃ sāsnaḍināṃ dharmāṇāṃ
paraparato bhedaḥ yathā sthūleṣv ekatvaṃ nānātvaṃ ca
tathā niravayaveṣv amūrta-vastuṣv ekatvaṃ nānātvaṃ ca tathā
niravayaveṣv amūrta-vastuṣv ekatvaṃ nānātvaṃ cānumeyam |⁹¹

This has been translated by Olle Qvarnström as follows:

On this some say: the Self is a substance that by itself has oneness and multiplicity, just as a cow is one as the substance cow, but its features, the dewlap, etc., are different from [one cow to] another. Just as there exists oneness and multiplicity in gross [substances], so we can infer that there exists oneness and multiplicity in indivisible formless substances.⁹²

Ānandagiri's sub-commentary on this has been summarized by Hajime Nakamura as follows. He here translates *vastu* as "thing" rather than as "substance."

According to Ānandagiri the meaning of this passage can be summarized in the following manner:

Thesis: What is at issue (= *Ātman*) is different and non-different (*bhinnābhinna*).

Reason: Because it is a thing (*vastu*).

Example: Like the case of a cow.⁹³

It is clear, then, that Bharṭṛ-prapañca taught *brahman* or *ātman* as substance, *vastu*, and that he was understood by his Advaita critics as doing so. From the quantity of references to his views and the respect that Sureśvara shows toward him while

criticizing these views, we can conclude that Bhartṛ-prapañca represented a widespread and influential school of Vedānta at that time. Although the works of pre-Śaṅkarācārya Vedāntins have for the most part disappeared, there exist a couple sources of great authority that confirm what we learn from the critical references to Bhartṛ-prapañca, namely, that *brahman* or *ātman* was taught as substance in an early school of Vedānta.

It has long been known that Patañjali, author of the great commentary or *Mahā-bhāṣya* on Pāṇini's famous grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, often said therein that substance (*dravya*) is eternal (*nitya*).⁹⁴ Being a very early writer, what he says in this book has been used as a source for what we can learn about ancient India. His statements that substance is eternal would likely indicate a prevalent belief in his time. This much can be gleaned from this important source. But this indication is expanded dramatically by what we learn from another early grammarian, Bhartṛ-hari.

Bhartṛ-hari is most famous as the primary exponent of the teaching of *śabda-brahman*, *brahman* as sound (*śabda*). This he gives in his book, the *Vākya-padīya*. In the first of its three parts he explains the philosophy of *śabda-brahman*. This part, then, is the one that has received attention. The latter two parts move on to primarily grammatical topics. In the third part there is a chapter on substance (*dravya*), the eternal substance spoken of by Patañjali. It is called ultimate substance (*pāramārthika dravya*) as opposed to conventional substance (*sāṃvyaavahārika dravya*). Here in this chapter Bhartṛ-hari says clearly and unmistakably that this ultimate substance is *ātman* or *brahman*. It begins:

1. ātmā vastu svabhāvaś ca śarīraṃ tattvam ity api |
dravyam ity asya paryāyās tac ca nityam iti smṛtam ||⁹⁵

As translated by K. A. Subramania Iyer, with words in brackets added by me:

1. The Self [*ātman*], the thing-in-itself [*vastu*], Being [*svabhāva*], the Body (Primordial matter), the Elements [*tattva*, or "reality"], these are synonyms of the word Substance [*dravya*] and it has been declared to be eternal [*nitya*].⁹⁶

The old commentary on this by Helārāja spells out for us that it is called *ātman* by Advaitins, and tells us by whom it is called what else it is called. As condensed by K. A. Subramania Iyer:

... Substance is of two kinds: real and expressional (*pāramārthika* and *sāmvyavahārika*). It is the second which, according to Vyāḍi, is the meaning of all words or rather all things can be presented by words as substance. Here, in this chapter, we are concerned with the first kind of substance. It is called by different names in different systems. The monists call it *ātmā*, the Self. The same Self appears as different things through different limiting factors (*upādhi*) which are the immediate meanings of the different words. According to the Bauddhas, the thing-in-itself (*svalakṣaṇa*) is the real substance. Followers of *sattādvaita* consider that substance is nothing more than the Being which is the own essence of a thing (*svobhāvaḥ*). When inner sequence is not meant to be conveyed, Being (*sattā*) becomes a thing (*sattva*) and this, differentiated by different limiting factors, is substance. For others, the body or primordial matter (*prakṛti*) is substance. For the Cārvākas, the four elements, air, fire, water and earth, are the substance. They call it the reality (*tattva*). When these elements combine, the body, the sense and the object result. These words are synonyms of the word *dravya*, because they denote the ultimate substance, which words like jar (*ghaṭa*) cannot do. They can be applied to anything as in the statement: *eko 'yam ātmā udakaṃ nāma* (M. Bhā. I. 1.1). Here the word *ātmā* is used for water kept in a particular vessel. Other words denote substance through *ākṛti* [form or shape]. These, on the other hand, denote substance directly. Patañjali has declared in one place that while shape (*ākṛti*) constantly changes, substance remains the same. Thus, it is eternal. What the Bhāṣyakāra [Patañjali] means by eternal is the fact of something not giving up its essence even while forms are changing and, in this sense, *dravya* is eternal even according to the Cārvākas.⁹⁷

Helārāja has here given us an extraordinary confirmation of Subba Row's early statement quoted above, about "the ONE and only Substance in the Universe."⁹⁸

In the next four of the eighteen verses in this chapter, Bharṭṛ-hari tells us that the one reality, or ultimate substance, is behind all the many and various unreal forms we perceive:

2. Through the unreal forms, it is the ultimate Reality [*satyam vastu*] which is cognised. By the words which directly express the unreal limiting factors [*upādhi*], it is really the ultimate [*satyam eva*] which is expressed.
3. It is like the house of Devadatta being recognised (or differentiated from other houses) by means of an impermanent feature of it and yet the word 'house' denoting only the bare house.
4. (Or) it is like gold etc. which even though differentiated by different impermanent forms, remains in its pure form, the expressed meaning of words like *rucaka* [necklace ornament or bracelet] and so on.
5. Just as the capacity of the eye etc. is limited by the tube [one may look through] etc., so is the capacity of words to convey all meanings restricted by the particular forms which they bring to the mind.

Here the commentator, Helārāja, explains that the substance *brahman* is what is behind all the words for different things:

. . . each word points to the substance Brahman through a particular form which that word and that word alone can bring to the mind.

In the next two verses, Bharṭṛ-hari says that even when words seem to denote only attributes, they still refer to the one reality, or ultimate substance:

6. As for the word which conveys such (impermanent) forms, since these are essentially one with it (the Substance), it also conveys the eternal [*nitya*].
7. The tradition which has come down from the elders is that there is no difference between the real [*tattva*] and the unreal [*atattva*]. The real [*tattva*], when not properly understood, is called the unreal [*atattva*].

In introducing and commenting on verse 8, Helārāja reiterates that *brahman* is the undifferentiated reality being referred to:

Comm.: The author now states that it is Brahman which appears as differentiated.

8. The undifferentiated Reality [*tattva*] appears to be differentiated. There is really no distinction of time within it and yet such a distinction is cognised.

Comm.: Thus, it is Brahman which manifests itself now as this and now as something else.

In the next three verses Bhartṛ-hari gives an example to show how what is wholly unreal can appear to be real, and says that the real can be distinguished from the unreal as what persists when the rest disappears:

9. Just as the attributes of the object cannot belong to cognition at all and yet that which is not identical with it appears as one with it.

10. In the same way, the forms of the transformations do not at all belong to the Reality [*tattva*] and yet that which is not at all identical with it appears as one with it.

11. That is real [*satya*] which persists till the end when all the forms disappear. It is eternal, it is expressed by the word and it is not different from the ultimate word-principle [*śabda-tattva*].

Bhartṛ-hari and Helārāja now depict the real as indescribable, and yet, somehow, as everything:

12. It does not exist nor does it not exist; it is not one nor is it different; it is not connected nor is it separated; it is not transformed nor is it not so.

Comm.: The reality is beyond all transformations. It cannot, therefore, be identical with them. It is beyond all assertions. One cannot say that it exists nor that it does not exist.

13. It does not exist and it does; it is one and it is many; it is connected and it is separated; it is transformed and it is not.

Comm.: And yet it is *Brahman* which appears as everything else.

14. That one Reality is seen as the word, the meaning and their relation. It is the seen, the seeing, the see-er and the fruit of the seeing.

Bhartṛ-hari in the next verse again, as he did in verse 4, refers to the analogy of gold. This classic analogy was used by Patañjali to show that substance is eternal. Patañjali wrote: *dravyam hi nityam ākṛtir anityā*, “substance is eternal, while its form is non-eternal.”⁹⁹ He then asked, “How is this known?,” and answered by giving the analogies of clay and of gold. Here is this passage as translated by K. V. Abhyankar and J. M. Shukla:

It is seen in the world that earth, when given a particular (spherical) shape, becomes a ball; after crushing the ball, small pitchers are made and after breaking the pitchers, small vases are made. Similarly, gold, when given a particular solid shape, becomes a bar; after changing the bar-form, *rucaka* ornaments are made, and after changing the *rucaka*-form, armlets are made, and after changing the armlets *svastika* ornaments are made. The gold can be given again the original form of a bar and can be given another form; the bar can be given the shape of a couple of resplendent ear-pendants red like burning embers of *Khadira* wood. Thus, it is clear that form (*ākṛti*) changes from one to another; while the abiding substance (gold) remains the same (gold); even though forms are changed one after another, the substance remains intact.¹⁰⁰

Using this analogy, Bhartṛ-hari and Helārāja tell us that, like the gold that remains when the forms disappear, the only thing real is ultimate substance, or *brahman*. Bhartṛ-hari here terms this *parām prakṛtim*, “highest substance,” an obvious equivalent of *mūla-prakṛti*, “root substance,” Subba Row’s “undifferentiated cosmic matter.”¹⁰¹

15. Just as, when forms disappear, it is the gold which is the truth (*satya*) in the ear-ring etc., in the same way, when transformations (like earth etc.) disappear, the primordial substance [*prakṛtim parām*] is the only thing which is real [*satya*].

Comm.: That which persists when all the forms disappear has been declared to be real. But somebody might ask whether something does persist at all. In answer, it is said that when forms such as ear-ring (*kunḍala*) disappear, the gold remains. Similarly, when forms such as earth disappear, primordial substance, that is, *Brahman*, remains. For this, the authority is the written tradition (*āgama*). It would not be right to say that all this universe proceeds from something which is non-existent and inexpressible. Non-existence cannot produce existence. Nothing can come out of a hare's horn. Consciousness persists in everything. Therefore, everything originally came out of it.

Notice here that Helārāja not only equates ultimate substance with *brahman*, but also with consciousness. For any Vedāntin, *brahman* is always associated with ultimate consciousness. So the ultimate substance spoken of in this chapter would also possess ultimate consciousness. It would be living substance. There is no chance that, in describing *brahman* as ultimate substance, ultimate consciousness would be left out. Helārāja also says this in his commentaries on verses 14 and 17-18.

The following verse gives the teaching of *śabda-brahman*, *brahman* as sound or word (*śabda*), saying that all words express the ultimate substance, *brahman*, the only persisting reality after unreal differences caused by ignorance disappear.

16. The primordial substance is the expressed meaning of all words. The words themselves are not different from it. Though not different from one another, there is a relation between them as though they were different from one another.

Comm.: Thus, what is called substance (*dravya*) is really *Brahman*, the only persisting reality. It is that which is expressed by all words. All usage is based on differences brought about by limiting factors. It is based on nescience. All words therefore, express *Brahman*, differentiated on the basis of limiting factors. Even words like *ātmā*, *brahman*, *tattva* express that primordial substance through some limiting factor or other. Because that which is beyond all limiting factors (*nirupādhi*) is also beyond the range of words. In comparison with words like *ghaṭa* [jar], words

like *ātmā* are much nearer to the ultimate reality. In fact, words themselves are not different from the ultimate Reality. In the world, one talks as if they were different from one another.

Bharṭṛ-hari concludes this eye-opening chapter by giving another example. This one is to show how the seemingly real diversity we experience can come from something that is really not diverse, but is in fact one and one alone.

17-18. Just as, in a dream, the one mind appears in contradictory forms, as the self and the non-self, friend and foe, the speaker and the spoken and the purpose, in the same way, while the ultimate reality [*tattva*] is unborn [*ajanman*], eternal [*nitya*] and devoid of inner sequence [*paurvāparya-vivarjita*, or devoid of earlier and later], we see it as having birth and other contradictory attributes.

The one reality behind all diversity, then, is ultimate substance, or *brahman*, and as noted above, this must also include ultimate consciousness. Such is the teaching of Bharṭṛ-hari and Helārāja.

What becomes clear from all this, namely, the references to the no longer extant Vedānta works of Bharṭṛ-prapañca, the statements of the early grammarian Patañjali, the chapter from the also early *Vākya-padīya* of Bharṭṛ-hari, and the commentary thereon by Helārāja, is that the teaching of eternal substance as the absolute *brahman* once existed in ancient India. What was once exoteric has now become esoteric. What Subba Row tried to show with the support of inferential references drawn from exoteric texts known today could have been shown plainly with the support of direct references from now esoteric texts. These texts clearly once existed openly in India, as did their teaching of *brahman* as substance.

Notes

1. These articles have been reprinted in: *A Collection of Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, Bombay: Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1895; *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, second edition, revised and enlarged, Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1931; Reprint, 1980; *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, compiled by Henk J. Spierenburg, vol. 1, San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 2001.

2. Reprinted in *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, 1950.

3. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, p. 181.

4. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, p. 182.

5. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, p. 182.

6. *The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, with the commentary by Śāṅkara*, Part I, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 34, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890, pp. 427-428.

7. *Bhagavad Gītā, With Saṃskṛt text, free Translation into English, a Word-for-Word Translation, an Introduction to Saṃskṛt Grammar, and a complete Word Index*, by Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das. Sixth Edition. Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973 (previous eds. 1905, 1926, 1940, 1950, 1962).

8. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 5, p. 192.

9. *Sankara-Dig-Vijaya: The Traditional Life of Sri Sankaracharya*, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978, pp. 196-197.

10. See my article, "The Original Śāṅkarācārya," note 36, pp. 30-32, at www.easterntradition.org. This information from 2001 can now be supplemented by the enlarged reprint of W. R. Antarkar's 1972 article as a separate booklet, *Saṅkṣepa-Śāṅkara-Jaya of Mādhavācārya or Śāṅkara-Digvijaya of Vidyāraṇya Muni*, Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2004. In his new Introduction, we read, p. v:

"I started my said thesis out of my desire to read this very book viz. The *Śāṅkara Digvijaya* or *Mādhavīya* written, as it was then generally supposed to be, by Śrī Vidyāraṇya Muni i.e., by one great man about another great man. When, however, I came across, in the course of my study, other *Śāṅkara-Vijayas* like *Vyāsācalīya*, Tiru-Dīkṣita's *Śāṅkarābhayudaya* and some others, I noticed that hundreds of stanzas were common verbatim to these works in particular on the one side and the *Mādhavīya* on the other. The very large number of such stanzas ruled out the possibility of chance identity or sameness and hence

I had perforce to ascertain the question of priority among the different works and then to decide who was likely to have borrowed from whom. In the end, I was driven to conclude that in spite of the beautiful poetic quality and the philosophical content of the *Mādhavīya*, it was this work that seemed to have borrowed from the other works and not *vice versa*.”

11. For this evidence, see my article, “The Original Śāṅkarācārya,” at www.easterntradition.org.

12. See my article, “The Original Śāṅkarācārya,” note 13, p. 22, at www.easterntradition.org. The birth date of 788 C.E. for Śāṅkarācārya was put forth in an 1866 Sanskrit book by Yajñeśvara Cimaṇa Bhaṭṭa, then copied from him by Albrecht Weber in 1876, and from him by other Western scholars. In 1882 K. B. Pathak published a chronogram in Sanskrit giving this date. It has been accepted by the great majority of Indian scholars, and has also been accepted by the largest and most influential of the traditional Śāṅkara Maṭhas, that of Śṛṅgeri.

13. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 4, 1969, pp. 15-16, and vol. 14, 1985, p. 429; same idea in vol. 6, 1954, 2nd ed. 1975, p. 99.

14. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, 1925, p. 43.

15. This is shown even in the traditional biographies. As described in Vidyāraṇya’s *Sankara-Dig-Vijaya* (see note 9 above), p. 204: “The Samkhyas say that Prakriti, constituted of the three Gunas, out of which the universe is formed, is independent. But the Vedantists say it is dependent on Iswara [God].”

16. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 78.

17. To give just one example, see the preface to *Preceptors of Advaita*, Chennai: Samata Books, 2003 (1st ed. 1968), where one of the leading Advaita Vedānta exponents of our time, T. M. P. Mahadevan, writes on p. xiii: “The Advaita tradition traces its inspiration to God Himself—as Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa, or as Sadā-Śiva. The supreme Lord revealed the wisdom of Advaita to Brahmā, the Creator, who in turn imparted it to Vasishṭha.”

18. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 598; quoting from *The Theosophist*, vol. 4, no. 5, Feb. 1883, p. 105; as reprinted in *Five Years of Theosophy*, 1885, pp. 202-203. This may also be found in *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 121.

19. *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya of Śrī Śāṅkarācārya*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965; fourth ed. 1983, p. 14; and repeated on p. 45.

20. "A Personal and an Impersonal God," *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 122. For a good explanation of this, see also p. 247, in the article, "Observations," etc., fully cited in note 85 below:

If it is maintained that the great first cause—Parabrahman—is unconscious, in the sense that it is the negation of all consciousness—it is a great fallacy. If, on the other hand, it is imagined to be conscious in our sense of consciousness—it is equally fallacious. If words are to have any meaning, conscious existence involves three elements—the Knower, the Knowledge and the Known. Now Parabrahman is "Only One without a second"—*ekamevādvītiyam*,—or, in other words, the unification of the three elements of conscious existence, mentioned above—the break-up of the three receptacles as it is technically called—*tripuṭi bhāṅgam*. Therefore there can be no conscious existence in Parabrahman. On the other hand, if Parabrahman is regarded as absolute unconsciousness violence will be done to the first principles of our philosophy. Unconsciousness is the negation of every form of consciousness, and therefore, without any relation thereto; to derive the latter from the former is to establish some sort of relation between the two, which, as we have seen is impossible. Therefore, Parabrahman is not unconsciousness, and as has been showed before, it is not conscious, in the sense the word must always be used. We are, therefore, reduced to the conclusion that Parabrahman is *absolute* consciousness, or *nirupādhikaṃ mahācaitanya*, as the Upaniṣad says.

It should be noted that the analysis of the words *cidākāśa* and *cinmātra* given in this edition of T. Subba Row's collected writings as *citta akāśā* (p. 121, fn. 226) and *citta tanmātra* (p. 122, fn. 228) are incorrect, as is that of *ciśakti*, given as *citta śakti* (p. 122, fn. 229). The first word in these compounds is *cit* (also written *cid*), not *citta*.

21. "A Personal and an Impersonal God," *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 123-125.

22. One translation of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* has a title that is quite graphic: *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad: Enlightenment without God*, by Sri Swami Rama, Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Himalayan International Institute, 1982. Several translations of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* are available with Gauḍapāda's exposition thereon, e.g., *The Āgamaśāstra of Gauḍapāda*, by Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, University of Calcutta, 1943; reprint,

Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989. A translation of the *Nṛsiṃha-tāpanīya Upaniṣad* by T. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar is found in *The Vaiṣṇavopaniṣad-s*, Adyar, Madras: The Adyar Library, 1945; one by A. A. Ramanathan is found in *The Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣad-s*, Adyar, Chennai: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 2002. Another translation may be found in Paul Deussen's *Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda*, translated from German by V. M. Bedekar and G. B. Palsule, 2 vols., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.

23. See, for example, *God in Advaita*, by A. G. Krishna Warriar, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977.

24. See note 18 above.

25. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 136.

26. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 140.

27. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, p. 458; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, Theosophical University Press, 1934, p. 21.

28. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 450-451; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 10.

29. See, for example, Śaṅkarācārya's *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, verses 110-116.

30. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 10 fn. Subba Row's statement was quoted, including the first clause, in vol. 1, p. 428.

31. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 16.

32. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, letter #10, 3rd ed., 1962, pp. 53-56.

33. *The Mahatma Letters*, letter #22, 3rd ed., pp. 138-139.

34. "In Re Advaita Philosophy," *A Collection of Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, 1895, pp. 110-113; *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, 1931, pp. 482-486; *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 136-141.

35. See, for example, Śaṅkarācārya's *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, verses 111-112.

36. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 154-160.

37. *Lucifer: A Theosophical Magazine*, vol. 10, 1892, p. 48.

38. *Lucifer: A Theosophical Magazine*, vol. 10, 1892, p. 51. This text, the *Vāsudeva-manana*, also called the *Laghu* or short *Vāsudeva-manana*, is attributed to Vāsudeva Yati. It consists of twelve chapters. Its first five chapters, however, have now been identified as actually being a work by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. In gathering all his known texts for our Bibliographic Guide, "Works of the Original Śaṅkarācārya," I obtained a copy of the only published edition of one of these, the *Māyā-vivaraṇa*.

This, according to T. S. Narayana Sastri, is described in the no longer available original biography of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya by Citsukhācārya as one of his original works. The published edition is: “Māyā Vivaraṇa of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya,” edited by T. Chandrasekharan, *Bulletin of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library* (Madras), vol. 1, no. 1, 1948, pp. 23-48. After obtaining this, I sent a copy of it to my friend Sudipta Muni in India, who gave a copy to his guru, Swami Prajñānānanda. Not long thereafter I was informed that Swami Prajñānānanda had identified the *Māyā-vivaraṇa* as the *Laghu-Vāsudeva-manana*. He also kindly sent me a book titled *Vedānta-Sandarbhā* (Mount Abu/Varanasi: Mahesh Research Institute, 1989), which included in it the *Laghu-Vāsudeva-manana*. I am extremely grateful to Swami Prajñānānanda for identifying the *Māyā-vivaraṇa* in the *Laghu-Vāsudeva-manana*. This means that in the *Laghu-Vāsudeva-manana* we now have several more printed editions of the *Māyā-vivaraṇa*, and a few English translations.

The translation serialized in *Lucifer* was published in book form as: *Vasudevamanana, or, The Meditations of Vasudeva: a Compendium of Advaita Philosophy*, by Vasudeva Yati, trans. by K. Narayana-svami Aiyar and R. Sundaresvara Sastri (Kumbakonam: Kumbakonam Branch Theosophical Society, 1893; 2nd ed., Adyar, Madras: Author, 1918). The next translation is: *An Introduction to Advaita Vedanta Philosophy: a free rendering into English of ‘Laghuvasudevamanana,’* trans. by Swami Tejomayananda (Shivanandanagar: Divine Life Society, 1972). Then another is: *Laghuvasudeva Mananam*, trans. by Swami Tapasyananda (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, [1992?]).

39. See, for example, Vidyāraṇya’s *Pañcadaśī*, verses 1.15-17. To be more precise, *māyā* is said to be when the pure *sattva* aspect (*guṇa*) of *prakṛti* predominates, and *avidyā* as when the impure *rajas* and *tamas* aspects (*guṇas*) of *prakṛti* predominate.

40. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 167.

41. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 171.

42. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 168. The second reason given here is: “Mūlaprakṛti is not dead or *jada*, as Puruṣa—the one life—always exists in it. It is in fact *Caitanya dīpta* (shining with life) as stated in Uttara Tāpanīya (see also *Gauḍapāda Kārika*).” This refers to the *Nṛsimha-tāpanīya Upaniṣad*, where the phrase about *caitanya dīptā* is found in the second or *uttara* part, chapter or *khaṇḍa* 9, verse 6. In the two Sanskrit editions listed in note 46 below, it occurs on p. 232 of the

Bibliotheca Indica edition, and on p. 145 of the Ānandāśrama edition. In the Adyar Library edition, it occurs in *The Vaiṣṇava-Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śrī Upaniṣad-Brahma-Yogin*, ed. A. Mahadeva Sastri, Adyar Library Series, no. 8 (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1923, 2nd ed. 1953), p. 288. In the English translations listed in note 22 above, it is found on p. 360 of the Srinivasa Ayyangar translation, on p. 241 of the Ramanathan translation, and on p. 855 of the Deussen translation. What is spoken of here as shining with life is *māyā*, taken by Subba Row to be synonymous with *mūla-prakṛti*. In the preceding verse 4, *māyā* is described as *jaḍa*, dead or inert. It is *caitanya-dīptā*, shining with life, in verse 6, because of the *ātman* or *puruṣa* shining in it.

43. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 169.

44. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 169.

45. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 171.

46. This passage given by Subba Row is printed in *The Theosophist*, vol. 4, no. 10, July 1883, p. 250, as: “*Guna beejopadhi Sakti mandalum.*” It is printed identically in *A Collection of Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, 1895, p. 137. In *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, 1931, p. 519, however, it is printed as: “*Guru bijopādhi Sakti maṇḍalam,*” and similarly in the 1980 reprint, p. 518, as: “*guru bijopādhi śakti maṇḍalam.*” The incorrect change of *guṇa* to *guru* was retained in *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, 2001, vol. 1, p. 169, with a note by the compiler, Henk J. Spierenburg. This note, no. 317 on p. 170, cites the original reading as printed in *The Theosophist*, and then adds: “but this sentence would be improper, so Tukaram Tatya, and after him C. Jinarājādāsa have changed the sentence.” But there is no change in the 1895 edition published by Tukaram (Tookaram) Tatya. Spierenburg lists in his bibliography a “verbatim reprint, Bombay 1910.” I must assume that a typographical error was introduced in that edition, an edition not seen by me, and then copied in the 1931 edition published by Jinarajadasa.

Although Subba Row gives no references, I was able to locate the original passage in two Sanskrit editions of this Upaniṣad. It is found in the commentary, not in the Upaniṣad. These editions are:

The Nṛisinha Tāpanī of the Atharva Veda, with the Commentary of Śankara Āchārya, edited by Rāmamaya Tarkaratna, Bibliotheca Indica, work 70 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1871), p. 158, lines 13-14;

Nṛisimhatāpanīyopanishad (Pūrva and Uttara), with the Bhāshya of Śrīmat Śankarāchārya on the Pūrva and the Dīpikā of Śrīmat Vidyāranya on the

Uttara Tāpanīya, edited by Pandits at the Ānandāśrama, Ānandāśrama Sanskrita Series, no. 30 (Poona: Ānandāśrama Press, 1896; 2nd ed. 1929, with same pagination), p. 100, lines 11-12.

As may be seen, the commentary in question is attributed to Śaṅkarācārya in the Bibliotheca Indica edition, and is attributed to Vidyāraṇya in the Ānandāśrama edition. The passage is, as found in the two editions, respectively, and then with the words separated:

guṇabijopādhi-śaktimaṇḍalasthaṃ
 guṇabijopādhiṃ śaktimaṇḍalasthaṃ
 guṇa-bīja-upādhiṃ śakti-maṇḍala-sthaṃ

After giving this passage, Subba Row comments: “This is the nearest approach to the one undifferentiated element called Mūlaprakṛiti.” That is, it is not yet *mūla-prakṛti*, but is as close as is possible to get to it. It describes the highest subdivision of the highest state or condition, *turīya avasthā*. Here, the falsely limiting factor (*upādhi*) is merely the seeds (*bīja*) of the qualities (*guṇa*) of *mūla-prakṛti*, the qualities that are manifested when *prakṛti* is differentiated. So although this passage does not directly state it, it does indicate the existence of *mūla-prakṛti* in the *turīya avasthā*, the “fourth state.”

Moreover, several lines earlier, describing a slightly lower but still very high subdivision of the *turīya avasthā*, the text does directly name *mūla-prakṛti*. This is the passage:

guṇa-sāmya-upādhi-śakti-maṇḍala-sthaṃ mūla-prakṛti-māyā-sahitaṃ
 Here, the falsely limiting factor (*upādhi*) is the state of sameness (*sāmya*) of the qualities (*guṇa*) of *mūla-prakṛti*, along with (*sahita*) *mūla-prakṛti* or *māyā*. So the text explicitly says that there is *mūla-prakṛti* in *turīya avasthā*.

47. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 170.

48. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 172.

49. *Word Index to the Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya of Śaṅkara*, 2 vols., Madras: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1971, 1973. See also: *Word-Index to Śaṅkara's Gītābhāṣya*, by Francis X. D'Sa, S.J., Pune: Institute for the Study of Religion, 1985.

50. *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* 2.3.9 (*Complete Works of Sri Sankaracharya in the Original Sanskrit*, Chennai: Samata Books, 1999, vol. 7, p. 437, lines 8 and 9): *mūla-prakṛty-anabhyupagame 'navasthā-prasaṅgāt, yā mūla-prakṛtir abhyupagamyate tad eva ca no brahma*. The translation is that cited in note 19 above, where it is found on p. 461. The translation of

this passage by George Thibaut, edition cited in note 6 above, where it is found in vol. 2, p. 20, is as follows:

. . . for the non-admission of a fundamental causal substance [*mūla-prakṛti*] would drive us to a retrogressus in infinitum. And that fundamental causal substance [*mūla-prakṛti*] which as a matter of fact is generally acknowledged to exist, just that is our Brahman.

51. "Criticism on the Late Mr. T. Subba Row's *Bhagavad-Gītā*," by A. Krishnaswamy Iyer, *The Theosophist*, vol. 17, April 1896, pp. 425-427.

52. "Subba Rao's *Avyaktam*," by C. R. Srinivasayangar, *The Theosophist*, vol. 17, July 1896, pp. 615-616. A third article on this topic was published in *The Theosophist*, vol. 17, Aug. 1896, pp. 658-660. It is titled, "Bhagavad Gita and *Avyaktam*," by A. Govinda Chárlu. For the most part it agrees with the first article in criticizing Subba Row's usage of *avyakta* in his *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures.

53. See note 27 above. This statement was quoted in full in *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 428.

54. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, p. 523; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 106.

55. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, p. 524; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 107.

56. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 35.

57. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 629.

58. *The Theosophical Glossary*, by H. P. Blavatsky, 1892, p. 297.

59. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 18. See also on this, vol. 1, p. 130.

60. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 488-489; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 61-62.

61. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 168.

62. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, pp. 273-274.

63. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 433 fn.

64. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, p. 24.

65. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 62.

66. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 10 fn.

67. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 450-451; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 10. See also *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 7, p. 351.

68. "T. Subba Row: An Appreciation," by S. Subramaniam, in *The Philosophy of the Bhagavad-gita*, by T. Subba Row (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1912; 2nd ed., 1921), pp. vi-vii.

69. "T. Subba Row: An Appreciation," by S. Subramaniam, p. vii.

70. See, for example, *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 46: "M. ordered Subba Row to answer his [Myers'] objection on the date of Buddha's birth and Cunningham's fanciful dates." M. is the Mahatma Morya, Subba Row's Master.

71. *The Mahatma Letters*, letter #93, 3rd ed., p. 422.

72. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 77.

73. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp. 95-96.

74. "Tibetan Teachings," in *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 6, 1954; 2nd ed., 1975, p. 111. There are also other misrepresentations in this article, showing that the original material, said to be written by a learned Tibetan, has been added to in its English translation. Thus, we read on p. 101:

. . . it is stated that "Because from the beginning, all sentient creatures have confused the truth, and embraced the false; therefore has there come into existence a hidden knowledge called Alaya Vijñāna."

As all Tibetan Buddhists know, *ālaya-vijñāna* refers to the substratum consciousness, not to the hidden knowledge. This incorrect meaning comes from Samuel Beal's 1871 book, *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*, p. 125:

But because from the very first, all sentient creatures have confused the truth, and embraced the false; therefore has there come into being a hidden knowledge called, "Alaya vijnyāna," . . .

Similarly, in this article the learned Tibetan correspondent reportedly writes of how an earlier European work on Tibet by della Penna gives a "simply absurd" account of the brotherhood of the *byang chub*, or *bodhisattvas*, taking some literal descriptions from Tibetan Buddhist books and "then embellishes them with his own interpretation," p. 97:

"Let me say at once that monks and laymen give the most ridiculously absurd digest of the Law of Faith, the popular beliefs of Tibet. The Capuchin Della Penna's account of the brotherhood of the 'Byang-tsiub' is simply absurd. Taking from the *Bkah-hgyur* and other books of the Tibetan laws some literal description, he then embellishes them with his own interpretation. Thus he speaks of the fabled worlds of 'spirits,' where live the 'Lha, who are like gods'; adding that the Tibetans imagine 'these places to be in the air above a great mountain, about a hundred and sixty

thousand leagues high and thirty-two thousand leagues in circuit; which is made up of four parts, being of crystal to the east, of the red ruby to the west, of gold to the north, and of the green precious stone—lapis lazuli—to the south. In these abodes of bliss they—the Lha—remain as long as they please, and then pass to the paradise of other worlds.”

He is then reported as writing, with the reference to his “missionary-school-going period at Lahoula” making this very plausible, that:

“This description resembles far more—if my memory of the missionary-school-going period at Lahoula does not deceive me—the ‘new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven’ in John’s vision—that city which measured ‘twelve thousand furlongs,’ whose walls were of ‘jasper,’ the buildings of ‘pure gold,’ the foundations of the walls ‘garnished with all manner of precious stones’ and ‘the twelve gates were twelve pearls’ than the city of the Jang-Chhub either in the *Bkah-hgyur* or in the ideas of Tibetans.”

In fact, the description given by della Penna is that of Mount Meru as found in standard Buddhist works, and is very well known to Tibetans. It is not an embellishment coming from the Bible, but rather comes from their own sacred books. The *Abhidharma-kośa* is one of the five texts of the Tibetan monastic curriculum. In its chapter 3, verse 50, and commentary, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, we read as translated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin and Leo M. Pruden (1988):

Verse 50a: Meru is made of four jewels.

Commentary: Meru has four faces which are respectively, from north to west, made of gold, silver, lapis, and crystal. . . .

The mountains rest on the sphere of gold and are in the water to a depth of eighty thousand *yojanas*. Meru rises out of the water for the same number of *yojanas*, and is thus, both in and out of the water, one hundred sixty thousand *yojanas* in height.

This account, by the way, has been taken literally by Buddhists until recent decades, when many are adopting the modern scientific view.

75. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 140.

76. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 126.

77. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 124-127. The term *prajñā* is defined as the capacity of perception on pp. 120, 123.

78. See note 18 above.

79. This is according to G. A. Jacob's *A Concordance to the Principal Upaniṣads and Bhagavadgītā*, 1891, and Gajanan Shambhu Sadhale's *Upaniṣadvākya Mahākoṣa*, 1940. The former does not list *cidākāśa* at all, while the latter lists only one occurrence, in *Tejo-bindu Upaniṣad* 3.3: *cidākāśamayo 'smy aham*. This is translated by K. Nārāyaṇasvāmi Aiyar in *Thirty Minor Upaniṣads*, 1914, p. 84, as: "I am full of *Chidākāś*." The ten principal Upaniṣads are the *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chāndogya*, and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. For the commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya on the *Brahma-sūtras* and *Bhagavad-gītā* I used the word-indexes cited in note 49 above.

80. "T. Subba Row: An Appreciation," by S. Subramaniam, p. xvi (see note 68 above).

81. P. C. Divanji, "Brahma-Ākāśa Equation," *The Poona Orientalist*, vol. 10, 1945, p. 12. It is possible that Subba Row adopted the term *cid-ākāśa* from Vidyāraṇya's *Pañcadaśī*, where it is found in chapter 8, verse 75. It is there used in a simile with clouds and rain, saying that these do not affect the sky (*ākāśa*), just like the pure *cit*, consciousness, is not affected by the manifestation of the world. This is the obvious meaning, and is followed by the translators Nandalal Dhole (1886), Hari Prasad Shastri (1954), and Swami Swahananda (1967). However, P. C. Divanji in the full version of his article, "Brahma-Ākāśa Equation: Its Origin and Development," *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, vol. 9, 1948, p. 169, sees *cid-ākāśa* in this verse as a synonym of *brahman*, as does the translator Swami Anubhavananda (1994), who glosses it as *kūṣastha caitanya*. This is the sense in which Subba Row uses the term *cid-ākāśa*.

Divanji in these articles cites from *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1 what would likely be considered in known Vedānta to be the highest trinity: *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma*. He translates these three aspects of *brahman* as existence (*satya*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and infiniteness (*ananta*). He then correlates these with *sat-cit-ānanda*, respectively, the trinity made famous in Vidyāraṇya's *Pañcadaśī*. This trinity is existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*). Bliss as in the individual viewpoint corresponds to infiniteness as in the cosmic viewpoint.

82. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 2, p. 459; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 21-22.

83. The criticism was published as a pamphlet of 39 pages, titled, *A Letter Addressed to the Fellows of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society by the President and a Vice-President of the Lodge*, by Anna Kingsford and

Edward Maitland, dated December 16, 1883. In the book criticized, A. P. Sinnett's 1883 *Esoteric Buddhism*, the idea of eternal matter and its motion from Mahatma Letter #10 is found on pp. 200-201 and 208 of the 1885 fifth annotated and enlarged edition.

84. *The Mahatma Letters*, letter #87, 3rd ed., p. 403: "Mr. Maitland's Remarks and Observations on Esoteric Buddhism are fully answered by Subba Row and another still greater scholar."

85. The reply was also published as a pamphlet, of 45 pages, titled, *Observations on "A Letter Addressed to the Fellows of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society, by the President and a Vice-President of the Lodge,"* by T. Subba Row, dated 1884. It was reprinted in all the editions cited in note 1 above. I here quote it from *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 250.

86. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 253.

87. *T. Subba Row Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 246. There is a footnote to this sentence, which reads:

In the *Ṛgveda* it is said that prior to the period of evolution in the celebrated Mantra beginning, *nāsadāsīt nasadāsīt* (X. 129)—"neither *asat* or *Prakṛiti* nor *sat* or *Puruṣa* was" but the one Life latent in the one Element, "was breathing without breath."

Notes to the Appendix

88. Jagadisha Chandra Chatterji, *The Hindu Realism: Being an Introduction to the Metaphysics of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika System of Philosophy* (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1912), p. 19.

89. Jogendra Chandra Sikdar, *Theory of Reality in Jaina Philosophy* (Varanasi: P. V. Research Institute, 1991), p. viii.

90. M. Hiriyanna, "Bhartṛ-prapañca: An Old Vedantin" (*The Indian Antiquary*, vol. 53, 1924), pp. 77-86; "Fragments of Bhartṛ-prapañca" (*Proceedings and Transactions of the Third Oriental Conference, Madras, December 22nd to 24th, 1924*), pp. 439-450. Hiriyanna's first listed article gives a summary of Bhartṛ-prapañca's teachings, while the second one gives the Sanskrit extracts from the commentaries. Satya Deva Misra's article, "The Philosophy of Bhartṛ-prapañca" (*The Voice of Śaṅkara*, vol. 25, 2000, pp. 126-136) is essentially a re-statement of Hiriyanna's first listed article, thus making this information available again.

91. Śaṅkarācārya's *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya*, 4.3.30, quoted from *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣat* (Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, no. 15), p. 622.

92. Olle Qvarnström, "Space and Substance: A Theme in Madhyamaka-Vedānta Polemics" (*Studies in Central and East Asian Religions*, vol. 1, 1988), p. 27. This passage is also translated by Swāmī Mādhavānanda in *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1934; 5th ed. 1975), p. 472.

93. Hajime Nakamura, *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004), p. 138.

94. See, for example, K. Madhava Krishna Sarma, "Patañjali and His Relation to Some Authors and Works" (*Indian Culture*, vol. 11, 1944), p. 76: "In Paspāśa he gives us his view of matter. To him it is either *Kūṣṭhanitya* or *Pravāhanitya*." That is, it is either eternal (*nitya*) as unchanging (*kūṣṭha*), or eternal (*nitya*) as an uninterrupted series (*pravāha*).

95. K. A. Subramania Iyer, edited by, *Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari, with the commentary of Helārāja*, Kāṇḍa III, Part 1 (Poona: Deccan College, Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1963), p. 106. This is *Vākyapadīya* 3.2.1 or 3.111. This verse is remarkably similar to a line written by Nāgārjuna, found in his *Acintya-stava* as verse 45ab, giving synonyms for the ultimate, *paramārtha*, also called suchness, *tathatā*, and usually described as emptiness, *śūnyatā*, in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is:

svabhāvaḥ prakṛtiḥ tattvaṃ dravyaṃ vastu sad ity api |

This is found in *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*, by Chr. Lindtner (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), pp. 154-155. He translates this line as follows (double brackets added by me):

It [[the ultimate meaning, *paramārtha*]] is also termed (*iti*) own-being, nature, truth, substance, the real [and the] true.

I have given additional translations of these terms in my article, "The Doctrinal Position of the Wisdom Tradition," p. 36, note 45: *svabhāva*, "inherent nature," or "inherent existence," *prakṛti*, "essential nature," or "(primary) substance," *tattva*, "reality," *dravya*, "substance," *vastu*, "a real thing," and *sat*, "true being." These are terms that are thoroughly negated by Nāgārjuna elsewhere.

96. K. A. Subramania Iyer, *The Vākyapadīya of Bhartṛhari*, Chapter III, pt. i, English Translation (Poona: Deccan College, Postgraduate

and Research Institute, 1971), p. 64. All the following quotations from this chapter are from this translation.

97. This is from the translation cited in note 96 above. All the rest of the quotations from this commentary are also from this translation.

98. See note 86 above.

99. Patanjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, edited by F. Kielhorn as, *The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, revised by K. V. Abhyankar, fourth edition (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1985), vol. 1, p. 7, lines 11-12.

100. K. V. Abhyankar and Jayadev Mohanlal Shukla, *Patañjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya*, Āhnikas 1-3, with English Translation and Notes (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1975), p. 28. This passage has also been translated by Surendranath Dasgupta, *The Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, with Annotations (Āhnikas I-IV)*, (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1991), p. 36.

101. The term “matter,” used in the earlier Theosophical writings such as Subba Row's, was later replaced by the term “substance,” as being less misleading. Thus, as mentioned in my article, “Sāṃkhya and the Wisdom-Religion” (pp. 4-5), by the time Blavatsky wrote *The Secret Doctrine*, she had come to prefer “substance,” saying there:

In strict accuracy—to avoid confusion and misconception—the term “Matter” ought to be applied to the aggregate of objects of possible perception, and “Substance” to *noumena*; . . . (vol. 1, p. 329).

The Occultists, who do not say—if they would express themselves correctly—that *matter*, but only the *substance* or *essence* of matter, is indestructible and eternal (*i.e.*, the Root of all, *Mūlaprakṛiti*), . . . (vol. 1, p. 147).

[The foregoing article was written by David Reigle in 2009. It is here published for the first time, by Eastern Tradition Research Institute, copyright 2009.]