

# Absolute Abstract Motion

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Absolute Abstract Motion symbolizes Unconditioned Consciousness, the aspect of the One Reality through which *The Secret Doctrine* approaches the source of all change and activity. Space emphasizes boundlessness; Duration, timeless continuity; Motion, the inexhaustible possibility of consciousness and life. It is neither physical displacement nor molecular vibration, and has no measurable velocity. Such movements belong to conditioned existence. Absolute Abstract Motion is their metaphysical ground, never one movement competing with others.

H.P. Blavatsky places this term in the First Fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine*. The One Absolute Reality is beyond thought, speech, relation, and attribute. Because it cannot be grasped directly by the human mind, it is symbolized under two primary aspects: absolute abstract Space and absolute Abstract Motion. Space represents bare subjectivity; Motion represents Unconditioned Consciousness. Duration stands inseparably with them as timeless continuity. These are not three things, but three symbolic doors through which finite intelligence approaches the ineffable.

Motion is chosen because consciousness is inconceivable apart from change. Even ordinary consciousness is known through modification: attention moves, thought changes, perception arises and subsides. Yet Absolute Abstract Motion is not change in time. It is the metaphysical symbol for the unconditioned source of all possible consciousness, change, activity, and life.

This is why H.P. Blavatsky also calls it the Great Breath. Breath is not meant literally. The Absolute does not breathe as a creature breathes. The image points to rhythmic manifestation: outbreathing and inbreathing, *Manvantara* and *Pralaya*, appearance and withdrawal, emanation and return. The Great Breath teaches that manifestation is rhythmic, not accidental; living, not mechanical.

Professor Iyer deepens the doctrine by teaching that all creative change and all dynamic activity in the universe are spontaneous expressions of one abstract, pre-cosmic source symbolized as the Great Breath. In its highest ranges this is Spirit; beneath that, it includes every mode of motion down to action on the physical plane. This establishes a vertical scale of motion: spiritual, noetic, mental, psychic, vital, organic, and physical.

Professor Iyer distinguishes the observable motions of bodies from the inward activity of thought, attention, and will. Each plane of manifestation, in *Gupta Vidya*, has subjective and objective aspects. This is a metaphysical account of consciousness and causation, rather than a

substitute for measuring physical energy. Its purpose is to prevent the student from assuming that a description of outward movement exhausts the meaning of an action, including its intention and its significance for other beings.

H.P. Blavatsky states that Motion as the Great Breath is the substratum of Kosmic Motion, beginningless and endless, the one eternal life, the basis and genesis of the subjective and objective universe. Molecular motion is only the lowest and most material of its finite manifestations. This reverses the modern habit of explanation. Physical motion is a terminal expression of a deeper life-current, not the source of consciousness or life.

Professor Iyer also invites the student to concentrate on absolute abstract Motion as the One Life. In Sanskrit language this is linked with *Jivatman*, the ever-pulsating life-principle, infinite and all-transcendent. This One Life is beyond the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. Only within manifestation can one speak of conscious, self-conscious, or unconscious states. At the highest level, those contrasts fall away.

The doctrine has direct ethical meaning. Human beings often confuse agitation with vitality, speed with intelligence, reaction with sincerity, and self-assertion with will. Absolute Abstract Motion corrects this confusion. The highest Motion is not restlessness. It is reflected in human life as serene rhythm, self-mastery, devotion, noetic action, and conscious participation in law.

Professor Iyer gives a practical key: hold fast to a serene rhythm of selfless devotion, develop ethical sensitivity to others, and maintain alert attentiveness to one's obligations. By letting go, one cooperates with nature's archetypal rhythms. To align with Motion does not necessarily mean doing more. It means moving from compulsion to conscious rhythm, from reaction to responsibility, from scattered desire to steady service.

This makes the teaching practical in ordinary life. A rushed reply, a defensive gesture, a harsh word, a restless habit, or a moment of impatience is also a motion. The student can learn to ask: what quality of motion is this? Is it arising from clarity or agitation, compassion or self-protection, duty or compulsion? Such questioning makes metaphysics usable.

Consider a volunteer preparing meals for a neighborhood gathering. Haste may produce a burst of activity while making every interruption seem intolerable. A steadier rhythm allows the same person to notice a missing portion, explain a task clearly, and receive help without resentment. The distinction is not simply between fast and slow. Urgent work sometimes requires speed. What matters is whether attention serves the shared task or is scattered by the worker's need to appear indispensable. Rhythm is tested by responsiveness, not by a fixed outward pace.

A musician offers a related image. The interval of silence belongs to the phrase as fully as the sounded note. For the student, an appropriate pause can belong to action as fully as visible

effort. Neither example explains the Absolute literally. Each helps separate living continuity from compulsory agitation. Professor Iyer's teaching on the Great Breath asks that such discrimination reach thought and motive, where the quality of an action is already being formed before anyone sees it.

Absolute Abstract Motion also teaches reverent stewardship. Nature is not dead matter pushed by external forces. It is a living field of motion, consciousness, energy, and law. The human task is not domination of motion, but conscious cooperation with lawful motion. Stewardship includes the earth, the body, speech, communities, and the atmosphere one generates through thought and action.

*Fohat* must be distinguished from Absolute Abstract Motion. *Fohat* is differentiated dynamic energy within manifestation, the linker of spirit and matter. Absolute Abstract Motion is higher and more primordial. *Fohat* is differentiated energy; Absolute Abstract Motion is the metaphysical root of all motion.

Absolute Abstract Motion also illumines freedom. At the personality level, motion is often experienced as compulsion: habit, craving, fear, and social pressure. Deeper motion becomes self-determined. The student can learn to participate consciously in karmic law rather than merely be driven by it. This is part of becoming self-determining and self-conscious in relation to the evolutionary process.

Absolute Abstract Motion stands as a master-symbol of Unconditioned Consciousness and the One Life. It asks the mind to stop confusing activity with life and to discover the deeper rhythm beneath all becoming. In its light, *Manas* turns toward *Buddhi*, will becomes rhythm, action becomes responsibility, and the individual life begins to flow more consciously within the one universal current.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception extends this attention beyond one's own performance. The meal depends on growers, transport, preparation, cleaning, and the needs of those who receive it. Human Solidarity becomes concrete when this interdependence changes the meaning of one's contribution. One can sustain a useful rhythm without imagining oneself the source of the whole undertaking. Self-determination then becomes intelligent participation: the capacity to redirect a habit, fulfill an obligation, and release an unnecessary claim upon other people's time.

The symbol also requires care when the universe is spoken of as resting during *pralaya*. Rest here concerns a phase of manifestation. It cannot mean that the eternal ground has become inert in the ordinary sense, any more than cosmic activity means that the Absolute has acquired a

personal purpose. The rhythm belongs to manifested cycles; Absolute Abstract Motion transcends the contrast by which those cycles are described.

## Glossary

**Absolute** — Unconditioned reality, beyond the limitations and relations of manifested existence.

**Absolute Abstract Motion** — A metaphysical symbol of Unconditioned Consciousness and the source of change; distinguished from measurable movement or differentiated energy.

**Absolute Abstract Space** — The boundless, non-relational symbol of the Absolute; neither astronomical emptiness nor a container outside the things it contains.

**Anima Mundi** — Latin for the soul of the world; used in the quotation for the universal life or world-soul.

**Archetypal** — Pertaining to a fundamental pattern or ideal underlying particular expressions.

**Attribute** — A quality assigned to something; in these essays, any predicate that would limit the Absolute if applied literally.

**Bare subjectivity** — The symbolic emphasis of Absolute Abstract Space, prior to the ordinary opposition of a perceiving person and a perceived object.

**Be-ness** — Blavatsky's term for unconditioned Reality beyond the contrast of being and non-being as ordinary categories.

**Buddhi** — The spiritual soul or vehicle of *Atman*, associated with intuitive discernment and the illumination of *Manas*.

**Conditioned** — Dependent upon particular limits, relations, causes, or instruments of experience.

**Continuity of consciousness** — Sustained awareness through changing states and circumstances; spiritually, the enduring continuity of the higher individuality.

**Cosmogony** — An account of the origin or emergence of a cosmos; cosmogenesis names that emergence.

**Differentiation** — The emergence of distinct forms, functions, or conditions within manifestation.

**Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception** — Widening the frame of understanding to include more relations, perspectives, and responsibilities.

**Emanation** — An expression or unfolding from a source, used in the metaphysical accounts of life and consciousness.

**Empyrean** — The highest heaven or realm of spiritual elevation; an image of the aspiration contrasted with everyday obligations in the quotation.

**Ergo** — Latin for therefore; introduces a consequence in Blavatsky's quoted argument.

**Fohat** — The dynamic power linking cosmic ideation with manifested life; Fohatic means pertaining to this power.

**Fons et origo** — Latin for source and origin; used for the underlying spring of manifested existence.

**Great Breath** — A symbol of eternal motion and the rhythms of manifestation and withdrawal in Theosophical cosmology.

**Gupta Vidya** — Hidden or secret wisdom; Professor Iyer's designation for an integrated philosophy of spiritual knowledge and human perfectibility.

**Human Solidarity** — Shared human dignity and interdependence, expressed through considerate responsibility for others.

**Jivatman** — The living Self; in Professor Iyer's quoted exposition, the universal life-principle beyond differentiated consciousness. Usage varies across philosophical systems.

**Kosmos** — A spelling of cosmos used in the sources for the ordered universe, especially in its ideal or metaphysical aspect.

**Laya** — Dissolution or a point of equilibrium; used in the quoted discussion of transition between states of consciousness.

**Manas** — The thinking principle or self-conscious mind; its higher individuality and lower personal ray are distinguished. Manasic means pertaining to *Manas*.

**Manifestation** — The expression of reality through differentiated forms, relations, and conditions.

**Manvantara** — A period of manifested cosmic activity, contrasted with *pralaya*.

**Metaphysics** — Inquiry into the fundamental principles and relations of reality beyond immediate appearances.

**Motive** — The inward purpose of an act, distinct from its outward appearance or the praise it receives.

**Noetic** — Pertaining to the higher or spiritual mind; associated here with *Buddhi-Manas* and an understanding rooted in unity.

**Noumenon** — An underlying reality or intelligible ground distinguished from its appearance; noumena is the plural, and noumenal the adjective.

**Nous** — Greek for mind or intelligence; used in these Theosophical passages for the higher or divine mind.

**One Life** — The universal living ground expressed through diverse forms and beings in Theosophical teaching.

**Personality** — The temporary personal constitution, memories, and roles of a particular life, distinguished from the enduring individuality.

**Plane** — A level or mode of being or consciousness; not necessarily a location in physical space.

**Pralaya** — Dissolution or a period of non-manifestation.

**Primordial** — Belonging to the earliest or underlying level of manifestation in the metaphysical account.

**Psychic** — Pertaining to personal and subtle awareness shaped by impressions and desire; not by itself equivalent to spiritual wisdom.

**Quotidian** — Everyday or daily; used of the ordinary details of ethical responsibility.

**Sub voce** — Latin for under the word or heading; directs the reader to a discussion of a specified term.

**Substratum** — An underlying basis or ground; used in metaphysical accounts of consciousness, substance, and manifestation.

**Triad** — A grouping of three related principles or aspects; the particular terms of a triad must be identified from context.

**Unconditioned Consciousness** — Consciousness beyond the limiting subject-object relations of manifested experience; symbolized by Absolute Abstract Motion.

**Vide** — Latin for see; an instruction to consult another passage or reference.

## Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, p. 14.

“This ‘Be-ness’ is symbolised in *the Secret Doctrine* under two aspects. On the one hand, absolute abstract Space, representing bare subjectivity, the one thing which no human mind can either exclude from any conception, or conceive of by itself. On the other, absolute Abstract Motion representing Unconditioned Consciousness. Even our Western thinkers have shown that Consciousness is inconceivable to us apart from change, and motion best symbolises change, its essential characteristic.”

*Meditation thought:* Observe the difference between an image of moving things and the inquiry into consciousness itself. The symbol asks thought to examine its own assumptions.

2. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, p. 43.

“The appearance and disappearance of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of ‘the Great Breath,’ which is eternal, and which, being Motion, is one of the three aspects of the Absolute — Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. When the ‘Great Breath’ is projected, it is called the Divine Breath, and is regarded as the breathing of the Unknowable Deity — the One Existence — which breathes out a thought, as it were, which becomes the Kosmos.”

*Meditation thought:* Receive the Great Breath as a cosmic analogy. What distinction must be preserved between the eternal ground and the cycles through which manifestation is described?

3. H.P. Blavatsky, “Psychic and Noetic Action”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume III, p. 442.

“Motion as the GREAT BREATH (*vide* “Secret Doctrine,” vol. i, *sub voce*) – ergo “sound” at the same time – is the substratum of Kosmic-Motion. It is beginningless and endless, the one eternal life, the basis and genesis of the subjective and the objective universe; for LIFE (or Be-ness) is the *fons et origo* of existence or being. But molecular motion is the lowest and most material of its finite manifestations.”

*Meditation thought:* Consider how a visible movement can express an unseen intention. Let this modest observation prepare a deeper inquiry into the subjective meaning of action.

4. R.N. Iyer, "Noetic Self-Determination", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, pp. 268–269.

"All creative change and all dynamic activity in the universe are understood, in the perennial philosophy of *Gupta Vidya*, as spontaneous expressions of one abstract, pre-cosmic source symbolized as the Great Breath. In its highest ranges this is Spirit, and beneath that, it encompasses every mode of motion down to and including action on the physical plane."

*Meditation thought:* Follow the range from inward intention to outward deed. Where might a change of motive alter the quality of an otherwise identical action?

5. R.N. Iyer, "Noetic Self-Determination", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 269.

"Several important consequences follow from this single origin of both subjective and objective reality. For example, the strict unity and universal causality implied by the conception of absolute abstract Motion entail the basic principle transmitted from ancient knowledge into modern science as the law of the conservation of energy."

*Meditation thought:* The passage joins metaphysical unity to lawful manifestation. Reflect on the responsibility implied by acting in a world where consequences are connected.

6. R.N. Iyer, "Noetic Self-Determination", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 269.

"Yet this does not really reveal much about the deeper sense in which there is collection and concentration of energy, from the highest *laya* state down through the physical plane of manifestation. There is a sense in which enormous energy is held waiting to be released from higher to lower planes."

*Meditation thought:* Quietness need not signify an absence of power. What useful capacity is being conserved when an impulsive response is withheld?

7. R.N. Iyer, "Noetic Self-Determination", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 269.

"This virtually inconceivable scale of modes of subtle manifestation of the Great Breath has immediate and evident implications in regard to cosmogony. But it is also highly significant when applied to the subjective side of conscious existence."

*Meditation thought:* Turn the cosmic question inward without shrinking it to a personal mood. What can the study of action reveal about the way attention moves?

8. R.N. Iyer, "Noetic Self-Determination", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 269.

"Whilst the laws of physical motion and energy are natural modes of manifestation of that divine Breath, no merely objective description of them can do justice to the subjective side of purely physical events, much less to deeper layers of human consciousness and noumenal reality."

*Meditation thought:* Describe a recent action first by its visible movement, then by its purpose. Notice what each description reveals and what it leaves unanswered.

9. R.N. Iyer, "Continuity of Consciousness", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 265.

"Beyond these cyclic transformations lies the Triad of absolute abstract Space, Duration and Motion, the metaphysical basis for all continuity of consciousness. All three may be seen as aspects of the Three-in-One, expanding the conceptions of matter, time and motion into primordial substance, boundless eternity and divine thought."

*Meditation thought:* Consider continuity without making it an endless repetition of familiar events. Let the triad widen the meaning of activity beyond one cycle.

10. R.N. Iyer, "Continuity of Consciousness", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 265.

"It is also helpful to concentrate on absolute abstract Motion as the One Life. This has a philosophical bearing upon one's notions of relative degrees of reality and unreality, of emptiness and illusion, of dependence and causality."

*Meditation thought:* Remember the common life while attending to a particular duty. Can that recollection lessen the pressure to make the duty serve personal importance?

11. R.N. Iyer, "Continuity of Consciousness", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, pp. 265–266.

"The One Life comprises both light and electricity in all their cosmic manifestations and is equivalent to the universal soul or *Anima Mundi*. In Sanskrit it is the *Jivatman*, the analogue of the Platonic *nous* or mundane cosmic intelligence, absolutely free from differentiated matter and ever-designing action."

*Meditation thought:* The analogy points beyond the isolated organism. How might a wider conception of life change the care given to a small contribution?

12. R.N. Iyer, "Continuity of Consciousness", *The Gupta Vidya*, Volume II, p. 265.

"Holding fast to a serene rhythm of selfless devotion, one should develop an ethical sensitivity to others, whilst maintaining an alert attentiveness to one's own obligations. One must refine a sense of balance, soaring to the empyrean in meditation, whilst controlling the quotidian details of ethical involvement. Thus metaphysics and ethics may be brought together, to create a steady, strong current of fervent aspiration. Thus too, the process of dissolution is quickened, the potential for continuous creation increased. By letting go, one cooperates with nature's archetypal rhythms."

*Meditation thought:* Choose one obligation and give it a serene, attentive rhythm. Let steadiness be measured by usefulness to others, rather than by the appearance of busyness.