

Reflection

Part 2

The idea of reflection (or 'superimposition') found in Shankara's writing on Advaita is an integral part of his explanation of the relation between the individual and the universal. It has many applications. Here is a last quotation from HH, answering a question about a hand sign, a *Mudra*:

The particular *Mudra* associated with Dakshina-murti (a deity symbolising liberation) to which you refer is like this:

(He showed the index fingernail of his left hand, curled up and lying against the anterior surface of the skin crease of the interphalangeal thumb-joint. So the thumb overlies the index finger. The three remaining fingers are extended straight).

The thumb symbolises the Absolute; the index finger symbolises the individual who comes under the Absolute; the three fingers which are left loose, symbolise the three gunas, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*.

So the individual by submitting himself to the Absolute and becoming just a witness to the streams of gunas, but detached from the gunas; becomes a follower of knowledge. . .

HH then quoted a verse by Shankara in praise of Dakshina-murti:

To him who by *Maya*, as by dream, sees within himself the universe which is inside him, like a city that appears in a mirror, but which is manifested as if externally to him who apprehends, at the time of awakening, his own single Self, to him, the primal Guru, Dakshina-murti, may this obeisance be!

He explained this as follows:

Shankara says that the forces of the *Atman* are reflected as the whole universe in *Antahkarana* (mind), as one can see images reflected in a mirror. The same simile is again given that just as the whole universe of the waking world is reflected in the dreams when we sleep, exactly in the same way all this creation is only a reflection, and the forms created in the streams of gunas; which again is known as *Maya*, because of the *Shakti* (power) of *Maya*. So if one can understand this and detach oneself with the Grace of the Teacher, one should learn these facts and detach oneself from the flow of the gunas and the Universe. [1.2.70]

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In the Pewsey Group meeting last week there were several penetrating observations about the nature of the creator, the creation, mechanicalness, and the role of Man. Also there was a feeling of reassurance that, although we may not see the reality, what we do see is at least a reflection of it. Here are a few more thoughts in relation to ideas of the System.

1. The six triads. In the System teaching of the Ray of Creation, the three forces (C – active; O – passive; and N - neutralising) arise in World 3. The forces form the three creative triads CON (creation), OCN (refinement), NOC (conscious help). Then at the next level down, World 6, there is a doubling of the triads and the other three triads enter: CNO (accident), ONC (one-sided development), NCO (evil). Duality and mechanicalness set in. It is

interesting to note that the first set of triads start with C, O and N; and so do the second set of triads. The difference between them is the order of the second and third forces. That is, there are three pairs: CON, CNO; OCN, ONC; NOC, NCO. Both triads of a pair start with the same force but the second and third triads are reversed and the outcome is opposite; it is as if they are mirror images (figure 1); and the subsequent doubling at still lower levels (World 12 etc) might also be explained by reflection.

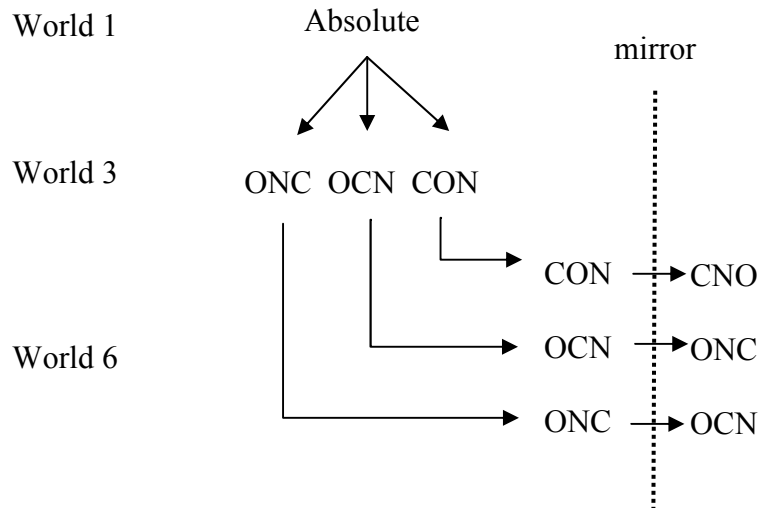


Fig. 1

2. Cosmoses. There is also a kind of reflection between the very large and the very small in the universe: galaxies and fundamental particles; stars and atoms; planets and molecules; organic life and cells (and indeed Shankara deals with the relation between the universe and the four elements in his *One thousand Teachings*), as if there were a kind of mirror as shown in Figure 2. Man seems to lie on the surface of the mirror, in an analogous position to the whole universe.

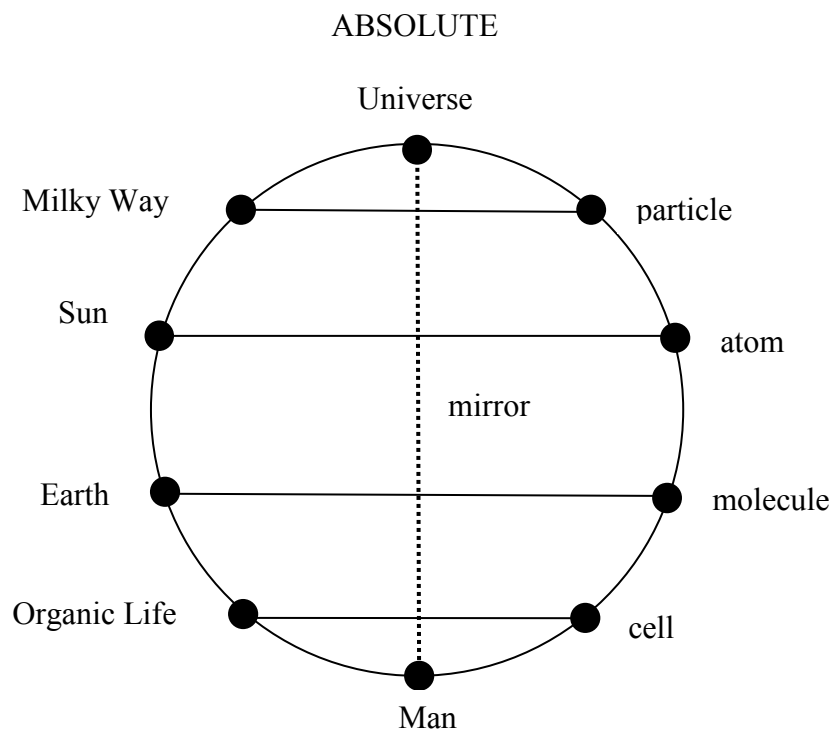


Fig. 2

3. Identification. There are many instances of mental activity which exemplify the idea that ‘the Atman creates ignorance just as Brahman creates Maya’. Identification in the System sense might be seen as reflection of something becoming fixed in the mind. The brain of a cat stalking a mouse has ‘mouse’ imprinted on it.

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If our ordinary self is a reflection of our Atman (real Self), which is in turn a reflection of Brahman; and if the world we see is itself a reflection of Brahman, then the whole thing starts to look like a fun fair Hall of Mirrors. How can we possibly know what is real? There is a famous shoot-out in a Hall of Mirrors at the end of the Orson Welles film *The Lady of Shanghai*, in which multiple images of the protagonists make it nigh impossible to locate the real person; mirror after mirror is shattered by shots aimed at illusory images until finally the villain is revealed and shot. We don’t need to do anything so dramatic about *Maya*. The *Mudra* described by HH is the *Jnana Mudra*, the knowledge sign. All we need to know is that we should accept that what we see is not the reality, find a little distance from it, and watch and wait.

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