

A WHITEHEADIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE ZOHARIC CREATION STORY

by

Michael Gold

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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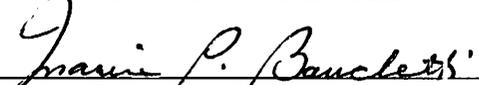
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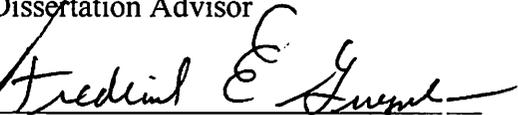
Michael Gold

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr Marina P. Banchetti, Department of Comparative Studies and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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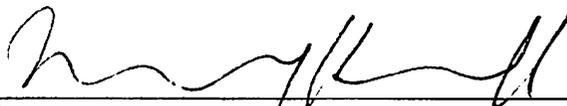

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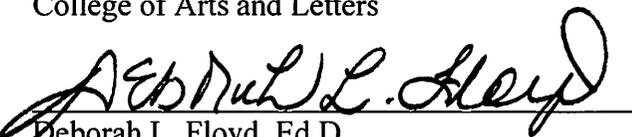

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation presents a Whiteheadian interpretation of the notions of mind, immanence and process as they are addressed in the *Zohar*. According to many scholars, this kabbalistic creation story as portrayed in the *Zohar* is a reaction to the earlier rabbinic concept of God qua creator, which emphasized divine transcendence over divine immanence. The medieval Jewish philosophers, particularly Maimonides influenced by Aristotle, placed particular emphasis on divine transcendence, seeing a radical separation between Creator and creation. With this in mind, these scholars claim that one of the goals of the *Zohar*'s creation story was to emphasize God's immanence within creation.

Similar to the *Zohar*, the process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and his followers was reacting to the substance metaphysics that had dominated Western philosophy as far back as ancient Greek thought. Whitehead adopts a very similar narrative to that of the *Zohar*. First there is mind containing all the eternal objects which serve as potential for the creation (God's primordial nature). Mind becomes immanent in

all actual occasions through prehension (God's consequent nature). Finally God becomes "the lure" (to use Whitehead's phrase) in the ongoing process of nature (God as superject). In this narrative, God is not the static being, the unmoved mover as discussed by Aristotle, but rather, is portrayed as a dynamic becoming, a God of process.

Due to these significant similarities between Whitehead's process philosophy and the *Zohar* with regard to the immanence of God and the process of creation, it is worthwhile to attempt a process interpretation of the kabbalistic creation story. The first part of this dissertation is entitled *Philosophical Foundations*, focusing on the intellectual framework of this study of the *Zohar*. The second part is entitled *Creating a Narrative*, looking at the text of the *Zohar* through the lens of Whitehead's metaphysics. Finally, the conclusion looks at the narrative and discusses whether the goals of the dissertation have been achieved.

DEDICATION

In appreciation to my wife Evelyn for all of her love and support.

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I am arguing for a Whiteheadian interpretation of the notions of mind, immanence, and process as they are addressed in the *Zohar*.

Sefer HaZohar (“the Book of Splendor”) is the most influential literary work in the Jewish mystical tradition known as kabbalah. It appeared in the heart of Castile, Spain around the year 1275 C.E. The work is traditionally attributed to the third-century Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, a mystic who spent many years hiding in a cave from the Romans and studying esoteric doctrines.¹ Many contemporary scholars beginning with Gershom Scholem attribute the work to Moshe de Leon (1250–1305), a Spanish rabbi and kabbalist. The question of the author of the *Zohar* is still being debated among scholars, but most see it coming from the school of mystics studying with de Leon. Scholem writes regarding the *Zohar*:

In the years immediately following 1275 ... a book was written somewhere in the heart of Castile which was destined to overshadow all other documents of Kabbalist literature by the success and the fame it achieved and the influence it gradually exerted. ... Its place in the history of Kabbalism can be gauged from the fact that alone among the whole of post-

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 33b.

Talmudic rabbinical literature it became a canonical text, which for a period of several centuries actually ranked with the Bible and the Talmud.

(Trends 158)

This dissertation will focus on one small part of the vast corpus of material in the *Zohar*—the creation story or the *Zohar*'s cosmogony. We will focus on the *Zohar*'s commentary on Genesis, Chapter 1. At the heart of the *Zohar*'s cosmogony is a simple narrative—first there is mind which is unified, non-local, and primordial (*Ein Sof* or since *Ein Sof* is ultimately unknowable, *Keter*). The mind emanates space and time, causing the sadness of separation and multiplicity. Nonetheless, since mind permeates all creation, there was also immanence (the various *sefirot* flowing from *Keter* and ultimately ending in *Shekhinah*). Finally there is a process of coming together showing teleology within all of nature (the interplay of the *sefirot* seeking balance and longing for the primordial unity). Thus we have three stages of our narrative—mind, immanence, and process. This narrative is part of the ongoing Jewish hermeneutic tradition with roots in the Biblical creation story.

According to many scholars, this kabbalistic creation story as portrayed in the *Zohar* is a reaction to the earlier rabbinic concept of God qua creator, which emphasized divine transcendence over divine immanence. The medieval Jewish philosophers, particularly Maimonides, placed particular emphasis on divine transcendence, seeing a radical separation between Creator and creation. With this in mind, these scholars claim that one of the goals of the *Zohar*'s creation story was to emphasize God's immanence within creation.

For example, Arthur Green in his introduction to the Pritzker Edition of the *Zohar* writes:

The secrets of Kabbalah were made public in this age as a way to combat the influence of Maimonidean rationalism. The freedom and implied disinterest in human affairs of the philosophers' God frightened the mystics into coming out of the deep esotericism that had until then restricted them to oral transmission of their teachings within closed conventicles of initiates. (Introduction xli)

In a similar way, Menachem Kellner, whose work will be explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, has written:

Maimonides' attempted reform boomeranged badly: his attempt to "demythologize" post-talmudic Judaism ... led to the enthusiastic "remythologization" of Judaism through Kabbalah. Whether or not the need to counter Maimonides was indeed a catalyst for the composition and publication of kabbalistic literature, there can be no doubt that its acceptance as normative by the rabbinic elite and by the rank and file of the Jewish people sounded the death knell for Maimonides' projected reforms. (Kellner, *Agonist*)

Rather than creating the universe as a separate entity that is ontologically independent of God, God emanates the world of space-time. Therefore, God's presence is everywhere.

Similar to the *Zohar*, the process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and his followers was reacting to the substance metaphysics that had dominated Western philosophy as far back as ancient Greek thought. Whitehead adopts a very similar narrative to that of the *Zohar*. First there is mind containing all the eternal objects which serve as potential for the creation (God's primordial nature.) Mind becomes immanent in all actual occasions through prehension (God's consequent nature). As both the cause of and an immanent part of creation, God both affects and is affected by what happens in the universe. Finally God becomes "the lure" (to use Whitehead's phrase) in the ongoing process of nature (God as superject). In this narrative, God is not the static being, the unmoved mover as discussed by Aristotle, but rather, is portrayed as a dynamic becoming, a God of process.

Due to these significant similarities between Whitehead's process philosophy and the *Zohar* with regard to the immanence of God and to the process of creation, it is worthwhile to attempt a process interpretation of the kabbalistic creation story. The position adopted in this dissertation is panentheism, the view that God is both beyond nature and within nature. God is both transcendent and immanent. Max Weber has claimed that modernity is marked by a disenchantment of the world. To quote Weber's essay on modern science, "[Modernity is] the knowledge or the belief that, *if one only wanted to, one could* find out any time that there are in principle no *mysterious, incalculable powers at work,*² but rather that one could in principle master everything through calculation. But that means the disenchantment of the world" (13). The process

² His italics.

interpretation of the Zoharic creation story, on the other hand, will be built around the notion of the world as inherently enchanted, as inhabited by God.

Panentheism is an essentially idealistic conception of reality, that is, it affirms the notion that mind or consciousness, rather than matter, is ontologically primary and fundamental. It does not deny the ontological reality of matter but merely stresses the fundamentality of consciousness in all reality. According to the position defended here, however, mind or consciousness is not static being but dynamic becoming. And, to the extent that this immanent consciousness is God, God is not static being but is dynamic becoming within the continuing process of creation.

The first part of this dissertation consisting of Chapters 1 to 3, entitled *Philosophical Foundations*, focuses on the intellectual framework of this study of the *Zohar*. The second part consisting of Chapters 4 to 6, entitled *Creating a Narrative*, presents the story of creation, looking at the text of the *Zohar* through the lens of Whitehead's metaphysics. Finally, Chapter 7 looks at the narrative presented in the previous three chapters and discuss whether the goals of the dissertation have been achieved. Following is a more detailed summary of the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter on hermeneutics, the philosophy of interpretation. The *Zohar* provides a hermeneutical approach to the Biblical creation story, and the heart of this dissertation will take the form of a process interpretation of the *Zohar*. Therefore this work sees the *Zohar* as both a hermeneutical text and a text that itself is open to further interpretation. As Harold Bloom has argued, kabbalah is itself a hermeneutic approach that breaks with classical rabbinic and philosophical understandings of the Biblical creation story. This chapter will rely heavily on the work

of Gershom Scholem, Jacques Derrida, Hans Gadamer, Harold Bloom, and Michael Fishbane to defend the hermeneutic approach that is used in this dissertation.

Chapter 2 explores two intellectual trends with roots in ancient Greece – Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. The former focuses on substances in the world and sees an ontological gap between the Creator and creation. The philosophy of Maimonides grew out of this Aristotelian tradition. Eventually, modern scientific materialism also has roots in this intellectual tradition, with its focus on substances and its denial of any spiritual realities beyond the material world. Neoplatonism, based on Plotinus’s interpretation of Plato, saw spiritual realities permeating the world. It denied any ontological gap between Creator and creation, but saw creation as a flow or emanation. As we will show, the *Zohar* grew out of the Neoplatonic tradition in reaction to Maimonides’ Aristotelianism.

Chapter 3 focuses on the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. It demonstrates that his writing is also within this Neoplatonist tradition, with a universe consisting not of pieces of inert matter reacting to forces but rather of moments of experience. These moments of experienceprehend or grasp every other moment of experience, creating a dynamic universe filled with the interplay of these objects. This chapter ends with Whitehead’s tripartite description of God as primordial, consequent, and superject. With this intellectual background we are ready to begin our study of the *Zohar*’s creation story. These will make up the core chapters in Part 2.

Chapter 4 deals with mind. The cosmogony of the *Zohar* begins with the highest of the *sefirot* which is *Keter*. *Keter* means “crown” but can be understood as will or desire. Perhaps in the spirit of traditional hermeneutics, one can make the jump from will and desire to mind or primordial consciousness. Mind is taken to exist beyond space and

time, as ontologically unified, that is, without separations. Mind is understood as the fundamental manifestation of the divine. Rather than being an emergent property as some ontological materialists would have it, mind is primordial according to pre-Lurianic kabbalah. Similarly, according to Whitehead's process philosophy, mind (God's primordial nature) contains all eternal objects and is prehended by all actual entities. This dissertation will examine closely the concept of mind in the *Zohar* and interpret this notion from the point of view of Whiteheadian process philosophy.

Chapter 5 deals with the emanation of this mind into all of creation. The cosmogony of the *Zohar* continues with the emanation of the next eight *sefirot* flowing from *Keter*, the first of the *sefirot*. The *sefirot* constitute the fundamental stuff of the universe, which breaking into space-time, must separate. With this separation comes the breaking of the primordial unity represented by mind, and both the midrash and the *Zohar* describe the sadness which follows this separation. This interpretation, therefore, implies divine immanence—God/spirit/consciousness permeates everything. For Whiteheadian process philosophy, mind also becomes part of every actual occasion (God's consequent nature.) Although reality is made up of separate occasions of experience, every such occasion prehends every other occasion, so some of the primordial unity is maintained. We will look at the concept of mind's immanence in nature and interpret this idea within the framework of Whiteheadian process philosophy.

Chapter 6 looks at process. The key idea of the *Zohar*'s cosmogony is that the *sefirot* are dynamic. They constantly interact and seek balance with one another. There is a telos or final causation, a purpose underlying this process. The individual *sefirot* are often depicted in masculine and feminine terms, drawn towards one another, creating sexual imagery for the entire process. The interpretation of creation as a teleological

developmental process is found both in kabbalistic thought and in Whiteheadian process philosophy. Whitehead also sees each actual entity as having a subjective aim, a telos, which grows out of the superject aspect of God. As well, according to Whitehead, God's power is not one of coercion but rather of persuasion (the lure), that is, nature is not externally forced into submission to a plan. Instead, a teleological direction and purpose permeates nature itself. Again we will look at the manner in which the *Zohar* metaphorically describes the process of creation and the teleological purpose that permeates nature and interpret these ideas from the point of view of process philosophy.

Chapter 7 summarizes the narrative created in the previous three chapters. The final narrative presented will be radically different from the classical understanding of creation in our Western culture. Rather than an all-powerful God creating a universe *ex nihilo*, God literally emanates a universe out of God's very being. Rather than an ontological gap between Creator and creation, a spiritual reality permeates everything. And rather than a God perfect and unchanging, God's very being is constantly transformed by the processes at work in the universe. Does such a narrative add a legitimate new layer to the historical hermeneutics of the creation story? This will open up a question for future exploration—does this new narrative resonate with the contemporary community as the Zoharic narrative resonated with the community of medieval Spain?

PART 1: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROCESS OF JEWISH HERMENEUTICS

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, 1040–1105), the classic Biblical commentator on Jewish scripture, comments on the first two words of the Hebrew Bible *bereishit bara* “In the beginning God created . . .” He writes: ³

אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דרשני.

This text cries out, Interpret Me!

Burton L. Visotzky points out that these first words of Genesis form a non-standard usage that seems to require interpretation (Visotzky 581). At the heart of the reading of any Jewish text, in particular the Jewish scripture and its commentaries, is interpretation.

This dissertation continues in the time honored process of Jewish biblical interpretation or, to use the more philosophical term, Jewish hermeneutics. In particular, we will look at the philosophy of organism developed by Alfred North Whitehead in his classic work of metaphysics *Process and Reality* and use it as a vehicle for interpreting a classical kabbalistic text, the *Zohar*. More specifically, we will use Whitehead’s philosophy to interpret the zoharic creation story, which is itself a commentary on *Genesis*,

³ Rashi on Genesis 1:1

Chapter 1. In so doing, we will add another voice to the long tradition of Jewish hermeneutics that stretches back to Hebrew scripture itself.

The *Zohar*, despite its radical departure from many Biblical ideas, is laid out as an interpretation of the written Torah. Later kabbalistic texts have been written as an interpretation of the *Zohar*. As critical theorist Harold Bloom has written: “The *Zohar* is organized as an apparent commentary upon Scripture, just as much of the later Kabbalah is organized as an apparent commentary upon the *Zohar*, but it is the genius of revisionism to swerve so far from its canonical texts as to make the ancestral voices into even their own opposites” (15). In other words, by offering an interpretation of the zoharic creation story, we are offering an interpretation of an interpretation.

Taking this idea further, according to Michael Fishbane in a source quoted below the written Torah is not at the beginning of this chain of interpretation. The written Torah itself is an instantiation of a primordial Torah, the Torah which pre-existed the very creation of the universe. The notion of such a primordial Torah is based on a passage in the rabbinic midrash:⁴

התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנתו של הקב"ה, בנוהג
שבעולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטין, אינו בונה אותה מדעת
עצמו אלא מדעת אומן, והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו,
אלא דיפתראות, ופינקסאות יש לו, לדעת היאך הוא עושה
חדרים, היאך הוא עושה פשפשין, כך היה הקב"ה מביט בתורה,
ובורא את העולם, והתורה אמרה בראשית ברא אלהים, ואין
ראשית אלא תורה, היאך מה דאת אמר (משלי ח) ה' קנני
ראשית דרכו.

⁴ *Genesis Rabbah* 1:1 (Theodor and Albeck 1 2).

The Torah declares, I was the working tool of the Holy One blessed be He. In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus, God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, “In the beginning God created” (Genesis 1:1), beginning referring to the Torah, as in the verse “The Lord made me as the beginning of His way” (Proverbs 8:22).⁵

Burton L. Visotzky, in his essay “Genesis in Rabbinic Interpretation,” writes regarding this passage:

It is neither “in the beginning,” nor “when God began to create;”⁶ instead the midrash imagines the Torah as the very instrument of creation. Further, God does not create by fiat, but rather consults a pre-existent plan, a sort of platonic ideal, which becomes the very blue-print of creation. (582)

Michael Fishbane, in his attempt to build a theology of Judaism on the Jewish hermeneutic tradition, quotes an earlier kabbalistic source that calls this primordial

⁵ Throughout this dissertation, all translations of biblical, talmudic, midrashic, and zoharic texts are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Two different translations of Genesis 1:1, as we shall show in Chapter 4.

Torah, this original blueprint, the *Torah Kelulah*, from a Hebrew root meaning “inclusive.” This was the original, all-inclusive Torah. To Fishbane, this *Torah Kelulah* was the original divine reality:

This divine reality precedes the Written Torah as said earlier, and may be designated as the *Torah Kelulah*, the Torah of All-in-All – an infinite enfoldment of all that could ever be in our world. Only this Torah truly comes from the mouth of God, forever and ever, as the kiss of divine truth upon the vastness of world-being. (61)

Fishbane mentions that Rabbi Isaac the Old uses the phrase *Torah Kelulah*, the Torah of the All-in-All, “to designate the preternatural Torah, all-enfolded with the infinities of forms, in all-unimaginable ways, within the gradation of *hesed*, the right hand of God” (60). So we have layers of interpretation stretching from the Bible to the modern period. In this work we will use Whitehead to interpret a section of *Zohar*, which is itself an interpretation of the written Torah, which is itself an interpretation of the primordial Torah. We will add a new layer of meaning. What gives us the right to participate in this layering of interpretation? And where does this process stop? Our study of this question will bring us ultimately to the work of Jacques Derrida, his attack on logocentrism, and his belief that there is no end to the process. In this exploration, we will see that, while most hermeneuticists base their ideas on Greek-Christian views, Derrida returns to his Jewish roots and is positively rabbinic in his approach to hermeneutics.

Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Ricoeur

The history of hermeneutics can be seen as a movement away from the notion of the fixed meaning of a text and towards an emphasis on the reader, or perhaps better, the community of interpreters. The first modern figure to develop a theory of interpretation was the Christian theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1864). Schleiermacher was a product of the Christian Reformation, a movement built on the rejection of the Church's interpretive authority, replacing it with an emphasis on the ability of the individual to interpret the Bible, through the use of reason accompanied by faith.

In the Christian Middle Ages there was a long tradition of non-literal interpretation of the text and multiple meanings of Scriptural passages. The various Church councils were seen as authoritative in permitting this multiplicity of interpretations. The Christian Reformation rejected the notion that the Church and its councils were necessary for the interpretation of scripture. As Timothy Ward wrote in his study on Biblical interpretation: "It was in their rejection of this kind of argument, and in their rigorous assertion of the formal as well as the material sufficiency of Scripture, that the Protestant Reformers made their decisive contribution to the doctrine of Scripture" (42). Ward continues: "Where almost all medieval theologians had appealed to Scripture as their authority, the Reformers raised the stakes, making the issue of biblical authority an issue not just of biblical citation but of the right understanding of Scripture" (43). Luther's doctrine of *sola scriptura* seems to point to the idea that not only does Scripture alone contain all the truth necessary for salvation, but as Ward writes, there is a "right understanding of Scripture." The search for this correct interpretation motivated Schleiermacher.

For Schleiermacher, the individual could approach the text itself and understand its literal meaning, what it actually meant to the author who wrote it. The authority of the text itself replaced that of the Church. For Schleiermacher in particular, the goal of hermeneutics was to uncover the original intent of the author. Anthony Thieselton, in his 2009 textbook on hermeneutics, explains Schleiermacher's approach: "Hermeneutics is part of the art of thinking. It involves 'stepping out of one's frame of mind' to understand the other" (159).

Schleiermacher's goal was to find the true meaning of a particular Biblical passage. Of course, this assumes that the Bible was written with one fixed meaning in mind. Hans Gadamer would later describe Schleiermacher's agenda as follows: "What is to be understood is now not only the exact words and their objective meaning, but also the individuality of the speaker, that is, the author. Hermeneutics includes grammatical and psychological interpretation. But Schleiermacher's particular contribution is psychological interpretation" (164). Schleiermacher, however, although he introduced the idea of philosophical hermeneutics, was an eighteenth-century Christian theologian. His entire outlook was grounded on the notion that the text has a fixed meaning that the interpreter must uncover. As we will show later, there is an equivalent tradition in Judaism, *peshat* that approaches interpretation in a simple straightforward manner.

Nonetheless, the Jewish tradition has long held a different conception of hermeneutics. Susan Handelman makes this clear in her study *The Slayers of Moses* where she claims that "The Rabbinic tradition . . . based itself on the principles of multiple meaning and endless interpretability, maintaining that interpretation and text were not only inseparable, but that interpretation – as opposed to incarnation – was the central divine act" (xiv). This idea of "multiple meaning and endless interpretability"

will become central to our goal of adding another layer to these multiple layers of interpretation.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), a philosopher from a Christian background, was the central figure in any history of hermeneutics. Gadamer, a student of Martin Heidegger, moved away from the Protestant notion of the fixed meaning of a text, towards a focus on the interpreter. To Gadamer, there is no “God’s eye,” objective interpretation of a text. Interpreters live within a community and a tradition. They approach a text with certain prejudices. In fact, Gadamer defends the entire notion of prejudice in interpretation. “... the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power” (239-240).

For Gadamer, then, authentic interpretation can take place only within a community, with its own traditions and culture. This idea will become extremely relevant when we look at the *Zohar*, written in thirteenth-century Spain. As we shall try to show, the *Zohar* grew out of a particular cultural milieu that was reacting to a particular world outlook. The *Zohar* was responding to the extreme rationalism of Jewish philosophers and their emphasis on God’s transcendence. It presented an image of God as far more immanent in the world.

According to Gadamer, any interpreter of a text views it from within a particular horizon or field of vision. Gadamer borrowed the idea of a “horizon” from Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Husserl developed a philosophy of consciousness, focused on what the mind actually perceives at any moment with no pre-conceived limitations. Such consciousness creates a horizon. Gadamer writes: “A horizon is not a rigid frontier, but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further” (217). The interpreter has a horizon, but the text also has a horizon.

Gadamer thus introduces his most fundamental idea. He speaks of interpretation as a fusion of horizons: “In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons” (273). Thus, for Gadamer, hermeneutics becomes an encounter between a text and an interpreter, standing in the midst of a particular community.

Elliot Wolfson, a scholar of mysticism who we will encounter regularly throughout this dissertation, shares a very similar idea. “The process of interpreting the relevant biblical passage occasions the experience that the passage is itself describing. Reading is thus a double mirroring, the mirror of the reader reflecting the mirror of the text and the mirror of the text reflecting the mirror of the reader” (Hermeneutics 107). In this interplay between the reader and the text, we see the beginning of the notion of hermeneutics as process. Gadamer calls each moment when an interpreter encounters a text “an event.” Thus he writes:

We showed that understanding is not so much a method by means of which the enquiring mind approaches some selected object and turns it into objective knowledge, as something of which a prior condition is its being situated within a process of tradition. Understanding itself proved to be an *event*⁷, and the task of hermeneutics, seen philosophically, consists in asking what kind of understanding, what kind of science it is, that is itself changed by historical change. (276).

⁷ My italics.

Hermeneutics as a series of events becomes a process. Interestingly, for process philosophy, as we will show in Chapter 3, the fundamental ontological realities are events located in space and time. As Romualdo Abulad wrote in his essay on hermeneutics: “The fusion which I call a collision of horizons is an event of the spirit of the *Geist* which is perpetually restless, never static, ever living and ceaselessly in flux” (18). Thus, hermeneutics in general, and in particular Jewish hermeneutics which recognizes multiple levels of interpretation, fits into Whitehead’s definition of a process as connected to an ongoing flow of consciousness.

Another modern philosopher who has spoken of the power of the interpreting community is Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005). Ricoeur, like Gadamer, also spoke about the importance of reading a text within a community. “If exegesis raised a hermeneutic problem, that is, a problem of interpretation, it is because every reading of a text always takes place within a community, a tradition, or a living current of thought, all of which display presuppositions and exigencies” (3). For Ricoeur, the emphasis is on the interpreting community to make accessible a text that often has hidden meanings:

The purpose of all interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance between the past cultural epoch to which the text belongs, and the interpreter himself. By overcoming this distance, by making himself contemporary with the text, the exegete can appropriate its meaning to himself: foreign, he makes it familiar, that is, he makes it his own. (16)

Ricoeur also placed particular emphasis on the ability of a community of interpretation to create new metaphors when approaching a text. There is no fixed meaning of a text but

rather a flexibility of interpretation. This allows a text to take on new meanings based on the particular needs of the community.

Gadamer and Ricoeur both shifted the emphasis of hermeneutics away from the text and the author's intentions towards the culture and needs of the interpreting community. Susan Handelman, however, claims that although both men made a break with the classical Christian notion of the fixed meaning of the text, both still remain in the Greco-Christian hermeneutic tradition. Handelman writes:

Among recent thinkers attempting to articulate theories of language and interpretation appropriate to a twentieth century which has radically severed its ties with the Greco-Christian tradition are Paul Ricoeur, Hans Gadamer, and Jacques Derrida. The first two are, however, concerned to create a new hermeneutic based on a specifically Christian form of theology. (16)

Handelman highlights the work of a more radical thinker who grew up in the Jewish tradition, Jacques Derrida, to return to a more authentic rabbinic approach to understanding texts and, thereby, "deconstruct" "the entire tradition of Western thought itself" (16).

Barthes and Derrida

This history of hermeneutics has shown a movement away from the focus on the intentions of the author towards an emphasis on the interpreting community. However, before turning to the ideas of Jacques Derrida, it will be worthwhile to look at one other

post-modern literary critic, Roland Barthes (1915–1980). Barthes coined the phrase “death of the author” in a seminal essay written in 1967. Barthes writes most explicitly about the move from text to reader. “The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author.” With no set author and no privileged original intent, there is room for multifaceted meanings and interpretations of the text. “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes). In such a “multi-dimensional space,” the intention or even the identity of the author becomes irrelevant. All we have before us is the text itself. Or, as Derrida would so aptly write: “There is nothing outside the text” (Grammatology 354). Derrida’s image of a text that stands alone, open to sometimes radical interpretation, provides an image for the method used by the author of the *Zohar*.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was born into an Algerian Jewish family, but ultimately rejected the religious observance of his youth. As we will show, however, theological methods played a profound role in Derrida’s thinking. Derrida coined the term ‘deconstruction’ as an extreme denial of any fixed meaning in a text. John D. Caputo has written extensively about the religious implications of Derrida’s writings. He writes the following about Derrida:

..let there be no mistake: ‘early on’ deconstruction *does* delimit the *metaphysical* side of theology. Still, is that not an honorable and hoary religious project? Does it not have an honorable name, the name of ‘dehellenizing Christianity,’ more generally of ‘dehellenizing biblical

faith'? ... Is it not in step with Abraham Heschel's remarkable extrication of the prophets from the grips of metaphysical theology? (Caputo 5)

Here, Caputo compares the radical thinking of Derrida to the neo-Hasidic teaching of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's return to a more authentic theology. For Caputo, deconstruction is not an enemy of faith. Rather, it can allow faith to flourish in a space in which the classical interpretations of a text have become unfruitful. Caputo writes:

Seen thus, deconstruction is not the sworn enemy of faith or religious institutions, but it can cause a lot of well-deserved trouble to a faith or an institution that has frozen over into immobility. Deconstruction is a way to let faith function more adventfully, with an enhanced sense of advent and event, gladdened by the good news of alterity by which we are always and already summoned. (18)

Caputo's remarks seem to fit well with the period when the *Zohar* was written. As we will try to show in this work, the classical interpretations of the classical texts and, in particular the philosophical arguments of Maimonides, no longer met the spiritual needs of the Jewish community. The austere, distant God of the philosophers could not appeal to a community longing to live in God's presence. The philosopher's God offered little solace to a community that was suffering. A new text and a new interpretation were needed to meet the spiritual needs of the community and the *Zohar* met those needs.

Returning now to Derrida, we must first explore his arguments. Derrida rejects the idea of what he calls a "transcendental signifier." This signifier is some ultimate

object that centers a text and gives it some absolute meaning. The transcendental signifier might be the Platonic forms, reason, or even God. Derrida sees his task as an attempt to unravel (or deconstruct) what he calls the logocentrism of Western metaphysics. Derrida totally rejects the idea that we can point to some logos or transcendental signifier that centers a text. For Derrida the text stands alone. "There is nothing outside the text." Any attempt to move from a text towards its ultimate or transcendent meaning is impossible due to what Derrida called "différance." Without going into all the details of Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist account of language, I will simply point out that Derrida coined the term "différance" to underscore both his indebtedness to and his supplementation of Saussure's notion of "différence." For Saussure, signs have meaning not by virtue of referring either to real objects or to ideas in the mind, what Saussure calls the "real presence" of the signified within the signifier. Instead, signs have meaning because of their relationship to other signs from which they are differentiated in the sign-system, that is, the difference or "différence." Thus, for Saussure, the meaning of a sign is a function of its occupying a different "space" in the sign-system.

For Derrida, on the other hand, the relationships that bind a language together are not merely differences or distinctions between signs. Signs are not self-sufficiently and discretely separate from other signs but, instead, bear "traces" within themselves of these other signs. The meaning of the sign is, therefore, "displaced," because it depends upon other signs from which it is supposed to be different. Though "displacement" retains the spatial metaphor of Saussure's "différence," Derrida also adds a temporal dimension to his analysis by claiming that the meaning of a sign is also always "deferred," because each present sign is linked both to signs that precede it and to signs that follow it. Thus,

Derrida coins the term “différance” to denote both “spatial displacement” and the “temporal deferral” of a sign’s meaning. “Différance” indicates that the meaning of a sign or word is always relational and never fixed in space or time. Thus, one can never locate a “transcendental signifier,” that is, the final element in the chain of signification that has a direct and unmediated relationship to the real beyond the sign, because such a transcendental signifier does not exist. Therefore, the meaning of a text, as a system of signs, is continually displaced and deferred, never absolute or fixed.

Derrida discusses this idea in numerous places including in his famous speech entitled *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*. The speech was delivered at a conference honoring the French anthropologist and structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009). Lévi-Strauss considered Derrida’s speech an attack on his life’s work and deeply resented him. As a structuralist and anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss believed that all human institutions contain underlying structures which serve as a pattern of understanding. The structure becomes a kind of transcendental signifier. Derrida rejects the very idea of such an underlying structure:

Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an ‘event’ ...Nevertheless, up until the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure – or rather the structurality of structure – although it has always been involved, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to

make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay of the structure. (Structure)

Note that he uses the term “event” in his attack on structuralism, hinting again that perhaps interpretation can be seen as a series of events. Derrida’s claim is that structure attempts to center a text and therefore limits the ability of freeplay, an open ended set of interpretations that allow for flexibility and freedom. Derrida continues:

There are thus two interpretations of interpretation of structure, of sign, of freeplay. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering, a truth or an origin which is free from freeplay and from the order of the sign, and lives like an exile the necessity of interpretation. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology – in other words, through the history of all of his history – has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of the game. (Structure)

Derrida, in his move away from both anthropological (Lévi-Strauss) and linguistic (Saussure) structuralism, is affirming free-play. He is looking for an open ended reading of the text.

Elliot Wolfson, in his essay on kabbalah and Derrida, has suggested that there is a confluence of opinions on the role of text in both the mystical tradition and Derrida’s thinking. Wolfson writes:

Derrida turns to the kabbalistic tradition to elicit support for the notion of an amorphous text, that is, a text whose language is no longer broken conventionally into discrete words, a fore-text, we might say, that serves as the hermeneutical basis for polysemy, the “white fire” of the primordial Torah, according to kabbalists, which is infinite and thus not fixed in any form, the “text written in letters that are still invisible.” (Assaulting 478)

Derrida certainly was ambivalent about his own Jewish background and was not a scholar of Jewish mysticism. Nonetheless, one can certainly see how kabbalistic ideas of an open ended text may have influenced his thinking.⁸

Derrida introduces a kind of postmodern thinking that claims that reality as such is never immediately accessible to the perceiver. In de-centering the text, Derrida seems to agree with metaphysical non-realists who believe that all knowledge is a human construct. Kevin Vanhoozer has written this quite explicitly:

The ‘hermeneutic realist’ holds that there is something prior to interpretation, something ‘there’ in the text, which can be known and to which the interpreter is accountable. By contrast, the hermeneutic nonrealist (e.g., Derrida, [Stanley] Fish) denies that meaning precedes interpretive activity; the truth of an interpretation depends on the response of the reader. The hermeneutic debate over meaning thus parallels its

⁸ Further down we bring a passage from Moshe Idel quoting Derrida’s use of the image of “white fire” on “black fire.”

counterpart in metaphysics; the metaphysical nonrealist denies that there is a mind-independent reality to which our true descriptions must correspond. The nonrealist maintains that the world (or the meaning of a text) is a construct of the mind. (496)

By disconnecting the text from any metaphysical reality, we can unleash a hermeneutic creativity which otherwise would be lacking. This was precisely the approach of the rabbis of classical Judaism. Daniel Boyarin has a wonderful image, comparing the breaking of the Logos to the shattering of the atom. He writes:

The late Babylonian rabbis seem to be articulating and acting out an hermeneutic practice of dissemination of meaning and fracturing of textual organicity: the shattering of the Logos, like the breaking of the atom, I suggest, released an enormous stockpile of hermeneutic energy, the sparks of the Logos. The practice can certainly be better apprehended by us in light of the denaturalization of metaphysics of language which Derrida has endeavored to perform, and provides a kind of model for a nonlogocentric reading practice. Through one of the accidents of history, it is perhaps this odd confluence that has given a possibility for a renewed (but critical) recovery of Jewish difference in our own time. (136)

Boyarin sees in Derrida's ideas the key to Jewish creativity. But the question still arises, if there is no transcendental signifier that ultimately centers the text, where is God?

Where is God?

To Derrida, the text stands alone, uncentered and unconnected, even to God. This is a reflection of the classical view of the rabbis:⁹

אותי עזבו אוותרה שמה את תורתני שמרו.

[God said], if only my children would abandon me and observe my Torah.

Underlying this rabbinic teaching is the hope that through learning the Torah and practicing its commandments, Israel will find her way back to God. Nonetheless, standing alone and uncentered, the text invites a freeplay of interpretation. There are multiple levels of such interpretation. The first level of interpretation is the written text itself, traditionally attributed to Moses. As Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, there are interpretations and cherished traditions that actually pre-date the written Torah. Therefore, he writes, “thus Judaism is based upon a minimum of revelation and a maximum of interpretation” (Heschel 274). This written text becomes the basis for more layers of interpretation—the rabbinic midrash, the medieval philosophical tradition, and the mystical speculation of the *Zohar*. As Bloom has written, the *Zohar* itself becomes a new text open to interpretation, and our attempt to employ Whitehead’s philosophy of organism to interpret the creation story of the *Zohar* adds one more layer to this ongoing process.

⁹ Jerusalem Talmud, Ḥagigah 1:7.

Where is God in this entire endeavor? When Derrida speaks of God, he sounds not like a self-identified atheist but far more like a mystic. Derrida writes:

What are we doing when we name God? What are the limits of this naming? Now we know that in many Abrahamic traditions God is nameless, beyond the name. In Jewish traditions, God is the empty place, beyond any name. But we name the nameless. And when we name 'what is not,' what is or is not nameless, what do we do? That is why being a believer, even a mystic believer, and being an atheist is not necessarily a different state of affairs. (Epoche 37-38)

Here, we get an image of God that is present and not present. In a sense this image of God comes straight out of the Jewish mystical tradition, where God is both *Ein Sof* – infinity - and *ayin* – nothingness, presence and absence. In the medieval Christian tradition of negative theology of John Scotus and others, this idea is captured as the *deus absconditus*, the hidden God. If God is both present and absent, the only place we find God is in the text itself. Again, “there is nothing outside the text”¹⁰ or as Beth Sharon Ash has written: “Derrida cites the Algerian Jew Edmond Jabès, whose interrogation of God pre-supposes divinity as silent absence, a negative expression of his presence: ‘If God is, it is because he is in the book’ (*Writing and Difference*, p. 76)” (70).

This idea of God as both present and absent is precisely the view that is found in the kabbalah or Jewish mystical tradition. Thus, Harold Bloom can write:

¹⁰In the original French, “Il n'y a rien en dehors du texte.” (Derrida 354)

Kabbalah too thinks in ways not permitted by Western metaphysics, since its God is at once *Ein-Sof* and *ayin*, total presence and total absence, and all its interiors contain exteriors, while all of its effects determine its causes. But Kabbalah stops the movement of Derrida's 'trace,' since it has a *point* of the primordial, where presence and absence co-exist by continuous interplay. (25)

The kabbalistic image of a God both present and absent and of a text which, therefore, stands alone was already anticipated in the rabbinic tradition. The midrash speaks of the Torah as having been present even before the creation of the universe:¹¹

שבעה דברים קדמו לעולם אלפיים שנה, התורה . . . ואנה היתה
התורה? כתובה באש שחורה על אש לבנה, ומונחת על ברכו של
הקב"ה.

Seven things preceded the creation of the universe by two thousand years.
[Among those was] the Torah..... Where was the Torah written? It was
written with black fire on white fire rested on the knee(s) of the Holy One,
blessed be He.

Moshe Idel describes how Derrida uses this classic Jewish image of black fire on white fire to elucidate the value of free play and open-ended interpretation of the text. In

¹¹ *Midrash Tehillim* 90:12.

his book *Dissemination*, Derrida first quotes a Hasidic interpretation of the black fire on white fire from Rabbi Levi Issac of Berdichev:

The fact is that also the whiteness constitutes letters but we do not know how to read them as [we know] the blackness of the letters. But in the future God, blessed be He, will reveal to us even the whiteness of the Torah. Namely we will [then] understand the white letter in our Torah, and this is the meaning of “A new Torah will go forth from me.” (Isaiah 51:4) (Idel, White 171)

Idel then quotes Derrida regarding this Hasidic passage:

Here, on the contrary, it is always possible for a text to become new, since the blanks open up its structure to an indefinitely disseminated transformation. The whiteness of the virgin paper, the blankness of the transparent column, reveals more than the neutrality of some medium; it uncovers the space or the play of space in which transformations are set off and sequences strung out. (*Dissemination* 345)

In the future even the white spaces between the letters will become a source of free play for interpreters.

Another rabbinic tradition, read in synagogues on Yom Kippur, describes the horrible martyrdom of Rabbi Haninah ben Teradian. The rabbi was burnt at the stake wrapped in the scroll of a Torah. As he was dying, his students ask him what he sees: ¹²

גליון נשרפין ואותיות פורחות.

The blank parchment is burning but the letters are taking flight.

It is clear from these rabbinic traditions that the Torah – the actual words and letters – exist in a reality independent of their material manifestation. This is the basis of those who have seen Derrida's radical view of hermeneutics as a return to the ancient rabbinic view. It was this long Jewish tradition that encouraged the "free-play" of interpretation which Derrida would later speak of in his essay *Structure, Sign, and Play*.

So we leave our history of hermeneutics with the thought that our most radical thinker is returning to the ancient rabbinic method of understanding text. Susan Handelman has written most clearly that with Derrida we are returning to the ancient rabbis:

All that a brilliant student will in the future expound in front of his teacher was already given to Moses at Sinai. (*Yerushalmi Peah* 6:2). That is, all later Rabbinic interpretation shared the same divine origin as the Torah of Moses; interpretation, in Derridean terms, was 'always already there.'

Human interpretation and commentary thus become part of the Divine

¹² Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 18a.

Revelation! The boundaries between text and commentary are fluid in a way that is difficult to imagine for a sacred text, but this fluidity is a central tenet of contemporary critical theory, especially in Derrida. (101)

Her use of the term “fluidity” points once again towards hermeneutics as process. With Handelman’s insights, we are ready to explore Jewish hermeneutics.

Jewish Hermeneutics

As already mentioned above, rabbinic tradition allows multiple levels of interpretation of the Biblical text. The Rabbis taught: ¹³

יש שבעים פנים בתורה.

There are seventy faces to the Torah.

The *Zohar* shares the same teaching. After quoting a Biblical verse, it writes: ¹⁴

וכל אורייתא מתפרשא בשבעין אנפין. לקביל שבעין סטרין
ושבעין אנפין. והכי הוא בכל מלה ומלה דאורייתא. וכל מאי
דנפיק מכל מלה ומלה כמה גוונין אתפרשן מניה לכל סטרין.

The entire Torah assumes seventy aspects, it takes on seventy sides and seventy faces. So it is with every single word of Torah, and whatever emerges from each and every word diverges into numerous nuances in countless directions.

¹³ *Numbers Rabbah* 13:15.

¹⁴ I 54a.

The medieval tradition divides these multiple interpretive methods into four major categories known as *peshat* פשט (the simple meaning of the text), *drash* דרש (from the Hebrew word meaning “search” – the rabbinic interpretation or midrash), *remez* רמז (literally “hint” – the allegorical or philosophical interpretation), and *sod* סוד (literally “secret” – the mystical interpretation). The four terms are often abbreviated *pardes* פרדס (*peshat, remez, drash, sod*), a Hebrew term borrowed from Greek which means “orchard,” and which also was the origin of the word “paradise.” This fourfold mode of interpretation developed in medieval times and probably has its roots in Christian exegesis. Wilhelm Bacher, in his article on Biblical exegesis in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, writes:

In formulating this doctrine of a fourfold meaning, the Christian mode of exegesis (which was known to the Spanish Jews) probably served as a model; in this the fourfold sense (historical or literal, tropological or moral, allegorical, and anagogical) had long since been formulated by the Venerable Bede in the eighth, and by Rhabanus Maurus in the ninth century. (171)

Jewish hermeneutics certainly shares with medieval Christianity a belief in multiple ways to understand scripture. But as Handelman has shown in the quote above, Jewish tradition sees a fluidity to the text which opens it to ongoing, multilevel interpretation that is “difficult to imagine for a sacred text.”

Michael A. Fishbane has written a Jewish theology based on these various levels of interpretation entitled *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*. He carefully defines each of the four Jewish hermeneutic categories. In doing so, he creatively builds on the long Jewish tradition of *parshanim* (interpreters) that reached its height during medieval times but had its roots in the earliest writings on the Bible. Let us briefly summarize Fishbane's summary of these four traditional methods of Jewish hermeneutics.

Peshat is the most basic level of interpretation—the search for the simple meaning of the words. Fishbane writes: "... reading of the *peshat* sense involves a subjugation of the self to the words of the text as they appear, both singly and in syntactic combination" (66). The Rabbis taught that:¹⁵

אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו.

The text never leaves its simple meaning.

The meaning of this Talmudic statement is debated by medieval authorities as well as modern scholars. Some hold that it means that the literal sense is Scripture's only meaning, while others hold that although scripture may hold multiple interpretations, it never loses its literal meaning. We begin with the *peshat*, but we never end with it. It is the first step into higher levels of interpretation.

Drash or rabbinic interpretation begins with knowledge of the full corpus of scripture and the willingness to learn from one verse to another vastly separated in the literature. Fishbane writes: "... but now it is not the syntax of a given sentence that helps

¹⁵ *Shabbat* 63a, *Yebamot* 24a and other sources.

determine the sense of its words but the inner resonance of selected words or phrases with others in the larger canonical whole” (75). Much of the huge corpus of rabbinic literature, particularly the aggadic or narrative as opposed to halachic or legal material—both the midrash and the Talmud—take the form of *drash*.

With *remez*, we reach a whole new level of textual understanding. The interpreter approaches the text from particular philosophical, psychological, or historical tradition. Teachings which must come from traditions totally different from the Biblical text such as Greek philosophy can now be seen within the text. Fishbane writes:

The reader begins with a body of truth claims from some other realm of inquiry (such as philosophical teachings about the hierarchies of reality, or psychological assertions about the multiform structure of the soul) and this matrix is then presumed to operate as the deep (and true) structure of the text – a presumption confirmed by the exegetical disclosure of verbal markers of sequences that are said to allude to this very structure or matrix. (91)

This study, when it approaches the text from Whitehead’s process philosophy, falls within the hermeneutic category of *remez*.

Finally there is *sod*, which views the text at its deepest level, finding mystical insights not simply in the meaning of words but the very shapes and sounds of letters. The *Zohar* comes from the tradition of *sod*. Fishbane writes:

... from a mystical point of view (derived from esoteric tradition), scripture is regarded as the earthly manifestation of the most supernal truths of God. Indeed, according to classic kabbalistic lore, the creative emanations of the divine Being, and their transcendent interactions and modalities, are believed to be refracted and encoded in the language of scripture. (94)

Mystical sources, although in the realm of *sod*, often build on earlier rabbinic sources or *drash*. As we will show throughout this study, the *Zohar* frequently quotes the Talmud and the midrash. However, these rabbinic sources become jumping off points for new often radical interpretations. A good example of this can be seen in Chapter 5 of this dissertation which brings the Talmudic source of God shrinking the moon.¹⁶ The *Zohar* quotes this source, but then gives a radical new understanding that it is the feminine aspect of God which has been shrunk.¹⁷

We have summarized the multilevel hermeneutical methods found in Jewish tradition. This multilevel method is beautifully portrayed in a parable from the *Zohar*, the central mystical text of Jewish tradition. The Torah text is compared to a beautiful maiden kept hidden in her palace. The interpreter is her lover trying to gain a glimpse of her. To quote the *Zohar* in full:¹⁸

¹⁶ Babylonian Talmud, Hullin 60b.

¹⁷ See for example *Zohar* I 20a.

¹⁸ *Mishpatim* II 99a-b.

משל למה"ד לרחימתא דאיהי שפירתא בחיזו ושפירתא בריוא ואיהי טמירתא בטמירו גו היכלא דילה ואית לה רחימא יחידאה דלא ידעין ביה בני נשא אלא איהו בטמירו. ההוא רחימא מגו רחימא דרחיס לה עבר לתרע ביתה תדיר זקיף עינוי לכל סטר. איהי ידעת דהא רחימא אסחר תרע ביתה תדיר מה עבדת פתחת פתחא זעירא בההוא היכלא טמירא דאיהי תמן וגליאת אנפהא לגבי רחימאה ומיד אתהדרת ואתכסיאת. כל אינון דהוו לגבי רחימא לא חמו ולא אסתכלו בר רחימא בלחודוי ומעוי ולביה ונפשה אזלו אבתרה. וידע דמגו רחימו דרחימת ליה אתגליאת לגביה רגעא חדא לאתערא (ס"א לגביה רחימו) ליה. הכי הוא מלה דאורייתא לא אתגליאת אלא לגבי רחימאה. ידעת אורייתא דההוא חכימא דלבא אסחר לתרע ביתה כל יומא מה עבדת גליאת אנפהא לגביה מגו היכלא וארמיזת ליה רמיזא ומיד אהדרת לאתרה ואתטמרת. כל אינון דתמן לא ידעי ולא מסתכלי אלא איהו בלחודוי ומעוי ולביה ונפשיה אזיל אבתרה. ועל דא אורייתא אתגליאת ואתכסיאת ואזלת ברחימו לגבי רחימהא לאתערא בהדיה רחימו.

תא חזי ארחא דאורייתא כך הוא. בקדמיתא כד שריא לאתגלאה לגבי בר נש (רגעא) ארמיזת ליה ברמיזו אי ידע טב ואי לא ידע שדרת לגביה וקראת ליה פתי. ואמרת אורייתא לההוא דשדרת לגביה אמרו לההוא פתי דיקרב הכא ואשתעי בהדיה. הדא הוא דכתיב (משלי ט) מי פתי יסור הנה חסר לב וגוי. קריב לגבה שריאת למללא עמיה מבתר פרוכתא דפרסא ליה מלין לפום ארחוי עד דיסתכל זעיר זעיר ודא הוא דרשא. לבתר תשתעי בהדיה מבתר שושיפא דקיק מלין דחידה ודא איהו הגדה. לבתר דאיהו רגיל לגבה אתגליאת לגביה אנפין באנפין ומלילת בהדיה כל רזין סתימין דילה וכל ארחין סתימין דהוו בלבאה טמירין מיומין קדמאין

A parable: To what can this be compared? To a beloved, ravishing maiden, hidden deep within her palace. She has one lover, unknown to anyone, hidden too. Out of love for her, this lover passes by her gate constantly, lifting his eyes to every side. Knowing that her lover hovers about her gate constantly, what does she do? She opens a little window in her hidden palace, revealing her face to her lover, then swiftly withdraws, concealing herself. No one near him sees or reflects, only the lover, and

his heart and his soul and everything within him flow to her. He knows that out of love for him she reveals herself for that one moment to awaken love in him.

So it is with a word of Torah: she reveals herself to no one but her lover. Torah knows that one who is wise of heart hovers about her gate every day. What does she do? She reveals her face to him from the palace and beckons him with a hint, then swiftly withdraws to her hiding place. No one there knows or reflects – he alone does, and his heart and his soul and everything within him flows out to her. This is why Torah reveals and conceals herself. With love she approaches her lover to arouse love with him.

Come and see the way of Torah. At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a human, she beckons him with a hint. If he perceives, good; if not, she sends him a message, calling him 'simple.' [This is the *peshat*.] Torah says to her messenger: 'Tell the simple one to come closer, so I can talk with him.' He approaches. She begins to speak with him from behind a curtain she has drawn, words he can follow, until he reflects a little at a time. This is *derasha*. [This is what we called *drash*.] Then she converses with him through a veil, words riddled with allegory. This is *haggadah*. [This is what we called *remez*.]

Once he has grown accustomed to her, she reveals herself face-to-face and tells him all her hidden secrets, all the hidden ways, since primordial days secreted in her heart. [This is *sod*]. (Matt, Zohar 5 33-35)

As we begin our study of Whitehead's process philosophy as an instrument for interpreting the creation story in the *Zohar*, we are clearly within the long tradition of Jewish hermeneutics, specifically *remez*. We have already discussed the long tradition for which anything that any student of the text says, in any generation, was already part of the original revelation. Although this interpretation may seem modern in its outlook, we are simply uncovering another layer of what was already hidden in the text. Or to use the *Zohar*'s parable, the princess hidden in the palace is revealing a new aspect of herself.

CHAPTER 2: ARISTOTELIANISM AND NEOPLATONISM—

TWO WORLD VIEWS

Between 1510 and 1511, the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael painted his famous fresco *The School of Athens* (*Scuola di Atene*). The painting adorns the walls of the Stanze di Raffaello in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. At the center of the painting are images of the two great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, in dispute. The older man Plato is pointing towards the sky. The younger man Aristotle is pointing towards the ground. This illustrates the fundamental disagreement, between the two philosophers on the ultimate nature of reality. Is reality found beyond this world, in an ideal world of the forms, as Plato taught? Or is reality rooted in this world of material objects, as Aristotle taught? This dispute between Plato and Aristotle, reaching back to ancient Greece, is also at the heart of this dissertation.

The ancient dispute between two Greek philosophers leads us to two distinct world views. One line of thought reaches from Aristotle through the medieval philosophy of Maimonides, to the nominalism of William of Ockham and the empiricism of Francis Bacon, to the substance ontology which is at the heart of scientific materialism. A second line of thought reaches from Plato through Plotinus's mystical reworking of Platonic thought, to Neoplatonic Jewish philosophers such as Ibn Gabirol to the *Zohar* which many saw as a reaction to Maimonides' rationalism, and straight to Whitehead's critique of substance ontology.

Although these two lines of thought represent distinct world views, they certainly interacted with and influenced each other. Nevertheless, they each gave rise to different ways of understanding the universe. Aristotle's way of thinking would lead to an ontological chasm between God and the world and to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, as articulated by, for example, Thomas Aquinas. Plato's way of thinking, on the contrary, would lead to several spiritual conceptions of reality such as the doctrine of emanation as the source of the world, and to the mysticism of the *Zohar*.

To lay out more carefully these two lines of thought, it would be useful to turn to the introductory lecture in Gershom Scholem's classic *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Even if later scholarship does not fully support Scholem's history of mysticism, his description can provide a valuable framework, descriptive if not historical, for describing these two world views. Scholem claims that there are three stages in the history and development of religious thought. The first of these stages, the view of the ancient pagans, postulates a world animated with spiritual presence:

The first stage represents the world as being full of gods whom man encounters at every step and whose presence can be experienced without recourse to ecstatic meditation. In other words, there is no room for mysticism as long as the abyss between Man and God has not become a fact of inner consciousness. That, however, is the case only while the childhood of mankind, its mythical epoch, lasts. (Scholem, Trends 7)

Scholem continues: "The second period which knows no real mysticism is the creative epoch in which the emergence, the break-through of religion occurs. For in its classical

form, religion signifies the creation of a vast abyss, conceived as absolute, between God, the infinite and transcendental Being, and Man the finite creature” (Trends 7). This stage signifies a gap not only between God and humanity but between God and God’s creation. There are no mediating spiritual realities, no forms, and no universals. It is a world of God, the material substances that God has created, and an infinite abyss between the two. This is the world envisioned by Aristotle and, later, by Maimonides. This idea would also lead, ultimately, to the substance ontology and scientific materialism which is popular today.

Scholem then mentions a third stage, the beginning of mysticism:

Mysticism does not deny or overlook the abyss; on the contrary, it begins by realizing its existence, but from there it proceeds to a quest for the secret that will close it in, the hidden path that will span it. It strives to piece together the fragments broken by the religious cataclysm, to bring back the old unity which religion has destroyed, on a new plane, where the world of mythology and that of revelation meet in the soul of man. (Trends 8)

This is the world that Plotinus and the Neoplatonists envisioned, a world of emanation. Plotinus’ insights, although indirectly, would influence the writing of the *Zohar*. This vision of a world populated by spiritual realities also had a great influence on the process philosophy of Whitehead.

Let us briefly explore each of these two lines of thought, following Scholem’s order. We chose this order although, historically, Aristotle came after Plato. We will

begin with a brief discussion of Aristotelianism and then continue with Neoplatonism, to which we will give a more detailed treatment since it is extremely pertinent to the subject of this dissertation.

From Aristotle to Maimonides, and Beyond

Aristotle's (384–322 B.C.E) empirical approach to reality is best expressed by the saying “there is nothing in the mind which is not first in the senses.”¹⁹ He was what we would call today an empiricist, who believed that knowledge comes from observation and from studying the material world. He rejected his teacher Plato's concept of ideal forms that could be known through the mind rather than the senses. To know the world is to know the substances that make up the world. That is the reason for which Aristotle's worldview is often called “substance ontology.”

For substance ontology, ultimate reality is made of substances. Aristotle writes in *The Categories*, the first section of his *Organon*: “Substance, in the truest, primary, and most definite sense of the word, is that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject; for instance, the individual man or horse” (9). Substances may have various accidental qualities—a horse may be white, or to use a Jewish example, the Sabbath may be holy. We will show later that Jewish mystics will see holiness as an attribute of certain entities such as the Sabbath. But in Aristotle's substance ontology, there is no spiritual form called *whiteness* beyond individual white objects, and there is no spiritual form called *holiness* beyond individual holy objects. There are no universals, just individual substances and their attributes. Aristotle expressed a belief in a god, but

¹⁹ In Latin “*Nihil est in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu.*” Although attributed to Aristotle by Scholastic thinkers, I was unable to find the origin of this quote.

his god was far from the God of the Bible and of Western religion. God was the “unmoved mover.” If the motion of every substance is caused by some other substance, ultimately, there must be a chain of such causes. But an infinite regress is impossible; therefore, there must be a first cause. In addition, Aristotle believed that the world has always existed, an idea which Maimonides and other Jewish philosophers rejected.

Maimonides (1135–1204), in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, although somewhat influenced by Neoplatonism, built a philosophy that combined Judaism with Aristotelianism. Later Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), in his *Summa Theologica*, greatly influenced by Maimonides, built a philosophy combining Christianity and Aristotle. Both philosophers continued in the Aristotelian tradition that saw reality as grounded in individual substances. Later scholastic thinkers, particularly William of Ockham (1287–1347), would develop the theory of nominalism. Nominalism is the theory that rejects the existence of universal entities, for example, Plato’s eternal forms. Such words as “white” and “holy” are mere names applied to real substances (thus the term “nominalism” which comes from a Latin root meaning “name”). This theory rejects the existence of any spiritual entities between God and the material world. God exists and material substances exist, but there is nothing else. Between God and God’s creation there is a vast void. This corresponds to the abyss about which Scholem wrote as being the second stage of religious development.

Menachem Kellner, in his study of Maimonides, strongly emphasizes that Maimonides was a nominalist. To Maimonides, besides God there are no entities - spiritual or otherwise - beyond the physical substances of this world. Kellner writes: “Maimonides here adopts a variant of a position later to be called ‘nominalism’ and made famous by William of Ockham (d. 1347) and his famous ‘razor’: one ought not multiply

entities beyond necessity. For Maimonides there is God and nature and nothing else” (Maimonides 12). Kellner continues: “Judaism, Maimonides was convinced, ‘depopulated the heavens’, and he was committed to battling efforts to repopulate them” (Maimonides 12).

The opposite of nominalism is known by philosophers as realism. This is the view that universals, and for some philosophers also spiritual entities, have reality—they actually exist. Maimonides rejected such realism or, as Oliver Leaman wrote, “Maimonides argued against realism, interpreting (some would say reinterpreting) Scripture so that it would fit with his naturalistic understanding of the character of the universe and its creator” (Leaman 7). Kellner contrasts Maimonides view to such realists as Judah Halevi. He writes, regarding Halevi’s view:

Holiness, for example is something which actually inheres in holy places, things, people, and times. Were we able to invent a ‘holiness counter’ it would click every time its wand came near something holy, just as a Geiger counter clicks in the presence of radioactivity. Radioactivity, of course, is present in the physical universe, while holiness is present only in the metaphysical universe. (Maimonides 43)

Maimonides utterly rejects this idea. The Jewish Sabbath, the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish people, even the Hebrew language, have no inherent or intrinsic holiness. Any holiness that adheres to them is based on the free will of a commanding God. And God could have commanded otherwise. But the kabbalistic tradition follows Halevi and

totally rejects Maimonides; for kabbalists there is a spiritual holiness which inheres in and is intrinsic to certain times, places, a language and a people.

What was Maimonides's reason for this strong nominalist position? According to Kellner, Maimonides was fighting against a certain proto-kabbalah that viewed the world as filled with spiritual entities. Such a view compromised the ultimate omnipotence of God which for Maimonides represented authentic Judaism. Kellner would admit that Maimonides ultimately failed in his attempt to remove from Judaism all spiritual entities beyond God. One can see the *Zohar* itself as a reaction to the extreme rationalism of Maimonides. “[Maimonides was] seeking to purify Judaism from ‘proto-kabbalah’.” What he actually succeeded in doing was to force these currents of thought from the subterranean depths in which they had hitherto flowed up to the bright light of day” (Kellner, Maimonides 4). Was the kabbalah, perhaps, responding to a certain human need that Maimonides's rationalism could not satisfy?

For Maimonides, the free will and free act of a commanding God also became the basis of creation. Where did the universe come from? Aristotle believed that the universe had always existed. However, Maimonides teaches that Aristotle never proved his case. Daniel Frank, in his essay “Maimonides and Medieval Jewish Aristotelianism,” writes: “He [Maimonides] presents three views, creation *ex nihilo* (the Biblical view), creation from pre-existing matter (the Platonic view), and the Aristotelian view that is committed to the eternity of the world [Guide 2:13]” (149).²⁰ As a Jew, Maimonides accepts the first of these three views, creation of the world at a single point in time. If Aristotle had proved his point of the eternity of the universe, Maimonides would have of

²⁰ Most scholars today believe that creation *ex nihilo* is not the actual Biblical view. We will explore this further in Chapter 4.

necessity accepted it. But since Aristotle's views are inconclusive with regard to this issue, Maimonides accepts what he considered the Biblical view of creation *ex nihilo*. Frank continues: "Given the existence of revelation, revealed law, one must presuppose the existence of a God who is free to do as It pleases, when It pleases. This entails an absolute lack of constraint on the creator, thus paving the way for belief in creation *ex nihilo*..." (150). The world was created through an act of divine will. Later, we will show that the Neoplatonic view that the world emanated by necessity, rather than through an act of will, proved difficult for Jewish philosophers to accept.

Maimonides presents an austere view of reality, a reality divided between an utterly transcendent creator and a material creation, with a large gap between the two. Mystics, as well as philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, have tried to fill that gap. They presented an alternative world view. Jewish mystics would build this view on the idea of emanation that was theorized by the great Neoplatonic philosopher, Plotinus.

From Plotinus to the *Zohar*, and Beyond

Plato (424/423–348/347 BCE) accepted the existence of spiritual realities. Whiteness and holiness actually exist in the World of the Forms, reachable not through the senses but through the mind. In fact, for Plato, the Forms were the ultimate reality. The material world, so important to Aristotle, was a pale reflection of the true world. In his dialogue *The Republic*, Plato compared people who dwell in the material world to prisoners sitting in a cave, able to see only reflections of light cast from beyond the cave. The goal of the philosopher is to leave the world of the cave and enter the only true world, the World of the Forms.

The greatest interpreter of Plato's works was the pagan philosopher Plotinus (204/5–270 CE), Roman by birth but living in Alexandria, Plotinus considered himself a Platonist. Later scholars, however, would use the term 'Neoplatonism' to describe Plotinus's approach to reality. Plotinus's approach was similar to stage three in Gershom Scholem's history of mysticism that is outlined above. It was an attempt to fill the void, creating spiritual realities that flowed from one to another. The most cursory reading of Plotinus easily shows how his ideas could lead to Jewish mysticism and to the image of the *sefirot* flowing from the ultimate unknowable one, the *Ein Sof*.

The best way to picture Plotinus's outlook is to imagine a multi-level punch bowl at a party. Punch flows from the higher to the lower levels, filling the levels below and eventually reaching the bottom level. Stephen MacKenna, in his introduction to his translation of *The Enneads*, gives a simple summary:

The system of Plotinus is a system of necessary emanation, procession, or irradiation accompanied by necessary aspiration or reversion-to-source; all the forms and phases of Existence flow from the Divinity and all strive to return thither and remain there. This divinity is a graded Triad. Its three Hypostases – or in modern religious terminology, 'persons' – are in the briefest description: 1. The One, or First Existent; 2. The Divine Mind, or First Thinker and Thought; 3. The All-Soul, or first and only principle of life. Of all things the governance and the existence are in these three.
(xxv-xxvi)

The highest level in Plotinus' vision is the One or the Good. The One is absolute unity, unknowable to the human mind. Plotinus compares the One to a spring that is the source of many rivers, but is never diminished within itself. "Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains always integrally as it was" (249). Plotinus teaches that the One is everywhere, but it is also nowhere. The One is everything, but it is also so unknowable that it is nothing:

How then does unity give rise to multiplicity? By its omnipresence: there is nowhere where it is not; it occupies therefore, all that is; at once, it is manifold – or, rather, it is all things. If it were simply and solely everywhere, all would be this one thing alone: but it is, also, in no place, and this gives, in the final result, that, while all exists by means of it, in virtue of its omnipresence, all is distinct from it, in virtue of its being nowhere. (Plotinus 253)

Plotinus's unique idea is that only an everything that is also a nothing can be both unified and the source of multiplicity.

In a sense, this same idea was reflected in later Kabbalah with an image of the *Ein Sof* that is *ayin* אֵין , both everything and nothing. Eitan Fishbane writes of this use of this philosophical idea of something being both everything and nothing in the development of medieval kabbalah:

One of the most intriguing manifestations of this phenomenon is the use of negativity and what has been called 'apophasis' in the presentation of theological and theosophical conceptions. For while the kabbalists asserted the positive character of theosophical description theoretically, and employed this perspective practically in the enterprise of cosmic gnosis, they were also haunted by the intuition that the human mind is unable to fully comprehend and know the divine reality. These mystics seem to be genuinely torn between the desire to penetrate the mysteries of divinity and the conception that the finite human mind cannot apprehend the depth of infinite being. (Mystical 2)

Fishbane continues:

The apophatic theology was largely the legacy of Neoplatonism and is a remarkable example of the formative influence that Jewish philosophy exercised on medieval kabbalah. Indeed, the negative theology of Neoplatonism, which stretches back to Plotinus, was a powerful force in the general intellectual culture of the High Middle Ages, and its impact reached beyond the borders of the different religious traditions in the period. (Mystical 2)

Daniel Matt, in a similar way, speaks of a God Who is no thing, not trapped by language:

The mystics, who celebrate divine ineffability, are quite comfortable with a God who refuses to be trapped by language. Yet even they need to refer to this nameless one – at least to communicate their awareness to others, to express a bit of what they have uncovered. One of their favorite strategies is to call God “Nothing.” ... The word *nothingness* connotes negativity and non-being, but what the mystic means by divine nothingness is that God is greater than any *thing* one can imagine: it is like no thing. (Tikkun 43)

Later this notion of God as *ayin* nothing will become important when we speak of creation as *ex nihilo*, creation from nothing.

Elliot Wolfson on the other hand argues against the notion that the *sefirot*, the ten emanations from the Godhead are knowable, while the Godhead itself is in all cases utterly unknowable. This idea of an unknowable God, a God who is *ayin* or nothing, may have been influenced by medieval philosophers such as Maimonides. But the early kabbalists taught that not only are the *sefirot* knowable, but ultimately so is *Ein Sof*, the very Godhead. He writes:

It must be concluded, therefore, that the rigorously apophatic notion of the unlimited One is not indicative of the complex mystical theosophy regarding the infinite as put forth by Issac [an early kabbalist] and his disciples. Given the ontological unity of the Ein-Sof and the *sefirot*, it must follow logically that positive attribution in the case of the latter affects the former. Without a framework of ontological dualism how can

one maintain an ontic distinction such that apophasis applies to the Ein-Sof and kataphasis to the *sefirot*.²¹ The monistic and even panentheistic orientation of theosophic kabbalah as it developed in Provence and Northern Spain, largely due to Neoplatonic influences, precludes any such bifurcation. (Wolfson Negative xx)

Is *Ein Sof* totally unknowable, beyond the human understanding? Or is knowledge of *Ein Sof* available to the mystic using proper techniques? This seems to be an ongoing question to scholars of early kabbalah.

The second stage in Plotinus' vision of emanation is the intelligence, using the Greek term *nous*. *Nous* is still one, but it contains the potential for many. As Plotinus put it, "The Highest began as a unity but did not remain as it began; all unknown to itself, it became manifold; it grew, as it were pregnant: desiring universal possession, it flung itself outward, though it were better had it never know the desire by which a Secondary came into being" (246). If the first is considered One, the second can be considered One-Many. It is only with this second level that the potential for multiplicity exists. This is the world of the forms. But they are forms without material substance, a form without matter. Since we are comparing Plotinus with Aristotle, we should note that Aristotle would disagree with this idea, claiming that form without matter cannot exist.

The third level is the region of the Soul, also known as the World Soul. This is the realm of the One and the Many, and it includes our individual souls. From this level multiplicity and division enter the world. From the World Soul ultimately flows the

²¹ Apophasis means negative discourse about God. (God is not knowable.) Kataphasis means positive discourse about God. (God is knowable.)

world of matter, the real material world in which we live. It is here that Neoplatonism reveals its difference from Gnosticism. Gnosticism sees the world as created by a demiurge, an inferior or perhaps even evil being, and therefore filled with evil. Hans Jonas, in his description of Gnosticism, has written:

Accordingly, the typical Gnostic system starts with a doctrine of divine transcendence in its original purity; traces the genesis of the world from some primordial disruption of this blessed state, a loss of divine integrity that leads to the emergence of lower powers who become the makers and rulers of this world. (Gnosticism 337)

Plotinus himself attacks this prevalent Gnostic view that the created world is evil. If the created world emanates from the One, which is good, then the world itself is good. As the Russian philosopher T. Iu. Borodai has written:

The Gnostics see evil in the very hierarchical arrangement of being; the world is bad merely on the account that it is not God. According to Plotinus, by contrast, each level of being is perfect in its own way. The perfection of each hypostasis consists in it completely fulfilling its nature. At each level there is a perfect whole, the totality of that level of being. Individual corporeal beings and things are imperfect, but the universe as a whole is irreproachable. And as Plotinus teaches, the soul has the potential of ascending and returning to its source. (71)

Arthur Green reflects this same idea in his introduction to Daniel Matt's translation of the *Zohar*. He offers a lucid summary of the *Zohar*'s creation story:

Nothing can ever exist outside of *Ein Sof*. It is thus not quite accurate to say that the *sefirot* “emerge” or “come out of” *Ein Sof*. Within the hidden reaches of infinity, in a way that of necessity eludes human comprehension, there stirs a primal desire, the slightest rippling in the stillness of cosmic solitude. The desire (not a change, the more philosophically-oriented kabbalist hastens to add, but an aspect of reality that has been there forever) draws the infinite well of energy called *Ein Sof* toward self-expression: a becoming manifest or a concretization that begins with the subtlest of steps, moves towards the emergence of ‘God’ as divine persona, manifests its spectrum of energies in the ‘fullness’ of the ten *sefirot*, and then spills over with plentitude to create all the ‘lower’ worlds including – as its very lowest manifestation – the material universe. The *sefirot* are thus a revelation, a rendering more accessible, of that which has existed in *Ein Sof* all along. (Green, Introduction xlvi)

Note how different this is from Gnosticism, which sees the world as created by some lesser being. Scholem in his landmark *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* did see Gnosticism as a major influence on Jewish mysticism. Nonetheless, Neoplatonism seems to fit more naturally with the Biblical view of creation, which teaches that “God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:4).

Here we have a different creation story from that of the philosophers who followed Aristotle. If the key idea for Maimonides was creation *ex nihilo*, the key idea for the Jewish Neoplatonists was emanation. Rather than creating a world outside Himself, God literally flowed into the world. Neoplatonism allows for an immanent view of God. Arthur Hyman summarized this Neoplatonic view of creation:

Dissatisfied with a cosmogony that explains the origin of the world on the analogy of the production of an artifact by a craftsman, Plotinus formulated the theory of emanation. The world proceeds from an ultimate principle, the One or the Good, like streams of water from a spring or like sunlight from the sun, like heat from fire, like cold from snow, or like perfume from something scented. (113)

According to Plotinus, the One permeates the world. Later kabbalists would see God as literally flowing into the world. Regarding this theory of emanation, Lenn Goodman writes:

...the Neoplatonic idea of a dynamic and intellectual immanence of the Absolute has been an integral and philosophically articulate idea in Jewish philosophical thinking, addressing precisely the problem that Jewish monotheism is stereotypically said to neglect or ignore: the mediation of God's transcendence to the created realm in general and of the human mind and heart in particular. (49-50)

Plotinus was not simply concerned with how the world was created. He was a mystic who saw the potential of the soul to return, through the various levels of creation, and commune with the One. Beyond the material world of appearances in which the soul resides, there is an underlying unity of reality. It is possible for the individual soul to connect with that ultimate reality and lose its sense of separateness. Such a return to the One involves a mystical separation from the concerns of the body and the physical world. According to Plotinus, it is in such a return to the One that true happiness lies. Plotinus writes, “So it is with the individual souls; the appetite for the divine Intellect urges them to return to their source” (360).

The philosophy of Plotinus became extremely influential in the development of various trends within each of the major Western Abrahamic religions. R. Blaine Harris has written: “The histories of the three major living religions of the West, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam reveal that all of them have had close involvements with various philosophies at various times. *The one philosophy that all three have had the most involvement with throughout the centuries of their histories is Neoplatonism²²*” (31). However, combining Neoplatonism with any of these religious traditions creates a problem. According to Plotinus the One flows naturally, without any act of will or desire. We can envision the One as being oblivious to its own creation, like a spring who knows nothing of the river it creates. Raphael Jospe, in his study of medieval Jewish philosophy, writes regarding Plotinus:

²² His italics.

... the process of emanation is not volitional. A standard teleological argument for the existence of a personal creator is the intention manifested in the order of nature. Plotinus explicitly rejects this religious line of thinking. The order of nature is a function not of volition and intentional creation, but of necessity. The One, as we saw, transcends thought, and thus intention or volition, and the world is emanated from the One by necessity, and could not have been other than it is. (88)

But according to the Biblical story, God creates the universe through an act of will. What Judaism must add to Plotinus is an act of will.

Goodman makes this point explicitly. “Indeed the centrality of Will becomes the hallmark of Jewish Neoplatonism” (8). Isaac Israeli ben Solomon (832–932) is usually considered the first of the Jewish Neoplatonists. Alexander Altmann explicitly uses the phrase “by the power and the will” in his description of Israeli’s vision of creation (17). Arthur Hyman, in his study of Neoplatonism, writes: “Acting without needs or desires, God, through his goodness and love, created the world. In a departure from the Neoplatonic scheme and apparently to counter its necessitarian aspect, Israeli ascribes the creation of the world, at least its first stage, to the ‘power and the will’ of God” (118). We thus see the introduction of the notion of will.

The idea of will becomes vital in the work of Solomon Ibn Gabirol (approximately 1021–1058), also known by his Arabic name Avicbron, who many consider to be the greatest of the Jewish Neoplatonists. In his introduction to *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, Lenn Goodman describes Ibn Gabirol’s approach. He writes:

It is Will for Ibn Gabirol that brings matter and form together and so makes creation possible. Creation is thus in some way a free act of God. It is not a mere timeless flowing forth of necessity, a freezing of the event within the Eternity of God, as though nature somehow remained embedded within God and never actually acquired its own reality. (8)

For Ibn Gabirol this Will actually becomes a spiritual stage between the One and the created world. Jospe writes: “Ibn Gabirol’s innovation ... [is] in his inserting a new spiritual stage into the top of his cosmology, namely the divine will. For Ibn Gabirol, the divine will intermediates between God, namely the One and the first agent, and the stage of universal matter and universal form” (113).

As mentioned earlier, Ibn Gabirol became the most influential Jewish writer in the tradition of Plotinus. His major work is *Fons Vitae* “The Fountain of Life,” based on the verse in Psalms:

כִּי־עִמָּךְ מְקוֹר חַיִּים בְּאוֹרְךָ נִרְאָה־אֹר.

For with Thee is the Fountain of Life; by Thy light do we see the light.

(Psalms 36:10)

To Ibn Gabirol, there exists various levels of reality, beginning with the Godhead and leading to matter and form. But Will forms the intermediate step between the Godhead and matter and form. He writes: “For every created thing there must be a cause and something intermediate between them. The cause is the First Essence, the created thing

is matter and form, what mediates between them is the Will” (McGinn 79). Ibn Gabirol uses the gap between the unity of the Godhead and the multiplicity of the created world to prove the need for an intermediate ontological level. He writes in his *Fons Vitae*:

The First Author is the true unity in whom there is no multiplicity; and the substance that supports the nine categories is the utmost multiplicity after which there is no greater multiplicity than itself. Now every compound multitude can be reduced to one. It is therefore necessary that there should be intermediaries between the true unity and the compound multitude.
(McGinn 4)

Sarah Pessin, in her new study *Ibn Gabirol's Theology of Desire*, discusses at length whether Ibn Gabirol's view of Divine Will shows a rejection of emanation as the method of creation. Many contemporary scholars - Pessin mentions Etienne Gilson, Isaac Husik, and James Weisheipl in particular - have written that the Divine Will mentioned in *Fons Vitae* require a rejection of the pure emanation of Plotinus. Pessin states emphatically: “I reject this widespread reading of Ibn Gabirol as opposing emanation on the basis of a so-called Doctrine of Divine Will” (54). One can accept both the Jewish notion of Divine Will and the Neoplatonist notion of Divine Emanation. In fact, this is precisely the approach of medieval kabbalistic sources.

Later in the Kabbalah, this centrality of the Will becomes the highest or first of the *sefirot* – *Keter* כתר. *Keter* means crown but is often translated as “will,” the first stirrings of desire in the *Ein Sof*. The idea of the beginning of Will in the unknowable

Godhead is vital for kabbalistic thinking. To quote Hans Jonas, a modern philosopher deeply influenced by kabbalah:

In the beginning, for unknowable reasons, the ground of being, or the Divine, chose to give itself over to the chance and risk and endless variety of becoming. And wholly so: entering into the adventure of space and time, the deity held back nothing of itself: no uncommitted or unimpaired part remained to direct, correct, and ultimately guarantee the devious working-out of its destiny in creation. On this unconditional immanence the modern temper insists. (Mortality134)

The key word here is “chose”; the One chose to enter the world of space and time.

How is this idea of Will manifested in the early kabbalah? In this dissertation we are going to see *Keter*, the first of the *sefirot*, as the beginning of this divine Will. Arthur Green, in his book *Keter*, gives a full history of the role of the crown or coronation in Jewish thought. Green writes regarding *Keter ‘elyon* or the upper crown:

Keter ‘elyon is much discussed, to be sure, by Kabbalists throughout the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There is a great debate in early Kabbalah as to the status of *keter*. Is it one with Eyn Sof and therefore not to be counted as one of the ten *sefirot*? The debate is partly a Kabbalistic reflection of the debate concerning the will of God in medieval Neoplatonism. Indeed it has been suggested the philosophical poetry of

Ibn Gabirol has had a direct influence on shaping this discussion among the early Kabbalists. (Keter 153)

Green continues: “Early Kabbalistic writings also identify *keter* and *ayin*, primal Nothingness” (Keter 154). The debate mentioned above regarding *Ein Sof*, whether it is unknowable or knowable, can also be applied to *Keter*. In this dissertation we will count *Keter* as the first of the *sefirot*, the first stirrings of Will within the Godhead.

With Ibn Gabirol and the Neoplatonists, we have a view of the origin of the universe that is far from Maimonides’ creation *ex nihilo*. For Maimonides, a totally transcendent God created the universe by an act of absolute will. Israeli and Ibn Gabirol also believe that the world came into being through an act of will. Ibn Gabirol did try to include the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* with his theory of emanation. But for the Jewish Neoplatonists, and eventually for the kabbalists who followed them, the universe was created through emanation rather than through *creatio ex nihilo*. Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan explicitly compares Maimonides to the theosophic kabbalists:

Maimonides insisted on the unbridgeable ontological gap between God and all other existents and, therefore, on the unknowability of God. Theosophic kabbalah struggled with the same theoretical problems but it was convinced that some positive knowledge of God was possible... Whatever exists ultimately emanates from the *Eyn-Sof* but the process of emanation [in Hebrew *atzilut*] begins not with spiritual extra-deical entities, such as the Separate Intellects of medieval Aristotelianism, but

with the emanation of God's own powers, the ten *sefirot*. (Philosophy 224-225)

Tirosh-Samuelson brings up another difference between the philosophical Aristotelianism of Maimonides and the mystical Neoplatonism of the Kabbalah. To Maimonides, the secrets of creation are knowable to all philosophically trained individuals of all faiths. Philosophy is universal. To the Kabbalists, the secrets of creation are only knowable to those who were part of the initial revelation of the Torah. Knowledge of the secrets of the Hebrew language is essential because the letters themselves are considered intrinsically holy. For the kabbalists, God emanates the creation through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Here, we see a difference between the nominalism of Maimonides (Hebrew is an arbitrary language with no intrinsic holiness; the Torah could have been written in any language), and the realism of the mystics (Hebrew contains an intrinsic holiness open to those who know its secrets).

Tirosh-Samuelson makes this point explicitly:

Both Maimonides and the kabbalists claimed to have fathomed the inner meaning of divine revelation, designated in rabbinic Judaism as *ma'aseh bereshit* [account of creation] and *ma'aseh merkavah* [account of the chariot]. ... [For Maimonides] that means that the esoteric meaning of the received tradition is identical with the truths of philosophy. Any philosopher, Jew or non-Jew, could know it by virtue of natural human reason. By contrast, the kabbalists claimed that the esoteric dimension of rabbinic Judaism cannot be known except through divine revelation to

those chosen by God, and the philosophy of Aristotle, or any other non-Jew, has nothing to say about it. (Philosophy 221)

Jonathan Dauber, in his book *Knowledge of God and the Development of Early Kabbalah*, makes the same point, speaking explicitly about the similarities and differences between the philosophical and the early kabbalistic traditions. Both believe it is possible to achieve knowledge of God. But Dauber writes:

I argued that there is also a hermeneutical dimension to investigation of God in the philosophic works, since they contain attempts to square Biblical and Rabbinic traditions with philosophic ideas. The Kabbalists are involved in a similar project, inasmuch as they attempt to reconcile their received traditions with Biblical, Rabbinic, and philosophic materials. In other terms, for both philosophers and Kabbalists, a central component of investigating God involves forging a systematic theology out of very disparate sets of material. To a certain extent, the main distinction between philosophers and Kabbalists, when it comes to such hermeneutical investigation, is that the latter had an additional set of material that the former did not have, namely received *esoteric* traditions. (161)

These esoteric traditions, usually written in Hebrew, were not available to philosophers. Tirosh-Samuelsan writes regarding the Hebrew language: “Hebrew, the kabbalist

maintain contrary to Maimonides, was not a product of human convention, but rather a unique language chosen by God to be the medium of creation” (221).

Of course, not all philosophers agreed with Maimonides that Hebrew was merely a human convention with no essential holiness. Judah Halevi in his classic philosophical work *The Kuzari* responds to a question by the king of the Khazars: “Is Hebrew superior to other languages? Do we not see distinctly that the latter are more finished and comprehensive?” (124). Halevi responds: “It shared the fate of its bearers, degenerating and dwindling with them. Considered historically and logically, its original form is the noblest. According to tradition it is the language in which God spoke to Adam and Eve, and in which the latter conversed” (124). Halevi mentions the wisdom of King Solomon, who knew all the sciences that were handed to him from all the languages of the world. But the original source of this wisdom was in the Hebrew. “To Hebrew, however, belongs the first place, both as regards the nature of the languages and as to fullness of meanings” (Halevi 124).

Of course, as mentioned above, Menachim Kellner contrasted the realism of Judah Halevi with the nominalism of Maimonides. Halevi accepted spiritual entities such as holiness which adheres to the Hebrew language. Maimonides rejected such spiritual entities as holiness and could therefore say that the Hebrew language lacks any intrinsic holiness. Divine wisdom would thus be available to philosophers of all faiths.

If philosophers disagree about the intrinsic holiness of the Hebrew language, mystics taught that the holiness of Hebrew was central. Thus, Eitan Fishbane writes of the importance of the Hebrew letters and sounds in the creation of the world:

In this view, the Being of the world unfolds from the depths of the primordial Infinite as the sound of speech rises from the unformed breath of divine articulation. ... In contrast to the classical rabbinic model of Creation, wherein divine speech creates something outside itself, this early kabbalistic model presents the cosmic unfolding *as a speech act in itself*. The auto-emanation of the divine Being is thus the vocalization of a silent cosmic reality. God does not just speak the word of creation; God is the word of creation. (Speech 491-492)

Once again we see the contrast between the classical view of God creating outside Himself with the kabbalistic view of God creating within Himself.

Having introduced the idea of Jewish Neoplatonism through the work of Israeli and Ibn-Gabirol, we can turn now to the great classic work of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*. Eitan Fishbane writes how the *Zohar* clearly reflects the thinking of these earlier Jewish Neoplatonists:

In this medieval kabbalistic thinking we observe a remarkably different theological conception than was established in previous Jewish thought, closest perhaps in approach to the third-century Neoplatonism of Plotinus and its medieval reverberations many centuries later. In the *Zohar* and its antecedents, God is represented as a dynamic flow of cosmic energy – composed of ten identifiable dimensions or stages of emanation (the *sefirot*) – always in flux from a primordial source of infinity, unfolding in progressively greater manifestation through these ten *sefirot* until birth is

given to the lower world. *Ein Sof* (lit., 'without end'; the Infinite One) is the source of all, and it is the lifeblood of all reality, circulating through Divinity and the totality of the cosmos. (Zohar 51)

Traditionally, Jews believed that the *Zohar* was the work of the second-century Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai. The earliest understanding of the origins of the *Zohar* is that Rabbi Shimon wrote it together with his son Rabbi Eliezer while hiding in a cave.²³ This tradition is made explicit in a fragment of a letter published in *Sefer Yuḥasin*. The letter quotes how the early kabbalist Rabbi Isaac of Acre left a diary found by the author of the fragment. The fragment says:

And I found the diary of Rabbi Isaac of Acre, the man who wrote a kabbalistic work in 1331 and in whose time Acre was destroyed and all its inhabitants captured He (i.e., Rabbi Isaac) went to Spain to find out how the book of the *Zohar*, which Rabbi Simeon and his son, Rabbi Elezar, composed in the cave, came to exist in his time. (Lachower, Tishby, and Goldstein 13)

Shimon bar Yoḥai's authorship of the *Zohar* was disproved in great detail by Gershom Scholem, one of the first to apply the tools of modern scholarship to the study of Jewish mysticism, who demonstrated that the *Zohar* was actually the work of the thirteenth-

²³ See Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 33b. Although the tradition that Rabbi Simeon and his son Rabbi Elezar wrote the *Zohar* is based on this Talmudic passage, nowhere is the creation of the *Zohar* explicitly mentioned in the Talmud itself.

century Spanish mystic Moshe de Leon (1250–1305). The question of the ultimate authorship of the *Zohar* is still being argued by scholars, but most see it as emerging from the circle of Spanish mystics studying with de Leon.²⁴ Written in Aramaic and Hebrew, and coming to light around the year 1300, the *Zohar* was, to use Arthur Green’s words, “a work of sacred fantasy” (Green Introduction xxxi). Yehuda Liebes writes about the uniqueness of the *Zohar*:

In contrast to the uniformity of the Hebrew writings, belonging to a genre prevalent in that period, the *Zohar* was a unique creation in the Middle Ages in its variety, its richness of expression, and the originality of thought and imagination. The Jewish nature of the book is not diminished thereby, its roots remaining fast in the soil of tradition in which it is incorporated as an integral part, preserving and reviving doctrines and myths of ancient times, which seem to have been lost to Medieval Jewry. (85-86)

One can easily see the relationship between Plotinus, as reworked by his Jewish interpreters, and the *Zohar*. The One of Plotinus becomes the *Ein Sof*, the utterly unknowable source of all that exists. The *nous* or divine intelligence of Plotinus becomes the Will or *Keter*, the highest of the *sefirot*. The divine forms or World Soul becomes the other nine *sefirot*, separated, but in a dynamic relationship with one another. Out of this

²⁴ Eitan Fishbane brings various theories about how the *Zohar* was written in his essay “The *Zohar*: Masterpiece of Jewish Mysticism.” He mentions in particular the theory of Yehuda Liebes, who “put forth the groundbreaking argument that the *Zohar* was quite probably composed by a group of Kabbalists, of which Moshe de Leon was a central part” (*Zohar* 56--57).

flows the material world, far from its source but having ultimately flowed from the Creator. The world may be tinged with evil, the *sitra ahra* (other side) which in the *Zohar* emerges from the left side of creation (see (Wolfson, Left). Nonetheless, Jewish mystics like the Neoplatonists before them, believe that the world flows from the One and thus has the potential for goodness.

The second half of this dissertation beginning with Chapter 4 is a study of this original account of thought and imagination, focusing on the creation story as portrayed in the *Zohar*, interpreted through the lens of process philosophy.

After Maimonides and the *Zohar*

We have briefly examined two lines of thought, two ways to see the universe. One line of thought leads from Aristotle's substance ontology directly to Maimonides. It denies the presence of any spiritual entities between a creator God and the material world. There is an abyss, as discussed by Gershom Scholem, in the second stage of his history of mysticism. The other line of thought leads from Plotinus's Neoplatonism to the *Zohar*. It corresponds to Gershom Scholem's third stage of his history of mysticism. This line of thought sees the gap between God and the world as filled with spiritual realities. Both of these lines of thought are still relevant in modern times.

Following Maimonides, we have a world built of two realities. There is an utterly transcendent God who created the world through an act of will, and there is a world of substances which may share certain attributes (whiteness, holiness). But these attributes have no ontological reality. In between the creator and the creation is a chasm which is difficult to bridge. The world is filled with individual substances. The scientific revolution, beginning with Francis Bacon, would study these substances to gain empirical

knowledge of nature. Through the Enlightenment and beyond, the transcendent God would fade in importance. For many major thinkers, their view of God would go from theism (a God involved in the affairs of creation) to deism (a God who ignores creation), and then to atheism (there is no God). We are left with a material world in which God is absent. And for many modern thinkers, particularly scientists, such scientific materialism would become the standard way of viewing the world.

The second line of thought has often reacted dialectically to the first. It is a mystical view of reality. This view rejects simple substance ontology and scientific materialism. It sees a universe filled with spiritual realities, and, some would say, mind or consciousness. This view of God would be characterized as pantheism (God is the world) or panentheism (God is both within and beyond the world.) This line of thought has manifested itself in multiple forms over the past half millennium. It can be traced back to the hermetic and other mystical traditions of the middle ages and Renaissance, to the Romantic reaction to the pure rationalism of the Enlightenment, to the German Idealist movement of Hegel and others, and to the process view of reality of Bergson, James, Whitehead, and Teilhard de Chardin. In particular, Whitehead rejects substance ontology in favor of a vision of reality built around process, consciousness, and moments of experience. If Aristotle and Maimonides see a world of substances, Whitehead sees instead a world of processes. In our next chapter, we explore Whitehead's metaphysics, which is the basis for our Whiteheadian interpretation of the creation story in the *Zohar*.

CHAPTER 3: WHITEHEAD'S PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANISM

We are now ready to turn to Whiteheadian process philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) had built a metaphysical system similar to the Neoplatonic tradition of the previous chapter, where mind or consciousness permeates all reality. He called his metaphysical system a “philosophy of organism.” It was a grand attempt to synthesize previous philosophical thinking with modern science, particularly Einstein’s theory of special relativity, into a systematic metaphysical system. Whitehead’s debt to Neoplatonism is reflected in his oft-quoted statement, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (37).

Before we can begin to explain Whitehead’s utility in interpreting the *Zohar*, it would be useful to place his metaphysical approach in the intellectual context of the two world views described in Chapter 2. To do this, we must go back several hundred years to the Renaissance and the beginning of the Scientific Revolution.

Three Cornered Contest

In the previous chapter we spoke of two world views—Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. Brian Easlea in *Witch Hunting, Magic, and the New Philosophy* described the beginning of the Scientific Revolution as a “three cornered contest” between classical Aristotelianism, the emerging modern scientific view, and the hermetic current in Renaissance culture. Both Aristotelianism and the emergent scientific view were built on

the notion of an ontological gap between God and substances. There were also substantial differences between these two views which we will describe in a moment.

According to Easlea, the third, hermetic current, in contrast to the first two, was rooted in the Neoplatonic tradition and in “magical” cosmologies, and was also associated with kabbalistic thought. Easlea writes:

It was not a case of the Aristotelian cosmology crumbling and ‘modern science’ simply taking its place. It was a case of scholastic Aristotelianism crumbling and protagonists of very different and rival cosmologies engaging in a bitter and protracted struggle for supremacy, both with each other and against the entrenched proponents of Aristotelian-Thomistic cosmology. ‘Modern science’ emerged, at least in part, out of a three-cornered contest between proponents of the established view and adherents of newly prospering magical cosmologies, both to be opposed in the seventeenth century advocates of revived mechanical world views. Scholastic Aristotelianism versus magic versus mechanical philosophies! (Witch 89)

To better understand this three cornered contest, we must turn back to the ancient Aristotelian view of causation. To Aristotle, every substance has four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final. Material causes and formal causes (the matter and form of a substance) will not concern us here, although they will be relevant when we start looking at the cosmogony of the *Zohar*. Efficient causes are what we would often call today scientific causes, e.g., the way in which an acorn becomes an oak tree. The final cause

is the purpose or goal—to use a philosophical term, the teleology—of a substance, e.g., the purpose of an oak tree and the drive that causes the acorn to become that tree. Whether substances have such a purpose was at the center of this three way contest.

The classical Aristotelian-Maimonidean-Thomistic position sees every substance as having a final cause. Scientific materialism denies the presence of such final causation, but claims rather only efficient causes can affect matter. During the Renaissance, this issue of final causation was one of the central issues dividing the three intellectual currents that were competing for dominance. There was Aristotelianism as interpreted by the medieval philosophers Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas, which saw all substances as having a teleology or final cause. The acorn is fulfilling some innate purpose as it develops into an oak tree.

Thus, Maimonides in his *The Guide for the Perplexed*, writes that everything created has a final cause. Only God has no final cause:

... it has become clear that a final end can only be sought with regard to all things produced in time that have been made through the purpose of an intelligent being. I mean to say that with regard to that which has its beginning in an intellect, one necessarily must seek to find out what its final cause is. On the other hand, one must not, as we have said, seek the final end of what has not been produced in time (III, 13). (Maimonides 448)

Similarly, in his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas writes:

We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence, it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence, as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. (14)

In contrast to this view, the beginning of scientific materialism, which rejected any notion of final causation, appeared during the Renaissance period. Materialists saw the universe as consisting only of matter in motion. The goal of the scientific revolution was to master nature and direct it towards human ends. Thus, Easlia wrote about the views of Francis Bacon, one of the earliest thinkers of this scientific revolution:

In Bacon's eyes, science was to regain for man that power over nature granted him "by divine bequest" but which had been lost in the Fall. To this end, scientific knowledge became *redefined* by Bacon as knowledge that would lead to power over nature – knowledge of causes of phenomena was what was required, not knowledge of purposes and goals in nature. Aristotle's belief in purposive behavior in nature was therefore mocked by Bacon: teleology he wrote, "... like a virgin consecrated to God, produces no offspring." (de Augmentis Scientiarum, Book III, Chapter V). Acceptable scientific explanation was now causal, not teleological. (Liberation 253)

Scientific materialism to this very day rejects final causation, or the presence of any teleology within the laws of nature.

Finally, with its Neoplatonic roots, there was the magical-hermetic-kabbalistic tradition, which accepted final causation, seeing the universe as populated by occult forces and spiritual realities, with motion as inherent to matter. Easlea describes this magical perspective as follows:

Man in the magical world view is situated in the centre of an enchanted world. He is at the centre of a cosmos threaded throughout by a world soul, of a network of sympathies and antipathies, of stellar and planetary influences, of signs conveying God's purpose, of angels and demons, of Satanic temptation, of divine retribution and divine redemption. (Witch 108-109)

Philosopher and theologian John Cobb Jr. summarizes the intellectual currents of this historical period:

Whereas the Aristotelian tradition had emphasized the teleological element in all things, the magical tradition went much further: it sought to ally itself with spiritual forces immanent in all things so as to bend them to human use and control. For it, nature was alive with spirit, and the explanations of natural events were to be found in these immanent

spiritual forces. These forces could act at a distance as well as in proximity. (103)

Moshe Idel, in his book *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, speaks about the role this hermetic or magical tradition had on early kabbalistic thinkers. In the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, the major concern was the soul rising above the material world to its source. In the hermetic tradition and later in the kabbalistic tradition, the goal was to draw spiritual forces down into this world:

The last major source of terminology for the description of mystical experiences is an undefined corpus of speculative writings, including Neoplatonic and hermetic treatises, with strong magical interests, widely known as theurgy. According to several ancient works ... we are able to draw the spirits of the gods downward into humanly prepared statues, which thereby enter into communication with men. Sometimes, according to these magical views, these spirits can enter the magician himself and take possession of him. (Idel, *Perspectives* 40)

Ultimately, this magical view of reality was not accepted for religious reasons. Cobb continues: “The primary objection was that it threatened belief in a God who transcended nature as its omnipotent creator. By seeing a miraculous aspect in many natural events, it undercut the arguments of the Christian church for validating supernatural miracles” (103).

Like the materialism of the early scientific revolution, the tradition of hermeticism and natural magic that tied into kabbalistic thought emphasized experimentation and mathematics. However, rooted in the Neoplatonist tradition, this magical worldview saw substances as being constantly moved by occult forces and inner sympathies and antipathies. Francis Yates, in her study of the hermetic tradition, writes: “Every object in the material world was full of occult sympathies poured down upon it from the star on which it depended” (45). There are spiritual realities at work in the universe. Substances are not merely passive entities being moved by efficient forces. It is almost as if each object of the universe has an inner awareness and inner desires. Or as Yates writes: “A striking feature of Cabalism is the importance assigned to angels or divine spirits as intermediaries throughout this system, arranged in hierarchies corresponding to the other hierarchies” (92).

According to most current thinking, scientific materialism ultimately dominated the other two world views. The irony is that scientific materialism probably became our dominant worldview precisely because the magical-hermetic point of view posed a threat to Christianity. If the substances of the world are merely “matter-in-motion,” blind objects acting from forces outside themselves, then the role of an all-powerful God is strengthened. God created these material objects *ex nihilo*. God is the ultimate first cause and first mover. This is precisely the point made by social critic Morris Berman in his book *The Reenchantment of the World*. “By attributing power to matter itself, the Hermetic tradition had denied the power of God, Who should rightly be seen as Governor of the world, not immanent in” (110).

For God to be seen as all powerful, nature had to become disempowered. It had to become disenchanting, merely vacuous matter moving in space. Although the adjective

“vacuous” is generally defined as “devoid of matter,” thereby rendering the notion of “vacuous matter” contradictory, Whitehead uses “vacuous” to mean “matter that is conceived as devoid of any subjective experience.” So, the notion of “vacuous actuality” is, for Whitehead, a term of art designed to capture a very specific conception of material reality that characterizes modernity. Berman goes on to quote Whitehead: “The universe, once seen as alive, possessing its own goals and purposes, is now a collection of inert matter, hurrying around endlessly and meaninglessly” (45).

Scientific materialism therefore became the accepted world view from the late Renaissance to modern times. This scientific outlook has affected how we human beings think about the world. Modern science is built on the idea of matter as fundamental substance. For science, the world is made of quarks and electrons, atoms and molecules, cells and tissues, all entities that function according to nature’s laws. Science is the study of how unfeeling substances follow the laws of nature and are, therefore, not affected by any spiritual force or experience.

This is where Whitehead enters the picture. Whitehead writes, regarding the three-way disagreement described above:

It is notable that no biological science has been able to express itself apart from the phraseology which is meaningless unless it refers to ideals proper to the organism in question. This aspect of the universe impressed itself on that great biologist and philosopher, Aristotle. His philosophy led to a wild oversteering of the notion of ‘final causes’ during the Christian middle ages; and thence, by a reaction, to the correlative oversteering of the notion of ‘efficient’ causes during the modern scientific period. One

task of a sound metaphysics is to exhibit final and efficient causes in their proper relation to each other. (84)

One might say, as we shall show, that Whitehead wants to put final causation back into nature in a manner similar to medieval hermetism.

Whitehead also disagrees with this materialistic vision of matter as vacuous entities. He rejects this vision of an all-powerful being governing matter as an overlord God. Whitehead believed that Western thought rendered unto God what more properly should belong to Caesar. It made God an all-powerful being with full control of the universe:

The notion of God as the 'unmoved mover' is derived from Aristotle, at least so far as Western thought is concerned. The notion of God as 'eminently real' is a favourite doctrine of Christian theology. The combination of the two into the doctrine of an aboriginal, eminently real, transcendent creator, at whose fiat the world came into being, and whose imposed will it obeys, is the fallacy which has infused tragedy into the histories of Christianity and of Mahometanism. (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 342)

Whitehead continues:

When the Western world accepted Christianity, Caesar conquered; and the received text of Western theology was edited by his lawyers ... The brief

Galilean vision of humility flickered throughout the ages, uncertainly. In the official formulation of the religion it has assumed the trivial form of the mere attribution to the Jews that they cherished a misconception about their Messiah. But the deeper idolatry, of the fashioning of god in the image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman imperial rulers, was retained. The Church gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar. (344)

Whitehead felt that Western thought was deeply mistaken in turning God into the image of an all-powerful Roman emperor. For Whitehead, it was necessary to return to this “brief Galilean vision” of a less than all-powerful God, more immanent than transcendent, more humble than majestic. In a sense, this emphasis on a transcendent, omnipotent, and omniscient God was already taking place in rabbinic thought after the Second Temple period. This can be contrasted with the far more immanent view of God envisioned through much of the *Tanach*.

Thus, part of Whitehead’s vision is to return to a more modest vision of God. He will eventually describe a God of persuasion, rather than a God of coercion. He will describe a God affected by what happens in the world. He will describe a God not totally in control of events. And, in order to do so, Whitehead will describe a world where mind or consciousness or, to use his term, moments of experience, permeate everything. This is far closer to the magical vision of occult forces and sympathies than is the materialistic vision of blind and inert matter. Thus, in some real ways, Whitehead returns to a Neoplatonic view of reality. Within this framework, we can turn to Whitehead’s ultimate question – What are the fundamental entities of the world?

Actual Entities

Whitehead seeks to return to the more magical-hermetic-kabbalistic view of reality that was described above. Ultimate reality cannot consist of soulless bits of matter which can only be moved by external forces. There must be final causation—each bit of reality must have a teleology or purpose. There must be influences, amongst these entities, that are analogous to the occult influences upon substances that were described by medieval writers. Whitehead is able to develop this metaphysical view by arguing that moments of experience, rather than particles of inert matter, are the fundamental reality. He calls these fundamental bits of reality “actual occasions” or “actual entities.”

Each of these actual entities is vanishingly small, exists for a very short duration of time, then vanishes. But, while each is alive, it is under the influence of all the other actual entities in the universe. It is also under the influence of, what Whitehead calls, “eternal objects.” And, when each actual entity vanishes, it becomes the basis of a new generation of actual entities. It is this interplay of actual entities, influencing one another, changing, vanishing while influencing the next generation of such entities, that Whitehead calls his “philosophy of organism.” It is a world of constant motion and change, and this is the reason why Whitehead’s system is called a “process philosophy.”

Whitehead describes these fundamental building blocks of reality as follows:

‘Actual entities’ – also termed ‘actual occasions’ – are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space.

But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of function, yet in the principles which actuality exemplifies all are on the same level. The final facts are, all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent. (18)

These bits of experience, at a very low level of consciousness, become the ultimate building blocks of reality.

How are we to explain these actual entities? Whitehead explains them by setting up human consciousness as his model:

Having established in general what Whitehead's 'actual occasions' are, some explanation of their nature needs to be made. It might be thought that such an explanation is to be found by starting at the bottom and working up from there. In fact, the place to start, and the place that Whitehead wants us to start, is at the level of human experience. (Farleigh 131)

In order to study the human flow of awareness, Whitehead turns to two earlier philosophers who strongly influenced him—William James and Henri Bergson. What do James and Bergson say about the flow of human consciousness?

William James (1842–1910), an American pragmatist philosopher and psychologist, coined the phrase “flow of consciousness” as a contrast to the substantialist and reified conception of mind. In an essay entitled *Does Consciousness Exist?* he explored the nature of human consciousness. James denied Kant's notion of a

transcendental ego that is conscious, as well as the dichotomy between the subject (the conscious ego) and the object (the items of which consciousness is aware). Rather than being a thing or substance, consciousness is a function:

Let me then immediately explain that I mean only to deny that the word [consciousness] stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function. There is, I mean, no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made; but there is a function in experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked. (James 478)

Subject and object are mingled into a single function. We will show when we describe prehension, in the next section, that actual entities combine subject and object into one function.

James was deeply influenced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941), who believed that living things had an inner spiritual drive, what he called *élan vital*, a kind of final causation or teleology. Bergson also introduced a new way of understanding the passage of time for all living entities. Time is not an uncountable series of points along a timeline, as a physicist might describe time. Rather Bergson introduced the idea of duration, short amounts of time, in which the present encompasses the past and moves towards the future. Bergson emphasized the importance of intuition, which allows us to perceive this flow of time. This perception of moments of experience

of short duration, which are both the subject and the object of knowledge, would become the basic building blocks of Whitehead's metaphysics.

Whitehead synthesized these ideas of James and Bergson. Each actual occasion is both a subject and an object (Whitehead calls them subject-superject). Each is of limited duration. Each contains a kind of low-level consciousness, not unlike Bergson's *élan vital*. Each actual occasion becomes an event in space-time. Each creatively integrates all other events into itself before passing out of existence. And each becomes the basis of future events. "What then are the fundamental entities, the ultimate facts if we reject the concept of simply located particles of matter? The theory which Whitehead proposed was that the ultimate facts with which science deals are events" (Leclerc 9). This passing of actual occasions from one to another is what Whitehead calls "creativity." And it is creativity that becomes the ultimate description of how the universe works.

In order to understand how this process works, we must examine the manner in which each actual occasion brings into its own being all other actual occasions. To explain this concept, Whitehead coins the word "prehension," a shortening of apprehension in the sense of understanding. Each actual occasion prehends every other actual occasion. In a sense, every event in the universe touches every other event. One senses, in Whitehead's work, the underlying unity of all existence.

Prehension

Prehension is the way that each actual occasion transforms itself and then becomes the object for the next actual occasion. Through prehension, we get to the heart of the process. Process philosopher Charles Hartshorne wrote, regarding prehension: "In a single conception it explains the spatiotemporal structure of the world, the possibility of

knowledge, and the reality of freedom. It is, in my opinion, one of the supreme intellectual discoveries” (127). Prehension, as conceived by Whitehead, is a complicated process of which we will describe only the most important points.

First, Whitehead teaches that each actual entity has a physical pole in space. Through this physical pole, it is able to grasp or take within itself every other actual entity currently in existence. “Actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other” (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 20). Whitehead sees this as a one-way process, with actual entities grasping previous actual entities but previous actual entities not prehending new ones. He uses the mathematical term “vector” to indicate this one way movement. The past can affect the present but the present cannot affect the past. Time and process are interwoven, for Whitehead. The future is open-ended. There is forward causation but no backwards causation.

Each actual entity also has a mental pole. Through this pole, the entity prehends what Whitehead calls “eternal objects.” They exist as pure potentiality. In a sense, these eternal objects can be compared to Platonic forms which are reflected in the substances of this world. Each actual entity prehends these eternal objects and either accepts or rejects them. “The eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world” (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 70). Bringing together the various actual occasions and the relevant eternal objects is a process that Whitehead calls “concrecence”, from the word “concrete.” It works very much like human consciousness, which combines sensations, memories, decisions, feelings, and various impressions, below the level of consciousness, and then makes a decision how to proceed. So each actual entity brings together both other actual entities and the eternal

forms in a concrete way. This decision of how to proceed is where creativity enters the picture.

Finally, each actual occasion has a subjective aim. Many process philosophers use the word “lure,” the direction in which it wants to go. This is the final cause or teleology we mentioned earlier. The actual occasion pulls together the input in its physical pole (other actual entities), the input in its mental pole (eternal objects), its subjective aim, and creatively moves forward. Whitehead calls this step “satisfaction.” The many aspects come together to become one movement. “The many become one, and are increased by one. In their natures, entities are disjunctively ‘many’ in process of passage into conjunctive unity” (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 21). And when it becomes one, the actual entity vanishes and ceases to exist as a subject. It now becomes, what Whitehead calls, a superject—an object for the next generation of actual entities. “An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences. It is subject-superject, and neither half of this description can for a moment be lost sight” (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 29). The subject-object dichotomy that James spoke of is resolved by using the terminology subject-superject. The subject prehends and becomes a superject that is prehended. And so the creative process continues.

Of course, human beings do not sense individual actual entities. They are too small and vanish too quickly to be perceived. Rather, we perceive objects in the universe—rocks and trees, animals and other human beings. But each of these is a collection of actual entities. On the most basic level, Whitehead calls such a collection of actual entities a “nexus.” He calls the higher level of such entities a “society.” For example, all of the actual entities that make up a tree, each prehending its various parts, form a society. The tree as a whole does notprehend; trees and rocks do not have

consciousness. But they are made up of individual actual occasions that prehend, every one prehending every other one. The society forms an organic whole. An individual hydrogen molecule in a tree, prehending all the other hydrogen molecules in that tree, may behave differently than an individual hydrogen molecule in the sun. However, there are some societies of actual entities, such as animals or human beings, in which one series of occasions become dominant. This dominant series of occasions becomes the spirit or soul. As David Ray Griffin, a prominent theologian and interpreter of Whitehead's, has written:

Either the organization is such as to give rise to a "regnant," "presiding," or "dominant" member, or it is not. If there is a dominant member, the total society is, to use the term coined by Hartshorne, a *compound individual*. The most obvious example is a human being or any other animal with a central nervous system, in which the bodily cells are organized so as to give rise to a temporally ordered society of higher-level occasions of experience, which we call the "mind" or "soul." (120)

We see in Whitehead's theory of actual entities and prehensions a return to the magical, Neoplatonic ideas that were rejected by scientific naturalism. The world is not made up of substances moved by blind forces. Instead, by saying that it is made up of occasions or entities, of moments of experience, Whitehead is saying that each entity prehends every other existent entity. Thus, there is a return to the notion of occult, non-manifest, or hidden forces that exist in the material objects in the universe. And by positing the idea of subjective aim, we have reintroduced final causation, teleology, and

purpose into the universe. There is still one question that must be examined before we begin to interpret the creation story of the *Zohar* by using process philosophy. The question is: “Where does God fit in to Whitehead’s metaphysical scheme?”

Whitehead’s Conception of God

Despite claiming to have developed a metaphysical system that is in keeping with modern science, Whitehead’s greatest influence has been on theology, particularly on Christian theology. Such thinkers as Charles Hartshorne, John B. Cobb Jr., and David Ray Griffin have used Whitehead’s work to develop a decidedly Christian process theology. A handful of Jewish thinkers have also been influenced by Whitehead’s conception of God. Perhaps the most prominent recent process thinker has been Bradley Artson. The following quote from Artson gives a process reading to the Jewish view of revelation:

*Because we understand the Torah as the inextricable fusion of the divine and human, giving and receiving Torah is a process without end. Any process is a series of events across time, and the process of giving/receiving Torah is composed of a series of events arranged chronologically, too. From the first telling of stories that grew into the compilations found in our Torah, from the first standards and practices that have been distilled into the imperatives and prohibitions that are the commandments (*mitzvot*), there has been a steady process of telling, doing, interpreting. These happen all together, in an organic rather than a linear order: all at once, each simultaneously influencing each other and*

being influenced by each other. Small surprise, then, that some of the stories and several of the laws strike many moderns as horrific: the very values that have emerged from the Bible sensitize us to hear those tales and practices with heightened awareness. Scripture is always clothed in interpretation, made real through active engagement. No wonder that the ancient Rabbis understood that the Written Torah was supplemented with an Oral Torah, the interpretive key to keeping scripture fresh, relevant, and wise. Oral Torah, originating in the same source and with the same level of authority as the Written Torah, makes possible the freshness of God's lure towards engagement, relationship, justice, and compassion. In the words of an ancient sage, "Even what an acute student will expound before a teacher has already been given to Moses at Sinai." (*Yerushalmi Peah* 2:4) Sinai is a symbol for an ongoing process without end, not just a particular moment at a particular mountain. Without a push toward playful interpretation in each age, the Word would calcify into something brittle, foolish, and harsh. (49)

Although various Jewish thinkers have developed process ideas, few have applied his ideas to Kabbalistic thought.²⁵ This dissertation extends this tradition by looking at the *Zohar* through the eyes of Whitehead's theology. We must first, however, begin by examining Whitehead's conception of God.

²⁵ See *Jewish Theology and Process Thought* (SUNY, 1996) edited by Sandra B. Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin. See also Bradley Shavit Artson, *God of Becoming and Relationship; The Dynamic Nature of Process Philosophy* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013).

Whitehead develops his conception of God in the last section of *Process and Reality*. Elizabeth M. Kraus, in her commentary on Whitehead, describes how this entire section is far less technical and far more poetic and evocative than the rest of the book:

Whitehead speaks lyrically and directly, pulling aside the curtain for a moment to enable the reader to catch a glimpse of the massive simplification of his cosmological vision. It is indeed only a glimpse - a return to romance - a preface to the theological counterpart of process cosmology, a beginning not an end. The details are not worked out; the language is more evocative than precise; more is concealed than revealed. Yet the revelation in and not despite its poetry gives process philosophy a scope paralleled only by the synoptic vision of a Hegel or an Aquinas.
(168)

As we have already shown, Whitehead is reacting to classical theism, what he calls "God as Caesar." Whitehead particularly rejects the Aristotelian image of God as the unmoved mover, of God as the first cause Who is Himself unmoved and uncaused. Charles Hartshorne describes this rejected view of God:

(1) We may identify God, conceived in terms of value, with sheer 'perfection,' defined as completeness or maximality of value such that nothing conceivably *could* be added to it, and from which, therefore, every form of self-enrichment, every aspect of process and of potential but unactual value, is absent. ... (2) We may also identify God, conceived in

terms of causality, with sheer power or activity, a `cause of all, which is in no aspect of its being the effect of any, an agent which acts but is not acted upon. (217)

To Hartshorne, such a God is not a God of perfection, for to be perfect includes having the ability to change. To be God is not having pure power, for power can only be used for coercion. Whitehead develops the conception of a God of persuasion, rather than coercion.

Thus, how are we to describe God according to Whitehead? Most importantly, God is an actual entity. (He does not use the phrase “actual occasion” when speaking of God, probably because God is the one actual entity that does not perish.) Like every actual entity, God has both a mental pole and a physical pole. The mental pole is that through which an entity prehends eternal objects. In the temporal world, an actual entity only prehends some eternal objects; God however prehends all eternal objects. Whitehead calls this mental pole that contains all eternal objects the primordial nature of God. Like the physical pole of all actual entities, the physical pole of God prehends all actual occasions in the universe. Everything that happens becomes part of God. Or perhaps a better way to say it is that God is affected by everything that happens. This is a God that is constantly in process, constantly changing as a result of His relationship with the world. Whitehead calls this the consequent nature of God.

Finally, as we described above, every actual entity is both a subject and a superject. As subject, it prehends both eternal objects and other actual entities. Through concrescence, it brings these together into a new form. It then passes away but, in so doing, it becomes the superject, the object of future actual entities. God, however, does

not pass away. But since God is also a superject, and becomes the subjective aim of every actual entity, this description leads to an image of God Who uses persuasion rather than coercion.

Thus Whitehead develops a three-part description of God.²⁶ First, there is God's primordial nature, which contains all eternal objects. Second, there is God's consequent nature which prehends all actual entities. Third, there is God's superject nature which provides the subjective aim of all new entities. What follows is Whitehead's own description of this tripartite nature of God:

There is still, however, the same threefold character; (i) the 'primordial nature' of God is the concrescence of a unity of conceptual feelings, including among their data all eternal objects. The concrescence is directed by the subjective aim, that the subjective forms of the feelings shall be such as to constitute the eternal objects into relevant lures of feeling severally appropriate for all realizable basic conditions, (ii) The 'consequent nature' of God is the physical prehension by God of the actualities of the evolving universe. His primordial nature directs such perspectives of objectification that each novel actuality in the temporal world contributes such elements as it can to a realization in God free from inhibitions of intensity by reason of discordance, (iii). The 'superjective nature' of God is the character of the pragmatic value of his specific

²⁶ This has no relation to the trinity, although some Christian process theologians may be tempted to interpret it that way.

satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity in the various temporal instances. (87)

Whitehead's writing is often dense, making it necessary to unpack what he is saying. The primordial nature of God contains all eternal objects. In the previous chapter we spoke of a "white horse." We can point to a particular white horse. But do "whiteness" or "horseness" exist as ontological realities? To use the Jewish example from the previous chapter, does "holiness" exist in reality? While Maimonides denied the existence of such eternal forms, Whitehead posits what he calls the ontological principle, which states simply that everything has to be somewhere. If eternal objects exist, they must exist within an actual entity. Whitehead writes: "everything must exist somewhere; and here somewhere means 'some actual entity.'" Accordingly the general potentiality of the universe [i.e. the realm of eternal objects] must be somewhere" (413).

The primordial nature of God contains all these eternal objects, though they all exist merely as potentials. They may desire to ingress into the actual occasions, but so far that has not happened. The primordial nature of God is static, pure potentiality not yet actualized. Or as Kraus has written: "God, under the abstraction of his primordial nature, is totally isolated from finite process" (169). To Whitehead, this primordial vision of God is incomplete. If God's primordial nature is static, then God's consequent nature is dynamic. God prehends all actual occasions. All become part of God. And as these occasions change with time, so God changes with time. God is forever in process, forever changing as the actual occasions change. To Whitehead, creativity is the ultimate reality. But the universe's creativity does not occur by God acting as an all-powerful agent. Rather, creativity takes place through the satisfaction of each actual occasions

going through the steps of concrescence and satisfaction. God takes up each moment of creativity into its being and is always dynamic.

But God's primordial and consequent natures are still not sufficient. God must act as the subjective aim, the lure for each actual occasion. This is the superject nature of God. By being the subjective aim of each actual occasion, God does not simply "hand out tickets' to destinations which concrescences meekly attain" (Kraus and Whitehead 54). This is not a God of coercion but, rather, a God of persuasion. This is the lure as each actual occasion moves towards its satisfaction. "It is an essential doctrine in the philosophy of organism that the primary function of a proposition is to be relevant as a lure for feeling" (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 25).

So we have an image of a God that brings change to the world, and an image of a world that brings change to God. In the end, Whitehead waxes poetic about this mutual relationship between the world and God:

It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent. It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many. It is true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently. It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World. It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God. (348)

Thus, in Whitehead's vision God and the world are interdependent. Each is in process, affecting and affected by the other.

There is no way to know whether Whitehead himself ever studied the kabbalistic tradition. But it is clear that his goal was similar to that of the early mystics. As Alfredo Borodowski wrote in his essay *The Perfect Theological Storm*: "Both Process Theology and Kabbalah battle against a common adversary: the concept of God derived from Greek philosophy" (89). The goal of the rest of this study will be to determine whether Whitehead's image of God and the world can serve as the basis for an interpretation of the creation story in the *Zohar*. As we begin the second section, we will lay out a narrative. How does the *Zohar* picture the creation of the world? And how can Whitehead's philosophy of organism serve as the basis for such a creation story?

PART 2: CREATING A NARRATIVE

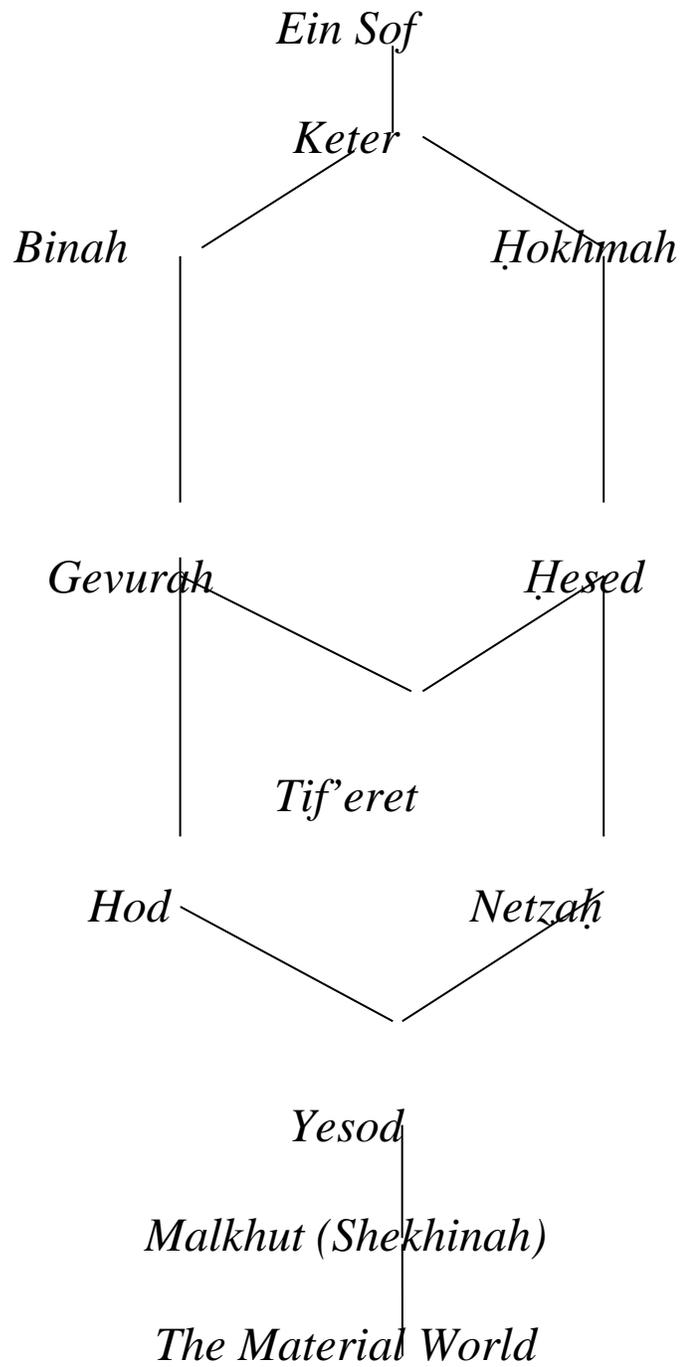


Figure 1. The Sefirot

CHAPTER 4: MIND, OR GOD’S PRIMORDIAL NATURE

Over the next three chapters our goal is to construct a creation narrative. The narrative is based on the *Zohar*’s commentary on Genesis Chapter 1. (*Sefer HaZohar* 1 15a- 23b). The narrative will also reflect the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*. Although Whitehead lived some six hundred years after the *Zohar*, in laying out his metaphysical system, he was reacting to some of the same ideas as the *Zohar*. As scholars as early as Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891) taught, the early kabbalah leading to the *Zohar* was a reaction to the Aristotelian rationalism of Maimonides and other philosophers.²⁷ In a similar way, Whitehead was reacting to the substance ontology of modern philosophy, an ontology based on the ideas of Aristotle.

Our narrative begins with mind. One might say, “In the beginning there was mind.” This is already a break from much modern thinking, which sees mind or consciousness or subjectivity as a late emergent property that comes with complexity. In fact, many ontological materialists see mind as a mere epiphenomenon, which has no causal efficacy of its own. The narrative in these three chapters takes a contrary approach. Before there were material objects, before there were space and time, before

²⁷ Scholem writes, “Graetz proposed an historical explanation based upon the great events and controversies of Jewish history. According to him, the Kabbalah was essentially nothing but a reaction against the radical rationalism of the Maimonideans—the adherents of the philosophy of Maimonides, who died in Fostat (Old Cairo) in 1204 but had enthusiastic followers throughout the Orient and in Provence as well” (Origins 7). Graetz himself had little respect for kabbalah. Scholem, after mentioning the anti-mysticism views of scholars such as Graetz, writes: “... what I am going to present is a critical appreciation involving a certain philosophical outlook, as applied to the life texture of Jewish history, which in its fundamentals I believe to be active and alive to this day” (Trends 3).

there was energy, before there was anything at all, there was mind. Mind came first. It is primordial.

What do we mean by mind? English has many terms similar to one another — consciousness, subjectivity, awareness, intention. Philosopher David Chalmers has written extensively on mind, and on what he called “the hard problem of consciousness.” To quote Chalmers:

Consciousness fits uneasily into our conception of the natural world. On the most common conception of nature, the natural world is the physical world. But on the most common conception of consciousness, it is not easy to see how it could be part of the physical world. So it seems that to find a place for consciousness within the natural order, we must either revise our conception of consciousness, or revise our conception of nature.

(Consciousness 102)

On a fundamental level, mind is something that exists beyond the physical, material world.

How does the *Zohar* view mind? Let us look at one passage.²⁸ R. Shimon was staying at an inn when he began sharing an interpretation of the Torah. A certain Jew was lying near him and spoke out against his interpretation. R. Shimon reacted sharply to this Jew interpreting scripture while lying down:

²⁸ 1 72a.

מלי דאורייתא בעיין כוונה. ומלין דאורייתא בעאן לאתקנא
בגופא ורעותא כחדא.

Words of Torah require proper intention. Words of Torah require
preparation of both the body and the mind as one.

Before speaking the man should rise out of bed and prepare his body as well as his mind. The passage views body and mind as two separate aspects of a person. Particularly relevant is the Aramaic term the *Zohar* uses for mind רעותא. The term *reyuta* means “will or desire.”²⁹ Mind is signified by the presence of will. This will become relevant as we develop our idea of mind in both the *Zohar* and Whitehead, where primal will becomes exceedingly important.

In the beginning, only mind existed. When we speak of the beginning, we do not mean the temporal beginning, since time did not yet exist. We will show, when we study process philosophy that time is a result of events in the material world. In the beginning, there are no events. So, by “beginning,” we mean an ontological beginning, not a temporal beginning. Though mind may remind us of Aristotle’s unmoved mover³⁰, mind as understood here is a moved mover. The primordial mind acts out of an inner need, or as we will show, an inner deficiency. Aristotle defines the unmoved mover as a “perfect being.” Following Aristotle, Maimonides and Aquinas describe God in the same manner. But why would such a perfect being need to create a world? And why would the perfect

²⁹ See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1950), Vol. 2, p. 1488.

³⁰ Aristotle writes, “And since that which is moved and is a mover is thus an intermediate, there is something which causes motion without being moved, and this is eternal, a substance, and an actuality” (Metaphysics, book lamda, part 7).

being care whether a world exists at all? To create a universe, the primordial mind needs to have desire or will. And to have that desire or will, the primordial mind needs to be deficient in some way. For if the mind lacks nothing, why create a world? This question will be addressed. However, at this point, we will begin discussing mind.

Mind as Light

How are we to designate or understand primordial mind? Already in Plato, mind was evoked by the metaphor of “light.” Arthur Zajonc, in his book *Catching the Light: The Entwined History of Light and Mind*, writes: “Plato used sight as a metaphor for all knowing, calling the psyche’s own organ of perception the ‘eye of the soul’ or ‘the mind’s eye’” (22). In a similar way, Lawrence Wu writes: “Philosophers have long been using the metaphors ‘light’ and ‘mirror’ to represent the nature of mind and its functionings because of their richness of meanings” (145). Although Wu does not discuss Jewish mysticism in particular, he does discuss Plotinus. Wu writes: “Plotinus’s theory of continuing creation as emanation seems to be based on the metaphor of light. This conception of the Universal Mind, the One and the Good as an overflowing fountain of light attests to this claim” (151). As shown in Chapter 2, much of Jewish mysticism grew out of Plotinus’s conception of emanation, this overflowing of light.³¹

Light seems an appropriate metaphor for mind in the *Zohar*. The very name *Zohar* comes from a verse in the book of Daniel:

³¹ For a deeper understanding of the use of light as a metaphor, see the anthology of essays by Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Presence of Light*. Kapstein writes in his own essay, “Light, under one description or another, is a universal religious symbol if anything is, and most religions make literal or metaphoric reference to experiences of light in various contexts. Nevertheless, it is striking that spiritual techniques focusing upon light became particularly accentuated in a number of particular religious movements, often described as ‘mystical,’ in late antiquity and the medieval period” (285).

וְהַמְשֻׁכְּלִים יִזְהָרוּ כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ וּמֵצִדֵּיקֵי הָרַבִּים כְּכּוֹכְבִּים
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament;
and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

(Daniel 12:3)

The verse uses the term *zohar*—brightness to refer to the *hamaskilim*—the wise, a clear comparison between light and mind.

If mind functions through words, then the metaphor of light is often used to refer to such words. Elliot Wolfson discusses a passage from the *Zohar*³² on how the words which the Israelites heard at Mt. Sinai were seen rather than heard:

In one of the key texts, an interpretation of Ex. 20:15, “And all the people saw the voices,” *we-khol ha-'am ro'im 'et ha-qolot*, the *Zohar* raises an obvious problem which troubled classical and medieval exegetes alike: why does Scripture employ the predicate 'saw' in conjunction with the object 'voices' thereby mixing an optical and auditory metaphor?
(Hermeneutics of Visionary 313)

³² 281a – b.

If speech or words are a fundamental aspect of mind, and light is used to refer to those words, light seems to be a useful metaphor for mind.

Wolfson also discusses the linguistic relationship between light and words in the concept of *sefirot*. He writes:

The most important term employed by medieval kabbalists to refer to the divine emanations, *sefirot*, is itself sufficient to convey this dual sense: The word derives from the root *sfr*, which can be vocalized as *sefer*, “book.” But it is associated as well with the word *sappir*, “sapphire.” Additionally, the root *sfr* can be vocalized as *safar*, “to count. No single English word can adequately account for the richness of the range of semantic meaning linked to the term *sefirot*, which denotes concurrently the sense of luminosity (*sappir*), speech (*sefer*), and enumeration (*sefar*). (Hermeneutics of Light 112)

The light according to the *Zohar* is not part of the creation. God did not create light out of nothing as the beginning of Genesis seems to indicate. Rather the light was always there; the light always existed. Alluding to an ancient midrashic tradition ³³, the *Zohar* states: ³⁴

וַיְהִי אֹרֶךְ. אֹרֶךְ דְּכַבֵּר הוּא. אֹרֶךְ דָּא רִזָּא סְתִימָא.

³³ *Genesis Rabbah* 3:2 (Theodor and Albeck 1 19).

³⁴ I 16b.

“Let there be light.” Light that already existed. This light is a hidden mystery.

What became of the primordial light? A midrash in the Talmud says that such perfect light was hidden away for the righteous in the World to Come³⁵ (Matt Zohar I 148):

אמר רבי אלעזר: אור שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא ביום ראשון -
אדם צופה בו מסוף העולם ועד סופו, כיון שנסתכל הקדוש ברוך
הוא בדור המבול ובדור הפלגה וראה שמעשיהם מקולקלים -
עמד וגנזו מהן, שנאמר (איוב ל"ח) וימנע מרשעים אורם. ולמי
גנזו - לצדיקים לעתיד לבא.

Rabbi Elazar said, the light created by the blessed Holy One on the first day, Adam could gaze at it and see from one end of the universe to the other. When the Holy One blessed be He foresaw the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Dispersion (the generation of the Tower of Babel) and how their deeds would become corrupt, He immediately hid it from them, as is written, *the light of the wicked is withheld* (Job 38:15). For whom did He hide it? For the righteous in the time to come.

We have used the primordial light to symbolize the primordial mind, the mind that was there from the beginning. Whitehead, in his discussion of the primordial God, introduces a very similar idea.

³⁵ Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 12a.

Whitehead's Primordial God

Alfred North Whitehead describes a primordial vision of God in which God encompasses all eternal objects, which exist as pure potentials. Whitehead writes that “The primordial created fact is the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects. This is the ‘primordial nature’ of God” (Whitehead, Griffin, and Sherburne 31). Such eternal objects as “whiteness,” “horseness,” or a Jewish ideal *kedusha* (“holiness”), were discussed in the previous chapter. For Whitehead, these are all eternal objects, part of the primordial nature of God. Whitehead imagines each of these objects desiring to become manifest in the world. Will or desire seems present in Whitehead’s philosophy from the beginning. Nonetheless, so far, these eternal objects are merely potential.

The primordial mind is filled with desire. Whitehead says this almost explicitly: “One side of God’s nature is constituted by his conceptual experience. This experience is the primordial fact in the world, limited by no actuality which it presupposes. It is therefore infinite, devoid of all negative prehensions. This side of his nature is free, complete, primordial, eternal, *actually deficient*³⁶ and unconscious” (413). In many ways, this description is reminiscent of Aristotle’s unmoved mover or the God of the medieval Aristotelian philosophers such as Maimonides. Such a God is free and complete, unconscious of (one might say unconcerned with) the world. But in this excerpt, we also see the major area in which Whitehead breaks with Aristotle and his medieval interpreters. His primordial God is not perfect. He uses the phrase “actually deficient.” Kraus, in her summary of Whitehead, writes about this God: “Prior to his

³⁶ My italics.

physical feelings, prior to the impact of the world upon him, God is ‘infinite, devoid of all negative prehensions,’ ‘free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious,’ an unmoved mover luring incarnations but oblivious to them” (177). It is a God in need of something more.

If God according to Whitehead is mind, then this mind lacks something. This mind is deficient in some way. The deficiency is due to the mind having desires - one might even say that mind has “longings.” Whitehead seems to imply that the multiple eternal objects which constitute the primordial God long to be manifested within a world. Hans Jonas, in passage quoted in Chapter 2, already expresses a similar idea:

In the beginning, for unknowable reasons, the ground of being, or the Divine, chose to give itself over to the chance and risk and endless variety of becoming. And wholly so: entering into the adventure of space and time, the deity held back nothing of itself: no uncommitted or unimpaired part remained to direct, correct, and ultimately guarantee the devious working-out of its destiny in creation. On this unconditional immanence the modern temper insists. (Mortality134)

Jonas’s “entering into the adventure of space and time” is a modern reworking of Whitehead’s image of deficiency and longings. God is able to fulfill those desires, and with that fulfillment of those desires our story begins. Thus, we now turn to the creation story as found in the *Zohar*.

Ein Sof

Sandra Valabregue-Perry has written extensively about the concept of *Ein Sof*, which she calls “the ontological kernel of theosophic Kabbalah” (407). Therefore our creation narrative must begin with this fundamental notion. The *Zohar* refers to the unknowable essence of God as *Ein Sof* – literally “without end” or “infinity.” To say that *Ein Sof* is the primordial mind would be totally improper; no statements can be made about *Ein Sof*. Isaiah Tishby writes, regarding *Ein Sof*:

The absolute concealment of *En-Sof*³⁷ demonstrates one of the differentiating characteristics of the kabbalistic approach to the mystery of the Godhead. Only a portion of this mystery, the part that concerns the self-revealing God, is susceptible to knowledge and perception. But as far as *En-Sof*, the hidden God, is concerned, the mystery is one of non-knowledge and non-perception. Just as the highest religious duty of man requires for its fulfillment a knowledge of his Creator, that is to say, that he should enter into the mystery of the *sefirot*, so it is also incumbent on him to recognize the limits of mystical perception and to acknowledge the concealment of *En-Sof*. (233-234)

We simply cannot know or say anything about *Ein Sof*.³⁸

³⁷ Tishby’s spelling.

³⁸ As we showed in Chapter 2, there are some scholars such as Elliot Wolfson who disagree (Wolfson Negative xx).

Scholars still debate the source of this concept of *Ein Sof*. Scholem claims that the term was used originally in adverbial form: *ad ein sof* -“until infinity.” Regarding the *Sefer HaBahir*, often considered the beginning of the development of theosophical kabbalah, Scholem writes:

... our book still knows nothing of an expression *`en-sof* in the terminological sense of “infinity,” designating that hidden reality of the Lord of all logoi, of God who conceals himself in the depths of his own essentiality. To be sure, the compound *`en-sof* appears in an adverbial form in section 48 [of *Sefer HaBahir*]: “the thought with which one can think up to infinity and the endless,” *le-`en sof we-takhlith*, but there is not the slightest hint here of the “infinite” as a noun, concerning which or of which one thinks. (Origins 130)

Scholem explains the difficulty of pinning down when *Ein Sof* went from being an adverb to being a noun. According to Valabregue-Perry: “The nominal form marks the integration of the philosophical transcendental description of God into Kabbalah and bears the mark of negative (apophatic) theology. This means that *Eyn-sof* comes to represent the concealed God whereas the *sefirot* are God manifested” (406).

The *Zohar* goes into great length about the unknowability of *Ein Sof*, as in the following passage: ³⁹

³⁹ II 239a.

א"ל הא אוקימנא עד אין סוף דכל קשורא ויחודא ושלימו
לאצנעא בהווא צניעו דלא אתדבק ולא אתידע דרעוא דכל
רעוין ביה. אין סוף לא קיימא לאודעא ולא למעבד סוף ולא
למעבד ראש כמה דאין קדמאה אפיק ראש וסוף. מאן ראש דא
נקודה עלאה דאיהו רישא דכלא סתימאה דקיימא גו מחשבה.
ועביד סוף דאקרי (קהלת יב) סוף דבר. אבל להתם אין סוף לאו
רעותין לאו נהורין לאו בוצינין בהווא אין סוף. כל אלן בוצינין
ונהורין תליין לאתקיימא בהו ולא קיימא לאתדבקא מאן דידע
ולא ידע לאו איהו אלא רעו עלאה סתימא דכל סתימין אי"ן.

He (Rabbi Shimon) said, We have already taught that it (the inability to know) extends to *Ein Sof* for all attachment, unification, and completion is to be hidden in that hidden place which is not perceived or known, and which contains the will of all wills. *Ein Sof* cannot be known, and does not produce end nor beginning like the primal *ayin* (nothing), which does bring forth beginning and end. What is beginning? The supernal point which is the beginning of all, concealed and resting within thought, and producing end that is called 'The end of the matter' (Ecclesiastes 12:13). But there are no ends, no wills, no lights, no sparks in *Ein Sof*. All these sparks and lights depend on it for their existence, but they are not in a position to perceive. That which knows, but does not know, is none but the Supernal Will, the secret of all secrets, *ayin*.

Even the *sefirot*, the various divine manifestations in the world, cannot know *Ein Sof*. It is totally concealed, both present and not present.

Ein Sof is present and absent, there and not there. This is the great paradox of the *Zohar*. This image of being both present and not present ought to be familiar to us. In

Chapter 1, we stated that this was Jacques Derrida's conception of God. As we wrote there: "If God is both present and absent, the only place we find God is in the text itself. Again, 'there is nothing outside the text.'" Or as Beth Sharon Ash has written: "Derrida cites the Algerian Jew Edmond Jabès, whose interrogation of God pre-supposes divinity as silent absence, a negative expression of his presence: 'If God is, it is because he is in the book' (*Writing and Difference*, p. 76)" (70).

So if we cannot speak of *Ein Sof*, what can we speak of? The Aramaic phrase רעו עלאה, which we translated "Supernal Will," in the above quote contains a hint. According to Tishby, this Supernal Will is also called *ayin*, literally "nothing." Daniel Matt writes regarding this *ayin*: "In medieval Kabbalah *ayin* functions as a theosophical symbol, part of the elaborate system of the *sefirot*. Everything emerges from the depths of *ayin* and eventually returns there" (*Ayin*, Essential 67).

Is *ayin* part of *Ein Sof*, or is *ayin* the first stage, the primordial will? Arthur Green has suggested the latter, as mentioned in a passage quoted in Chapter 2? ⁴⁰ Tishby seems to say that it is the will, the first desires within the hiddenness of *Ein Sof*. This first desire to create is the highest of the *sefirot*, known as *Keter* (literally "crown"). Matt argues that *Keter* is the name of the divine will, referring to *Keter* as "the impulse within the divine mind" (*Zohar* 1 116). The first *sefirah* was seen, by early kabbalists, as the unity of *Ein Sof* and Primal Will. This Primal Will is that first desire which is the unique contribution of Jewish Neoplatonism. With *Keter*, we see a conceptual break from Aristotle's classical unmoved mover. We also see a break from Plotinus's conception of a spring from which

⁴⁰ "Early Kabbalistic writings also identify *keter* and *ayin*, primal Nothingness" (Green *Keter* 154).

emanation flows, but which is in and of itself oblivious to its creation. We have already mentioned in Chapter 2 that what differentiates Jewish thought from classical Greek thought is the necessity of this Will within the Creator. As Lenn Goodman writes and as we quoted in Chapter 2: “Indeed the centrality of Will becomes the hallmark of Jewish Neoplatonism” (Introduction 8).

Let us turn briefly to Whitehead regarding these same ideas. Having disagreed with Aristotle’s substance ontology, Whitehead seems to draw on these same ideas of divine will or *Keter*. If the primordial God is deficient in some way, then that God desires whatever can resolve this deficiency. The various eternal objects that make up the primordial God long to manifest themselves in some way. The resolution of this problem is the creation of a universe in which the various eternal objects or potentialities become manifest.

Out of the supernal will, a world must develop. However, the question remains of whether creation occurred *ex nihilo* and external to God’s very being, as the medieval Aristotelian philosophers such as Maimonides and Aquinas taught, or did creation occur through emanation within the very being of the Creator.

Did God Create the Universe *Ex Nihilo*?

The narrative could continue in one of two possible directions at this point. One direction is that which is usually taught by classical Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Here, an all-powerful Creator made a world outside itself. Thus, there is a radical separation between God and God’s creation, so that God is transcendent. The world was created from nothing—*ex nihilo*. This idea conforms to the classical conception of divine omnipotence. God is utterly transcendent and the material world is utterly passive. It is

mere stuff or substance, to use Aristotle's term. This was the view held by Maimonides and other medieval philosophers who were discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the view of most modern theologians. However, as I will show, this is not the view held by Whitehead or found in the *Zohar*.

Many modern scholars believe that creation *ex nihilo* was a relatively late addition to both Christian and Jewish thought. The Bible, according to most scholars, views creation as God bringing order out of the primordial chaos. Jonathan Goldstein, in his article on creation *ex nihilo*, quotes David Winston: "The explicit formulation of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was not indigenously Jewish, but ... under the influence of Christian-Muslim thought it penetrated into Jewish philosophical and religious literature" (128). Goldstein himself disagrees with Winston and says that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* developed in defense of the doctrine of full bodily resurrection. Although scholars may disagree on how the idea developed, most understand it as a result of God's omnipotence. To claim, as Plato did in his *Timaeus*, that God needed some kind of pre-existent material to form a world expresses a limitation to God's power.

The Biblical account does not seem to hold this view of creation from nothing, but rather speaks of water that existed before creation. Let us quote at length one Biblical scholar, William P. Brown:

In Genesis 1, the curtain rises to reveal a cosmic mishmash. I offer my own translation of the Hebrew the first two verses. ^{1:1}When God began to create the heavens and the earth, ^{1:2}the earth was void and vacuum, and darkness was upon the surface of the deep while the breath of God hovered over the watery surface.

This initial state of creation is described in verse 2 as *the wābōhû*, here translated as "void and vacuum," but typically rendered as "formless void" (so NRSV). The Hebrew, however, is more vivid. The phrase is what grammarians call a "farrago," an alliterative meshing of words or syllables whose overall semantic sense transcends its individual components, such as in "topsy-turvy," "vice versa," "mishmash," or "hodgepodge." In fact, the French *Le tohu-bohu*, meaning "hubbub," is a Hebrew loanword that captures well the biblical sense, a dynamic undifferentiated condition that lacks both substance and form. Such was the "soupy" state of the universe in the beginning according to the biblical cosmologist. One could call it chaos, but not in any mythically threatening sense. Darkness, water, and emptiness do not make a monster. Neither do they constitute mere "nothing" (*nihil*). To find the deity creating from nothing (*ex nihilo*), one must look elsewhere in the biblical tradition (e.g., 2 Maccabees 7:28). The chaos described in Genesis 1:2 designates a state of dynamic disorder poised for order. For whatever reason, the ancient cosmologists surmised that creation commenced *in extremis*, amid the "chaos" of turbulent *tōhû wābōhû*, a state of cosmic potential or readiness for creation. (Part 2)

The Jewish Publication Society's translation of the beginning of *Genesis* reflects this scholarly approach: "When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being

unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light’” (Genesis 1:1-3). This is a very different translation from the Authorized Version of the Bible which is reflected in many earlier translations into English: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The latter translation sees God as creating the universe *ex nihilo*. The Jewish Publication Society translation sees God bringing order out of a primordial chaos.

Agreeing that creation *ex nihilo* is not the original meaning of the biblical creation story, Daniel Matt writes, “The theory of creation *ex nihilo* first appears in second-century Christian literature, evoked by the confrontation with Gnostic heresy and Greek philosophy. It represents a denial of the prevailing Platonic notion that creation was out of eternal primordial matter, a notion that compromises the sovereignty of God” (Ayin, Essential 69). Matt continues:

Creation *ex nihilo* provided a defense for the belief in one free and transcendent Creator not dependent on anything. It became the paradigm for God’s miraculous powers and served as the chief underpinning for the supernatural conception of deity. Its denial was tantamount to the undermining of revealed religion. In the words of Moses Maimonides, “If the philosophers would succeed in demonstrating eternity as Aristotle understands it, the Law as a whole would become void.” (Guide for the Perplexed 2:25) [In contrast], there is little if any evidence that the normative rabbinic view was of creation *ex nihilo*. (Ayin, Essential 70)

This argument seems to reflect the two world views that were discussed in Chapter 2. Medieval Aristotelianism supports the idea of creation *ex nihilo*, though Aristotle himself believed that the world was eternal. Maimonides, for example, defended the notion of a transcendent Creator and a passive creation. Neoplatonism, including its medieval developments, differs from this view, seeing emanation rather than creation as the best account for the existence of the universe. As I will show, the *Zohar* followed the path of Neoplatonism in its interpretation of the creation story.

The rabbis of the midrash had already argued whether creation was *ex nihilo* or flowed from pre-existing material. *Genesis Rabbah*, a collection of midrashim collected in the fourth or fifth centuries, tells a story of the great second-century sage, Rabban Gamliel, defending creation *ex nihilo* against a Hellenistic/Gentile philosopher's view:⁴¹

פילסופיס אחד שאל את רבן גמליאל, אמר לו צייר גדול הוה
אלהיכם, אלא מצא סמנים טובים שסייעוהו, אמר לא מה
אינון. אמר ליה תוהו, ובוהו, וחושך, ומים ורוח, ותהומות, אמר
ליה תיפח רוחיה דההוא גברא, כולם כתוב בהם בריאה.

A certain philosopher questioned Rabban Gamliel, saying “Your God is a great artisan but he had wonderful materials to help him - *tohu* (formlessness), *bohu* (void), darkness, spirit, water, depths.” He replied, “Foolish man, it is written regarding all of these *beriah* (created).”

⁴¹ *Genesis Rabbah* 1:9 (Theodor and Albeck 1 8).

The Hebrew word *beriah* refers to creation out of nothing, as opposed to *atzilut*, a word which appears in medieval mystical literature and means emanation from something that is preexisting. Rabban Gamliel, like the early Christian sages who lived around his time, defended creation *ex nihilo* based on the Hebrew term *beriah*. In doing so, he is defending the absolute sovereignty and omnipotence of God. But the mystical tradition in Judaism would take a different approach, seeing creation as flowing out of God rather than as appearing out of nothing.

How would Alfred North Whitehead answer the question of creation *ex nihilo* as it was expressed in these classical and medieval sources? Whitehead never directly deals with the issue of how creation took place. Nevertheless, I have already shown that Whitehead rejects the notion of God's omnipotence. God relates to the world through persuasion, rather than through coercion. Helmut Maassen, in his essay "Revelation, Myth, and Metaphysics: Three Traditional Concepts of God and Whitehead's Dipolar God," writes, for Whitehead "as in Plato, God relies on matter for the 'creation' to create reality. The latter is neither 'before' nor 'inferior': it is inseparably connected with God. While in Plato God creates out of matter, in Whitehead God persuades the occasions to create themselves out of past actualities (i.e., proximate matter)" (3). If creativity is God calling forth all actual entities, then these entities must exist along with God. Maassen continues, "He describes the actual entities as self-creative, *causa sui* [self caused], in clear contradiction to a transcendent Creator" (6). It seems from this that Whitehead's approach would fit better with the notion of creation as emanation rather than with that of creation *ex nihilo*.

Based on Whitehead's conception of self-causation, and the earlier Biblical understanding of God as working with pre-existent entities, some form of emanation

seems a more fitting explanation for our narrative of how the world came into being. The world emanated from the primordial God's actual self. Of course, as we will show below, if we call that primordial God *ayin* "nothing," then the universe was created from nothing. Let us turn now to the concept of emanation.

Emanation

The fundamental idea behind the *Zohar's* picture of the beginning of the universe is that it emanated within God. It did not simply emanate out of God into space and time. The emanation actually took place within God's (or *Ein Sof's*) very self. Of course, this seems to contradict the classical biblical story of creation, which uses the term *bara* (created) or *beriah* (creation). As mentioned above, for many medieval Jewish thinkers, this term implies creation from nothing. Yet the Bible itself implies that chaos and the depths of the water pre-existed creation. The Spanish born, kabbalistically inclined Biblical interpreter Nachmanides (the Ramban 1194–1270), in his commentary on the first words of *Genesis*, writes:⁴²

ועתה שמע פירוש המקרא על פשוטו נכון וברור. הקב"ה ברא כל
הנבראים מאפיסה מוחלטת. ואין אצלנו בלשון הקדש בהוצאת
היש מאין אלא לשון "ברא".

Now listen to the correct and clear explanation of the verse in its literal sense. The Holy One, blessed be He, created all things from absolute non-

⁴² Ramban on Genesis 1:1.

existence. Now we have no expression in the sacred language for bringing forth something from nothing other than the word *bara* (created).

Creation had to come from absolute nothing.

The notion of “creation from nothing” (*yesh me-ayin*) is problematic for those many who endorse the theory of emanation. If nothing existed before creation, what emanated? The mystics, however, had a clever solution. The universe was created from nothing, but that ‘nothing,’ *ayin*, was another name for *Ein Sof*, or, as Tishby and others hold, for *Keter*, the highest of the *sefirot*. Creation from nothing means that creation flows out of the primordial being. Matt suggests that Ibn Gabirol, the Neoplatonic philosopher, had already hinted at this idea. “In his masterpiece, *Keter Malkhut* [Crown of the Kingdom], in a stanza dealing with divine wisdom, we read, ‘To draw the flow of the *yesh* [something] from the *ayin*, as the light emerging from the eye is drawn forth... He called to the *ayin* and it was cleft, to the *yesh* and it was infixed” (Ayin, Essential 74). Creation flowed out of, or more properly within, the supernal mind which was there at the beginning. The nothing is really a ‘something,’ a primordial mind that emanated all reality. Matt sums this up beautifully:

For the kabbalists, there *is* a “something” that emerges from “nothing,” but the nothing is brimming with overwhelming divine reality; it is *mahut*, the “whatness,” the quiddity of God. The something is not a physical object but rather the first ray of divine wisdom, which, as Job indicates [see Job 28:12 which can be translated “But wisdom from nothing is it found, where is the place of understanding”], emerges from *ayin*. It is the

primordial point that marks the beginning of the unfolding of God. (Ayin, Essential 78)

We now return to the metaphor of light as the fundamental essence of being. It is the light that emanates from within the hidden Godhead. Tishby describes this process as follows:

En-Sof, the hidden God, dwelling in the depths of His own being, seeks to reveal Himself, and to unloose His hidden powers. His will realizes itself through the emanation of rays from His light, which break out of their concealment and are arrayed in the order of the *sefirot*, the world of divine emanation. Subsequently, through the power of the *sefirot*, the lower, nondivine, worlds are established, in which the divine governance of the *sefirot* acts and reveals itself. (233)

We can see this metaphor of light and emanation in a quote from the *Zohar*:⁴³

מגו סתימא דסתימא. מריש נחיתו דאין סוף. נהיר נהירו דקיק
ולא ידיע. סתים בסתימו (נ"א ברשימו) כחדודא דמחטא. רזא
סתימא דמחשבה לא ידיע. עד דאתפשט נהירו מניה. באתר
דאית ביה רשימין דאתוון.

⁴³ I 21a.

From within concealing of the concealed, from the initial descent of *Ein Sof*, radiates a thin radiance, unknown, concealed in tracing like the point of a needle, mystery of concealment of thought. It is unknown, until a radiance extends from it to a realm containing tracings of all letters.

Of course, if the primordial light is unified before emanation, does this emanation not create division? Tishby discusses this problem:

The identification of the emanatory process with the absolute perfection and indissoluble unity of God creates a serious difficulty, which the early kabbalists labored hard to solve. On the face of it, the doctrine of emanation splits up the unity of the divine being, and spoils its perfection, by allowing parts of it to be hived off and to be reconstituted outside the domain of the Godhead. (274)

In offering a solution, Tishby quotes the kabbalah of the Gerona school, especially the writings of Rabbi Azriel. He claims that emanation is like passing light from candle to candle; the light of the initial candle is not diminished when the next candle is lit. Rabbi Azriel writes:

There is a distinction between procreation and emanation . . . for in the world above there is neither diminution nor growth, and if there is emanation and growth from the holy spirit it is simply like the lighting of a candle from a candle that is already lit; for even if myriads upon myriads

of candles were lit from it, its own light would not diminish owing to the power inherent in it. [*Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbi Azriel*, quoted in (Lachower, Tishby, and Goldstein 274)]

In the same way the initial light, which we saw as a metaphor for mind, gives off its glow to other lights (other minds) without being diminished in any way.

We have suggested that ‘light’ is really a metaphor for mind. This raises some difficult and profound questions. What does it mean for mind to emanate? Do parts of mind become separated from other parts of mind? If we say they are separate, do such minds occupy space? Does the primordial mind include these various separate pieces of mind? If emanation can be compared to a candle lighting another, how do we explain the separation of the various candles? Perhaps, to answer this, we should return to Whitehead. Whitehead sees a world made up of actual entities or actual occasions, bits of consciousness (mind) that appear momentarily and pass out of existence. Whitehead never described where his actual entities came from. This image of separate entities or occasions of experience seems very close to the image of mind emanating into space and time and separating into bits of consciousness. It suggests the image of one consciousness becoming many. In the next chapter this suggestion will be explicitly examined.

Before finishing this section, let us return for a moment to Nachmanides (the Ramban) and his requirement for creation *ex nihilo*. After his assertion of creation from nothing, Nachmanides claims that the “nothing” is not actually nothing. There is a kind

of primordial stuff out of which everything is made. Let us continue the quote from his commentary on the first few words of Genesis which we began above:⁴⁴

ואין כל הנעשה תחת השמש או למעלה, הווה מן האין התחלה ראשונה. אבל הוציא מן האפס הגמור המוחלט יסוד דק מאד, אין בו ממש, אבל הוא כח ממציא, מוכן לקבל הצורה, ולצאת מן הכח אל הפועל, והוא החומר הראשון, נקרא ליונים "היולי". ואחר ההיולי לא ברא דבר, אבל יצר ועשה, כי ממנו המציא הכל והלביש הצורות ותקן אותן :

Everything that exists under the sun or above was not made from non-existence at the outset. Instead He brought forth from total and absolute nothing a very thin substance devoid of corporeality but having a power of potency, fit to assume form and proceed from potentiality into reality. This was the primary matter created by God; it is called by the Greeks *hyle* (matter). After the *hyle*, He did not create anything, but He formed and made things with it, and from this *hyle*, He brought everything into existence and clothed the forms and put them into a finished condition.

To interpret this passage, let us turn for a moment to Aristotle's four causes discussed in Chapter 3 – formal, material, efficient, and final. Aristotle himself would claim that there cannot be a material cause without a formal cause, there cannot be matter without form. This is where Ibn Gabirol and the Neoplatonists break with Aristotle. Before there is a formal cause there exists a material cause, this primordial stuff which the Greeks called

⁴⁴ Ramban on Genesis 1:1.

hyle. It became the material cause of everything. Emanation meant giving form to this primordial matter, literally “clothing” it. This idea became central to the thinking of the Jewish neoplatonist philosopher Ibn Gabirol, who we looked at in Chapter 2. Bernard McGinn, in his essay “The Sage Among the Schoolman,” writes:

More revealing of the uniqueness of Ibn Gabirol’s thought is his conception of the priority of matter to form. It is no secret that in Aristotle’s world form is king. In Ibn Gabirol’s world we might say that matter is king, but it is a constitutional monarch. Because it is matter that provides substantiality to all created things, Ibn Gabirol can describe *materia prima*, rather than being as the *genus generalissimum*. Viewing created reality from the perspective of substantiality leads the Jewish philosopher to passages in which the traditional Great Chain of Being comes to sound more like a Great Chain of Matter. (89)

Both Nachmanides and Ibn Gabirol point to an unformed, primordial matter that is prepared to take on form. This notion of primordial matter taking on form will enter the *Zohar*, which will put its own interpretation on the idea.

The phrase *tohu vavohu* (Genesis 1:2) is usually translated “unformed and void,” the watery chaos which preceded the creation of the world. Nevertheless, the *Zohar* builds on the thinking of Nachmanides and Ibn Gabirol mentioned above to present a radically different understanding of these two terms. *Tohu* and *bohu* are not formlessness and void. Instead *tohu* is the primordial matter (*hyle*) and *bohu* is the primordial form. Creation is about bringing matter and form together, taking *tohu* and turning it into *bohu*.

The *Zohar* teaches: ⁴⁵

תה"ו אתר דלית ביה גוון ולא דיוקנא. ולא אתכליל ברזא
דדיוקנא. השתא איהו בדיוקנא. כד מסתכלן ביה לית ליה
דיוקנא כלל. לכלא אית לבושא לאתלבשא. בר האי (דאתחזי
ביה וליתיה כלל ולא הוי). בה"ו להאי אית ליה ציורא ודיוקנא.
אבנין משקעין גו גליפא (נ"א. קליפה) דתהו. נפקי גו גליפא
דמשקען תמן. ומתמן משכי תועלתא לעלמא. בציורא דלבושא
משכי תועלתא מעילא לתתא. וסלקי מתתא לעילא.

Tohu—a colorless, formless realm, not embraced by the mystery of form.
Now within form—as one contemplates it, not form at all. Everything has
a garment in which to be clothed, except for this: though appearing upon
it, it does not exist at all, never did. *Bohu*—this has shape and form;
stones sunk within the shell of *tohu*, emerging from the shell in which they
are sunk, conveying benefit to the world. Through the form of a garment
they convey benefit from above to below, ascending from below to above.

Matt comments on this: “Once the forms of *bohu* emerge from the *tohu*, they clothe
matter and enable the things of the world to exist. They transmit the stream of emanation
from the *sefirot* above to the world below” (Zohar 1 120). Here, we see the first hints of
how matter comes about in a world of emanation. The emanation takes the primordial
formless matter and gives it form.

Whitehead seems to express a similar idea when he writes how God’s primordial
nature is filled with eternal forms that long to be manifested in a created world. But

⁴⁵ I 16a.

nothing will happen until there is the underlying substrate to take on these forms. To Whitehead, this underlying substrate is the many actual occasions, which will take on the multiple forms and become the objects of the created universe. This formation takes place in space, and as we will show, existence in space requires division and separation. As we will show in Chapter 5, both the midrash and the *Zohar* express the ideal that with division and separation comes sadness.

The process of emanation has begun. Thus, we are ready to explore the next steps in the process, the next two *sefirot* or manifestations of the divine, *Hokhmah* and *Binah*.

Hokhmah and Binah

The first of the *sefirot* is called *Keter*. Translated as “crown”, as we have explained above, the word means the divine will or desire. The creation story begins with a primordial desire within the Godhead. But now that desire is willing to manifest itself. We can now present a brief summary of the *sefirot* of *Hokhmah* and *Binah* before applying these ideas to our own creation narrative.

The first level of divine thought is, known as *Hokhmah* (“wisdom”). *Hokhmah* is compared to a first drop of thought, like a point unseparated and undifferentiated. It is the first spark of light. Tishby writes regarding this first manifestation of thought:

The origin of actual existence is in the *sefirah Hokhmah*, which is the divine Thought. In actual fact however, even in *Hokhmah* there is no revelation, nor any particularization or separation of individual beings. It is consequently called *Maḥashavah Setumah* (hidden thought): “Thought is the beginning of all and in that it is thought it is internal, secret and

unknowable.” But it contains the general material for the construction of the worlds. (270)

Everything that is needed for the creation of the entire universe is contained in *Hokhmah*, as pure potential. Early mystical thinkers saw it much like a sperm or male seed, with the potential to impregnate a female.⁴⁶ This image of *Hokhmah* is definitely masculine. The idea of gender in relation to the *sefirot* will become extremely important as we develop our narrative, particularly when we begin speaking of process.

A male needs a female to create new life. The feminine *sefirah* corresponding to *Hokhmah* is *Binah* (“understanding”). *Binah* is the womb in which the seed of *Hokhmah* will be implanted. Tishby describes the process: “This inapprehensible material reaches the stage of revelation and substance in the third *sefirah*, *Binah*. Here existing things are separated and differentiated, and the faint sketches that are to be found in *Hokhmah*, and which have no independent existence, are here crystallized and given a life of their own” (270). The *Zohar* will present an image of the seed of *Hokhmah* impregnating *Binah*:⁴⁷

זהר סתימא דסתימין. בטש אורא דיליה. (דמטי ולא מטי)
(נ"א. ואנהיר) בהאי נקודה. וכדין אתפשט האי ראשית. ועביד
ליה היכלא ליקריה ולתושבחתיה. תמן זרע זרעא דקודשא
לאולדא לתועלתא דעלמא.

⁴⁶ In antiquity teachers did not have our biological knowledge, that both the male and the female contribute genetic material to the construction of a new life. To them, the male seed had the information and the female womb was the container where the implanted seed could grow. For example, Dorothy Sly wrote in her book about Philo: “Aristotle argued for a one-seed theory. Woman is an imperfect man, the criterion being the ability to produce seed. Woman is the passive recipient of the male seed. Philo leads towards Aristotle’s opinion” (161).

⁴⁷ I 15a.

Radiance! Concealed of concealed struck its aura, which touched and did not touch this point. Then this beginning (the point of *Hokhmah*) expanded, building itself a palace worthy of glorious praise. There it sowed seed to give birth, availing worlds.

The seed is *Hokhmah*, the palace is *Binah*. As Matt explains in his notes to his translation of the *Zohar*:

The spark of emanation flashes again, and *Keter*, the aura, subtly transmits the impulse to *Hokhmah*, the point of Wisdom. ... The purpose of emanation is to display the glory of the hidden God which is achieved through a rhythm of revelation and concealment: only by concealing itself can the overwhelming light be revealed. The point expands into a circle, a palace – the third *sefirah*: *Binah*. She is the divine womb, where the seed of *Hokhmah*, the divine father is sown. (*Zohar* 1 109-110)

Here we see the narrative of the first three *sefirot*. *Keter* is the divine will or desire which grows within *Ein Sof* or the Godhead. *Keter* produces a divine spark that contains all potentials, known as *Hokhmah*. *Hokhmah* impregnates *Binah*, the divine palace or the divine womb. Male and female come together to create a world. At this point the male and female are still not separated: ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ I 15b.

דלא לאפרשא לון דכר ונוקבא כחדא.

There was still no separation, male and female as one.

With this brief summary of the first three *sefirot*, we can now begin to deepen our narrative. Let us look at the very first word of the Torah בראשית. The word *reishit* (as in *bereishit*) means beginning. But Jewish tradition has a long history of connecting the term *reishit* “beginning” with the term for “wisdom” *hokhmah*. It is based on the verse in Psalms:

ראשית חכמה | יראת יהוה .

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalms 111:10)

Matt brings numerous sources connecting the two terms *reishit* and *hokhmah* (*Zohar* 1 109). For example, Ramban (Nachmanides) on Genesis 1:1 writes: ⁴⁹

ומלת "בראשית" תרמוז בחכמה, שהיא ראשית הראשית, כאשר הזכרתי. ולכך תרגמו בתרגום ירושלמי בחכמתא.

The word *bereishit* (“in the beginning”) hints at wisdom, which is the beginning or beginnings as I mentioned. There the *Tirgum Yerusalmi* ⁵⁰ translates (the first word of Genesis) “with wisdom.”

⁴⁹ Ramban on Genesis 1:1.

⁵⁰ A Palestinian translation of scripture into Aramaic usually dated after the canonization of the Talmud in the middle of the first millennium.

Thus, the fact that God created the universe in the beginning can also mean that God created the universe with wisdom—*Hokhmah*. The *beit* at the beginning of the term can mean “in” but it can also mean “with” as in “with wisdom.” Out of this we will come to one of most radical and fascinating statements in the *Zohar*. From this statement will grow a new way of viewing the creation story.

A Radical Statement

We have already seen two interpretations of the first three words of the Torah—
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים *Bereishit Bara Elohim*. The King James Version commonly known as the Authorized Version, produced in the early seventeenth century, translates this as “In the beginning God created...” God is the subject of the sentence. This seems to point to creation *ex nihilo* as Maimonides and other medieval Jewish philosophers taught. The Jewish Publication Society translates it “When God began to create....” Again God is the subject, but it is a dependent clause. This seems to point to creation from pre-existing matter, an idea going back to Plato. The most important Jewish thinker who, contrary to Maimonides, taught that creation happened from pre-existent matter was Levi ben Gershom or Gersonides. Seymour Feldman wrote regarding Gersonides, “‘When were the waters [mentioned in Genesis 1:2] created?’ Not finding any answer in Scripture he came to the conclusion that they were not created at all. Indeed, he became convinced on purely philosophical grounds that the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was false – in fact, absurd” (6).

So we have two authentic Jewish interpretations of the beginning of Genesis—creation from nothing and creation from pre-existent matter. Surprisingly, the *Zohar*

reads this phrase very differently, presenting a radical third interpretation of the creation story. The first term *bereishit* means “with beginning,” but we have already translated this term as *Hokhmah* “wisdom.” The *Zohar* translate the first word of the Torah “with wisdom.” *Bara* means “created.” *Elohim* means God. But this term, following the term *bara*, is read literally in order. The midrash already remarks on the order of the terms, that the term God comes after the creation. So for example, the midrash teaches: ⁵¹

ב"ו בשר ודם מזכיר שמו, ואח"כ שבחו, פלן אגוסטלא, פלן אנ
 פרוטאטא, אבל הקב"ה אינו כן אלא משברא צרכי עולמו,
 הזכיר שמו, בראשית ברא ואח"כ אלהים.

A human being states his name first and then his title: so-and-so the Prefect, so-and-so the owner of the title. The Holy One blessed be He does not do so. First He created all the requirements of his universe, and only afterwards does He mention His name. In the beginning and only afterwards - God.

The *Zohar* dramatically develops this interpretation. *Elohim* “God” is not the subject doing the creating. Rather *Elohim* is the object being created. God is not the Creator but rather the Creation. The subject of the sentence is left blank. Who is doing the creating? Something unmentioned and unknown: *Ein Sof*, *ayin*, or perhaps *Keter*. The translation of the first few words of Genesis becomes, “With wisdom _____

⁵¹ *Bereishit Rabbah* 1:12 (Theodor and Albeck 1 11) .

created God.” God is the creation, or to follow our interpretation, mind is the creation.
The blank line represents an unknown.

The *Zohar* reads: ⁵²

בהאי ראשית ברא ההוא סתימא דלא אתיידע להיכלא דא.
היכלא דא אקרי אלהים. ורזא דא בראשית ברא אלהים.

With this beginning, the unknown concealed one created this palace. The palace is called Elohim, God. The secret is: With beginning, _____ created God.

Daniel Matt comments regarding this passage: “The subject of the verse (*Elohim*) God, follows the verb (*bara*) created. In its typical hyperliteral fashion, the author(s) of the *Zohar* insists on reading the words in the exact order in which they appear, thereby transforming God into the object! This means that the subject is now unnamed, but that is perfectly appropriate because the true subject of emanation is unnamable” (*Zohar* 1 110). The unknown emanates a palace that is called “God.” We have already shown that the palace is called *Binah* (“understanding”). *Hokhmah* which was a point of light, like a seed, has now entered a palace called *Binah*, which we will call God. The *Zohar* hints how the light began to spread and separate when it reached the palace: ⁵³

⁵² I 15a.

⁵³ I 246b.

תא חזי מחשבה ראשיתא דכלא. ובגין דאיהי מחשבה איהי לגו
סתימא ולא אתיידע. כד אתפשט האי מחשבה יתיר אתיא
לאתר דרוחא שריא. וכד מטי לההוא אתר אקרי בינה. והא לאו
סתים כדקדמיתא. ואף על גב דאיהו סתים. האי רוחא אתפשט
ואפיק קלא. כליל מאשא ומיא ורוחא. דאינון צפון ודרום
ומזרח.

Come and see, Thought is the beginning of all, and in that it is thought it is internal, secret, and unknowable. When this thought extended farther it came to a place where spirit dwelt, and when it reached this place it was called *Binah* (understanding), and this is not so secret as the preceding, even though it is also secret. This spirit extended itself and brought first a voice, comprised of fire, water, and wind, which were north, south, and east.

The palace is the beginning of the created universe. The created universe is called ‘God,’ it is permeated with God’s presence.

Does this mean that the *Zohar*’s vision of creation is pure pantheism, the idea that God equals nature? The traditional idea of creation *ex nihilo* (*yesh mi’ayin*) would seem to reject such pantheism. God creates a world through an act of will wholly outside God’s very self. Nonetheless, as noted above, kabbalistic tradition has reworked this idea of creation *ex nihilo*. The world was created from *ayin* “nothing,” but that nothing is actually the fullness of being, called nothingness because it is unknowable to humanity. As Yosef Ben-Shlomo has written in his essay on Gershom Scholem and pantheism:

‘Nothingness’ (*ayin*) becomes not total absence of being, but a mystical symbol of the infinite fullness of being, which because it is beyond man’s comprehension is paradoxically called ‘Nothingness.’ This Nothingness is the first *sefira*, from which the First Being, that is the second *sefira*, emerges by means of a process of emanation—and not by a spontaneous act of divine free will. If a continuous chain of causation is posited from this point, by which each level of reality, down to our material world, is emanated from that above it, this does away with the theistic understanding of the doctrine of creation. Those kabbalistic doctrines that identify the first *sefira* with ‘*Ein-Sof*’ thus take on a markedly pantheistic coloration, for then God himself is the Nothingness from which all the worlds are formed and in which they are comprised. (57)

Ben-Shlomo continues his essay by noting that Scholem points out two possibilities. The Nothingness can be identified with *Ein Sof* as in the quote above, which seems to lead to pure pantheism. On the other hand, the Nothingness can be identified with the Divine Will, what we called *Keter*.⁵⁴ Ben-Shlomo continues: “The pantheistic thrust of this doctrine is mitigated by separating the *ayin*, the divine Will, from God, the infinite plenitude (*Ein-Sof*) hidden in the depths of His divine substance, which is above being and nothingness alike” (58).

This second interpretation seems to point to a God Who is in nature, but in another sense, beyond nature. *Keter* created the palace out of God’s own self, but beyond

⁵⁴ Above we spoke of how Tishby identifies *ayin* Nothingness with *Keter*.

Keter is *Ein Sof*. There are two parts to this image of God. Or as Elliot Wolfson has written:

The *Ein-Sof* and the *sefirot* represent two aspects of the one God: the former is the nameless, boundless ground of being that assumes personality in the dynamic *sefirotic* structure. Though multiple, the *sefirot* form one organic unity and are said to be connected to the Infinite 'like the flame bound to the coal,' utilizing the language of *Sefer Yetzirah*.
(Mysticism 477)

The philosophical term for such an image of God is panentheism. The term means that everything is within God. God is both beyond nature and permeates nature. Panentheism encompasses the classical monotheistic view of God as both transcendent and immanent. The term *Ein Sof* points to the transcendent God which goes beyond nature. But seeing *Keter* as Divine Will, becoming the various *sefirot*, the immanent God not only permeates nature, it is nature itself. At the beginning of this chapter we suggested that God is symbolized by light and light is a symbol for mind. Carrying this idea forward, we have the first hint that mind or consciousness or subjectivity permeates nature.

Let us apply Whitehead's ideas to this image of mind permeating nature. The term panentheism has often been used to describe the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. For Whitehead, this mind is the primordial nature of God, existing as pure potential. The mind formed a spark which emanated into all of creation, forming bits of consciousness. The mind therefore becomes part of all creation. The world is made up not of bits of material as Aristotle's substance ontology would teach, but multiple moments of

experience. This is the consequent nature of God which consists of all the moments of experience. The technical term for the idea that mind permeates all of matter is panpsychism. Mind is immanent in everything.

Let us summarize our narrative up to this point. We began with mind. But that mind was deficient; there was a desire for something more. The will or desire goes by the name *Keter*. Out of this mind burst a first spark or thought. Like a sperm or seed, it contained all potential but could not come into actuality. It was called *Hokhmah*. This seed burst into a palace known as *Binah*. If *Hokhmah* is the seed, *Binah* is the womb. This seed planted in this womb became all creation. Thus mind permeated all of creation. At this moment the masculine (*Hokhmah*) and the feminine (*Binah*) were still unified. At this point we have introduced the first three of the ten *sefirot*, the various manifestations of God's presence in the universe. But separation and differentiation will be the next inevitable step in our story. We will explore how this mind became immanent in all creation, and the necessary separation, in the next chapter. In it we will look at the consequent nature of God.

CHAPTER 5: IMMANENCE, OR GOD'S CONSEQUENT NATURE

We now turn to the second part of our narrative begun in the previous chapter. There we spoke about mind, and how mind came first. Now we turn to the idea of that mind being immanent within nature. Both the *Zohar* and Whitehead reflect the idea of this primordial mind permeating the universe. This permeation occurs through separation, when the initial unity of mind becomes broken, separating into various moments of consciousness.

The primordial unity has been broken. There are now individual moments of awareness, individual bits of consciousness, which permeate the universe. In the previous chapter we used the metaphor of light to symbolize mind. According to the *Zohar*, that light burst forth out of *Ein Sof*. To quote the *Zohar* at length:⁵⁵

ויהי אור. אור דכבר הוה. אור דא רזא סתימא. אתפשטותא
דאתפשט ואתבקע מרזא דסתרא דאור עלאה סתימא. בקע
בקדמיתא ואפיק חד נקודה סתימא מרזא דיליה. דהא אין סוף
בקע מאורא דיליה. וגלי האי נקודה י. כיון דהאי י אתפשט. מה
דשתאר אשתכח אור. מההוא רזא דההוא אור סתימא. כד
אשתכח מניה נקודה קדמאה י. אתגלי לבתר עליה מטי ולא
מטי. כיון דאתפשט נפק. ואיהו הוא אור דשתאר מאור.
והיינו אור דכבר הוה. והא קיימא. נפק ואסתלק ואתגניז.
ואשתאר חד נקודה מניה. למהוי מטי תדיר בארח גניזו בההיא
נקודה. מטי ולא מטי. נהיר ביה בארח נקודה קדמאה דנפק
מניה. ובגין כך כלא אחיד דא בדא.

⁵⁵ 1:16b.

And there was light – light that already existed. This light is concealed mystery, an expansion expanding, bursting from the mysterious secret of the hidden supernal aura. First it burst forth, generating from its mystery a single concealed point, for *Ein Sof* burst out of its aura, revealing the point *yod*. Once the *yod* expanded, what remained was found to be: *or, light* from the mystery of concealed *avir* aura.⁵⁶ After the primordial point, *yod*, emerged from it into being, it manifested upon it, touching yet not touching. Expanding, it emerged; this is *or, light* remaining from *avir, aura*, namely the light that already was. This endured, emerged, ascended, was treasured away, and a single point remained, so that by a hidden path it constantly touches that point, touching yet not touching, illumining it through the primordial point that emerged from it. So all is linked, one to another.

The *Zohar* portrays an image of light bursting forth, touching but not quite touching a primordial point, touching but not quite touching each other, every bit of light linked to every other one. Imagine this not as light but as mind, each bit of consciousness separate yet touching every other bit of consciousness.

At the risk of becoming prosaic, perhaps it will be worthwhile to explain in a more concrete way this evocative idea of bits of consciousness touching but not quite touching. In order to do so, we must mention the thinking of the rationalist philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650). Descartes was a dualist who taught that there are two

⁵⁶ The Hebrew word *avir* aura minus the letter *yud* forms the Hebrew word *or* light.

kinds of substances in the world—matter and mind. Matter is *res extensa*, it displays ubiquity, taking up physical space. Two particles of matter can be adjacent or even touch, but they cannot occupy the same space. Mind on the other hand is *res cogitans*, a thinking thing. Mind does not occupy space. Perhaps what the *Zohar* is hinting at is that two pieces of mind which do not occupy space, although separate, can touch one another on some spiritual level.

Alfred North Whitehead brings a similar image of moments of experience separated and yet touching. He called these moments of experience “actual entities” or “actual occasions.” They exist momentarily. But in that moment they perceive or, to use Whitehead’s term, prehend every other actual entity. They also prehend the eternal forms that make up the primordial nature of God. It is within these separated moments of consciousness that Whitehead’s God enters the world. These moments of consciousness become God’s consequent nature. To quote Whitehead:

But God, as well as being primordial, is also consequent. He is the beginning and the end. He is not the beginning in the sense of being in the past of all members. He is the presupposed actuality of conceptual operation, in unison of becoming with every other creative act. Thus, by reason of the relativity of all things, there is a reaction of the world on God. The completion of God’s nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God. He shares with every new creation its actual world; and the concrescent creature is objectified in God as a novel element in God’s objectification of that actual world.

(345)

Each of these moments of consciousness becomes “objectified in God.” God contains all of these actual entities, these moments of awareness. As a result, the consequent nature of God is not static but constantly in process. Rather than a being, God is a becoming. After reading these ideas about process in Whitehead, one might say that kabbalah constitutes an early form of Jewish process philosophy, a system of thinking that Whitehead later named and developed from within a very different, if parallel, tradition.

Whitehead’s idea of individual moments of consciousness that exist and pass away can also be found in the Talmud.⁵⁷ Using rather poetic language, the following passage gives us a hint of this:

אמר ליה שמואל לחייה בר רב: בר אריא תא, אימא לך מילתא
מהני מילי מעליותא דהוה אמר אבוך: כל יומא ויומא נבראין
מלאכי השרת מנהר דינור, ואמרי שירה ובטלי, שנאמר (איכה
ג') חדשים לבקרים רבה אמונתך.

Shmuel said to Rabbi Hiyya son of Rav, O son of a lion. Come, I will tell you one of those fine words said by your father: Every single day ministering angels are created from the fiery stream, chant a song, then cease to be, as it is said “New every morning immense is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:23). (quoted in Matt Zohar 1 286)

⁵⁷ Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 14a.

Of course this passage is not speaking of God, or even divine bits of light, but of angels. Nonetheless, one can make a comparison here between Whitehead's actual entities that come into existence, achieve satisfaction, and pass on, and the angels who come into being, chant their song, and then pass out of existence.

In a similar way, each actual entity prehends every other actual entity. There is an underlying unity or connection behind the separation. With reference to the *Zohar*, Daniel Matt teaches that "Each *sefirah* reflects the entire array of *sefirot*" (*Zohar* 1 135). As the *Zohar* describes each entity:⁵⁸

וחי העולמים אזיל בהו ואנהיג בהו. וכלהו כלילן דא בדא.

Life of the worlds moves through it, conducts by it, all comprising one another.

There is interplay here between separation and connection, between multiplicity and unity, and there is still the memory of the primordial unity. But separation from that unity was necessary for the world to develop. From this separation, the next six *sefirot* will appear.

The Next Six *Sefirot*

We have already learned in chapter 1 that rabbinic tradition allows multiple meanings of each verse of the Torah, using the number seventy which was never meant to be an exact number but rather stands for a great many. In the history of biblical

⁵⁸ I 18a.

commentary, various rabbis have offered a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1:1. In the previous chapter we described three such interpretations. The three words “*Bereishit bara Elohim*” can mean “In the beginning God created,” following the translation of the Authorized Version, that is, God created *ex nihilo*. It can mean “When God began to create,” following the new Jewish Publication Society interpretation, that is, God brought order out of chaos. Or, it could mean “With wisdom _____ created God (*Elohim*),” following the radical interpretation of the *Zohar*. Here, *Elohim* is the object rather than the subject, the creation rather than the creator. *Elohim* is the palace which flowed out of the unnamable reality. *Elohim* stands for the higher *sefirot*, and in particular *Binah*, which contains the seed of *Hokhmah*. To use zoharic terms, the *sefirot* flowed out of *Ein Sof*. This flow seems to fit with an understanding that the first act was emanation, not creation *ex nihilo*.⁵⁹

The next step in the creation exegesis of the *Zohar* brings a fourth interpretation of the first verse in Genesis. This fourth interpretation suggests that the term *bereishit* can be read to read *bara sheet*—“created six.” This alternative reading is found in the *Zohar*:⁶⁰

בראשית בר"א שי"ת. מקצה השמים ועד קצה השמים. שית
 סטרינדמתפשטן מרזא עלאה. באתפשטותא דברא מגו נקודה
 קדמאה.

⁵⁹ In the previous chapter we showed how emanation can be understood as creation *ex nihilo*, creation from nothing, if we understand *Ein Sof* or perhaps *Keter* as nothing, unknowable.

⁶⁰ I 15b.

(*Be-reshit- bara sheet*), He created six, “from one end of the heaven to the other” (Deuteronomy 4:32), six directions, extending from the supernal mystery through the expansion that He created from the primordial point.

Thus, out of an initial unity came the six separate entities. Isaiah Tishby in his *Wisdom of the Zohar* describes how this happened:

The six *sefirot* below *Binah* are usually depicted as a group of forces connected with, and centered around *Tif'eret*, the central pillar. The word *bereshit* (“in the beginning”) is taken as referring to the way in which they emerged from *Binah*, as if it were two words *bara sheet* (“He created six”), the “six” being “the six extremes that extend from the supernal mystery through the extension that He created from the primal point.” ...Sometimes it is only the three upper ones (*Hesed, Gevurah, Tif'eret*) that are referred to, in the guise of the three patriarchs, while the three lower ones (*Nezah, Hod, Yesod*) are taken together as their sons or their messengers. (277)

Of course, as we have already suggested above, there is an underlying unity in the separation of these next six *sefirot*.

Gershom Scholem in his analysis of the development of the *sefirot* already mentions that these six plus *Malkhut*, the lowest of the *sefirot*, form a separate entity.

Scholem writes regarding the early development of these lower *sefirot* in *Sefer HaBahir*, an early kabbalistic work: ⁶¹

The next seven logoi, with which the Bahir is chiefly concerned, are very emphatically treated as constituting a separate whole. Indeed, all ten “kings” form a unity, just as the Ten Commandments were all “uttered in one word” at the time of revelation; but below the three supreme “words” in the hierarchy of the pleroma are seven other words identical with the seven voices with which the Torah was given and with the seven voices mentioned in psalm 29. (Origins 138)

Scholem goes on to describe how these seven came to be identified with the limbs of the human body.

In order to build our narrative, it will be useful to summarize briefly the nature of the six lower *sefirot* before exploring their deeper implications. We will address the last of the *sefirot*, *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah*, in the next chapter.

The first of these next six *sefirot* is *Hesed*, often translated as “lovingkindness.” The term has multiple meanings in Hebrew which vary from “love” to “mercy.” It implies reaching out one’s hand to another. *Hesed* is identified with the first of the

⁶¹ Attributed by kabbalists to the Rabbi Nehunya in the second century C.E., modern scholars differ as to the authorship of *Sefer HaBahir*. Some claim it was written by Rabbi Isaac the Blind in the thirteenth century. Other see it as reflecting much earlier sources. What is clear is that many of the ideas of the book, particularly regarding the ten *sefirot*, were developed in the *Zohar*.

patriarchs, Abraham, known for his overwhelming kindness and hospitality.⁶² Sanford L. Drob has described this theological model:

*Chesed*⁶³ reflects God's unlimited benevolence toward creation and it is only natural that it develops after *sefirah Binah* which represents the first inkling of a finite created world. It is the *middah* [positive trait or quality] and *sefirah* that is glimpsed by prophets and mystics in their experience of God's grace and love. As *Gedullah* (greatness) this *sefirah* reflects God's awesome presence, what modern theologians have referred to as the *mysterium tremendum*. In its purest form, *Chesed/Gedullah* would be overwhelming to humankind and hence this divine trait is generally experienced as it is moderated by the other *sefirot* particularly *Din* (judgment). (18)

In kabbalistic thought, *Hesed* is considered a masculine trait, on the right side of the symbolic tree of *sefirot*. *Hesed* is marked by outreach and benevolence and by a desire to give to others. *Hesed* is responsible for the unity of the created world. As important as *Hesed* is, a world built simply on *Hesed* could not survive. Imagine a home in which the father so desires to practice charity that he gives almost everything away. The family would ultimately perish. Now, imagine a biological cell with no protective wall, ready to share all of its nutrients with other cells. It would not survive. Thus, there must be a limit to *Hesed* in order for life to sustain itself.

⁶² See Genesis 18:2 for an elaboration of Abraham's attribute of kindness.

⁶³ His spelling.

This limit is *Gevurah*, which stands to the left of *Hesed*. The word means “strength” in Hebrew, and many kabbalistic texts prefer the word *din* “judgment.” In keeping with our formulation of the *sefirot*, perhaps the term “restraint” offers the best description. Let us consider the way in which Drob defines *Gevurah*:

The *sefirah* *Gevurah/Din* is understood as a principle of measure, limit and restraint. The “power” of *Gevurah* is in the fact that it constrains God's boundless love or *Chesed* and distributes it according to the capacity of the receiver and, more importantly, according to the receiver's *merit*. *Gevurah* is a singularly important *middah* (trait) both because it reflects the very essence of creation itself (which is limitation and restraint) and because it introduces a dimension of divine *justice* and *righteousness* into the world. (18)

Gevurah is the feminine trait, much like the mother who keeps her husband from giving everything away. *Gevurah* is the cell membrane that protects the inner contents. Since *Gevurah* is feminine, there is a sense that the female keeps the male from conceding too much, in order to protect the whole. *Gevurah* is the part of reality that is marked by restraint and self-protection. Of course *Gevurah* also reflects the idea of judgment and severity. *Gevurah* is identified with the second patriarch, Isaac, who lived a far more circumscribed and protected life than either his father or his son. For example, Isaac never set foot outside the holy land at any time of his life.⁶⁴ If *Hesed* is responsible

⁶⁴ See for example Genesis 24:5-6.

for unity or connections within the created world, then *Gevurah* is responsible for the differentiation and uniqueness that marks the created world.

Of course *Hesed* and *Gevurah* can fall out of balance. If there is too much *Hesed*, entities will give everything away, thereby losing their integrity and their uniqueness. If there is too much *Gevurah*, entities will retract within themselves and lose all connection to the rest of the world. The proper balance between *Hesed* and *Gevurah* is called *Tif'eret*, literally “beauty.” Sometimes it goes by the name *Rachamim* (“compassion”). Again let us consider Drob’s definition of *Tif'eret*:

The dialectical relationship between *Chesed* and *Gevurah* is manifest and resolved in the *sefirah Tif'eret* (beauty) or *Rachamim* (compassion). This *sefirah* is a harmonizing principle which tempers both the boundlessness of God's love (*Chesed*) and the severity of God's judgment (*Gevurah*). This balancing, or harmony is also understood as the foundation for beauty. We might say that beautiful things contain the spiritual (*Chesed*) in a way that is conditioned and limited through form (*Gevurah*). (19)

Tif'eret sits at the bottom of a triangle below *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. It is identified with Jacob who somehow succeeded in balancing self-absorption with outwardly directed kindness. Implementing *Tif'eret* in the world by seeking balance appears to be the *Zohar*’s ideal. Tishby calls it “the central pillar.” In the next chapter, dealing with process, we will see that *Tif'eret*, meaning balance, comes to represent the masculine aspect of reality, as opposed to *Shekhinah* which is the feminine aspect of reality.

The next triangle of *sefirot* can be seen, as Tishby points out in the quote above, as the “sons or messengers” of these three *sefirot*. Once more let us look at how Drob summarizes these next three *sefirot*:

Netzah, *Hod* and *Yesod* are regarded as branches or channels for the higher *sefirot* of *Chesed*, *Gevurah* and *Tif'eret*, respectively. They are considered *receptacles* for the upper *middot* and serve as tools or vessels for the factual application of kindness, justice, and compassion in the world. However, unlike the upper *sefirot* which act through the stimulus of will and reason, these *sefirot* act *mechanically* and thus follow the *causal* order of the natural, spatio-temporal world. It does not require much of an interpretive leap to see these *sefirot* as the foundation for spatial, corporeal creation. (20 - 21)

With these three, we have come a bit closer to the material world in which we live. Perhaps it is easiest to think of *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret* as referring to emotions or tendencies within the divine self, while the next three *sefirot* (*Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*) refer to acting out of these emotions or tendencies. Thus, if this lower triangle of *sefirot* refers to action, we are moving closer to the material world which is a world of physical laws or actions.

Netzah literally means “eternity.” If *Hesed* is the *desire* to give, then *Netzah* is the *act* of giving. There is a direct line from *Hesed* to *Netzah*. *Netzah* is also related to

prophecy. According to the *Zohar*, when Jacob was wounded in the thigh while wrestling with the angel,⁶⁵ he lost part of his *Netzah*. The *Zohar* teaches:⁶⁶

ודאי כד אתכליל בהוא פנות ערב. מכאן ולהלאה והוא צולע על ירכו. דא איהו נצח ישראל. על ירכו ירכו כתיב ולא ירכיו. דא דרגא רביעאה דלא אתנבי בר נש מתמן עד דאתא שמואל. ועליה כתיב (שמואל א טו כט) וגם נצח ישראל וגו'. כדין אתתקן דהוה חלשא מכד אסתכן יעקב אבינו בממנא.

Indeed once he had merged in that turning of the evening. From here on, he was limping on his thigh (Genesis 32:32). Eternity of Israel (I Samuel 15:29). It is written “his thigh” not “his thighs.” This is the fourth rung [i.e., *Netzah*], from which no human prophesied until Samuel arrived, and of which it is written, “The Eternal One of Israel (*Netzah Yisrael*) does not lie or change His mind.” (I Samuel 15:21) Then the rung was mended, for it had been weak ever since Jacob was endangered by the Prince of Esau.

The *Zohar* sees the story of Jacob wrestling with an angel as a cosmic event in this world of division and separation. As Matt comments on this: “Jacob wrestled with the power of the left, the turning of the evening, and integrated it with the right. Therefore he attained the rung of *Tiferet*” (Zohar 1 163). Let us recall that Jacob is identified with *Tiferet* in kabbalistic symbolism.

⁶⁵ See Genesis 32:25-33 for full passage.

⁶⁶ I 21b.

When Jacob wrestled with the man, he put the right and the left side together to reach *Tiferet*. But the *Zohar* also gives an alternative understanding, that Jacob damaged the ability to prophesize, meaning that he caused a separation from the higher powers. *Netzah* and *Hod* in balance are the means by which prophecy flows down to the world. When Jacob wrestles with the man, known as the Prince of Esau, *Netzah* is damaged and a part of prophecy is lost. Jacob can only prophesize from his weaker, or left, side. In a similar manner, Joshua is only able to prophesize from the side of *Hod*, a weaker source of prophecy. The *Zohar* says:⁶⁷

יהושע אתנבי מהודו של משה. דכתיב (במדבר כז כ) ונתתה
מהודך עליו.

Joshua was only able to prophesy from the side of *Hod*, which he received from the glory of Moses, as it is written, “Confer some of your glory upon him” (Numbers 27:20).⁶⁸

Only with Samuel was full prophecy restored and balance achieved once again. With prophecy, we see how the *sefirot* become the pathways whereby higher realities or divine *shefah* (abundance) flow down into lower worlds.

In a manner parallel to *Hesed* and *Netzah*, there is a direct line from *Gevurah* to *Hod*. *Hod* means “glory” or “splendor,” and it represents the *act* of protecting, of trying to balance out *Netzah*. The balance point between *Netzah* and *Hod* is called *Yesod* or “foundation.” When balance is achieved, the world stands on a solid foundation. But

⁶⁷ I 21b.

⁶⁸ In this passage, Moses transfers some of his glory but not all of it to Joshua.

when *Netzah* and *Hod* are off-balance, the world cannot persist. This interpretation fits the common image of the various *sefirot* resting on a human body. *Netzah* rests on the right leg, *Hod* rests on the left leg. In balance, they give a solid foundation *Yesod*. *Yesod* is also symbolic of the phallus, the masculine drive drawn towards the *Shekhinah*, the feminine drive below.

Having described these six *sefirot* leading from *Hokhmah* and *Binah* down to *Malkhut*, it is worthy to ask what they mean. Perhaps they are the path by which the initial unity of mind we spoke about above becomes the brokenness and separation of matter. Perhaps it will be useful to turn for a moment to an Italian Jewish philosopher, David Messer Leon (1470–1526), writing long after the *Zohar* was produced, who included the *sefirot* within his philosophical system. Although a rationalist and a defender of Maimonides, Messer Leon had a clear description of the meaning of the *sefirot*. He wrote:

God knows the unity of the *sefirot* in His mind, blessed be He, because they exist in God like the rooms and the attics and all aspects of a house in the mind of an architect. They are there in an abstract and unified manner, but when he starts to build they then become pluralized and multiplied, because they exist outside, in matter and no longer in the perfection they held in the architect's mind. Thus are the *sefirot*, which were diversified and said to be ten when individual beings became existent. All of them are included in these ten names, according to the diversity of modes of being. (quoted in Tirosh-Rothschild 422)

Perhaps as Messer Leon hints in his metaphor of the architect, the *sefirot* are the path by which the unity in the mind become pluralized and multiplied in matter.

We have seen here how the primordial unity of mind is broken, the seed of *Hokhmah* implanted in *Binah* becomes two pairs of three lower *sefirot* – *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, and then *Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. What we have shown up to this point is that, from the primordial unity comes separation, and with separation comes conflict. But before conflict enters the world, mind has to solidify into matter. Material substance has to enter the world. We must now examine the question: from where does this material substance originate?

From Mind to Matter

Up to this point, the *Zohar* describes a reality of light, separated in space and which we have understood as symbolizing mind. These are akin to Whitehead's moments of experience, coming into being and passing away, also purely mind. But mind still has not congealed or condensed into solid substance. We mentioned above that with the lower *sefirot* of *Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*, we are moving away from the world of thought towards the material world of action. The separated pieces of mind must begin to take on their material form.

According to a midrashic tradition, this congealing of mind into matter takes place on the second day of creation. Why were the heavens created on the first day and the firmament on the second day? What is the difference between the heavens and the firmament? In the midrash we find the following passage: ⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Genesis Rabbah 4:2 (Theodor and Albeck 1 26) .

רב אמר לחים היו מעשיהם ביום הראשון, ובשני קרשו, יהי רקיע יחזק הרקיע.

Rav said, His works were fluid, and on the second day they congealed.

“Let there be an expanse (in the midst of the waters)” (Gen. 1:6). Let the expanse be firm.

The Hebrew root *k-r-sh* means to congeal or become solid? What had been fluid now becomes solid.

The *Zohar* builds on this idea from the midrash in two different passages. In one of them it is light that congeals and becomes solid. In a second it is the Hebrew letters which congeal and become solid. Regarding light, the *Zohar* teaches:⁷⁰

לבתר ההוא זרע דאיהו אור אתפשט ואתעביד מים בלחותא
דיליה אגליף יתיר ואתפשט פשיטו גו אינון מים פשיטו דגופא
לכל סטרין. כיון דאתצייר ואגליף ציורא ודיוקנא דגופא אקריש
ההוא פשיטו ואקרי רקיע ודא איהו רקיע בתוך המים.

The seed which is also light sheds itself and becomes water which in its moisture penetrates all parts of the body. When it takes shape and form for the body it solidifies (*akrish*) and becomes the firmament. This is shown by the words, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.”

In a similar passage, the *Zohar* using similar language to the midrashic passage quoted above:⁷¹

⁷⁰ II 167a-b.

ההיא נקודה דאור. אור איהו. ואתפשט. ונהירו ביה שבע אתוון דאלפא ביתא. ולא אקרישו ולחים הוו. נפק חשך לבתר ונפקו ביה שבע אתוון אחרן דאלפא ביתא. ולא אקרישו וקיימו לחים. נפק רקיע דאפריש מחלוקת דתרין סטרין. ונפקו ביה תמניא אתוון אחרנין. כדין כ"ב. דלגו שבע אתוון דהאי סטרא ושבע דהאי סטרא. ואתגליפו כלהו בההוא רקיע. והוו קיימי לחים אקריש ההוא רקיע. ואקרישו אתוון ואגלימו ואתציירו בציורייהו.

That point of light is *light*.⁷² It expanded, and seven letters of the alphabet shone within, not congealing, still fluid. Then *darkness* emerged⁷³, and seven other letters of the alphabet emerged within, not congealing, remaining fluid. An expanse emerged, dissipating the discord of two sides and eight other letters emerged within, making twenty two.⁷⁴ Seven letters jumped from this side and seven from that, and all were engraved in that *expanse*, remaining fluid. The *expanse* congealed (*akrishu*), and the letters congealed, folding into shape, forming forms.

In the first passage it is the light which congeals and takes on form. In the second passage it is the letters of the Hebrew alphabet that congeal and take on form. There is a fascinating interplay between light and letters as the building blocks of creation. So for example, the *Zohar* teaches:⁷⁵

⁷¹ I 16b.

⁷² Matt called this *Hesed*.

⁷³ Matt called this *Gevurah*.

⁷⁴ Matt called this *Tiferet*. Note that there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

⁷⁵ III 201a.

ולית לך מלה באורייתא דלית בה כמה בוצינין מנהרן לכל סטר.

There is no word in the Torah that does not shine several lights to every side.

Wolfson writes regarding this passage from the Zohar: “In that context the different lights that shine in each word of Torah correspond to the various types of meanings, to wit, the literal or contextual, the homiletical, the allegorical, the mystical, and the legalistic” (Speculum 375-376 footnote 171). We explored these ideas in our first chapter on hermeneutics.

Is it light that solidifies and becomes matter? Or is it letters that solidify and become matter? The *Zohar* contains both ideas. Here we see an interplay between the vision and hearing, between sight and sound. It is worth exploring this interplay between these two types of perception further.

The source of this comparison between vision and hearing goes back to the Torah itself. It says regarding the Israelites encamped at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:16):

וְכָל־הָעָם רָאִים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת...

All the people saw the voices...

How can people see voices? The midrash regarding this passage writes:⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *Mechita BaHodesh Parshat 9.*

כל העם רואים את הקולות. רואין הנראה ושומעין הנשמע דברי ר' ישמעאל. רבי עקיבא אומר רואין ושומעין הנראה.

“All the people saw the voices.” They saw what could be seen and heard what could be heard, these are the words of Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Akiba said, they saw and heard what could be seen.

According to Rabbi Akiba, they literally heard the lights, as if each of the lights also contained words and letters. The aural became verbal and the verbal became aural. This idea became the basis of envisioning a verbal communication. Elliot Wolfson makes this point explicitly:

... the letters are constitutive of the divine physiognomy, the material encasements, as it were, of the sefirotic light that emanates from the Infinite. Widespread in kabbalistic sources is the juxtaposition of language and being encoded in the symbolic identification of the Hebrew consonants as elemental building blocks of all creation. (Negativa 419)

Eitan Fishbane has written about this flow of the divine into the verbal in his essay on Asher ben David, the nephew of one of the most influential early kabbalists Rabbi Isaac the Blind.⁷⁷ He writes:

⁷⁷ Fishbane cites Ḥaviva Pediya who has written that R. Isaac's preference for aural to visual mysticism was based on his blindness.

Name mysticism in the school of R. Isaac is a theory of phonetic cosmogony, a conception of the emanation of the cosmos in terms of sound and speech. In this view, the Being of the world unfolds from the depths of the primordial Infinite as the sound of speech rises from the unformed breath of divine articulation. Rooted in the rhetoric of Sefer yetzirah, this conceptual rubric presents a process of emanation that moves from the most subtle of all breath and sound to the most definite and discrete of all articulated language. In contrast to the classical rabbinic model of Creation, wherein divine speech creates something outside of itself, this early kabbalistic model presents the cosmic unfolding as a speech act in itself. The auto-emanation of the divine Being is thus the vocalization of a silent cosmic reality. God does not just speak the word of Creation. God is the word of Creation. (Speech 491-492)

We see two very different conceptions of how emanation took place. One sees the emanation in terms of light, the other in terms of letters and language. Nonetheless there is an interplay between the two, as if the letters themselves are sources of light. The underlying conceptual idea behind this entire narrative is that mind came first. Mind is the primordial reality of the universe. Could it be that mind is represented not only by light, but by the Hebrew letters? Mind has become matter and, by becoming matter, it has caused separation to enter the world.

Let us end this section with a look at how Whitehead views matter in the world. He writes:

In the philosophy of organism it is not 'substance' which is permanent, but 'form.' Forms suffer changing relations; actual entities 'perpetually perish' subjectively, but are immortal objectively. Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy. It loses the final causation which is its internal principle of unrest, and it acquires efficient causation whereby it is a ground of obligation characterizing the creativity. (29)

For Whitehead, form which exists in the mind becomes the basis of matter. Joseph Bracken explains this passage from Whitehead:

In the philosophy of organism it is not 'substance' which is permanent but 'form.' Forms suffer changing relations; actual entities 'perpetually perish' subjectively but are immortal objectively. But what is objectively immortal here except a feeling-laden form or mini-pattern available for incorporation into the subjectivity of the next actual occasion(s)? The subject of experience expires once it has completed its process of concrescence. Presumably all that remains is the objective result of the subject's self-constituting "decision": in the first place, a pattern or form that brought into harmony all the "feelings" derived from the subject's multiple prehensions of the world around it; and in the second place, the unified feeling or set of feelings accompanying that same form or pattern. (772)

Recall that Aristotle taught that one cannot have form without matter. But for the Neoplatonists form can exist without matter. So too in the quote of Messer Leon above regarding the forms, “they exist in God like the rooms and the attics and all aspects of a house in the mind of an architect.”

Form which exists in the mind congeals into matter. And by congealing into matter, it begins to occupy space. By occupying space, separation and conflict enter the world.

Separation and Conflict

The Rabbis have long noted that the words “God saw it was good” come at the end of most of the days of Biblical creation. On the third day, the phrase appears twice. At the end of the sixth day, the words used are “God saw it was very good.” However, on the second day of creation, the phrase does not appear.

The midrash presents a number of reasons why the phrase “God saw it was good” are missing on the second day of creation.⁷⁸

למה אין כתיב בשני כי טוב, רבי יוחנן תני לה בשם רבי יוסי
ב"ר חלפתא שבו נבראת גיהנם... רבי חנינא אומר שבו נבראת
מחלוקת, שנאמר ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים, א"ר טביומי אם
מחלוקת שהיא לתקונו של עולם ולישובו אין בה כי טוב,
מחלוקת שהיא לערבובו על אחת כמה וכמה, א"ר שמואל לפי
שלא נגמרה מלאכת המים, לפיכך כתוב בשלישי כי טוב שני
פעמים אחד למלאכת המים, ואי למלאכתו של יום.

⁷⁸ Genesis Rabbah 4:7 (Theodor and Albeck 1 30).

Why is it not written on the second day “it was good”? Rabbi Yohanan taught in the name of Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Ḥalafta, On that day hell was created. Rabbi Ḥanina taught, on this day conflict was created, as it says “He separated the water from the water.” Rabbi Tavyomi said, “If conflict whose purpose is to fix the world it does not say “it was good,” how much more so for conflict that simply creates confusion. Rabbi Samuel said, Because He did not finish the work of the water. Therefore it says on the third day twice “it was good”, once for the work of the water and once for the work of the day.

Let us focus on Rabbi Ḥanina’s statement, that conflict was created on the second day. This was the day that God made the expanse (*raki’a*) to separate the upper waters from the lower waters. Thus, on the second day of creation, separation and conflict enter the world. This becomes a major theme in the Zoharic creation story. Here is one passage from the *Zohar*:⁷⁹

ויאמר אלהים יהי רקיע בתוך המים וגו'. הכא בפרט. רזא לאפרשא בין מיין עלאין לתתאין. ברזא דשמאלא. (נ"א. ואתברי) הכא מחלוקת ברזא דשמאלא. דעד הכא רזא דימינא הוא. והכא איהו רזא דשמאלא. ובגין כך אסגיא מחלוקת. (נ"א. בין) בגין דא לימינא. ימינא איהו שלימא דכלא. ובגין כך בימינא כתיב כלא. דהא ביה תליא כל שלימו. כד אתער שמאלא אתער מחלוקת. ובהווא מחלוקת אתתקף אשא דרוגזא. ונפק מניה מהווא מחלוקת גיהנם. וגיהנם בשמאלא אתער ואתדבק.

⁷⁹ I 17a.

“God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters.” (Gen. 1:6)
Here is mystery in detail, separating upper waters from lower through mystery of the left. Here conflict was created through the left side. For until here was mystery of the right, and here is the mystery of the left, so conflict raged between this and the right. Right is consummate of all, so all is written by the right, for upon it depends all consummation. When the left aroused, conflict aroused, and through that conflict blazed the fire of wrath. Out of that conflict aroused by the left, emerged Hell. Hell aroused on the left and clung.

The first thing to note here is that, although the Hebrew Bible speaks of the separation as occurring between the upper and lower waters, the *Zohar* turns this separation on its side. It becomes a separation between right and left. We have already noted that the *sefirot* on the right—*Hokhmah*, *Hesed* and *Netzah*—tend to represent the masculine aspect of creation. Those on the left—*Binah*, *Gevurah*, and *Hod*—tend to represent the feminine aspect. Thus, in the *Zohar*, the separation is not simply between the various *sefirot*, but also between the masculine and feminine aspects of reality. This theme of masculine/feminine polarity will become a major factor in the next chapter, when we speak about process.

The second thing to note is that separation leads to fury. The *Zohar* uses terms such as “anger” and “the fire of wrath” to capture this. In fact, based on a passage in the

Talmud, the *Zohar* notes that hell itself was created on the second day. The Talmud teaches that:⁸⁰

ואמר רבי בנאה בריה דרבי עולא: מפני מה לא נאמר כי טוב
בשני בשבת - מפני שנברא בו אור של גיהנם.

Rabbi Bana'ah the son of Rabbi Ulla taught, Why does it not say “it was good” on the second day of Shabbat. Because on that day the light of hell⁸¹ was created.

Separation leads to hell. Part of this separation involves an intense longing between the different aspects of creation. Based on a verse in Psalms, the *Midrash Rabbah* speaks about how the upper waters and lower waters cried out for each other:⁸²

ארי"ש בן אלעזר אין לך טפה יורד מלמעלה, שאין הארץ עולה
כנגדו טפחיים, מה טעם (תהלים מב) תהום אל תהום קורא
לקול צנוריק וגוי, א"ר לוי המים העליונים זכרים והתחתונים
נקבות, והן אומרים אלו לאלו קבלו אותנו, אתם בריותיו של
הקב"ה ואנו שלוחיו, מיד הם מקבלים אותן, הה"ד (ישעיה מה)
תפתח ארץ, כנקבה זו שהיא פותחת לזכר.

Rabbi Shimon son of Elazar said, every single handbreadth [of water]
descending from above is met by two handbreadths emitted by the earth.

⁸⁰ Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54a.

⁸¹ Gehinom literally means “the Valley of Hinom,” a valley outside Jerusalem where the ancient Moabites practiced human sacrifice. It has come to mean hell in Jewish tradition, although not the hell of eternal damnation as pictured by Dante.

⁸² *Genesis Rabbah* 13:13 (Theodor and Albeck 1 122) .

What is the reason? “Deep calls to deep in the voice of your waterfalls” (Psalms 42:8). Rabbi Levi said. The upper waters are male; the lower, female. The former cry to the latter, Receive us! You are creatures of the Holy One and we are His messengers. They immediately receive them, as is written “Let the earth open” (Isaiah 45:8)—like a female opening go a male.

This image of the waters above crying out to the waters below indicates the longing created by the initial separation. Although *Genesis Rabbah* cites this passage as an interpretation of Genesis Chapter 2, the *Zohar* subsequently refers to it in its interpretation of the second day of creation in Genesis Chapter 1 (Matt Zohar 1 134). The classical Rabbis employ erotic imagery when describing the longing caused by separation. The male waters cry out to the female waters, and the female waters receive the male waters.

The *Zohar* also sees this separation as the source of evil in the world. The evil flows out of the left side. In fact, kabbalistic literature sees a parallel demonic realm to the ten *sefirot* which flowed from the left side of creation. As Elliot Wolfson articulates the dynamic:

... kabbalists struggled over the question, whence arose the demonic, or left, side? While they differed as to the exact moment within the emanative process which would account for the emergence of the left side, all agreed that at some moment this in fact occurred. The demonic side was thus accorded a "quasi" independence, said to have emerged from

either the third sefirah, Binah, or the fifth, Gevurah (Strength) or Din (Judgment). In either case, according to these kabbalists, the "emanations of the left" have their origin in and are sustained by the left side of the divine realm itself. That is to say, therefore, that the demonic has a root within the divine. (Left 29)

However, the insight of the *Zohar* is that this evil realm, often called the *sitra aħra* ("other side"), also has a role to play in the process of redemption. The object is not the destruction of this demonic realm, but rather the reappropriation of the demonic into the divine. That is why Wolfson entitles the article quoted above "Left Contained in the Right." To quote Wolfson once again:

The author of the *Zohar*, in contrast, does assign such a role to the underworld of darkness. Moreover, he provides us with a mediating principle, the containment of the left in the right, in virtue of which the demonic is restored to the right. This notion is an exegetical axis upon which much of *Zoharic* hermeneutics turns. In many cases the reference is to an inter-divine process—the containment of the divine attribute of judgment in the attribute of love, the left hand within the right. (Light 84)

In a similar manner, Nathaniel Berman calls his doctoral dissertation on the *sitra aħra* "Improper Twins," echoing the relationship between the created world and the "other side" or the demonic realm. To quote Berman:

The ultimate teaching about the *Sitra Aḥra* would thus be that the demonic Other is the primordial condition of the holy Subject (human, national, or divine). As the name *Sitra Aḥra* suggests, the Other haunts the subject as its secret, never definitively locked away in a sealed-off temporal or geographical elsewhere, rendering its annihilation or incorporation forever impossible. (277)

The *sitra aḥra* is not a foreign demonic force to be destroyed, but a shadow of creation to be reincorporated back into the original creation. Keeping these ideas in mind, we can explore the identification of the *sitra aḥra* with the feminine aspects of creation.

There is a good deal of recent work on the identification of the left side and the *sitra aḥra* with the feminine aspects of reality. Nonetheless, many modern scholars some have interpreted this role for the feminine in a positive light. For example, Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan quotes regarding the female body: ⁸³

These images do not present the female as an aspect of the male body, nor do they look at the female as a separate Other that represents Evil in the sefirotic world. Rather, the female, which is indeed described as the Other Side (*Sitra Ahrah*), is not a negation of the male or a projection of the male but rather is enshrined through images of the distinctive human body; through her unique body parts a distinct selfhood that characterizes her alone is exposed. (Gender 215)

⁸³ Tirosh-Samuelsan builds on the work of Daniel Abrams in this quotation. We will look at Abrams in more detail further down.

In fact, there seems to be a whole area of study both in scholarly and popular writing envisioning for Judaism the role of the feminine based on kabbalistic imagery.

There may be conflict between the right side and the left side, but they need each other to fulfill the divine plan. As R. Tavyomi said in the quote from *Genesis Rabbah* above, this is conflict for the sake of fixing the world. The midrash further teaches:⁸⁴

א"ר טביומי אם מחלוקת שהיא לתקונו של עולם ולישובו אין
בה כי טוב, מחלוקת שהיא לערבובו על אחת כמה וכמה.

R. Tavyomi said, If conflict for the sake of fixing the world and its inhabitants, it is not written "it was good," for conflict that simply leads to confusion, how much more so!

What kind of conflict entered the world on the second day? In a famous passage in *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)*, the Rabbis teach that there are two types of conflict. The first type of conflict is not for the sake of heaven. The classical example of this is the conflict between Moses and Korach (Numbers Chapter 16). The second type of conflict is for the sake of heaven. The classical example is the conflict between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel.⁸⁵ Building upon these older rabbinic models, the *Zohar* goes into some detail comparing the conflict for the sake of heaven with those not for the sake of heaven. Here is the passage in the *Zohar*:⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Genesis Rabbah* 4:7 (Theodor and Albeck 1 30) .

⁸⁵ See M. Avot 5:17.

⁸⁶ I 17b.

מחלוקת דאתתקן כגוונא דלעילא. וסליק ולא נחית. ואתקיים בארח מישר. דא מחלוקת דשמאי והלל. וקב"ה אפריש בינייהו ואסכים לון. ודא הוה מחלוקת לשם שמים. ושמים אפריש מחלוקת. ועל דא אתקיים. ודא הוה כגוונא דעובדא דבראשית. וקרח בעובדא דבראשית אכחיש בכלא. ופלוגתא דשמים הוה. ובעא לאכחשא מלי דאורייתא. ודאי באתדבקותא דגיהנם הוה. ועל דא אתדבק בהדיה. ורזא דא בספרא דאדם. חשך כד אתער אתער בתוקפיה. וברא ביה גיהנם. ואתדבק בהדיה בההוא מחלוקת. כיון דשכיך רוגזא ותוקפא. אתער מחלוקת בגוונא אחרא. מחלוקת דרחימו. ותרין מחלוקת הוו. חד שירותא וחד סיומא. ודא איהו ארחון דצדיקיא. שירותא דלהון בקשיו. וסופא דלהון בנייחא. קרח הוה שירותא דמחלוקת. כפום רוגזא ותוקפא. ואתדבק בגיהנם. שמאי סופא דמחלוקת. כד רוגזא בנייחא אצטריך לאתערא מחלוקת דרחימו.

A conflict arrayed as above, ascending, not descending, established rightly, is the conflict of Shammai and Hillel. The blessed Holy One mediated between them, harmonizing them. This was a conflict for the sake of heaven, so Heaven mediated the conflict, and upon this conflict the world was established. This resembled the act of Creation, whereas Korach totally denied the act of creation, disputing heaven, seeking to deny the words of Torah. He certainly adhered to Hell, so there he clung. The secret appears in *The Book of Adam*.⁸⁷ When darkness aroused, it aroused intensely, thereby creating Hell, clinging to it in that conflict. As the seething fury subsided, conflict of a different type arose: a conflict of love. There were two conflicts: one, beginning; one ending. This is the

⁸⁷ According to Matt, *The Book of Adam* is "one of the many volumes housed in the real or imaginary library of the author(s) of the *Zohar*" (*Zohar* 1 130).

way of the righteous; beginning harshly, ending gently. Korach was the beginning of the conflict: seething in wrath, he was compelled to cling to Hell. Shammai was the end of the conflict, when wrath subsides and one must arouse the conflict of love and be reconciled by heaven.

In the end, even this conflict on the second day finds reconciliation and becomes, to use the *Zohar's* phrase, a “conflict of love.” It is as if even the terrible conflict of the second day had a positive purpose. However, there was no reconciliation until the third day.

The *Zohar* writes about the reconciliation of the waters: ⁸⁸

ועם כל דא כיון דאשתלימו מיין דכורין במיין נוקבין. שמה
דאלהים אתפשט בכלא. ואע״ג דאפריש בין מיין עלאין לתתאין.
מחלוקת לא אתבטל עד יום תליתאי. ואסכים מחלוקת.
ואתיישב כלא בדוכתיה כדקא יאות. ובגין מחלוקת דא אע״פ
דאיהו קיומא דעלמא. לא כתיב כי טוב בשני. דלא אשתלים
עובדא. ומיין עלאין ומיין תתאין הוו כחדא. ולא הוו תולדין
בעלמא. עד דאתפרשו ואשתמודעו. ובגין כך עבדו תולדין. ועם
כל דא אע״ג דהבדלה הוי בשני. ומחלוקת ביה הוה. יום תליתאי
אסכים בכלא.

Once male waters were completed by female waters, the name *Elohim* extended over all. Even though He separated the upper waters from the lower, the conflict did not cease until the third day arrived, harmonizing the conflict, and everything settled fittingly in place. Because of the conflict, although it sustains the world, *that it was good* is not written of

⁸⁸ 1 18a.

the second day, for the act was incomplete.⁸⁹ Upper waters and lower waters mingled, and nothing generated in the world until they were separated and distinguished, thereby generating offspring. Even so, although the separation took place on the second day, and the conflict arose then, the third day harmonized everything.

We see here how the *Zohar* understands the first three biblical days of creation. On the first day, when God says `let there be light,' there remains a primordial unity. On the second day, with the separation of the upper and lower waters, separation and conflict enter the world. But the two sides long for one another. Therefore, the second day does not proclaim "God saw that it was good." But, on the third day, there is finally reconciliation. Thus, the Torah proclaims twice, on the third day, that "it was good." There is still separation, but that separation fulfills a divine purpose; it exists "for the sake of heaven." A balance has been found, and the middle *sefirot* – *Tif'eret* and *Yesod* – reflect that balance.

In the biblical account of creation, the third day is that during which life, in particular, plants are created. The *Zohar*, in contrast, teaches that the third day contains the potential for life to begin. To quote one passage from the *Zohar* regarding the third day of creation:⁹⁰

⁸⁹ This idea is also found in the *Genesis Rabbah* passage quoted above.

⁹⁰ 1 18a.

רבי אלעזר אמר. כל חילין הוו בארעא. ולא אפיקת חילהא
ואינון תולדותיה עד יום הששי. דכתיב תוצא הארץ נפש חיה.
ואי תימא והא כתיב ותוצא הארץ דשא. אלא אפיקת תקון
חילהא לאתישבא כדקא יאות.

Rabbi El'azar said, All forces were in earth, though she did not issue her forces, namely *generations*, until the sixth day, as is written, "Let the earth bring forth living beings" (Gen. 1:24). If you say, but it is written "the earth brought forth vegetation" (Gen. 1:12), this means she arrayed her forces so they would be fittingly deployed, all hidden away within her until necessary.

Thus, on the third day the potential for all future growth is established within the earth. But this can occur only because the conflict of the second day has been resolved. For the universe to exist, separation must be maintained but reconciliation also has to be achieved. This is articulated explicitly by Moshe Idel in his *Kabbalah and Eros*:

Characteristic of the theosophical kabbalistic view is the emphasis on the attainment of a harmonious relationship between opposing principles, whose separate existence is indispensable to the welfare of the entire cosmos. Or, to put it in other words, the huge majority of texts belonging to theosophical kabbalah were not interested in a drastic restructuring of existence by either the transformation of the feminine into masculine or vice versa. Neither were they concerned with the final fusion of the male and female divine or human powers into a bisexual or asexual entity which

transcends the sexual polarity. Rather, those Kabbalists were striving for an improvement of the processes going on between polar elements found in both the terrestrial and the divine universes. (Eros 217)

Idel emphasizes the value of both the masculine and feminine aspects of reality maintaining their own identity and staying in balance.

We should note that Elliot Wolfson takes a somewhat different approach than Idel in his writing about the masculine and feminine aspects of reality. Ultimately, the feminine comes from the divine anthropos, and the feminine will ultimately be absorbed back into the masculine. Thus Wolfson writes:

The union of male and female is predicated ultimately on the absorption or containment of the left side (passive, judgmental, constraining female) in the right side (active, merciful, overflowing male). Indeed, the negative valorization of the feminine in certain kabbalistic texts, especially in the zoharic literature, is underscored by the fact that when the female potency is separated from the masculine the potential exists that she will evolve into a punitive or even demonic force. Sexual coupling of male and female is indicative of an androgynous unity that has been fractured. In the ideal state, gender differentiation is neutralized and the female is absorbed back into the male. (Circle 84)

Wolfson and Idel seem to take different approaches to the issue of the masculine and feminine. While Wolfson sees the eventual absorption of the feminine back into the

masculine, Idel claims that the “separate existence is indispensable to the welfare of the entire cosmos.” For the separate masculine and feminine *sefirot* to fuse into one androgynous entity would defeat the divine purpose. Each individual *sefirah*, or each individual divine entity, has a role to play in the fulfillment of the initial plan.

Daniel Abrams summarizes these two different views of Idel and Wolfson. Like Idel, he emphasizes the importance of the feminine in the ultimate reality. Thus Abrams writes:

Idel has explained the platonic roots of the myth of masculine and feminine halves to the sphere which characterize union. This theme of balance is further strengthened in this book when he identifies traditions that explicitly speak of equality (*shivyon*) between the male and female. Additionally, Idel has written about the direct theurgic effect of women on the divine realm through their participation in a proper sexual relationship.

(Light 12)

In a sense, Abrams goes even further than Idel in emphasizing the importance of the feminine. It is the feminine *Shekhinah* and not the masculine higher *sefirot* that become the focus of the Jewish mystic. It is the feminine that carries theurgic power. Thus, Abrams criticizes Wolfson:

And I offer parenthetically, that following his thesis, the book ⁹¹ could equally have been termed 'Through a Speculum that Does Not Shine,' highlighting the channel through which vision of the male androgyne is made possible. But nevertheless, the sun is the source of light and grants possibility of vision by man. Ironically, the sun's light is too strong to be seen and vision is made possible only in the reflected medium of the moon. Even so, it is the light of the sun that is seen. (Light 19)

To prove his point, Abrams quotes a passage from the *Zohar*: ⁹²

תא חזי מלה דלעילא לא אתער. עד דאתער לתתא בקדמיתא.
על מה דתשרי ההיא דלעילא. ורזא דמלה. נהורא אוכמא לא
אתאחיד בנהורא חוורא. עד דאיהי אתערית בקדמיתא. כיון
דאיהי אתערית בקדמיתא. מיד נהורא חוורא שרייא עלה.

Come and see, A thing that is above is not aroused until the below is first aroused so that above may reside upon it. And the secret of the matter is that the black light does not grasp the upper, white light until it is first aroused. And when it is aroused the white light immediately resides upon it.

We see three different approaches to the balance between the masculine and feminine aspects of reality. For Idel the masculine and the feminine are equal and in

⁹¹ Referring to Wolfson's book *Through a Speculum that Shines*.

⁹² I 77a.

balance. For Wolfson the feminine is secondary and ultimately absorbed back into the masculine. For Abrams the feminine takes on a particular importance because only through her the masculine is aroused. We will explore the meaning of these ideas further in the next chapter. For our purposes, Idel's emphasis on the equality of the masculine and the feminine seems closest to the approach we will take in that chapter.

To summarize this chapter so far, there exist individual divine entities, separated in space, often longing for one another. The separation is a source of conflict. Nonetheless, there is a divine purpose to be fulfilled by separation and conflict. Thus, in Zoharic thought, the separation between these entities exists "for the sake of heaven." We will explore this purpose in the next chapter, which will focus on process. But, first, we must examine one other separation that becomes vital in the *Zohar's* vision of creation.

Shrinking the Moon

We have spoken of separation and conflict. A particularly powerful image of this conflict occurs on the fourth day of creation, when God makes the sun, moon, and stars. The Book of Genesis asserts (Gen. 1:16) that "God made the two great lights, the great light to rule by day and the lesser light to rule by night, and the stars." The classical Rabbis, however, noticed an inner contradiction in this passage. The moon is first called "the great light" and then is called "the lesser light." How are we to understand this seeming contradiction? The Talmud provides an answer with a long passage that introduces a key point about the brokenness of the world:⁹³

⁹³ Babylonian Talmud, Hullin 60b.

רבי שמעון בן פזי רמי, כתיב: (בראשית א') ויעש אלהים את שני המאורות הגדולים וכתיב: את המאור הגדול ואת המאור הקטן אמרה ירח לפני הקב"ה: רבש"ע, אפשר לשני מלכים שישתמשו בכתר אחד? אמר לה: לכי ומעטי את עצמך אמרה לפניו: רבש"ע, הואיל ואמרת לפניך דבר הגון, אמעיט את עצמי? אמר לה: לכי ומשול ביום ובלילה, אמרה ליה: מאי רבותיה, דשרגא בטיהרא מאי אהני? אמר לה: זיל, לימנו בך ישראל ימים ושנים, אמרה ליה: יומא נמי, אי אפשר דלא מנו ביה תקופותא, דכתיב (בראשית א') והיו לאותות ולמועדים ולימים ושנים, זיל, ליקרו צדיקי בשמיך: (עמוס ז') יעקב הקטן שמואל הקטן (שמואל א' י"ז) דוד,,, הקטן. חזייה דלא קא מיתבא דעתה, אמר הקב"ה: הביאו כפרה עלי שמיעטתי את הירח והיינו דאמר ר"ש בן לקיש: מה נשתנה שער של ראש חדש שנאמר בו (במדבר כ"ח) לה' - אמר הקב"ה: שער זה יהא כפרה על שמיעטתי את הירח.

Rabbi Shimon son of Pazzi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, "God made two great lights (Gen. 1:16)" and it is written [in the same verse "the greater light... and the lesser light." The moon said before the blessed Holy One, Master of the Universe. Can two kings possibly wear one crown? He answered, Go diminish yourself. She said before Him, Master of the Universe. Because I have suggested something proper I should make myself smaller? He replied, Go and rule by day and night. She said, But what is the value of this? What good is a lamp in the daytime? He said, Go and let Israel reckon days and years through you. She said to Him, But the sun also does this, for we reckon seasons by the sun, as it says, "and they shall serve as days and years." (Gen. 1:14). He replied, the righteous will be called by your name, "Jacob the Small" (see Amos 7:2), "Samuel the Small" (source of this unknown), "David the Small" (I

Samuel 17:14). Nevertheless, seeing that her mind was uneasy, the blessed Holy One said, Bring an atonement offering for making the moon smaller. As was said by Rabbi Shimon son of Lakish, Why is the goat offered on the new moon distinguished by the phrase “for YHVH (Numbers 28:15)?” The blessed Holy One said, “Let this goat be an atonement offering for My having made the moon smaller.”

In this tale, the sun and the moon were originally equal in size and stature. However, the moon complained, “How can two kings wear one crown?” So God responded to the moon, “You are right, shrink yourself.” But then God felt guilty for having shrunk the moon. Therefore, each month on *Rosh Hodesh* or “the new moon,” the people Israel must bring a sin offering for God for the shrinking of the moon. God sinned by making the moon smaller. On *Rosh Hodesh*, the people of Israel atone for God’s sin. The book of Isaiah already suggests that someday in the future, the moon and the sun will be equal in stature once again:

וְהָיָה אֹרֶן הַלְבָנָה כְּאֹרֶן הַחַמָּה וְאֹרֶן הַחַמָּה יִהְיֶה שְׁבַע־עֲתִים כְּאֹרֶן
שְׁבַע־עַת הַיָּמִים.

The light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, like the light of the seven days. (Isaiah 30:26)

The first half of the verse suggests that in a Messianic future the moon will once again equal the sun. Robert Gordis has suggested that the second half of the verse, about the

sun becoming sevenfold, means the sun will once again shine the primordial light.⁹⁴

Thus Gordis writes:

To the writer it would seem that we have an allusion to an ancient Midrash. The creation story in Genesis 1 speaks of the light as having been created on the first day, while the sun, moon, and stars were created on the fourth. What was this primal light that existed before the heavenly “lights” came into existence? ... The light that preceded the creation was a supernatural light of marvelous effulgence and power, which the Almighty hid because He foresaw the sinfulness of later generations.

(421)

Isaiah seems to prophesize that the universe is moving in the direction where the moon will once again equal the sun, and the sun will shine with the original primordial light. We will discuss this process further in the next chapter.

The passage quoted above about God shrinking the moon leads to an important theme in the *Zohar*, where the sun and moon take on a deeper meaning. In kabbalistic symbolism the sun represents the masculine aspects of reality, and the moon represents the feminine aspects of reality. The masculine and feminine principles were originally equal. But, God shrunk the feminine principle and made it secondary to the masculine principle. As the verse in Isaiah quoted about hints, in the future these two principles will

⁹⁴ In Chapter 4 we quoted the Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 12a which speaks of God hiding the primordial light to be used by the righteous in the time to come.

become equal once again. Consider a brief passage from the *Zohar* to illustrate this point:⁹⁵

אמר לה קב"ה זילי ואזעירי גרמך. ומתמן לית לה נהורא בר
משמשא. דבקדמיתא הוו יתבי כחדא בשקולא. לבתר אזעירת
גרמה בכל אינון דרגין דילה. אע"ג דאיהי רישא עלייהו. דהא
לית אתתא ברבויהא בר בבעלה כחדא.

The Holy One Blessed be He told her, God diminish yourself. From that point onwards she had light only from the sun. At first they dwelled as one, evenly, from that point on she diminished herself on all her rungs, though heading them, for a woman is enhanced only together with her husband.

As Matt explains in his annotations of these lines: “When *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the fourth day of Creation, diminished Her light, She excluded Herself from the brilliance of *the builders*, the triad of *sefirot* (*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*) symbolized by the first three days of Creation who together construct the pattern of the *sefirot*” (Zohar 1 155).

The masculine and the feminine principles are out of balance. There is also a separation between the masculine aspects of reality, symbolized by *Tif'eret*, and the feminine aspects of reality, symbolized by *Shekhinah* or *Malkhut*. But there is also a purpose, a direction, for reality. How can balance be restored? We will explore this in our next chapter.

⁹⁵ I 20a.

We have now arrived at a key point, one in which mind/- awareness/- consciousness, permeates reality. Perhaps this is a good time to return to the language of Whitehead, and his description of the consequent aspect of God. God is not simply transcendent, as shown by the primordial aspect of divinity. God is also immanent. We have now encountered a truly panentheistic view of reality, a God not only beyond the universe but also permeating the universe. According to Whitehead, the consequent nature of God encompasses all the individual entities or separate moments of experience. Mind may permeate all of existence, but it is now filled with separation and brokenness. Both the *Zohar* and Whitehead envision a universe of separate moments of consciousness. But this view of reality as separation and brokenness allow for an inner longing of each of these moments of awareness. This inner longing of each moment of awareness will give purpose and direction to all of creation. This is the flow or process of reality that we will explore in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: PROCESS, OR GOD'S SUPERJECT NATURE

We now turn to the third part of our narrative. Process has entered the universe. Following the *Zohar's* creation story, each of the *sefirot* is pulled by an inner *Eros* or desire towards other *sefirot*. Seen through the lens of Whitehead's metaphysical system, God in the zoharic thought-system becomes a superject or lure, pulling each actual entity towards an actual goal. Using very different language, Whitehead seems to agree with the much earlier zoharic insight that process is the next step in our narrative.

God as Superject

We have already explored the primordial aspects of God as developed in zoharic thought. This is God as pure potential, encompassing all of the eternal objects, containing and ordering all potentialities. We have also already explored the consequent aspects of God—the manner in which Divinity may be said to encompass all individual actual occasions—that a part of God is in constant transformation. But is there a direction or a purpose to this ongoing process? In order to develop this idea, let us turn to Whitehead's third conception of God—God as superject.

We previously defined the superject aspect of each individual actual occasion as that moment when it becomes the object of future occasions. To quote Whitehead once again: "An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences. It is subject-superject, and neither half of this description can for a moment be lost sight of" (29). Each actual occasion, as a superject, is prehended by each future

actual occasion. Even as the actual occasion passes out of existence, it becomes a lure, an object for the next generation of actual entities. To use Whitehead's language, the next generation of occasions prehends it, being lured by the presence of this past occasion.

Whitehead further suggests that God's power is not one of coercion but rather of persuasion (the lure), that is, nature is not externally forced into submission to a plan. Instead, a teleological direction and purpose permeates nature itself. God is the superject, that is, God is that teleological point towards which the process is moving.

In this sense, God is the ultimate superject. We learned in the previous chapter that God encompasses each of the actual occasions that have passed out of existence. Each future actual occasion prehends God as a lure, pulling it in a particular direction. This is how Whitehead describes this aspect of God: "The 'superjective nature' of God is the character of the pragmatic value of his specific satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity in the various temporal instances" (87). As F. F. Centore described this in his essay "Whitehead's Conception of God:" "God is the lure, the initial impetus, for feelings, conditioning (channeling) the actual occasion along a certain course by supplying the ideal desires" (150).

In asserting that each actual occasion has a lure or direction, we are moving away from the materialistic claim that the world is composed of inert entities being pushed around by outside forces. We have moved beyond Aristotle's efficient causation.⁹⁶

Whitehead has reintroduced final causation or teleology back into the universe.

⁹⁶ As explained in Chapter 3, Aristotle taught that there are four causes for every substance. The formal and material causes are related to form and matter. The efficient cause is what we would call today the scientific cause, how it came to be. The final cause is its purpose or teleology. Whitehead remarks that

This teleological conception of the universe may be observed in zoharic theology and metaphysics. Each of the *sefirot* has a teleology, or, to use Whitehead's phrase, a lure. In every moment each of the *sefirot* possesses a desire to move in a particular direction. According to Moshe Idel, the kabbalah sees Eros or desire as permeating the universe. He writes: "... all entities of the world, not only humans, participate in the erotic impulse" (Eros 179). Idel continues: "For the more Neoplatonically oriented Jewish authors, Eros was a cosmic power, somehow running between God and man via all the cosmic hierarchies" (Eros 181). It is fair to assume that the Neoplatonically oriented Jewish authors referred to by Idel include Moshe de Leon and his circle. Process is vital to the functioning of the universe and, to carry out that process, God provides the lure or direction to all entities.

The *Zohar* reflects this idea of Eros or love permeating the universe, beginning with the palace of *Binah* that is entered by *Hokhmah*. To quote one passage:⁹⁷

תא חזי היכלא דא אהבה אתקרי ובגין אהבה קיימא כלא כמה
דכתיב (שיר ח) מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות את האהבה וכלא
ברחימותא קיימא דהא שמא קדישא הכי אשתכח דהא
אוקמוה יי לא מתפרש קוצא דלעילא מן יי לעלמין דהא
ברחימותא שריא עליה ולא מתפרש מניה לעלמין.

Come and see. The palace is called love and because of love everything exists, as is written "Great waters cannot extinguish love" (Song of Songs

modern science tries to remove such teleology from the universe. One of Whitehead's primary goals is to reintroduce final causation.

⁹⁷ III 267b.

8:6). Everything stands on love, behold the Holy Name is found [exists] in such a manner. It is said of the letter *Yod* that the title [of the letter] is never separated from it, and behold by dint of love dwells upon it and forever is not separated from it.⁹⁸

Love dwelt among all the entities that made up the world.

Even the conflict that occurred with separation, discussed in the previous chapter, was brought about by love. Thus the *Zohar* teaches:⁹⁹

כיון דשכיך רוגזא ותוקפא. אתער מחלוקת בגוונא אחרא.
מחלוקת דרחימו.

As the seething fury subsided, conflict of a different type arose: a conflict of love.

As Daniel Matt notes in his commentary on these lines: “The tension between left and right, when resolved yields the harmony of *Tif’eret*, also known as *Rahamim*, Compassion who eventually unites with *Shekhinah*” (Zohar 1 130). Like the actual entities of process philosophy, each of the *sefirot* through each moment is infused with love.

⁹⁸ This passage uses two Hebrew words for love – *ahavah* as the direct translation of love, and *rehimuta* which actually means mercy, and which we associated with *Hesed* in the previous chapter.

⁹⁹ I 17b.

Masculine and Feminine

In the classic diagrammatic representation of the ten *sefirot*, the divine emanations are expressed as maintaining numerous lines of connection. Lines connecting *sefirot* ascend and descend, as well as achieving diagonally linkages. But some of the important lines, when explaining the imagery of the *Zohar*, are the horizontal lines connecting the right and the left sides. Traditionally, the right side represents the masculine impulse, whereas left represents the feminine impulse. It is important to note that these dichotomies are tendencies—nothing is purely masculine or purely feminine. Nonetheless, one cannot discuss process within the *Zohar* without discussing masculine/feminine dichotomies.

Daniel Abrams, in his book *HaGuf HaElohai HaNashi BeKabbalah (The Female Body of God in Kabbalistic Literature)* writes:¹⁰⁰ “Each *sefirah* has two roles, to outpour and to receive” (Female 92). Abrams continues:

In the description of the birth of the *sefirot* from *Ein Sof* until the final *sefirah* and in the description of their influence on one another, each *sefirah* has two identities defined by its actions. For example, at the times when the *Shekhinah* receives the outpouring from the *sefirah Yesod*, she is described as female. When she pours out her abundance to lower beings she is described as male. (Female 93)

¹⁰⁰ My translation.

In a similar matter, Charles Mopsik writes: “For the kabbalists, giving and receiving are two fundamental acts that underlie the entire system of divine life. Each of the ten *sefirot* or emanations receives the influx which comes to it from the *Ein Sof* (Infinite) and emanate it in turn. These two acts also describe sexual union” (23). The giving is the masculine tendency and the receiving is the feminine tendency. Although each *sefirah* may have both masculine and feminine tendencies, certain of the *sefirot* are clearly identified in kabbalistic sources with the masculine or the feminine.

In the previous chapter we compared the views of Elliot Wolfson, Moshe Idel, and Daniel Abrams on this masculine-feminine dichotomy. Wolfson places an emphasis on the masculine, which will ultimately reabsorb the feminine. Idel emphasizes the equality between masculine and feminine and the importance of maintaining balance between these tendencies. Abrams goes even further by emphasizing the feminine, and as noted there, “It is the feminine that carries theurgic power.” All center Eros on this attraction between the masculine and feminine aspects of reality.

As quoted in the midrash below, these masculine and feminine aspects of reality were initially united and then became separated. Their desire is to reunite and recreate the primal unity. Elliot Wolfson summarizes this separation and eventual reunion:

It is commonplace in scholarship to assume that the distinctive feature of the kabbalistic idea of redemption involves the reunification of the masculine and the feminine aspects of the divine. Historical exile is understood widely in the theosophic kabbalistic tradition as a reflection of a fissure or an imbalance within the nature of God that results from the separation of the male and the female, the holy King (Tif'eret) and the

Matrona (Shekhinah). The redemptive moment is marked by the rectification of this condition, which again is operative in both the divine and the human spheres. (Tiqqun 289)

The *Zohar* often quotes the classical image, found in the midrash, of Adam and Eve originally created as one, and split by God into two entities. For example, the midrash teaches:¹⁰¹

אמר רבי ירמיה בן אלעזר בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון אנדרוגינוס בראו הדא הוא דכתיב זכר ונקבה בראם, א"ר שמואל בר נחמן בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון דיו פרצופים בראו, ונסרו ועשאו גביים גב לכאן וגב לכאן.

Rabbi Yirmeyah son of El'azar said, When the blessed Holy One created Adam, he created him androgynous, as is said, "Male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Rabbi Shemu'el son of Nahman said, when the blessed Holy One created Adam, He created him with two faces. Then He separated him and gave him two backs—one on this side and one on that.

Thus we see that the masculine and the feminine were originally joined and then separated. This became the basis of the longing of the masculine and feminine aspects of reality for one another.

¹⁰¹ *Bereishit Rabbah* 8:1 (Theodor and Albeck 1 55).

Arthur Green, in his study of the *Shekhinah*, writes regarding this separation and longing:

The androgynous nature of the Kabbalistic God is well-known and has been much discussed. The ancient aggadah contains a Platonically¹⁰² based tale that describes Adam as an androgynous being, a sort of Siamese twin of both genders who had to be separated at the rear in order to turn face-to-face to him/herself. This myth, which serves as an etiology of human sexual difference and attraction, is applied by the earliest Kabbalists to God; it is then in *imitatio Dei* that Adam is bi-gendered. The back-to-back joining and the need for separation and turning occurred in the first place within the Godhead, in relation to the “male” and “female” aspects of the divine self. (*Shekhinah* 40)

Moshe Idel builds part of his study of Eros in the Kabbalah on this image. He quotes a long passage written by the Ravad (Rabbi Abraham ben David 1125 – 1198), a Talmudic authority and mystic who lived in Provence:

Adam and Eve were created *du-partzufin*, so that the woman should be obedient to her husband, her life depending upon him, lest he go his own

¹⁰² In Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophanes explains, “The original human nature was not like the present but different. The sexes were not two, as they are now, but originally three in numbers; there was man, woman, and the union of the two.” Zeus divided those who were joined. “After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one” (Plato *Symposium* 285, 287).

way, while she got her [own] way, rather, affinity and friendship will exist between them, and they shall not separate from each other, and peace will rest upon them and calmness in their houses. ... But now, since they were created *du-partzufin*, their actions are performed in cooperation and in equal manner [*be-shawweh*] and in total unison [*bi-yhud gamur*], without any separation. ... But now, since they were created as *du-partzufin*, each of them may approach his partner and unite with him, and his desire is to unite willingly with his partner, so “that the tabernacle may be one (Exodus 26:11).”¹⁰³ (Eros 61-62)

Commenting on this passage, as well as a similar passage by the earlier Jewish Platonic philosopher Philo, Idel writes: “In the passages of these Jewish thinkers [Philo and Ravad], three stages occur: initial union, which may be understood as some form of *coincidentia oppositorum*,¹⁰⁴ then separation; and finally cooperation, which is facilitated by the original union between the two divine powers” (Eros 72). Note how these three stages seem to correspond to the three stages in the cosmic story that I have recounted in these past three chapters—the initial unity of mind, the separation in space-time of immanence, and the eventual cooperation which is the desire of process.

Ravad in this passage is speaking about a human separation and reunion. Nonetheless, Jewish mystics, including the author of the *Zohar*, applied this idea much more broadly - to the separation and eventual reunion of the masculine and feminine

¹⁰³ The Hebrew text was first published by Gershom Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1948), p. 79.

¹⁰⁴ Unity of opposites.

aspects of reality. When we speak of the desire of the masculine for the feminine and vice versa, at least according to Idel's understanding, we are not imagining these individual tendencies losing their individual identities and uniting into one. Separation has a purpose. Even as each individual tendency desires its opposite, it always maintains its own identity. In the Jewish mystical tradition, the masculine aspects of reality became identified with mercy. The feminine aspects of reality became identified with justice. Both are necessary but each must maintain its separate identity. To quote Idel once again:

To return to Ravad's passage: what is obvious is that when separated from their primordial existence, the two divine powers become the attributes of mercy and judgment. Being two distinct and opposite powers, the two attributes could not cooperate had they not been originally united. However, their union entails not complete reunion, a return to their pristine situation, but a form of cooperation which does not obliterate their independent existence. (Eros 67)

The lure is towards cooperation.

To picture this desire of the masculine towards the feminine, and vice versa, let us turn for a moment to an earlier rabbinic source found in the Talmud. There we find a vision of the Cherubim, sculpted above the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple. In the tabernacle carried through the desert, God had appeared to Moses between the faces of

the Cherubim. Often these two Cherubim were pictured as two children.¹⁰⁵ However, the Talmud imagines the Cherubim as a male and a female in a sexual embrace:¹⁰⁶

אמר רב קטינא : בשעה שהיו ישראל עולין לרגל מגללין להם את
הפרוכת, ומראין להם את הכרובים שהיו מעורים זה בזה,
ואומרים להן : ראו חבתכם לפני המקום כחבת זכר ונקבה.

Rabbi Katina said, When Israel ascended [to Jerusalem] for the Festival, the curtain would be rolled open for them and the cherubs revealed, their bodies intertwined one with the other. They would be addressed, look, the love between you and God is as the love between a man and a woman.

We can note the complex process of midrashic creativity here. According to Nahum Sarna, the original Cherubim in the Bible were “composites of human, animal, and avian features” (278). In the Talmud they became the faces of children, and then a man and a woman in sexual embrace, symbolizing the love between God (the male) and His people Israel (the female.) As we will show below, in the *Zohar* it will become the Eros or desire between the masculine and feminine aspects of reality.

Although the masculine and feminine duality permeated all the *sefirot*, it became particularly pronounced in the relation between *Tif'eret* and *Malkhut*, identified with *Shekhinah*. Let us briefly review the entire flow of the first nine *sefirot* before turning to the last or tenth *sefirah*, the *Shekhinah* (God's indwelling).

¹⁰⁵ See Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 5b. “R. Ababu said, [the word cherub] means ‘like a child’ for in Babylonia they call a child *ravya*.”

¹⁰⁶ Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 54a.

The Shekhinah

On the top of the hierarchy of *sefirot* is *Keter* (crown or divine will), closest to *Ein Sof*. In *Keter* separation and disunity have not yet entered the world. The *sefirot* that appear on the right side—*Hokhmah*, *Hesed*, and *Netzah*—symbolize the masculine aspects of reality. Later when we bring the insights of Whitehead to bear on these, we can conceive of them as an entities bursting forth or moving outside themselves, sources of creativity similar to male sperm. The *sefirot* that appear on the left side—*Binah*, *Gevurah*, and *Hod*—symbolize the feminine aspects of reality. Later when we bring the insights of Whitehead to bear on these, we can conceive of them as protective walls or enclosures, sources of protection similar to the female womb. The middle *sefirot*—*Tif'eret*, and *Yesod*—reflect the balance points between the masculine and feminine.

Tif'eret has a second purpose. Not only is it the balance point between *Hesed* and *Gevurah*. It is also the overall name for the lower six—*Hesed*, *Gevurah Tif'eret*, *Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. (Let us recall how, in the previous chapter, we observed the zoharic interpretation of the word *Bereishit* “to mean *bara sheet*—“created six.”) *Tif'eret*, encompassing these six *sefirot*, is masculine. There is already a hint that *Tif'eret* is masculine in earlier sources leading up to the *Zohar*. For example, Eitan Fishbane quotes the *Me'irat 'Einayim* of the early kabbalist Rabbi Isaac of Acre regarding the commentary of Nachmanides (the Ramban): “... the essence of *Tif'eret*'s reception is from *Hesed* which is from the right side. Hence you will find in many places that the Rabbi¹⁰⁷, of blessed memory, calls *Tif'eret* ‘the Right side’ (*Me'irat 'Einayim* 146)” (Authority 75). Fishbane mentions in a footnote there “*Tif'eret* is in the center of the

¹⁰⁷ Nachmanides.

sefirotic structure but leans to the right side” (Authority 76). The right side is the masculine side.

Elliot Wolfson also brings a source from the *Zohar*¹⁰⁸ of how Abraham’s circumcision has theurgic power, uniting the masculine and the feminine above. Wolfson writes:

Before Abraham’s circumcision, only the *Shekhinah* conversed with him; after his circumcision She was united with her masculine consort, *Tif’eret*, and the latter was revealed to Abraham through the *Shekhinah*. This is the mystical meaning of Genesis 18:1, “And the Lord” *Tif’eret*, the masculine potency or the attribute of mercy, “appeared to him,” that is to the gradation that spoke to Abraham, the feminine *Shekhinah* or the attribute of judgment. (Circumcision 203)

According to the *Zohar*, *Tif’eret* represents the central beam of the creation. The *Zohar*¹⁰⁹ quotes the Biblical verse regarding the building of the tabernacle “Running from end to end (Exodus 26:28).” Matt comments there: “A description of the central wooden beam of the Tabernacle in the desert. The *Zohar* applies this description to *Tif’eret*, the central *sefirah*, symbolized by Jacob, who spans the sefirot from *Binah* to *Shekhinah*” (*Zohar* 2 70). Since *Tif’eret* is considered masculine, it longs for a feminine counterpart, which is the tenth *sefirah*—*Malkhut* or *Shekhinah*.

¹⁰⁸ I 98a.

¹⁰⁹ I 1b

This idea of *Shekhinah* is already developed earlier in the Talmud and midrash. It comes from the Hebrew root ש כ נ *sh-kh-n*, meaning “to dwell.” This is God’s indwelling in the material world. The Rabbis developed the idea that the *Shekhinah* went into exile with the community of Israel. The radical change of the kabbalists was the transformation of *Shekhinah* from the indwelling of God in the material world to the feminine side of God. So for example, Tishby quotes a Talmudic passage:¹¹⁰

בוא וראה כמה חביבין ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. שבכל מקום שגלו - שכינה עמהן ... ואף כשהן עתידין ליגאל שכינה עמהן, שנאמר: (דברים ל') ושב ה' אלהיך את שבותך, ... מלמד שהקדוש ברוך הוא שב עמהן מבין הגליות.

Come and see how beloved Israel are to the Holy One, blessed be He, for wherever they are exiled the *Shekhinah* is with them ... and when they are redeemed in the future the *Shekhinah* will again be with them, as it said, “and the Lord, your God, will return with your captivity” (Deut. 30:3).¹¹¹
(382)

Nonetheless, in kabbalistic literature the image of *Shekhinah* as the feminine aspect of God will become fully developed.

In the *Zohar*, the *Shekhinah* is the end of the flow of emanation. So Tishby writes: “In relation to the upper world it is the last link in the chain of emanation, acting as a receptacle for the supernal flow of influence, and representing the extreme limit of

¹¹⁰ Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 29a.

¹¹¹ The Hebrew term *et* has a double meaning, indicating a direct object but also meaning “with.”

the divine being. In relation to the lower world, however, it is the very beginning and highest point, assuming the role of mother and ruler of the world” (372).

The *Shekhinah* takes a somewhat different role than the other *sefirot*. It is more passive, absorbing, and reflecting higher levels of emanation. On the other hand, it is the spiritual presence closest to the material world. Here is how Tishby describes the special status of the *Shekhinah* in the *Zohar*’s cosmological system:

The last *sefirah* assumes a special character in the *sefirotic* system. It is represented as the passive female who receives and transmits the influence which descends from the active male forces. A central feature of the *Zohar* is the description of the essential nature of this *sefirah*, and its multifarious ramifications. Once all the different veils of kabbalistic symbolism have been lifted, the many facets of this *sefirah* become apparent. Its particular characteristic is that it has no light or definite colour of its own, but, on the other hand, precisely because of this, it acts as a mirror for every light and colour. (371)

Arthur Green writes about this emergence in kabbalistic literature of the *Shekhinah* as the feminine aspects of God:

A key element in this symbolic universe is the emergence of the divine female, a figure within the divine-symbolic realm who serves as consort to the blessed Holy One, God of Israel. The radical character of this development cannot be overstated. The singularity and aloneness of God,

described almost exclusively in masculine terms, is the very essence of the monotheistic revolution wrought by Israel's ancient prophets. It is the God who by definition has no heavenly consort that seeks out a human beloved in the people Israel, allowing for the essential God-Israel erotic myth that plays a key role in rabbinic Judaism. Now Kabbalah comes and tampers with this most essential *datum* of Jewish devotional life. (Shekhinah 15-16)

How was *Shekhinah* transformed from the indwelling of God in the material world to the feminine aspects of God? Peter Schäfer was the first to suggest that perhaps this was a reaction in the Jewish community to the worship of Mary in Christianity in his essay "Daughter, Sister, Bride, and Mother: Images of the Femininity of God in the Early Kabbalah." Schäfer describes the development within the *Bahir*, an early kabbalistic work, of the feminine aspect of God:

The name of this female principle within God, Shekhina, is only mentioned in passing. The Shekhina (literally, "dwelling") is wellknown from classic Rabbinic literature and refers there to the presence of God in the world; she is always synonymous with God, i.e., not a hypostasis, not a different ontological being, not an autonomous feature or activity of God. In the Kabbala, on the other hand, she is included as a distinctive principle within the inner-divine life—a concept that is completely alien to Rabbinic Judaism—but her influence is also felt, as we shall see, in a special way on earth. The decisive difference, and thereby the completely innovative

feature of the Book Bahir, is, finally, that never before (neither in Rabbinic literature nor in Jewish philosophy) is she defined as an explicitly female principle. (223)

Schäfer continues with the possibility of Christian influence on this radical new idea of the *Bahir*:

Out of love for humankind God goes into the earthly world to lead it back to himself. In Christianity it is the Son of God; in the Bahir it is his daughter, his female potency. To put it pointedly, one could even say that in the Bahir the functions of Jesus and his mother Mary coincide. The Shekhina who has been sent to earth represents God's presence in the world; and she is God's feminine manifestation which is missing in Christianity. (239)

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, in her essay on the history of the feminine in kabbalah, quotes Schäfer: “Schäfer notes `striking parallels with the increased emphasis on the feminine aspects of the Kabbalah.’ Like the Virgin Mary, the *Shekhinah* functions as a mediator between God and humanity, an intercessor on behalf of humankind and a restorer and redeemer of humanity” (Gender 196). Nonetheless, other scholars were divided on the validity of this idea.

Arthur Green similarly suggests that the development of the *Shekhinah* in kabbalistic literature was a direct reaction in the Jewish community to the worship of Mary within the Christian Church. Green continues: “Whatever else the Kabbalistic

shekhinah is historically or psychologically, she is also a Jewish response to the growth of the popular Marian devotion that flourished in the twelfth century” (Shekhinah 27). Regarding the Christian veneration of Mary, Green writes: “In the shadow of this new development in the majority culture, the Jews, responding chiefly to their own needs and in a form shaped by their own limitations, created a religious symbol that was to transform the character of Jewish devotional life” (Shekhinah 28).

This idea that the development of the *Shekhinah* in kabbalah grew out of the worship of Mary in the Catholic Church is not accepted by all scholars. Although the veneration of Mary developed in the twelfth century shortly before the writing of the *Zohar*, there is a sufficient difference between the Christian view of a holy virgin and the kabbalistic view of the *Shekhinah* which often becomes explicitly sexual. So for example, Idel writes:

... the cult of the Virgin Mary is by no means a paradigm for most of the kabbalistic perceptions of the Shekhinah in Kabbalah, where the nightly sexual union with her divine husband is a major aspect of her function. Thus, even if it is sometimes possible to detect some specific affinities between twelfth-century Mariology and early Kabbalah, the important question is much more central and gravitates around a phenomenological issue: Does the Shekhinah in early kabbalistic sources indeed function in a manner reminiscent of Mary in the Marian cult? Is the latter understood as longing for sexual encounters with the Father, or any other masculine hypostasis? Or in other terms: Was the Marian cult intended ever, especially in the western European Middle Ages, to bring about an explicit

sexual union between the Mother of the Christ, conceived of as *Theotokos*, and the divine Father? And if this is not the case, the proposed comparisons are between two starkly diverging phenomena, one based on a cult grounded in faith, the other gravitating around the importance of theurgical activity. (Eros 48-49)

Perhaps there was some influence of the Christian cult of Mary on the kabbalistic development of the *Shekhinah*. But whereas Christianity places a spiritual value on celibacy and chastity, Judaism does not have a parallel idea. Rather it emphasizes the centrality of sexuality within the context of marriage. In fact, as Idel mentioned regarding “theurgical activity,” such sexual relations have a direct influence on the encounter between *Tif'eret* and *Shekhinah*.

The sexual act itself, as a culmination of that desire, will take on cosmic consequences in kabbalistic sources. Thus Elliot Wolfson writes: “... the kabbalistic tradition has unequivocally assigned a positive valence to sexuality as a sacrament that celebrates the union of masculine and feminine energies in the divine, the mythopoeic basis for the kabbalistic interpretation of the religious obligation to procreate” (Language 312). Wolfson does comment that such an emphasis on sexuality in the *Zohar* probably serves as a “polemic against the Christian affirmation of celibacy as the means to restore humanity to its pristine state” (Language 119).

Let us share one passage from the *Zohar* that emphasizes the theurgic power of the sexual act if performed with the correct intentions: ¹¹²

¹¹² I 90b.

תא חזי מההוא זרעא דבר נש. כד אתער תיאובתיה לגבי נוקביה. ונוקביה אתערת לגביה. כדין מתחברן תרווייהו כחדא. ונפק מנייהו בר חד דכליל מתרין דיוקנין כחד. בגין דקב"ה צייר ליה בציורא דאתכליל מתרווייהו. ועל דא בעי בר נש לקדשא גרמיה בההוא זמנא. בגין דישתכח ההוא דיוקנא בציורא שלים כדקא חזי.

Come and see from the seed of a man. When his desire is aroused towards a woman and her desire is aroused towards him, the two of them become joined as one. Thus they issue a single son, blending two images as one.¹¹³ For the Holy One Blessed be He forms them in one pattern containing them both. Therefore one should sanctify himself at that time, so the ultimate design will be fitting.

Wolfson comments regarding this passage that the sexual desire cannot be simply carnal lust, but must have the intention of performing a commandment:

Minimally, the demand that the Jewish man should sanctify himself when having sex with his wife requires that he not act like an animal and that he should not think of another woman but focus only on his spouse, requirements that were already established in the Talmudic code of law; from a mystical standpoint, however, in order to secure that his seed be truthful (*zera emet*), the man must sanctify himself by performing the

¹¹³ Matt quotes the Babylonian Talmud regarding this passage, "See BT Shevu'ot 18b: Rabbi El'azar said, Whoever sanctifies himself during intercourse will have male children (Matt Zohar 2 70)."

physical act of intercourse “for the sake of the commandment” (*le-shem mišwah*) and “direct his heart for the sake of heaven” (*mekhavein libbo le-shem shamayim*), “to build the house and to produce offspring.” (Language 312)

What is in the human world a sexual desire between a man and a woman will become in the *Zohar* the love between the masculine aspects of God (symbolized by *Tif'eret*) and the feminine aspects of God (symbolized by *Shekhinah*). What happens in the world below has consequences in the world above. Eitan Fishbane describes this desire in the divine realm:

In the rhythmic Aramaic voice of the *Zohar*, divinity is represented as brimming with interior struggle and yearning. Male lover (*Tif'eret*) and female beloved (*Shekhinah/Malkhut*) pine for each other with poetic romance, and the actions of Jews in the lower world are thought to stimulate union or separation of those divine forces above. The life of God is represented as a dance of sexual intimacy, a drama of Eros between gendered and personified dimensions of the divine realm that is most easily compared to the mythological narratives of ancient Greece. And yet the *Zohar* constantly disavows these distinctions, claiming that the different, sexually charged sefirot are nothing but faces of the one, indivisible, divine organism. (*Zohar* 52-54)

Note that God's presence is where male meets female, each keeping his or her own identity, while embracing one another. The goal is to build on the brokenness to fulfill some greater divine purpose. But as Fishbane remarks, beneath it all there is a primordial unity.

Let us summarize where we are at this point. *Shekhinah* arouses a desire in *Tiferet*, and in turn its own desire is aroused. Process is built on the desire, or Eros, between these two aspects of reality as they seek to come together and embrace once again. Each becomes the lure for the other, and this process is symbolized in the *Zohar* by the midrash regarding the relationship between the sun and the moon, as described in the previous chapter.

No Light of Its Own

In the previous chapter, we considered the classical rabbinic legend (and its later kabbalistic adaptation) regarding the primordial divine act of shrinking the moon, making her the lesser light. As I observed there, the medieval mystics took the sun to symbolize the masculine aspects of reality, whereas the moon was believed to symbolize the feminine aspects of reality. The masculine and feminine were originally equal, but God diminished the feminine and made it secondary to the masculine. In the redemptive future, the masculine and feminine will become balanced once again. As the *Zohar* puts it in one representative passage: ¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ I 20a.

דבקדמיתא הוו יתבי כחדא בשקולא. לבתר אזעירת גרמה בכל
אינון דרגין דילה. אעיג דאיהי רישא עלייהו. דהא לית אתתא
ברבויהא בר בבעלה כחדא.

In the beginning they dwelled as one, evenly, but later she diminished herself on all her rungs, though heading them, for a woman is enhanced only together with her husband.

Matt comments on this passage: “When *Shekhinah*, symbolized by the fourth day of Creation, diminished Her light, She excluded Herself from the brilliance of *the builders*, the triad of *sefirot* (*Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tif'eret*) symbolized by the first three days of Creation who together construct the pattern of the *sefirot*” (Zohar 1 155).

Passages in the *Zohar* build on the fact first noticed by medieval astronomers that the moon does not give off its own light but merely reflects that of the sun. So for example, Rabbi David Kimchi (the Radak - 1160–1235) writes in his commentary on Genesis Chapter 1:

וחקרו בעלי המחקר כי השמש גדול מהלבנה מאה ושבעים
פעמים והלבנה אין לה אור כי אם מהשמש כי גופה עכורת.

Scholars of astronomy have discovered that the sun is larger than the moon one hundred seventy times, and the moon has no light of its own for its body is black.

Other passages share this idea that the *Shekhinah* has no light of its own but is dependent on higher emanation for illumination. For example, here is a passage from the *Zohar* of how *Shekhinah*'s mother and father adorn her to make her attractive for *Tiferet*:¹¹⁵

את הצלע. כמה דאת אמר (שיר א ה) שחורה אני ונאווה בנות
ירושלם. אספקלריאה דלא נהרא. אבל אבא ואמא אתקיננו לה
לאתפייסא בעלה בהדה.

“The side,”¹¹⁶ as is said, “I am black but beautiful” (Song of Songs 1:5), the speculum that does not shine, but Father and Mother adorned Her so that Her husband be pleased with Her.

Matt comments that the divine parents are *Hokhmah*, the father and *Binah*, the mother. (Zohar 1 268)

In passages such as this, the *Zohar* emphasizes that the moon has no light of its own, but must be illuminated by the sun. So too, the *Shekhinah* has no light of its own but must be illuminated by the upper *sefirot*. As the *Zohar* explains:¹¹⁷

ואעי'ג דאתא מסטרא דאשא דאיהי חשך. אבל חשך עד
דאתנהיר מסטרא דיום. יום נהיר ללילה. ולילה לא נהיר עד
זמנא דכתיב (תהלים קלט יב) ולילה כיום יאיר כחשכה כאורה.

¹¹⁵ I 49a.

¹¹⁶ In Genesis 2:22, the Hebrew term *hatzelah* is usually translated as “the rib.” In this passage from the *Zohar* we translated the rib taken from Adam to make Eve as “the side,” in keeping with the midrash quoted above (*Bereishit Rabbah* 8:1) that Adam was split in half to create a man and a woman.

¹¹⁷ I 31a.

Though deriving from the side of fire, which is darkness, still She is dark until illumined from the side of Day. Day illumines Night, but Night does not shine until the time of which is written, “Night will shine as day, darkness and light will be the same (Psalms 139:12).”

Commenting on this passage, Matt states: “Though *Shekhinah* derives from *Gevurah*, symbolized by both fire and *darkness*, She receives no light from this fire but rather remains dark until illumined by *Tif’eret*. Until Messianic time, when *Shekhinah* will shine on He own” (Zohar 1 188). We see a hint of the direction of the process. It is moving towards a time when day and night will be equal, when *Shekhinah* will have her own light like *Tif’eret*. God will undo the damage of having shrunk the moon. We may recall from the previous chapter that Israel actually brings a sin offering for God to atone for the sin of shrinking the moon.

The *Shekhinah* represented by the moon may have no light of its own. But she receives light not only from above but also from below, not only from the upper *sefirot* but also from those mystics below who have the power to illuminate the moon. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Daniel Abrams commented on the theurgic power of kabbalists of this world to affect the *Shekhinah*, which in turn can affect the upper *sefirot*. The moon affects the sun, as quoted in the previous chapter, “Ironically, the sun’s light is too strong to be seen and vision is made possible only in the reflected medium of the moon” (Abrams Light 19). Nathan Wolski in his introduction to the *Zohar* makes this point explicitly:

Positioned at the limits of divinity, the divine female is the most dynamic (and interesting) aspect of God. Like the ever changing moon, which possesses no light of its own but reflects the brilliance of the sun, *Malkhut* is dependent on the influx of the sefirot above her for illumination. She is also dependent on the mystics below, “her handmaidens” as one text calls them, to protect, sustain, and beautify her in preparation for her union with YHVH, the Blessed Holy One, the male face of divinity. (18)

The mystics of this world, the moon’s “handmaidens,” are necessary for the moon to shine once again.

The *Zohar* describes the day in the future when the moon once again shines forth its own light: ¹¹⁸

תא חזי כיון דסיהרא שלטא. ואתנהיר מההוא נהרא דנגיד
ונפיק. כל אינון שמיא דלתתא וחיליהון כלהון אתוספן נהורא.
וככביא דממנן על ארעא כלהו שלטין ומגדלין צמחים ואילנין.
ועלמא אתרבי בכלהו. ואפילו מיא ונוני ימא כלהו ברבו יתיר.

Come and see: Once the moon prevails, illumined by that river flowing forth, all those heavens below and their hosts are augmented with light. The stars empowered over the world prevail, raising plants and trees. Earth grows in its entirety – even the waters and fish of the sea abound.

¹¹⁸ I 34a.

Now we see the direction of the process. It is moving towards a time when the masculine and feminine aspects of reality will be in balance again, when both will shine with a light of their own. Masculine and feminine will not become one as they were when only *Keter* existed and unity prevailed. But there will be a oneness of two sides working in balance.¹¹⁹

Let us look at one more passage about how this unity will come about. It is based on a passage from the book of *Zechariah* that has become central in the Jewish liturgy:

והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד.

“The Lord shall be king over all the earth, on that day the Lord will be One and His Name will be One.” (Zechariah 14:9)

What does it mean that the Lord will be One sometime in the future? The *Zohar* teaches:¹²⁰

יהוה אחד ושמו אחד. תרין יחודין. חד דעלמא עלאה לאתיחדא בדרגוי. וחד דעלמא תתאה לאתיחדא בדרגוי. קשורא דיחודא דעלמא עלאה עד הכא איהו. חי עלמין תמן אתבסים. ואתקשר עלמא עלאה ביחודא דיליה. ובגין כך אקרי מקום אחד. כל דרגין וכל שייפין מתכנשין תמן. והוו כלהו ביה חד בלא פרודא כלל. ולית דרגא דאתיחדן תמן ביחודא חד אלא האי. וביה אתכסיין כלהו בארח סתים בתיאובתא חד. עד הכא בדרגא דא. אתיחד עלמא דאתגלייא בעלמא דאתכסייא.

¹¹⁹ As mentioned earlier, Wolfson disagrees. He sees the world moving towards a time when the feminine will be reabsorbed in the masculine. We will explore this idea further toward the end of this chapter.

¹²⁰ I 18a.

“YHVH is one and His name is one (Zech. 14:9).” Two unifications: one of the upper world, to be unified in its rungs, and one of the lower world to be unified in its rungs. Nexus of unity of the upper world extends till here. Vitality of the Worlds is consummated there, the upper world bound in unity. So it is called one place. All levels and limbs gather there, all unified within, completely indivisible. On no level but this are they unified; within, they are all secretly concealed in a single desire. Here, on this rung, the revealed world joins the concealed.¹²¹ (Matt Zohar 1 138)

The entire process of divine unfolding has a goal and a direction. The *Zohar* explicitly mentions this. It speaks about *Alma d’Atei* “the world that is coming. This is a direct Aramaic translation of the Hebrew phrase *Olam HaBa*. But for the *Zohar*, this world that is coming already exists in potential in the existent world. To quote the *Zohar* regarding the symbolism of the enclosure in the ancient tabernacle:¹²²

ובגין דאיהו אתר גניז וסתים אקרי מסגרת. ודא הוא עלמא
דאתי.

Because it is a place hidden and closed up, it is called enclosure. This is the world that is coming.

¹²¹ According to Matt, the upper world is the higher *sefirot*, *Hesed* through *Yesod* centering on *Tiferet*. The lower world is *Shekhinah* and all the powers accompanying her. Matt ends with the footnote, “*Shekhinah* joins the more hidden *sefirot*.”

¹²² I 31a.

After explaining this passage, Matt writes: “From another point of view, however, ‘the world that is coming’ already exists, occupying another dimension” (Zohar 1 189). It is coming in the present tense—ever-flowing emanation that unfolds the process of all Being. Indeed this is an important distinction from the classical rabbinic idea of *Olam HaBa*, the World to Come. In the classical rabbinic tradition, the World to Come was either a future time in this physical world or a heavenly realm beyond death. Now in this passage from the *Zohar*, this World to Come is actually existent in the present as pure potential. Perhaps one can compare this zoharic idea of the World to Come to Whitehead’s notion that all future potentialities exist within the primordial God.

Since the World to Come does exist, at least in potential, it serves as a guarantee that the world is not a series of random events, and it will not veer off into chaos. It seems to have a direction; there is a “world that is coming.” The idea that the world might veer off into chaos will become important when we return to Whitehead. This image of a world that is coming seems like a close equivalent to Whitehead’s vision of the superject God, who serves as a lure, giving a telos to everything in the universe.

What Does It Mean?

What does it mean to suggest that there are masculine and feminine aspects of reality? How are we to interpret this vision of a world that is coming, when masculine and feminine will once again be in balance? And what insights can Whitehead add to these ideas? Perhaps the best place to begin is to look at a later kabbalistic interpretation of the *Zohar*. Let us turn to the teachings of Isaac Luria (1534–1572) and the literary transmitter and interpreter of his orally delivered ideas, Hayyim Vital (1543–1620). It was Luria and Vital who introduced a brilliant insight into this notion of masculine and

feminine aspects of reality—circles (*igullim*) and straightness (*yosher*). Mordecai Pachter in his essay “Circles and Straightness”¹²³ describes the fundamental idea:

Thus, in his *Es Hayyim*, Rabbi Hayyim Vital presents the pair of concepts, “circles” and “lines” (“straightness”) for the first time, representing two different aspects of the nature of the *sefirot*. In this sense it is an attempt to resolve a problem arising from classic Kabbalistic sources, where descriptions of the *sefirot* as concentric circles intermingle with others of a linear hierarchic order, without adequate explanation for the inconsistency or even contradictions between the two. Vital’s solution is that “Both are the living word of God,” not contradictory descriptions, but compatible ones, since they represent two aspects of one nature, two formal aspects for conceptualizing the divine *sefirot*. (131)

The lines, or the straightness, are identified with the masculine aspects of reality; the circles are identified with the feminine aspects of reality. “Indeed the interaction between straightness and circles is none other than a sexual relationship in which straightness is identified with the male and circles with the female, i.e. the *sefirah Yesod* and the *sefirah Malkhut*” (Pachter 143). The relationship between the masculine and the feminine which we have been describing throughout this chapter can be represented by the symbolism of lines and circles.

¹²³ This is an English translation of Pachter’s Hebrew essay *Igullim veYosher – LeToldoteha shel Idea*, which appeared in *Daat*, Volume 18.

Pachter continues his essay by tracing the development of these ideas in various post Lurianic kabbalah sources. For example, he quotes R. Shlomo Eliashiv's (1841–1926) work *Le Shem Shevo ve-Aḥlamah* that the circles are embodied first as the four elements at the core of reality. But it is the lines that allow these elements to develop into various worlds. Thus Pachter writes regarding Eliashiv:

In this context the main difference between the principle of circles and the principle of straightness is revealed. While the first is based on the wholeness of each particular world, the second represents the openness between the worlds. It is the bridge between the separate worlds and is thus the guarantee of their separate existence on one hand, and on the other, of their elevation and inclusion in each other, to the point of ultimate union. (140-141)

We see in this the hint of an idea, that the circles represent the roots but the lines represent the development out of those roots.

Pachter contrasts this view to an earlier thinker R. Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto (1707–1746) in this *Qelah Pithei Hokhmah* that there is no concrete reality to circles and lines, but rather they are visions and dreams. Pachter writes:

In brief: circles and straightness are images of abstract spiritual reality. Their real meaning is therefore to be sought beyond the forms in themselves. Indeed, when he comes to discuss this meaning, Luzzatto declares that circles and straightness illustrate two manifestations of divine

providence by means of geometric imagery. One is called general providence or the mystery of the chain of emanative descent (*histalshelut*), and the other is individual conduct (*hanhagah*). (149)

Perhaps we can see the idea that the circles stand for something given in the nature of reality while the lines stand for the direction of individual behavior. This idea is developed further by the last thinker Pachter discusses, Rav Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935).

For Kook, the circles represent the necessary laws of existence. The lines represent the freedom to break out of those laws. Pachter quotes Kook's *Orot HaKodesh* 3:

Straightness is the more important aspect of existence, and circles are subordinate to it. That is to say, freedom of life, the absolute freedom from the source of existence, the freedom [embodied] in the divine concept that existence has been created from the moral side, is all in all. Thus it is that the morality in the matter of life that is the decisive aspect of life...Within the circles themselves, within the necessary laws of existence, within the everlasting iron laws that do not change their mode of existence on either a nation or a person, exerting their beneficence on evil [people] and their burning aspect on the good and the honest, within [their] inwardness, only straightness acts, and they take the way of the disposition of straightness for its sake. (165)

From these various rabbis we see the development of an idea that will be useful for our interpretation. Circles or the feminine aspects of reality represent the nature of things and are a conserving force. Straightness or the masculine nature of things represents individual action to break forth. The masculine takes priority over the feminine. Before we look at these ideas through the eyes of Whitehead, let us turn once again to Wolfson's writing.

In Wolfson's 1995 book *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism*, the title expresses a fundamental idea of Wolfson. The circle is the feminine aspect of reality, the square is the masculine aspect of reality. As Wolfson's title suggests, the circle is in the square meaning that ultimately the feminine will be reabsorbed into the masculine. Wolfson writes in the preface to the book:

Although kabbalists clearly describe the divine in terms of male and female, in the final analysis the dualistic posture gives way to a metaphysical monism that can be expressed mythically as the male androgyne; that is, the gender polarity of God is transcended in the singular male form that comprises both masculine and feminine. I argue, moreover, that the ontological status of the female as being part of the male is most vividly articulated in kabbalistic sources in the mythic complex of the androgynous phallus. That is, the locus of gender dimorphism is in the male organ itself. More specifically, the feminine aspect of God in its ontological root is portrayed as the corona of the penis. For the kabbalist, therefore, redemption consists of the restoration of the female to the male, a process that is fundamentally the

reconstitution of the male androgyne rather than the unification of two autonomous entities. The secret of unity ultimately involves the merging of the female into the male and not the preservation of their ontic distinctiveness. This point is poignantly expressed by the adaptation in Lurianic kabbalah of the eschatological motif of the righteous sitting in the world to come with their crowns on their heads. This image conveys the idea that in the eschaton there is a reconstitution of the androgynous phallus symbolized by the restitution of the female crown to the male organ. (Circle xiii)

As noted in the previous chapter, other scholars such as Idel and Abrams disagree with Wolfson that redemption will occur when the feminine is reabsorbed into the masculine. Still we can see from Wolfson's language that the circle is secondary to the square. If circles stand for the conserving forces of nature and lines of the square stand for individuals breaking out, the lines take priority. With this summary of the powerful idea of circles and straightness from Lurianic kabbalah, we are ready to apply this to our image of reality.

Why lines and circles? The masculine aspects of reality, symbolized by lines, are those that break forth into new areas, evolve, and lead to the emergence of new ways. Without them the world cannot move forward. Lines are necessary for emergence to take place. But lines can also lead to randomness and chaos. There must be a force that conserves the past, that protects old habits, and that prevents total randomness from overtaking reality. This is represented by the circles.

The circles are a conserving force. They represent old ways. They protect against total chaos. The masculine tendencies are those that break outside of themselves to create new realities. Remember the previous comparison to sperm. But this creativity can burst forth out of control. The feminine tendencies are those that limit creativity, form protective walls. They are compared to the womb. Without this protective wall, chaos can reign. When the universe is out of balance, chaos is the result. When the universe is back in balance, the creative tendencies are balanced with the protective tendencies. Therefore process encompasses the tendency to move forward to create new realities balanced against the tendency to conserve old realities. The former is necessary but can lead to chaos. The latter is also necessary but can inhibit progress.

This idea finds its parallel in the much later writings of Whitehead. Whitehead does not speak of masculine and feminine in his description of actual entities. But he does speak of the potential for some entities to break forth in new directions, and as a result, for some to descend into chaos. In fact, his concerns about chaos are an important part of his vision. Each actual entity or occasion has freedom and autonomy to go in whatever direction it chooses. It has the vision of the lure - God's superject nature. But it also has the freedom to go off in any direction. And sometimes that direction leads to chaos. Whitehead writes about the balance between order and chaos. He claims that the advance into creativity entails the threat of chaos. Nonetheless, without such an advance there can be no progress. To quote Whitehead on this issue:

Thus, if there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture along the borders of chaos in its substitution of higher for lower types of order. The immanence of God

gives reason for the belief that pure chaos is intrinsically impossible. At the other end of the scale, the immensity of the world negatives the belief that any state of order can be so established that beyond it there can be no progress. The belief in a final order, popular in religious and philosophic thought, seems to be due to the prevalent fallacy that all types of seriality necessarily involve terminal instances. It follows that Tennyson's phrase "...one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves"¹²⁴ presents a fallacious conception of the universe. (111)

Whitehead whose entire metaphysics is built around evolution and process, teaches that without the bursting forth and creativity of individual entities there can be no such evolution and no progress. The quote from Tennyson shows that there is no final end with which this progress will come to a halt. Evolution and process will continue. On the other hand, without the conserving qualities to sustain order, the process can lose control and chaos can reign. Balance is necessary in the evolution of the individual entities.

Elizabeth Kraus, in her analysis of Whitehead, writes how living things in particular evolve under this vision of the balance between order and chaos:

¹²⁴ From Alfred Lord Tennyson's 1849 poem "In Memoriam." The closing stanza is: "That God, which ever lives and loves, One God, one law, one element, And one far-off divine event, To which the whole creation moves." The last three lines are inscribed in the main reading room of the Library of Congress.

Life manifests a degree of autonomy not found in the inorganic world of corpuscular and structured societies. Yet its very autonomy makes it paradoxically the most destructive as well as the most fragile of forces. Without a highly structured environment to pattern its data and assimilate its reactions, it is merely a moment of valueless, anarchic disorder, resembling a revolutionary so radical as to eschew any contact or communication with the society he revolts against, thereby forfeiting both the platform and the fruits of his revolt. (71)

Without a conserving tendency to “pattern its date,” there is a danger that this process will lead to chaos and anarchy. F. Centore, in his essay “Whitehead’s Conception of God,” expresses a similar concern. However, he also sees the positive aspects of the potential for chaos. He writes:

Chaos enters the picture of the universe by the fact that there may exist nonsocial actual entities, that is, elements existing in the midst of the universe of actual entities which do not form a part of some social nexus by sharing the same common element with other members of the group in question. These elements contribute to disorderliness in the world. However, *some* chaos is not considered by Whitehead to be evil. In fact, it performs a valuable function in the universe by aiding the advance of progress beyond limited ideals by making possible the formation of new groupings and societies of various types. (152-153)

Finally, Whitehead speaks of the human need to find such a balance between preserving the past and moving creatively into the future. He writes: “The world is faced by the paradox that, at least in the higher actualities, it craves for novelty and yet is haunted by terror at the loss of the past, with its familiarities and its loved ones” (516). Whitehead sees this need for seeking balance as a central purpose of education. “Another contrast is equally essential for the understanding of ideals – the contrast between order as the condition for excellence, and order as stifling the freshness for living. The contrast is met with in the theory of education” (514).

Therefore, in both the *Zohar* and Whitehead, we begin to see an image of process in the universe. Process is the balance of two forces symbolized in kabbalistic thought by the masculine and the feminine, lines and circles. According to this interpretation, the masculine aspect of reality, the line, is what allows the universe to move forward, forming new types and allowing emergence to take place. But the masculine aspect out of control can lead to chaos and a breakdown of reality. According to this interpretation, the feminine aspect of reality, the circle, holds the masculine aspect in check, conserving old ways and maintaining old habits. But the feminine devoid of the masculine will become stuck in a repetitive pattern, with no hope for progress and no room for renewal. Only when the masculine and the feminine are brought into balance can progress be made. And returning to zoharic language, this will only happen when the moon and the sun are back in balance.

Part of the beauty of the kabbalistic way of understanding the universe is that human beings have the power to restore the balance between the masculine and the feminine. That is the reason why, in the *Siddur* (prayerbook) used by followers of the

Jewish mystical tradition, a short meditation appears at the beginning of the morning prayers:

לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קְדוּשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתָּהּ.

For the purpose of uniting the Holy One, Blessed is He, and the *Shekhinah*.

Moshe Halamish, in his book *An Introduction to the Kabbalah*, specifically speaks of this human role in uniting the masculine and feminine aspects of God:

A large part of man's religious action is therefore dedicated to removing obstacles and maximizing the nearness and the union between these two Sefirot. ¹²⁵ The male figure, which actually characterizes all nine of the Sefirot, as abundance flows from all of them, has its focal point in the figure of Tiferet. Not accidentally does that Sefirah descend as a straight line directly from Keter, with nothing else on that line but the Sefirah of Yesod, which connects to the figure below it-that of the female. (137)

Human beings are part of the unfolding cosmology begun with the first emanation from *Ein Sof* into the palace. God is somehow broken, filled with separations. But humanity has been given the power to put God back together again. Idel powerfully describes this human power and responsibility:

¹²⁵ *Tiferet and Malkhut*.

Jewish theurgical anthropology strikes utterly different chords; the problem is basically the need of the Divinity for human help, or human power, in order to restore the lost Sefirotic harmony. The focus of the Kabbalistic theurgy is God, not man; the latter is given unimaginable powers, to be used in order to repair the divine glory or the divine image; only his initiative can improve Divinity. An archmagician, the theurgical Kabbalist does not need external help or grace; his way of operating – namely the Torah – enables him to be independent; he looks not so much for salvation by the intervention of God as for God's redemption by human intervention. The theurgical Kabbalah articulates a basic feature of Jewish religion in general: because he concentrates more upon action than upon thought, the Jew is responsible for everything, including God, since his activity is crucial for the welfare of the cosmos in general. Accordingly, no speculation or faith can change the exterior reality, which must be rescued from its fallen state. (Perspectives 179)

In a similar manner, Charles Mopsik describes the relationship between the masculine and the feminine in both the earthly and heavenly realm:

The divine entity and the human entity as described in Genesis 2:24¹²⁶ are identical in structure. One like the other involves reuniting male and female principles. In the case of man it involves the physical union of man and woman; in the case of divinity, it involves the union of the *sefirot*, the masculine and feminine emanations *Yesod* and *Malkhut*. This view, which is also that of the Zohar, became the general stance of theosophical Kabbalah. A human soul is hence masculine and feminine in substance at the same time. Its split into a male entity and a female entity is an accident required for its descent into the lower world. The reconstitution of its bisexual unity, its “androgynous form” to us Gikatilla’s¹²⁷ terms, is the main objective of a successful marriage, since it is the guarantee of reunification in the world above. (31)

With these descriptions of human theurgic activity, we come to the end of our chapter on process. The goal is not to return to the primordial unity described in Chapter 4, but rather to seek balance between the masculine and the feminine aspects of reality. The masculine represented by the line is where reality breaks out in new directions, which leads to creativity. But such breaking forth can also lead to chaos. The feminine represented by the circle is where the past is preserved. But such preservation can stifle future creativity. In balance, reality move forward into new possibilities.

¹²⁶ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”

¹²⁷ Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla (1248–after 1305), a Spanish kabbalist.

With this image, we have applied Whitehead's philosophy of organism to the *Zohar's* description of creation. Both the *Zohar* and Whitehead, though separated by centuries, envision a reality that is not merely matter in motion. This interpretation of the creation story in the *Zohar* envision a reality where mind is immanent in the world, and where that mind creatively moves forward to new possibilities. By looking at mind, immanence, and process, we have described a powerful narrative of how the universe works, based on the *Zohar's* interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, as seen through the lens of Whitehead's process philosophy. We will summarize this narrative in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

We have now completed our project of using Whitehead's process philosophy to interpret the creation story in the *Zohar*. We have created a narrative which is an interpretation of the *Zohar*, itself an interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. Let us once again retell the story we developed over the last three chapters.

In the beginning there was mind. This primordial mind was different from anything that would one day exist. In fact, it could be called nothing, in the sense that it was no-thing. It was unlike any existent thing. That mind existed before time, before space, it was unified with no separations. The mind contained all potentialities, all possibilities. And that mind had a deficiency, a longing for something.

In the mind was a supernal will, a desire for something. A flow began within the mind. It flowed within itself, and the mind was not diminished by the flow. Initially it was a primordial spark, a simple thought. Within that spark remained all potentialities, with no separations. It was like a spark of light. But this spark of light, this primordial thought, needed a place to manifest itself. It spread out within a large space, a palace. In this way, separation and multiplicity entered the world. Separate minds were born. This was the beginning of creation.

Mind still permeated everything. But now the primordial unity was broken. Mind had emanated into space and separation had entered the world. Reality was composed of multiple individual entities, moments of awareness, separated in space from one another.

Each of these moments of awareness existed momentarily and then passed on, moving into new moments of awareness. And each such moment of awareness was cognizant of every other moment of awareness.

Nonetheless separation had entered the universe. Such separation created conflict and pain. But conflict and pain were necessary for creation to exist and eventually for the process to move forward. These moments of awareness, even as they touched one another, often differed. Some were marked by outreach and benevolence. Others were marked by protectiveness and self-absorption. Others still tried to balance these two natures. But often the world was out of balance.

As separation and conflict entered the world, so did the possibility of process. Only then could the original will of the primordial mind be fulfilled in space and time.

Mind permeated everything. The universe was filled with individual bits of consciousness that sought satisfaction, passed out of existence, and in so doing, became the basis for future bits of consciousness. The primordial unity had been broken. Nonetheless, these individual moments of consciousness were filled with a desire, an eros. Since the primordial unity had been broken, perhaps they were being lured to fulfill some greater purpose.

Of course each of these moments of consciousness was independent, following its own particular creative path. Some would choose ways that would lead to chaos and even destruction. Others would seek to conserve the past and stifle creativity. But many had a deep sense of where they wanted to go, an attraction to other moments of consciousness. Teleology had entered the world, a sense of purpose and direction. The Zohar would see this teleology in explicitly masculine and feminine drives.

Each individual moment of consciousness followed its particular path, directed itself towards its particular destiny. But behind it all there was a direction, an ultimate purpose. The universe was not a series of random events, it was not chaos. Or to put it more precisely, the chaos could be overcome. Sometimes an individual moment of consciousness would move in a chaotic direction. And sometimes an individual moment of consciousness was pulled from the verge of chaos by forces of order and habit. But reality was constantly in process, moving from chaos to order. It had a direction. There was a process at work in the world. And that direction was building on the brokenness to reclaim some greater purpose.

Three Fundamental Ideas in this Story

This narrative is built on three fundamental ideas, each of which was at the heart of the three previous chapters. The first idea is that mind is the primordial being. Before space and time, before matter and energy, before the existence of anything else, there was mind. This contradicts the contemporary idea that mind is an emergent property, coming late in the development of the universe. On the contrary, mind was there from the beginning and it is matter that develops later.

The second fundamental idea is that mind permeates everything. All creation has a low-level consciousness. The technical term for this idea is panpsychism and it has a long philosophical history. Philosophy of mind scholar David Chalmers says it makes no sense for mind to emerge at a higher level of creation. If it exists at all, it must exist all the way down. Chalmers writes:

A final consideration in favor of simple systems having experience: if experience is truly a fundamental property, it seems natural for it to be widespread. Certainly all the other fundamental properties that we know about occur even in simple systems, and throughout the universe. It would be odd for a fundamental property to be instantiated for the first time only relatively late in the history of the universe, and even then only in occasional complex systems. (Conscious 297)

The third fundamental idea is the notion of process or purpose in the universe. Each of the moments of consciousness mentioned in the above narrative has a telos, a direction. If modern science removed Aristotle's final causation from our understanding of the universe, our narrative reintroduces it. Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg may have famously said: "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless" (154). But our narrative proposes that the universe is not pointless, that there is an underlying purpose or direction to everything. However, can this new narrative replace the classical narrative in our modern outlook towards the universe?

A New Interpretation

For many people in the contemporary world, the classical interpretation of the creation story in Genesis does not work. Many people have become skeptical of the idea of an all-powerful God Who created the universe through an act of divine fiat. Many people do not believe in a God who suspends scientific laws to work miracles. Many people are troubled by the idea of a world made of mindless stuff, passively reacting to outside forces but with no self-awareness. And many people are particularly troubled by

the idea of a world without purpose, with no teleology and no goals. For these people, the classical story of creation as we have understood it in the past no longer works.

I wrote in Chapter 1 regarding the creativity of hermeneutics, that the *Zohar* appeared because the classical interpretations of the classical texts and, in particular the philosophical arguments of Maimonides, no longer met the spiritual needs of the Jewish community. A new text and a new interpretation were needed to meet the spiritual needs of the community. The *Zohar* was reacting to the extreme rationalism of Jewish philosophy and the absolute transcendence of the philosophy's God.

In a similar way, Whitehead was reacting to the substance ontology of Aristotle that described a world made up of vacuous entities.¹²⁸ He repudiates the idea that the universe is made up of mindless substances moving about by blind forces. Whitehead writes: "The term 'vacuous actuality' here means the notion of a *res vera* devoid of subjective immediacy. This repudiation is fundamental for the organic philosophy" (29). Based on Whitehead, we have developed a narrative where each entity prehends every other entity, where a basic awareness permeates all creation. Mind has entered the universe at the lowest level of being.

Like the *Zohar* and like Whitehead, this narrative should meet the needs of contemporary people who are uncomfortable with the traditional interpretations of Genesis 1. This is a creation story with roots in the Biblical story. We have added a new layer to the long hermeneutic history of creation. We have put mind, awareness, and a sense of purpose back into the world. One can ask whether this layer of interpretation fits into the long Jewish history of hermeneutics. Is this a legitimate interpretation?

¹²⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 3, Whitehead uses the term "vacuous" to mean matter that is conceived as devoid of any subjective experience.

In Chapter 1, I wrote that hermeneutics itself is a kind of process. To quote what I wrote there: “hermeneutics in general, and in particular Jewish hermeneutics which recognizes multiple levels of interpretation, fits into Whitehead’s definition of a process as connected to an ongoing flow of consciousness.” Whitehead writes that any process must find a balance between being too orderly and being too chaotic. Too much order and the process will lack creativity, a word at the heart of Whitehead’s metaphysics. But too much chaos and the process will make a radical break with the past. To quote Whitehead on this balance between order and chaos: “The societies in an environment will constitute its orderly element, and the non-social entities will constitute its elements of chaos. There is no reason, so far as our knowledge is concerned to conceive the actual world as purely orderly or purely chaotic” (110). Whitehead continues with this theme: “Thus, if there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture along the borders of chaos in its substitution of higher for lower types of order” (111). Creativity requires a balance between order and chaos.

If hermeneutics is a process, it must follow the same rules. In order to show creativity, it must break away from the accepted interpretations of the past. But break away too far and it descends into chaos, losing its legitimacy as a Jewish interpretation. In my humble opinion, this narrative meets Whitehead’s criteria for a legitimate process. It is radical enough to break with past interpretations and display new creativity, but not so radical that it totally breaks with the past. It is a legitimate new layer added to the multiple Jewish interpretations of the Biblical creation story.

Does this narrative work? Can this new way of understanding creation resonate with contemporary thinkers who cannot accept the classical interpretation of the creation story? This will be the basis for future exploration. Elaborating on these themes of mind,

immanence, and process to continue to tell a compelling story will be the goal of further research on this topic.

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