

## KABBALAH AND YOGA AS “BRICOLAGE”: *TIKKUN OLAM* - THE CREATION OF IDENTITY IN A WORLD OF MEANING

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Why should we practice yoga and Kabbalah together?

In the Kabbalistic philosophy taught by Moshe Cordevero and Isaac Luria in 16th century Safed - *Tsfat* - in the Palestine of the Ottoman Empire : the purpose of Kabbalah was *tikkun olam* - the repair of the world.

This is only fully possible if you believe, as the Safed Kabbalists did, that the *mitzvah*, the good deed, carried out in the spirit of the *Shekhina*, the holy presence, embodies wisdom in *this* world, a wisdom which also repairs and perfects *the world to come*.

The *psyche* through Kabbalah (meaning “reception” of the actual or mythological *Shekhina* through Jewish mysticism) and the *body* through yoga breathing and exercise ideally become one: the *psyche-soma* - at least in meditation even if you don't believe in a world hereafter. In that case you have to frame your Kabbalah and yoga practice in more modest, metaphorical terms: - to try in some small way to make at least our world, better: less soulless, less meaningless, less heartless. This is to address modernity and its discontents (Berger *et al* 1974).

The whole trouble with capitalism and post-capitalist collectivism is that the self and the physical body are irreparably split by a sense of our alienation from the Big Thing – the System which dominates our working and personal lives and fragments us. The System can be the state, something alienating in our work, the tragic impact of unhappy relationships, something quite personal such as losing a loved one, the process of ageing, becoming handicapped or finally the last challenge of all: death which should as we look back over our lives, retrospectively make us aware of how we have, after all created an identity in a world which has through art, sport, work, love, religion, our families, our friends, even through self-sacrifice, become meaningful and fulfilling.

Our purpose is to internalise the existentially imperative mythology of a usually veiled God. In Jewish mysticism the necessary mythology of God unites the moral and physical universe which we perceive in the here and now. We need to believe in the mythological God for fear that without Her the world in Camus's graphic term in *The Myth of Sisyphus* – *is absurd*, not only cruel and heartless. Creation otherwise is, scientifically, just an accident in the nature of things, explicable in terms of the laws of astrophysics. But we have to make God, as it were, even though, apparently S/he did not make us. Darwin, Freud, Einstein, Hawking understand this.

That the universe or the multiverse just is, is hard to grasp, especially after Auschwitz. Richard Rubinstein in his book *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (1966) at first retreated into a pagan respect for nature in an apparently Godless universe. No one to my knowledge can answer the question properly “why is what is?” even if we can give historical reasons for Hitler and the hideous wrongs committed in the name of white, Western (or Eastern) civilisations.

But to make what is good requires the genius of a Kant (1724-1804) who never left his native Königsberg. The *Zohar* suggests that “*Bereishit bara Elohim et...*” “With the beginning created God [*et*]... : aleph-tav –“ Not “*Bereishit bara Elohim et haShamaim v' et ha Aretz*” but first of all “*et*” - aleph-tav - the first and last letters of the alphabet – Alpha and Omega, the beginning of and the ultimate end of the universe – perhaps from a scientific point of view contained in the singularity, the ultimate “point” of *Hokhmah* – wisdom - which a modern cosmologist might identify as the origin of what became the Big Bang 13.75 billion years ago. Stephen Hawking (2001 pp.36-99 on the “Singularity”) and Greek thought corroborate the *Zohar*'s intuitive insight. We live in an anthropic universe where the human and the environmental natural and animal good are *a priori* - from before, rooted in Jewish and Greek philosophy, in the *logos* - Reason, in the Platonic idea, the *eidos*, as long as we properly know ourselves and our society and its false and authentic *mythos*, its narratives.

This intuitive premonition of a scientific finding is to be found in Daniel Matt's commentary (pp 109-111 footnotes 1 and following of his commentary on the *Zohar*). The origin of Being is nothing but a point containing a kind of idealised Platonic wisdom into which every possibility of Being is infinitely condensed.

Gershom Scholem in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941,1995, pp..156-286) attributes the *Zohar* to Rabbi Moshe ben Shemtov de Leon who started to publish it in Castile in 1280 as pseudepigraphica in the name of the eminent second century Palestinian Talmudist Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The problem is that the *Zohar* written in De Leon's idiosyncratic, fantastic, medieval Aramaic and Hebrew has to be interpreted *ecstatically* if we are to internalise Kant's ethic, the categorical imperative as a corollary of the *Tselem* the image of God, Adam Kadmon and Chavva Kadmona. Otherwise any myth of any god, even an evil god who inspires murder would count. Which means in Kant's terms, to try to act as if we are acting for mankind or at least taking into account our significant Others as well as for ourselves.

My hypothesis is that we are better able to do this identification in a trance state or in a meditative mood flooded by the *endorphin* hormones produced by the intensive yoga pose.

The fact is that alienation constantly intrudes. We might understand, with Sartre (in his play *Huis Clos* and in pp 245-326 of *Being and Nothingness*) that hell can be Other people or at least we and the Others can look at each other to objectify us as things rather than as people like themselves. But in the Kantian ethic the categorical imperative transcends its absence in the Other, who then has to be dealt with according to law and custom so as to bring him within an ethical universe. In the shadow of Hegel's universal reason, the individual, good and evil, finds his authentic or false subjectivity.

Emmanuel Levinas who survived the Holocaust but some of whose family of origin in Lithuania did not, simply asks of the Other - would the Other kill him for no good reason? For Levinas, in civilization,

as in Kant, the Other, who shares with me an ultimate end in death, as a “thou” is somehow elected into a hoped-for immortality, which transcends the animality and the anarchy of the primal horde of early man (Levinas 2006, p.7). This is *a priori* – “from before” in the very nature of the social contract. This is the fundamental ethical basis for humanity and for the control of crime and if justified, international intervention, taking issue against those in the grip of some monstrous unreason like Nazism, Stalinism, white supremacism, Islamic or any other religious terrorism, black elitist dictatorship as in Zimbabwe and even in a post-apartheid South Africa a society potentially ruined by corruption and a failure in governance. This violation of the *a priori* of the “thou”-ness of the Other given our mutual end in death is found in Thabo Mbeki refusing to issue anti-retrovirals on “ideological” grounds - the insanity that AIDS was not caused by a virus at all and was rather purely a disease of poverty caused by white colonialism (Johnson 2010 index references to Mbeki’s AIDS denial). Corruption to the point of violating the equality of “thou” is to be found in Jacob Zuma’s financial associates, able to offer cabinet posts to “friends” even after Zuma alleged embezzlement of state funds. (See [politicsweb.co.za](http://politicsweb.co.za) posts on this controversy). Obviously, Nazism and Stalinism were evils on a scale that far exceed post-colonial corruption and dictatorship in Africa including genocides in Zimbabwe and Rwanda-Burundi, famine and starvation in Darfur, chaos in Syria.

In Kabbalah, for me, Adam Kadmon and Chavva Kadmona, are made in the image of a mythological God. I say mythological: S/he does not appear to intervene in history, to the point that we might wonder if S/he is there at all. I see why in theory if there is a God S/he should allow free will to Nazis or any psychopathic person or group. Otherwise how would we learn justice without confrontational and hideous narratives concerning unspeakable murders and wars? Further, one might believe in the myth of a normally good God which, when I take the leap of faith with Soren Kierkegaard, *does* locate me in an ethical world. S/he does not normally hide or veil Her face as S/he did in the Holocaust or in the era of Stalinism. But for me Elohim, *mythologically*, is the God of justice or *Din* or *Gevurah*, who is identified with Isaac *and* is El identified with Abraham, the God of Her patriarch’s

lovingkindness. Soren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* (1985, pp.140-147) shows that whereas we admire the aesthetic of the narrative of the tragic hero like Abraham or Isaac - we are tempted by the voice of God in our consciousness disguised as Moloch and we are intrigued by the struggle of the knight of faith. Only if the story grips us aesthetically and ethically is there the springboard across the abyss of unbelief into belief when God (in our consciousness) stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. This is why we have to narrate the story of a Hitler or a Stalin *and their final last acts of murder* to show aesthetically and ethically that there is firm ground before and after the leap of faith across the abyss of unbelief. This does not have to be into Kierkegaard's Christian fundamentalism or literalism (in his case into the saving grace of Jesus' sacrifice which in some way redeems us.) It could be ethically and aesthetically more truthful to intuitively understand not only the suffering of God's Son as a "payment" for our sins in which transaction God is the model self-sacrificing parent on whom we should model ourselves, but to be moved to ethical compassion by Isaac's terror when he saw his father Abraham about to tie him to an altar and sacrifice his beloved son. In the same way in the Amidah prayer before the destruction of the temples, the ancestors and God were appeased by being "fed" by animals killed and roasted on an altar. In the primitive unconscious God and the ancestors are hungry and lonely in the afterworld. But these are appealing stories. Apparently we need to have an appealing story of primitive guilt and fear of the punishing, hungry ancestors as well as the evil of Hitler and Stalin, **negative examples**, to cause us to create a firm ground of ethics and an abyss to be leapt over into faith.

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In yoga when we are in the tension of the yoga pose like the Cobra we use the exercise of the body introjected into which there are Abraham and Isaac, right arm and left arm, (respectively also Sarah and Rebecca) *enacting* the *Akedah*. This is not the serpent of Chavva Kadmona's disobedience but the snake traditionally associated with Hermes' or Mercury's wisdom, bringing *Eyn Sof, Hokhmah, Binah and Tiferet* as the beauty of endless, wise and understanding compassion, together. This is a *bricolage* (*a propos* Levi-Strauss and other anthropologists) of various re-assembled religious elements. This is so because modernisation and social

disintegration require that we reach across the worlds of various religions to express what was or is trapped within one religious tradition, trapped within its own dogma because alienation, the extinction of the heart of a heartless world, is so widespread. We also meditate on the everyday heroism of police, soldiers, firemen, ambulance men, neighbours, friends, who reach across from Wisdom to Understanding to the Beauty of Compassion.

Actually, in even in our philosophical myth, God is One. But in Kabbalah and even in some Jewish theology there are aspects of God. Hence at a more psychological level the *Shekhina*, is the everyday Presence of God Who is ready-to-hand. *Shekhina* can also enter the metaphorical womb of *Binah*, and *YHVH* is identified with the power of receptive understanding - *Binah* - and with the cognitive power of outward-reaching wisdom (*Hokhmah*) and the underlying power of knowledge (*Da'at*). *Kether*, crown, is the sovereignty of God and this myth can be internalised mystically and cognitively as human sovereignty and will. They can all be ready-to-hand in the Imaginary and through the Imaginary can become Real, rather than present-at-hand as merely scientific or cognitive or ritualistic entities. The entity with which we are dealing is *Dasein* which means *Being There: the subject is not an object, not just ontic (empirical), but ontological (to do with ontos - Greek for "of Being".)* According to Julia Kristeva, the origin of being is not cognitive, and is pre-verbal, pre-symbolic, pre-Oedipal, the *chora* - Greek for "space". The artist still pulses with the rhythms of the foetus in the womb.

To help us locate and integrate the metaphysical with the physical I can show how Elohim/YHVH is internalised in the body in the *sefirot* of AYN SOF and KETHER through yoga which is the vehicle for Being.

AYN SOF: This is the Without End, Being as such, Being-in-the-world and Being-in-the-cosmos. In yoga this can be symbolised and internalised in the posture of the Tree. In the Tree I stand, one foot behind and at right angles to the other as in the first position of ballet. I extend the arms and hands straight up and interlace the fingers upside down and stretch the arms and hands up vertically and I imagine Being, Ayn Sof, pouring into me. I can put the

interlaced fingers the right way round on my head: this symbolises the imagined *Kether*, the crown of sovereignty.

El as *Hesed*, lovingkindness, and *Elohim* as *Gevurah* justice and power unite with the beauty of compassion, TIFERET who is Jacob who became Israel after his struggle with the stranger - the Other in the *parshah V'yishach*. *Tiferet* - which means beauty but refers in Kabbalah to the beauty of compassion is identified with yoga breathing which is the same breathing used by opera singers. On the in-breath the diaphragm and stomach wall are pushed down and out. There is a pause whilst the breath is held, then the breath is pushed out by bringing the diaphragm up and pulling the stomach wall in. At a physiological level this breathing releases *endorphins* - hormones producing feelings of pleasure and tranquillity. Each limb and aspect of cognition and imagination becomes symbolically Real through the imaginary and Real discourse of biblical characters: the matriarchs are excluded from Kabbalah traditionally but become Real in the sense meant by Jacques Lacan by being either located with their male partners or with the moving spirit of the Shekhina or simply with Jacob-becoming-Israel in TIFERET. To quote Moshe Cordevero, the colleague of the Ari, Rabbi Isaac Luria:

“The righteous are capable of becoming a vehicle for the *sefirot*, through the mystery of the emanations of their souls, their actions in this world, and their inclination toward one side and toward one of the *sefirot*. Thus Abraham was a man of *Hesed*; Isaac was a man of *Gevurah*, Jacob master of *Tiferet*, Moses, master of *Netsah*, Aaron master of *Hod*, Joseph master of *Yesod* and David master of *Malkut*.”

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The idea of *tikkun olam*, *repair of the shattered world*, speaks for itself; intuitively it seems to be not just mythological even though put in religious terms in Lurianic Kabbalah. It seems to have quasi-political and ethical appeal. Whilst not overtly Zionist the setting of the *Zohar* is the mythological Palestine of Shimon bar Yochai re-conceived by Rabbi Moshe De Leon and if the life of Maimonides is anything to go by at least the Sephardi Jews would know that emigration elsewhere from Spain would fulfil the quasi-Zionist

aspiration of the *Zohar* to enter the world of Shimon bar Yochai as closer to HaShem, or as they put it *Ayn Sof*, being as Being.

This insight has been used in Lurianic Kabbalah for four hundred years and is now part of Hasidic Judaism, dating back to the world of the Ba'al Shem Tov (1698 - 1760) in 18th century Ukraine which spread throughout eastern Europe and western Russia. The *Besht* tried to get to Ottoman Palestine but his journey was, he thought, fatefully aborted perhaps through divine intervention. Still, if anybody could speak with political and ethical sincerity about the vulnerability of the Jewish population in eastern Europe to *pogroms* and how to facilitate defence and emigration in the face of violent anti-Semitism, it would be the Hasidim, some of whom, however, would tragically, leave it too late to avoid Hitler.

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Marx said that religion was the opium of the masses, but also, he added, *religion is the heart of a heartless world*. This heartlessness, spiritual or psycho-social alienation, has preoccupied serious modern economists like J.M.Keynes, and Thomas Piketty, worried about the globalised pervasiveness of a frequently collapsing inegalitarian, alienating and pollution-prone capitalism.

These concerns have been shared by sociologists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, artists and philosophers of the industrial and post-industrial ages.

These include Durkheim on suicide, Freud on civilisation and its discontents, Jung on the need for religious archetypes, Edmund Husserl on the crisis in European thought, Erich Fromm on consumerism, Theodore Adorno on authoritarianism and Max Horkheimer the latter three belonging to the Frankfurt School of Social Research. Fredric Jameson and Jacques Lacan with their psycho-social philosophy of how the Imaginary political and personal "unconscious" becomes as brutally real as the brute Real of pain, instinct and recurrent traumatic neuroses. Malcolm Bowie in *Lacan*, (1993 index references to the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary) and Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* suggest that that a social system based on conformity causes us to repress

rebellion against it. The mystic is not necessarily an extreme neurotic introvert or, God forbid, a schizophrenic saint as suggested by R.D. Laing. But it is politically problematic that mysticism albeit based on a healthy connection through meditation and yogic exercise should deflect us from changing the alienating Real. Mystical visionaries like Jean d'Arc do change political history.

Mysticism is like fiction in that writers preoccupied with the heartlessness of modern psycho-social alienation appeal to us because they imagine and convey the world as it really is with a view to changing it or at least changing us: Dostoevsky (*Notes from the Underground*), Kafka (*The Trial*), Thomas Mann (*Death in Venice*), Solzhenitsyn (*Cancer Ward*), J.M.Coetzee (*Disgrace*), Nadine Gordimer (*Guest of Honour*), Doris Lessing (*The Grass is Singing* and *The Golden Notebook*), Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*), Philip Roth (*American Pastoral*), philosophers such as the existentialists Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Simone De Beauvoir, and a more contemporary intellectual Slavoj Žižek make us more than mystically aware of the abyss between aesthetics, ethics, the authentic on the one hand and on the other faith as a wasted life trapped in "facticity", "finitude," "fallen-ness" (Heidegger), bad faith (Sartre), the absurd (Camus), the necessarily ambiguous ethics of being a member of the allegedly "second sex" (De Beauvoir).

Rowan Williams, ex-Archbishop of Canterbury has written poetry, literary criticism, essays which address the emptiness of the spiritual condition in our contemporary world in relation to Christianity. Secularism is the preferred ideological / non-religious option of about 60% of Israeli Jews. Does not this need, surely to be linked to a holistic philosophy, a *tikkun olam* which although in some ways mythological is also a practical ethics?

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Psycho-social alienation is such an epidemic that it apparently drives ordinary voters like the white middle-class and blue-collar workers of the U.S. to elect a Donald Trump. In the White House, apparently only three sane generals and a sane secretary of state would be able to stop an evidently mentally disordered white

supremacist president who hates and seeks to unravel every decent piece of legislation created by his black predecessor, and, more importantly might want to press the nuclear holocaust buttons which would finally end civilization as we know it.

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Outside the West rule is also frequently in the hands of totalitarian dictatorships such as in China and North Korea and oligarchic post-communist near-dictatorships like Russia. Heartless fundamentalist religious/ political cults embodied by the state exist in Iran and in Saudi Arabia. Other dictatorships in the previous colonised world are ruled by the military or are proxies for quasi-tribal and corrupt oligarchies. Most of Africa and much of Asia and Central and South America are governed by elites which perpetuate huge inequalities and pollute the environment to the point of faunal, floral and human extinction - as do Western countries.

Syria and much of the Middle East is engulfed in ethnic-religious civil war or on the brink of outbreaks of terrorism. In the West terrorism is perpetrated by young fundamentalists who see nothing *for them but their heaven* at the expense of thousands of meanings outside a religiosity which *for them* restores a heart to a heartless world, ignoring victims who previously might have welcomed religious diversity as lessening the heartlessness of a heartless world. Tony Blair and George W. Bush Jnr. inflicted an unnecessary state-terroristic war on Iraq killing hundreds of thousands, and maiming and traumatising hundreds of thousands more.

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Refuge from diversity and the breakdown of meaningful old communities is sought in populist solutions which will add to the fragmentation of international alliances like the E.U. The irrationality of Brexit from the E.U. is motivated by a sense of alienation experienced by the older generation especially in deprived areas who voted to leave. Our own prime minister seems to lack the capacity for spiritual leadership although she is the daughter of an Anglican vicar. She seems incapable of controlling the huge damage being done by Brexit populists and people like Boris Johnson in her cabinet. She and Amber Rudd have allowed

the Home Office to create a hostile environment for civilized citizens of the EU or from other highly developed countries who have lived in Britain for years, and have British spouses and children, but are now faced with deportation or have been deported.

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How is one to restore a heart or *tikkun olam* to this seemingly heartless world?

Heart-fullness is now sought in quasi -religious practices like yoga and Kabbalah by Jews and gentiles because the mainstream churches, synagogues, temples and mosques preach a form of the divine which is, evidently quite unable to protect people psychologically from understanding fully the horrors of the violent world: fragmentation of old communities, civil war, widespread famine, massive inequality of opportunity, and indeed the fecklessness of indigenous populations who indeed *may* be welfare scroungers but still hate hard-working immigrants, be they Poles, Turks, Rumanians, Africans, Syrians, - any other kind of Other who may indeed become a terrorist threat but no more so than the indigenous white serial killer.

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Kabbalah as practiced by the Kabbalah Centres in Israel, Britain, Europe the U.S. and Brazil purport to cater for the heart in a heartless world. Unfortunately, they have been victims of far-fetched purely scandalous claims they are big business and liable to encourage far-fetched ideas for what they sell, be it "kabbalah water" at £5 a bottle of what turns out to be tap-water -or such went the malicious gossip. Or possession of their complete volumes of their edition of *The Zohar* the central text of Kabbalah which even though it is not properly annotated for the layperson - may indeed be incomprehensible to the lay person: but, again according to malicious gossip supposedly and magically a whole set of volumes of the Zohar profitably marketed was said by the purveyors of gossip to convey protection for the purchaser whether he can read and understand it or not. This was said, no doubt maliciously to be part of the sales talk of the Kabbalah Centres or some individuals within them.

The ordinary professional, office or factory worker, student, even children have to endure a splitting of mind and body in work, sport and education and end up often lacking in heart or wholeness or integration. In my opinion this is accentuated rather than diminished in Kabbalah as a pseudo-religion split off from the Judaism within which it originated and with which it should be integrated so as not to de-ethicise Kabbalah and turn it into a cult as does, famously, Madonna, who has not converted to Judaism, but, so we are told, has the money to subsidise the now extremely successful and profitable Kabbalah Centres.

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Yoga seeks to draw from Hindu philosophy and religion so as to add a physical dimension to the “spiritual” (really the psycho-social) search for meaning - for the body and the mind. The aim is to integrate the one with the other. Yoga too can become a source of alienation if the yoga teacher and yoga student prefer not to explore the “spiritual” (Symbolic, Imaginary and Real) setting of yoga in Hindu theology and philosophy, which has to do not only with the *chakras* but more importantly with what the Hindu deities represent within the yoga poses. Thus, one should be aware of and respectful to Brahmah the transcendent preserver, Shiva the destroyer and Vishnu the creator but understand how they interact in Lord Krishna’s yogic dance - and in the sacred Vedic texts, in the Mahabharata and in yoga as practiced by the westerner.

#### HOW HAS KABBALAH DEVELOPED WITHIN JUDAISM AND HOW CAN IT RELATE RESPECTFULLY TO YOGA AND JUDAISM WITHOUT “IDOLATRY”

My opinion is that modern contemporary Judaism is already tainted with idolatry, if only because it is often ideologically tied to or is ideologically used for or against Zionism or anti-Zionism. In my opinion Zionism and anti-Zionism can be metaphorically, “idols” - in other words false gods, platitudes, postures. The real question is “Can radical right-wing Zionist/Jewish religion and politics or by

the same token radical left wing pro-Palestinian politics solve the Israel-Palestine problem?” Radical and ideological polarisation cannot, almost by definition, *a priori*, solve the problem because the problem it is too much rooted in a long history of emotional investment in, for example, the Holocaust and equally, the *Nakhbah* – the tragic eviction of 700,000 Arab Palestinian refugees. These traumata which have to be acknowledged - in modern terminology “worked through” and for which reparation should be made. The latter is virtually impossible at a governmental level as regards Likud, Hamas and Hezbollah. A Nelson Mandela or an Archbishop Tutu - neither appear to exist on the Israeli/Palestinian scene, although Rabbi Arik Ashermann is an almost messianic hero. At least most South Africans are nominally Christians and apart from the San, the Bushpeople, never suffered genocide.

What we can do is to set an example of inter-culturality. This form of yoga entails Buddhist and/or Hindu and/or Jewish Kabbalistic meditation techniques. In doing so *bricolage* (see Veronique’s Altglas’s recent book based on her ethnographic research *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*) - allows for eclecticism as between yoga and Kabbalah somewhat reassembled because mainstream Hinduism and Judaism and other institutional religions do not address the alienating non-spirituality of the modern industrial and post-industrial *secular* worlds which, on the contrary have a disintegrating influence on individuals and groups.

Importing African spirit religion or animism into church Christianity may, on the contrary revive spirituality in Africa or African diaspora societies - or, equally African animism in Britain - anywhere - may cause severe child abuse and child murder as happened a few years ago in London where a supposedly bewitched child was murdered by her aunt and her aunt’s male partner.

Dogmatic talk of idolatry polluting Jewish religion through Kabbalah or contact with idols in other religions is not helpful especially in a heartless world which to quote Nietzsche ... “God is dead and we have killed him” and in the realistically disilluminated post-Holocaust theology of Richard Rubinstein in his book *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (1966) the original edition of

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which advocated a humanist paganism. Even conservative and mainstream Jewish thinkers accept that God “veiled His face” when He saw what Hitler and the SS and their willing executioners, Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Belarussians, etc. did from the summer of 1941 till the end of the second world war in 1944 and 1945. Anti-Semitism is now the norm in places like Hungary where ultra-right-wing politicians like Orban and his party are in power. (See “Jewish Renaissance”, London October 2017 in which virtually all the contributors including Hungarian Jews descended from families who survived and others, relatives of those who died in the Holocaust write of overt dislike or rejection of Jewishness by Christian Hungarians - Judaism being contrary to Hungarian nationalism – which is a fragile thing because of the isolating difference of the Hungarian language and Hungary’s long history of being colonised by the Hapsburgs, and the communist empires.)

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Kabbalah has already been co-opted into New Age and Christian cultures. One should ask of the Other to be respectful of the essentially Jewish nature of Kabbalah.

All these provisos need to be made because inter-culturality is not just fashionable. It may also be very threatening to fundamentalists or intellectual purists. It needs to be wise.

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## ISRAELITE AND JEWISH MYSTICISMS AND THEIR INTEGRATION WITH YOGA

The earliest inspiration for Jewish mysticism comes from the Hebrew bible. The experience of Moses at the burning bush may be mythological but this vision and Moses’ dialogue with *Eheye Asher Eheye* (“I Am That I Am”), Abrahams’s experiences and the episode of Jacob and the Stranger can be incorporated into Kabbalah meditations, mythological though they may be.

The other early roots of Kabbalah (which, to remind one again means “reception” or “received tradition”) are in the 3rd-6th century Palestinian *Sefer Ha Yetzirah*, the Book of Creation; and the 12th century Provencal *Sefer ha Bahir* (the Book of Clarity). The main

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source of Kabbalah, however, is the *Sefer ha Zohar* which is the Book of Radiance and indispensably the annotation of the book by the leading current scholar of the Zohar, Daniel Matt who has now edited the whole of the Zohar in the Prinzker edition which runs to 12 volumes. It is now accepted by all except the fundamentalist Orthodox that the author of the Zohar was Rabbi Moshe De Leon of Castile the manuscript of which he began to distribute in 1280, although he may have thought, as he maintained, that it was written by (we should say inspired by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai the famous 2nd century Talmudic sage and his companions). The analogy is in Plato's dialogues, where attributions are made to Socrates and Alcibiades but the real voice is Plato's - just as the real voice in the Zohar is that of De Leon whose Aramaic is full of neologisms quite unlike the genuine Aramaic of Roman Palestine. This is shown by De Leon's other writings acknowledged by him as his own written in a medieval Spanish version of Aramaic exactly like the Aramaic of the Zohar - as argued by Gershon Scholem the most eminent researcher into the Zohar in his books about Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism.

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I have given one example of a yoga pose or *asana* which relates practically and physically with Ayn Sof - the Tree as the means whereby Being which is-present-at-hand is mythologically accessed through the presented symbolised Crown in the interlaced hands turned round the palms facing up and psychologically becomes ready-to-hand.

Here one attempts to integrate the other *sefirot* with another yoga pose the Cobra: - the arms vertical and the hands flat facing forward on the mat, supporting the abdomen and the chest at roughly 45 degrees, the head looking straight out horizontally. The legs are flat straight out pressing on the mat. (This pose and all the yoga poses are accessible in pictorial form on the internet under "Yoga Poses - the Cobra" etc.)

Integration with the *sefirot* and biblical heroes and heroines and their mystical or mythological experiences would go as follows: assuming the divine to be associated with what pours in from the outside - Being as being present- at hand is part of the unassimilable AYN SOF only part of which comes into the senses

as coordinated by the mind/brain: Being as ready-to-hand. Adam Kadmon is intuitively mapped in the following way:

KETHER - crown surrounds the head is itself WILL or sovereignty, but the brain/mind is seen as containing HOKHMAH wisdom on the right side of the mind/brain of the individual himself looking out. This in Adam Kadmon reflects the divine cosmological wisdom or science of both being-present-at-hand i.e. accessible in some way with BINAH, understanding, also either present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. The meditation might be the mythological meditation based on DA'AT, knowledge: the serpent not only persuades Chavva (Eve) to disobey God, but the disobedience is guiltily admitted to the LORD God, that is the fullest possible presence of Elohim and YHVH - which we may interpret as Being itself: thus what Heidegger calls *fallen-ness* and *guilt* is inherent in *Dasein* (human being) ontologically-in-the-world. All cultures produce some guilt whatever the differences in mythological background if only to prevent or to control incest which may be biologically harmful. All cultures deal in some sort of mind-stuff, consciousness of understanding-consciousness, whether Being-in-the-world, or Being-with-the-Other(s).

Commented [MP14]: add words

Commented [MP15]: alter phrase

Commented [MP16R15]:

Here is the full catalogue of the attributes of Adam and Chavva Kadmon(a) as *b'tselem*, the image of God "male and female made he them" as in the first creation story in Genesis and further elaborated in Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism. These "*sefirot*" refer to the potential of the natural and human worlds: ATSILUT - "emanation" the perfectly Platonic ideas or essences which exist in the good parents for example, but which require BERIAH "creation" in order to be exemplified in the child through learning; then YETZIRAH ("formation" - of sexual identity) and finally HASIYAH (the "making" of the work done by the adult.) As this is an interactive system the "whole" person is, like God, in a constant state of becoming (existence not essence is the being of Being; *existence precedes essence.* )

## BEING IS THE PURPOSE OF BEING

AYN SOF("without end" and AYIN "nothingness" are because they are)- EHEYEH ("I AM")



V

V

The thorax breathing

V

> > < <

TIFERET [Beauty as Compassion]  
Jacob becomes Israel at Pen'iel;  
Patriarchs and matriarchs  
become intermediary  
ancestors replacing  
animal sacrifices in the  
Amidah. Jacob/ancestors  
become Ego. YHVH

Commented [MP17]: replace one word "invocational" with this other

V

V

HOD

NETSAH

The left leg:

The right leg:

AARON: MAJESTY: RITUAL:  
TSPA'OT:

MOSES: ETERNITY of  
PROPHECY & LAW:  
TSPA'OT

V

YESOD

SEXUALITY: JOSEPH  
SHADDAI

V

V

V

V

the feet on the earth

MALKUT - kingdom - DAVID / SHEKHINA - holy presence  
ADONAI

In *The Zohar*, Volume One (ed. by Daniel C. Matt pp. 110-111 footnotes 22 and 23 ) a mystical re-translation of the first words of Bereishit suggests “ [With] the beginning created God” and that the indicator of the object “Et” [ aleph-tav] indicates God created “ et” before He created “ haShamaim” “v’ et ha Aretz”. “Et” itself is the equivalent of Alpha to Omega, the beginning and the end of the Symbolic sign-universe: ”Bereshit bara Elohim et...” [With]the-beginning created God [Who is ) et - Aleph-Tav”

\* \* \*

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Commented [MP18]: correct bracket

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KIERKEGAARD, Soren (1843 / 1985) *Fear and Trembling*. London: Penguin pp. 83-95 and footnote 53 p.153 on the contradiction involved in the voice of God commanding the *Akedah* – the sacrifice of Isaac. This is a parable, a story, part of the aesthetic of religious ritual, to do with faith standing opposed to the Hegelian or Hellenic universalistic voice of reason which resolves ethical conflict. Conventional religion ignores the abyss of non-reason; it assumes a higher reason that subsumes a higher faith. The myth of God is the Real expressed in the Symbolic in the Imaginary subjective truth in Kierkegaard. As interpreted by a Lacanian: if Abraham succumbs to the Imaginary (Moloch) he betrays the Symbolic (HaMelech or haMalachey HaMelech) which requires the power of *logos* to fortify the Real in its brutal encounter with the Imaginary unconscious, the religiously fantastic regression into infanticide as required by the hungry primitive god - haMoloch.

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