The Three Svabhāvas in The Secret Doctrine (v. 2)

Central to the ontology of the Yogācāra school of thought, is the philosophy of the three svabhāvas. One of the terms used in HPB's rendering of the stanzas from the Book of Dzyan referring implicitly to the Yogācāra school, is **pariniṣpanna**, in stanza 1 śloka 6 and in stanza 2 śloka 1 respectively, which is one of these three. All three svabhāvas are discussed in HPB's commentary to stanza 1 śloka 9. The page numbers of all locations, all in SD I, are:

pariniṣpanna	absolute existence	23, 42 (27), 42, 48, 53 (28) and 54
paratantra	dependent existence	48 (2x) and 49
parikalpita	imaginary existence	48 (2x)

In SD I, 42 a mystery is presented to the reader:

Up to the day of the Yogacharya school the true nature of Paranirvana was taught publicly, but since then it has become entirely esoteric; hence so many contradictory interpretations of it. It is only a true Idealist who can understand it. Everything has to be viewed as ideal, with the exception of Paranirvana, by him who would comprehend that state, and acquire a knowledge of how Non Ego, Voidness, and Darkness are Three in One and alone Self-existent and perfect.

What exactly are these "Three in One, Self-existent [sva-bhāva] and perfect", or Non Ego, Voidness and Darkness?

Non Ego

Non Ego, the first of the Three in One, is described by HPB in SD I, 48 as **parikalpita**, imaginary existence:

Parikalpita (in Tibetan Kun-ttag) is error, made by those unable to realize the emptiness and illusionary nature of all; who believe something to exist which does not -- e.g., the Non-Ego.

Non Ego could be HPB's rendering of the Buddhist term **anātman**.

Voidness

Voidness, the second of the Three in One, is described as personified by **ālaya**, according to the yogācāra's, in SD I, 48:

Thus, while the Yogacharyas (of the Mahayana school) say that Alaya is the personification of the Voidness, and yet Alaya (Nyingpo and Tsang in Tibetan) is the basis of every visible and invisible thing, and that, though it is eternal and immutable in its essence, it reflects itself in every object of the Universe "like the moon in clear tranquil water"; other schools dispute the statement.

In part II of the article *Ālaya in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, we have argued that ālaya might be viewed as tri-une, in HPB's words having two "Manvantaric" aspects and one "Non-Manvantaric". In its Non-Manvantaric aspect it is "eternal and immutable in its essence". In (one of) its Manvantaric aspects it would be the personification of Voidness which is the ultimate "basis of every visible and invisible thing", having a "dependent or causal connection" with "every visible and invisible thing". On **paratantra**, dependent existence, we find in SD I, 48:

> And Paratantra is that, whatever it is, which exists only through a dependent or causal connexion, and which has to disappear as soon as the cause from which it proceeds is removed -- e.g., the light of a wick. Destroy or extinguish it, and light disappears.

Undoubtedly, Voidness is a rendering of the Mahāyāna term **śūnyatā**, which is voidness, or emptyness.

Darkness

Darkness, the third of the Three in One, is a term used in the Book of Dzyan in relation to pariniṣpanna. When the universe is in the state of pralaya, all that "was" or "will be" can be thought of as being in darkness. In SD I, 28 for example, the builders are said to be in darkness, which is (their) pariniṣpanna:

> . . . WHERE WERE THE BUILDERS, THE LUMINOUS SONS OF MANVANTARIC DAWN? . . . IN THE UNKNOWN DARKNESS IN THEIR AH-HI PARANISHPANNA. [...]

In SD I, 53, HPB identifies **parinirvana** with pariniṣpanna, absolute existence:

> Paranishpanna, remember, is the summum bonum, the Absolute, hence the same as Paranirvana.

This points to a relation to the whole "Three in One" of SD I, 42, or SPACE, which is the First (unmanifested) Logos, which is forever in the state of pariniṣpanna.

Solution

The solution of the mystery of SD I, 42 would then be:

Non-ego	anātman	parikalpita
Voidness	śūnyatā	paratantra
Darkness		pariniṣpanna