

5.2 COSMIC PRINCIPLES

OBSERVING AND ANALYSING THE PHENOMENA of the physical creation, scientists have determined certain basic empirical rules by which the universe may be described and, to some extent, comprehended. The actual origins of these natural laws, however, remain a mystery. Why are there three observable dimensions to space and not two or four, or more? Why does light travel at the speed it does? Why does electricity behave in the way it does? What actually are electromagnetism and gravity? How are the bodies of living creatures so intricately and complexly organized? These and many other conundrums of physical life remain a mystery. Scientists can measure and describe – but they cannot provide fundamental answers to the nature of life and existence, and how it comes into being.

Mystics are fully aware of the limitations of the human mind and the physical senses to understand the deeper mysteries of creation. They know that the understanding which they derive from mystic experience cannot be conveyed in human language. Nevertheless, certain fundamental principles can to some extent be expressed, and in the many descriptions of creation, there are hints as to the nature of certain broad principles underlying the nature of manifestation and creation, both in this world and the heavenly regions. Some of these have been covered in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 5.1. Others of a more general character are described here, while those specifically related to the soul's captivity in the creation are covered in Volume 6.

The key to intellectually understanding the ramifications of creation is provided by the mystics when they say that the Source of all – the Lord – is one and undivided, while His creation arises as patterns of multiplicity and diversity within the ocean of Himself. As regards the phenomena of this world, as well as those of the astral and causal realms, the architect of all this diversity is the universal mind. All the phenomena of this world – whether they are deemed a part of physics, chemistry, medicine, biology, evolution, psychology, sociology or any other branch of science – are ultimately related to the functioning of the greater mind, of which the human mind is only one small part.

It is because man generally ignores the higher principles of the nature and functioning of the mind – or glimpses them only rather vaguely when he turns his attention to ethical and moral considerations – that

human science is not only so incomplete but, despite its enormous advancement, it is also so imperfect, and has led to destruction on a massive planetary scale. If man could see the higher laws at work governing the play of life in this world, he would automatically rein in the activities of his own mind, and behave more in harmony with the divine law.

It is a matter of considerable interest that while man prides himself on the use of his mind to understand the nature of the universe, he fails to understand the nature of that very mind by which he thinks he understands. His understanding, therefore, is related to a point of ignorance: he is quite ignorant of the nature and governing principles of the very means by which he tries to understand the world – his own mind.

This section covers some of the general principles in creation as outlined by the mystics, as well as traditional mythologies, cosmogonies and metaphysics.

KEY ENTRIES: Adam Kadmon, guṇa, parṣufim, prakṛiti, pralaya, wǔ hsíng, yīn yáng, yuga.

An opposite reveals its opposite in the process of manifestation (*ṣudūr*).

Rūmī, Maśnavī I:1133, MJR2 p.63

See also: **al-Fayḍ al-Aqdas** (2.1).

ṣūrah (A), **ṣūrat** (P) *Lit.* in Arabic, form; in Persian, form, face, visage, countenance, image, outward appearance; mystically, the visible forms of the manifest world. In Sufism, *ṣūrat* is often contrasted with *ma'ná*. *Ma'ná* means 'meaning', but the word is commonly used for the reality or essence within something, as of the soul or spirit within the form of the body, or the divine Spirit hidden within all things, and from which they proceed. Thus, Rūmī says that *Ma'ná* is the source of all forms:

Know that form (*ṣūrat*) springs from Reality (Spirit, *Ma'ná*)
as a lion from the thicket,
or as voice and speech from thought.

Rūmī, Maśnavī I:1136; cf. MJR2 p.63

Rūmī also says that all love is actually love for the spirit, the divine 'meaning' within everything. Love for the form is only an appearance, for else, why does love for another's body vanish when the "spirit has fled":

Give up this belief in phenomena.
Loves for what is endowed with form (*ṣūrat*)
have not as their object
the outward form (*ṣūrat*) or the lady's face.
That which is the object of love is not the form (*ṣūrat*),
whether it be love for this world or yonder world;
Else why do you abandon
that which you have come to love for its form (*ṣūrat*)
after the spirit (*jān*) has fled?
Its form (*ṣūrat*) is still there: why then this satiety?
O lover, inquire who your Beloved really is!

Rūmī, Maśnavī II:702-5; cf. MJR2 p.258

The realized mystics know that the divine Beloved is the reality behind all form. When that reality is sought, the Beloved is found everywhere:

The world is but form (*ṣūrat*),
the Friend its Reality (*Ma'ná*).
Look to the Reality (*Ma'ná*),
and everything is the Beloved.

Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.212, in FNII p.74; cf. in SSEI p.100

See also: **al-ma'ná**.

tajaddud al-amthāl, al- (A), **tajaddud-i amsāl** (P) *Lit.* the renewal (*tajaddud*) of like by like (*amthāl*). A Sufi doctrine of the continuous annihilation and re-creation of the creation, by which is meant that through the divine Word, the creation is new every moment. It is continuously sustained and created in an ultradynamic process. Rūmī says:

Form was born of the Word (*Sukhun*) and died again:
 the wave drew itself back into the sea.
 Form came forth from Formlessness and returned thither,
 for, "Verily unto Him are we returning."¹
 Every instant, then, you are dying and returning:
 Muḥammad declared that this world is but a moment....
 Every moment the world is renewed,
 but we live unaware of its renewal.
 Life is ever arriving anew, like water in a stream,
 though in the body it has the appearance of permanence.
 From its swiftness it appears continuous,
 like a spark which you whirl rapidly with your hand.
 If you whirl a firebrand with dexterity,
 it appears to the sight to be a very long line of fire.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1140–42, 1144–47; cf. MJR2 p.64

1. *Qur'ān* 2:156.

tamas (S), **tamogūḥ(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* the attribute (*guṇa*) of darkness (*tamas*) – physical, moral or any other kind; ignorance, error, delusion; one of the three *guṇas*; the third *guṇa* or attribute of destruction, decay, death, inertia, inactivity, quiescence, dullness, ignorance, the past and so on:

Regarding *tamas*, it is born of ignorance,
 and creates delusion in all incarnate beings.
 It binds the soul with heedlessness, indolence and torpor....
 When *tamas* dominates, lack of intelligence,
 lack of effort, heedlessness and also delusion arise.

Bhagavad Gītā 14:8, 13; cf. BGT

Although often portrayed as negative, *tamas* is an essential aspect of creation, a part of the passage of time, and the pulse and rhythm of nature. The resting phase of winter, for example, is required, before spring can come.

And the indrawing of life in autumn is required to consolidate energy for the next creative or *rajas* period (*i.e.* spring). It is also the breaking-down process in metabolism.

No value judgment is to be attached to the *guṇas*. Plus and minus are both required for a balanced creation. Between them, the three *guṇas* form the warp and the weft of the fabric of life. A person intent upon his spiritual life should strive to attain the point of balance from which the *guṇas* of *rajas* and *tamas* proceed – that is, the peace and harmony of *sattva*. But ultimately, all the *guṇas*, being attributes of the universal mind, are to be transcended before liberation of the soul can be attained.

See also: **guṇa, rajas.**

té (dé) (C) *Lit.* power, virtue; the dynamic force of *Tào*, expressed in the physical universe. *Tào* cannot be seen in the physical world, the world of ‘ten thousand things’. However, the active power of *Tào* in each object and being is the principle that Taoists call *té*. Each object’s identity or unique attributes are manifested through *té*, enlivened by *ch’i* (breath, life force), and given unique characteristics through the juxtaposition of *yīn* and *yáng*, the principles of duality.

See also: **ch’i, Tào (3.1), yīn yáng.**

tehiru (He) *Lit.* vacuum; a term introduced by Rabbi Isaac Luria and used by some later Kabbalists to describe the ‘empty space’ or vacuum into which the *sefirot* were projected when the initial manifestation of the creation took place. The process of *zimzum* (withdrawal) of the *Ayn-Sof* (the Godhead) created the *tehiru* in which the process of emanation and creation actually happened. It is where the forces of judgment separated from the forces of mercy; where the positive and negative energies first polarized.

See also: **shevirat ha-kelim, zimzum.**

tikkun (He) *Lit.* restoration.

See **shevirat ha-kelim.**

tohu va-bohu (He) *Lit.* without form, chaos, desert, wilderness (*tohu*) + void, emptiness, chaos (*bohu*); appears in the creation story at the beginning of

Genesis, translated in a number of ways, and for which a specific meaning has never been determined:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth –
 Now the earth had been wild and waste (*tohu va-bohu*),
 darkness over the face of Ocean,
 breath of God hovering over the face of the waters –
 God said: “Let there be light!”: and there was light.
 God saw the light: that it was good.
 God separated the light from the darkness.
 God called the light: Day! And the darkness he called: Night!
 There was evening, there was morning: one day.

Genesis 1:1–5, FBM

Many commentators have suggested that this term refers to the initial state of chaos that preceded the creation – ‘chaos’ understood as undifferentiated oneness, complete formlessness, a state in which the potential for life can eventually gestate towards becoming life. Chaos here does not have the sense of destructive confusion and violence that it suggests in modern English.

As an ‘answer’ to an intriguing metaphysical conundrum, *tohu va-bohu* is the subject of a number of discussions in the *Zohar*. One in particular relates to ‘chaos’ as the pre-creation state of God. It begins with a discussion of the term *bara*, meaning ‘created’, which is the second word of the first sentence of *Genesis* (In the beginning, God ‘created’):

“*Bara* (created) is always a word of mystery, closing and not opening.”
 Said Rabbi Jose, “Assuredly it is so, and I have heard the Sacred Lamp (Rabbi Simeon) say the same, to wit, that *bara* is a term of mystery, a lock without a key, and as long as the world was locked within the term *bara* it was not in a state of being or existence. Over the whole, there hovered *tohu* (chaos), and as long as *tohu* dominated, the world was not in being or existence.”

Zohar 1:3b, ZSS1 p.14, JCL

The *Midrash* and *Zohar* give other interpretations of *tohu va-bohu* as well. Some of the most interesting of these link the term with a state of confusion to be found among the first peoples of the earth and the earth itself. Nothing is as it appears to be. The *Midrash*, for example, explains that the earth and its first inhabitants were “bewildered and confounded (*tohu va-bohu*)” by what would take place in the ages to come. It says that the first people did not know their own true nature. They thought they were as innocent as children, yet events would prove that they were not, and that they too would sin.

The *Midrash* continues by explaining that the earth was confused because she perceived that the fate of people on earth was harsher than that of heavenly beings:

The beings above (in the heavens) ... are nourished by the splendour of the (divine) presence, while those below do not eat if they do not toil.... The beings above and the beings below were created at the same time. Yet the beings above live on, while the beings below die.... (And) the earth foresaw that she was to receive her punishment through Adam, (who came from her).... Hence Scripture: "The earth was bewildered and confounded (*tohu va-bohu*)."¹

Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 1:1–2, in BLBR p.8:15

See also: **dhundhūkār**.

1. *Genesis* 1:2.

tretāyug(a) (S/H/Pu), **tretājug** (Pu) *Lit.* the triad (*tretā*) + age (*yuga*); from *traya* (three); the second *yuga* following a *kṛita* or *satyuga*. *Tretā* or *trey* is the name of that side of a dice with three spots. It is the second *yuga* because a throw of three is the second best throw of a dice. Traditional Indian dice are rectangular, the four scoring faces being the long oblong sides.

See also: **yuga**.

utpatti (S/H/Pu), **utpati** (Pu) *Lit.* origination, production, creation, birth, genesis, commencement, evolution; the creation of the universe; creation as opposed to dissolution or *pralaya*; also, the Hindi name for the biblical book of *Genesis*. Mystics say that the One creates all things out of Himself, reabsorbing everything into Himself at the end of a cycle:

He Himself is true, and true is all that He has made:

from that Lord has originated the entire creation (*utpati*).

When it pleases Him, then does He make the expanse:

if it pleases Him, He becomes (the) One alone (*Ekankār*)....

Lord, the Creator, is contained in water, the land and the sky:

in manifold ways, the one Lord (*Ekankār*) has diffused Himself, O Nānak.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 294, 296, MMS

He does this by means of His Creative Word:

The creation (*utpati*) and deluge (*parlo*, dissolution)
 occur through the Lord's Word (*Shabd*).
 Through the Word (*Shabd*), the creation evolves again.
Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 117, MMS

vyāpak(a), vyāpt(a) (S/H), **vyāpya** (S), **byāpak** (H) *Lit.* pervasive; spread widely, diffusive, comprehensive, extensive, extending over the whole, present in all; from the verb *vyāp* (to spread, to pervade, to penetrate, to permeate); also as *sarvavyāpi* (all-pervading); commonly used in mystic literature to describe the Lord who pervades all hearts and is present in every part of creation:

All faces are His faces,
 all heads, His heads,
 all necks, His necks.
 Dwelling in the secret heart of all beings,
 the Lord (*Bhagavān*) is all-pervading (*sarvavyāpi*).
 Therefore, He is the omnipresent and gracious One.
Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 3:11

Pervading (*vyāpya*) the entire universe, within and without, *Brahman*
 shines of Itself, like fire permeating a red-hot iron ball.
Shankara, Ātmabodha 62

The Lord is present in all (*byāpak*),
 though the physical forms are all different.
 Whether king or pauper or one of low degree,
 O Sahajo, the same lamp lights all hearts.
Sahajobāī, Bānī, Ajapā Gāyatrī 8, SBB p.35

wàn wù (wàn wù) (C) *Lit.* ten thousand (*wàn*) objects (*wù*); popularly known as the ten thousand things; the myriad things; the totality of all created things. Taoists believe that at the beginning of creation a purely amorphous state of matter emerged from *Tào*, at first a singularity or *T'ài Chí*, then separating into duality, or *yīn yáng*, whose combinations ultimately brought about Heaven, Earth and man. From this, all the remaining myriad forms of creation, the ten thousand things, were manifested. Lǎo Tzu puts it very simply:

Tào generates one;
 One generates two;
 Two generates three;
 Three generates the ten thousand things (*wàn wù*).
Lǎo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 42

See also: **Tào** (2.2), **yīn yáng**.

waqt (A/P/U) (pl. *awqāt*) *Lit.* time, hour, moment; hence also, the present moment, the eternal now; thus, immediate experience. A Sufi saying says that the present moment (*waqt*) is a “cutting sword”. Hujwīrī writes:

The *Shaykhs* have said, “The (present) moment (*waqt*) is a cutting sword,” because it is characteristic of a sword to cut, and the (present) moment cuts the root of the future and the past, and obliterates care of yesterday and tomorrow from the heart.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXIV; cf. KM p.369

The (present) moment (*waqt*) is that whereby a man becomes independent of the past and the future, as, for example, when an influence from God descends into his soul and makes his heart collected (*mujtami‘*), he has no memory of the past and no thought of that which is not yet come.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXIV; cf. KM p.367

Rūmī speaks of instructions given to him by his Master to make no delay in writing the *Maśnavī*:

(He said,) “For the sake of our years of companionship,
recount one of those sweet ecstasies,
that earth and heaven may laugh with joy,
that intellect and spirit and eye
may increase a hundredfold.” ...

He said: “Feed me, for I am hungry, and make haste,
for the (present) moment (*waqt*) is a cutting sword.
The *Şūfī* is the son of the (present) moment (*waqt*), O comrade:
it is not the rule of the Way to say ‘Tomorrow’.
Are you not indeed a *Şūfī*, then?
That which is in hand is reduced to naught
by postponing the payment.”

Rūmī, Maśnavī I:126–27, 132–34; cf. MJR2 pp.11

wǔ hsíng (wǔ xíng) (C) *Lit.* five (*wǔ*) movers or agents (*hsíng*); the five agents or elements of Chinese philosophy, not as static physical substances, but as dynamic interactive forces, energies, subtle influences, movers or interactive agents of transformation. Arising from the interplay of *yīn* and *yáng*, the dual