

JACOB BOEHME AND THE SECRET DOCTRINE

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JACOB Boehme (or as some say Behmen) was a German mystic and spiritualist who began to write in the 17th century. In his works he inserted a picture of an angel blowing a trumpet, from which issued these words: "To all Christians, Jews, Turks and Heathens, to all the nations of the earth this Trumpet sounds for the last time." In truth it was a curious emblem, but he, the author, was a mystic, and as all experience shows, the path of the mystic is a strange one. It is, as Job says, a path which the "vulture knoweth not." Even as a bird cleaves the eternal ether, so the mystic advances on a path nor ordinarily manifest, a way which must be followed with care, because like the Great Light, which flashes forth and leaves only traces when it returns again to its centre, only indications are left for those who come after seeking the same spiritual wisdom. Yet by these "traces," for such they are called in the Kabbala, the way can be discerned, and the truth discovered.

Boehme was poor, of common birth, and totally devoid of ordinary education. He was only a shoemaker. Yet from the mind and out of the mouth of this unlettered man came mighty truths.

It would be idle to inquire into the complications of Karma which condemned him to such a life as his appeared to be. It must have been extremely curious, because though he had grasped the truth and was able to appreciate it, yet at the same time he could not give it out in its perfection. But he performed his work, and there can be no manner of doubt about his succeeding incarnation. As Krishna says in the Bhagavad-Gita, he has been already or will shortly be "born into a family of wise devotees"; and thence "he will attain the highest walk."

His life and writings furnish another proof that the great wisdom-religion-the Secret Doctrine-has never been left without a witness. Born a Christian, he nevertheless saw the esoteric truth lying under the moss and crust of centuries, and from the Christian Bible extracted for his purblind fellows those pearls which they refused to accept. But he did not get his knowledge from the Christian Scriptures only. Before his internal eye the panorama of real knowledge passed. His interior vision being open he could see the things he had learned in a former life, and at first not knowing what they were was stimulated by them to construe his only spiritual books in the esoteric fashion. His brain took cognizance of the Book before him, but his spirit aided by his past, and perchance by the living guardians of the shining lamp of truth, could not but read them aright.

His work was called "The Dawning of the Eternal Day." In this he endeavors to outline the great philosophy. He narrates the circumstances and reasons for the angelic creation, the fall of its chief three hierarchies, and the awful effects which thereupon fell upon Eternal Nature. Mark this, not upon man-for he was not yet-but upon the eternal Nature, that is BRAHM. Then he says that these effects came about by reason of the *unbalancing of the seven equipoised powers* of forces of the Eternal Nature or Brahm. That is to say, that so long as the seven principles of Brahm were in perfect poise, there was no corporeal or manifested universe. So in the Bhagavad-Gita we find that Krishna tells Arjuna that "after the lapse of a thousand ages (or Night of Brahm) all objects of developed matter come forth from the non-developed principle. At the approach of that day they emanate spontaneously." (Bhagavad-Gita, Chap. 8.) Such is the teaching of the Secret Doctrine.

And again Boehme shows the duality of the Supreme Soul. For he says in his work "Psychologia Vera cum Supplemento" that these two eternal principles of positive and negative, the *yea* and the *nay* of the outspoken *Supreme One*, together constitute eternal nature, -not the dark world alone; which is termed the "root of nature,-" the two being as it were combined in *perfect indissoluble union*.

This is nothing else but Purush and Prakriti, or taken together, what is referred to in the Bhagavad-Gita where it is said: "But there is another invisible, eternal existence, superior to this visible one, which does not perish when all things perish. It is called invisible and indivisible. This is my Supreme Abode."

Clearly the *Supreme Abode* could never be in Purush alone, nor in Prakriti alone, but in both when *indissolubly united*.

This scheme is adhered to all through this great philosopher's works, no matter whether he is speaking of the great Universe or macrocosm, or of its antitype in man or microcosm. In "De Tribus Principiis" he treats of the three principles or worlds of Nature, describing its eternal birth, its *seven* properties, and the *two* co-eternal principles; and furthermore in "De Triplici Vita Hominis" he gives the three-fold life of man from which the *seven* is again deduced.

In "De Electione Gratia" he goes into a subject that often proves a stumbling block to many, and that is the *inevitableness* of evil as well as of good. From this it is easy to pass to a contemplation of one of the difficult points in occultism as shown in the Secret Doctrine, that nothing is evil, and that even if we admit evil or wickedness in man, it is of the nature of the quality or *guna*, which in the Bhagavad-Gita is denominated *raja*-foulness or bad action. Even this is better than the indifferent action that only leads to death. Even from wickedness may and does come forth spiritual life, but from indifferent action comes only darkness, and finally death.

Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita, Chap. IV: "There are three kinds of action: first, that which is of the nature of *Satyam*, or true action; second, that which is of the nature of *Raja*, or bad action; third, that which is of the nature of *Tamas*, or indifferent action." He then says: "Although thou wert the greatest of all offenders, thou shalt be able to cross the gulf of sin in the bark of spiritual wisdom"; and a little farther on "The ignorant and man without faith, whose spirit is full of doubt, is lost and cannot enjoy either world." And in another chapter in describing Himself, he says that he is not only the Buddha, but also is the most evil of mankind or the Asura.

This is one of the most mystical parts of the whole secret doctrine. While Boehme has touched on it sufficiently to show that he had a memory of it, he did not go into the most occult details. It has to be remembered that the Bhagavad-Gita, and many other books treating on the Secret Doctrine, must be regarded from seven points of view; and that imperfect man is not able to look at it from the centre, which would give the whole seven points at once.

Boehme wrote about thirty different treatise, all of them devoted to great subjects, portions of the Secret Doctrine.

Curiously enough the first treated of the "Dawn of the Eternal Day," and the second was devoted to an elucidation of "The Three Principles of Man." In the latter is really to be found a sevenfold classification similar to that which Mr. Sinnett propounded in "Esoteric Buddhism."

He held that the greatest obstacle in the path of man is the astral or elementary power, which engenders and sustain this world.

Then he talks of "tinctures," which we may call principles. According to him there are two principles ones, the watery, and the igneous. These ought to be united in Man; and they ardently seek each other continually, in order to be identified with Sophia or Divine Wisdom. Many Theosophists will see in this a clue not only to the two principles-or tinctures-which ought to be united man, but also to a law which obtains in many of the phenomena of magic. But even if I were able, I should not speak on this more clearly.

For many inquirers the greatest interest in these works will be found in his hypothesis as to the birth of the material Universe. On the evolution of man from spirit into matter he has much more than i

could hope to glance at. In nearly all of it he was outlining and illustrating the Secret Doctrine. The books indicated are well worthy of study not only by Western but also by Eastern metaphysicians.

Let us add a few sentences to support this hypothesis from Count Saint Martin, who was a devoted student of these works.

Jacob Boehme took for granted the existence of an Universal Principle; he was persuaded that everything is connected in the immense chain of truths, and that the Eternal Nature reposed on seven principles or bases, which he sometimes calls powers, forms, spiritual wheels, sources, and fountains, and that those seven bases exist also in this disordered material nature, under constraint. His nomenclature, adopted for these fundamental relations, ran thus: The first *astringency*, the second *gall* or bitterness, the third *anguish*, the fourth *fire*, the fifth *light*, the sixth *sound*, and the seventh he called BEING or the *thing itself*.

The reader may have begun to think the author did not rightly comprehend the first six but his definition of the seventh shows he was right throughout, and we may conclude the real meanings are concealed under these names.

The third principle, *anguish*, attenuates the *astringent* one, turns it into water, and allows a passage to *fire*, which was shut up in the astringent principle.

There are in this many suggestions and a pursuit of them will repay the student.

Now the Divine Sophia caused a new order to take birth in the centre of our system, and there burned our sun; from that do come forth all kinds of qualities, forms and powers. This centre is the Separator.

It is well known that from the sun was taken by the ancients all kinds of power; and if we mistake not, the Hindus claim that when the Fathers enter into Para-Nirvana, their accumulated goodness pours itself out on the world through the "Door of the Sun".

The Bhagavad-Gita says, that the Lord of all dwells in the region of the heart, and again that this Lord is also the Sun of the world.

"The earth is a condensation of the seven primordial principles, and by the withdrawal of eternal light this became a dark valley." It is taught in the East, that this world is a valley and that we are in it, our bodies reaching to the moon, being condensed to hardness at the point where we are on the earth thus becoming visible to the eye of man. There is a mystery in this statement, but not such an one as cannot be unravelled.

Boehme proceeds:

When the light mastered the fire at the place of the sun, the terrible shock of the battle engendered an igneous eruption by which there shot forth from the sun a stormy and frightful flash of fire-Mars. Taken captive by light it assumed a place, and there it struggles furiously, a pricking goad, whose office is to agitate all nature, producing reaction. It is the gall of nature. The gracious, amiable Light, having enchained unerupted Mars, proceeded by its own power to the bottom or end of the rigidity of Nature, when unable to proceed further it stopped, and became corporeal; remaining there it warms that place, and although a valet in Nature, it is the source of sweetness and the moderator of Mars.

Saturn does not originate from the sun, but was produced from the severe astringent anguish of the whole body of this Universe. Above Jupiter the sun could not mitigate the horror, and out of

that arose Saturn, who is the opposite of meekness, and who produces whatever of rigidity there is in creatures, including bones, and what in moral nature corresponds thereto.¹

As in the Sun is the *heart of life*, so by Saturn commenceth all corporeal nature. Thus in these two resides the power of the whole universal body, and without their power there could be no creation nor any corporification.

Venus originates in *effluvia* from the Sun. She lights the unctuousness of the water of the Universe, penetrates hardness, and enkindles love.

Mercury is the chief worker in the planetary wheel; he is *sound*, and wakes up the germs in everything. His origin, the triumph of Light over Astringency (in which sound was shut up silent), set free the sound by the attenuation of the astringent power.

It is certain that if this peculiar statement regarding Mercury is understood, the student will have gained a high point of knowledge. A seductive bait is here held out to those striving disciples who so earnestly desire to hold converse with the elemental world. But there is no danger, for all the avenues are very secret and only the pure can prevail in the preliminary steps.

Boehme says again:

The Mercury is impregnated and fed continually by the solar substance; that in it is found the knowledge of what was in the order above, before Light had penetrated to the solar centre.

As to the Moon, it is curious to note that he says, "she was produced from the sun itself, at the time of his becoming material, and that the moon is his spouse." Students of the story of Adam being made to sleep after his creation and before coats of skin were given, when Eve was produced from his side, will find in this a strong hint.

The above is not by any means a complete statement of Boehme's system. In order to do justice to it, a full analysis of all his works should be undertaken. However, it is sufficient if thoughtful minds who have not read Boehme, shall turn to him after reading this, or if but one earnest reader of his works, or seeker after wisdom, shall receive even a hint that may lead to a clearing up of doubts, or to the acquisition of one new idea. Count Saint Martin continually read him; and the merest glance at the "Theosophic Correspondence" or, "Man - His Nature, & Ministry" of Saint Martin will show that from that study he learned much. How much more then will the Western mind be aided by the light shed on both by the lamp of Theosophical teachings.

"Let the desire of the pious be fulfilled."

¹ This is all the highest astrology, from one who had no knowledge of it.