

February 2010

THE MYSTERY OF THE “RING-PASS-NOT”

One of the many occult terms found in H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* is what is called the “Ring-Pass-Not,” an intriguing term found in Śloka 6 of Stanza V. It is prefaced by a series of geometrical symbols, which can be interpreted numerically as representing the mathematical value *pi*, a number (3.1415) used to calculate the circumference of a given circle when only the diameter of that circle is known. In his *Occult Glossary*, G. de Purucker provides a definition that only deepens the mystery:

A profoundly mystical and suggestive term signifying the circle or bounds of frontiers within which is contained the consciousness of those who are still under the sway of the delusion of separateness—and this applies whether the Ring be large or small. It does not signify any one especial occasion or condition, but is a general term applicable to any state in which an entity, having reached a certain stage of evolutionary growth of the unfolding of consciousness, finds itself unable to pass into a still higher state because of some delusion under which the consciousness is laboring, be that delusion mental or spiritual.

Purucker goes on to explain that although the phenomenon of a Ring-Pass-Not applies to globes, planetary chains, solar systems, and so forth, the main point to remember is that it pertains in some mysterious way to “phases or states of consciousness.” Blavatsky adds to the mystery when she says, “The full Initiate *knows* that the Ring ‘Pass-Not’ is neither a locality nor can it be measured by distance, but that it exists in the absoluteness of infinity.”

As a further illustration of how this relates to fields of consciousness in living entities, Purucker suggests that for animals, it is their inability to exercise the power of reflective self-consciousness—an ability which is distinctly human. We can only speculate what it may represent in relation to the field of human consciousness.

David P. Bruce is the Director of Education at the Theosophical Society in America.