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## A REFLECTION ON *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, No. 11

The opening stanza of *The Secret Doctrine* stops the rational mind dead in its tracks: "Time was not, for it lay asleep in the Infinite Bosom of Duration." The rational mind wants to ask, "How can there not be time?" But what is time? We generally understand it as *past*, *present* and *future*—this threefold division corresponding to the way we experience the world. Upon closer examination, however, the concept of time proves to be one of the most illusory aspects of phenomenal existence.

Madame Blavatsky was not the first to point this out. Consider this passage from Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions*:

For what is time? Who can even comprehend it in thought or put the answer into words? . . . How is it that there are the two times, past and future, when even the past is now no longer and the future is now not yet? But if the present were always present, and did not pass into past time, it obviously would not be time but eternity.

*The Secret Doctrine* describes the present as "a mathematical line which divides that part of eternal duration which we call the future, from that part which we call the past." A true mathematical line has no existence in this three dimensional world. What you see on the draftsman's schematic is only a reasonable representation of it, for a mathematical line exists only in the realm of ideas, not in the world of form.

Let us return to the *Confessions* of Augustine:

If any fraction of time be conceived that cannot now be divided even into the most minute momentary point, this alone is what we may call time present. But this flies so rapidly from future to past that it cannot be extended by any delay. For if it is extended, it is then divided into past and future. But the present has no extension whatsoever.

The rational mind reels in bewilderment before all this. Perhaps it was Marcus Aurelius who put it best: "Every instant of time is a pinprick of eternity."

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