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THE INFINITE BOSOM OF DURATION

"Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration." This enigmatic verse from the Stanzas of Dzyan attempts to describe "the state of the ONE ALL during Pralaya, before the first flutter of reawakening manifestation." The language employed throughout Stanza One reverberates with mystical overtones; it soon becomes evident to the first-time reader that a literal interpretation of the verses is totally inappropriate. What is also evident is that this particular verse suggests a mysterious relationship between time and duration.

We are familiar with chronological time, which is delineated by seconds, hours, days, and years. These demarcations of time are objective and therefore predictable. Psychological time, however, is subjective and thus unpredictable. A person bored with a lecture may feel time crawling at a turtle's pace, while the next person may be enthused by the speaker and therefore have a sense that time has passed by rather quickly. Measured by the clock, the time of the lecture is the same for both listeners, but their subjective sense of time could hardly be more different.

In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, H. P. Blavatsky was asked the following question by a Theosophist attending the meeting: "What is the difference between Time and Duration?" She answered, "Duration *is*; it has neither beginning nor end. Duration is beginningless and endless; Time is finite."

As creatures with finite bodies, we have an intimate knowledge of time, whether in the chronological or psychological sense. But what about the eternal Duration mentioned in the Stanzas of Dzyan? Is there something within us capable of understanding, or responding to, eternal Duration? Is there some aspect of our Being that is without beginning and without end?

There is a memorable line in *The Voice of the Silence*, which suggests that the answer to these questions is affirmative: "Thy shadows live and vanish; that which in thee shall live forever, that which in thee knows, for it is knowledge, is not of fleeting life: it is the man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike."

Whether we like it or not, the clock of Time ticks away relentlessly. A human being appears briefly upon the world stage and then disappears. Universes appear and then disappear. As the poet Horace queried, "What do the ravages of time not injure?"

What is that mystery within us that endures? Do we have a sense of it? Have we even tried to find it?

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