Reality in the Name of God, or, Divine Insistence: An Essay on Creation, Infinity, and the Ontological Implications of Kabbalah

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§30. ‘ON THAT DAY, GOD AND GOD’S NAME WILL BE ONE’

Badiou does not, in his book on Shaul of Tarsus, ever risk thinking of Judaism as naming a pure event. But just as Christianity itself names a religious event (fable or not), so does Judaism. This event itself is universal insofar as it reveals the one God who creates the world as such via his holy name. It also looks forward to the time in which this truth will be recognized by all: “God will be King over all the world—on that day, God will be one and his name will be one” (Zechariah 14:9). This prophetic passage signals the hope for a time when differing names for God will be recognized as referring to one thing exempt from the world. At that time, God will be one through recognition by all that there is the one unique God. But this is placed in the future, since it is something that occurs only through universal recognition.

But we can give a further reading to this passage. God’s name will be one when the creation that is formed through its complicated elaborations will be made one via the universal computer. Here, we can see the universe becoming divine and ruled over by God in a very direct way. This is, in fact, the only possibility: for God to cease remaining absent from the world as such and for the world to become one with God. The universe itself is perfected at this time and completed. We have argued throughout that God is not his name. God is perfect, and the holy Name is not. But the holy name is still connected to God and “as his name, so is he” (Samuel 25:25).
What is interesting is that, as our earlier comments on quantum physics and consciousness show, at this future moment the past will also change. In *Quantum Physics, Jewish Law, and Kabbalah: Astonishing Parallels*, Aaron Schreiber notes that in Judaism the notion of repentance means “moving backward in time” such that in the present one can nullify and render non-existence what was done in the past by confessing one’s past wrongs on Yom Kippur (Schreiber 2009, 33). In this way, the past itself can be changed by later events. Things are moved automatically backward in time. It is thus that consciousness, when it collapses the wave function, determines not only the present, but also the nature of past. What is true of past sins is true of physical particles insofar as each “has amplitude to move backwards in time” (Schreiber 2009, 40). This means that it cannot be ruled out that when the universal computer would be formed that the past itself would not be changed by the new consciousness found, such that God will no longer be in exile from the world. In this way, then, we realize God’s plan for the world at this point through our own actions which alter the past bringing into being God (“God will be King”) in this world. The incompleteness of the world is thereby rendered ended as the world becomes itself one.

Consciousness is thereby in the end the beginning’s co-creator. At the present time, we do not perceive this unity. But God’s name, also in the sense of divine names/attributes, is not one. At the time of redemption, the messianic era, the oneness of these names will occur. There will no longer be many. Consciousness will achieve a new perspective. When we look at a doughnut and coffee mug we may not see them as permutations of the same structure. Through a shift in consciousness one is able to see their unity. At the time of redemption this will take place on a universal scale. God is therefore both the creator and
supreme attractor leading the world to this possible endpoint. The pattern of creation constantly emerges towards this divine matrix even if it is not knowable now or in the past if it is coming. It is a matter of faith.

This numinous attractor creates through us. If we are able to lead to a computer capable of active universal computation and unity, we will through our own free wills have helped complete creation itself. At this point we will see how God was hidden and disguised in the world and as the world all along. The program of creation will therefore have been to reveal and enact the divine as such. It is through our own consciousness that this awareness evolves. But consciousness is not just an observer, it is also an actor. God is therefore hiding, yet absent in all of creation. Faith sees space-time headed towards a future redemption and salvation, the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth and throughout the universe. Then the name of God will be knowable as such and not through other names since all the names will be as expressing one thing. A universal consciousness contemplates this oneness.

This active intellect is the most ultimate aim life could set for itself. But it will not occur until the world-to-come arrives. Our own minds would be connected to this universal mind: “But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day” (Deuteronomy 10:20). Here, all languages and all peoples will recognize the unicity of God, but all languages will become one, as one will be able in the universal mind to understand anyone else directly. In this way, all will invoke the name of God together. The messianic meaning and message of the divine name then is Zechariah’s prophetic vision. This completion of the world means all the shvirah, the breaking, of the world has been repaired. The fractured universe will become whole (tikkun olam). The repairing of the world and its restoration only
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occurs though at the end. It is not possible for us to truly imagine this repair. But its miraculous advent cannot be ruled out insofar as there is nothing inherently contradictory about it. We do not yet even experience its possibility. Our consciousness has not yet collapsed parts of the universal wave function. There are parts we are not yet aware of. These do not exist for us even as possibility or tendencies at this point. They are not even probability waves for us. Only when this universal mind appears will they are perceived and collapsed, thereby altering the past and enacting a new world.

This is why this position is not Hegelian. It is not saying God exiles himself in the world, but is rather initially exiled from the world in creation. God becomes one with the world through a transformation of the world into a universal mind, but this occurs via the very transfinite nature of the world and its incompleteness rather than by the infinite becoming finite. What is removed from this world also is contradiction itself rather than contradiction forming the motor and source of it. Also, for Hegel, the dialectic itself yields Absolute Spirit. But absolute spirit is only ever an embodiment of the dialectic whereas we are positing a new order that obeys a new rule. Hegel does not see Absolute Spirit as taking on some order radically different than the dialectic.

Also, we have argued for the incompleteness of the world and, through its alienation in the signifier, its transfinite and incomplete nature. But that does not imply that this incompleteness is itself eternal. Cantorianism might describe the world as it is now. But there is always the possibility that new laws will arise that will cancel this insight. While this insight cannot now be known or truly formulated other than as a miraculous possibility, one can suggest that it involves the very universality of the consciousness proposed here. Its self-referential nature will not exist,
as it were, or will exist in such a way as to make the signifier no longer relevant. We could say that it is like a two-dimensional order suddenly becoming three dimensional. The truths of a two-dimensional order may no longer hold when a new dimension is added. This change is not itself built into any dialectic which constantly repeats itself, as it arises out of an order that turns completely random and through its randomness lead to new orders. The dialectic repeats like a fractal, itself a nested pattern that turns into a larger overall view. But here we are proposing a pattern that shifts in its entire nature and not by the repetition of the same as its iterations can simply turn random, but in doing so changes all past iterations.

The name of God marks how we are aware of God. We cannot be aware of God without God having a name—unlike a person whom we can confront in their flesh. As God insists beyond the world, our conscious awareness of God in reality is in and through the name. For the entire world to be conscious of God requires universal consciousness, since only through such consciousness can consciousness of God be embodied in every action and in every aspect of existence. Rabbi David Dov Levanon teaches: “...and His name one.” Is His name not one at present? R. Nachman bar Yitzchak says: ‘This world of ours is unlike that of the World to Come. In this world, it (God’s name) is written with ‘Yod’ and a ‘Heh’ but read as if [written] ‘Alef,’ ‘Dalet.’ But, in the world to Come, they will be united: It will be read with ‘Yod’ and ‘Heh,’ and written with ‘Yod,’ ‘Heh.’” These two excerpts are compatible, for the names of God teach us about the manner in which God runs His world. In this world we are unaware of God’s deep hidden providence. It is therefore impossible to read God’s name as it is written, but, in the future, the inwardness of His direction will be revealed, and then God will be One, and His Name One. Therefore, in
this world of ours, there appears to be bad news sometimes, and it should be blessed upon accordingly. Yet, in the Days of the Messiah, when the inwardness of God’s providence is revealed to all, the blessing ‘HaTov VeHaMeitiv’ (‘the Good and Benevolent’) will be pronounced over everything. Based upon this, we may conclude that in the Days to Come there will continue to exist the kind of tidings that today appear to us to be undesirable. The difference will be that humankind will have attained a level whereupon people will be able to see the positive aspect that results from such instances. (The sages of the Talmud explain that in this world we are so shortsighted that even when we know that something good is bound to result from an undesirable situation, we nonetheless bless ‘the True Judge’)” (Levanon 2011).

§31. The Name of Prayer

We have just speculated concerning the final redemption of the universe, but in the meantime we are left in a world otherwise constructed. In this present world, we are left with prayer itself as our way of engaging with the holy name of God and with its truth. Prayer means to call in the name of God: Abraham “called in the name of God” (Genesis 12:8). It means to call this name and meditate on it. The Talmud says that God himself prays (Brechot 7a). I take this to mean that the world itself as an elaboration of God’s Name is itself a prayer and a call unto us.

Aryeh Kaplan notes that “that there is considerable evidence . . . that the entire Amidah [the central prayer of Judaism other than the ‘Shema’] was meant to be used as a meditative device, very much a long mantra” (Kaplan 1995, 283). The meditation is done via iterations of blessings (in most cases memorized) said three times per day. It is the very enunciation of this group of words addressed to the
Name and involved in calling on it that spiritually transforms one’s consciousness. In Hebrew, the verb to pray (l’hitpalel) means to bring judgment on oneself. The one who prays is the one who gauges oneself as to whether or not they are worthy of the name itself and its articulation. Via this appeal to God a prayer is a disappearing act into the name. Like the universe itself, prayer is “a living garment and tissue, a textus in the most accurate understanding of the term, in which, as a kid of basic motif and a leitmotif, the program is woven in a hidden way and sometimes directly,” as all that is said consists of ramifications of the divine name at the root of all things (Scholem 1972b, 179). The evocation of the divine name in prayer refers back to this in all the variations and changes of words one poses.

It is the word of God that is endlessly alive with meaning. It is that infinity that one touches in prayer itself. Out of a basic element, the very name of God, the associated letters of the name and alphabet are permuted and combined and exchanged in prayer itself by the very act of repeating the same prayers multiple times and daily. After all, the absolute infinite, God, gives expression to himself through withdrawing from the world and then allowing creation to arise out of a combination of structural elements, the alphabet (Scholem 1972b, 181). In prayer then, we repeat as best we can the act of creation.

It is therefore not coincidental that the most basic religious expression is a linguistic movement. It is not a free association as in psychoanalysis. But insofar as it is a repetition it achieves some of the same aims. In particular, it shows how we are in the image of God insofar as we are the absent cause of the movement of words. As Jacques-Alain Miller explains, the one who free-associates is the very “element” “lacking” in the chain of associations and receives a “stand-in” in the
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form of signifiers (Miller 1977, 26). The words take our place. In our place, they create a link to the absent creator. We are a desire excluded from the structure and yet the absent cause of the series of words (Miller 1977, 27). There must be a lack, a blank, to enable the words to replace each other in order and in succession (Miller 1977, 30). It is our very being that insists as this lack—the empty set from which the succeeding can be built. And in prayer there is always one more signifier to be said due to this lack and incompleteness, one more word needed to be said in our encounter with infinity itself. In prayer we are able to come as close as possible to experiencing our creation again: at one and the same time the subject is anterior to the signifier and the signifier anterior to subject. The main consequence consists essentially of this: the birth of linear time. We must think together that which makes the subject the effect of the signifier and the signifier as the restative of the subject. It is a circular, though non-reciprocal, relation (Miller 1977, 34). One judges oneself by judging one’s ability to approach the Name and bear its truth. Prayer, then, is pure speaking. One is not trying to describe a world, but only to address infinity itself. Prayer sanctifies the name itself by offering a pure relation to it. One speaks to the Name and speaks it. It is a speaking to, but also a praising of the name for allowing us to speak to it. One may even list the very traits of God, but does so ultimately for the act of listening to the names themselves.

This is why prayer itself is whispered softly to oneself. It asks that one hear it and receive it as one’s very being and self. This is why one says prayer, one sanctifies the Name. Of course, there are other ways to do so: by good deeds to others, by defending others, through martyrdom, etc. But prayer itself hallows the holy Name. The Torah says that one should not desecrate the holy name. The verb used here is l’challel which literally means to make a void space of
(chalal). One desecrates the name by turning it into nothingness, erasing it, making it invisible. To sanctify the name is to make it appear as the mark of the void. Prayer is the elimination of the state of the vacuum via the name itself. God is absent from this reality, but in absenting himself leaves behind his Name.

We sanctify that name when we stop being silent and speak the name in prayer. If we behave in the wrong way we also make it appear as if the name is eased by not heeding its words. God is lacking in this world, but we sanctify the name by showing it appears in and through this nothingness. One sanctifies God by being willing to lose one’s own life in order not to betray the unicity of God. That means never giving into idolatry even if forced to by a death threat for example. To sanctify means to make holy: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2). To make holy means to note the uniqueness of something, of God. God is separate and transcendent: “You shall not desecrate My holy Name, and I shall become sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel, for I am God your God” (Leviticus 22:32).

And that is why another central prayer is called the ‘Kaddish’. The Kaddish says directly, ‘magnified and sanctified be God’s great Name.’ We say this prayer to mourn the dead since they await us in the days to come: “In the future, the righteous will be named after God.” It is important to recall this name in order to recall the hope and principle of faith that points toward the future: “HaShem is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, HaShem, have never forsaken those who seek you” (Psalms 9:9-10).

This future is made possible by how the Name itself forms our reality. It is by the very iteration and elaboration of the Name that we can see the future.
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redemption: “May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed.” At the time of universal consciousness everyone will then be praising this name and will be involved in perpetual prayer: “My mouth will speak in praise of HaShem. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever.” (Psalms 145:21). “I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of HaShem (the Name)” (Psalms 116:13).