

Study Guide for The Secret Doctrine, Vol. 1: Cosmogenesis

1. Introduction and Foundations

Read: Preface (vii-xvii) and Introduction (1-23 p.)

- Blavatsky's purpose for writing *The Secret Doctrine*
- The relationship between science, religion, and esoteric philosophy
- The idea of a universal wisdom tradition

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the primary aims Blavatsky outlines for The Secret Doctrine?
2. How does she reconcile or challenge the divide between science and religion?
3. What is the significance of the "Ancient Wisdom" as a foundation for her work?

2. The Proem: The Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy

Read: Proem (25-34 p.)

- The Three Fundamental Propositions of Esoteric Philosophy
- The Boundless, the Eternal, and the Infinite as the basis of reality
- The cyclical nature of existence

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the Three Fundamental Propositions define the framework of The Secret Doctrine?
2. What role does "cyclic evolution" play in the esoteric understanding of the universe?
3. How does the concept of the Boundless compare to modern scientific or philosophical ideas about the origin of the universe?

3. Stanzas of Dzyan: Cosmogenesis

Read: Stanzas I-III (35 - 85 p.)

- The stages of cosmic manifestation
- The role of "The Great Breath" in creation

- The symbolism of the "Eternal Parent" and the "Egg of the Universe"

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the key symbolic elements in the Stanzas, and how do they relate to creation?
2. How does the imagery of "The Great Breath" relate to the ideas of cosmic cycles?
3. How does Blavatsky interpret the concept of "space" in metaphysical terms?

4. Stanza IV: The Creation of the Elements

Read: Stanza IV (86 - 106 p.)

- The differentiation of elements and forces
- The concept of Fohat as the "Cosmic Energy"
- The role of the "Builders" or Dhyan-Chohans in the creation

Discussion Questions:

1. What is Fohat, and how does it function in the creation process?
2. How do the "Builders" or cosmic intelligence contribute to the formation of the universe?
3. How does this section relate to modern scientific views on energy and matter?

5. Evolution of the Cosmos

Read: (107 - 220 p.)

- The sevenfold nature of the universe
- The relationship between spirit and matter
- The evolution of worlds and globes

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of the sevenfold classification in Blavatsky's cosmology?
2. How does the concept of the evolution of globes reflect spiritual principles?
3. What parallels can be drawn between Blavatsky's views and contemporary scientific theories of evolution?

6. Anthropogenesis and the Connection to Cosmogenesis

Read: (221 - 275 p.)

- The link between the origin of humanity and cosmic evolution
- The role of karma and reincarnation in creation
- The spiritual and material evolution of humanity

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Blavatsky connect the evolution of humanity to the larger cosmic framework?
2. What role does karma play in the esoteric understanding of evolution?
3. How does this section prepare the reader for the transition to Volume II, which focuses on human evolution?

7. Comparative Mythology and Religion

Read: (276 - 355 p.)

- Parallels between ancient religious texts and the Stanzas of Dzyan
- Symbolism in world mythologies
- The universality of esoteric truths

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Blavatsky use comparative mythology to support her claims?
2. What commonalities exist between ancient religious texts and the esoteric teachings presented here?
3. How does this section challenge or affirm contemporary interpretations of mythology?

Final Reflections

Activity: Reflect on the interconnectedness of the topics covered and create a diagram or written summary of how cosmogenesis relates to anthropogenesis and universal evolution.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the key takeaways from Volume 1 of The Secret Doctrine?

2. How has your understanding of the origins of the universe evolved through this study?
3. What elements of Blavatsky's philosophy resonate most with your own beliefs or experiences?