

Early Ontologies of Both—The
Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The
Love Story of the Universe—in the
Interior Sciences

*An Early Draft of an Excerpt from Volume Two of
The Universe: A Love Story*

First Meditations on CosmoErotic Humanism

in Response to the Meta-Crisis

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We now turn to early ontologies of both, the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, in the interior sciences of the great traditions. By this we mean both realizations of the Cosmos as animated and driven by Eros, as well as a sense of Eros as the animating and motive force of the Evolutionary Story.

We alluded to Charles Darwin in passing above. But before we turn again to Darwin himself, more ancient sources for the ontologizing¹ of love—the realization of Love as an organizing Cosmic Principle in the interior sciences—are important sources which require at least some prior mention. By ontology we of course mean to refer to Eros, not as a materialist social construction of reality but as an intrinsic meaning structure of value of Cosmos.

Early sources for this understanding of Love as a basic ontology of Cosmos—as the animating energy of Reality, and particularly as the Creative Process—appear as an esoteric thread that runs through key texts of the interior sciences. We speak not of a premodern dogma claiming a central place for love as the motive force of Reality but of the contemplative realizations of the great traditions. These sets of common realizations derive from the cross-cultural interior investigation and experimentation conducted by some of the greatest hearts, minds, and spirits in known human history.

The writings of the interior sciences on the motive force of Eros deserve at the very least their own volume. Indeed, each of the interior science traditions deserves its own volume, with a second volume integrating their shared perennial features. But since that is beyond our purview here, we must at least mention them as part of the larger source context for the ontology of Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, the Universe: A Love Story, and the Intimate Universe that we are presenting here. After we adduce below at least the fragrance of these important ontologizers of Eros as the motive force of Reality, we also need to briefly explain why these sources have been largely ignored—with some notable exceptions—in the contemporary evolutionary conversation.

¹ *To ontologize*—according to Merriam Webster—means *to convert into ontological entities or express ontologically*. *Ontological* means *relating to or based upon being or existence*. As we write in the main text, by *ontology* we of course mean to refer *not* to a materialist, social construction of reality but to an intrinsic meaning structure of value of Cosmos.

One great tradition that has a profoundly historical, even proto-evolutionary character is that of Hebrew mysticism. Here, Eros is often portrayed as the central animating force of both Reality itself and what would come to be called *the evolutionary process*. I (Marc) have written an entire volume on this realization of the Universe: *A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe within the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom*. That volume is entitled: *The Wisdom-of-Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom*.² The next section will naturally not cover all of the material but will at least evoke some of the parameters of this crucial lineage in the interior sciences.

I first described these sources in 2003, in a work called *The Mystery of Love*, later expanded under the title *A Return to Eros*.³ In the early work, there are thirty pages of primary sources, drawn from two millennia of texts, supporting the above claim.

The premise of that heavily footnoted work, *The Mystery of Love*, and its later recension, without the explicit footnotes and in a more evolutionary context, as *A Return to Eros*, is that *we live in a CosmoErotic Universe—and that the CosmoErotic Universe lives in us—and that Reality is incepted, animated, and driven by Eros all the way down and all the way up the evolutionary chain*.

A central verse describing the centrality of Eros is the highly erotic *Song of Songs* which describes Reality and its creative forces as *Tocho Ratzuf Ahava*, “*Its insides are lined with love*.”⁴ A

² Forthcoming with Waterside Press.

³ Let’s just note here some distinction between these two volumes. *The Mystery of Love*, written almost twenty years before *A Return to Eros*, is written in what we might call a Rabbinic or Midrashic trope, with extensive stories, textual references, a distinctively Hebraic flavor and some forty pages of primary sources Hebrew and Aramaic source footnotes from Kabbalistic sources. *A Return to Eros* is written in the trope of classical western essays. There are also no primary source footnotes in *A Return to Eros*. Additionally, in *A Return to Eros*, the evolutionary nature of Eros is made more explicit, much new material is added and earlier material is clearly elucidated. And a chapter on the feminine and the masculine, what we call *lines* and *circles*, as Cosmos principles was removed from *A Return to Eros*, both for reasons of space and because a deep elaboration of this notion of lines and circles as evolving cosmic principles is central to the articulation of what we call *Unique Gender* as a response to the transgender moment. Thus, we felt that it needed to be independently articulated in its own volume. See the forthcoming books *Lines, Circles, and Unique Gender* by Dr. Marc Gafni with Claire Molinard and *Beyond He and She: Toward a Vision of Unique Gender* by Dr. Marc Gafni with Claire Molinard.

⁴ See *Song of Solomon*, Chapter Three, Verse Ten. **Read more in the accompanying endnote.**

Although he doesn't deploy an evolutionary vocabulary, and his work is virtually never cited in the context of evolutionary thought, Kabbalah scholar Moshe Idel's classic work *Kabbalah and Eros*⁵ B with its abundant primary sources should be seen as seminal in charting the central role of Eros in the pre-Darwinian proto-evolutionary view of Kabbalah.⁶ C But even before glancing at just a few of the plethora of sources that inform the aforementioned volumes, our *The Mystery of Love* and *A Return to Eros*, and Idel's *Kabbalah and Eros*, one has but to turn to the core structure of Renaissance Kabbalah as expressed by its most seminal figure Isaac Luria. The mandate of the human being was understood to be no less than the erotic theurgical act of *LeShem Yichud Kudsha Berich Hu Ushchintei*—literally translated as *for the sake of uniting in erotic union the feminine and masculine poles of Reality*.

Before we unpack this notion of *LeShem Yichud*, some brief introduction to the larger context is in order. The word *theurgy* is a formal scholarly term which indicates *human participation in the transformation of the Divine Realms*. Two of the many formal words for this notion of *theurgy* in the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom are *Yichud* and *Tikkun*, which are often (but not always) describing virtually isomorphic processes.

The word *Yichud* is translated as *union* and *intimacy*. *LeShem Yichud* means for the sake of Divine Union and Divine Intimacy, both Intra-Divine Union and Intimacy—between the Masculine and Feminine Divine—and between the Divine and manifest Reality—Infinity and finitude.

⁵ Note from the editor: It is also worth noting that Gafni discussed his work *The Mystery of Love* and its general parameters, and specifically in regard to the notion of Cosmic Eros being the very nature of Reality—with the sexual as an expression and model of this larger Eros—with Moshe Idel, who was his co-doctoral thesis advisor at Oxford University (while writing *Radical Kabbalah*, the core of which was written between 2001-2004), in the Bar Ilan library in 2002. Idel enthusiastically validated and embraced, from his perspective, Gafni's direction and readings of the original sources as he shared them at the time—as expressing a CosmoErotic Eros—Eros as the animating force of Cosmos in which we participate—as well as sharing with Gafni at that time, that he was working on a volume in a parallel direction. *See accompanying endnote for more.*

⁶ The term *proto-evolutionary* to describe Kabbalah was suggested by Ken Wilber in a discussion in 2004 after I (Marc) had shared—in a long conversation with Ken Wilber and Esalen founder and evolutionary spirituality pioneer Michael Murphy, Andrew Cohen, and Brother David Steindl Rast—a set of key sources in Kabbalistic texts that differed sharply from the canonical texts of what we might call classical enlightenment in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, with which they were more familiar. It was clear that these texts were evolutionary in their character. These sources included among others those adduced here, which we first gathered and posted in 2004 and then later reposted here: . They also include the Abraham Kook evolutionary Kabbalah texts that we cited in this essay. *See accompanying endnote for more proto-evolutionary sources on Eros in the Hebrew mystical tradition.*

But let's first turn to the word *Tikkun*, and then, we will return to the word *Yichud*.

The word *Tikkun*, which is generally translated as *fixing* or *repair* in the sense of *healing* or *transformation*, actually, in the text of the Hebrew interior sciences, means something much closer to *evolve*. The use of the term *Tikkun* appears as the title of one of strata of Zoharic texts called *Tikkunei Zohar*. In those texts, as Kabbalah scholar Avraham Leader points out,⁷ the evolutionary meaning already appears. The human being, in the realization of this text, is not only cause for the healing and repair of the Divine. (And it is self-evident that the word *only* in the previous sentence only makes sense in relation to the next sentence.) The human being not only has the power to heal and repair God—to heal and repair Divine Power—but the human being, actually, in some direct and real ontological sense, evolves God—evolves Divine Power.

This expresses itself in Luria in myriad forms.⁸ For example, Kabbalah scholar Menachem Kallus, in his brilliant but little-known doctoral exposition on Luria,⁹ recapitulated Lurianic thought through Nikos Kazantzakis's radical phrase, "*We are the Saviors of God.*"¹⁰ For both Kallus and Leader, that phrase really means, *we are responsible for the evolution of God*. That interpretation is, of course, based on their reading of the sources, which is aligned with my own reading. One primary expression of this foundational ontology in Luria is *LeShem Yichud*. For Luria, this means that all of Reality, in all of its dimensions through every moment in time, is made up of what he calls *iggulim* and *yosher*, *lines* and *circles*.¹¹ D

Lines and circles represent for Luria the poles of Reality, Intra-Divine—within the Godhead—and between the Godhead and manifest Reality, pre-human-gender, which yearns for union, intimacy, and evolution. These poles for Luria live not only in every human being and

⁷ Personal conversation with one of the authors, 2005 (Gafni).

⁸ See for example, Menachem Kallus, *The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah*, Doctoral Dissertation, Submitted to the Senate of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2002. See also Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford University Press, 1. Edition, 2003.

⁹ Ibid, Kallus.

¹⁰ Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, translated by Kimon Friar, Simon & Schuster, 1. Edition, 1960.

¹¹ I relate to these sources in some depth in the work we just referred to above, Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, pp. 183-203, Atria, 2003, some of which I will now cite as they unpack the core Lurianic understanding of two cosmic forces, lines and circles, and their evolution—the evolution of love—as being the core ontology of Cosmos: *See accompanying endnote.*

between all human beings, but in every dimension of Reality, from matter (physics and chemistry) to life (biology) to mind (personal and collective culture).¹² In other words, by *lines and circles* Luria means *the movement of Eros*—what we have also called *Evolutionary Love* or *Outrageous Love*—which animates and drives all Cosmos. In other words, in Luria’s realization, lines and circles are not static but evolving.¹³ The evolution of lines and circles for Luria is quite precisely what we have called the *evolution of love*.

And most dramatically, in Luria’s interior sciences, representing the mainstream of the esoteric lineages from which he draws, every human participates in the Field of Eros. For Luria, in what we might call a *proto-evolutionary realization* from the interior sciences, we not only live in a Field of Eros, but the Field of Eros lives in us. We are actors in the Universe: A Love Story and not merely spectators.

Every single human action has the capacity, in the language of Luria and the *Zohar*, to arouse the *feminine waters* (*mayin nukvin*) or the *throbbing of the masculine* (*ever chai*)¹⁴ and bring them together in the great union of Eros, which is the intention of Cosmos. This intention, accomplished by human action, was said to effect the fundamental *Tikkun*, or *fixing*, in the Cosmos. However, as we have already pointed out, the word *Tikkun* in early sources can be more fruitfully translated as *evolving the Divine*.¹⁵

¹² On lines and circles, see for example Isaac Luria, *Sod Iggulim Ve-yosher*. Jerusalem 1964. For a discussion of this Lurianic distinction, see Marc Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Atria, 2003, “Chapter Eight—Circle and Line: The Dance of Male and Female.” For classical Kabbalistic texts expressing the masculine feminine polarity in the Name of God, see, R. Moshe Cordevero’s *Pardes Rimoni* (Orchard of Pomegranates), R. Yosef Gikatilla’s *Sha’are Orah* (Gates of Light), See also Sara Schneider’s *Kabbalistic Writings on the Nature of the Masculine and Feminine*, a carefully annotated translation and rudimentary analysis of a classic set of mystical Hebrew texts related to this trope.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See this term, literally, throbbing phallus, for example, in the seminal work of Elijah of Vilna.

¹⁵ Ibid, Menachem Kallus, *The Theurgy of Prayer in the Lurianic Kabbalah*, Doctoral Dissertation, Submitted to the Senate of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2002, and Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford University Press, 1. Edition, 2003.

This is a crucial point. The nature of Eros, described in the realization of the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, speaks not only of what Alfred North Whitehead called *being*, but no less of what he referred to as *becoming*.¹⁶

In a word, these sources of the interior sciences are evolutionary. In some of our earlier work, we have collected and translated some fifteen of the core sources of what might be fairly termed as *Evolutionary Kabbalah*.¹⁷ It was these sources, via Christian Kabbalah and the mystery schools of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance world, that defined the emergence of western thought, including the sciences and the science of evolution itself.¹⁸ These sources describe evolution as the Love Story of the Universe.

But as value was deconstructed in modernity and postmodernity, the politics of the real sought to include only the measurable and the commodifiable, and the crucial information of the interior sciences was disqualified from its rightful place in shaping human beings and humanity.

We will now turn, by way of introduction, to but one *framing* source, which accurately recapitulates the fifteen sources we adduced and translated, drawn from the depth and breadth of this lineage of Evolutionary Eros. We cite this text below—as well as adducing the reference above to the Lurianic structure of erotic union (and the human participation in effecting erotic union)—to demonstrate clearly that these sources are not only describing the Universe: A Love Story, but also Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe.

¹⁶ On the distinction between Being and Becoming, see Alfred North Whitehead, e.g., in *Process and Reality (Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927-28)*, Corrected Edition, Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, 2nd Edition 2010, who first formulated this nomenclature. I (Marc) refer to this distinction in my original work on *Soul Prints*, which pre-dates by some five years my first encounter with my dear friend and Integral mentor Ken Wilber and the contemporary community of Integral evolutionary mystics. The dialectic between being and becoming is a perennial philosophical theme running back to Zeno and Heraclitus. It figured prominently in the philosophy of Plotinus and in some of the debates of the medieval philosophers. Kant, Hegel, and Marx took up the issues, as did Emerson and the American pragmatists. More recently, Whitehead provided a synoptic view of the history of the debate by way of distilling the main theological implications of a thoroughgoing evolutionary worldview.

¹⁷ . See earlier footnote.

¹⁸ For but one example, the Kabbalists had significant influence on Fichte and Schelling, who are often listed as the originators of *Evolutionary Spirituality*. On the influence of Kabbalistic sources on Schelling, see Eliot Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). This influence is not a minor fancy of some scholar, but a major insight of the most respected scholars in the field.

For Luria, considered by his lineage to be the greatest interior-science realizer of the last thousand years—the primary source of Hebrew interior sciences after the *Zohar*—all of Reality is evolving Eros, which lives in, as, and through the human being, who participates directly in its evolution, which is the evolution of love.

This *framing* source, which contextualizes the understated and esoteric mainstream of a millennium of Hebrew interior sciences, is penned by the preeminent evolutionary mystic and interior scientist Abraham Kook, whom we shall introduce somewhat more fully below. For now, however, it is sufficient to say that Kook is a significant locus of authority both as a legal scholar, political leader, and preeminent interior scientist of Hebrew wisdom, deeply versed in the esoteric tracts of Kabbalah.¹⁹

The title of this piece provided by Kook's closest students is:

The Torah [the Dharma or Doctrine] of Evolution²⁰

*More than all other philosophical teachings,
the doctrine of evolution that is moving through and conquering the world
is more aligned with the interior sciences of the Kabbalistic world philosophy
than it is with any other world philosophy.
Evolution, which advances in the direction of betterment,
grounds the optimistic essence of the world—
for how is it possible to despair when one sees that the arc of everything
is evolving and improving?
And when one penetrates to the inner center*

¹⁹ See Yehuda Mirsky's excellent *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*, Jewish Lives. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

²⁰ Abraham Kook, *Orot HaKodesh, Lights of Holiness*, vol. 2 pp. 537 sec. 19, Jerusalem, *Mosad HaRav Kook*, 1985.

*of the Becoming, Ascending Essence,
we find there the matter of the Divine
illuminated with absolute brilliance:
for it is precisely the Infinite in action which generates into being
that which is Infinite in potential.*

*Evolution shines light on all the ways of the Divine.
The entirety of the Cosmos is evolving and ascending,
just as this dynamic is recognizable in parts of it.
And the rising of the Cosmos is universal as well as particular:
it is rising to the apex of the pinnacle of the absolute Good.
It is a given that Goodness and Inter-included Allness merge into unity,
and that the Cosmos is destined to come to this dimension of being:
that the Intercluded All will absorb all the good of each of its details.
This is the comprehensive rising of the Cosmos:
no detail will be left out, no spark lost from the ensemble.
Everything is being readied for the ultimate gorgeous culmination.*

*To participate in this goal,
we need a refining and alignment of human spirit to the higher Divine Desire,
which comes into being through trusted action in and as the Divine.*

For Kook, the Eros of Cosmos is not static. Rather, the Cosmos is illuminated by Evolutionary Eros, which animates and drives all vectors of evolution's unfolding from matter to life to mind. In other words, for Kook, the verse in the *Song of Songs*, *Its insides are lined with*

love, which is understood by the interior sciences to be describing the animating interior quality of Cosmos, refers not only to the eternal Eros of Being, but to the evolutionary driver of Becoming. The Love that lines Cosmos is an evolving Eros.

This unique lineage of Evolutionary Love informed the Renaissance via Christian Kabbalah and the mystery schools of the west—shaping seminal figures like Comenius²¹—and ultimately directly impacting the thinking of Fichte, Schelling, and their colleague Hegel, who formed the core of contemporary evolutionary thinking.²²

The first dimension, however, that gradually became effaced in foundational Universe Stories was Eros, or Evolutionary Love, as the animating and driving Eros. This was lost, in part because the scientific establishment did not want to be confused with premodern Christian notions of Love and Eros, which were affiliated with premodern and often regressive conceptions of God. The entire point of the major thrust of modernity was to dis-enchant Cosmos—from the vile enchantments of premodern religion, which were not incorrectly seen as the cause of so much cruelty. Voltaire was not entirely wrong in his battle cry of the enlightenment—*Remember the Cruelties*.

Modernity's major move was to create a new politics of the Real, in which interiors in general and Eros and *telos* in particular were overthrown and executed.²³ By the time evolution made its way from the interior science of Hebrew mysticism via the mystery schools of the Renaissance and its many modern offshoot, it became, along with the rest of the Universe, mechanical and structural, devoid of all inherent Eros, or *telos*, what Lewis Mumford accurately summarized as *the dis-qualification of the universe*.

²¹ On Comenius, see Zachary Stein's essay "Education Must Make History Again: Remembering Comenius in a Time Between Worlds" Jan. 2022, . On the influence of the Hebrew interior sciences on the Renaissance, both directly and indirectly, see also Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy, 1280-1510: A Survey*, Yale University Press, 2011.

²² Ibid, earlier footnote on Kabbalistic influence on Fichte and Schelling.

²³ See, for example, Habermas and his notion of the three lifeworlds—I, We, and It—each of which participates in the Real and is accessible through its own validated methods. Integral philosophy in its multiple forms is a more evolved expression of this notion with Ken Wilber explicating Habermas's lifeworlds into four quadrants, which include I and It in both their personal and collective expressions. See also Jeffrey Kripal, *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge*, Bellevue Literary Press (2019), which in part is a challenge to the flatland politics of the Real that dominates the mainstream of contemporary intellectual culture—see especially pp. 98, 103,111,120, 126, 131.

For reasons to which we will return briefly at the end of this essay and in more depth in other writings on CosmoErotic Humanism, there is an overwhelming political and moral imperative to reclaim interiors, and particularly to reclaim First Principles and First Values embedded in a Story of Value as our primary superstructure response to the catastrophic and even existential risk.²⁴

Exterior science has done crucial and necessary work in clarifying the field of knowing— itself a form of Love²⁵—from its premodern dross, including its ethnocentricity, chauvinism, denial of universal human rights, oppression of the feminine, and overall devaluation of human dignity. This notion that the exterior sciences—or indeed all *gnosis*—is a form of Love is key to the Universe: A Love Story. In the language of the *Zohar*: “*To be opened in Torah and to open his eyes to Her.*”²⁶ In the Universe: A Love Story, there can be no split between Eros and knowledge.²⁷

But now, the clarified core of the interior sciences must be integrated with the exterior sciences into a new Story of Value—Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe. And the texts of the interior sciences expressing the early ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story are vital to reclaim. We will of course do so only very briefly in this context, but enough, we hope, to transmit some of the direct feeling of the realizations implicit and explicit in these texts.

²⁴ See also Volume 1 of this series.

²⁵ On the relationship of Love and knowledge, see for example, Maimonides, *The Books of Commandments* (The *Sefer HaMitzvot* (*Book of Commandments*) is Maimonides’ list of the 613 commandments accompanied by brief descriptions, originally written in Arabic. See https://www.sefaria.org/Sefer_HaMitzvot?tab=versions). “*To know God is to be passionately yearning and aflame for the beloved.*” See for a discussion of Maimonides in this regard, Kaplan, Lawrence. “The love of God in Maimonides and Rav Kook.” *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, vol. 43, no. 3, summer 1994, pp. 227+ *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A16348280/AONE?u=anon~ea49913b&sid=googleScholar&xid=40fcd10b. Accessed 15 Sept. 2022. For a contemporary conversation along the same lines, but integrating modernity and postmodernity, see Martha Nussbaum’s excellent *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, especially the essay in that volume by that name (“Love’s Knowledge”).

²⁶ *Zohar* vol. 3:164a.

²⁷ On the deep erotic entanglement between Eros and *gnosis*—love and knowledge—in the *Zohar*, see Liebes, Yehuda, “Zohar and Eros” *Alpayim* 9 (1994), pp. 87-112. One of the key innovations of Maimonides was to include the sciences, *Chochma*, as part of the overall rubric of Torah. See Twersky, Isadore, “Some Non-Halakic Aspects of The Mishneh Torah,” *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann.

An Interlude Note on Reading These Texts of the Interior Sciences

This brief interlude is necessary to point towards the nature of the texts that we have just adduced above²⁸ and of the texts that we will briefly adduce below. Like the Kook text we just adduced above, these are all classical texts of the interior sciences. Before proceeding with our conversation, it is valuable to access a direct fragrance of this sense of Reality lined with Eros, and particular Evolutionary Eros, in which the human being is participatory and therefore influential. And it is precisely this fragrance that animates these esoteric texts of the interior sciences.

Indeed, one of the key missing pieces in the articulation of a new Universe Story is the information of the interior sciences. The interior sciences form the core of the great traditions, each of which had a set of exoteric, public practices as well as a set of realizations about the nature of Reality, which lay beneath the surface structure of their often-chauvinistic faith claims, shaped by the socially constructed forces of history and power.²⁹

The interior sciences emerge from what has been called *the Eye of the Heart*, or *the Eye of the Spirit*—or what in CosmoErotic Humanism we often refer to as *the Eye of Value*. This Eye of Value is the faculty of knowing through which the human being, who participates directly in the interior Reality, is able to access *gnosis*—to discern goodness, truth, beauty, love, and all other values.

As we discuss in other writings of CosmoErotic Humanism, and briefly below in this essay, we refer to this method, which gives us direct access to intrinsic Value and *gnosis*, as *the*

²⁸ Both in the main body of the text, for example, the text we just adduced from Kook, and in the sources referred to in the footnotes.

²⁹ The rituals and practices of a religion are, however, not only part of its surface structures, but also of the unique expression or Unique Self of that religion. Each religion is actually not lost in some kind of demented, premodern, infantilized primitivity, as so many modern and postmodern scholars would have us believe. The core of every religion is not just its realization of emptiness. It is its intimate play, its intimate structure of ritual and practice. We need religion back at the table, we need the binding character of religion. And we need new ritual (and new practices). And that new ritual has to be that which binds us. New ritual comes from the depth of a lineage, and that lineage has attainment. That lineage has realization. And that lineage has, as Rupert Sheldrake called it, a *morphic resonance* with everyone who has ever fulfilled that ritual and poured their unique realization into that ritual, which was sourced in the most subtle mind-hearts. A ritual needs the crucible of realization; a ritual needs the crucible of attainment. ***We need a shared language, a shared grammar of value, and we also need shared rituals. We need shared universal rituals that bind us in a global intimacy.***

Anthro-Ontological Method. As we briefly discussed the Anthro-Ontological Method in Volume 1 and will discuss in more depth in Volume 5 of this series,³⁰ for now, suffice it to say that it has nothing to do with dogma or faith claims.

It is rather a core method of radical empiricism,
the capacity to know something about Reality,
whether we are talking about the nature of the exterior structure of Reality
—the First Principles and First Values that guide the physical world,
for example, the values in a mathematics equation describing that
exterior world—
or something of the nature of Reality’s inner value structures
—the First Principles and First Values that animate the interior Face of
Cosmos,
for example, the value of values like Eros, intimacy, love, goodness,
truth, and beauty.

The work of CosmoErotic Humanism, to which we have referred earlier, is the meta-vision that integrates multiple metatheories into a new coherent worldview, what we call *the new Story of Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe*. It emerges from the realization that we live in a coherent Cosmos, incepted, animated, and driven by Eros, and that interiors and exteriors are evolving fractal patterns of each other.

This realization is not dogmatic. It is empirical. It is not a dogmatic certainty, the kind of which was claimed by some of the surface structures of the great traditions, which arrogantly

³⁰ For a fuller description of the Anthro-Ontological Method, see Marc Gafni & Zachary Stein, *First Principles & First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism, the Meta-Crisis, and the World to Come* (2024), and see also the fuller conversation in Marc Gafni & Zachary Stein with Ken Wilber, *First Principles and First Values: Towards an Evolving Perennialism: Introducing the Anthro-Ontological Method*.

claimed to have dissipated or somehow *solved* the great mystery. Rather, CosmoErotic Humanism is the context in which we can live the mystery and create ever-evolving Value.

It is only such a vision of the emergence of a new Story of Value that can respond to, and even dispel, the looming shadow of existential risk, rooted as it is in the collapse of First Principles and First Values. Thus, it is imperative to integrate—to taste and feel—the information of the interior sciences, which realize Reality as a Love Story generating ever-evolving Value. So, let us pause for a moment, and *taste* directly the quality of realization that lines the hidden texts of Eros in the interior sciences.

We have already seen the first shades of CosmoErotic Humanism in the foundational principles of Renaissance mystic Isaac Luria. This lineage of Eros also finds extensive expression in the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century explosion of Eros, which is referred to as *Hasidism*, about which Martin Buber penned so many lines.³¹ Though we might have cited any one of dozens of esoteric texts that we will adduce in our more complete volume on this subject, we chose to cite two texts that we came across fortuitously, exactly as we were preparing this essay for publication.

In the writings of the *Zohar*: “All is called love and all exists because of love, as Scripture says, ‘Mighty waters cannot quench love’ [*Song of Solomon* 8:5]. Everything stands upon love, because such is the holy name.”³²

³¹ See, for example, the important work of Esther Liebes, *Love and Creation: The Thought of R. Baruch of Kossov* [Hebrew], Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997.

³² Quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (pp. 126-127). Yale University Press. 2020. Kindle Edition. The quote continues:

We have established that the upper tip of the *yod* is never separated from it because it dwells upon it in love. . . . Regarding *heh*, we know that *yod* is never separated from it; they are in constant love and are inseparable. Thus *Yod Heh*. Of this we have learned: “A river flows from Eden” (Gen. 2:10) [in the present tense]. It is constantly flowing; they cleave to one another in love. *Vav* is always the bridegroom of the bride. *Yod* with *heh*, *heh* with *vav*, *vav* with *heh*. That is why all is called love. And one who loves the King becomes bound up into that love. Hence: “You shall love with Y-H-W-H your God” (Deut. 6:5). [Footnote (p. 440 of Arthur Green): *Zohar* 3:267b. “All” in the *Zohar* often refers to the entire sefirotic realm. See further the exposition of this text in *Reshit Hokhmah*, *ahavah* 6:10, where he extends the “all” to include the lower worlds. . . .]

See also Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 192-193, (2005 Yale University Press), where this source is cited in a somewhat different but not unrelated context.

Or in another passage by one early erotic mystic, an early foundational figure in the great realization of Hasidism, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, accurately reflecting the esoteric interior sciences of his lineage:

*In this love you are bound in a matter of course, to all who come into this world, to all other humans, who are just like you. Since such love is a blessing that flows from above, you are absolutely aware that you have not achieved it on your own. You could not have done this at all ... Therefore, when you rise up in your love ... all rise up with you ... You and they constitute a single soul. By whatever rod you can measure, you are tied to those thousands, even tens of thousands, of people. When you rise up, they rise with you.*³³

The same erotic realizer continues:

Who is the one who loves, if not the living God flowing through your soul? And whom does He love, if not God? ... And what is that love? It is hewn out of the flowing essence of divinity. It joins itself and becomes one with the lower world, reducing itself into that microcosm called the human being. Wherever you stand you are standing within blessed Y-H-V-H, since He is the locus of the world, surrounding and filling all the worlds at once. When that quality of love attacks you, you don't know what is happening ... All is nought in the fact of it, because "It comes from Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 118:24) ... This is the spirit of Y-H-V-H speaking within you, His word upon your tongue. This love is a brand plucked from the divine fire. [As you realize this,] you will become ever more enflamed, the voice growing louder, without ceasing. The written page could

³³ Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Pri ha-Arets, shoftim*; quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (p. 138). Yale University Press. 2020. Kindle Edition.

In a series of conversations years back, I (Marc) shared with Art my sense of the CosmoErotic Universe as expressed in our shared lineage. We have different nuances in our reading but the same underlying sense of realization and scholarly reading. The Vitebsk sources are rooted in earlier sources still, particularly in Elijah de Vidas, in his epic *Reshit Hokhmah* in the section called "The Gate of Love." Over the years, I have enjoyed a study partnership, itself an expression of a shared love of these texts, with Art, in which we engaged "The Gate of Love" and other texts. We will adduce some of these sources forthwith below.

*not contain, nor could oceans of ink express, the great openness of heart in that true love.*³⁴

This classical text of Hasidism is deeply rooted in earlier Renaissance and other sources pointing not only towards the CosmoErotic Universe but towards CosmoErotic Humanism. Indeed, one of the most important demarcating characteristics of the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom is that there is no sharp split between the personal and the impersonal. The ostensibly impersonal forces of Cosmos—Eros, for example—are at their core infinitely personal, in other words, the Universe is a Love Story.

In the section “The Secret of the Name Meets the Secret of the Cherubs: The Universe: A Love Story” below, we will continue this thread of the Universe: A Love Story in the Hasidic sources with a critical literary source from one of Franz Kafka’s favorite mystical sources, Hasidic master Nachman of Breslov. But before we turn to Nachman, we cannot convey the central fragrance of the Universe: A Love Story in these interior sciences, without bringing to bear at least two central esoteric themes which inform these sources—each of which is a code for the Universe: A Love Story.

The first core theme—or code for the Universe: A Love Story—is known as *Sod HaShemot*, the Secret of the Names of God, and the second as *Sod HaKeruvim*, the Secret of the Cherubs. We will unpack each of them briefly below.

For the texts from Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk are not an expression of his fanciful conjecture. Rather, Menachem Mendel is rooted in the mainstream of the esoteric interior sciences—particularly in earlier *Zohar* texts—to which we will refer forthwith. In the texts from Menachem Mendel appears the first core theme, rooted in these earlier Zoharic and pre-Zoharic sources, the Secret of the Name of God, which, as we will see, is itself almost isomorphic with the Secret of the Cherubs, both of which express the core structure of Reality as the Universe: A Love Story.

³⁴ Ibid, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Pri ha-Arets, shoftim*; quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (p. 138). Yale University Press. 2020. Kindle Edition.

Thus, before we turn to Nachman of Breslov as our next source for the Hasidic interior sciences, we will unpack these two dimensions that inform every Hasidic and pre-Hasidic text of the interior sciences, which hold the esoteric realization of the Universe: A Love Story.

The Name of God Is Eros—The Universe: A Love Story

When Menachem Mendel writes the following text that we adduced above, he is referring to the Secret of the Name of God:

Wherever you stand you are standing within blessed Y-H-V-H, since He is the locus of the world, surrounding and filling all the worlds at once. When that quality of love attacks you, you don't know what is happening ... All is nought in the fact of it, because "It comes from Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 118:24) ... This is the spirit of Y-H-V-H speaking within you, His word upon your tongue. This love is a brand plucked from the divine fire. [As you realize this,] you will become ever more enflamed, the voice growing louder, without ceasing.

So let us turn to the Name of God.

One of the classic formulations in the interior sciences of the Hebrew lineage understands the cherubs as Names of God.³⁵ Specifically, we are talking about the two cherubs above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, the inner *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. We will unpack more of the two cherubs in the section immediately following our discussion of the two Names of God. But for now, we will simply state that the two cherubs are understood in the esoteric interior sciences to be sexually entwined in an erotic embrace of LoveDesire. For now, what is crucial is that, in the interior sciences, "the two cherubs above the Ark of the Covenant correspond to the two Names of God—*Yod He Vav He* and *Elohim*."³⁶ In

³⁵ See Idel, Moshe. *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism*. Cherub Press, 2005. See also, Scholem, Gershom, and Simon Pleasance. "The Name of God and the linguistic theory of the Kabbala." *Diogenes* 20.79 (1972): 59-80.

³⁶ Eliezer of Worms, *Sefer Harokeach*, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 22. Kabbalah scholar Moshe Idel carefully traces this sense of the cherubs as divine forces—Names of God—all the way back to the second Temple period. See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

the interior sciences, both in Hebrew wisdom and in multiple other interior science traditions, the Name of God represents the DNA of Reality.³⁷

This already alludes to the initiate that the Name of God tradition is an expression of the notion of the Amorous Cosmos—the Universe: A Love Story.

Meditations on the Names of God

The Jerusalem Temple itself, the cherubs in the Holy of Holies, and all of the *Song of Solomon*, to which we already referred above, are often understood in the esoteric text of the interior sciences as meditations on the Name of God. Moreover, the most sacred ritual of the Temple is the priest who enters the Holy of Holies and meditates on the Name of God. And if we are deploying the epistemological methodologies of the interior sciences, it becomes self-evident that the meditation on the Name of God is a meditation on the interior nature of Reality itself.

Indeed, a central practice of the initiates, recorded in the texts of the interior sciences³⁸ of virtually all the great traditions, is to meditate on the Names of God. The Sufi masters meditate on the *Ninety-Nine Names of God*.³⁹ The Hebrew masters, rooted in the Temple traditions, meditate on myriad erotic unions between different Names of God, focusing often on what are called the *Seventy-Two Names of God*, each comprised of three letters. And Christian practice in Christ does the same.⁴⁰

³⁷ Kianfar, Ali. *Illumination of the Names: Meditation by Sufi Masters on the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*. International Association of Sufism, 2011.

³⁸ The *interior sciences* are the inner knowledge that comes from direct experience and experimentation deploying not the Eye of the Mind (as in mathematics or logic), nor the Eye of the Senses (as in empirical science), but the Eye of the Heart, so called by the Sufis and Kabbalists. The Eye of the Heart, or what we have also called in CosmoErotic Humanism the *Eye of Consciousness with its four expressions: The Eye of the Spirit, the Eye of the Heart, the Eye of Contemplation, and the Eye of Value*, deploys its own set of interior methodologies, which are in effect the full range of epistemologies that discloses interiors.

³⁹ Ibid, Kianfar, Ali. *Illumination of the Names: Meditation by Sufi Masters on the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*. International Association of Sufism, 2011.

⁴⁰ For a contemporary expression of this practice in the Christian tradition, see .

LoveDesire Is the Name of God

In the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, the meditation on the Name of God is also called *Sod HaYichud*, the Secret of Union. In understanding the two LoveDesire-entwined cherubs as Names of God, the interior scientists are pointing to the inter-inclusion of *Sod HaShemot* and *Sod HaYichud* with *Sod HaKeruvim*—the inter-inclusions of the Secret of the Name and the Secret of Union with the Secret of the Cherubs.

At the core of all three is the realization that *Eros is the Name of God*. For the interior sciences, *Eros is the Name of God* means that the *Name of God* connotes the *LoveDesire* that drives and animates Cosmos all the way down and all the way up the *evolutionary chain*.⁴¹

The Zoharic and other interior-science texts are describing what it calls *Zivug Kaddisha*, the sacred Eros, the Universe: A Love Story, that is the hidden realization of the Wisdom of Solomon.

We will cite one source from the *Zohar*, describing the amorous Cosmos, as expressed in the Name of God meditation, which, as we by this point expect, sources itself in *Solomon's Song of Songs*. This is an extended version of the same Zoharic passage cited by Arthur Green, which we adduced above.

All is called love and all exists because of love, as Scripture says: "Mighty waters cannot quench love" (Cant. 8:5). Everything stands upon love, because such is the holy name [Yod He Vav He]. We have established that the upper tip of the yod is never separated from it because it dwells upon it in love. . . . Regarding heh, we know that yod is never separated from it; they are in constant love and are inseparable. Thus Yod Heh. Of this we have learned: "A river flows from Eden" (Gen. 2:10) [in the present tense]. It is constantly flowing; they cleave to one another in love. Vav is always the bridegroom of the bride. Yod with heh, heh with vav, vav with heh. That is why all is called

⁴¹ Abraham Kook, one of the preeminent figures of the interior sciences, whom we have already adduced and will cite again below, explicitly refers to this by the modern scientific name as the *evolutionary chain*.

*love. And one who loves the King becomes bound up into that love. Hence:
“You shall love with Y-H-W-H your God” (Deut. 6:5).⁴²*

The text begins with the realization of the Universe: A Love Story. *All is called love and all exists because of love.* The expression of this realization is the Wisdom of Solomon, sourced in the *Song of Songs*. The text then moves immediately to identify the *holy Name*—the Name of God—as the fundamental structure of Reality. The Name of God itself *is* the Universe: A Love Story. This text of the interior sciences then unpacks the Name of God in terms of its four Hebrew letters and the Intra-Divine Eros that they express. But the text also assumes that all of Reality is constituted by the Divine Name, meaning, *all of Reality is the amorous Cosmos.*

In the section below we will unpack this passage and the four-letter Name of God as the Universe: A Love Story in general terms, at which point we will briefly return and explain the remainder of the passage, whose interpretation by that point will be virtually self-evident.

The Name of God Is Eros

Let’s turn to the fascinating realization of the Universe: A Love Story—the realization that Eros is the animating Force of Reality, which informs both the interior and exterior sciences. Interior scientists, sometimes called *mystics*, talk about this in their way, and classical scientists talk about this in their way. They are not talking about the same thing, but they are describing overlapping phenomena.

The interior scientist describes both the irreducible interiors of Cosmos, as well as how those interiors animate the exteriors with Eros and *telos*. The exterior scientists almost inevitably bypass interiors and describe the exteriors of Reality while generally not addressing issues of the *telos*, depth, or ultimate causes. The classical interior scientists, deploying their own language, declare unabashedly: *Eros is the Name of God.*

The classic Name of God was spelled *Yod He Vav He (YHVH)*:⁴³

⁴² *Zohar* 3:267b, quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (p. 127). Yale University Press. 2020. Kindle Edition.

⁴³ Hebrew reads from right to left.



He

Vav

He

Yod

A First Meaning of the Name of God

The first meaning of the Name of God is something like the *Eternity that lives in the Now*. The first letter is *Yod*. *Yod* is the letter that represents Eternity. It is called, in the interior sciences, *the Point*, meaning *the point of Eternity beyond time*. The next three letters are *He Vav He*. These letters spell a Hebrew word *Hoveh*, which in English is best translated as *the Present*. **The Name of God is then the *Point of Eternity that lives in the Present*.**

By Eternity we do not mean everlasting time. Rather, as Ludwig Wittgenstein pointed out, the Eternal is that which is beneath time, the *Eternal Nowing* that animates Reality. **Thus, the Name of God connotes Eternity, the timeless time and placeless place that is always available right beneath the surface of the Eternal Present.**

For many schools of the interior sciences, what we might call *Nowing* is a central practice of Reality. By the term *Nowing* we evoke the practice of living, even momentarily, in the full depth of the Divine Now. Various forms of this practice focusing on the Name of God appear in the interior sciences across cultures and throughout recorded history.

A Second Meaning of the Name of God

As we just noted, in the interior sciences the Name of God is a code for the inner structure of Reality. Or said slightly differently, for the erotic mystics the Name of God is the Essence of all matter.

Let's evoke again the four Hebrew letters in the Name of God and adduce a second reading of their letters *Yod He Vav He* that shows up in so many texts of the interior sciences including the *Zohar* and Vitebsk text that we just adduced.

The first letter *Yod* enters the second letter *He*.

This is called by the mystics *Zivug Matmedet*,⁴⁴ literally translated as the *constant Eros* or *allurement* that animates all of Reality. This is described in the *Zoharic* passage above as “Regarding *he*, we know that *yod* is never separate from it”—meaning the *Zivug Matmedet* is expressed in this passage in the *Yod* that is never separate from the *He*.

This is an interior structure of Cosmos, which—since the Cosmos is interiors and exteriors all the way down and all the way up the evolutionary chain—also has an exterior expression. This Name of God finds exterior expression, for example, in the allurement that is gravity or electromagnetic attraction. It is the core of field theory in modern physics and so much more.⁴⁵ It is the perpetual creative allurement or Eros that both binds and drives all of Reality all the way down and all the way up the evolutionary chain. God is Eros.

The first two letters (moving from the right because Hebrew text reads opposite English texts)—*Yod* and *He*—are the masculine and feminine; not man and woman, but masculine and feminine, or what we call, in the writings of CosmoErotic Humanism based on the interior

⁴⁴ This term is drawn from the interior science of erotic mysticism in Hebrew wisdom, particularly from the writings of the *Zohar*. See for example, *Zohar*, vol.3, p. 120a, and later Isaac Luria, expressed throughout his lineage in myriad forms with particular emphasis in the writings of Abraham Kook. On the lineage line from Luria to Kook in these regards, the serious reader of interior sciences is well directed to the writings of Tamar Ross. See for example, Tamar Ross, “Overcoming the Epistemological Challenge,” in Aaron Hughes and Hava Tirosh Samuelson, eds., *Jewish Philosophy for the 21st Century: Personal Reflections* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 372-390.

⁴⁵ See Laszlo, Ervin. *Science and the Akashic field: An integral theory of everything*. Simon and Schuster, 2007.

sciences, *lines* and *circles*.⁴⁶ What Luria called *iggulim* and *yosher*,⁴⁷ *circles* and *lines*, are understood in the interior sciences to express two primary forces of the Cosmos. The Universe, in every moment, every situation, every person, every entity, every dynamic, is the play between the line qualities of autonomy and independence, on the one hand, and the circle qualities of attraction and allurement, on the other.

Science reminds us that it is the constant dance between attraction and repulsion that shapes the structure of Reality.⁴⁸ Attraction and repulsion, or what we often refer to as *allurement* and *autonomy*, are expressions of the line/circle, dialectical dance of Reality.

Reality is the play between the line qualities of thrusting forward and directionality, on the one hand, and the circle qualities of including and connection, on the other. This is called, in the interior science of Hebrew wisdom, the *Zivug* of the Cosmos, which is the Name of God. *Zivug* is considered to be the core structure of Cosmos. *Zivug* is exactly what we are referring to when we refer to the *Universe: A Love Story* and *Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe*.

The Yod enters the He.

As we noted above, this *constant Zivug*, following the interior sciences,⁴⁹ this sustained or *perpetual Zivug* lies at the center of Reality. The force of *Zivug* or Eros is the force of desire

⁴⁶ On lines and circles, see for example Isaac Luria, *Sod Iggulim Ve-yosher*. Jerusalem 1964. For a discussion of this Lurianic distinction, see Marc Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Atria, 2003, “Chapter Eight—Circle and Line: The Dance of Male and Female.” For classical Kabbalistic texts expressing the masculine feminine polarity in the Name of God, see, R. Moshe Cordevero’s *Pardes Rimoni* (Orchard of Pomegranates), R. Yosef Gikatilla’s *Sha’are Orah* (Gates of Light), See also Sara Schneider’s *Kabbalistic Writings on the Nature of the Masculine and Feminine*, a carefully annotated translation and rudimentary analysis of a classic set of mystical Hebrew texts related to this trope.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ This scientific distinction is equivalent to the more traditional distinction of line and circle: attraction expresses the quality of communion or circle, while repulsion expresses the quality of autonomy or line.

⁴⁹ *Zivug Matmedet*, *constant Zivug*, or *merging in Eros*, is a classical term in the lineage of Kabbalah deployed extensively by contemporary erotic mystic Abraham Kook. At the core of the interior sciences’ notion of *Zivug* or Eros as the substratum of Reality is the Wisdom of Solomon, rooted in the Temple Mysteries, where the Names of God, incarnate in the two cherubs, was central both to the public ritual and esoteric practice. For the lineage of the Wisdom of Solomon, see Marc Gafni *Radical Kabbalah: Book One: Volume Two*. The entire volume traces the interior sciences of Solomon’s wisdom. The notion of *Zivug*, the Eros between the letters of the Name of God expressed as masculine and feminine, is also front and center in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, the 18th-century founder of Hasidic wisdom, who believed that the highest aspiration of the soul was cleaving (*devekut*), coupling, and joining in partnership (*zivug*) with the *Shekhinah*—the feminine Goddess that is the *dwelling* of the Divine Presence of God—through rituals and prayer. This is the *Yod* (masculine) entering the *He* (feminine).

itself, built into the source code of Reality. Science says the same thing in its language. Desire, or what one mathematical cosmologist called *cosmic allurement*, is the essence of Reality itself.⁵⁰

In other words, attraction, or allurement, is built into the very structure of the Universe. For example, the standard model of particle physics explains that electromagnetism causes molecules to form. Molecules are the basis of matter. A molecule is made up of atoms. Stable atoms have an equal number of positively charged protons and negatively charged electrons. This balances the electrical charge of the atom. But if the electrical charge of the atom is neutral, then, what makes neutrally charged particles come together? How do the particles stick together? How do these atoms come together to form the molecules that are the building blocks of material reality? The answer is the Eros, or in the language of the interior sciences the Name of God, that animates, suffuses, and drives Reality.

The positive charge of a proton is attracted to the negative charge of an electron. The positively charged proton is attracted to the negatively charged electron to form an atom. This is Eros. This is *Zivug*. This attraction, this allurement, is the base for the formation of atoms that make up all matter. We call the connecting force *Eros*, as one of the many names of God.

Through Eros—in the language of the interior sciences—we can see—in the language of science—how the positively charged protons inside of an atom are electromagnetically attracted to its negatively charged electrons. This desire is the basis of the formation of atoms that make up all matter. This is the sustained Eros. The *Yod* that is constantly entering the *He*.

There is, however, a second form of *Zivug*, or Eros, core to Reality, in which human beings play the primary role.

The last two letters of the Name of God are the *Vav* and the *He*.

The *Vav*, an obviously phallic expression,⁵¹ enters and is received by the *He*, the Divine Feminine.⁵² This is also called by the interior scientists, *Zivug She'Eino Metamedet*, non-

⁵⁰ Swimme, Brian. *The Universe Is A Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story*. Bear & Company, 1984

⁵¹ It likely originates from the Egyptian hieroglyph representing a mace, taking on a phallic image.

⁵² *He* in Judaism is often taken to mean *the Name* as deference to the ineffable God, or that which cannot be named.

constant Union. This union is caused by *Arousal from Below*, the aroused Eros generated by human activism in the realms of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

For the *Zohar*, as well as for the interior sciences that form the Zoharic texts, particularly the *Song of Solomon*, all of Reality is Eros, precisely what we have called the *CosmoErotic Universe*. This is the crucial realization. The *Vav* only enters the *He* when human beings arouse the Divine Eros. The human being arouses the Divine Eros when he/she lives the unique quality of his/her full Eros and aliveness in every dimension of life. The *Yod* entering the *He* is often referred to as *It'aruta De'Leyla—Arousal from above*.⁵³ The *Vav* entering the *He* is called, in the interior sciences, *It'aruta De'Le'tata—Arousal from Below*.⁵⁴

And for the *Zohar*, it is the human activism of Arousal from Below that itself causes Arousal from Above. In the language of the *Zohar*:

*“I am my beloved's and his desire is for me (Song 7:11). They have already established that through an arousal below arises an arousal above, for nothing arouses above until something arouses below.”*⁵⁵

The *Vav* only enters the *He* when human beings—through their own processes of activation—arouse the Divine *Zivug*. For the interior scientists in the Solomon tradition, human beings can realize their capacity to participate directly in the great *Zivug* of Reality and to arouse the Divine *Zivug* by living the unique quality of one's full Eros and aliveness in every dimension of their life.

⁵³ The relationship between Arousal from Below and Above to constant *Zivug* and non-constant *Zivug* [*Zivug* that must be aroused through human action] is complex and varied in different texts and, while a fascinating study, it is beyond our purview and not necessary for this conversation.

⁵⁴ For Reality itself is Eros, as expressed in the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, see Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, 2003. See Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 2005. See Liebes, Yehuda, “Zohar and Eros” *Alpayim* 9 (1994): 87–94, was a key source for both Gafni and Idel and for Liebes's student, and wonderful scholar in her own right, Melila Hellner-Eshed. For the language of Arousal from Below and Arousal from Above as being an expression of these core Zoharic motifs, themselves, rooted in the *Songs of Songs*, see Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press (29 Jun. 2009), translated from Hebrew by Nathan Wolski, and particularly p. 222 on Arousal from Below and Arousal from Above.

⁵⁵ *Zohar* vol. 1: 88a [trans. Daniel Matt, Pritzker Edition, vol. 2 p. 61.] See also *Zohar* vol. 1:86b, 35a,77b and vol. 2:135b. Cited in Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, fn. 50 to Chapter 10, p. 412.

In CosmoErotic Humanism, we name this quality of personhood, which is so well described in the lineage of the Wisdom of Solomon,⁵⁶ *Your Unique Self*.⁵⁷ To live one's Unique Self is therefore to access one's unique Eros, which participates in direct ontic identity with the larger Field of Divine Eros.⁵⁸

For the interior sciences, human activism is not merely political but ontological activism. Ontological activism is predicated on the realization that the human being participates in the Field of Divine Reality—in Eros itself—and its expressions as the Good, the True, and the Beautiful in all realms of Reality from the supernal to the political to the personal.

Reality Is Names of God All the Way Down and the Way Up the Chains of Being and Becoming

We have asserted that, for the interior sciences, the Names of God are somewhat like the interior DNA of all of Reality. For example, from the perspective of the Names of God, the split between animate and inanimate is true but partial. To contextualize this crucial realization, let's

⁵⁶ See Gafni, Marc, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book One, Volume One, Part One, Integral Publishers, 2010, on the irreducible human uniqueness as a core feature of nondual humanism.

⁵⁷ This is notion of *Unique Self* in the context of the Wisdom of Solomon and the Field of Eros is unpacked in great depth and length in two scholarly books, Marc Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book 1, Volume 1, particularly sections One, Two, and Three, and in Marc Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book 2, Volumes 2 and 3, Integral Publishers, 2010, where the matrix of the Wisdom of Solomon is decoded and related to the larger Fields of Eros and uniqueness.

⁵⁸ For a direct unpacking of Unique Self, see Gafni, Marc. *Your Unique Self, The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment*, with Introduction and Afterword by Ken Wilber, Integral Publishers, 2012. Note in that book Ken Wilber's foreword and afterword for the meta-context of Unique Self Theory, which was originally articulated by Gafni. See also the full issue devoted to Unique Self Theory in the peer-reviewed scholarly Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, Vol. 6 no.1, ed. Sean Esbjörn Hargens. This journal issue leads with two articles by Marc Gafni and one by Zachary Stein, together with Susanne Cook-Greuter and others is dedicated to Unique Self. Gafni was also guest editor of the issue. A second volume of Unique Self by Gafni and Stein, is now in preparation which covers key developments in Unique Self Theory between 2011 and today and locates Unique Self Theory in the larger context of Gafni and Stein's CosmoErotic Humanism.

refer back for a moment to what we have called *the Four Big Bangs*⁵⁹ that unfold the distinct stages of Reality.⁶⁰

We will return to these below, but let's foreshadow that conversation for but a brief moment:

1. The First Big Bang, cosmological evolution, takes us all the way from the first nanoseconds of the namesake to elementary particles, stars, planets, and supernovas.
2. The Second Big Bang, biological evolution, is the emergence of what we term sentient or animate life, and with it the entire biosphere.
3. The Third Big Bang, cultural evolution, is when the hominids walking on the African savanna wake up into self-reflection, art, technology, and trade, birthing what we refer to as *humanity*.
4. The Fourth Big Bang is the emergence of a New Human and a New Humanity, what we have called the transition from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo amor*.

This process is denoted in part by the humans awakening from separate self into True Self, and then into Unique Self, Evolutionary Unique Self, and ultimately to the emergence of Unique Self Symphony.

As *Homo amor*, we realize that we are the personal face of the evolutionary impulse, a divine miniature, playing a distinct instrument in the larger Unique Self Symphony, which is the new emergent of Evolutionary Intimacy in the self-organizing Universe. We realize that our music is intended, chosen, recognized, desired, loved, adored, and needed by All-That-Is.

This is an important model we developed to unpack something essential about *telos* and Eros—the *Teleros* of Cosmos. The model emphasizes both the narrative arc of Cosmos, the

⁵⁹ The first three Big Bangs are unpacked by Ralston, Homer. *The Three Big Bangs*. Columbia University Press, 2010; The model of the Four Big Bangs, which is core to *CosmoErotic Humanism* appears below in this essay. It also has been succinctly articulated by us, Gafni and Stein, in our early work 2015, *Homo Amor and CosmoErotic Humanism: First Thoughts and Towards a Politics of Evolutionary Love: Unique Self Symphonies, Democratization of Enlightenment, and Others Social Miracles*. We have articulated the Four Big Bangs in somewhat more depth in our current work, "First Thoughts on Homo amor and the Amorous Cosmos." [Perspectiva Press, Ed. Jonathan Rawson], in our *Homo Amor Manifesto*, and in the text of this essay below [Waterside Press].

⁶⁰ See *Sexually Incorrect: The Abridged Phenomenology of Eros, Volume One*, Introduction, "The New Sexual Story."

continuity between matter, life, and the depth of the human self-reflective mind, and the progressive unfolding of all of the distinct levels of each.

And the model emphasizes the discontinuity, the distinct split between the animate and inanimate, sentient and non-sentient. Clearly, the emergence of life is a momentous leap; it has radically emergent properties, which sharply evolve beyond any of the previous stages of evolution. A cell, for example, breathes and replicates—at first asexually and later sexually—something that none of the molecules that constitute a cell are able to accomplish on their own.⁶¹

From that flow emerges an entirely new pattern of life that eventually leads to humanity. We clearly value animate life differently,⁶² as no one has ever gone on trial for murdering rocks. None of us would say that the difference between inanimate rocks and animate creatures is a frivolous distinction. Clearly, then, the split between animate and inanimate is real and not to be overridden by ill-conceived spiritual declarations. At the same time, it is easy to overstate the split, which is both a mistake and existentially tragic. If we overstate the split, then, we are left with the false impression—that depresses our very humanity—of billions of years of empty space before life dawns and lights up at least a proto-existential *Cosmos*.

The language and realization of the interior sciences is essential here. For the interior scientist's Reality is the Names of God all the way down and all the way up the great evolutionary chain of being and becoming. However, unlike in the classic great chain, which was matter, life, mind, soul, and spirit, with matter on the bottom and spirit on the top, the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom asserted that all of Reality was in fact interiors and exteriors—in other words, Names of God—all the way down and all the way up the chain.

At this point, we return to the original theme, *Eros is the Name of God*, with which we began.

⁶¹ There was, however, probably an in-between step, where organic molecules started to replicate themselves, before they became enclosed within a cell membrane and the first cell came into existence. See, for example, the article “How did life originate?” on the *Understanding Evolution* website of the Berkely University of California: .

⁶² That is not to say we could not do much better at valuing life, as we see massive animal suffering in the form of factory farming and human-induced mass extinctions of insects, ecosystems, and organic matter in soil for the sake of protecting large-scale agriculture. It can be argued that such atrocities have spread precisely because the animate beings have been objectified and commodified, stripped of their animate identity.

Let's cite again the second part of the Zohar passage that we adduced above.

We have established that the upper tip of the yod is never separated from it because it dwells upon it in love. . . . Regarding heh, we know that yod is never separated from it; they are in constant love and are inseparable. Thus Yod Heh. Of this we have learned: "A river flows from Eden" (Gen. 2:10) [in the present tense]. It is constantly flowing; they cleave to one another in love. Vav is always the bridegroom of the bride. Yod with heh, heh with vav, vav with heh. That is why all is called love. And one who loves the King becomes bound up into that love. Hence: "You shall love with Y-H-W-H your God" (Deut. 6:5).⁶³

At this point, the text is clear. The text begins with one version of the *Zivug Matmedet*, constant *Eros*, or *Zivug*, between the *Yod* and the *He*. This is the river of *Eros* that is constantly flowing from Eden. This is the constant *Zivug*—*they cleave to one another in love*—that is the perpetual Divine Lovemaking at every level of Reality that sustains Cosmos.

The text then goes on to describe *Zivug She'Eno Matmedet*—this is the *aroused Eros*, the *Vav* and the *He*, that emerges from human activism. The participatory Cosmos is described by the phrase, "*And one who loves the King becomes bound up with that love.*" To know the ontic identity of *Eros* between the human and the Divine is understood by the text as the invocation of the command, "*You shall love with Yod He Vav He your God.*"

The Secret of the Cherubs

As we already alluded to above, the Secret of the Cherubs is interlocked and at times almost synonymous with the *Sod HaYichud*—the Secret of Unification—and the *Sod HaShemot*—the Secret of the Names. Before we clarify this identity, however, we need to first get a sense of the Cherubs in their larger context—the Jerusalem Temple built by Solomon.

⁶³ *Zohar* 3:267b, quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (p. 127). Yale University Press. 2020. Kindle Edition.

To access the mystery of the Jerusalem Temple, we need to approach it more carefully. The Temple itself was built somewhat like an exquisite mandala, in the form of a layered structure. On the pilgrim festivals, the high priest would ascend the great staircase to the outer *Courtyard of Song*, pass through the *Chatzer*—the courtyard—into the chamber called the Holy, and from there into the innermost *Sanctum*—the Holy of Holies. In this *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the Temple, behind brocaded curtains, stood the golden Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was the sole content of the Holy of Holies.

For the lineage, the Ark, perhaps more than any other earthly object, is of overwhelming mythic and mystical significance. The Ark is described in the lineage sources as something akin to a spiritually creative, life-giving nuclear reactor. It was lost when the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed some 2,500 years ago. It has been sought after, physically, and mythically ever since.

The search for the Ark is the original grail quest born of the Hebrew lineage. But for interior sciences, the search was not of the hero's journey of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* variety, or the earlier medieval search for the physical grail. Rather, it was the intense yearning for what might be called the *original gnosis of Temple Consciousness—Solomon's wisdom—the realization of the Universe: A Love Story*.

The Ark contained within it the two tablets of stone, upon which were carved the Ten Commandments. According to the lineage, these mystical lapidary tablets were sculpted by the

God-gripped hand of Moses himself.⁶⁴ Most significant though is that which rests atop the Ark.⁶⁵ Sitting perched aloft the Ark are our two-winged figures, the celebrated cherubs with faces of pure innocence.⁶⁶

The original text reads,

*Make two cherubim of gold—make them of hammered work—at the two ends of the cover. Make one cherub at one end and the other cherub at the other end; of one piece with the cover shall you make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They shall confront each other; the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover.*⁶⁷

These were the cherubs in the original Temple, known as the *Mishkan*—the Tabernacle—which accompanied the people in their *Exodus* journey through the desert of Sinai and into the land. However, when Solomon builds the Temple in Jerusalem, two free-standing cherubs are

⁶⁴ In the mythic historical imagery of the Sinai revelation, Moses receives the original tablets in his first ascent of Mount Sinai, tablets that were broken by Moses after confronting the golden calf. Moses later receives the second, on his second ascent to Sinai, after the reconciliation between Israel and God. *Babylonian Talmud tractate Baba Batra*, 14b: “*R. Huna said: What is the meaning of the verse, ‘Which is called by the Name, the Name of the Lord of Hosts, Who sits upon the Cherubs?’* [The fact that the word *Name* is repeated] *teaches that both the tablets and the broken tablets were deposited in the Ark.*” The Ark contained both the fragments of the first tablets, which Moses broke, and the second tablets. On the mythic motif of the Ark containing the “*tablets and the broken tablets,*” see also *Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berkhot* 8b and *Menachot* 69b. Note the usage of a biblical verse that emphasizes how the *Name* rests on the cherubs. See chapter 9, “*Lishma,*” in Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Atria, 2003, for a nuanced explanation of *Name* as a particular path in the Mystery of the Cherubs.

⁶⁵ According to both traditional sources and scholarship, the Ark was in the Temple, even during the first Temple, only until the period of the King Josiah. The Talmudic passages that talk about the intertwined cherubs are either talking about the cherubs above the Ark in the first Temple, before the Ark was hidden, or, as the Talmud suggests [*Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 54a], about the cherubs that were on the walls and other furnishing of the Temple. Other passages, which we will adduce, that refer to the cherubs in the Holy of Holies may also refer to the free-standing cherubs that were in the Holy of Holies of the first Temple, even after the Ark was hidden or to the image of cherubs on the wall of the Ark. We will refer to the sources for these other set of cherubs in the text below. All of these issues are well discussed, both in the traditional sources and in scholarship; and a review of these sources is unnecessary for our core theme.

⁶⁶ On the cherubs, see the original groundbreaking essay of Raphael Pattai, *Hebrew Goddesses*, pp. 59-98. On the childlike faces of the cherubs, see *Babylonian Talmud, Sukka*, 5a.

⁶⁷ *Exodus* 25:18-20.

added to the Holy of Holies.⁶⁸ Moreover, images of the same erotically engaged cherubs adorned the curtains and certain instruments of the Holy of Holies.

In the description of the Talmud citing the ancient texts,

*Rav Aḥa bar Ya’akov said: Actually, Rav Ketina’s statement is referring to the Second Temple: There was a curtain at the entrance of the Holy of Holies, and indeed there were images of cherubs there, i.e., drawn or engraved pictures of the cherubs on the walls. As it is written: “And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubs and palm trees and open flowers, within and without” (I Kings 6:29), and it is further stated: “And he overlaid them with gold fitted upon the graven work” (I Kings 6:35), which teaches that in addition to the cherubs within the sacred place, other cherubs were drawn on the walls.*⁶⁹

Finally, in the texts of the interior sciences,⁷⁰ the Divine Voice, the voice of prophecy, of goodness, truth, and beauty, was said to speak from *between the two cherubs*.⁷¹

In the language of the *Book of Exodus*,

⁶⁸ For a description of the Cherubs in the Temple of Solomon, see the book of *Chronicles* 1, ch.28, verse 18. “...and the gold for the figure of the chariot—the cherubim—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD.” Note, as well, the nexus between the chariot of Ezekiel, the major mystical vision of the interior sciences, and the cherubs. We will return to this crucial topic below.

⁶⁹ *Babylonian Talmud* 54a, .

⁷⁰ *Book of Numbers*, chapter 7, verse 89 (New International Version): “When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law. In this way the Lord spoke to him.”

⁷¹ In the early biblical texts, the cherubs are dynamic angelic figures who serve as the chariot of the Divine in mystical vision. See, for example, the *Book of Samuel* 2: chapter 22, verse 11, where the Divine is described as, “*he rode on the cherub*,” with the word *rode* being the root work of the *Merkava* chariot. See also the *Book of Ezekiel*, chapter 10, verse 20. Ezekiel is the source of the central mystical *gnosis* of the Hebrew lineage, *Ma’aseh Merkava*—the account of the chariot. Here, Ezekiel recognizes that his vision of the chariot was a vision of cherubs. “[what] *I saw under the God of Israel by the River of Kedar ...and I knew that they were cherubs...*” God is described alternately as *the ride of the cherubs* [as in the text of Samuel, just adduced] or the *Yoshev Keruvim*—*The One Who Sits Astride the Cherubs*. [See a plethora of texts in this regard, including *Psalms*, chapter 80, verse 1, *Isaiah*, chapter 37, verse 16, and *Kings* 2, chapter 19, verse 15. These angelic cherubs are later representations but not identical with the cherubs of the *Sanctum Sanctorum*.

*There I will meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover,
from between the two cherubim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact/
Witnessing—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people.*⁷²

These winged cherubs with their innocent faces have, like the phrase *the Wisdom of Solomon*, entered the depth of public culture. They have graced everything from the greatest works of art to countless covers of Hallmark cards. Yet, according to the esoteric tradition, these images were not of the Hallmark variety. These two cherubs were male and female, face to face, *me'urim zeh b'zeh*—intertwined in embrace of LoveDesire.⁷³

These carved creatures were the focal point, the epicenter, of the mandala-like Temple space. They sat, like the guarded pupil of the eye, at the source of the sacred. The tradition of cherubs embraced in LoveDesire as the very center of the Holy of Holies above the Ark of the Covenant, and the voice of prophecy emerging from between the love-entwined cherubs, is dramatic. The Temple is considered to be not a historical building but the *axis mundi* of Reality and its interior structure. The center of the Temple is the Holy of Holies, the center of the Holy of Holies is the Ark, and the focal point of the Ark is the two cherubs entwined in LoveDesire perched above it.

The *Shekhinah* is understood, in myriad texts from biblical to midrashic to kabbalistic, to dwell in the space between the cherubs.⁷⁴ That the Divine-human encounter—prophecy—is described by the Secret-of-the-Cherubs tradition as *the merger in Eros with the Shekhinah* that takes place between two cherubs embraced in LoveDesire is a direct expression of the *gnosis* of what we call the Universe: A Love Story. But this tradition is esoteric, a hidden *gnosis*. To cite one example of its hiddenness, one needs to but turn to a major modern source, Sefaria.org, which is providing some of the best translations of the entire canon of Hebrew wisdom texts, and one notes that the major Talmudic source describing the cherubs reads:

⁷² *Exodus*, 25:22. New International Version: “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.”

⁷³ “Male and female”—This is implicit from the passage that we will quote below, *Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 54a. But in the *Additions to the Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 278a, the fact that the cherubs are male and female is mentioned explicitly.

⁷⁴ See *Exodus* 25. For a wider array of sources, historically sequenced by the texts, see, for example, .

...the cherubs, which were clinging to one another...

The correct reading of the text, however, is as follows.

R. Ketina said: “When Israel would come for the holiday pilgrimage, they would open the Veil [that concealed the Holy of Holies] and show them the Cherubs, who were [me’urim zeh b’zeh] entwined in LoveDesire with one another, and they would say to them: ‘See how beloved you are to the One who is Infinite Space, in which all of Reality is held, like the love of man and woman.’”⁷⁵

The Hebrew word in question in this Talmudic text is *me’urim*, which we have accurately translated as *entwined in LoveDesire*, as opposed to *clinging to one another*, which obfuscates the core point of the text. The word *me’urim* derives from the two-letter Hebrew root *er* meaning *awake* or *aroused*. It is the root word of the word *ervah*, which consistently refers to *the Eros of LoveDesire*—the anatomies of arousal in the texts of the lineage.⁷⁶

That the Talmudic passage cited in the name of R. Ketina refers *not* to cherubs *neutrally clinging to each other*, as the classical translations we adduced above wrongly suggest, but that it is referring to *the embrace of LoveDesire*, is clear not only because that is the correct translation of the word *me’urim* but also from the context of the text. The experience of *me’urim* is described as *the LoveDesire between a man and a woman*. The implication is clear. The LoveDesire between man and woman participates in the love of the cherubs, which is the very structure of the Amorous Cosmos. The continuation of the same text thread in *Talmud Yoma* itself makes even explicit that the root word *er*, as in the phrase *me’urim zeh b’zeh*, R. Ketina’s description of the cherubs, is referring to *LoveDesire*.

The *Talmud* adduces a text from the *Book of Kings*, describing the cherubs “*as one embraced with his lover.*”

The Talmudic passage—*Tractate Yoma* 54a-b—again in our own translation:

⁷⁵ *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma* 54a.

⁷⁶ See *Leviticus*, chapter 20, verse 18 and 19. The context of the verses is sexuality, the sexual relations—of embodied Eros between human beings—in their—from the biblical perspective—unrectified forms.

And it is written [describing the cherubs]: According to the [Me'ur Ish Ul-yoto] me'ur of each with loyot" (I Kings 7:36). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: "According to the [Me'ur Ish Ul-yoto] me'ur of each with loyot"? Rabba bar Rav Sheila said:

It means like a man joined in LoveDesire to his livaya, his partner... In other words, the cherubs are in the embrace of LoveDesire.

The key word is *me'ur*—embraced in *LoveDesire*, which is clearly the source of R. Ketina's statement that *the cherubs are me'urim with one another*.⁷⁷ One classic commentary on this text from the *Book of Kings*, describing the cherubs, reads it as follows, "*Like a man cleaved in union with his wife, mouth pressed to mouth.*"⁷⁸ The language of *er* in the Talmud emerges directly from the *Songs of Songs*. This is the oath that the *dod*, the *beloved*, adjures the *benot Yerushalayim*, the *maidens of Jerusalem*, that runs as an erotic refrain through the song,

*Do not awaken and do not arouse love until there is full desire.*⁷⁹

Or

*Under the apple tree, I aroused you.*⁸⁰

The Talmud picks up on this theme of the arousal of *LoveDesire*—the two cherubs aroused and entwined in *LoveDesire* is the topic of this Talmudic passage. If there was even a

⁷⁷ Once again, the *Sefaria* translation mis-reads the text as one *clinging* to his partner, as it translated the word *me'urim* as *clinging*, and in doing so, removing the Eros that is the essence of the word. For a better reading of these texts, in scholarship which understands correctly that the texts are referring to *cherubs entwined in LoveDesire*, see for example, Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 111-112, see also Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 31ff. See also Melila Hellner-Eshed on the language of *er*, *arousal*, in the Zoharic corpus *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press (29 Jun. 2009), translated from Hebrew by Nathan Wolski, pp. 204-228, "The Language of Awakening and Arousal." The *Zoharic* corpus flows from the *Song of Songs*.

⁷⁸ See the author of the commentary *Michlal Yofi* on the verses from the *Book of Kings* 1, chapter 7, verse 36. The classical commentator Rashi and the Metzudot commentary understand the text as *Male and Female—Chavurim Yachad*—meaning *embraced*.

⁷⁹ *Song of Songs of Solomon*, chapter 2, verse 7, chapter 3, verse 5, chapter 8, verse 4.

⁸⁰ *Song of Songs of Solomon*, chapter 8, verse 5.

shred of doubt that this text was referring to LoveDesire, it evaporates with the continuation of this Talmudic thread where the cherubs are once again evoked.⁸¹

Reish Lakish said:

When gentiles destroyed the Second Temple and entered the Sanctuary, they saw these drawings of cherubs clinging to one another. They peeled them from the wall, took them out to the market, and said: These Jews, whose blessing is a blessing and whose curse is a curse, due to their great awareness of the Divine, should they be occupied with such matters, making images of this kind? They immediately debased and destroyed them, as it is stated: "All who honored her debase her because they have seen her nakedness."⁸²

The implication of the text is, of course, that the cherubs were embraced in LoveDesire, aroused intertwined cherubs, and the proof text cited contains the word *ervah*, which, as we noted above, is *not* a neutral term connoting *clinging* but rather evokes the Eros of LoveDesire, which is central to the *Songs of Songs*, is picked up by the mystical texts of the *Talmud*, and early *Kabbalah*, and suffuses the *Zohar*.⁸³ The Eros at the very center of the Temple shocks the Babylonians, who do not understand the esoteric teaching of the Secret of the Cherubs. As the classical early Kabbalistic text, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation*, describes the cherubs in

⁸¹ *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma 54b*, in the translation of Sefaria.org.

⁸² (*Lamentations 1:8*).

⁸³ On Eros as a primary if elusive theme threaded through the fabric of the *Zohar*, *Talmud*, and key biblical texts, see *ibid* in earlier footnotes, Pattai, *Hebrew Goddess*, see Liebes, Yehuda, "Zohar and Eros" *Alpayim* 9 (1994), Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press (29 Jun. 2009), translated from Hebrew by Nathan Wolski, and Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*. See also, not yet cited above but an important work, by my colleague Ohad Ezrahi, "Shenyayim Keruvim" in *Ha-yashan yehaddesh ve-he-h.adash yitkaddesh*, edited by Yitschak Hayut-Man and Ohad Ezrahi, Jerusalem: Hay-Or, 1997.

the Temple as *being in sexual union*, citing the verse from *Kings*:⁸⁴ *like a man sexually entwined*—the word *entwined* comes again from the root *er*.

The Secret of the Name Meets the Secret of the Cherubs: The Universe: A Love Story

The cherubs first appear in the early biblical texts as angelic figures. The cherubs are then transposed in the mythical-mystical consciousness from the angelic realm to forces of Cosmos, of Eros, represented by the male and female cherubs. These two forces of Reality represented by cherubs include Divinity and humanity, the masculine and feminine, and, in medieval Kabbalah, the *Sefirot*—the creative Divine Force of Reality—of *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, or *Malchut* and *Tiferet*.⁸⁵ The two creative Divine Forces, which incarnate the two cherubs, are understood to be

⁸⁴ Kings 1, chapter 7, verse 36. This is the verse cited in the *Talmud Yoma* 54a-b that we cited above: *According to the [Me'ur Ish Ul-yoto] me'ur of each with loyot"? Rabba bar Rav Sheila said: It means like a man joined in LoveDesire to his livaya, his partner... In other words, the cherubs are in the embrace of LoveDesire. ...* The key word is *me'ur*, with the root word *er*, signifying arousal as in the Hebrew word *ervah*. The word *er* means in Hebrew both *awakening* and *arousal*, themes that are the inter-included in biblical text—for example, the *Song of Songs of Solomon* [chapter 3, verse 5]: “*Do not awaken or arouse love until the desire is full*”—an inter-inclusion that later became core to the interior sciences of the *Zohar*. See for example, Melila Hellner-Eshed, *ibid*, “The Language of Awakening and Arousal” in *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press (29 Jun. 2009), translated from Hebrew by Nathan Wolski, pp. 204-228.

⁸⁵ See R. Ezra of Gerona, student of R. Isaac the Blind, himself the son of Rabad of Posquieres, in his commentary to the *Songs of Songs of Solomon*, in *Kitvei HaRamban*, 2:493-496. See also R. Menachem Recanti, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, p. 49b, *op cit*. Idel, *Kabbalah New Perspectives*, 131. See also the Rabad on *Du Partzufim*, the original androgyne of Adam and Eve, which are identified by him as the two Names of God and implicitly, within the context of his interior sciences, as the two cherubs. This text of the Rabad was originally published in the scholarly literature by Gershom Scholem in *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, (1150-1250), Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1948 p. 179, and analyzed by Idel in terms of the identity between the Names of God and the cherubs in *Kabbalah New Perspectives*, pp. 129-130. Another manuscript from medieval Kabbalah manuscript of Shem Tov ibn Gaon (1325) states that Adam and Eve were created *Du Partzufim*—as Androgyne—*me'urim*—aroused and entwined with each other. That of course also alludes to the two erotically entwined cherubs—the implication being the cherubs [*me'urim*] aroused and entwined in LoveDesire, as described in *Talmud Yoma* 54 a, are the original Androgyne, transformed into the cherubs, whose entwinement is the purpose and nature of Reality itself—the Universe: A Love Story. *Op cit*. manuscript, Idel, *Kabbalah New Perspectives*, p. 338, fn. 165.

two Names of God.⁸⁶ his tradition appears in *Midrashim*⁸⁷ and runs through a thousand years of realized texts. In the language of one *Midrash*,

*the two cherubs on the ark of the testimony correspond to the two holy Names, YHVH and Elohim.*⁸⁸

These are respectively the feminine and masculine poles of the Godhead. One medieval Kabbalist, Eliezer of Worms, citing this *Midrash* adds,

*YHVH on the seat of judgment is inscribed and likewise on the seat of mercy and on the seat of the cherubs, as it is written, whose name is called by the Lord of Hosts who dwells upon the cherubs, and the corresponding two are the two divine names.*⁸⁹

The two cherubs are the two names of God, are the seat of judgment and the seat of mercy, which in turn are the masculine and feminine polarity in the tree of life, the tree of kabbalistic luminations known as *Ilan Ha-Sefirot*, the Tree of Luminations. *Malchut* is *Shekhinah*, the feminine pole or lumination—or *Sefira*—that suffuses all of Reality. And *Tiferet* is the masculine pole or lumination or *Sefira* in this system. Both, *Malchut*, or *Shekhinah*, and *Tiferet*, like all the *Sefirot*, refer to both, the structure of the Divine and the human world, which, from the ultimate nondual perspective expressed in myriad Kabbalistic sources, share an ontic identity.

In the structure of Lurianic Kabbalah, the cherubs are identified as *Zeir Anpin* (the small face, referring to the six emotional *Sefirot* with *Tiferet* at the center and related to the *masculine*

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *Midrash*, plural *Midrashim*, refers—according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*—to a mode of biblical interpretation prominent in the Talmudic literature. The term is also used to refer to a separate body of commentaries on Scripture that uses this interpretative mode.

⁸⁸ The *Midrash Tadsheh* affirming the identity between the two Cherubs and the two Names of God is cited by Pattai, *The Hebrew Goddesses*, p. 82, the *Midrash* itself is printed in Abraham Epstein, *Me-Kadmoniyot ha-yichudim*, (Hebrew) Jerusalem, 1957 p. 144. Of course, the masculine and feminine nature of the two cherubs is already made clearly in the text of the *Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 54a, which we adduced above in the main text. See also *Sefer Yetzirah*, citing the Talmudic text regarding the cherubs.

⁸⁹ See *Sefer Ha-Rokeach* (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 22.

waters, or *Arousal from Above*) and *Nukva* (the feminine, referring to the *Shekhinah* or *Malchut* and related to the *feminine waters*, or *Arousal from Below*).⁹⁰

What becomes clear from the material we have just adduced is that the Secret of the Name and the Secret of the Cherubs are, if not one and the same, tightly interdigitated. All of this is part of the mental mystical furniture of the interior sciences that animate Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk.

Who is the one who loves, if not the living God flowing through your soul? And whom does He love, if not God? And what is that love? It is hewn out of the flowing essence of divinity. It joins itself and becomes one with the lower world, reducing itself into that microcosm called the human being. Wherever you stand, you are standing within blessed Y-H-W-H, since He is the locus of the world, surrounding and filling all the worlds at once.

When that quality of love attacks you, you don't know what is happening. ... All is naught in the face of it, because "It comes from Y-H-W-H" (Ps. 118:24). ... This is the spirit of Y-H-W-H speaking within you, His word upon your tongue. This love is a brand plucked from the divine fire. [As you realize this], you will become ever more enflamed, the voice growing louder, without ceasing. The written page could not contain, nor could oceans of ink express, the great openness of heart in that true love.⁹¹

When Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk talks about the *YHVH*, the Name of God, in this passage and many others, he is referring to the Secret of the Name. In this esoteric mental furniture, drawn from the interior sciences, the two cherubs are the Names of God. The Universe: A Love Story expresses itself both within the four-letter Name of God, *YHVH*, and between the Names of God, *YHVH* and the *Elohim*, which are, as we saw above, the lumination, the *Sefirot*—

⁹⁰ The biblical texts are what we might call today *heteronormative*, and the modern or postmodern readers who do not experience personal Eros in a heteronormative context should transpose the images to ones more aligned with their own experience.

⁹¹ Ibid, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, *Pri ha-Arets, shofetim*; quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (pp. 139-140). Yale University Press. Kindle Edition.

Malchut and Tiferet, Chesed and Gevurah—or in the language of Luria’s interior science, *Zeir Anpin and Nukva*.

This is the Secret of the Cherubs and the Secret of Names. At the core of the Secret of the Cherubs and the Secret of the Name are all the core principles of the Universe: A Love Story. That is what the interior scientists mean when they say that all of Reality is composed of the Names of God. In the language of the *Zohar*, God “*looked into the Torah and created the world.*”⁹² But the inner text of the *Torah* is nothing other than *the Names of God*.⁹³ The Names of God—in the Universe: A Love Story—are the very DNA of Reality.

Just a few years after Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, the realization of the Universe: A Love Story finds literary expression in the epic *Tale of the Seven Beggars*, penned by one of the greatest interior scientists of Hasidism, Nachman of Breslov. Nachman’s students write, explaining this tale, “*the foundational existence and aliveness of the world is only through the erotic longings of love.*”⁹⁴

For there is a mountain, and on this mountain stands a rock, and from the rock flows a Spring. Everything that exists has a heart. Also, the world itself has a Heart. And the Heart of the world is a complete structure, with a face, and arms, and legs etc. But the toenail of the Heart of the world has more heart in it than any other heart in the world. And this mountain with its rock and its Spring stands at one end of the world, and the Heart of the world stands at the other end. And the Heart stands opposite the Spring and is filled with a mighty yearning to come to the Spring, crying out constantly, that it should be able to come to the Spring. And the Spring, similarly, is constantly yearning for the Heart.

⁹² *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1. Quoted in Green, Arthur. *Judaism for the World: Reflections on God, Life, and Love* (p. 241). Yale University Press. Kindle Edition.

⁹³ See for example, Shimon Levi, in his *Ketem Paz*, 1:210 a: “*for all the Torah is the names of the blessed holy one.*” On Shimon Levi and *Ketem Paz*. See Boaz Huss Al Adeni Paz, *HaKaballah Shel R, Shimon Ibn Levi*, Jerusalem Magnes Press, 1990 pp. 58-59. See also the Ramban (Nachmanides), Introduction to his *Commentary on Torah*, Chavel Edition, Mossad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, 1972.

⁹⁴ *Rimzei Ma'asiyot*, Commentary [Heb] to Nachman of Breslov, *The Tale of the Seven Beggars* in Nachman of Breslov, *Sippurei Ma'asiyot*. Jerusalem, 1985.

But the Heart has two things that weaken it, one is that the sun concentrates its rays on it and burns it (because it is longing so much to go to the Spring). And the second is that it is terribly weak, precisely because of its tremendous yearning to go to the Spring. And when it needs to rest a little, when it needs to have a break from such a powerful desire, a huge bird comes and flaps its wings on it and shields it from the sun. But even while it is resting, still it is constantly looking at the Spring, and yearning to come to it.

So, if it is yearning so much to come to the Spring, why does it not just get up and go to it? The reason is that, when it comes close to the mountain, it can no longer see the summit, and therefore it cannot see the Spring. And were it to stop looking at the Spring, it would die, because its whole existence comes from the Spring. As long as it stands at a distance, it can see the summit of the mountain, and the Spring, but as soon as it gets close to the mountain, it loses sight of the summit, (as can be easily demonstrated,) and therefore of the Spring, and then it starts to die, G-D forbid. For were the Heart to die, G-D forbid, the whole world would cease to exist. For the Heart is the life of everything in existence, and obviously, there is no life without a heart. This is the reason that it cannot go to the Spring. All it can do is to stand opposite it, and yearn and cry out for it.

Nachman's description is intentional. The Eros of Reality lives in the human being and in the Heart of Reality itself. While there is obviously discontinuity in the expression of Eros in the world of matter, the Mountain and the Spring, and the human world, there is also continuity. We elaborate on this Principle of Continuity and Discontinuity between matter, life, and mind, in other writings of CosmoErotic Humanism. But for now, suffice to say that it is the same *One Love* that animates the erotic longing of all of Reality, at all of its levels, in all of its expressions. This is the core realization of Nachman in these passages.

Like Abraham Kook's writing on evolution and Evolutionary Love, which we adduced above and to which we will return below, Nachman is recapitulating, in this story, the entire lineage.

At this point, we turn to one of the core earlier sources—besides Luria, with whom we began—which informs this esoteric CosmoErotic Humanist strain of the Universe: A Love Story, as have just seen it in these Hasidic sources. We refer to Elijah De Vidas, the Renaissance scholar and erotic mystic, in his epic essay, *Shaar HaAhava—Gate of Love*.

De Vidas writes,

*The matter of love is that its existence consists in the link and the union of the effect with each other, by the inner soul, and likewise man will not God but by [means of] his soul.*⁹⁵

In another passage in *Gate of Love*, De Vidas elaborates:

R. Shimon Bar Yochai commented that the entire range of emanation is called love. This is the language [of the Zohar]: “Come and see: All is called love, and because of love everything exists, as it is written: ‘Much water cannot extinguish love’⁹⁶ and everything stands upon love. Behold the holy name is found [namely exists] in such a manner. It is said about the [letter] Yod that the tittle [of the letter] is never separated from it, and behold by dint of love it dwells upon it...Whoever loves the king is in union with that love, and this is why, it is said: ‘thou shalt love YHVH, the lord, thy God.’”⁹⁷ See it is laid clear that the entire [world of] emanation is designated by the word love.⁹⁸

Finally, we conclude De Vidas with a final passage from the same work, *Gate of Love*.

“all the emanation is called love...and because of love everything exists, and without the love that each cause has for its effect to emanate upon it, the world would be destroyed, and it would return to the chaos. All the degrees are linked to each other from the beginning of the degrees to their end. And if

⁹⁵ *Reshit Hokhmah*, Gate of Love, chap. 1, 1:366. See also *ibid* chap. 2, 1:367; and *Or ha-Hammah*, 3: fol. 110b. cited in Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, p. 192.

⁹⁶ *Song of Songs*, 8:7.

⁹⁷ See *Deuteronomy* 6:5. And see the *Zohar*'s reading of this verse adduced by De Vidas, *Zohar*, vol. 3 fol. 267a. Cited in Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 192-193.

⁹⁸ *Reshit Hokhmah*, Gate of Love, chap. 2, 1:367, cited in Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 192-193.

*someone were to think that the Keter withstands its emanation to Hokhmah, because of it the world would be destroyed... Since this is the desire of the effect to suck from its cause, and it is conspicuous that each effect needs its cause to emanate upon it in order to live, and this is the reason why the effect is never separated from the cause, and its love is with it... The existence of love is the link of the cause to the effect effected by it, in order to emanate upon it as the father [does] upon the son...*⁹⁹

[In other sources *mother* is deployed in the same manner.]

This CosmoErotic Love, however, not merely shows up in what we call third-person terms, but the same quality of Eros appears in second-person terms—or what one scholar of Kabbalah calls *its personalistic forms*.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, that is precisely the reading of these texts that we saw in Hasidic master Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, “*What is the one who loves, if not the living God flowing through your soul.*” The texts of realization that describe the CosmoErotic Universe move seamlessly between the first-, second-, and third-person perspective of Reality, understanding—trans-conceptually—that all three are Faces of the One. We will turn again to these three persons of Eros, as three expressions of the CosmoErotic Universe and as core matrixes for CosmoErotic Humanism below.

Hasidism is followed, some one hundred and fifty years later, by the writings of contemporary evolutionary mystic Abraham Kook,¹⁰¹ whose seminal text on the evolutionary

⁹⁹ *Reshit Hokhmah*, Gate of Love, chap. 6 1:457, quoted in *Novelot Hokhmah*, fol. 128ab, cited in Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 193-194.

¹⁰⁰ See for example, *Reshit Hokhmah*, Gate of Love, chap. 2: 373, cited in Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 193-194.

¹⁰¹ Kook was the first Orthodox Chief Rabbi of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. He died in 1938.

nature of the Eros of Cosmos we adduced above.¹⁰² Kook, heir to the great lineage of Hebrew mysticism, who sees himself as direct heir to the seminal Renaissance mystic Isaac Luria and, before him, the earlier school of the Zohar, directly integrates the Hasidic masters as well.

We invoke again the opening line of the text we adduced above, where, as we noted, Kook stands for the esoteric lineage of *Evolutionary Love Mystics* when he writes,

*The doctrine of evolution, which is currently conquering the world, is aligned with the interior sciences of Kabbalah more than all other philosophical teachings.*¹⁰³

And, for Kook and the lineage, the Cosmic Process of evolution was animated and driven by Eros.¹⁰⁴ One expression of Kook's realization of Eros in this regard is shared by him on walks

¹⁰² Importantly, Hasidism articulates very potently the notion of Eros, the LoveIntelligence as the animating Reality of Cosmos, but downplays the evolutionary sense of Luria. Kook, however, is more faithful to the historical and ultimately evolutionary thrust. Luria realizes Divinity as Evolutionary Love at the center of his interior science. Hasidism, caught in a traumatic reaction to the failed Messianic historical attempt of the sixteenth-century Shabtai Tzvi, develops an anathema to historical participation, seeing it as dangerous to the ultimate goal of mystical union. So, while Hasidism understands the Universe: A Love Story as the central tale of Cosmos, the plotline of the story is *ethos* coupled with some mystical union or communion with the Divine and the realization of the Hebrew eschatological vision. By contrast, the school of Elijah of Vilna, known as *the Gaon [Genius] of Vilna*, writing in the later part of the eighteenth century, at the same time as Hasidism emerges, sees *the historical thrust* of Luria—Divinity acting in what Kook would call *evolutionary history*, a more Hegelian view of history—as central. Kook integrates the *Erotic Evolutionary Love Thrust* of Luria, via Elijah of Vilna, *with the Eros of mystical union*, central to Hasidism. [The Eros of mystical union is equally strong in the Gaon, but in different form. See, for example the excellent work of Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1989. See also Tamar Ross's excellent essay, contrasting the mystical lineages of the Vilna Gaon and Hasidism: "Two Interpretations of the Doctrine of Tzimtzum: Hayim of Volozhin and Shneur Zalman of Lyadi," *Mehkarei Yerushalayim B'machshevet Yisrael* (Hebrew) 2, Jerusalem, 1981, pp. 153-169.

¹⁰³ See *Orot HaKodesh [Lights of Holiness]* (Vol. 2), (p. 537), R. Abraham Kook, 1937, Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁴ In, for example, *Lights of Teshuva* [Repentance], 5:3, Kook understands repentance to be not merely a personal process but a cosmic process, and particularly the cosmic process of evolution at all of its levels including cultural evolution. This process of *Cosmic Teshuva* in its truest form is driven for Kook by *Cosmic Love*, what we have called *Evolutionary Love*, the Eros that animates evolution. A careful study of Kook's *Lights of Teshuva* makes this abundantly clear. On Kook and evolutionary theory, see more generally, for example, Bergman, Samuel Higo. 'On Reality in God,' in *Essays on the Thought and Philosophy of Rabbi Kook*, edited by Ezra Gellman, 76-88, New York: Cornwall Books, 1991. Cherry, Michael Shai, 'Creation, Evolution and Jewish Thought,' Doctoral thesis, Brandeis University, 2001. Cherry, Shai, 'Three Twentieth-Century Jewish Responses to Evolutionary Theory,' *Aleph* 3 (2003): 247-290. See especially "Abraham Isaac Kook's Account of 'Creative Evolution': A Response to Modernity for the Sake of Zion," Daniel R. Langton, *Melilah: Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* (1759-1953), Vol. 10 (2013), pp. 1-11, University of Manchester and Gorgias Press. See also Yehuda Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*, pp. 39, 59,60,94, 95, 105.

with a close student, and they appear in the form of a short essay in Kook’s Introduction to the *Song of Songs of Solomon*.¹⁰⁵

That is, of course, no accident, for the *Song of Songs of Solomon* itself, which we already invoked at the outset, is one of the primary sources for CosmoErotic Humanism, and particularly the Universe: A Love Story in the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom. This is, of course, intimately related to the larger esoteric Wisdom of Solomon teaching, which is the lineage expression of the Universe: A Love Story and a key foreshadowing of our CosmoErotic Humanism. We will discuss this in some depth in a forthcoming volume in this precise regard.¹⁰⁶ For Kook, as one early scholar of his work accurately summarized his realization, Eros is at its heart,

*one flame expressing itself on many different levels. To diminish the flame on any one level is to weaken the capacity of love on all levels.*¹⁰⁷

There is only One Love, One Eros, One Heart.

In his short essay introducing the *Songs of Songs*, Kook adduces

- romantic love,

¹⁰⁵ See Daniel Landes “Aesthetics as Mysticism: Rav Kook’s Introduction to Song of Songs” in *Gesher: Bridging the Spectrum of Orthodox Jewish Scholarship, A Publication of the Student Organization of Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary*, 1985: “Rav Kook’s introduction to the *Song of Songs* was first published in *HaMizrah* (Cracow, 5663). It was reprinted in the journal, *Almah* (Jerusalem, 5696) and in a slightly expanded revised version with *Olot Rayah*, Rav Kook’s prayer book. In *Almah*, it was preceded by a short note by Dr. Benjamin Manasseh Lewin, the noted Talmudist and a student of Rav Kook, explaining the piece’s origin:

On one of the daily walks that I took with our glorious and holy Master and Teacher—may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing r—on the outskirts of Bausk (Kurland) in 5661, the following ideas flowed from his holiness’ mouth. Immediately I placed my pencil in his hand, and sitting on a rock by the ruins of a wall he recorded, with my pencil, these words. Afterwards I sent them to *HaMizrah*, and they were first published there under the title *Ayin A ’Y’H*.”

¹⁰⁶ These core themes are in fact discussed in two places. The first is *Radical Kabbalah* Book One with volume one and especially Book Two with volume two and three. Volumes two and three focus directly on the Wisdom of Solomon. However, in that writing, which is formally academic in structure and tone, I (Marc) alluded to the Universe: A Love Story themes throughout, but without explicitly connecting all of the dots. The second place is Marc Gafni: *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press]. In this latter short volume, I adduced some of the material in *Radical Kabbalah*, set it in a broader context, and connected the dots, explicating the core themes of the Universe: A Love Story and CosmoErotic Humanism.

¹⁰⁷ Herbert Weiner, “Cedars of Lebanon: The Levels of Love,” *Commentary Magazine*, April 1958, .

- political love,
- aesthetic and artistic love,
- the love of nature,
- spiritual love,
- and the love of one's nation

and understands them to be all expressions of what he calls *the fundamental love* that is the Heart of Reality itself.

The *Song of Songs* is an explicit love song that pulses and drips with Eros.

The public tradition, in both Judaism and Christianity, reads the book allegorically. Indeed, there are texts that seem to suggest that anything other than an allegorical reading is

heretical.¹⁰⁸ A closer reading, however, discloses that this is simply part of an intentional strategy to hold the realization of the text as esoteric. Indeed, the *Song of Songs* is called, by Akiva, *Mashal*, which is generally translated as *allegory*. But Akiva's statement, read esoterically, is not at all a rejection of the incarnate Eros at the center of the text.

Quite the opposite. Rather, Akiva is saying that the Eros of the *Song of Songs* is *Mashal*, but not in the sense of *allegory* that disqualifies the direct meaning of the text, but rather *Mashal*

¹⁰⁸ Here are two expressions of this impulse, as it appears in contemporary religious communities. The first is the *ArtScroll* publishing project, by far the most widely disseminated translations of sacred texts in the Jewish world today. The *ArtScroll* commentary offers an allegorical rendering in line with medievalist commentator Rashi in lieu of a typical English translation. As formulated in the original introduction to the commentary (1977): "The Song is an allegory. It is a duet of love between God and Israel. Its verses are so saturated with meaning that nearly every one of the major commentators finds new themes in its beautiful but cryptic words. All agree, however, that the true and simple meaning of *Shir Ha-Shirim* is the allegorical meaning. The literal meaning of the words is so far from their meaning that it is false... Has it been misinterpreted by fools and twisted by scoundrels? Most assuredly, yes!" quoted in "The Role of Peshat" by Rav Tzvi Sinensky, . *ArtScroll* represents what is often called the right wing of the Orthodox Jewish community.

A second contemporary expression of the same position is found in the work of Joseph Soloveitchik, an Orthodox Talmudist with significant philosophical depth, but who is absolutely loyal in his public pronouncements to the classical tradition. "The allegorical character of the Song of Songs is a firm principle of the Halakha, upon which are founded both the physical sanctity of the scroll of Song of Songs as not to be touched (*Yadayim* 3:5) and the sanctity of the name Shlomo, occurrences of which in the Song of Songs are interpreted allegorically as appellations for God. The aggadic tradition also interprets the Song of Songs symbolically... The book cannot be interpreted according to *peshat*. In all of the rest of the Torah, we are permitted to interpret the verses according to either the midrashic reading or the plain sense... In this case, the symbolic method is the only one we can use. Anyone who explains this book in accordance with the literal meaning of the words, as referring to sensual love, defiles its sanctity and denies the Oral Torah." (*U-Vikashtem Mi-Sham*, pp. 289-290, n. 124) quoted in "The Role of Peshat" by Rav Tzvi Sinensky, .

Both of these positions reflect a powerful exoteric strain in the interior sciences. They are countered, however, by an equally significant crosscurrent, which affirms the integrity of the *Song of Songs* and opens the door to CosmoErotic Humanism. For example, it is worth reading orthodox scholar Tzvi Sinensky, who teaches at the Seminary that was headed by Soloveitchik's son-in-law Aharon Lichtenstein, for many decades. Sinensky, in an excellent essay, cites this passage from Soloveitchik and locates its sources in the tradition. Sinensky, then, however, correctly adduces a plethora of classical and medieval sources countering this position, after which he correctly proceeds to point out that Soloveitchik himself did not intend it the way it is often read. Writes Sinensky, in the internal language of Orthodox writing, "What R. Soloveitchik maintains is that the claim that *Shir Ha-Shirim* on a level of *peshat* is a collection of love poems, entirely lacking in religious content, is false. Regarding such a basic and uncontested issue the position of *Chazal* [the Talmudic sages] reflects a tradition which cannot be debated, even on a level of *peshat*. Hence, R. Akiva (Tosefta, *Sanhedrin* 12:10) said if someone treats *Shir Ha-Shirim* as a love song, he has no portion in the World to Come. In other words, R. Soloveitchik does not claim that *Shir Ha-Shirim* has no *peshat* [meaning cannot be read literally as a love song]; all he means to say is that the significance of the *peshat* is as an entranceway to understanding the midrashic interpretation." ("The Role of Peshat" by Rav Tzvi Sinensky, , which is part of a series on *Shir Ha-Shirim*) Sinensky correctly rescues Soloveitchik and cites extensive but little-known sources to support his rescue. However, the rejection of the very Eros of the *Song of Songs* itself as the gateway to realization is indeed the dominant position in the exoteric tradition.

in the sense of *model*,¹⁰⁹ pointing to what Kook calls *the intrinsic or fundamental Eros* that animates all of Reality all the way down and all the way up the evolutionary chain.¹¹⁰

A close reading of this Kook text discloses that, for him, this Eros is not what postmodernists might call *a human social construction*. Rather, this love is the core throb of Cosmos itself, expressing itself in every dimension of Reality. Kook begins:

*Rabbi Akiva said, "The entire world is in itself not as worthwhile as the day in which the Song of Songs was given to Israel."*¹¹¹

The *Song of Songs of Solomon*—a pure song of Eros—is understood by the esoteric interior sciences of Kook’s lineage to be *the Cosmic Love Story of Reality*.¹¹² This reading of the *Song of Songs* suffuses the Zohar and the entire subsequent lineage of the interior sciences to which Kook is heir.

Kook continues:

¹⁰⁹ On this distinction between *allegory* and *model* in the reading of Akiva, see Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, p. 64. For the principle of *The sexual models the erotic but in no sense even vaguely exhausts the erotic*, a core principle of CosmoErotic Humanism, see Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, pp. 43-77. In *The Mystery of Love* and a later recension and evolution of this material in *A Return to Eros*, I (Marc) outline some twelve Faces of Eros. All of these Faces are elegantly modeled by the sexual but not in any sense exhausted by the sexual. Indeed, there are 12 billion years of Eros before there is any sex. Sex is a bursting forth of the essential qualities of Eros in a novel form.

¹¹⁰ For a more nuanced and complete read of the *Songs of Songs of Solomon* and the Talmudic sage Akiva as key for the realization of CosmoErotic Humanism, see Gafni, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix: Early Ontologies of The Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* particularly, “The Early Ontologies of CosmoErotic Humanism, Section Two,” which engages these sources in more depth.

¹¹¹ *Mishnah Yadayim* 3:5. Translated by and quoted in Daniel Landes “Aesthetics as Mysticism: Rav Kook’s Introduction to Song of Songs” in *Gesher: Bridging the Spectrum of Orthodox Jewish Scholarship, A Publication of the Student Organization of Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary*, 1985.

¹¹² See, for example, *Zohar*, volume two, 144a, which writes of the *Songs of Songs* that it “*comprises the crowning of the holy, supernal name in love and joy.*” The name is the Name of God, which is not only the DNA of Reality itself but holds, in its letters *YHVH*, the Love Story of Reality. But it is not only the *being* quality of Reality as Eros, which is incarnate in the *Song of Songs*, it is also the *narrative*, or *story*, quality of Reality—the quality of Reality’s *becoming*—the *his-story* of Cosmos—that is incarnate in the *Song of Songs*. The *Zohar*, in this same passage, continues, “The praise of this song [the *Song of Songs of Solomon*] comprises the entire Torah. . . from the Work of the Beginning. . . to the resurrection of the dead until the day that is a Sabbath to *YHVH*, that which has been, that which is, that which will be on the seventh day when there will be a Sabbath to *YHVH*, all is in the *Song of Songs*.” The *Zohar* is unpacking the implications of Akiva’s statements—cited in the main text above about the centrality of the *Song of Songs*—see also our discussion of the Name of God as the Love Story of Reality in section “The Name of God Is Eros—The Universe: A Love Story” above.

There is a love directed toward the Blessed Name which stems from creation and its splendor—the Grace of God which fills the universe and His Goodness toward His creatures. And there is a form of love, felt in the soul, which stems from the essential ascent of the soul to the love of the Absolute Good. This latter love is fundamental and is more precious than that love rooted in a spiritual perception of reality. In order to accurately portray this fundamental love one needs all the many and great descriptions employed in the Song of Songs. Therefore “the entire world is in itself not as worthwhile as the day in which the Song of Songs was given to Israel.”¹¹³

Kook continues:

“For all of Writings is holy and the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.”¹¹⁴

Literature, painting, and sculpture have the potential to realize all the spiritual concepts impressed into the depth of the human soul. As long as even a trace of a line—concealed within the depth of the soul—is lacking realization, the service of art is still obligated to bring it forth. It is understood that it is good and proper to open only those treasures whose opening will perfume the air of Reality.

“Every utterance which departs the mouth of the Holy One Blessed Be He, perfumes the entire world.”¹¹⁵

Kook, in the adduced passage, describes two forms of love. One is love classically described in religious texts that derives from what he calls *the spiritual perception of Reality*. The second is what Kook calls a *fundamental*, or intrinsic, *love* that moves in the human being and animates all of Reality. This, for Kook and for the weight of the esoteric tradition, is the love described in the *Songs of Songs*, the One Eros of Cosmos.

Later in the short essay, Kook evokes the many-faceted life of the Talmudic R. Akiba as living evidence of his realization that the One Eros animates every dimension of Reality. Akiva

¹¹³ Ibid, transl. by and quoted in Landes.

¹¹⁴ *Mishnah Yadayim* 3:5. Ibid, transl. by and quoted in Landes.

¹¹⁵ *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat*, p. 88b. Ibid, transl. by and quoted in Landes.

is the lover of Rachel, the political revolutionary, the sage, the mystic who dies for the Divine, the visionary who sees beyond the present into the future, the mad lover of his people and nation, and the lover of Reality itself.¹¹⁶ All of these loves are inseparable from each other. For the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, all participate in the One Eros that animates all Cosmos.

Evolutionary Love and the Evolution of Love

The sources, however, are not only talking about the Universe: A Love Story but also about Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe. Because, for the realization of the esoteric Hebrew wisdom lineage, as recapitulated by Kook, it is not only that an eternal Love, or Eros, is the fundamental nature of Cosmos animating all of its expressions—which is the implication of the Universe: A Love Story. Rather, for Kook and the school of *Evolutionary Love Mysticism*, from which he emerged,¹¹⁷ the evolution of love, both personally and cosmically, was the erotic motive of Cosmos,¹¹⁸ in other words, *Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe*.

And the core plotline of the Love Story of the Universe is, for Kook and the lineage of interior sciences from which he emerges, no less than the evolution of love. Indeed, the evolution of love as an expression of the *Song of Songs* is a core motif in Kook's crystallization of the early ontologies of CosmoErotic Humanism in the interior sciences. Kook ends, for example, a

¹¹⁶ For an in-depth discussion of Akiva in this precise regard, see Gafni, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

¹¹⁷ Marc Gafni has called this lineage *Evolutionary Kabbalah*. For a set of core sources of Evolutionary Kabbalah translated into English, together with Avraham Leader, see Marc Gafni, *Evolutionary Kabbalah Sources*, .

¹¹⁸ Kook roots himself, like most Hebrew mystics, in the *Songs of Songs of Solomon*. Ibid. On the *Song of Songs*, and particularly the verse, “*Its insides are lined with love*” as a description of Reality as Eros, see Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book One, p. 120. On Kook and the meta-context of Cosmic Love and its relationship to earlier sources, see *Radical Kabbalah*, Book One, pp. 325-329 and 247-291. For Kook, *Love of God* meant *the Love that courses through all of Reality, the Cosmic Force of the Universe awake and alive uniquely in the human being*. Uniqueness is a major theme of Kook, and particularly uniqueness as an expression *not* of separation but Essence. On this sense of uniqueness and its history in Hebrew wisdom, see also, *Radical Kabbalah*, 1-89. The best collection of Kook sources, expressing this sense of things in Kook, is by Ruchi Ebner, a collection of what Ebner termed instead of *translations*, *Transilluminations* of key Kook texts. Ebner had published this excellent collection online for a time under the title *My Rav Kook*. See also Tamar Ross for a more extensive collection of Kook sources, prepared for her university courses, which covers much of the same sources. We are indebted to both collections, which were formative as I (Marc) re-engaged Kook in my early thirties.

stunning text on the evolution of love, which we already adduced in Volume 1 of this series and will adduce again below, by saying,

[this is] *The Song of Songs of Solomon, the King to Whom Wholeness Belongs*.

The *King to Whom Wholeness Belongs* is a formal term in the interior sciences, which alludes to what is sometimes formally called *apotheosis*. *Apotheosis* is the realization that the human being in her most perfect form participates in the Divine. And the palpable sense of *apotheosis* is directly accessible through the realization of human participation in the Infinite Eros of Reality. In other words, the Eros that flows through the human being, animating and driving every human gesture, is the very Eros that animates and evolves all of the movement of Reality itself.

For Kook and for the lineage of interior sciences, beginning with the Wisdom of Solomon, which he is articulating, there is a core ontic identity between human and Divine Eros. Kook draws on the Hasidic tradition and the entire lineage of interior sciences that informs it, in affirming the nature of this ontic identity. In early writings on what we called *Nondual Humanism*,¹¹⁹ we have referred to this isomorphism as *the ontic identity of wills between the human and the Divine*.

Before we turn to Kook and the evolution of love, a word on *the ontic identity of wills*, core to CosmoErotic Humanism and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, is in order.

A Note on Eros and Will

This notion of Eros incarnate as *will*, both personal and cosmic, lies at the core of the Wisdom of Solomon and its major text, the *Song of Songs*, attributed by the tradition to

¹¹⁹ See Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book One, chapter 15, “Lainer and the Romantics” and “Excursus to Volume One: On Acosmic Humanism vs. Autonomy” on ontic identity of wills, and “Nondual Humanism and the Democratization of Enlightenment” in the Introduction to the same volume on nondual humanism. See also Zachary Stein’s “Review of *Radical Kabbalah*” in *Integral Review*, March 2014, Vol. 10, No. 1. For a later expression of some of these ideas, see Gafni, Kincaid, *A Return to Eros: The Radical Experience of Being Fully Alive*. BenBella Books, Inc, 2017, and Zachary Stein, “Love in a Time Between Worlds: On the Metamodern ‘Return’ to a Metaphysics of Eros,” in *Integral Review*, August 2018, Vol. 14, No. 1.

Solomon. In the first chapter of Solomon's song, the lover writes to the beloved, *Mashcheni acherecha ve' narutza—Draw me erotically after you, and I will run towards you.*¹²⁰

The word *nutz*, as in *run* in the phrase *run towards you*, is the same root word as the word *ratzon—will*, as in the *Will of the Name*, expressing the Divine or Cosmic Will. The description is paradoxically of the lover being erotically drawn after the beloved, in a manner in which their lover disappears and the higher Will of Eros takes over and guides the way.

There are two distinct steps in the process.

First, the lover says to the beloved, *Draw me after you*. This is not what we now call in culture *consent*. It is something far more profound, Eros-laden, and sacred. It is the urgent plea of the lover to the beloved: *Draw me—meaning allure me, seduce me*. I demand—tenderly and fiercely—your seduction. I invite you, nay I *need* you, I urgently lovingly *need* you to seduce me—to *demand* that I break my boundaries.

And then, the **second** step, the seduction itself, where the lover is allured to—*narutza—run after* the beloved. The term *run after*, as we just noted, is the same as the term *will*, and in the play of the words, one of the wondrous paradoxes that is coiled in the foundation of CosmoErotic Humanism is disclosed. This description of *running after* describes the moment in sensuality where one crosses a line, one is no longer rational in the formal sense of *making decisions*. Rather, one is held and moved forward by a current of Eros, which suspends the lower will. One is carried by the Will of Cosmos, the current of Eros, personally expressed as and directed towards oneself. This moment, when the human being is carried on the wings of Eros, is a pivotal moment of fulfillment and realization in CosmoErotic Humanism. The depth of our humanity is expressed in the ontic identity of wills between the human being and God, in other words between Divine Eros and human Eros.

Clearly then, CosmoErotic Humanism is defying the staid and conventional understanding of seduction in our mainstream culture, where *Draw me after you* is understood as a regressive boundary violation, which is thought, from an ethical and spiritual perspective, as intensely degraded and negative. But that is only because, in postmodern culture, we have

¹²⁰ *Song of Songs*, Chapter One, Verse Four.

downgraded the human being to being a materialistic separate self, a skin-encapsulated ego, who is born by accident, devoid of meaning and value—in a grotesque attempt to live on purpose—the illusion of which ends in the final brutality of death. From that perspective, the only dignity a human being has in the world is the boundaries of one’s separate self, which *must* remain inviolate. For their violation could only mean regression to the mere animal—without even the social construction of human dignity.

But from within the realization of the interior sciences, the human being’s True Self is inseparable from the Field of Consciousness, Value, and Desire. Indeed, the human being is not only part of the seamless Field, but the human being realizes that the Field is seamless but not featureless. The human being realizes that s/he is a Unique Self—a higher individuation beyond separate self, an irreducibly unique expression of the larger Field of Eros, Consciousness, and Desire.

From inside this realization, the breaking of boundaries engendered by seduction is not necessarily regressive. There is a new arrow at play in CosmoErotic Humanism. This new arrow points not in a regressive but rather in a transformational—developmental or evolutionary—direction. The boundaries broken are those of contraction and bounded identity. This seduction is to break the limiting boundary of separate self—to realize one’s True Nature as indivisible from the Field of Eros itself and indeed, as an irreducibly unique expression of that Field of One Eros and One Love.

The Radical Implications of the Universe: A Love Story in the Early Ontologies—The Emergence of the New Human and the New Humanity

The interior sciences, in deeply veiled code, directly connect the capacity to have Eros guide the way by passing the assumed inviolability of the conventional structures of law with the cosmic truth that Reality is a Love Story—and, as we have noted above and will more clearly below, an evolving Love Story.

One core writer, Mordechai Lainer of Izbica—also from the Hasidic school, speaking for and extending the classical esoteric wisdom sources—articulates all of the core ideas we noted above in the name of the interior sciences. Lainer, as we have noted in other scholarly writings,

is highly influential on Kook.¹²¹ A master in the tradition of nineteenth-century Hasidism, deeply entrenched in the mainstream of the lineage, Lainer articulates his reading of the interior sciences as an expression of Solomon's hidden wisdom.

To be clear, Lainer himself holds this truth esoterically. As we have pointed towards in some scholarly depth in other writing,¹²² only a careful reconstruction of the sources cracks his rigorously crafted code and discloses that Lainer is holding the Wisdom of Solomon lineage and transmitting its essential teaching only to the initiated—namely to those who have the capacity to crack his code and access the esoteric teaching. Lainer boldly declares that the essence of Solomon's wisdom, as passed down esoterically through the generations, is the capacity to directly access the Will of Cosmos through one's own will. This is an expression of Lainer's core realization, which places *apotheosis*, the human realization of Divinity, as the fundamental plotline of Cosmos.

But our will is not a generic or neutral structure that lives identically in all interiors. Rather, will is unique. We gain direct access to our ontic identity with the Divine Will only through our own unique interior experience. But that unique interior experience is also not generic. It is a unique interior experience of *Eros*. But not Eros as some sort of social category of utility. Rather, our unique quality of interior Eros participates in the Field of Eros that animates all of Reality.

Lainer's point is a critical crosscurrent with law and convention. Because for Lainer, Love—Evolutionary Love or Eros—lived in our unique interior—is a normative guide for much of human action. In other words, according to the Wisdom of Solomon, when one is *lived as love*, one has the ability to directly access the *Ratzon*—the *Will of God*—which, as we have noted above, is an expression of the Eros of Cosmos. In Solomon's wisdom, as unpacked in the esoteric interior sciences, as recapitulated and extended by Lainer, the Eros of Cosmos is personally incarnate in the clarified unique will of every individual, which participates in the Eros of Cosmos.

¹²¹ On Lainer as a formative influence on Kook, see Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah, Book One*, "Lainer and Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook," pp. 325-329.

¹²² See Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah, Book Two, Volume Two: The Wisdom of Solomon as the Matrix of Lainer's Nondual Acosmic Humanism and Unique Self*.

At this point, we remind ourselves of our note above: In the interior sciences that are the early ontologies of CosmoErotic Humanism and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, Eros and will are mutually entwined if not identical, as disclosed in their shared root, *Ratzon* and *Rutz*, as it is deployed in the lovers' texts of the *Song of Songs*—the *Song of Solomon*—which we adduced above.

The narrative of identity, in the Wisdom of Solomon, is sourced in its larger Universe Story, namely that the Cosmos is animated and driven by Eros—in other words, the Universe is a Love Story and evolution is the Love Story of the Universe. The ontological architecture of the interior sciences of the Wisdom of Solomon is a narrative of human identity rooted in a larger Universe Story. That narrative of identity describes the realized human being that uniquely incarnates Cosmic Eros. It is through the human being's unique access and incarnation of Cosmic Eros, which we might also call *Outrageous Love* or *Evolutionary Love*, that the human being has access to and expresses the unique Will of Cosmos that flows through their Unique Self. It is this capacity that allows the human being who is lived as love to be guided by what, for the Wisdom of Solomon, is the implicit normativity of Eros. In other words, the narrative of identity in the Wisdom of Solomon is rooted in its larger Universe Story—the Universe: A Love Story.

We noted earlier that our notion of CosmoErotic Humanism, with its core notion of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, is rooted in both the interior and exterior sciences. On the interior sciences side, one primary set of sources is precisely the Wisdom of Solomon as described by Lainer that we are here adducing. Lainer's system, in which all is ultimately part of the fabric of Cosmic Eros, is what we have called in earlier writings *Acosmic Humanism*—or alternately *Nondual Humanism*. Meaning, the Eros of

Cosmos incarnates uniquely in every human being. There is an ontic identity between the clarified human will and what Lainer refers to as *the Will of the Divine*.¹²³

Song of Songs, Chapter One, Verse Four

For Kook, and Lainer and Luria before him, the evolution of love is the core plotline of the Love Story of the Universe. This notion finds myriad expressions in each of these interior scientists. In the passage we will now adduce from Kook, this evolution of love expresses itself as the widening of our circles of felt sense of care and concern. These circles—and our willingness to commit and even sacrifice for their sake— expand:

- from our egocentric circle of love [our love of self and our immediate circle]
- to our ethnocentric circle of love [our love of our people, religion, nation, or other forms of sociocentric community]
- to our worldcentric circle of love [our love for every human being on the planet]
- to our cosmocentric circle of love [our love for all living things and for all of Reality—for Gaia and evolution itself].

For Kook and his lineage, this story of the evolution of love, which takes place within the ever-expanding human heart, is the story of the *Song of Songs of Solomon*. But of course, Kook tells us this elliptically, at the very end of this esoteric passage, in what seems like a poetic flourish, whose true intention would only be understood by initiates.

Here is the key: What Kook discloses is that the *Song of Songs*, in the reading of the interior sciences of the lineage, is not only a great story of Eternal Cosmic Eros but the story of

¹²³ See Marc Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Books 1 and 2, written at Oxford University under the co-supervision of Moshe Idel. I (Marc) wrote some 1200 pages, of which 300 pages were submitted for a doctoral dissertation. The point of both volumes was to unpack the outlines of the New Human and the New Humanity, what I then called *Acosmic Humanism* or *Nondual Humanism*. After further unpacking the realities of Eros, which, as I began to realize in renewed depth and intensity, animate all of Reality—as reflected both in the hard sciences and especially in its frontier iterations, think, for example, molecular biology, systems, complexity and chaos theory, new physics, and so much more—I, together with Barbara Marx Hubbard, Kristina Kincaid, and Zak Stein, coined the term *CosmoErotic Humanism*.

Evolutionary Eros, moving through history and evolving the human being, and, as the text will make clear, his Evolutionary We-Spaces.

Kook calls each of the expression of Eros a distinct *song*, and all four of them constitute what he calls *the four-fold song*. The gradual emergence of the four-fold song, with the melody of the individual and collective consciousness, is itself an expression of *the Song of Songs of Solomon*.

Here is Kook's text,¹²⁴ with our brief explanation in brackets, which should be, at least in its broad strokes, self-explanatory.

*There is a one
who sings the song of his soul,
and in his soul, he finds it all,
full, complete spiritual satisfaction.*

[This the first circle of Eros—egocentric love.]

*And there is a one
who sings the song of the nation.
He leaves the zone of his personal soul,
which he doesn't find wide enough,
and not settled in ideal serenity,
and attaches himself with tender love
to the totality of the congregation of Israel
and together with her
he sings her songs,
he suffers her pains
and he takes delight in her hopes,
he ponders high and pure ideas
about her past and her future,
and he investigates*

¹²⁴ Kook, Abraham, *Orot HaKodesh [Lights of Holiness]*, #82|1:444.

*with love and the wisdom of the heart
the inner content of her soul.*

[This is the second circle of Eros—ethnocentric or sociocentric love.]

*And there is a one
who widens his soul even further
until it expands and spreads beyond the boundary of Israel
to sing the song of humanity;
his soul is continuously enlarged
by the genius of Man
and the glory of his divine image,
he aspires towards Man's universal purpose
and anticipates his higher wholification,
and from this living source
does he draw the entirety of his thoughts and explorations,
his aspirations and his visions.*

[This is the third circle of Eros—worldcentric love.]

*And there is a one
who rises even further than this in expansion
until he joins himself in unity with all of existence in its totality,
with all creatures
and with all worlds,
and together with all of them he gives forth song;
and this is the one
who "engages daily in a chapter of song"
who is promised that he lives in the emergent world.*

[This is the fourth circle of Eros—cosmocentric love.]

*And there is a one
who rises with all these songs
together in one unity,*

*and all of them send forth their voices,
all together they play their melodies,
and each pours vigor and life into the other,
the sound of jubilation and the sound of joy,
the sound of celebration and the sound of exultance,
the sound of rejoicing and the sound of holiness.*

*The song of the soul,
the song of the nation,
the song of humankind,
the song of the world,
all flow together within him
all the time, at every moment.*

[The perfect form of the human being sings all of the songs, egocentric, sociocentric, worldcentric, and cosmocentric at once, without experiencing any contradiction between them. Quite the opposite, all the songs synthesize into a new song which includes and transcends each of the previous songs.]

*And this completeness, in its fullness,
rises to become the song of holiness:*

...
*a simple song,
a double song,
a three-fold song
a four-fold song.*

*The Song of Songs of Solomon,
The King to whom Wholeness belongs.*

For Kook, as we saw in his short introduction to the commentary on the *Song of Songs*¹²⁵ [and it is clear in myriad other passages of Kook], all, everything, is alive and suffused with value. Nothing is inert or dead. A pulsing movement of Love throbs in, as, and through

¹²⁵ In the section called “The Secret of the Name Meets the Secret of the Cherubs: The Universe: A Love Story.”

everything. But aliveness is not exhausted by *being*. The Eros of aliveness and value is constantly *becoming*, both in exterior and interior forms.

For Kook all—everything—is sentient. Reality is, in one sense or another, *sentience all the way down and sentience all the way up the evolutionary chain*. Kook talks again and again about the *Ratzon*, the living Eros, that animates all of the living Universe, even that which is sometimes referred to as *inanimate*.¹²⁶ Nothing is inert or dead. A pulsing movement of love throbs in, as, and through everything. ***And everything is part of an eternal yet evolving organic whole.***

All of Reality, with no exception, is animated from within by this pulsing Divine Eros, which vibrates in and as each of us with the absolute radiance of Eros, which is ever-rising, deepening, and evolving, manifest in what we will refer to below as *Three Faces of Spirit—S/He, You, and I—third person, second person, and first person*.

It is also worth noting the evocation of Solomon that occurs at the end of Kook’s text on the four-fold song above. This is not insignificant. Indeed, in the interior science of the Hebrew wisdom lineage, CosmoErotic Humanism itself is rooted in a number of source sets, all of which are part of a general literature that is known as *the Wisdom of Solomon*. In the separate volume that we mentioned at the beginning of our conversation,¹²⁷ we will engage this set of ancient sources—all expressions of the Wisdom of Solomon, and all directly expressing or foreshadowing CosmoErotic Humanism in greater depth. For now, it is sufficient to say that the Wisdom of Solomon, which lies at the core of the interior science of Hebrew wisdom, is actually but an early form of what we are calling *CosmoErotic Humanism*.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ See, for example, Kook, in a passage entitled “Ratzon Ha-Olam—The Will of the World” in *The Lights of Holiness*, volume two, pp. 369, passage thirty-one. This is but one of dozens of passages of Kook that elliptically consent the same esoteric truth: All of Reality is *Ratzon*, Will and Eros, and all of Reality—matter, life, and mind—participate in the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution the Love Story of the Universe.

¹²⁷ Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

¹²⁸ On the Wisdom of Solomon, see Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book One, the Introduction to volume one, pp. lix ff., as well as the section “Model Five: The Wisdom of Solomon,” pp 290-291, and *Radical Kabbalah*, Book Two, volume two, is about “The Wisdom of Solomon as the Matrix of the Enlightenment Teaching of Nondual Acosmic Humanism and Unique Self,” and *Radical Kabbalah*, Book Two, volume three, “The Sources and Evolution of the Wisdom of Solomon in Kabbalah and Hasidut.” Note: volumes two and three appear in the same Book.

The manifest Eros of Divinity, for Kook, expressing the lineage of Luria and the Hebrew interior sciences called the *Wisdom of Solomon*, manifests itself in the universal desire—*appetite* in the parlance of Kook’s contemporary Alfred North Whitehead—for goodness, love, beauty, and truth, all inseparable from the auto-erotic yearning of Divinity for its own fulfillment. Divine Eros is on the move, Eternity manifests as evolution—eternal being and ecstatically urgent becoming.¹²⁹

Both Kook and Whitehead, however, are deeply infused—the former directly and the latter indirectly—by the primary Lurianic lineage of Eros, with which we began, that moved from Hebrew Kabbalah via various channels including Christian Kabbalah and its mystery schools, into the Renaissance. Given Luria’s and Lurianic Kabbalah’s enormous influence over the Renaissance, it becomes critical to note that Luria himself—in his affirmation of the centrality of Eros, the human participation in the Field of Eros, and the human-caused evolution of Eros—is not an aberration but rather a direct expression and deepening of the lineage teachings of the Universe: A Love Story that is axiomatic to the esoteric realization of the Hebrew lineage. We will point towards this truth in more depth in our *Solomon Matrix* volume.¹³⁰

Another seminal lineage figure in the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom who expresses the Universe: A Love Story realization is the famed Don Judah Abarbanel, scholar par excellence, son of Don Isaac Abarbanel, communal leader and advisor to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and a major figure in the Renaissance. His major work, *Dialoghi d’Amore*, was published in its canonical form in the three dialogues in 1535 in Rome. Another work, *On the*

¹²⁹ Ibid, Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*, Jewish Lives. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 94: “Everything is alive. Nothing is inert. A seething dynamism pulses through everything, and everything is part of an eternal, organic whole. All is animated, illuminated from within by God, who vibrates in each and all with absolute, radiant, and loving presence; and everything is rising. All that is, was, or will ever be is of God, a personality living in all three persons—he, you, and I. The eternal God manifests Himself in historical time in the universal yearning for goodness, love, beauty, and truth, all of a piece with His own yearning for self-expression. We are the field on and through which that divine yearning strains for self-realization. The resolution of that longing is holiness; the place where the soul comes to rest is the holy, as near as we can get to the endlessly beating heart of God.” Mirsky is an excellent scholar of Kook. Note, however, both the overlaps in our descriptions of Kook, which are intentional, and the distinction, both in our verbiage and in the feeling tone of our descriptions, which are no less intentional.

¹³⁰ Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

Harmony of the Heavens, was attributed to him, ostensibly penned at the request of the central Renaissance figure Pico della Mirandola.

Don Judah, or Leone Ebreo as he was known in Christian Renaissance circles, writes as follows:¹³¹

[Human marriage is a] *copy of the sacred and divine marriage of the supremely beautiful with the highest beauty, from which the whole universe has its origin.*

This passage and the one we will promptly adduce below anticipate Whitehead's understanding of beauty, as including goodness and truth, whose most profound realization is the great *telos* of the Universe: A Love Story. Ebreo explicitly ascribed his understanding to the ancient King Solomon, who, as we point out in section two of the *Wisdom of Solomon Matrix* volume,¹³² is the primary realizer sourcing the ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story in the tradition. Indeed, there we will show that the *Wisdom of Solomon* itself is a primary ancient antecedent for the ontologies of what we are referring to as CosmoErotic Humanism.

Leone Ebreo:

Solomon and the sages of the bible were of the opinion that the world was created as the son of the supernal beautiful the father, and the supernal wisdom the mother, or the supernal beauty. As they say that the supernal wisdom fell in love with the supernal beautiful as a woman does with a man

¹³¹ See Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, pp. 425, an English translation of his *Dialoghi d'Amore* [translated into English by F. Friedberg-Seely and Jean H. Barnes, Soncino Press, June 1937. See also Hubert Dethier, "Love and Intellect in Leone Ebreo: The Joys and Pains of Human Passion," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman, (Suny Press, Albany, 1993), pp. 353-385. See also Shlomo Pines, "Medieval Doctrines in Renaissance Garb, Some Jewish and Arabic Sources of Leone Ebreo's Doctrine" in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B.D. Cooperman, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 1983). See also Idel, Moshe, "The Source of the Circles Images in Dialoghi d'Amore" *Iyyun* 28, 1978, pp. 162-166, where he challenges the assumption of Ebreo's indebtedness to Renaissance thinker Marcelo Ficino. I (Marc) would argue that the search for external sources in which to root Ebreo is, while not entirely frivolous, fundamentally misguided. Ebreo is in fact a classical expression of the Wisdom of Solomon lineage that formed him, that we have unpacked above and that we will unpack in great depth in the *Solomon matrix* volume—Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

¹³² Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

who is more perfect than she. And the supernal beauty returned her love, and she conceived from him and bore to him a son, which is the entire universe in all its parts...By his love for her she became more perfect...and she conceived and gave birth to the perfection of the reality...the supernal beauty is not only the wife of the supernal beautiful but also its first child...the mother is the first intellect.^{133 E}

Leone Ebreo was a seminal figure in the interior science of the Hebrew lineage in alluring the Christian interior sciences towards Kabbalah and, in this sense, was an important force [one of many] in the flowing of the Christian Kabbalah in the Renaissance.

For, as we noted above, however, it was primarily the Kabbalah mediated through the Christian Kabbalah of the Renaissance that birthed the Evolutionary Spirituality of Fichte and Schelling.¹³⁴

¹³³ Ibid, Ebreo, *Philosophy of Love*, pp. 454-5. Scholarship correctly points to multiple influences on Ebreo. Shlomo Pines [ibid] points towards Avicenna's *Risalah al-Ishq, The Treatise of Love*, which was known to Ebreo. Moshe Idel points to an Arabic nonplatonistic treatise of the twelfth century, *The Book of Imaginary Circles* by Ibn Sid Al-Batalyusi, while pointing to the interaction between Renaissance Neoplatonism and its philosophy of love, mediated by the commentaries and translations of key Renaissance figure Marcello Ficino. Of course, Neoplatonism itself has a long and complex history of interpenetration with the Hebraic lineages, which has never been sufficiently documented. Warren Zev Harvey points to Crescas and his influence on Ebreo [Harvey, *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas*, Gieben, Amsterdam, 1998]. All of this scholarship is of course important and helpful. It also needs to be said, as evidenced from section two in the *Solomon Matrix* volume—Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press]—cited ibid, that Ebreo is actually articulating not a novel position, but rather new language forms of the classical Universe: A Love Story realization that lies at the center of the esoteric Wisdom of Solomon lineage. Scholarship might have paid better attention to Ebreo himself, who is explicit in locating Solomon and other Hebrew sages as his core source. On the general issue of the relationship between Kabbalah and the Renaissance, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy, 1280-1510: A Survey*, Yale University Press, 2011. For the broader issue of the Neoplatonic schools and their relationship to Kabbalah, see an extensive scholarship, in which Moshe Idel's work stands at the center. See for example, Idel's "Metamorphoses of a Platonic Theme in Jewish Mysticism," in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* 3 (2002-2003) 67-86. At this point, we cite Idel's first three footnotes from this article—in our accompanying endnote—as they are relevant here.

¹³⁴ See *Your Unique Self: The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment*, (p. 468), Endnote 7 to Chapter 8: "The Kabbalists had significant influence on Fichte and Schelling, who are often listed as the originators of Evolutionary Spirituality. On the influence on Kabbalistic sources on Schelling, see Eliot Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 392n2. This influence is not a minor fancy of some scholar, but a major insight of the most respected scholars in the field."

Kashmir Shaivism

As we have explored in some depth the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, it is but one model of early ontologies in the interior sciences for key dimensions of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe. A similar understanding of Eros as the motive force of Reality, and particularly the creative process, also shows up in Kashmir Shaivism's notion of *Sat Chit Ananda* as a central structure of Cosmos. *Sat* means *Being*. The inside of *Sat* is *Chit*, meaning *Consciousness*. The inside of *Chit* is *Ananda*, or *BlissLove*. *BlissLove* is thus *the Inside of the Inside—the motive interior force of Cosmos*.

In Hinduism, and especially in the original source texts of Kashmir Shaivism, *Shakti*, which is not entirely dissimilar to what we are calling *Eros*, is the dynamic motive force of Cosmos.

This notion of *Shakti*, *Ananda*, or *Eros* as central to the evolutionary process was foundational to Sri Aurobindo, the Hindu scholar and mystic who was one of the most important voices of Conscious Evolution in the twentieth century.

Sufism

While Kashmir Shaivism and Hebrew mysticism are most explicit in understanding Eros as the creative aggregating structure of Cosmos, moving diverse parts into larger wholes of coherent intimacy, similar structures appear in Sufism. For Sufism, all love is the love *for* God and the love *of* God.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ See for example E. H. Whinfield, *Gulshan-i Raz, The Mystic Rose Garden*, London, 1880, pp. 70-94; F. Lederer, *The Secret Rose Garden of Sa'd-ul-Din Mahmud Shabistari*, Lahore, 1969, pp. 17-22, 41-45 and 61-64; and Johnson Pasha, *The Secret Garden*, London, 1969, pp.79-81. Lahiji's Persian commentary on this work, *Mâfatîh al-I'jâz fi sharh Gulshan râz*, greatly elaborates on the technical meaning of these terms. See the edition of K. Sami'i, Tehran, 1337/1958, pp.549-706. 'Iraqi explains the meaning of numerous terms referring to sensual images—such as desire, love, beauty, wink, deception, coquetry, veil, tree, eyebrow, languid eyes, wine, tavern, cupbearer, hangover, minstrel, tambourine and dance (a total of some 320 words)—in his *Istilahât*, ed. by J. Nurbakhsh along with 'Iraqi's *Lama'at*, Tehran, 1353/1974; also by S. Naficy in *Kulliyat-i 'Iraqi*, Tehran, 1338/1959. op cit, *The Divine Roots of Human Love*, William C Chittick, *Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society Journal*. These terms parallel the terms in Solomon's *Song of Songs* and are meant to be expressions of the Divine Eros at the center of Cosmos. Naturally in both traditions, the mainstream of commentary attempted to allegorize their reading, making the love abstract, intellectual, and often arid, desiccating the Eros that lives in the original sources, as an accurate description of the animating quality of reality and its motives.

At the source of virtually all of the premodern traditions is a core notion of *involution* and *evolution*, which we will discuss in somewhat more depth in Appendix One of *First Meditations on the Intimate Universe*.¹³⁶ As we pointed out at the outset, a full volume integrating the distinct contribution of each of the interior sciences in this regard is necessary. We can for now, however, only provide this essay and one larger volume on the Solomon Matrix,¹³⁷ which expands on the material we have adduced here, from the interior science of Hebrew wisdom, with both more breadth and depth. But for now, with all of this in mind, let us proceed with our broader conversation around the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe.

Recontextualizing these traditions in an evolutionary context, we might formulate them as follows: Infinite LoveReality hides itself, contracting into a single point, devolving as it were from Spirit to Mind to Life to Matter into a single Point of Reality. That single point then explodes as the singularity of the Big Bang and evolves again from Matter to Life to Mind and then all the way back to Spirit. This is the involution of love followed by the evolution of love, climaxing, after eons of infinitely meaningful agony and ecstasy, into the New Human and the New Humanity—what we will call *Homo amor*.

The Three Faces of Love: Love in First, Second, and Third Person

Persian Sufi and Hebrew Hasidic texts love poetry, of which the likes of Rumi and Hafiz are but the most popular representatives. They move constantly and seamlessly through what has been termed *the First, Second, and Third Persons of the Divine*, to which we have already alluded above.

¹³⁶ See the section of Appendix One of *First Meditations on the Intimate Universe: Volume One—Global Intimacy Disorder as Cause for Global Action Paralysis—A New Universe Story as the Necessary Response to Existential Risk*, forthcoming, Waterside Productions, on “Involution and Evolution in the New Perennialism,” for the core realization of the interior sciences on the lower being already seeded with the higher. For a short recapitulation of the involution and evolution movement from Plotinus through the modern mystics, see Wilber, K., *Integral Spirituality*, Shambala Publications, Integral Books, 2006, Appendix One.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Gafni, Marc, *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].

Thus, Reality's creative process, constantly evolving towards ever-deeper levels of intimate coherence (Third Person), is—in its essential quality—not different from all the other expressions of love in Reality, be it the human passion for the Divine or the passion for another human being and all forms of finitude (Second Person), or the love that courses through the human being herself (First Person).

Rather, these are three Faces of Love: Love in *first* person, love in *second* person, and love in *third* person:

- *I* is first person.
 - *You*, or *we*, is second person.
 - *Him* or *her* or *it*, *they* or *them*, are third person.
1. *I* refers to my own interior experience of myself. *I* is the interior experience of the *first* person.
 2. *You*, or *we*, is about the space in between us. *You*, or *we*, is the interior experience of the *second* person.
 3. Looking at something, a force or object, or a person or group of persons, is *third* person. Thus, the third person could be *him* or *her* or *they* or *them* or *it*. *Him* or *it*—for example—are the interior experiences of the third-person gaze.

The laws of science, taken as a whole, both the exterior sciences and interior sciences, describe the third-person forces of Eros that drive Cosmos. Think, for a second, of the four forces, the gravitational, electromagnetic, and the strong and weak nuclear. These are the four forces that, in every nanosecond, hold all of Reality in exterior and interior bonds.

We often hear the word *bond* in description of both exterior-science relationships and interior-science relationships: Chemical bonds and emotional bonds, for example. A *bond* is, from one perspective, the third-person Eros of all of Reality, which itself is a dance between autonomy and allured relationships of intimate coherence.

But of course, as already implicit in the previous sentence and self-evident in science, the third-person force of science with its multiplicity of bonds and precisely attuned bonding forces—forces of Eros—is in fact rooted in myriad second-person relationships. An atom, for

example, is inexplicable without discerning—feeling—the second-person relationships between protons, neutrons, and electrons. And of course, the four forces themselves are forces of allurement and autonomy, or attraction and repulsion in more formal exterior scientific terms. Indeed, it is the dialectical relationship between allurement and autonomy that is Eros itself. Thus, third-person Eros is inextricably entwined with second-person Eros.

In the second-person force of Love or Eros, we discern the quality of feeling—both the feeling of allurement and autonomy as two qualities of will. Indeed, as we saw earlier, through looking at the original Hebrew word *ratzon*, which is literally translated as *will*, that *will* is contained within the Principle of Eros as well. *Ratzon* implies both *Eros* and *will*, which are, in some real sense, inextricable.

Finally, this force of Eros—Eros and will—courses in us, as us, and through us as our fundamental experience of our first-person Reality. And this experience of the first person—which itself is the experience of will—does not begin at the human level, but can, on some level, be traced deep into evolutionary history—some theorists would argue to the very inception of the manifest world. This is what Alfred North Whitehead was referring to when he talked about the *prehension* that lives at the very subatomic level of being and becoming.

These three Faces of Eros are *not* a social construction of Reality. They are First Principles and First Values of Reality itself. They are not, however, static, or eternal, in the sense of *unchanging* First Values and First Principles. Rather, they are *evolving* First Values and First Principles. First Principles and First Values are what physicist Richard Feynman and mathematician Stuart Kauffman refer to when they describe a proto-freedom or will [or Eros] that lives all the way down the evolutionary chain.

In Freeman Dyson's words,

*There is a certain kind of freedom that atoms have to jump around, and they seem to choose entirely on their own without any input from the outside, so in a certain sense atoms have free will.*¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Freeman Dyson, "Could Atomic Science Explain Free Will?" BigThink.com, (accessed September 6, 2011)—quoted in Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016).

Mathematician John Conway and his colleague Simon Kochen at Princeton audaciously refer to “*the free decisions of particles and humans...free will.*”¹³⁹ Stuart Kauffman, based on a dazzling depth of scientific and mathematical reasoning, asserts that “*elementary particles have volition. That they have free will.*”¹⁴⁰ Conway and Kochen articulate what they audaciously call the *Free Will Theorem*. In its opening lines they begin as follows:

Do we really have free will, or, as a few determined folk maintain, is it all an illusion?

They gave an outrageous answer,

*We don't know, but will prove in this paper that if indeed there exist any experimenters with a modicum of free will, then elementary particles must have their own share of this valuable commodity.*¹⁴¹

As Howard Bloom recapitulates it:¹⁴²

In other words, Kauffman, Dyson, Kochen, and Conway are telling you and me that if we have free will, then electrons, photons, and atoms have free will too. What appalling anthropomorphism. Or is it?

If you rerun Thomas Young's two-slit experiment, a photon shooting from your light source has to “decide” which slit to go through. Should it go through the left slit or the right? Writes Reinhold Blümel, professor of physics at Wesleyan University, “a photon . . . has to ‘make up its mind.’”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ See Stuart A. Kauffman, “Five Problems in the Philosophy of Mind,” Edge.org, August 7, 2009, (accessed December 2023). Kauffman quotes Conway and Kochen in his article (Conway, J. and Kochen, S., *The Free Will Theorem*, (2006) and Conway, J. and Kochen, S., *The Strong Free Will Theorem*, (2008). The Kauffman article is also quoted in Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016). According to Howard Bloom, “Five Problems in the Philosophy of Mind” is “an essay that appears on one of the most prominent websites for advanced physicists and mathematicians.”

¹⁴⁰ Howard Bloom about Kauffman in Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016), p. 511.

¹⁴¹ John Conway and Simon Kochen, “The Free Will Theorem,” April 11, 2006, (accessed December 2023).

¹⁴² Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016), pp. 511-512.

¹⁴³ Reinhold Blümel, *Foundations of Quantum Mechanics: From Photons to Quantum Computers* (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2010), pp. 15, 32—quoted in Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016).

Blümel is not suggesting that protons think the way humans do. Protons do not have human minds. That would be a pseudo-magical retrojection of the human world onto the subatomic world. There is obviously a radical discontinuity of the quality of consciousness between matter, life, and mind, and even between distinct levels of matter, life, and mind. But there is also continuity. This is what we have called, in our work on First Principles and First Values, *the Principle of Continuity and Discontinuity*. In fact, Blümel is deploying a metaphor when he says that the photon must *make up its mind*. But as we point out, together with Howard Bloom and other interior scientists of language, universal patterns in language also disclose First Principles and First Values of Reality. And it is in that precise sense that metaphors work because they are pointing to something real, in Blümel's case to a quality of *will* or *mind*, or what we have called a *first-person quality*, which itself is what we are calling a *First Principle and First Value of Cosmos*.

This is what Howard refers to as an *Ur Pattern*. A First Principle or First Value of Cosmos is a deep pattern of coherent intimacy coded with meaning that repeats itself “*over and over again on wildly different levels of cosmic evolution.*”¹⁴⁴

So, returning again to Blümel:

*Blümel in describing atoms puts “make up its mind” in quotes because he is using a figure of speech, not a scientific description. He is not implying that photons can think. He is not suggesting that photons have minds. He is using a metaphor. But when metaphors work, it is often because they capture Ur patterns, patterns repeated on many levels of emergence. It is often because they capture deep structures of the cosmos. Structures as deeply embedded as axioms. Why deeply embedded? Because they are often structures that have been here from the beginning. Structures on which everything around us has been built.*¹⁴⁵

These structures are what we are referring to as *First Principles and First Values of Cosmos*.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016), p. 282.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, Bloom, Howard, *The God Problem, How a Godless Cosmos Creates*, (Prometheus, 2016), p. 512.

Blümel is arguing, together with Conway, Kochen, Kauffman, Feynman, and others that the first-person perspective, or expression, is as well a First Principle and First Value of Cosmos. It is, however, like all First Values and First Principles, what we call *evolving* First Principles and First Values. This is the crucial point that we point towards in our work *First Principles & First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism, the Meta-Crisis, and the World to Come* and later in the primary book on *First Principles and First Values: Towards an Evolving Perennialism—Introducing the Anthro-Ontological Method*.¹⁴⁶

We have gone to some pains to show that Eros and its quality of *will* live in three persons, what we have called the *three persons of love*, or the *first, second, and third person of Eros*. This tripartite distinction between the first, second, and third person of Eros is central to the ontologies of love as they show up in Hebrew wisdom, Sufism, and Kashmir Shaivism. Expressions of them are also found in mystical Christianity, tantric Buddhism, and indigenous cultures. In Kabbalah, the *Zohar* famously distinguishes between God as *Ani, Ata, and Hu*, literally translated *I, You, and He*. In Kashmir Shaivism, *Shiva* is pure consciousness, the ultimate *I*, while *Shakti* is the dynamic force of Cosmos in both first, second, and third person—with *Nara* being the effect of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, a classic expression of third person.¹⁴⁷

The great German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and, later, Integral Theory recapitulate these great traditions, when they point out that these three perspectives—first, second, and third

¹⁴⁶ See David J. Temple, *First Principles & First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism, the Meta-Crisis, and the World to Come*, and see also the fuller conversation in David J. Temple, *First Principles and First Values: Towards an Evolving Perennialism: Introducing the Anthro-Ontological Method*.

¹⁴⁷ At a lower level, or what Shaivism refers to as a *tattva* (levels of emanation, loosely defined, are called *tattvas*), these three Faces of Reality might be expressed as *purusha*, the pure consciousness of first person, and *prakriti*, both the second and third person faces of nature.

person—are primordial dimensions of Reality built into the very substrate of existence through the universals of language.¹⁴⁸

Language, for the interior scientist, is the core structure of Reality. For the logical positivist as well, clarity of universal language is a key window into the nature of Reality.¹⁴⁹

In the language of CosmoErotic Humanism, we might say that language discloses First Principles and First Values of Reality. First, second, and third person need to be understood, in this light, as First Principles and First Values of Reality—the three primordial perspectives.

The three primordial perspectives are, as Whitehead pointed out, the nature of Reality all the way up and all the way down the evolutionary chain. Through the intimate interiority of *I*, the intimacy of *We*, and the third person *telos* of *He* and *She*, the intimate interiority of Eros itself operates at all levels of Cosmos. It is these three perspectives that we referred to above as the three Faces of Love or the three Faces of Eros.

¹⁴⁸ I (Marc) and Ken Wilber engaged in an in-depth set of conversations in 2003-5, around particularly the word *You*, as it appears in language and lineage. We focused on an interior-science story in which a Hasidic lineage master, Zusia of Onipol, faints in ecstasy when speaking the word *You* in the context of prayer, with *You* being an expression of the second face of spirit, what I have referred to in *Your Unique Self*, (Integral Publishers 2012) as *the Infinity of Intimacy in its personal face that knows your name*. These conversations were integrated and came to be expressed in Integral Theory—recapitulating similar structures in Kabbalah, Kashmir Shaivism, Sufism, Mystical Christianity, and other traditions—as the three Faces of Spirit—*I*, *You*, and *It*—or *I*, *We*, and *It*—First person, second person, and third person. See Wilber, Ken, *Integral Spirituality*, 2006. See also Gafni, Marc, *Tears: Reclaiming Ritual, Integral Religion and Rosh Hashanah*, written in 2005 and first published 2014 by Integral Publishers. The introduction contains an extended conversation around the three Faces of Spirit.

¹⁴⁹ See for example, *Language, Truth and Logic*, by A.J. Ayers, 1936, Dover.

Endnotes

^A On this verse, *Its Insides are Lined with Love*, see Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Book 1 pp. 120-123, which talks about what is described as a Hasidic expression of Acosmic Humanism, or what I (Marc) also refer to in this writing as Nondual Humanism, grounded in the Reality of Love between Divinity and humanity—and all of Reality—participating in the same current of One Love, One Breath, and One Eros.

These ideas are grounded in Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Simon and Schuster, 2003, and the thirty pages of primary source footnotes prepared by Gafni and Avraham Leader to that volume. It is perhaps worth noting that these readings, when put forth by Gafni, were recognized and well received in both the world of Kabbalah Scholarship and the leading edges of the mainstream and neo-Hasidic worlds of Hebrew wisdom. This is crucial because it validates the readings as being non-eccentric but rather as the sharing of a crucial esoteric lodestone of the Hebrew wisdom lineage. Kabbalah scholar Daniel Abrams wrote about the book, “an important book which unpacks with depth, power and clarity an important strain in Kabbalistic thought. [Gafni’s] original readings engage and provoke both scholar and layman alike.”

Zalman Shalomi Schachter, the founder and Rebbe of the Neo-Hasidic Jewish renewal movement wrote, “Reb Mordechai Gafni’s torah on love and eros is *l’eyla u’layla*, the highest of the high. Everyone needs to hear it.” Irwin Kula, president of the Jewish Federation Center for Learning and Leadership, which serves as the mainstream leadership of the American Jewish community, called it a “tour de force.”

Peter Pitzele, founder of Bibliodrama, on the faculty of Jewish Theological seminary, called it “an act of ecstatic scholarship. Reb Gafni comes among us as a dancing ecstatic sage.” Leading mainstream author Rabbi Joseph Teluskin called it “radical and profound,” with similar approbations from Noan Zion of the Shalom Hartman Institute, Rabbi Bradely Shavit Artson of the University of Judaism, Rabbi Roly Matolon of the leading-edge Congregation Kehillat Jeshurun in New York. A similar set of ideas, but one which bypassed the relationship of the erotic to the sexual, and with a somewhat different set of sources, was published many years later

by Arthur Green under the title, *Judaism as a Path of Love*, in a volume entitled *Judaism for the World, Reflections on God, Life and Love*, Yale University Press, 2020.

As we have noted in the next footnote as well, leading Kabbalah Scholar Yehuda Liebes and his student Melila Hellner-Eshed extending his work are also crucial voices in the interior sciences of this tradition, in pointing towards the esoteric sources for Eros as the motivational architecture of Reality. The point of this information, both about the reception of these ideas in Gafni's work and the other key writers, is that this reading is not purely idiosyncratic but rather an accurate reading of the mystery tradition of one of the great traditions of interior science. Similar readings need to be done at this juncture, as part of this Eros project, to demonstrate that the other great traditions of interior science, each in their own esoteric language, came to the same set of conclusions.

^B Expanded note from the editor: The notion of a CosmoErotic perspective in Kabbalah is clear throughout *The Mystery of Love*—and various iterations of this phrase were deployed by Marc in teaching, prior to Idel's publication.

This notion is also at the very core of Gafni two-volume work *Radical Kabbalah*, where the text from Solomon's Song of Songs, *Its Insides are Lined with Love* [as read by Lainer according to Gafni], is understood to refer to what Gafni originally termed *acosmic humanism*, later *Nondual Humanism*, and finally renamed it, together with Zak Stein, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and Kristina Kincaid, as *CosmoErotic Humanism*.

Idel published his own magisterial expression of this notion in Hebrew lineage thought—he called it *cosmoeroticism*—under the title *Kabbalah and Eros*, Yale University Press 2005. Idel, however, deployed the term in a different way than in Gafni's teaching, as he included several different strains of this notion, some of which linked Eros and desire from the sexual to all dimensions of desire, as Gafni did in the prior *The Mystery of Love*, and some of which split off sexual desire from what Gafni referred to as *the larger Field of Desire*.

It is thus important to distinguish between Idel's general deployment of the term *cosmoeroticism*, and Gafni and Stein's deployment of CosmoErotic Humanism. For indeed, several of the deployments of cosmoeroticism by Idel are in fact anti-humanistic and split between embodied desire and intellectual desire. In contrast, Gafni and Stein's deployment is

profoundly humanistic. CosmoErotic Humanism is rooted, however, not in a secular humanism but what they term an *acosmic* or *nondual humanism*.

Another leading Kabbalah scholar Eliot Wolfson, whom Gafni did not know personally, also contacted Gafni after stumbling across a copy of *The Mystery of Love* (after the first hardback edition was published before the paperback) expressing appreciation for the textual readings. Wolfson also generously added an approbation to the paperback work calling it “*a beautiful book that will undoubtedly inspire many people and perhaps even bring some healing to a desperately ill world.*”

^C On Idel, see *Kabbalah and Eros*, by M. Idel, 2005, Yale University Press. As noted in a previous footnote and endnote, Idel told me (Marc) that he was working on this book in a conversation in the university library after I had already submitted my first work on Eros in the Hebrew tradition, for publication, namely *The Mystery of Love*, submitted in 2002. Although my book appeared two years earlier than Idel’s *Kabbalah and Eros*, and the style could not be more divergent, the core premise of both books was, as Idel noted to me, the same.

For source material relevant to proto-versions of what we are calling *Evolutionary Eros*, see especially *Kabbalah and Eros*, Chapter Five, and the first three chapters of *The Mystery of Love*, as well as the extensive footnotes in both books.

A second crucial source for Eros in the Hebrew mystical tradition, to which I am equally indebted, is Yehuda Liebes’s classical article (1994), “Zohar and Eros,” *Alpayim*, 9(1), [Hebrew]. Retrieved from: .

^D I relate to these sources in some depth in the work we just referred to above, Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, pp. 183-203, Atria, 2003, some of which I will now cite as they unpack the core Lurianic understanding of two kosmic forces, lines and circles, and their evolution—the evolution of love—as being the core ontology of Cosmos:

“This is perhaps the major premise of the entire *Zohar*. The *Sifra Detziniyuta*, which is possibly the most abstruse passage in the entire *Zohar*, begins its mythic cosmology with: ‘until the Scale existed, there was no possibility of gazing face to face. The ancient kings died, their coupling did not exist, and the earth was eradicated, until the Head [beginning], the Yearnings of all Yearnings, developed and transferred the Clothes of Glory.’ The first shift toward creation of

reality as we know it was the introduction of the scale, whose function was to divide the highest root of the Godhead into the basic binary division of male and female. In the Primordial Unity, there was no possibility of ‘gazing face to face,’ so there could be no coupling, and the earth could not subsist. Only when the (God)Head allowed for the single one cell to begin dividing and developing into the basic male/female paradigm could creation take place.” (pp. 344/5 notes to p. 183, *The Mystery of Love*)

“All of reality’s unfolding is about the evolutionary balancing of these two forces. On this key topic of balancing, see, for example, Abraham Joshua Heschel in his *Ohev Yisrael* on Vaethanan in Deuteronomy: “For everything in the world must have the aspects of male and female. A person committed to spiritual work [literally servant of the divine] must be especially certain to contain both male and female.” It is important to note that each person contains and must realize both aspects.” (p. 345, notes to p. 184, *The Mystery of Love*)

Human action *effects a Tikkun*—which, as already noted above, means something close to *evolves*—in a way that not only mends the cosmic rend but generates a new Reality that is more good, true, and beautiful than anything that came before. This notion appears in the *Ohev Yisrael* [cited above] in a radical passage within the context of his conversation around the two cherubs above the ark of covenant in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. We point out in section two of the *Wisdom of Solomon* books (Gafni, *Radical Kabbalah*, Books 1 and 2, as well as *The Wisdom of Solomon Matrix of CosmoErotic Humanism: Early Ontologies of the Universe: A Love Story and Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe in the Interior Sciences of Hebrew Wisdom* [forthcoming, Waterside Press].) that what is called the *Secret of the Cherubs* is core to the *Wisdom of Solomon/Universe: A Love Story* lineage. But for now, let’s turn to the radical passage itself:

“Everything must be male and female, therefore the cherubs are entwined in sexual embrace. So too... is the reality of this lower lowly world. Like a baby whose limbs are very small, and then grows up, the Divine [grows] through the creation of all worlds. Through the Torah, right behavior, and the Arousal from Below, strength is added to the Higher Power, and all the worlds expand. Understand this well. (*Ohev Yisrael*, on *Ki Tissa*, in *Exodus*)” (p. 345, notes to p. 185 *The Mystery of Love*)

The notion of lines and circles is core to Lurianic Kabbalah, which envisages the world as first brought into being in circles and then in lines. “In fact, the Sefirot tree [of life, of the *Sefirot*, the ten divine luminations] and the Divine Human Image, only appear in the ‘lines.’ This extremely complex and detailed theory is described [by Hayyim Vital in the name of his teacher] in length at the beginning of *Etz Hayim* in the first gate, and later on the eighth gate, as circles and lines emerge at the root of every stage of emanated creation. Although Luria says (Gate 8, chap. 1) that “the form of a man as a male and female is only in the lines,” we can still say that the lines are the root source of the masculine and the circles are the root source of the feminine. The basis for this would be that circle reality is identified with the *nefesh* level the soul, which corresponds to the feminine *Malchut*, while the lines are identified with the *ruach* level of the soul, which corresponds to *Tiferet*. In addition, the circles are identified with the permutations of the divine Name known as ‘52,’ which derives from the last feminine *he* of God’s name, while the lines derive from the ‘45’ Name, which emerges from the masculine *vav* of God’s name. See also in this regard *Sha’ar Hakdamot*, 8a. (p. 345 notes to p. 187 *The Mystery of Love*)

“See also R. Abraham Kook, in *Orot HaKodesh [Lights of Holiness, Volume three, section two, subsections 15-28, Jerusalem Mosad HaRav Kuk]*, for an excellent mystical [interior science] treatment of circles and lines and their modern implications. For a cursory intellectual history of circles and lines from [Isaac] Luria to [Moshe Chaim] Luzatto, to R. Isaac Chaver, a student of [Elijah of Vilna,] the Vilna Gaon, see *Iggulim VeYosher*, Mordechai Pachter, Daat, 1987. I thank Tamar Ross for bringing this article to my attention many years ago.” (pp. 345/6, note to p. 188, *The Mystery of Love*)

^E At this point, we cite Idel’s first three footnotes from this article—“Metamorphoses of a Platonic Theme in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University 3* (2002-2003) 67-86—as they are relevant here:

1 G. Scholem, ‘The Traces of ibn Gabirol in Kabbalah’, *Me’assef Soferei Eretz Yisrael* (Tel-Aviv, 1960), pp. 160–78 (Hebrew); M. Idel, ‘Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance’, in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), pp. 319–52; M. Idel, ‘The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of

Kabbalah in the Renaissance', *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Cambridge, MA, 1983), pp. 186–242.

2 G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (tr. A. Arkush, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky) (JPS and Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 269, 363; G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Printing House, 1974), p. 45, 98.

3 See, e.g., M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 239–49, where I assume the formative role of much earlier elements found in material related to Judaism; M. Idel, 'The Image of Man above the *Sefirot*,' *Daat*, vol. 4 (1980), pp. 41–55 (Hebrew), esp. pp. 54–5; M. Idel, 'Kabbalistic Material from the School of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 2 (1983), pp. 170–93 (Hebrew), esp. 173; M. Idel, 'The *Sefirot* above the *Sefirot*', *Tarbiz*, vol. 51 (1982), pp. 239–80 (Hebrew); Idel, 'Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance', pp. 338–44; E. Wolfson, 'Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in the Early Kabbalah', *Daat*, vol. 32–33 (1994), pp. V–XXII. For the existence of a scheme of supernal decades before the period when Scholem claimed that Kabbalah begun see also M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 113–18. I hope to return elsewhere to a discussion of an additional example found in late antiquity, where the concept of *aperantos* is found together with a double scheme of ten divine powers. See, meanwhile, the important discussion of Sh. Pines, *Collected Works*, vol. V (ed. W. Z. Harvey and M. Idel) (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1997), pp. 153–7 and note 22. On the presence, in a late medieval Jewish source, of a theosophical understanding of the ten *sefirot*, see E. Wolfson, 'The Theosophy of Shabbetai Donnolo, with Special Emphasis on the Doctrine of the Sefirot in Sefer Hakhmoni', *Jewish History*, vol. 6 (1992) = *The Frank Talmage Memorial*, vol. II, pp. 281–316; E. Wolfson, *Along the Path* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 68–9.