

ELLIOT R. WOLFSON



✻ Alef,  
מ Mem,  
ט Tau

Kabbalistic Musings  
on Time, Truth,  
and Death



ALEF, MEM, TAU

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# ALEF, MEM, TAU

Kabbalistic Musings  
on Time, Truth, and Death

Elliot R. Wolfson



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to the blessed memory of  
joel kenny

seeker of truth in time  
even unto death





Patient serpent, circle round,  
Till in death thy life is found;  
Double form of godly prime  
Holding the whole thought of time,  
When the perfect two embrace,  
Male & female, black & white,  
Soul is justified in space,  
Dark made fruitful by the light;  
And centered in the diamond Sun,  
Time & Eternity are one.

Margaret Fuller



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## PREFACE

This book is based on the Taubman Lectures that I delivered at the University of California, Berkeley, February–March 2001. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor David Biale, who first approached me about preparing these lectures, and to Professor Daniel Boyarin, who followed up by extending an official invitation on behalf of the Program in Jewish Studies at Berkeley. The time I spent on the Berkeley campus was a turning point on my journey, both personally and professionally.

The goal of my lectures was to illumine the nexus of time, truth, and death elicited from the symbolic imaginary of the Jewish esoteric tradition known by both practitioners and scholars as kabbalah. The inspiration and framework for my exploration, however, was the rabbinic teaching that the word *emet*, “truth,” comprises the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet: *alef*, *mem*, and *tau*.<sup>1</sup> These letters serve, in turn, as semiotic signposts for the three tenses of time: past, present, and future. Accordingly, I dedicated each of the three lectures to one of these letters, with the aim of elucidating the corresponding aspect of temporality. In revising the lectures for publication, I have added two introductory chapters. The first outlines the philosophical sources that have shaped my own hermeneutical understanding of time, which, invariably, entails a temporal understanding of hermeneutics. The second offers a conception of temporality, culled from a wide range of kabbalistic texts, that serves as the backdrop for the specific analyses in the three chapters on *alef*/past, *mem*/present, and *tau*/future.

I drew the material for my textual reasoning in the lectures almost exclusively

from two anthologies that can be viewed as the bookends of the earliest period of kabbalistic literary activity, the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries: *Sefer ha-Bahir* and *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the former also transmitted as *Midrash Rabbi Nehuniah ben ha-Qanah* and the latter as *Midrash Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai*. The choice of these pseudepigraphic texts—here I bracket the complex question of multiple layers of composition and redaction discernible in the literary landscape of both works, though it should be clear to the reader that I presume in neither case the existence of an “original” text that may be recovered or reconstructed by the canons of critical scholarship—is deliberate: the midrashic disposition exhibited in the bahiric parables and zoharic homilies provides a particularly useful prism through which to consider a narratological conception of temporality that defies the doctrinaire distinction between truth and appearance, reality and imagination.

To elucidate this point fully I mention a comment made by Theodor Adorno in a letter written April 19, 1939, to Gershom Scholem, thanking him for sending a copy of *Die Geheimnisse der Tora* (1936). Adorno said of Scholem’s translation of a zoharic passage in this work: “The extract you have translated is an interpretation of the history of creation as a ‘symbol.’ However, the language into which the symbol is translated is itself a symbolic language, which calls to mind Kafka’s statement that all his works were symbolic, but only in the sense that they were to be interpreted by new symbols in an endless series of steps.”<sup>2</sup> Adorno correctly understood that in presuming the parabolic nature of truth—an orientation that resonates with the symbolic imaginary proffered by medieval kabbalists—Kafka closed the gap separating fact and fiction and thereby opened the horizon of textuality to the measure of incommensurability, the limitless limit that delimits the interpretative standpoint from which a reader may summon a hermeneutical criterion of objectivity that avoids the extremes of absolute relativism, on the one hand, and relative absolutism, on the other. Critical to abiding in the sway of this stance is the discernment that language, poetically conceived as inherently metaphorical, is always a gesture of translation, a joining of disparate sign-codes rather than a harnessing of similar ones.<sup>3</sup> In the particular cultural ambiance of medieval kabbalah, language performs this function by expressing the inexpressible, rendering the invisible visible. The symbol, therefore, brings the unknown into relation with the known, but without reducing the difference that binds the two incongruities into a selfsame identity.<sup>4</sup>

The obfuscation between story and event displayed in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and even more extremely in *Sefer ha-Zohar*, represents an embellishment of the rabbinic parable to the point that one can no longer distinguish between signifier and signified, *mashal* and *nimshal*.<sup>5</sup> In the kabbalistic mind-set, there is no gap between signifier and signified, for every *nimshal* becomes a *mashal* vis-à-vis

another *nimshal*, which quickly turns into another *mashal*, and so on ad infinitum in an endless string of signifiers that winds its way finally (as a hypothetical construct rather than a chronological occurrence) to the in/significant, which may be viewed either as the signified to which no signifier can be affixed or the signifier to which no signified can be assigned. To those familiar with post-modernist theory, such a blurring of the distinction between *mashal* and *nimshal* will resonate with the challenge to the modernist faith in epistemological certainty based on fixed meaning and identifiable essences. In semiotic terms, one can meaningfully posit that speech (the linguistic gesture expressed as the verbal gesticulation, graphic inscription, or mental avowal of word-signs) has a terminus, but semiosis (the interpretation of those signs) is infinite. The impossibility of presence—the rallying call of postmodern hermeneutics—is inseparable from the impossibility of absence inasmuch as there can be no presence but in the presence of absence, just as there can be no absence but in the absence of presence.<sup>6</sup> The notion of the inherently symbolic nature of language, and the further assumption regarding the linguistic nature of reality, raise the possibility of a hermeneutic buttressed by an alternative conception of temporality, one not necessarily privileging a linear conception of time that imposes upon the researcher the historicist presumption that a cultural phenomenon is best apprehended by viewing its historical context synchronically.

In the third chapter in this book, the first of the lectures, I explore the paradox of beginning: to begin, the beginning would have had to begin to be the beginning it is to be, but if this is so, then it would not be the beginning it must be if it is the beginning of what it is to be. The mystery of doubling is encoded semiotically in the opening letter of the first verse of the genesis narrative that begins Torah, *beit*, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the cipher for number two. Beginning is symbolized by *beit*, but before *beit* is *alef*, the mystery, *pele*,<sup>7</sup> that points to the origin that precedes the beginning. The first, which is the head, is shrouded in the veil of the second, the twofold nature of secrecy that lies at the time-root; the two come to fruition by the third letter, *gimmel*, the bridge that connects *alef* and *beit* and thus makes possible the bestowing of the gift, the overflow of divine effulgence from the phallic potency to the vaginal vessel, mythicized as the son connecting father and daughter, the upper and lower manifestations of wisdom.

In the fourth chapter, the second of the three lectures, I turn my attention to the letter *mem*, the thirteenth of the twenty-two letters, situated, according to the rabbinic dictum briefly mentioned above, in the middle of the alphabet. By focusing on the letter that signifies the middle, one is, needless to say, well placed to reflect philosophically on the nature of the middle. Like the beginning, the middle exemplifies the character of doubling, for to speak of the mid-

dle one must be muddled in the middle, that is, one speaks of the middle only from the standpoint of the middle. In this respect, meditation on the *mem* affords us a model of repetition with difference, the eschatological mirroring of creation, moving from beginning's end to end's beginning, returning from middle to middle.

In the fifth chapter, the last of the lectures, I investigate the letter *tau*, the final letter in the *alef-beit* and thus the obvious demarcation of the terminus, manifest on the temporal plane with the in/temporal experience of death—if one can speak of death as experienced. The letter assumes as well the character of the seal of the word for truth, *hotamo shel emet*, the “signet of truth.” This double function of *tau* opens a path that illumines the juxtaposition of truth and death, which underscores that truth is most fully disclosed in the inevitable eventuality of the singular (non)event of death—the moment that is always never the same. In/through death, one discerns that change and permanence are not antinomical; quite to the contrary, the time of death beckons the death of time, viewed through setting permanence and annihilation at opposite ends of a spectrum; in the death of time is not the time of death but an awakening to the chronic truth that what persists is what changes, what changes is what persists.<sup>8</sup> In the space-time world of differentiation, dichotomies are posited pragmatically to allow a natural order: light followed by dark, left opposite right, above distinguished from below, within differentiated from without. In death, however, the truth of the world of unity is disclosed—a truth predicated on discerning the coincidence of opposites, that is, the mystical insight that in ultimate reality opposites are no longer distinguishable, for they are identical in virtue of being opposite. Death allows truth in its ultimate (non)appearance to be seen, the other comprising its other as the same other that is other to the same, untruth rooted in the very heart of truth. It is precisely from this identity of difference that one may glimpse the difference of identity, the weave of time's being becoming the becoming of time's being, each moment ephemerally enduring, the past persistently approaching the present of its future passing.<sup>9</sup>

The ruminations on time contained in this book well forth from the dilemma, acknowledged by many who have walked this path before me, that it does not seem possible to experience external events and objects temporally unless we presuppose an inner sense of time, but if we presume the latter, we cannot be confident that we are experiencing the former—temporal objects can be constituted for consciousness only because consciousness comports itself temporally. How can consciousness constituted by time, and thus always in flux, account for the persistence of intentional contents of consciousness as identifiable subjects of experience? Edmund Husserl, who dedicated so much of his life to pondering the human experience of time, ably captured the wider



issue underlying this puzzle when he wondered in his Amsterdam lectures of 1926 if we can “overcome the paradox of our doubling [*Verdoppelung*]. . . . We are fated as human beings to be the psychophysical subjects of a mental life in the real world and, at the same time, transcendently to be subjects of a transcendental, world-constituting life-process.”<sup>10</sup> As the following citation from Barry Dainton illustrates, even contemporary physicists, utilizing a different methodology, have been forced by the dint of their speculations to acknowledge the inherent difficulty in thinking about time that Husserl formulated so well: “Immanent flow is such a pervasive feature of our consciousness that it is hard to think of *anything* that does not possess this feature, *time included*, for not only do our thoughts possess it as we think them, but so do any mental images that we call up.”<sup>11</sup> The supposedly distinctive capacity of human beings to live in this state of “doubling” as immanent and transcendent subjectivities is facilitated by the “transcendental power of imagination”—in Martin Heidegger’s locution, a “spontaneous receptivity and receptive spontaneity,”<sup>12</sup> a metamorphic power that unsettles binary oppositions, rendering the real unreal, the concrete abstract, the somatic symbolic. “To render Time sensible,” wrote Gilles Deleuze, “in itself is a task common to the painter, the musician, and sometimes the writer. It is a task beyond all measure or cadence.”<sup>13</sup> The time of which Deleuze speaks is not “time as Chronos,” that is, time measured in accord with the repetition of events, but “time as Aion,”<sup>14</sup> that is, the “form of empty time” that fractures the “I” and dissolves the self,<sup>15</sup> the “demented time” that is “out of joint,” the event of difference that ruptures chronology, the discontinuous duration of the continuous present,<sup>16</sup> the immeasurable time of the force of becoming, the “pure immanence” of the indeterminate life<sup>17</sup> that for all time remains predictably unpredictable.<sup>18</sup> Hopefully, the path I set forth with the words that follow will make something of the phenomenon sensible and thus lead the steps of another to the place of temporal doubling, the middle wherein beginnings end and endings begin.



To think of time—of all that retrospection,  
 To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward. . . .  
 Is to-day nothing? Is the beginningless past nothing?  
 If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

### (Un)doing Time in Time Un(doing)

In my time, many a time, I have heard myself and others speak of a *lifetime*. This compound dis/plays the juxtaposition of life and time so elemental to our way of being in the world: what most impresses our thinking about the life-that-is-passing is the passing-that-is-life, a passing that lies at the root of our rootlessness. We are perpetually cast in the mold of temporal beings, always, it seems, being in time for the time being. Time flies, runs, flees, passes too quickly, too slowly, and yet at the end of day—invariably the beginning of night—the question persists: where did the time go? The seemingly trite wording of the query should not be overlooked: the emphasis is on time's going, that is, one attempts to take hold of the passage of time.

From the philosophical position known as temporal realism, and according to the somewhat more sophisticated theory of four-dimensionalism—the hypothesis that material reality consists of spatial and temporal parts, that objects persist in spacetime through the manifold combinations of perdurance, endurance, presentism, and eternalism<sup>1</sup>—it is the “progress of events, the coming to pass of one thing after another, and not just a timeless tapestry” that grounds the distinction between past, present, and future and thereby accords legitimacy to the proposition that time is real.<sup>2</sup> Stated less technically, the signposts that mark one's entry into and departure from the world are temporal in their comportment, birth at one end, death at the other. Nothing, it would

seem, is more basic to the scripting of the egological narrative—the I “am” of what “is”<sup>3</sup>—than the time it takes one to die, an insight familiar to the philosophically attuned from Heidegger’s infamous notion of *Sein zum Tode*, being-unto-death—the (not)being that is(not), present all too pervasively in its absence.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly enough, this philosophic discernment, often considered elitist and removed from mundane social reality, is supported by archaeological and ethnological evidence from the dawn of human culture indicating that Paleolithic humans were acutely aware of the temporal nature of existence. Anthropologists have even argued that the ability to view time in its twofold dimension, the present as an outcome of the past and as a platform for the future, is one of the principal ways in which *Homo sapiens* is distinguished as a distinct species of primate.<sup>5</sup> Even in preliterate societies the preoccupation with temporality—specifically, the quest to commemorate time and thereby overcome the ravaging aspect of mortality—was concretized in rituals that celebrated birth and death as the bookends of life’s journey. Although these rites might seem “primitive” to the critical eye, ideationally they were no less sophisticated than the most convoluted postmodern discourse that depicts human temporality as caught between recollection of the beginning anticipating the end and anticipation of the beginning recollecting the end. Robert Lauer, a sociologist by training, astutely observed:

Indeed, if one were to write a history of concern with the temporal, one would find oneself compelled to probe into the primordial consciousness. Even at the most primitive level of human life, we have evidence of human awareness of and concern with temporality. . . . In the mythical consciousness of the archaic human, there was an inner sense, an intuitive grasping, of the temporality of life. . . . Human awareness of and concern with temporality is particularly evident in our unique concern for the dead—a distinctively human trait that has apparently characterized all people in all places and in all times.<sup>6</sup>

Besides maintaining a concern with temporality from time immemorial, humans have also been compelled to inquire about the nature of time. What sense of time is conveyed when one speaks of a lifetime? No sooner spoken that another question suggests itself: How does one distinguish the time of telling from the telling of time? To discourse about time is to be caught in a circle: one cannot speak of the being of time except from the standpoint of the time of being, nor of the time of being except from the standpoint of the being of time. As Julia Kristeva noted in her exposition of “the experience of time embodied” (*l’expérience du temps incorporé*) in the thought of Marcel Proust, “Whether we are lost

in time, losing time, or losing our lives without discovering anything in death, we are made of the same substance as time because it defines the boundaries of our speech. Speaking about time while time passes is a problem that circles in on itself, producing a painful cyclical motion in which the problem disappears in order to attain a rapture beyond words—and beyond time.”<sup>7</sup>

In the effort to discern time the mind comes to the rim of reason, the limit of language. Aristotle, it will be recalled, lucidly laid out some of the paradoxes that arise when one attempts to account for time—paradoxes that, according to Simplicius, the sixth-century Neoplatonist, were not successfully resolved by either Aristotle or his expositors.<sup>8</sup> Many centuries later, in *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, the text of a lecture course delivered at the University of Marburg in the summer of 1927, Martin Heidegger offered the following assessment: “No attempt to get behind the riddle of time can permit itself to dispense with coming to grips with Aristotle. For he expressed in clear conceptual form, for the first time and for a long time after, the common understanding of time, so that his view of time corresponds to the natural concept of time.”<sup>9</sup>

The first of Aristotle’s paradoxes renders the very existence of time impossible, since something whose parts do not exist cannot itself exist—and in the case of time, its parts do not exist. The past is no longer, the future is not yet, and the present cannot be considered part of a larger whole, for, in the absence of past and future, time is dimensionless, an instant with no measurable duration and consequently erased from the imprint of memory in a flash, (be)coming in passing. The second paradox deals with the impossibility of determining whether the present, ostensibly the bridge that links past and future, is always the same or always different. If the former, there would be no way to establish simultaneity so one could discern a pattern in the unfolding of temporal events; if the latter, there would of necessity be absolute simultaneity, the coincidence or “compresence” of all moments in the present, and hence “nothing would be before or after anything else.”<sup>10</sup> Plotinus began his treatise on eternity and time on a similar note, remarking that “we think that we have a clear and distinct experience of them in our own souls, as we are always speaking of them and using their names on every occasion. Of course, when we try to concentrate on them and, so to speak, to get close to them, we find again that our thought runs into difficulties.”<sup>11</sup> But surely the most celebrated passage enunciating the dilemma of determining the nature of time appears in the *Confessions* of Augustine: “What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what is meant when we hear someone else talking about it. When then is time?

Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.”<sup>12</sup>

To articulate the character of time is to freeze the river in motion, but the river thus frozen is not the river one set out to freeze. In the history of Western philosophy, Zeno’s well-known paradoxes are based on the assumption that movement as such cannot be comprehended without contradiction.<sup>13</sup> Extending this point to the issue of time more generally—an extension justified by the seemingly inextricable link between motion and temporality—it is impossible to delineate in word or concept what is constantly on the way to not being what it has become. In Augustine’s own words, “At the moment when time is passing, it can be perceived and measured. But when it has passed and is not present, it cannot be.”<sup>14</sup> To (be)hold the time of flux, one would have to stop the flux of time, but if one were to stop the flux of time, there would no longer be a time of flux to be(hold). The conventional triadic division of time offers the illusion of a temporal trajectory traversing through one fixed point to the next in a linear pattern, but the experience of the flowing currents of time, swerving this way and that way, cannot be accounted for on the basis of spatially-conceived instants, momentary units that are measurable, decipherable, commingled yet discrete. As Simplicius put it, “As to what time may be, then, to this question hardly the wisest would be able to find an answer.”<sup>15</sup>

In the course of the passage of much time, the same sentiment has been expressed by many of the finest philosophical minds. To mention two examples from the twentieth century, Alfred North Whitehead wrote: “It is impossible to meditate on time and the mystery of the creative passage of nature without overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, too, observed: “Although we constantly reckon with time or take account of it without explicitly measuring it by the clock and are abandoned to it as the most commonplace thing, whether we are lost in it or pressed by it—although time is as familiar to us as only something in our *Dasein* can be, nevertheless, it becomes strange and puzzling when we try to make it clear to ourselves even if only within the limits of everyday intelligibility.”<sup>17</sup>

Heidegger, however, provides a method to deal with the *aporia*, a path to cut through the ostensible obstruction of having no path: “What we need first of all is a many-sided orientation toward the time phenomenon, following the clue of the traditional time concepts. After that it becomes pertinent to inquire in what way the interpretations of time from which these concepts have sprung themselves took sight of the time phenomenon, how far they took into view the original time phenomenon, and how we can achieve the return passage from this time phenomenon first given to the original time.”<sup>18</sup> The appeal to multivocality, therefore, is a stepping-stone to attain the “original time,” which

Heidegger further identifies as the temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) that is the “ontological condition of the possibility of the understanding of being.”<sup>19</sup> I shall return to Heidegger’s thought subsequently; it is adequate to note that he belongs to the class of philosophers who believe in the possibility of establishing the “true” nature of time.

In *Unreality and Time*, Robert S. Brumbaugh reasonably challenges “the notion that there can be any single nature of time, to which the law of contradiction will apply as it does to substances or flowing qualities.” “We are,” he continues, “dealing with a complex sequential relationship which will not exhibit any property of quantity, or quality, or relation, or modality. The assumption that we can find a suitable model, formal or mechanical, to serve as a paradigm fails as well.”<sup>20</sup> The second part of this statement accords with Heidegger’s petition to assemble multiple views on the nature of time expressed by thinkers through the course of time, but the justification for this venture, specified in the first part of the statement, underscores the significant difference between the two. For Brumbaugh, polysemy is a consequence of aporia; for Heidegger, it is the impetus to slash through the aporia. Brumbaugh identifies four analyses of time that have been operative in occidental metaphysics (beginning with Plato) and attempts to show how none is adequate to deal with the complex phenomenon of time.<sup>21</sup> Although no single conceptual model, whether derived from mathematics, physics, or philosophy, is sufficient to explain time, Brumbaugh does not consider the quest to do so meaningless. To treat Brumbaugh’s work in the manner it demands and deserves lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice it to say that he builds on Whitehead’s insight, which bears similarity to Husserl’s,<sup>22</sup> in understanding time to be a directional process constituted by irreversible “patterns of concrescence” rather than self-sustained, intermonadic moments sequentially strung on a time-line.<sup>23</sup>

The relevance of Brumbaugh’s perspective to my own imaginal thinking about time will become apparent later. For the moment let us return to Augustine and consider more carefully the context of his remark cited earlier. The reflections on time in book eleven of the *Confessions* come directly after the affirmation of the Christological doctrine of creation by the eternal Logos. Significantly, Augustine’s musing on the first verse in Genesis, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth,” precedes the discourse on this creed. Augustine notes that although he knew only Latin and not Hebrew, he would have understood the truth (*veritas*) of these words even in Moses’s own Hebrew, for truth “uses neither mouth nor tongue as instruments and utters no audible syllables,” and thus it can be stripped of any particular linguistic attire.<sup>24</sup>

One cannot fail to note the ironic twist in Augustine’s thought. The scriptural truth that the medium of creation is the word of God finds its ultimate

justification in an intuition beyond the Logos in its ocular and verbal representations. The only way to transcend the word, however, is through the word. To support his point exegetically, Augustine cites the words attributed to the voice that spoke from the clouds to Peter, James, and John while they were witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus and his standing in the company of Moses and Elijah: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matt 17:5). Augustine detects here a reference to the mystery of incarnation, which he expounds in temporal terms: “Therefore it is clear and evident that the utterance came through the movement of some created thing, serving your eternal will but itself temporal [*quod creaturae motus expressit eam, serviens aeternae voluntati tuae, ipse temporalis*]. And these your words, made for temporal succession, were reported by the external ear to the judicious mind whose internal ear is disposed to hear your eternal word.”<sup>25</sup>

The “eternal word” (*aeternum verbum*) by which all things were created is identified as Jesus, the beginning (*principium*) that is wisdom (*sapientia*), the silence (*silentio*) apprehended by way of the “inner ear” (*interior posita*), the temporal instantiation of the eternal will. The word, the instrument of creation, is described, therefore, as temporal but also as coeternal with God. Insofar as the Logos participates in the divine substance, its “true eternity” and “true immortality” are set in diametric opposition to “time and change,”<sup>26</sup> and hence we cannot speak of the word as a “transient utterance” (*transitoria voce*);<sup>27</sup> it is, rather, the primordial saying voiced in the “simultaneity of eternity” (*simul ac sempiternae*): “You call us, therefore, to understand the Word, God who is with you God (Jn 1:1). That word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are uttered eternally.”<sup>28</sup> Speaking that has no inception or terminus, no succession or interruption, is not a speaking with which we are familiar, a speaking determined by change and mutability,<sup>29</sup> a speaking sounded in time, which is inaudible without transition and movement; only eternal silence can be spoken eternally. The speaking of the Logos, consequently, is “successiveness which never has any constancy.”<sup>30</sup> How can that which is without constancy lay claim to being successive? If nothing is constant, there is nothing to succeed, and with nothing to succeed there can be no successiveness except perhaps the succession of inconstancy, though this, too, would depend on the constancy of succession.

This paradoxical quandary illumines the fact that, for Augustine, the mystery of the word made flesh problematizes the alleged antinomy between time and eternity, motion and rest.<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, the word is coeternal and thus not subject to generation or decay; on the other hand, the word transpires in time, the incarnation of the word bespeaks the temporal manifestation of the eternal will, always in and of the moment—indeed the momentum of the moment is conceived from the vantage point of the enfleshment of the flesh beyond flesh,



the envisioning of the image beyond image, the “immanence of infinitude in the finite.”<sup>32</sup> On this basis we can grasp why Augustine exegetically links the mystery to the verse “Today I have begotten you,” *ego hodie genui te* (Ps 2:7), a verse that was already applied to Jesus in Hebrews 5:5. God’s eternity is characterized by a today that “does not yield to a tomorrow, nor did it follow a yesterday,” that is, the today is the fullness of a present that has neither past nor future.<sup>33</sup> To speak of the word being born “today” signifies the begetting of what is coeternal with God, the eternal coming-to-be of what has everlastingly been. The incarnation semiotically encodes the a/temporal transition from immutable to mutable that makes temporal creation on the part of the timeless God possible.<sup>34</sup> The transition cannot occur in time since it is the process that provides the very conditions for time. Alternatively expressed, the word eternally begotten—clearly a stumbling block to reason since the eternal cannot be begotten nor can the begotten be eternal—is the ontic source of temporality. It follows, then, that there cannot be a time when time did not exist, *nec aliquo tempore non erat tempus*.<sup>35</sup> In the Word, “everything which begins to be and ceases to be begins and ends its existence” precisely because it is the “eternal reason [*aeterna ratione*] where nothing begins or ends,”<sup>36</sup> the eternal law (*lex aeterna*) that manifests the reason (*ratio*) of the timeless deity in the transitory world.<sup>37</sup> Augustine opines further about this matter in his explication of John’s statement concerning Jesus, “They sought therefore to seize him, and no one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come” (Jn 7:30):

He was waiting for the time when he would die, because he also waited for the time when he was to be born. The apostle, speaking about this time, said, “But when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son” (Gal 4:4). That is why many ask: Why did not the Christ come before? To them it must be answered that the fullness of time had not yet come, inasmuch as he, through whom times were made, regulates [them]; for he knew when he ought to come. . . . Finally, when the fullness of time came, he who was to free us from time also came. For, freed from time, we shall come to that eternity where time is not. And there it is not asked, when will the hour come? For the day is everlasting and is not preceded by a yesterday nor closed out by a tomorrow. . . . And so we ought to love him through whom times were made, that we may be freed from time and fixed in eternity where there is no alteration of time.<sup>38</sup>

The hour of Christ’s coming is designated the *fullness of time*, the “everlasting” day that is “not preceded by a yesterday nor closed out by a tomorrow.” The mystery of incarnation embodies the temporalization of the eternal—the timeless being through whom all times are made—that yields the possibility for the

eternalization of the temporal, the possibility for the human being to partake in the fullness of eternity realized in the simultaneity of the ever-recurring present that “flies so quickly from future into past that it is an interval with no duration.”<sup>39</sup> Precisely because “nothing is transient” in the eternal, the “whole is present” therein.<sup>40</sup> Augustine thus writes of God’s dwelling in the “sublimity of eternity which is always in the present,”<sup>41</sup> a state that is before all things past and beyond all things future. Nothing in time can claim to be present in this way since “all past time is driven backwards by the future, and all future time is the consequent of the past, and all past and future are created and set on their course by that which is always present.”<sup>42</sup> By contrast, the moment of eternity, the eternal moment, “occupies no space,” for there is no “tension between past and future” in the present of divine activity. God does not suffer human consciousness’s “distension” of time, the “stretching in feeling and in sense-perception” from past memories to future expectations.<sup>43</sup> Even for human beings the present is privileged as the mode in which all perspectives on time are apprehended, that is, memory of past experiences, perception of present sensations, and expectation of future events are discerned only from the present. In a sense, then, the only time that is real is the present. In Augustine’s own language, “Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else. The present considering the past is memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation.”<sup>44</sup>

Augustine challenged the customary way of referring to three temporal tenses, for, in his opinion, past and future are only “real” as they are experienced in the present—in the one case as recollection and in the other as anticipation. In a move that had major ramifications in the history of philosophy, especially in the philosophical phenomenology formulated by Husserl, Augustine, following Plotinus, identified the soul as the place of time or, to be more specific, time is defined as a quantity in the soul (*distentio ipsius animi*).<sup>45</sup> For Augustine, therefore, human experience of time is not linked to external space, a mode of temporality that he ascribes, in a passage in *De Genesi ad litteram*, to the angels, incorporeal beings not situated in space who nevertheless perform acts in a temporal sequence. In that context, the angelic beings are positioned between the Creator, who is beyond all time and space, and corporeal beings, who act in time and space.<sup>46</sup> Even though human beings are corporeal bodies located in space, their temporal comportment nonetheless is non-spatial (and hence angelic) inasmuch as the locus of the measure of time is in the immaterial soul and not in external matter.

If we divest Augustine’s view of its theological language, we recognize it as

a philosophical foundation for Husserl's phenomenology of time. On this score, it is of interest to recall the words of Jean-François Lyotard, "From book XI of the *Confessions* Husserl reads off the phenomenology of the internal consciousness of time. In this book Augustine sketches from below a libidinal-ontological constitution of temporality."<sup>47</sup> Leaving aside the provocative characterization of time in the conclusion of Lyotard's remark, for our purpose what is most significant is the recognition of the impact of Augustine's demarcation of the soul as the site of temporal constitution on the phenomenological conception of time proffered by Husserl. Time, for Augustine, is indicative not of external objects but of the psychic mode through which these objects are represented in the human mind. The measurement of time, accordingly, applies to what endures in the consciousness of the present, not to the stream of past or future events.<sup>48</sup> That the soul is the locus of temporality is underscored by the emphasis Augustine placed on the narrativity of recalling the past as well as predicting the future. Although he did not articulate it fully, Augustine seemed to have grasped the intractable link between the tempo of time and the narrative structure of human consciousness exemplified in our inability to conceive of time in the absence of narrative or narrative in the absence of time. I will return to the more fully developed version of this theme in the thought of Paul Ricoeur later in this chapter. What is crucial to underscore here is that, for Augustine, even though the human soul is the ground of time, as it were, the character of temporality embraces a paradox that is, in the end, an inscrutable scandal to reason, a paradox inscribed most peculiarly in the incarnation of the eternal word in the body of Christ.

We may gauge Augustine's insight into the incomprehensibility and ineffability of time better if we consider his thoughts on encountering the proposition that "God is truth" (Jn 14:6) in the eighth book of *De Trinitate*. When the mind hears that truth, it sees the light of God (1 Jn 1:5), but this intellectual vision, occasioned by internal hearing,<sup>49</sup> is ephemeral, an instantaneous knowing of interminable truth that is subject to neither critical inquiry nor rational analysis.<sup>50</sup> Augustine instructs the reader: "Do not ask: 'What is Truth?' [Jn 18:38]. For at once the mists of bodily images and the clouds of phantasms will obstruct your view, and obscure the brightness which shone upon you at the first flash when I said 'Truth.' Remain in it, if you can, but if you cannot, you will fall back into those wonted early thoughts."<sup>51</sup> In the continuation, Augustine answers his own rhetorical question by noting the lamentable state of the human predicament, which prevents us from persisting in the luster of everlasting truth. The decisive point is the affinity in Augustine's thinking between the texture of time and the contour of God's truth: Just as one cannot ask about the proposition that God is truth, as this truth is grasped intuitively,

so one cannot ask about time, as the truth of time, manifest most pristinely in the *nunc stans*, the moment that becomes eternally in the ephemerality of being, is not rationally discernible.

Prima facie, the comparison might strike one as dubious, given the unequivocal distinction Augustine draws between the fixity of eternity and the mutability of time, the constancy of God and the variableness of creation,<sup>52</sup> a perspective that can be traced conceptually to Plato's exposition in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* that the One, the ultimate principle of metaphysical unity, does not come to be and is thus not a "tensed being," subject to the fluctuations of time.<sup>53</sup> Any attempt "to taste eternity" when one's heart is "still flitting about in the realm where things change and have a past and future" proves futile.<sup>54</sup> The logic underlying the binary opposition is transparent: A being that suffers generation and decay, the law of the temporal order, necessarily changes, but the simplicity of the divine being—characterized variously by Augustine as "that which is" (*id quod est*), "what truly is" (*id quod vere est*), "true being" (*vere esse*), "being itself" (*ipsum esse*)—cannot be subject to alteration and thus cannot be affected by ephemeral occurrences.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, every existent being must be either that which truly is or ontically dependent on that which truly is. Hence, the being that truly is comprehends everything in its own being; and since that being is simple and immutable, it must contain everything in an eternal present that precludes complexity or alteration. Therein lies the crucial difference between time and eternity, but also their point of contiguity: "In the eternal, nothing is transient, but the whole is present. But no time is wholly present."<sup>56</sup>

For Augustine, eternity is not infinite duration, for infinite duration, though infinite, is duration nonetheless and is consequently measurable; the eternal, by contrast, must be immeasurable, the absolutely timeless as opposed to the unendingly time-bound.<sup>57</sup> Augustine's analysis of time leads him to the conclusion that the moment itself, the only temporal tense we can affirm as real, is analogously without duration and hence incalculable. The present time, which can never be the time of presence, is the eternalized instant that "is not a distention to immeasurability but is rather its outside," in the manner that silence is outside, and thus still part of, the province of language.<sup>58</sup> Eternity, therefore, is the perpetual reappearance of what repeatedly disappears, a present that has no past or future, memory without memorable imprint.<sup>59</sup> Significantly, Augustine describes his intellectual vision of God in these very terms: "So in the flash of a trembling glance it attained to that which is. At that moment I saw your 'invisible nature understood through the things which are made' (Rom 1:20). But I did not possess the strength to keep my vision fixed."<sup>60</sup> In spite of the seemingly incontrovertible divergence between eternity and time on philo-

sophical grounds, in theological terms—that is, in the language of faith—the one informs us about the nature of the other; to see the light that is God, one beholds with the mind’s eye the flow of time in the flight of eternity. Echoing the Augustinian position many centuries later, Kierkegaard surmised that the “moment is really time’s atom, but not until eternity is posited, and this is why one may properly say that eternity is always in ἐν ᾧτόμῳ [the moment].”<sup>61</sup>

Augustine’s quandary, as Husserl correctly understood, is a matter of interpretation, not experience, that is, the difficulty of determining the nature of time lies not in suffering the events themselves—“we all know what time is”—but in giving an adequate “account of time-consciousness, to put objective time and subjective time-consciousness into the proper relationship and to reach an understanding of how temporal objectivity—and therefore any individual objectivity whatever—can become constituted in the subjective consciousness of time.”<sup>62</sup> In a similar vein, Wittgenstein observed that what is perplexing to the mind is not the phenomenal experience of temporal duration as such but discerning the “kind of statement” (*die Art der Aussagen*) appropriate to articulate it.<sup>63</sup> The reasonableness of the distinction notwithstanding, the telling of time—recounting events in an extending and purportedly continuous chain of remembrance and anticipation—is not easily separated from the experience of time. But what is it that we experience? Having thought through the labyrinth of logical puzzles connected to reflection on the nature of time, Augustine holds fast to the conclusion that it is inexact to speak of three tenses, since neither past nor future exists independently of the present; thus, if one is to accord meaning to the customary way of speaking about time, the three times will be interpreted as three aspects of the moment, “a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are these three aspects of time, and I do not see them anywhere else. The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation.”<sup>64</sup> For Augustine, therefore, the true reality of time is not adduced from the measure of bodies in motion but from the distension of mind, the vital force of being manifest in the successive spreading out of the soul between recollection and expectation,<sup>65</sup> a psychological process that mimics the foundational mystery of Christian faith, the incarnation of the eternal Word at a particular point in time, an historical event that summons an abiding-in-being-born rather than the passing-away that is characteristic of all things ephemeral.<sup>66</sup>

In some respects, Augustine anticipated the view of Henri Bergson for whom time is expressive of the creative impulse of being, the *élan vital*, the “pure duration,” which he contrasts sharply with measured time, casting the two in a series of antinomies—succession and simultaneity, alteration and homogeneity,

intensive magnitude and spatial representation. Science demonstrates unequivocally the human mind's capacity to measure time mathematically—though, in point of fact, real time is never so measured—a tendency to “empty” the “content” of time “into a space of four dimensions in which past, present and future are juxtaposed or superimposed for all eternity.” In the spatialization of time, “conscious duration and real motion” are replaced—Bergson's language is precise, “replaced” and not “translated”—by the “mathematical point that has been carried over from space to time.” What we call time is but a contrived artifice that “infuses living duration into a time dried up as a space.”<sup>67</sup> Real duration is experienced as an unfolding of time that cannot be measured unless it is spatially converted. This experience, moreover, is not subject to articulation, since language cannot affix meaning to the temporal flow without arresting its mobility.<sup>68</sup>

Going beyond the Bergsonian notion of time as inner duration in the direction of the more technical phenomenological analyses of Husserl, temporal fluidity is ascribed to the intentional structure of internal time-consciousness.<sup>69</sup> Husserl would have agreed with Bergson that reflection imposes the form of objective time upon an evanescent living present, but, in his mind, even the present has to be construed as a constitution of temporal intentionality striving for—though never finally achieving—a unitary object in the flux of manifold lived experiences.<sup>70</sup> The present is not an “impressionist point” lodged between past and future but rather a “concatenation of temporal phases” composed of retention and protention.<sup>71</sup> I shall revisit this aspect of Husserl's conception of time. Worth underscoring here is his acute sensibility that human consciousness displays a hybrid nature, as it both constitutes and is constituted by an ego-self<sup>72</sup> that is constricted within necessarily limited boundaries, embodied, as we are, in an encasing that comes-to-be and passes-away, that is, an embodiment that is of necessity mortal and thus evidently time-bound.<sup>73</sup> Is there anything more basic to human experience than the *temporal socialization* that gives scope and meaning to the span of individual and communal life?<sup>74</sup> “Doing time” is what we are primordially, not in the sense of chronological priority but in the manner of persisting in time as the evolving self (more process than substance) acutely attuned to bearing the destiny of being the being that is yet to become no more.<sup>75</sup>

## Internal Time-Consciousness and Temporal Coherence

One of phenomenology's most significant contributions to the history of philosophy is the privileged status accorded to time in determining the nature of

human consciousness—and, reciprocally, the privileged status attributed to human consciousness in determining the nature of time.<sup>76</sup> Merleau-Ponty hit the mark when he insisted that we should no longer think of time as a “datum of consciousness,” that it is more precise to say “consciousness unfolds or constitutes time.”<sup>77</sup> The phenomenological consideration of time has as its focus the “intersection of time and human experience, where time is human and human experience is temporal.”<sup>78</sup> This orientation is rooted in Plotinus, whose meditations on time rest on two presuppositions: first, an elaboration of the Platonic conjecture that time is the “moving image of eternity”<sup>79</sup> and, second, a rejection of Aristotle’s demarcation of time as the measure of the motion of bodies with respect to a “before” and an “after.”<sup>80</sup> For Plotinus, still indebted to Aristotle, determining the nature of time centers on understanding the relationship between movement and distance, a relationship that is tied to the matter of number. As he puts it, “Movement which extends over a distance and the distance covered by it are not the actual thing, time, but are in time. But if someone were to say that the distance of movement is time, not in the sense of the distance of movement itself, but that in relation to which the movement has its extension, as if it was running along with it, what this is has not been stated. For it is obvious that time is that in which movement has occurred.”<sup>81</sup>

The decisive feature of temporality is extension, “spreading out” (*diastasis*), and consequently the ability to compute the duration and passage of events is central to the human experience of time. “So the spreading out of life involves time; life’s continual progress involves continuity of time; and life which is past involves past time.”<sup>82</sup> Unlike Aristotle, however, Plotinus locates the primary site of extension in the psychic rather than somatic domain. Hence it is proper to speak of time as the “life of the soul in a movement of passage [*kinesei metabatike*] from one way of life to another.”<sup>83</sup> To be sure, Aristotle himself was aware that our sense of time’s passage is dependent on the mental experience of movement and change; thus, as he states explicitly, when one is conscious of no change, it seems as if no time has elapsed.<sup>84</sup> Centuries later, Hobbes reiterated the Aristotelian conception: “As a body leaves a phantasm of its magnitude in the mind, so also a moved body leaves a phantasm of its motion, namely, an idea of that body passing out of one space into another by continual succession. And this idea, or phantasm, is that, which (without receding much from the common opinion, or from Aristotle’s definition) I call Time.”<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to recall that Aristotle understood time more precisely as the measure of the movement of bodies, not souls, in space. Time is not simply an idea or phantasm; it is the idea or phantasm that corresponds to the measure of the motion of a body periodically moving and resting in space. By contrast, Plotinus spoke of time as the movement of a soul from one state to another.

In the fifth century, Proclus elaborated the Plotinian perspective on time in language worthy of our consideration. Echoing the view that time is the measure of things in motion, Proclus argued, “All that is measured by time either in its existence or in its activity is in the process of coming-to-be in that respect in which it is measured by time.”<sup>86</sup> As a necessary corollary, what moves perpetually cannot be measured by time, for it can never be said to come to be, and consequently it can have no temporal origin or end. What moves perpetually is imperishable, incomposite, and self-constituted,<sup>87</sup> transcending all that is measured by time.<sup>88</sup> Following an etymology proffered by Aristotle<sup>89</sup> and reiterated by Plotinus,<sup>90</sup> Proclus defines the “eternal” (*aionion*) as that which “always is” (*aei on*), in contrast to the temporal being that incessantly comes-to-be.<sup>91</sup> Applying his theory of causality based on a tripartite system of participation—the unparticipated (*amethekton*), participated (*metechomenon*), and participant (*metechon*)<sup>92</sup>—Proclus establishes two principles of being to articulate the contours of our temporal comportment in the world: “Prior to all things eternal there exists Eternity; and prior to all things temporal, Time. . . . For the eternal things are many, and likewise the temporal: all the former have an eternity by participation, all the latter a time which is parcelled out. But prior to these are the undivided Eternity and the one Time; these are Eternity of eternities and the Time of times, since they generate the participated terms.”<sup>93</sup>

Rather than positioning eternity and time in an antithetical binary, Proclus views both as “measures of life and movement in things”—eternity the measure of things interminable and time the measure of things terminable.<sup>94</sup> Concerning the latter, it is necessary to distinguish, moreover, between substances that have permanent duration and thus exemplify the character of “perpetual time” (*aidios chronos*) and others that have a temporary existence and therefore partake only of a “part of time” (*pote en merei chronou*). Insofar as transitory beings cannot be considered truly real, since true being is not subject to coming-to-be, it follows that time is the measure of that which perpetually comes-to-be, for in virtue of “its perpetuity it imitates the eternal nature.”<sup>95</sup> Two kinds of perpetuity are differentiated by Proclus: “the one eternal, the other in time; the one a perpetual steadfastness, the other a perpetual process; the one having its existence concentrated in a simultaneous whole, the other diffused and unfolded in temporal extension; the one entire in itself, the other composed of parts each of which exists separately in an order of succession.”<sup>96</sup> On the basis of this differentiation, three levels of being may be distinguished: the “impartible perpetuity” (*aidiotes ameristos*)<sup>97</sup> of eternity beyond time; the perpetuity of “intransitive intellection” (*ametabatos noesis*)<sup>98</sup> attributed to the intellect, the eternal image of eternity, time at rest; and the temporal, which is always in motion and hence is perpetual in a derivative sense.<sup>99</sup> Proclus speaks of three successive



entities: the “one being” (to *hen on hos*), the “monad of all being” (*monas tōn onton*), which, in virtue of its absolute oneness, is beyond attribution; “eternity” (*aion*), the dyad that “always is” (*o aei on*); and “the eternal” (*to aionion*), which participates in the conjunction of “always” and “existence” but not with the same degree of durability as in the case of eternity.<sup>100</sup> In contrast to the “friends of Plato,” that is, Plotinus and other Neoplatonists, who considered time an “obscure notion” linked to the motion of the soul that is measurable,<sup>101</sup> Proclus insists that time’s essence is more divine than that of the soul.<sup>102</sup> Certainly, he accepts the proposition that if something partakes of soul, it partakes of time; but for him the converse is not true, as there are beings without soul that partake of time, and thus one must conclude that “time is beyond the soul” (*chronon epekeina psychēs*).<sup>103</sup> Time is engendered from the desire of the Intellect, identified as the Platonic demiurge, to overflow and to fill all things,<sup>104</sup> and in this sense it is the imitation of eternity, though it is actualized in the physical world by the principle of self-motion enacted in the Soul. The nature of time appropriate to the Intellect is imparticipable (*amethektos chronos*), that is, the monadic, and consequently motionless, time, for what is truly one is incomposite and hence cannot be subject to change, whereas temporal extension, the ceaseless motion that emulates the steadfastness of eternity, is located in the soul. As Proclus puts it, “Every intra-mundane soul, having movement and exercising a temporal activity, will have a periodic motion, and also cyclic reinstatements (since in the case of things perpetual every period ends in a reinstatement of the original condition).”<sup>105</sup> Psychic motion exhibits the character of perpetuity, which is associated in Hellenic thought with the rotation of a sphere, considered to be the most perfect form of movement. E. R. Dodds has cogently outlined the Aristotelian principles underlying the Proclean theorem: “The physical universe is finite save in the sense that finite bodies are potentially divisible *ad infinitum*. . . . And movement in a finite space can continue through an infinite time only by returning periodically to its starting-point. Hence the only movement which is both continuous and perpetual is a circular movement, like that of the heavenly bodies.”<sup>106</sup> For Proclus, the way of the soul mirrors the way of the heavenly bodies, and thus, as he further adduces, “every psychic period is measured by time”; the soul is characterized by circular motion, continuous and perpetual, and it is in this sense that time is the image of eternity. The way of the soul, like the spiritual power (*dunamis*) of being more generally, undergoes procession and reversion in relation to its source.<sup>107</sup> In his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*, Proclus reiterates this point by noting that what is nonreceptive to time applies to the One and not the Soul, “for all soul partakes in time and uses periods measured by time. The One, indeed, is superior to Soul because all Soul partakes in time, and the One will be shown now not to partake in time; but Intellect

also is different from Soul for the same reasons, being pure from all temporal activity, so that by means of these distinctions we are able to discern and recognise the three ruling hypostases.”<sup>108</sup>

Time is understood most elementally as the measure of the motion of the soul’s journey, a narratological conception that Reiner Schürman traces to the visionary poem of Parmenides, a philosophic unveiling of truth, or perhaps more accurately, an unveiling of the unveiling, a path that “integrates concealing into unconcealing,” the one way of “concealment/unconcealment, for which the word *alétheia* suggests our wresting ourselves away from contrary representations and the conquest of a unitary point of view.”<sup>109</sup> The experience of time is intimately coupled with the computation of the mythic account of the psychic voyage,<sup>110</sup> the verbal gesticulation that reveals the soul’s passing through the gates of night and day to cross the threshold from the “way of seeming” to the “way of truth,” the flight of mind from transient objects of sense (*aisthetā*) to eternal objects of contemplation (*noeton*).<sup>111</sup> There is much to say about Parmenides and his impact on the history of Western philosophy, but most relevant here is the point that Plotinus’s demarcation of soul as the locus for the measure of time may be viewed as an embellishment of the Parmenidean conception of originary time.<sup>112</sup> Needless to say, there are fundamental differences; most significantly, for Plotinus and like-minded Neoplatonists, time applies not only to individual souls but also, indeed primarily, to the “first soul,” that is, the world soul of the Platonic tradition.<sup>113</sup> In a universe thought to be closed, limitless motion—the quality experienced in the flow of time—can express itself in the recurrent coming-to-be and passing-away of the soul, the perpetual return whither it must always have never been. The most perfect mode of temporal activity, therefore, the place where time and eternity intersect, where eternity is eternally temporal and time temporally eternal, is assigned to the world soul. Proclus, accordingly, asserts that “the soul with which temporal measurement begins has the whole of time for measure.”<sup>114</sup>

This account of the interiorization of the temporal unquestionably influenced Augustine’s definition of time as a distension of the mind (*distentio animi*),<sup>115</sup> a position that approximates the present-day emphasis on the locus of temporality in internal time-consciousness.<sup>116</sup> In modern philosophical discourse, Kant established the foundation for the phenomenological viewpoint, or what has been felicitously called the “reflexive temporalization of time,”<sup>117</sup> by insisting on the “transcendental ideality” of the temporal sensibility.<sup>118</sup> To be more precise, Kant identified both space and time as “pure forms of sensible intuition,” the “two sources of cognition” that impart the necessary conditions for the synthetic knowledge that shapes all human experience. Yet he accorded a privileged status to time, for space is “limited as an *a priori* condition merely to outer intu-

itions,” whereas time, being linked to the inner sense, is the “*a priori* formal condition of all appearances in general.”<sup>119</sup> The logic behind Kant’s assessment is clear enough: All mental representations, even if they correspond to external objects, are determinations of the mind and thus belong to the inner intuition, which cannot be understood except through the modalities of time; we cannot think of consciousness in the absence of time, nor time in the absence of consciousness.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, for Kant, we cannot account for human experience without presuming the unity of self-consciousness—the hypothetical construct of *transcendental apperception*—the “I think” that accompanies all representations and thereby holds manifold sensory data together in time.<sup>121</sup> “I am an object of inner sense and all time is merely the form of inner sense. . . . For it really says no more than that in the whole time in which I am conscious of myself, I am conscious of this time as belonging to the unity of my Self, and it is all the same whether I say that this whole time is in Me, as an individual unity, or that I am to be found with numerical identity, in all of this time.”<sup>122</sup> Time, therefore, is given epistemological preference over space as the form of intuition that provides the structure of the phenomenal datum as such: time cannot be removed from appearances without there ceasing to be appearances.<sup>123</sup> John R. Searle captures the point succinctly: “Since Kant we have been aware of an asymmetry in the way that consciousness relates to space and to time. Although we experience objects and events as both spatially extended and of temporal duration, our consciousness itself is not experienced as spatial, though it is experienced as temporally extended. Indeed, the spatial metaphors for describing time seem almost inevitable for consciousness as well, as when we speak for example of the ‘stream of consciousness.’”<sup>124</sup> The privileging of time would prove to have a profound impact on subsequent philosophical and scientific speculations on the nature of being.<sup>125</sup>

Husserl elaborated on the Kantian position in a 1905 lecture—published in 1966 as volume 10 in the *Husserliana* series with the title *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1893–1917)—on his signature notion of the internal time-consciousness (*inneren Zeitbewußtseins*), which deals, more specifically, with the “double intentionality of retention and the constitution of the flow of consciousness.” “This prephenomenal, preimmanent temporality becomes constituted intentionally as the form of the time-constituting consciousness and in it itself. The flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only exists but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a self-appearance of the flow necessarily exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing.”<sup>126</sup> In the flow of consciousness, which cannot be isolated from consciousness of the flow, constituting and constituted coincide.<sup>127</sup> Mathematical time, like geometric space, is an idealized abstraction, a

logical substructure constructed and imposed on the concrete forms of the intuitive life-world (*Lebenswelt*), the world of experience (*Erfahrungswelt*), revealed from the surrounding precategorical world (*Umwelt*).<sup>128</sup> “Immanent time” thus “becomes objectivated into a time of objects constituted in the immanent appearances . . . in the multiplicity of adumbrations of the sensation-contents understood as unities belonging to phenomenological time.”<sup>129</sup> In the second of his *Cartesianische Meditationen* (written in 1929 but first published in French translation in 1933), Husserl offered a slightly different account of the matter:

The all-embracing cogitatum <of reflection> is the all-embracing life itself, with its openly endless unity and wholeness. . . . The *fundamental form* of this universal synthesis, the form that makes all other syntheses of consciousness possible, is the all-embracing *consciousness of internal time*. The correlate of this consciousness is immanent temporality itself, in conformity with which all the life-processes belonging to the ego that can ever be found reflectively must present themselves as temporally ordered, temporally beginning and ending, simultaneous or successive, within the constant infinite horizon: immanent time. The distinction between <internal> time itself and the consciousness of <internal> time can be expressed also as that between the subjective process in internal time, or the temporal form of this process, and the *modes of its temporal appearance*, as the corresponding “multiplicities.” As these modes of appearance, which make up the consciousness of internal time, are themselves “intensive components of conscious life” [*“intentionale Erlebnisse”*] and must in turn be given in reflection as temporalities, we encounter here a paradoxical fundamental property of conscious life, which seems thus to be infected with an infinite regress.<sup>130</sup>

The “consciousness of internal time” is made up of “intensive components of conscious life,” but these intensive components themselves can only be “given in reflection as temporalities.” The paradox is expressed in slightly different terms in Husserl’s depiction of the intentional constitution of the “empirical ego” by the “phenomenological ego” in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900–1901):

When I say “cohered continuously with it in unity,” I refer to the unity of the concrete phenomenological whole, whose parts are either abstract *aspects* . . . or pieces from whose nature spring forms of coexistent unity, . . . These “unities of coexistence” pass continuously into one another from one moment to the next, composing a unity of change, of the stream of consciousness, which in turn demands the continuous persistence, or no continuous change, of at least one aspect essential for its total unity, and so inseparable from it as a whole. This part is played by the presentative form of time which is immanent in the stream of consciousness, which later appears as a unity in time (not in the time of the world of things, but

in the time which appears together with the stream of consciousness itself, and in which the stream flows). Each instant of time is given in a continuous projective series (so-to-speak) “time-sensations”; in each actual phase of the stream of consciousness the whole time-horizon of the stream is presented, and it thereby possesses a form overreaching all its contents, which remains the same form continuously, though its content steadily alters. This accordingly forms the phenomenological content of the ego, of the empirical ego in the sense of the psychic subject. Phenomenological reduction yields the really self-enclosed, temporally growing unity of the stream of experience.<sup>131</sup>

The “phenomenological whole” is located in the “unities of coexistence,” which cohere to form the stream of consciousness. The oneness experienced therein is “unity of change,” that is, unity that emerges from the constancy of change, the novelty of each instant, recurring enduringly as the present having passed in the immediate presence of what has never been.<sup>132</sup> For Husserl, the “presentative form of time” is the intentional structure that provides the temporal synthesis required for one to become aware of objects persisting through time.<sup>133</sup> The very possibility of comprehending a “temporal object” (*Zeitobjekt*), therefore, is dependent on a “temporalizing” (*zeitigend*) of the original flow (*Fluß*) of prereflective consciousness, which constitutes the external objectivity displayed in the duration of things that appear as well as the internal subjectivity by which the flow of consciousness itself endures.<sup>134</sup> In the final analysis, Husserl’s phenomenological method of the epoché—the suspension of judgment with regard to the actuality or nonactuality of the contents of consciousness—seeks to disclose world and ego without being ensnared in the traditional binary of objectivity and subjectivity. To the extent that the “world” is alive as a datum of consciousness, it coheres immanently as an intentional form of subjectivity in the world; analogously, to the extent that the “subject” is constituted by the structure of intentionality, it inheres transcendently as a constructed object of the world in subjectivity.<sup>135</sup>

In *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* (composed from 1934 to 1937 though not published until 1954), Husserl deals with the juxtaposition of “subjectivity in the world as object” and the “conscious subject for the world” under the rubric “paradox of human subjectivity: being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world.”<sup>136</sup> Acknowledging that as a consequence of the phenomenological reduction “everything objective is transformed into something subjective,” Husserl is quick to point out that “this cannot be meant in such a way that through this method the existing world and the human world-representation are set over against each other and that, on the

ground of the world, taken for granted as actually existing, we inquire into the subjective, i.e., into the psychic occurrences in men through which they gain experience of the world, everyday or scientific opinions about the world, their particular sensible and conceptual ‘world-pictures.’” Notwithstanding the attempt to distance his own perspective from an idealistic reduction of all beings to mental constructs, Husserl is not able to free himself entirely from the grip of this philosophic orientation. The nucleus of Husserl’s transcendental idealism is expressed in his remark that “in the pure attitude focused upon correlations, created by the epoché, the world, the objective, becomes itself something subjective.”<sup>137</sup>

Within the brackets of the suspension, therefore, the world is transformed into a “transcendental phenomenon,” which “is from the start taken only as a correlate of the subjective appearances, views, subjective acts and capacities through which it constantly has, and ever attains anew, its changeable [but] unitary sense. . . . The epoché, in giving us the attitude *above* the subject-object correlation which belongs to the world and thus the attitude of focus upon the transcendental subject-object correlation, leads us to recognize, in self-reflection, that the world exists for us, that is, our world in its being and being-such, takes its ontic meaning entirely from our intentional life through a priori types of accomplishments that can be exhibited rather than argumentatively constructed or conceived through mythical thinking.”<sup>138</sup> But it is here that the epistemological difficulty emerges, as we confront a seemingly insoluble paradox: on the one hand, human consciousness assumes the task of a “world-constituting subjectivity,” yet, on the other, it is “incorporated in the world itself.”<sup>139</sup> Simply put, how can the self be the agent of the construction of the world when it is a component of the world so constructed?

Husserl’s resolution of the paradox depends on discerning that notions of subjective identity such as “soul” or “psychic life” belong to the “phenomena” of the world as a constituted pole of the transcendental subject-object correlation, and, consequently, the “I” that is attained in the epoché—a modality of consciousness that precedes the dyadic division precipitated by the structure of intentionality—is called “I” only by equivocation.<sup>140</sup> “The epoché creates a unique sort of philosophical solitude which is the fundamental methodical requirement for a truly radical philosophy. In this solitude I am not a single individual who has somehow willfully cut himself off from the society of mankind. . . . All of mankind, and the whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns, has become a phenomenon within my epoché; and so has the privilege of I-the-man among other men.”<sup>141</sup> The “I” ascertained within the phenomenological bracket exhibits “uniqueness and personal indeclinability” (the *always singular* “I”) but it is at the same time a “privileged member” of

the “transcendental intersubjectivity” (one “I” among others), the community of “cosubjects” constituting the world as “world for all.” Husserl elucidates the matter by examining the process of “self-temporalization” through the prism of the “transcendental exposition of recollection”:

Thus the immediate “I” performs an accomplishment through which it constitutes a variational mode of itself as existing (in the mode of having passed). Starting from this we can trace how the immediate “I,” flowingly-statically present, constitutes itself in self-temporalization as enduring through “its” pasts. In the same way, the immediate “I,” already enduring in the enduring primordial sphere, constitutes in itself another as other. Self-temporalization through derepresentation [*Ent-Gegenwärtigung*], so to speak (through recollection), has its analogue in my self-alienation [*Ent-Fremdung*] (empathy as a derepresentation of a higher level—derepresentation of my primal presence [*Urpräsenz*] into a merely presentified [*vergegenwärtigte*] primal presence).<sup>142</sup>

Husserl describes the “I” of the immediate presence of the present, which is identified as the time of the “enduring primordial sphere,” in the evocative elocution “flowingly-statically present,” a turn of phrase meant to traverse the polarities of stasis and motion, substance and process, thing and event. Inasmuch as the “I” of the present constitutes itself as enduring through its past, self-temporalization is said to occur through “derepresentation,” that is, the recollection in the immediate presence of what is no longer present, the absent presence—presently absent, the present absence—absently present. In the same manner, Husserl speaks of “self-alienation” to account for the discernment of the other in the constitution of self. The “derepresentation” of one’s “primal presence” into a “merely presentified primal presence” marks the shift from the singular “I” to the communal “I” of transcendental intersubjectivity, a transformation that makes possible the eidetic correlation of subject-object in the noetic/noematic field of consciousness before the distinction of subject and object, and the presumed constitution of the latter as an expression of the former.

Time, in its phenomenological comportment as immanent temporality, serves as the bridge that links the two aspects of the *Lebenswelt*, the egoic stratum of intentionality and the hyletic stratum of the universe, without reducing one to the other—the metaphor of the bridge is employed to preserve the differences of what are joined together—and thereby lapsing into a contrived choice between realism and idealism. The possibility of representation is dependent on the living presence of the time of the present, but this presence embraces the past as a presence no longer present, a presence retained as the absence recollected in the present time projected into the future. The “continuous persis-

tence” of internal time-consciousness is thus glossed as “continuous change,” for only change persists in time. By the same token, in and through the streaming of time the self comes to be threaded together, as it were, into a semblance of unified identity by the “intensive components of conscious life.”<sup>143</sup>

In *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1913), Husserl characterized “phenomenological” time, in contrast to “objective” or “cosmic” time, as a “unitary form of all experiences within a single stream of experience (that of one pure Ego).”<sup>144</sup> Temporality, we are told, “indicates not only something that belongs in a general way to every single experience, but a necessary form binding experiences with experiences.”<sup>145</sup> In the domain of internal time-consciousness, change is invariable, the flux binding. As Husserl says in the second book of the *Ideen*, which focuses on the phenomenology of constitution (a treatise he kept revising until 1928 that was published for the first time posthumously in 1952 by the Husserl-Archives):

All the unities we have discussed are unities in reference to a pure Ego, whose stream of consciousness they belong to and as whose “possessions” they are constituted. And the stream of consciousness, as a totality, builds itself up as a phenomenal unity. All my lived experiences, the successive and the coexisting, on which I focus, have the unity of a flux of time. That which belongs immanently to a flux of time possesses a perceivable, adequately graspable, unity. The unity of immanence is the unity of a constant flux, in the nexus of which all immanent duration and change are constituted.<sup>146</sup>

The “unity of immanence” arises not through stringing together a series of discrete moments but through the co/herence of successive and coexisting lived experiences in consciousness, the time-flow, which is always consciousness of the present, even though that present is compresently past and future. In thinking the presence of the present, we bring to mind the absence of past and future as the boundaries by which the present is formed.<sup>147</sup> This idea, and particularly the focus on the concept of boundary or limit (*die Grenze*) in assessing the intentional character of temporal continuity, was expressed by Husserl’s teacher, Franz Brentano.<sup>148</sup> Describing the nature of temporal relations in a discourse dictated relatively late in his life (February 22, 1915), he remarked: “It seems certain that we can never think of anything without thinking of something as present, that is to say, however, as on a boundary line which exists as the connecting point of an otherwise non-existent continuum or as providing its beginning or its end.”<sup>149</sup> Our intuition of time, according to Brentano, is linked exclusively to the moment,<sup>150</sup> the point of the present that divides the continuum into potentially limitless parts that converge transcendently in the bound-



ary of boundless temporal determinations but in so doing allows a sense of continuity between what has come before and what will come after.<sup>151</sup> The presumption of continuity is necessary to account for the fact that intended objects of human experience appear in consciousness under the guise of the three temporal modes of presentation (*Modi des Vorstellens*): past, present, and future.<sup>152</sup>

Now it is true that everything which is in time is present, existing now. But nevertheless it is not something existing in isolation in and of itself. It is rather continuing, or ending or beginning. It cannot exist without a *relation of continuity* [*Kontinualrelation*] to what is earlier or later and it is thereby connected with things which are separated from it, some by a greater and some by a lesser interval. . . . Having a finite far-ranging connection of this sort with other things is part of the concept of the present. Without this relational character it could not be conceived nor could it ever be an element of something with temporal duration and development.<sup>153</sup>

According to Brentano, the temporal modes of presentation are acquired in an “original” experience of association, an inner perception that he calls *proter-aesthesia*, described in a brief excursus (dictated in 1914) on the “temporally continuous” nature of the “real”—a term that alludes to Brentano’s reism, the doctrine that the object of thought must be considered a “real thing” (*Reales*) whether it is presented in the mind directly (*in recto*) or obliquely (*in obliquo*)<sup>154</sup>—as the “boundary-sensation which experiences the primary object as present” but also as “continuously manifold.”<sup>155</sup> On the one hand, temporal experience is of necessity constricted to a present that is isolated from past and future, but, on the other hand, the point of the present “cannot be set apart for itself because it is a mere boundary.” Brentano draws the logical conclusion: “So also perceiving cannot possibly exist for itself in a single isolated point in time so as to be reduced to a temporally punctual perceiving. . . . For after all, everything else that is temporal exists only in a point without existing isolated in this point—in virtue of its connection in infinitesimal transition with what is past or future.” The “temporal point,” therefore, can be grasped “without our grasping any preceding or following stretch of time, in spite of the fact that the temporal point itself cannot be without that which precedes or follows.” The “boundary-character” of the present “allows us to recognise its belonging to something that it bounds. Yet this boundary-character requires no specific magnitude of extension; it does not even require the existence of any specific second point in time, however close this might be for the first. And thus the grasping will perfectly well be capable of being limited to what is in the present; indeed it must be so limited already for the sake of its evidence, as also because of the infinite complication which would otherwise ensue.”<sup>156</sup>

In the terms Husserl used in the passage cited earlier, the stream, though ever-evolving, can be conceived as a “totality,” a “phenomenal unity,” a “unity of constant flux, in the nexus of which all immanent duration and change are constituted.” The coherence—what Husserl refers to as *temporal determination*, the duration of a thing as temporally extended<sup>157</sup>—embraces a threefold noetic structure that can be accounted for psychologically and ontically. That is, Husserl speaks of three primary types of intentional experience, retention, imagination, and expectation, that parallel the division of time into past, present, and future.<sup>158</sup> In the structure of ego the three converge, as imagination cannot function without retention or retention without expectation. Analogously, when we speak of consciousness, it is always consciousness of the present, but a present informed by the confluence of three temporalities; indeed, what presents itself as the flowing now-point is illumined from the shadow of what has been and springs forth from the ground of what shall be. “In each primal phase that originally constitutes the immanent content we have retentions of the preceding phases and protentions of the coming phases of precisely this content. . . . These ‘determinate’ retentions and protentions have an obscure horizon; in flowing away, they turn into indeterminate retentions and protentions related to the past and future course of the stream. It is through the indeterminate retentions and protentions that the actually present content is inserted into the unity of the stream.”<sup>159</sup> From this perspective it is correct to say that, for Husserl, the transcendental constitution of objective time and the consciousness of temporal immanence are intentional acts of human imagination.<sup>160</sup>

### Making-Present/Temporal Emplacement

In *La Voix et le Phénomène* (1967), Derrida remarked that, for Husserl, the “now,” or the “punctuality of the instant,” is affirmed as the “nondisplaceable center,” “eye,” and “living core” of temporality.<sup>161</sup> Derrida correctly noted that the now-point (*nunc stans*) so conceived is a “spatial or mechanical metaphor” related to the “metaphysical concept” of “self-presence,” but he has not done justice to the complexity of Husserl’s conception of the present (and thus of temporality more generally) as consisting of intermonadic moments linked in a continuum of retentions and protentions that makes up our experience of duration, an expanding chain extending to and beyond the “horizon of futurity.” In other words, Husserl’s *nunc stans* is far from being a mechanical or spatial metaphor. On the contrary, in a manner that actually anticipates Derrida’s critique of understanding presence in terms of an adequately given present, in Husserl’s view the living now is not a fixed point with discrete boundaries.<sup>162</sup> “It is evident that each time-point has its before and after, and that the points and extended sections that

are before cannot be compressed in the fashion of an approach to a mathematical limit, such as the limit of intensity. . . . A now is always and essentially a border-point of an extent of time.”<sup>163</sup> Acknowledging that the claim that the “flow of consciousness” (*der Fluß des Bewußtseins*) is a “succession” (*Aufeinanderfolge*) depends on fulfilling the conditions for “the possibility of the consciousness of succession” (*der Möglichkeit des Bewußtseins der Folge*), Husserl nevertheless insists that it is incorrect to speak of ultimate consciousness as temporal, let alone to posit that the present moment should be considered a time-object (*Zeitobjekt*) that persists in consciousness. In his own unambiguous language:

*The flow of the modes of consciousness is not a process; the consciousness of the now is not itself now [Der Fluß der Bewußtseinsmodi ist kein Vorgang, das Jetzt-Bewußtsein ist nicht selbst jetzt]. The retention that exists “together” with the consciousness of the now is not “now,” is not simultaneous with the now, and it would make no sense to say that it is. . . . Memory [Erinnerung] is an expression that always and only refers to a constituted temporal object. Retention, on the other hand, is an expression used to designate the intentional relation (a fundamentally different relation) of phase of consciousness to phase of consciousness; and in this case the phases of consciousness and continuities of consciousness must not be regarded as temporal objects themselves.*<sup>164</sup>

The very structures necessary to the constitution of time-consciousness are “nontemporal, that is to say, nothing in immanent time.”<sup>165</sup> Husserl’s conception of the flow of experience (*Erlebnisstrom*), moreover, presupposes *temporal irreversibility*,<sup>166</sup> that is, each moment displays the character of a monad that cannot be repeated.<sup>167</sup> Hence, we cannot say of the past that it returns; reminiscence of the past is predicated precisely on its no longer being present. The irreversible character of time precludes the possibility of reverting to the past in the present or of repeating the present in the future, but these very impossibilities facilitate the re/presentation of past and future in the present. Enzo Paci sagaciously summarized the “temporal dialectic” implicit in Husserl’s thought: “Since everything originates in present life, in this dialectic the *origin as past*, in passing from the *origin of the present*, becomes the *origin as future*, and therefore *telos*. . . . We shall describe the fundamental operation of the outlined dialectic as that operation whereby, in the present, the past reverts into the future.”<sup>168</sup> We would do better, then, to conceive of the present time as a field that is always in the making through retention of what has passed and protention of what is coming.<sup>169</sup> “The further an experience proceeds,” wrote Husserl, “the more it inherently supports more differentiated protentions, ‘the style of the past becomes projected into the future.’ . . . The course of the retentive branches (or the pres-

ent intentional content of the retentional branch) influences protention, determining its content, and prescribes its sense.”<sup>170</sup>

The field of time is unified in the protentional relation between past and future, the meeting of our expectations in the fulfillment of what has already been what is yet to come. In Husserl’s words, “Every retentional momentary continuity contains a protention directed to the following [retained stretch] and, in continuous mediation, is directed to those [retained stretches] that follow. Genetically put: when, again and again, continually new core data appear, the old do not just sink down retentionally; rather a protentional consciousness ‘grows,’ which advances towards the new primary data and, terminating with them, fulfills itself.”<sup>171</sup> As Pierre Keller correctly observed, “Husserl’s theory of time-consciousness not only attempts to mediate between the alternatives of thinking of temporal experience as consisting of intervals or of moments. It also combines an account of temporal experience, and indeed of time itself, as a temporal becoming of successively real past, present, and future experiences with an account of time that bases the structure of time in tenseless relations between events.”<sup>172</sup> The flux of consciousness, which cannot be known except through the consciousness of flux, exemplifies a unity of retentional, impressional, and protentional activities, which correspond to three phases of time.<sup>173</sup> The inherently temporal comportment of consciousness renders the constitutive process of imagining time genetic in its composition.<sup>174</sup>

The province of music supplies a metaphor suitable to capture the dual intentionality of the stream of consciousness and its correlation with the movement of time.<sup>175</sup> Thus, in his 1905 lectures on the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness, which were compiled and published by Heidegger, his former student,<sup>176</sup> in 1928, Husserl wrote:

When we speak of the analysis of time-consciousness, of the temporal character of objects of perception, memory, and expectation, it may seem, to be sure, as if we assume the Objective flow of time, and then really study only the subjective conditions of the possibility of an intuition of time and a true knowledge of time. What we accept, however, is not the existence of a world-time, the existence of a concrete duration, and the like, but time and duration appearing as such. . . . To be sure, we also assume an existing time; this, however, is not the time of the world of experience but the *immanent* time of the flow of consciousness. The evidence that consciousness of a tonal process, a melody, exhibits a succession even as I hear it is such as to make every doubt or denial appear senseless.<sup>177</sup>

The flow of internal time-consciousness is described as a “tonal process,” for the arrangement of notes in a melody provides an apt image to portray the suc-

cession of moments that cohere as a continuous stream, each moment wedged between past anticipation and future retention, a present understood as the expectation that lingers in the lingering of expectation. Identity is spun from the web of momentous experiences, that is, experiences lived in and of the moment, enduring in their passing. “I-am . . . is as ‘I am’ in the living streaming, and this is a streaming having present and the streaming present itself.” Consciousness of self, expressed by the egological utterance par excellence, “I am,” is constituted by/in the course of immanent time, and thus it is described metaphorically in the threefold manner, “living stream,” “streaming having present,” and “streaming present itself.” The stream of time interminably streams forth in consciousness, or more precisely, the stream of time that interminably streams forth is consciousness. Making-present (*Gegenwärtigen*), presenting (*Präsentieren*), *appresence*, that is, the possibility of “bringing the object, in continuous original perceptions, to primal presence,” is the temporalizing (*Zeitigung*) that lies at the base of intentional consciousness.<sup>178</sup>

Inner-time is thus privileged phenomenologically, for through it the world-structure in both its spatial and temporal dimensions is constituted. Consider, for example, the distinction between “immanent time” and “objective time” offered by Husserl in his account of the temporalization of the psychic:

Pure consciousness is a genuine temporal field, a field of “phenomenological” time. This must not be confused with “Objective” time, which is constituted, along with nature, by consciousness. It is through the psychic apprehension that the conscious lived experiences obtain the sense of psychophysical states and consequently their insertion into Objective time, the form of Objective nature; to localization corresponds temporalization. Since phenomenological time, immanent in the stream of consciousness, is a uni-dimensional “constant” manifold of properties that are exactly analogous to the properties of the time which *presents* itself (“appears”) in the lived experiences of the perception of something physical and “corresponds” to the latter point for point, and since in this appearing time in the ultimate Objectivation the “absolute” world-time manifests itself, so the temporalization of the time of consciousness is an especially deep one, insofar as the latter perfectly coincides, in a certain way, with absolute time.<sup>179</sup>

In contrast to the view (traceable to Aristotle) that time is to be measured as a series of isolated, interchangeable now-points, Husserlian phenomenology (in consonance with the philosophy of William James)<sup>180</sup> envisions the consciousness of time as a stream whose flow “is not a mere ‘one after the other,’ but rather a ‘one out of the other,’ a becoming according to laws of a necessary sequence.”<sup>181</sup> For Husserl, the unique character of temporality lies in the inten-

tional act of making-present, appresenting, re/presenting the present. However, the present, punctilious though it may seem, cannot present itself without the continuum that extends from past to future. Memory and anticipation are necessary structural elements of the stream of consciousness, for representation is not possible without retrospection and expectation. "In the impressional momentary field," wrote Husserl, "we have the unities that crystallize and achieve prominence through particular simultaneous mergings, those [unities] that in the streaming, between the streaming [up] and streaming away, concretely continue to endure as the duration continually 'builds up' or constitutes impressional (perceptual) unities. The constitution of a unity signifies the constitution of a persisting present in the streaming."<sup>182</sup> Time as it appears, that is, the temporal experience of temporality, embraces the paradox that only that which endures changes and only that which changes endures. "The tone and every time-point in the unity of the enduring tone certainly does have its absolutely fixed position in 'objective' (even if immanent) time. Time is fixed, and yet time flows. In the flow of time, in the continuous sinking down into the past, a nonflowing, absolutely fixed, identical, objective time becomes constituted."<sup>183</sup> I note, parenthetically, that a similar view was expressed by Hermann Weyl, a substantially less-known German phenomenologist whose work was familiar to Husserl, with whom he exchanged some letters.<sup>184</sup> Distinguishing between time as the "original form of the stream of consciousness" and space as the "form of material reality," Weyl noted that the "contents of consciousness present themselves not as merely being . . . but as *being-now*, filling the form of the enduring now with a continually changing content. When in reflection we tear ourselves out of the stream and posit its content as an object over against us, the stream becomes for us a temporal flow whose individual phases are related to one another according to the relation *earlier* and *later*."<sup>185</sup>

At this juncture, let me cite Husserl's own summation of the lecture on the "exclusion of objective time" as a way of presenting his notion of internal time-consciousness succinctly: "Phenomenologically speaking, Objectivity is not even constituted through 'primary' content but through characters of apprehension and the regularities which pertain to the essence of these characters. It is precisely the business of the phenomenology of cognition to grasp this fully and to make it completely intelligible."<sup>186</sup> As Husserl put it in a manuscript entry dated March 1931 from what is known as the C-series: the "proto-condition" for the sense of being attributed to everything that exists is the "I-am," that is, the "living streaming" of the transcendental ego, a "streaming having-present" that is the "streaming present itself." This wakeful "I" is not an abstract subject but a "living actuality" that perforce includes the "all-encompassing world-structure." The "concrete being of the I . . . is living temporalization with the I-pole . . . and

what is proper to it at that level is inseparably one with that which is first existent for it primarily, with the temporalized as such, or with the living temporalization in which the temporalized is unitarily constituted.” The “proto-livingness” is thus a “continual temporalization . . . by which all and everything that is this-moment present [*das aktuelle Gegenwärtige*] for me, is; but that must be correctly understood and delimited. The world that is there for me, as in the way it holds for me now, is in the now, in a temporalization that belongs to the living present.”<sup>187</sup>

The primary task of the phenomenological method is to elucidate the manner in which objects of experience are continually constituted by characters of apprehension, ideal essences that inhere in the conscious I-pole. Making-present, appresenting, relates precisely to the cognitive ability of human consciousness to instantiate atemporal ideals through the temporal variance of intentional acts. Husserl identified this as the psychic apprehension—perhaps “attunement” would be the better word—of internal time that makes possible the constitution of objective time.<sup>188</sup> The latter is correlated with localization in space, the former with temporalization in consciousness. It follows (contra some interpreters of Husserl, including Derrida to whom I refer above) that spatiality assumes a secondary and derivative status vis-à-vis temporality.<sup>189</sup> Husserl’s view is reminiscent of the stance taken by Schelling—and reaffirmed by the early Heidegger, as will be seen shortly. Schelling, in dialogue with Kant,<sup>190</sup> affirms that space and time are the “necessary conditions for all intuition,” one being imperceptible without the other. Although space and time cannot be severed phenomenally—space without time would be extension without limitation and time without space would be limitation without extension—logically, it is possible to conceive of limitation without extension, but not the reverse, and hence priority is bestowed on time as determinative of the borders and contours of space,<sup>191</sup> a position that accords with Kant’s designation of time, not space, as the “universal pure intuition” that is the “a priori formal condition of all appearances.”<sup>192</sup>

In *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1938), Husserl affirms a comparable position, albeit in a different terminological and conceptual register. Two kinds of horizon can be distinguished for everything given in experience, a first level, which is the “internal horizon,” and the second level, which is “an infinite, open, external horizon of objects cogiven . . . all real things which at any given time are anticipated together or cogiven only in the background as an external horizon are known as real objects . . . from the world, are known as existing within the one spatiotemporal horizon.”<sup>193</sup> The hyphenated demarcation of the external horizon as “spatiotemporal” underscores Husserl’s discernment that the two cannot be separated in lived experience. As Husserl puts it in another passage from this

work, “The world, every possible world, is the universe of realities, among which we count all objects individualized in spatiotemporality, as the form of the world, by their spatiotemporal localization.”<sup>194</sup> The essential inseparability of the spatial and temporal notwithstanding, Husserl seems to privilege the latter in its tripartite intentionality as the phenomenological ground of the intentional structure of human consciousness: “In this unique world, everything sensuous that I now originally perceive, everything that I have perceived and which I can now remember or about which others can now remember or about which others can report to me as what they have perceived or remembered, has its place. Everything has its unity in that it has its fixed temporal position in this objective world, its place in objective time.”<sup>195</sup> The emplacement in time does not bespeak the spatialization of the temporal but rather the temporalization of the spatial.

### Being-There/Insi(gh)ting the Moment

Husserl’s perspective was elaborated upon and modified by Heidegger in his existential-analytic inquiry on time and space in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). The “specific spatiality” of Dasein (being-there, the technical expression for human existence) “must be grounded in temporality” inasmuch as the “constitution of Dasein and its modes of being are ontologically possible only on the basis of temporality.”<sup>196</sup> In *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, based on lectures delivered the same year as the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger, betraying his indebtedness to Nietzsche’s critique of traditional Western metaphysics and its implicit resentment of time,<sup>197</sup> characterizes the essential nature of temporality by noting that the “ontological condition of the possibility of understanding of being is temporality itself. . . . Temporality takes over the enabling of the understanding of being and thus the enabling of the thematic interpretation of being and of its articulation and manifold ways; it makes ontology possible.” *Temporalität*, which he contrasts with *Zeitlichkeit*,<sup>198</sup> represents the determinative factor in how human beings inhabit and experience the world, a major component of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology: “It [*Temporalität*] means temporality insofar as temporality itself is made into a theme as the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being and of ontology as such. The term ‘Temporality’ is intended to indicate that temporality, in existential analytic, represents the horizon from which we understand being.”<sup>199</sup>

As the title *Sein und Zeit* clearly indicates, Heidegger gave temporality priority of place in his hermeneutical project of thinking about being from the perspective of time. His choice marks a decisive shift from the phenomenological focus on time-consciousness to an ontological assumption regarding the temporal



character of human existence. The temporalizing character of human experience, therefore, is not a consequence of the intentional structure of consciousness, as Husserl insisted; rather, it indicates the prenoetic manner in which human beings are ontologically situated in the world.<sup>200</sup> Yet in spite of this crucial shift, Heidegger, like Husserl, emphasizes time as the distinguishing feature of the human comportment. Recently, Alejandro Vallega has made an impressive attempt to consider more seriously the “figure of spatiality as a deconstructive element in Heidegger’s discourse on temporality,” that is, to view the experience of space as the “decisive interruption (*Ent-scheidung*) of thought’s claim to metaphysical and transcendental principles as the ground and root of the question of being that this very question will begin to be experienced in its alterity.”<sup>201</sup> The marginality of space accords it special significance as it “punctuates the development or delimitation of Heidegger’s discourse on temporality. Throughout Heidegger’s book spatiality appears as a constant aporetic element in his discourse, which ultimately proves to be insurmountable. Spatiality appears not only explicitly and thematically, but also implicitly through various interruptions of the main discourse that point to difficulties that later will lead Heidegger to abandon his attempt in *Being and Time* to articulate spatiality in terms of the essential temporality of the question of being.” Spatiality thus “appears as an exilic figure in the discourse on temporality, and at the same time, when engaged, it indicates issues beyond that discourse. In light of the character of spatiality as a figure of alterity and exilic thought, the alterity of the question of being in *Being and Time* and the exilic character of that thought are made apparent by remaining with Heidegger’s struggle for the question of being in his difficulties with spatiality.”<sup>202</sup>

There is much to commend in Vallega’s study; he has opened up a hitherto untrodden pathway into the thicket of Heidegger’s thinking, a pathway that takes seriously the conception of space as the enactment of alterity—the disruption that opens thought to its own other. Notwithstanding the welcomed contribution and achievement of this approach, I would contend that time remains the privileged mode of experience in Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein’s way of being in the world because it is from this vantage point that the world-structure in its temporal-spatial magnitude is constituted. Consider Vallega’s own remark: “The issues of alterity and exilic thought are figured by the moments of suspension, interruption, and indeterminacy that punctuate the discussions of spatiality.”<sup>203</sup> The untimely use of a temporal metaphor, no doubt an inadvertent slip of the pen, points to the difficulty for one engaged in Heidegger’s thought in overcoming the bias toward the interpretation of time as the ecstatic-horizon of our understanding of being. As Heidegger put it in his notes for the lecture series “*Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*,” delivered at the

University of Marburg during the summer semester of 1925, human existence finds its ontological grounding in the “phenomenon of the presence of what is of concern in the authentic sense, to the analysis of being-in-the-world in its particular sense as concern, which has the mode of being of pure *letting-become-present*—a remarkable kind of being which is understood only when it is seen that this *making present and appresenting is nothing other than time itself*.”<sup>204</sup> The proximity to Husserl’s language is obvious: the essential feature of time is making-present, or appresenting.<sup>205</sup> Heidegger, however, reframes the discussion by relating the phenomenon of presence to the disposition of concern or care (*Sorge*), which he thematizes in *Sein und Zeit* as existentiality, facticity, and falling prey, the three-fold structure fundamental to the way of being of *Dasein*.<sup>206</sup>

In *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Einleitung in die Philosophie*, a text first published in 1982 but based on a lecture course delivered at the University of Freiburg in the summer of 1930, Heidegger wrote again of the “primordial connection between being and time.” He identified time as the light that illumines being and allows it to be understood as “constant presence,” the self-contained ecstasis of each instant, the *present-at-hand*, an occasionalist challenge to the conception of time as a continuously flowing sequence of now-points.<sup>207</sup> The fundamental question of philosophy, therefore, is “what is the essence of time, such that it grounds being, and such that the question of being as the leading question of metaphysics can and must be unfolded within this horizon? . . . The schema for this perspective has come into view: being and time—time—constant presence—being—beings as such—positive freedom.” The focus of the fundamental question is on the “and” in the formula “being and time.” Heidegger is of the view that in this case the conjunction does not signify an “external relation which merely juxtaposes two things,” but it points to a “primordial relation” that “must originate equiprimordially from the essence of being and the essence of time.” Hence, we may conclude that being and time are interwoven with one another. “The ‘and’ signifies a primordial co-belongingness of being and time from the ground of their existence.”<sup>208</sup> Although Heidegger acknowledges that when we inquire into time, we generally inquire as well into the nature of space, he still maintains that time is indicative of being in a manner not replicated by space. Drawing on traditional philosophical treatments of time—he specifically mentions Aristotle, Augustine, and Kant—Heidegger marks the distinctiveness of time in terms of the fact the human subject is the locus of time. From this he concludes that an inquiry into the essence of time is necessarily an inquiry into the essence of the human being. “The fundamental question concerning being and time forces us into the question concerning the human being. . . . When the problematic of being and time forces us to the question of man, we inquire into man not just as a being within the multiplicity of beings, but into man insofar as time—the ground of the most radicalized ontological problem—belongs to man.”<sup>209</sup>

In “Zeit und Sein,” a lecture delivered at a later stage in his career, Heidegger acknowledged that the attempt in *Sein und Zeit* “to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable.” He opted instead to comprehend Being (for which he uses the technical term *ereignis*, “appropriation” or “enowning”) as the extending of time-space (*das Reichen von Zeit-Raum*).<sup>210</sup> In his post-phenomenological ontology, “time-space” is Heidegger’s term for the *Abgrund*, the ground attained by leaping (*das Sich-den-Grund-erspringen*),<sup>211</sup> the originary leap (*Ur-sprung*), the inception and initiation (*Anfang*), as opposed to the beginning (*Beginn*) wherein time and space transpire in their calculatedly represented affiliation.<sup>212</sup> In *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, written between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger stretched the limits of language when he described time-space as “arising from and belonging to the essential sway of truth [*entspringend aus dem und gehörig zu dem Wesen der Wahrheit*], as the grounded jointure of removal- and charming-moving-onto (joining) of the t/here [*als das so gegründete Entrückungs-Berückungsgefüge (Fügung) des Da*]. . . . The site for the moment and the strife of world and earth. The strife and sheltering of the truth of enowning.”<sup>213</sup> The translators have sensibly rendered *dem Wesen der Wahrheit* as “the essential sway of truth.” The continuation of the sentence, however, defies precise translation, as the poetic flourish of Heidegger’s rhetoric overflows the vessels of the German language he summoned and was summoned by, *als das so gegründete Entrückungs-Berückungsgefüge (Fügung) des Da*. Time-space lays the ground of *Dasein*’s relationship to being by way of the “strife and sheltering of the truth of enowning” (*Der Streit und die Bergung der Wahrheit des Ereignisses*). Strife and sheltering, words juxtaposed by way of opposition,<sup>214</sup> convey coming-together in pulling-apart, drawing a boundary in the giving/withholding of the fourfold (*Geviert*), the rebuff of strife that enframes the sheltering of embrace.<sup>215</sup>

The originary swerve on the path, the “essential sway of truth,” is described in words that conjure images of enrapture (*Entrücken*) and enchantment (*Berückung*), the fate/deed of “there” to which *Dasein* must submit. In the inceptual opening-closure, ever about to transpire, time-space is experienced as the “site for the moment” (*Augenblicksstätte*), a locution that is not meant to convey the dependence of time on space, but rather the conjunction of temporality and spatiality in their separateness. To be/hold the site of the moment marks the “uniqueness of *Da-sein*” in belonging to truth as the “essential enswaying of being as enowning” (*der Erwesung des Seins als Ereignis*), the “enowned encleavage of the turning between belongingness and the call, between abandonment by being and enbeckoning.” In the “hidden essential sway of time-space,” *Dasein* discerns the “enquivering of the resonance of be-ing itself” (*das Erzittern der Schwingung des Seyns selbst*).<sup>216</sup> Time-space is the ab-ground, the foundation that is the “inbetween of the turning” (*das Inzwischen der Kehre*), the “inabiding” (*inständ-*

liches), which is “determined as the now and the here,” the “originary onefold (*ursprüngliche Einheit*) of space and time, that unifying onefold that above all lets them go apart into their separatedness.”<sup>217</sup> Time-space is the “originary essential swaying of ground” (*die ursprüngliche Wesung des Grundes*), whence temporal and spatial are dispatched in the difference of their sameness. The *ab-ground*, for Heidegger, is the *ab-ground*,<sup>218</sup> that is, that which is “of the ground” comes forth as going away “from the ground,” a grounding that does not ground except as the “hesitating refusal of ground” (*die zögernde Versagung des Grundes*), an encompassing that brings into the open the enopening that holds sway, the keeping-together of what is to be broken-apart, the abiding of the ephemeral, the “self-sheltering-concealing in the manner of not-granting the ground” by “letting be unfulfilled,” “letting be empty,” the “initial openness” (*erst Offene*) of the “originary emptiness” (*ursprüngliche Leere*) whereby “what is ownmost to truth” is enopened in the “belongingness of time-space,” “en-ownment, be-ing itself.”

### Time’s Becoming/Identity of Indifference

To do justice to Heidegger’s *Abgrund*, particularly its implications for the conception of temporality, one would do well to take into account the notion of the *Ungrund* in Schelling’s philosophical treatises, a term he apparently appropriated from Jacob Böhme’s mystical theosophy, which is related, in turn, to the *Abgrund*, or abyss, of Meister Eckhart.<sup>219</sup> In Schelling’s post-Identity-Philosophy, the “un-ground” designates the dark abyss whence God gives birth to himself as light,<sup>220</sup> the “original ground” that is “before all ground and before all existence, thus before any duality at all. . . . Since it precedes all opposites, these cannot be differentiated within it or be in any way present in it. Thus it cannot be designated as the identity of opposites, but only as their absolute *indifference*.” The critical notion of indifference (*Indifferenz*) implies that “all opposites are broken, which is nothing other than their very non-being, and which therefore has no predicate except predicatelessness, without therefore being a nothing or an absurdity.”<sup>221</sup> Schelling’s objective was to maintain a sense of difference by affirming the unity of identity and indifference,<sup>222</sup> that is, a unity that embraces the disjunction of opposites coexisting as non-opposites. In Schelling’s own words, “Real and ideal, darkness and light, or however else we wish to designate the two principles, can never be predicated of the unground as opposites. But nothing hinders their being predicated of it as non-opposites, i.e., in disjunction and each *for itself*; whereby, however, this very duality (the actual twofoldness of the principles) is posited.”<sup>223</sup> God is the “nonground” (*Ungrund*) as the “absence of ground” (*Abgrund*), a state that is prior to all opposition and even beyond the overcoming of opposition; it is this quality that merits the term “absolute indifference.”<sup>224</sup>

The characterization of the *Ungrund* most relevant to the present analysis is elaborated in the third version of *Die Weltalter* (1815) in the portrayal of the “eternal life of the Godhead,” the “absolute” and “primordial being,” as a conflict between two equally primal forces, the negative and positive. This “eternal antithesis,” Schelling notes, is difficult to verbalize and to conceive scientifically, but it may be cast in a number of images, to wit, necessity and freedom, withholding and outpouring, love and wrath, leniency and strictness, retreat into selfhood (*die Selbstheit*) and self-giving egoity (*die Egoität*).<sup>225</sup> The absolute is not configured as a dissolution of opposites (or, in the celebrated language of Nicholas of Cusa, *coincidentia oppositorum*)<sup>226</sup> but rather as their perpetuation, for divine individuality (*göttlichen Individualität*) is not possible without dividuality (*Dividualität*).<sup>227</sup> Hence, the primal being, the unground that precedes all ground, is characterized as a composite of dual forces that remain distinct, “a doubling (*Doppelheit*) that . . . appears to us as light and darkness, masculine and feminine, spiritual and corporeal. Therefore, the oldest teachings straightforwardly represented the first nature as a being with two conflicting modes of activity.”<sup>228</sup> To say of the divine essence that it is simultaneously negative and positive is not to conflate the two to the point that difference is effaced, but rather to embrace the nonduality of oppositional forces, the indifference—a state of “nondivorce” (*Ungeschiedenheit*) that is not free from all difference but rather negates it (*nicht eine von aller Differenz freie, sondern eine sie verneinende*)<sup>229</sup>—through which difference is preserved.<sup>230</sup> “For since God is not the cause of the Other through a special volition but through God’s mere essence, the Other is certainly not the essence of God, but it belongs to God’s essence, indeed, in a natural and inseparable way. It therefore follows that if the pure Godhead = A, and that the Other = B, then the full concept of the living Godhead which has being is not merely A, but is A + B.”<sup>231</sup>

It may very well be that the rubric “oldest teachings” (*ältesten Lehren*) mentioned by Schelling refers to the secret gnosis of kabbalah, even though the primary conduit of this doctrine would have likely been Böhme’s account of the *Ungrund*, the self-enfolding God, as both *Nichts* (nothing) and *Alles* (everything), the single will in which all creation lies, the eternal one beyond the polarities of love and anger, light and darkness.<sup>232</sup> A comprehensive examination of the influence of kabbalistic doctrine on Schelling is beyond the scope of this chapter,<sup>233</sup> but suffice it to say that he drew from the wellsprings of Jewish esoteric lore—either directly from a compilation of material translated by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth in *Kabbala Denudata* (Sulzbach 1677–1684)<sup>234</sup> or through secondary channels like Friedrich Christoph Oetinger<sup>235</sup>—to formulate his logic of identity and indifference, the absolute unity that arises from the belonging together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of two oppositional forces in a third that sustains

rather than obliterates dichotomy.<sup>236</sup> The interrelationship of two discrete qualities yields the indifference that facilitates difference of identity ( $A + B$ ) as opposed to identity of difference ( $A = B$ ). In the theosophic symbolism adopted by kabbalists, God is characterized as balancing two major attributes, the outpouring hand of mercy on the right and the constricting hand of judgment on the left, the masculine impulsion to overflow and the feminine capacity to receive. God's becoming, and the nature of being that may be adduced therefrom, is measured by this balance, a harmony that preserves opposites in their opposition.

In the thirteenth century kabbalists were already employing the term *hashwa'ah*, which, as Gershom Scholem noted, corresponds to the Latin *indistinctio* or *aequalitas*, and the related *hashwa'at ha-ahdut*, "equanimous one," to describe the lack of differentiation—or what we might call the indifference of opposites—in Ein Sof, or in the will, identified as the primary gradation *Keter* or *Ayin*, that is coeternal with it.<sup>237</sup> Analogously, Schelling describes the unity of the first being as "one and the same, that is the affirmation and the negation, that which pours out and that which holds on. . . . Precisely that which is set in opposition can only be essentially and, so to speak, personally, 'one,' insofar as it is only the individual nature of the person that is able to unite that which is in conflict."<sup>238</sup> The absolute can be encrypted as "one and the same = x" insofar as it is the case that " $A = x$ " and " $B = x$ ," whence follows "A and B are one and the same," that is, "both are x." To say that "both are x," however, does not entail that there is no difference between the "x" that A is and the "x" that B is; it signifies, rather, that A and B are both "x" to the extent that the "something = x that B is" is not identical to the "something = x that A is." We may conclude, therefore, that God's being "is of two different kinds; first the negating force (B) that represses the affirmative being (A), positing it as the inwardly passive or as what is hidden; second, the outstretching, self-communicating being that in clear contrast holds down the negating power in itself and does not let it come outwardly into effect."<sup>239</sup>

Significantly, Schelling contends that the "doctrine of the unity of the divine essence in duality shows itself as profoundly interwoven with what is innermost, even with the language itself, of the Old Testament." More specifically, the proof is elicited from the repeated use of the plural name *Elohim* with verbs in the singular, and from the conjunction of the two names, *YHWH* and *Elohim*. Schelling relates this archaic pairing to a distinction between the hidden and manifest dimensions of God, an approach that resonates with kabbalists' distinction between Ein Sof and the *sefirot*.<sup>240</sup> "YHWH," whose true pronunciation is unknown, consisting as it does of the "pure, so-called silent letters" (*lauter sogenannten ruhenden Buchstaben; literis quiescentibus*), is the "name of the essence" that

is “pure breath,” “pure spirit, or “pure will without actual conation,” whereas “Elohim” is the “name of the divine effects,” the multifaceted manifestation of that essence, spirit, and will.<sup>241</sup>

The kabbalistic influence on Schelling is even more conspicuous in his observation regarding the interchangeability of the angelic figure—the “angel of the countenance,” *mal’akh ha-panim* (*der Engel des Angesichts*) or the “angel of the Lord,” *mal’akh yhwē* (*der Engel Jehovahs*)<sup>242</sup>—and the divine essence.<sup>243</sup> Focusing exegetically on the theophany of God to Moses at/in the burning bush (Exod 3:2 ff.), Schelling notes “according to the understanding of the narrator, the angel of the countenance is also Jehovah, yet both are still distinct. The meaning of the narration is perhaps just that Moses was deemed worthy of a vision of that highest vitality, of that inner consuming yet always again reviving (and in this respect not consuming) fire that is the nature of the Godhead.”<sup>244</sup> The obfuscation of the ontic boundary between angel and God, centered about the image of the glorious angel and/or angelic glory, is a fundamental tenet of kabbalah—in its varied formulations—with roots in much older forms of Jewish esotericism that may have served as the model for the binitarian pattern of devotion apparent in early Christian communities that ascribed to Jesus the role of the chief mediating agent.<sup>245</sup> For Schelling, the intentional confusion in Scripture is proof of the logic of A + B applied to the Godhead, that is, to speak of—to imagine—the divine essence requires envisioning the essence and the other that comes through that essence but is not identical to it, an ontotheological truth that lies beyond and is the foundation of the Christological myth of three persons in the one substance of God. In line with those who viewed kabbalah as a repository of Jewish doctrine that confirms Christian belief, a strategy that gained particular currency in Renaissance Humanist and Neoplatonist circles advocating a *prisca theologia*, Schelling adduces the trinitarian dogma on the basis of a dyad derived from the mythologic of kabbalistic symbolism.

In consonance with the theosophy of Böhme, Schelling maintains that the Godhead is a “whole and undivided” unity comprising the “eternal Yes” and “eternal No,” and thus it is improper to privilege one member of the antinomial pair over the other.<sup>246</sup> Nevertheless, it is evident that Schelling ascribes priority to the negating force as the primal phase of divine autogenesis, the “initiating power” that is the “unconditioned and absolutely first beginning.”<sup>247</sup> It is with regard to this issue that Schelling’s probable indebtedness to kabbalah, and especially to the teachings of Luria, is perhaps most conspicuous. In language that resonates with kabbalistic symbolism, based in turn on an earlier aggadic motif regarding the primacy of judgment vis-à-vis mercy in the creation of the world,<sup>248</sup> Schelling states explicitly that in the Godhead might precedes leniency, stringency precedes gentleness, and wrath precedes love.<sup>249</sup> Moreover,

in an even more precise analogue to the kabbalistic myth of *šimšum*—the primordial withdrawal of the infinite from itself into itself to create the space devoid of itself wherein the emanation of all things in the concatenation of being will unfold<sup>250</sup>—Schelling contends that “what is altogether first in God, in the living God, the eternal beginning of itself in itself, is that God restricts itself, denies itself, withdraws its essence from the outside and retreats into itself.”<sup>251</sup>

The primary gesture of God is an “originary negation” (*ursprüngliche Verneinung*),<sup>252</sup> an act of severity, exclusivity, and intolerance that Schelling associates with the “jealous Jewish God,”<sup>253</sup> a withdrawing that exposes what remains withdrawn, a concealment that facilitates disclosure.<sup>254</sup> “The now active negating potency is the force (i.e., the possibility) of positing the affirming potency. . . . For God is precisely in that God does not *have being*. God is only as not having being, in the state of involution (*implicite, in statu involutionis*), which is a transport (intermediary) of real revelation.”<sup>255</sup> Just as Böhme (in an uncanny similarity to kabbalistic theosophy) had argued that the “great expansiveness without limit desires a narrowness and a comprehension (*Einfasslichkeit*) by which it might reveal itself” and thus “there must be a contraction and a closing in from which the revelation may shine,”<sup>256</sup> Schelling maintains that the “ground of revelation” is “that which negates all revelation.”<sup>257</sup> Responding to the view that God is a “self-revelatory being” (*ens manifestativum sui*), a stance that is the mythic basis for his own theogonic speculations, Schelling argues that revelation is not the “highest self of the Godhead,” for “something that is free is free precisely in that it does not have to reveal itself.”<sup>258</sup> The initial expression of divine freedom, the “original” and “root” force whence life begins, is not in expansion but in contraction, not in evolution but in involution, not in being seen but in being hidden.<sup>259</sup> “That God negates itself, restricts its being, and withdraws into itself, is the eternal force and might of God. In this manner, the negating force is that which is singularly revealing of God. But the actual being of God is that which is concealed.”<sup>260</sup> The mystery of occlusion, according to Schelling, is alluded to in the biblical image of God concealing his countenance.<sup>261</sup> Yet, from another perspective, the receding must be seen as an expression of advancing, the judgment a manifestation of love. “The decision to reveal itself and to posit itself superably as the eternal No was one and the same decision. Hence, just as this decision is a work of the highest freedom, it is also a work of the highest Love. . . . Priority is in inverse to superiority.”<sup>262</sup> We find exactly the same logic at work in the relevant kabbalistic sources: the first act is one of judgmental contraction (an idea rendered by a number of mythical images, including the kings of Edom who reigned ahead of the kings of Israel, the worlds destroyed that preceded the created world, the shell that emerged



before the fruit), but when understood dialectically, it is a manifestation of merciful expansion; thus what is temporally prior is ontically subordinate.

Utilizing a distinction attributed to Plutarch, Schelling describes the Godhead—or what he calls in one passage the Super-Godhead (*Übergottheit*)<sup>263</sup>—as the “being that has no being” (*nicht seyend seyn*), to be differentiated from the being that is “non-being” (*nicht Seyn*).<sup>264</sup> Commenting on a statement from *De cherubinische Wandersmann* by Johann Scheffler, known as Angelus Silesius (1624–1677), “The gentle Godhead is nothing and beyond nothing” (*Die zarte Gottheit ist das Nichts und Übernichts*), Schelling writes that the “Godhead is nothing because nothing can come toward it in a way distinct from its being and, again, it is above all nothingness because it itself is everything.”<sup>265</sup> To speak of the Godhead as nothing is to equate it with “pure freedom” (*laute Freiheit*), which Schelling further characterizes as the “will that wills nothing, that desires no object, for which all things are equal and is therefore moved by none of them.” Of this will we can say both that it is nothing, for “it neither desires to become actual itself nor wants any kind of actuality,” and that it is everything, for it is the “eternal freedom” that “rules everything, and is ruled by nothing.”<sup>266</sup> In an apparently contradictory claim, Schelling delineates the primal being as “self-wanting” [*sich-Wollen*], but, as he is quick to point out, “wanting oneself (*Sich wollen*) and negating oneself as having being [*Sich verneinen als Seyend*] is [*sic*] one and the same.”<sup>267</sup> If “wanting oneself” and “negating oneself as having being” are identical, it follows that the two portrayals of the Godhead are not conflicting, that is, the highest of desires is the desire that has no object (*der seine Sache begehrt*) and the strongest of wills, the will that wills nothing (*der Wille, der nichts will*).

Similar representations of the infinite will are widely attested in the theosophic ruminations of thirteenth-century kabbalists—for instance, Azriel of Gerona, Jacob ben Sheshet, Isaac Ibn Latif, Moses de León, and other Castilian figures whose views are preserved in zoharic homilies, and the many subsequent authors influenced thereby, including Luria and his disciples.<sup>268</sup> *Keter*, the “supernal will,” the aura that is coextensive with and hence ontically inseparable—even if distinguishable—from *Ein Sof*,<sup>269</sup> is also characterized as “nothing” (*ayin*),<sup>270</sup> a designation that denotes not lack but surplus of being that is beyond comprehension, the “pure ether that cannot be apprehended.”<sup>271</sup> The nature of that primordial will is to will naught but itself, which is to say, to will nothing; but to will nothing is to have nothing to will, a double negation that results in the emanation of the *sefirot* hidden in the will.<sup>272</sup> The plentitude of the infinite finds its fullest expression in the emptying of the will rather than its overflowing, retreating into the nothing it is (not), inhalation preceding exhalation, enfolding beginning every unfolding,<sup>273</sup> the mystical One that is so full that it is empty, so empty that it is full, the paradoxical identity of the plenum

and vacuum.<sup>274</sup> Thus, Schelling concludes, “actual power lies more in delimitation than expansion and that to withdraw oneself has more to do with might than to give oneself.”<sup>275</sup>

This conclusion resonates with another aspect of Lurianic teaching that is captured by the technical term *sha’ashu’a*, which suggests that the primal act of contraction on the part of the unlimited is a form of self-arousal or bemusement (both sexual and noetic in intent), a process I have explored elsewhere under the rubric “suffering and the *jouissance* of becoming-other.”<sup>276</sup> In rhetoric remarkably similar to kabbalistic sources, Schelling comprehends the initial stirring in the Godhead in terms of the desire to become oneself, which is concomitantly suffering for the sake of the other. “Suffering is universal, not only with respect to humanity, but also with respect to the creator. . . . Because all living things must first involve themselves in Being and break out of the darkness to transfiguration, so, too, in its revelation, the divine being must first assume nature and, as such, suffer it, before it can celebrate the triumph of its liberation.”<sup>277</sup> For kabbalists, the primal suffering is connected to the archaic sapiential image of God taking delight in his wisdom prior to creation, an idea affirmed by Schelling in response to the question of what God was doing before the world was created: “Scriptures tell in what cozy proximity wisdom already was in and around God in those primordial times. As such, wisdom was God’s favorite and found herself in the sweetest feeling of bliss, but was also the cause of God’s joy, since at that time He beheld, in advance and through Her, the entire future history, the great image of the world and all of the events in nature and in the realm of spirits.”<sup>278</sup> Admittedly, there is no mention of suffering in this passage, but it is obvious that what Schelling is describing is the activity of the divine in the “primordial times” (*Urzeiten*) of eternity, the stirring of the will in its purest freedom to manifest itself in nature and thus become actual. This self-manifestation is precisely what Schelling intends in the text just cited, in which he explicitly applies suffering to God’s revelation.<sup>279</sup>

The path of Schelling’s thought culminates in the paradox of self-negation that marks the “first beginning” (*erste Anfang*), the beginning that has no beginning and hence no end, the ground that never begins and thus never ceases being the beginning.<sup>280</sup> Placing the negating force that “is its own precisely in negation”<sup>281</sup> at the beginning leads to a deconstruction—or, in Schelling’s own terms, a sublimation—of the very concept of beginning and end, which, by implication, challenges the linear conception of time from past to future as well as the hierarchical alignment of space from top to bottom.

Hence we first attain the consummate concept of that first nature . . . a life that eternally circulates within itself, a kind of circle because the lowest always runs into the

highest, and the highest again into the lowest. . . . There is neither a veritable higher nor a veritable lower, since in turn one is the higher and the other is the lower. There is only an unremitting wheel, a rotatory movement that never comes to a standstill and in which there is no differentiation. Even the concept of the beginning, as well as the concept of the end, again sublimates itself in this circulation. . . . Since it did not begin sometime but began since all eternity in order never (veritably) to end, and ended since all eternity, in order always to begin again, it is clear that that first nature was since all eternity and hence, equiprimordially, a movement circulating within itself, and that this is its true, living concept.<sup>282</sup>

Avoiding the extremes of either collapsing the difference between time and eternity or setting them in diametric opposition, Schelling conjures a temporal eternity that is at the same time an eternal temporality.<sup>283</sup> The boundless freedom of the absolute being expresses itself in the perpetual alteration of the abyssal will within the circle of becoming, the “inner life that incessantly gives birth to itself and again consumes itself. . . . Through that constant retreat to the beginning and the eternal recommencement, it makes itself into substance in the real sense of the word (*id quod substat*), into the always abiding. It is the constant inner mechanism and clockwork, time, eternally commencing, eternally becoming, always devouring itself and always giving birth to itself.”<sup>284</sup> The freedom of will, insofar as it wills nothing actual, is the “affirmative concept of absolute eternity,” and just as “eternal immovability” is the goal of all movement, so “all time, even that eternal time, is nothing but the constant obsession with eternity.”<sup>285</sup> There are metaphysicians who advocate a “concept of eternity completely pure of any admixtures of temporal concepts,” but this is an eternity that is “as nothing.” To speak of an “actual, living eternity” (*wirklichen lebendigen Ewigkeit*) requires one to posit a “constant Now [*beständiges Nun*], an eternal present [*ewige Gegenwart*].”<sup>286</sup> In this moment, eternally present yet not fully disclosed—the “nonpresent” (*Nichtgegenwart*) in Schelling’s language—for if fully disclosed it would not be the eternally present moment on its way to becoming, time and eternity are held together in the identity of their indifference, “time coexisting with eternity.”<sup>287</sup> “Just as there is no other concept for time other than the counterplay of eternity, there is also no other concept (for eternal time) than that it is the eternally nonpresent.” Schelling draws the logical conclusion: “The true eternity does not exclude all time but rather contains time (eternal time) subjugated within itself. Actual eternity is the overcoming of time, as the richly meaningful Hebrew language expresses ‘victory’ (which it posits among the first attributes of God) and ‘eternity’ with a single word (*naezach*).”<sup>288</sup> The “overcoming of time” (*Überwindung der Zeit*) by the “actual eternity” (*wirkliche Ewigkeit*) entails not the dissolution of time but its eternalization.

As Schelling puts it in another passage, time is the “succession of eternities,” that is, different times that recurrently coexist at the same time.<sup>289</sup>

It is noteworthy that Schelling connects the temporalization of eternity to the Hebrew word *nesah*, which, as he says, denotes both victory and eternity. That he had in mind kabbalistic symbolism is evident from his parenthetical remark that this word is “among the first attributes of God,” a reference to the eighth of the traditional ten *sefirot*. Schelling also relates the notion of eternity that contains time subjugated within itself to the Egyptian theogonic circularity captured in the inscription over the Temple of Sais: “I am the one who was, who is, who will be.” Moreover, following Kant, Schelling associates this inscription with the divine epiphany to Moses (Exod 3:14), which he paraphrases as “I am the one who was, I was who I will be, I will be who I am” (*Ich bin, der ich war, Ich war, der ich sehn werde, Ich werde sehn, der ich bin*).<sup>290</sup> For Schelling, we cannot speak of time in God, but we must speak of God in time:

This time outside of eternity is that movement of eternal nature where eternal nature, ascending from the lowest, always attains the highest, and, from the highest, always retreats anew in order to ascend again. Only in this movement does eternal nature discern itself as eternity. The Godhead counts and gauges in this clockwork—not its own eternity (for this is always whole, consummate, indivisible, beyond all time and no more eternal in the succession of all times than in the moment), but rather just the moments of the constant repetition of its eternity, that is, of time itself, which, as Pindar already says, is only the simulacrum of eternity. For eternity must not be thought as those moments of time *taken together*, but rather as coexisting with each single moment so that eternity again sees only its (whole, immeasurable) self in each single one.<sup>291</sup>

In sum, we may conclude that primordial time according to Schelling is the eternal movement of God’s self-becoming; eternity, therefore, is the temporal unfolding of the commutable form.<sup>292</sup> As we shall see, the kabbalists’ portrayal of the infinite’s encircled expansion suggests a similar view.

## Timespace and Swaying of Ground

In modes of discourse still beholden to Schelling,<sup>293</sup> and by implication to the theosophic gnosis espoused in the secrets of kabbalah, yet distinctive of his own poetizing, Heidegger writes of the “ur-ground” that “opens only in ab-ground,” that is, the ground that grounds its being in the holding sway of its truth.<sup>294</sup> Insofar as the ab-ground is a “staying away of ground” (*Weg-bleiben des Grundes*), the “primary clearing for what is open as ‘emptiness’” (*die erste Lichtung*

des Offenen als der “Leere”), it follows that enowning the ground, an originary attunement that Heidegger refers to as the “engrounding of ground” (*die Ergründung des Grundes*), must “venture a leap into ab-ground and must enfathom and withstand the ab-ground.”<sup>295</sup> To leap into and withstand the ground, to enfathom the engrounded by engrounding the enfathomed, one must take hold of the ground that is grounded in the staying-away of the ground, the nameless abyss empty of content, the “subsumptive power” that resists the resolution of conflictuality, by appealing to an origin that synthesizes disparate forces.<sup>296</sup>

It is the way of the foundation (*Abgrund*) to be unfathomable (*abgründig*), and thus Heidegger’s only recourse for formulating the texture of time-space was to adopt a manner of discourse that, in his own words, lacks “any claim to immediate intelligibility”<sup>297</sup>—a form of expression that mimics what is to be expressed, that is, the ab-ground, the “originary clearing” (*ursprüngliche Lichtung*) in which the hesitating manifests itself, the “steadfastness of the sheltering that lights up” (*das Beständnis der lichtenden Verbergung*), in the gifting of withholding, the concealment of disclosure in the disclosure of concealment.<sup>298</sup> Time-space is the source, the *ur-ground*, whence time and space break apart into differentiated representations that mark the determination of humankind’s historical destination.<sup>299</sup> The “unfolding of time-space out of the site for the moment” results in the “stretching” of time and space respectively into quantifiable and calculable forms. “Belonging to what is ownmost to truth, both are originally one in time-space, both render the grounding of the *t/here* [*Da*]—a grounding that holds to the abground—a *t/here* [*Da*] through which selfhood and all that is true about a being is first grounded.”<sup>300</sup> The shift in orientation (I do not say “phenomenological” for, technically speaking, the abground is not phenomenizable) required by Heidegger’s ontological turn is a move from the secondary representations of time and space as corresponding but essentially distinct modes of perception to the originary attunement of time-space as a coupling of what belongs together by virtue of not belonging together.

Rejecting his own earlier attempt to treat spatial demarcation as a form of temporalizing, Heidegger insists that space and time “are not only different in the number of usually meant ‘dimensions,’ but from the ground up each has what is ownmost to it—and only by virtue of this utmost difference do they refer to their origin, time-space. The more purely what is own-ownmost to each is preserved and the deeper the origin lies, the more successful is the grasping of their essential sway as time-space, which belongs to what is ownmost to truth as clearing ground for sheltering-concealing.”<sup>301</sup> In speaking of time-space as the source, Heidegger does not have in mind an essential and original truth subject to metaphysical speculation<sup>302</sup> but the ground of what is “ownmost” to both temporal and spatial delimitation, “the displacing into the

encompassing open—an open which builds presencing and stability, but without becoming experienceable and groundable.” The pathway to the “transitional mindfulness” of the ground that is not groundable is not by way of “representing a general essence” but through the “originary-historical entry into the site for the moment,” a projecting-open into the encompassing-open by means of which one appropriates the “uniqueness and onset of the brightest removal—unto the domain of the hint, out of the gentle charming-moving-onto the self-refusing-hesitating, nearness and remoteness in decision, the ‘where’ and the ‘when’ of being-history, lights up and shelters itself from within enownment of the grounding-attunement of *reservedness*—this and the basic experience of the *t/here* and thus of time-place.”<sup>303</sup> To be attuned to time-space, one must enown the site of the moment, an enowning that comes by letting go, a drawing near by moving away, an opening up by closing down, an advancing forward by retrieving behind.

In time-space as the essential swaying of truth, the ground that holds its ground, the *ab-ground*, time and space are named together in inexplicable association. In this regard, as I have already intimated, Heidegger’s later thought has moved away from the phenomenological claim of his early work that space is derived from time. Emphasizing the point, Heidegger contrasts timespace (*Zeitraum*) and time-space (*Zeit-Raum*): “What is meant by timespace is a determination of time itself and only of time—and not that grounding essential sway that is originally a one for time and space, as in the word *time-space*.”<sup>304</sup> In speaking of timespace, the span of time, time is represented as spacious and space as temporal; by contrast, time-space presumes the onefold origin (or originary onefold) of space and time that allows for separation in the manner of temporalizing and spatializing determinations.

Notwithstanding the critical turn in his thinking, vestiges of his older view that privileged time are evident in Heidegger’s later compositions. Consider, for instance, the key term “site for the moment,” *Augenblicksstätte*, which, as noted above, is associated with the experience of the *ab-ground*. The conjunctive grammatical state implies that we are seeking the site for the moment, not the moment for the site, and hence temporality is primary and spatiality secondary. Furthermore, Heidegger’s description of the “hint” or the “hesitating self-refusal,” which is upheld as the “enopening of what shelters and conceals itself as such,” the “self-enopening for and as enownment, which is also grounding of the human being’s “call to belongingness to enowning itself,”<sup>305</sup> assumes a decidedly temporal as opposed to spatial character: “Self-refusal creates not only the emptiness of deprivation and awaiting but also, along with these, the emptiness as an emptiness that is in itself removing-onto, removing unto futurity and thus at the same time breaking open what has been, which bounces back from

what is to come and makes up the present as moving into abandonment, but as remembering-awaiting. But because this abandonment is originally remembering-expecting (belongingness to being and to the call of be-ing), it is in itself no mere sinking and dying away in a not-having, but conversely, it is the present that aims at and is solely carried out into decision: *moment*.”<sup>306</sup> In these words, one can detect a hint of a critical component of Heidegger’s notion of temporality that persisted, albeit in constantly changing forms, in the various stages of his thought: the realization that to become present, time must be absent. As Frank Schallow has pointed out, Heidegger realized that this ability of time to defer itself was not “merely an accidental feature of temporality, but rather marked its deeper origin within the polarity of revealing-concealing as the essence of truth. Temporality thereby appears less as a transcendental structure and more as a kinetic event or movement between opposites, the re-enactment of a creative process interchanging end and beginning, consummation and origin.”<sup>307</sup> This conception of temporality is indebted to Schelling’s emphasis on time as “an elliptical rather than a linear process,” a “primeval occurrence” that is not juxtaposed to eternity. Temporality, for Schelling, “provides the intermediary link through which the possibilities housed in the divine essence can unfold, and these possibilities in turn become concrete when specified within the delimited confines of nature and history.”<sup>308</sup> Time, in short, is the space within which the reconciliation of opposites within the infinite is enacted.

The influence of Schelling can be discerned both in Heidegger’s reference to the originary abandonment that takes the form of remembering-awaiting, terms that have a distinctive temporal quality, and in Dasein’s response to the call to belonging, which is occasioned by the retention-expectation of the abandonment that is in and of the moment. “The *remembering awaiting* (remembering a concealed belongingness to be-ing, awaiting a call of be-ing) puts to decision the whether or not of the onset of be-ing. More clearly: Temporalizing as this joining of (the hesitating) self-refusal grounds the domain of decision, in accord with the ab-ground.”<sup>309</sup> Although Heidegger goes on to speak of the “spatializing of enowning,” which complements the temporalizing, there is no question that he privileges the latter. From this vantage point, one must consider Heidegger’s supposition regarding the conjunction of time and being: “Being as presence, as the present in a still undetermined sense, is characterized by a time-character and thus by time. This gives rise to the supposition that the It which gives Being, which determines Being as presencing and allowing-to-presence, might be found in what is called ‘time’ in the title *Time and Being*.”<sup>310</sup> The critical unit of time in the presencing of time-space remains the moment-at-hand; however, this “no longer means merely the distance between two now-points of calculated time” but is rather the “name for the openness which opens up in the

mutual self-extending of futural approach, past and present. This openness exclusively and primarily provides the space in which space as we usually know it can unfold.”<sup>311</sup> Time continues to receive preferential treatment, for the convergence of the three temporal modes is what constitutes the prespatial self-extending that provides the space wherein beings are to be disclosed.

## Temporocentrism/Overcoming Spatial Logic

Not surprisingly, there has been recent criticism of the subordination of space to time, or what Edward Casey has called the phenomenon of “temporocentrism,” that has dominated the “modernist myth” underlying philosophical and scientific conceptions of the cosmos.<sup>312</sup> As a corrective, some thinkers have focused on the primacy of space, rather than time, in the shaping of human perception and memory.<sup>313</sup> Gaston Bachelard, for instance, has written: “To localize a memory in time is merely a matter for the biographer and only corresponds to a sort of external history, for external use, to be communicated to others. But hermeneutics, which is more profound than biography, must determine the centers of fate by ridding history of its conjunctive temporal tissue. . . . For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates.”<sup>314</sup>

Casey has more recently affirmed Blanchot’s privileging of space in his phenomenological study on remembering, although he is careful to distinguish between place and space. The “modern obsession with time” can only be overcome by breaking down the “resistance to place,” which “by virtue of its unencompassability by anything other than itself” is conceived as the “limit and condition of all that exists.”<sup>315</sup> When examined from this standpoint, it appears that implacement is what makes the passage of time possible.<sup>316</sup>

What is remembered is well grounded if it is remembered as being in a particular place—a place that may well take precedence over the time of its occurrence. . . . But precisely where memory is at stake, to be fixed in space is to be fixed in place. . . . Memory of place implaces us and thus empowers us: gives us space to be precisely because we *have been* in so many memorable places, enjoyed such intimacy in them, known such pain there as well. If body memory moves us—is the prime mover of our memorial lives—it moves us directly into place, whose very immobility contributes to its distinct potency in matters of memory.<sup>317</sup>

In response to the critique of the subordination of the spatial to the temporal, I would counter that the more distinctive character of the postmodern experience may be the reverse, that is, the greatest challenge is to liberate



time—and ultimately the construction of self that is dependent on temporal demarcations—from its subjugation to an overwhelmingly spatial orientation.<sup>318</sup> Frederic Jameson's insightful comment is relevant here:

The crisis in historicity now dictates a return, in a new way, to the question of temporal organization in general in the postmodern force field, and indeed, to the problem of the form that time, temporality, and the syntagmatic will be able to take in a culture increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic. If, indeed, the subject has lost its capacity actively to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organize its past and future into coherent experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but "heaps of fragments" and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory.<sup>319</sup>

In the final analysis, we must admit (as physicists would surely insist) that distinctions of time are inconceivable without boundaries of space and boundaries of space are unimaginable without distinctions of time.<sup>320</sup> Here we would do well to recall Nietzsche's sagacious and relatively straightforward remark: "It seems to me that the most important faculty is that of perceiving *shape*, i.e., a faculty based upon mirroring. Space and time are only things which have been measured according to some rhythm."<sup>321</sup> Spatial and temporal characteristics do not exist in themselves; they arise in consciousness as a result of measuring the interval against some standard—a point that accords with Nietzsche's view that "knowing is a process of measuring according to a criterion. Without a criterion, i.e., without any limitation, there is no knowing."<sup>322</sup>

Our knowledge of the world would not be possible without the limitations imposed by the notions of space and time. Casey himself remarks on the ultimate inseparability of these two modalities: "What most merits noticing is that in every instance internal and external horizons are at once spatial and temporal (ultimately, they are spatio-temporal) and that both kinds of horizon are shared by memory and place alike."<sup>323</sup> Thus, we speak tellingly of an event "taking place," a common expression that conveys very well the phenomenological insight that a datum of human experience is perceived concomitantly in the venues of time and space.

The concurrence of the spatial and temporal is a distinctive feature of Proust's "experience of time embodied" (*l'expérience du temps incorporé*), as Kristeva has ardently insisted:

If Time is psychic time, and if it thus affects our bodies, it remains the only imaginary value that the novel can offer its community of readers. . . . Yet if associations

are metaphors and if sensations affect the body, then Proustian time, which unites sensations imprinted in signs, is a metamorphosis. By believing that Proust's novel merely deals with time, we may be overemphasizing a single word of its title. It is perhaps more accurate to say that through the intermediary of time, Proust is in search of an "embodied" imaginary, a space where words, along with their unconscious and obscure emergences, knit the unbroken flesh of the world I belong to. That is, I the writer, I the reader, and the living, loving, and dying I.<sup>324</sup>

The inherently temporal nature of the fabric of memory provides the space where language weaves the intermingled flesh of world and self. From this perspective, those who would contrast the duration of inner time-consciousness and the exteriorization of quantitative or measurable time are mistaken. Embodied time is "invariably spatialized."<sup>325</sup>

In this way, by presenting the space of memory as a sort of safety net added to the spectacle of society and its myriad dramas, Proust does more than simply endorse the philosophical tenets of Bergson and Heidegger that seek to capture Being by examining the opacity of Time, for he also verbalizes a sort of sensory time beyond metaphysical categories. In this way, Proust undoes oppositions (idea, duration, and space, on the one hand, and force, perception, emotion, and desire, on the other), and he maps out a psychic and transpsychic universe that is extremely complex, a seductive place, a source of communion and sacredness for those who love to read. . . . At this point, the line of reasoning has been developed enough so that the formula of *In Search of Lost Time*, the alchemical key to unlock its meaning, may be announced. This "augmented place," which we feel and which may be inaccessible, but which is constantly promised to us, is presented by the preposition we find in the title of the work, a preposition that indicates continual movement: "*A la recherche*"—we are always in search. In this way, the place remains an open one, and it is not closed off within the revolution of selves—it is "time embodied."<sup>326</sup>

Given that embodied time is configured in the space of memory—an insight that Proust connects to the "indissociable symbiosis between the sensible and the sensed" implied in the Christian doctrine of incarnation, the word made flesh<sup>327</sup>—Kristeva contends that

Proust does not subscribe to the opposition Bergson sets up between pure subjective duration and an objective time that can be measured in spatio-temporal terms. In Proust's novel, lost time is immediately "searched for" within a spatial imaginary and within the discontinuity of language, so that spatio-temporal continuity and its fragmentation are not an antithesis to pure time but its servant, the preferred means for attaining time regained. . . . Every page and every sentence of *In Search of Lost Time*

includes a panoply of sensations forming a singular space in which there is a gap between perception and memory, between memory and perception. What rushes into this breach is not *emptiness* . . . but the *time of language*. Time regained would thus be the time of language as an imaginary experience.<sup>328</sup>

Projecting-back and gathering-forward provide the temporal frame within which the parameters of space are demarcated. One's sense of spatial boundary, laying claim to where one is experientially, is intricately connected to the emplacement of things in memory, the mnemonic attachment to objects held in the folds of memory by having experienced them previously in particular places. We encounter this association in different spheres of human life experience, from subjective psychology on one end of the spectrum to political ideology on the other. Without memory, which is inconceivable in the absence of an internal time-consciousness, however this eidetic process is to be explained, we would be spatially disoriented. On the other hand, without the imaginal places enfolded in creases of memory in the brain tissue, future retention and past protention would not be possible in the present. We would do well, therefore, to move beyond the temporal/spatial split and embrace as phenomenologically sound the conjunction time-space articulated by Heidegger.

## Emplotment in Time of the Other

We have seen already that time-space is the ab-ground, the engrounding in the staying-away of the ground, extending forward in holding back. This sense of grounding seems uniquely related to the distinctive human capacity to narrate coherently events that have been experienced episodically.<sup>329</sup> Our sense of time proceeds from this capacity for "emplotment,"<sup>330</sup> in the felicitous idiom of Ricoeur, which he aptly characterized as a "configuring" and "judicative" act that involves "grasping together"<sup>331</sup> divergent events and thematizing them into the unified story of a myth. The fictive recounting of factuality is predicated on a presumed reciprocity between narrativity and temporality, a reciprocity that necessarily implies circularity of reasoning. As Ricoeur succinctly expressed it, "Time becomes human to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; a narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience."<sup>332</sup> The narrative structuring of time by the temporal structure of narrative would seem to lead hermeneutically to an inversion of the circle, whereby the end is read from the beginning and the beginning from the end. Upon closer inspection, however, we observe that recapitulation is not dependent on sequential coherence. On the contrary, narrated time, in its cyclicity, revolves about the poles of memory and expectation.

Future is retained in the protentionally envisaged past; retrospection ensues from retrieving traces of what is yet to be left behind.

Time of consciousness can awaken only as consciousness of time, and consciousness of time only as time of consciousness. Precisely because of this circularity in thinking about time, and the reflexivity of consciousness that it implies, we cannot say what time is without being caught in a web of self-referentiality. In the absence of a face, can the face appear other than as effaced, or is effacement itself too revealing? With this discernment we take the turn of Levinas, a turn that, by the author's own admission, was greatly indebted to Franz Rosenzweig's "new thinking" (*neue denken*).<sup>333</sup> Rosenzweig's preoccupation with temporality in his literary masterpiece *Der Stern der Erlösung* (which first appeared in 1921) is apparent in his axiomatic acceptance of the three theological categories, creation (*Schöpfung*), revelation (*Offenbarung*), and redemption (*Erlösung*). Each of these corresponds to a dimension of time: creation to the ever-renewed past, revelation to the ever-enduring present, redemption to the ever-coming future. For Rosenzweig, the temporal mode has ontological status only by virtue of its theological correlates. His theology, therefore, may be labeled a metaphysics of temporality whereby the traditional distinction between time and eternity is transcended in the eternalization of time through the temporalization of eternity: in the fullness of the moment, one encounters the perpetual coming-to-be of what has always been. In a manner similar to Schelling, whose later thought betrays an affinity with traditional kabbalah, for Rosenzweig God is the being of eternity, the eternal being, which temporally becomes in the eternity of temporal becoming.<sup>334</sup>

In the essay *Das neue Denken*, published in 1925 with the aim of offering readers pointers on how to read *Der Stern*, Rosenzweig writes that time is "entirely real" for the one who embraces the new thinking (*neue denken*), which he also calls speech-thinking (*sprachdenken*), in contrast to the philosopher interested in immutable essences who wants "to know nothing of time." The critical element of speech, therefore, is the verb, which in German is *Zeitwort*, literally, time-word, the part of language that conveys knowledge of the tenses (*Zeiten*) of reality.<sup>335</sup> Rosenzweig thus expresses the "secret" of the "wisdom of the new philosophy" encapsulated in Goethe's phrase "understanding at the right time" (*Verstehen zur rechten Zeit*):<sup>336</sup> understanding always occurs in the present, "time in the most temporal sense" (*Zeit im zeitlichsten Sinn*).<sup>337</sup> In another passage in the same essay, Rosenzweig elaborates on the interconnectedness between time (especially in the form of the present) and *sprachdenken*:

Thus the new thinking's temporality gives rise to its new method. In all three books [of *Der Stern*] to be sure, but most visibly in the book that is the heart of this volume

and thus of the whole, in the second, the book of the present revelation. The method of speech takes the place of the method of thinking, as developed in all earlier philosophies. Thinking is timeless and wants to be timeless. . . . Speech is bound to time, nourished by time, [and] it neither can nor wants to abandon this ground of nourishment; it does not know beforehand what will emerge; it lets itself be given its cues from others; it actually lives by another's life. . . . To need time means: not to be able to presuppose anything, to have to wait for everything, to be dependent on the other for what is ours. All this is entirely unthinkable to the thinking thinker, while it alone suits [entspricht] the speech-thinker. Speech-thinker—for of course the new, speaking-thinking is also thinking, just as the old, the thinking did not come about without inner speaking; the difference between the old and new, logical and grammatical thinking, does not lie in sound and silence, but in the need of an other and, what is the same thing, in the taking of time seriously.<sup>338</sup>

Rosenzweig's insight that taking time seriously entails being in need of the other is elaborated in Levinas, who repeatedly stresses the correlation of the structure of the experience of alterity and temporality, the internal form of subjectivity.<sup>339</sup> Awareness of self comes to be through facing the other without othering the face, an exposure to exteriority, an openness to "the deportation or the transcendence beyond any end and any finality: the thinking of the absolute without this absolute being reached as an end, which again would have signified finality and finitude. The idea of the Infinite is a thought released from consciousness . . . according to the thought, perhaps the most profoundly considered thought, of the release with regard to being, of dis-inter-est: a relation without a hold on being and without subservience to the *conatus essendi*, contrary to knowledge and to perception."<sup>340</sup> The infinite of which Levinas speaks is not the negative abstraction of meontological speculation, the not-being of Neoplatonic metaphysics, but rather an enigma of transcendence, "the proximity of the Other as Other," the "intervention of a meaning" that "disturbs phenomena"<sup>341</sup> as a consequence of one's ethical relationship to another human being. Such a relationship defies the subject's attempt to re/present transcendence as a presence, to reduce the other in the identity of the same, an alterity undyingly beyond the clasp of intentionality, as we realize most poignantly in the invariable (un)eventuality of death. Similarly, apprehension of time issues from contemplating thought-thinking-what-cannot-be-thought, the infinite surplus, incomprehensible and unassimilable, the "always of noncoincidence, but also the always of the relationship, an aspiration and an awaiting."<sup>342</sup> For Levinas, the conjunction of time and being implied by the dialogical temporalization of being indicates that at all times "the event of being, the *esse*, the *essence*, passes over to what is other than being . . . being's other, otherwise-than-being"<sup>343</sup>—a subjectivity

to be conceived not as immanence and essence but as the correlative interplay of the Said and the Saying, which resists ontologization and “overflows the very being it thematizes in stating it to the other.”<sup>344</sup> From this vantage point, the nature of time, by which we calibrate the inessentiality of being, that is, the otherwise-than-being displayed in the concealment of being-otherwise, is the enigmatic absolution that betrays the “trace of illeity” in a present that remains open as “difference” with respect to an “ab-solute past”<sup>345</sup> continuously refigured as the future.<sup>346</sup>

The manifestation of being, the appearing, is indeed the primary event, but the very primacy of the primary is in the presence of the present. A past more ancient than any present, a past which was never present and whose other signification remains to be described, signifies over and beyond the manifestation of being, which thus would convey but a moment of this signifying signification. In the diachrony . . . with regard to the progressiveness of manifestation, one can suspect there is the interval that separates the same from the other, an interval that is reflected in manifestation. For manifestation, which one might have thought to be by right a fulgurating instant of openness and intuition, is discontinuous, and lasts from a question to the response. But this leads us to surprise the Who that is looking, the identical subject, allegedly placed in the openness of Being, as the crux of a diachronic plot (which remains to be determined) between the same and the other.<sup>347</sup>

Time is indicative of a narrative telling, a diachronic plot whose synchronic crux is open-ended, yielding a rhetoric of temporality characterized by a confluence of repetition and change too complex for simplistic binary opposition,<sup>348</sup> a past determined by a future that anticipates the past as a word spoken in the dialogue between the same and other, the question and response. “The relationship with the other is time: it is an untotizable diachrony in which one moment pursues another without ever being able to retrieve it, to catch up with it, or coincide with it. . . . Time means that the other is forever beyond me, irreducible to the synchrony of the same. The temporality of the interhuman opens up the meaning of otherness and the otherness of meaning.”<sup>349</sup>

The intrinsic linking of alterity and temporality underscores as well the texture of the erotic fabric that envelops time. The fecundity of eros signifies the desire for the other in the mystery of the other’s essential inessentiality. Significantly, Levinas identifies this transcendence, which cannot be spatial in nature and precludes possession of the other, as the feminine.<sup>350</sup>

The pathos of love, however, consists in an insurmountable duality of beings. It is a relationship with what always slips away. The relationship does not *ipso facto* neutral-

ize alterity but preserves it. . . . The other as other is not here an object that becomes ours or becomes us; to the contrary, it withdraws into its mystery. Neither does this mystery of the feminine—the feminine: essentially other—refer to any romantic notions of the mysterious, unknown, or misunderstood woman. . . . What matters to me in this notion of the feminine is not merely the unknowable, but a mode of being that consists in slipping away from the light. . . . It is a flight before light. Hiding is the way of existing of the feminine, and this fact of hiding is precisely modesty.<sup>351</sup>

Just as the face of the other can be confronted only in its inaccessibility, so the flow of time is renewed in its anarchical, nonoriginal chiasmus, the immemorial lapse in the nonsimultaneity of the Said and the Saying<sup>352</sup>—momentarily abiding, abidingly momentary—the supplementing (*suppléance*) that originates without origin, the creaturality (*la créaturalité*) that begins without beginning,<sup>353</sup> the meaning that Levinas elicits from the word “anarchy,” literally, without an *arché*.<sup>354</sup>

The nexus of time and the face affirmed by Levinas provides the temporal basis for a phenomenology of non-phenomenality, a phenomenology that eschews the metaphysics of presence, a phenomenological canvassing of the unapparent.<sup>355</sup> The implication of this insight is captured poetically by Jean-Luc Marion when he notes that “phenomenologically, time does not pass; if it were passing, it would not leave any trace and thus would destroy nothing.” To calculate time, therefore, we must assume that the past is “accumulated in the flesh” of a person, most particularly in the face, which is where the “flesh is most openly visible”; yet the “unique characteristic” of the face is that it is the “sole place where precisely nothing can be seen,” and thus it delineates the “point at which all visible spectacle happens to be impossible, where there is nothing to see, where intuition can give nothing [of the] visible.”<sup>356</sup> The impossibility implied in envisaging the invisible visage provides a template by which we can measure the temporal efflux as the incessant becoming of what has everlastingly been, steadfast in its transience, transient in its steadfastness.

One never sees the same face twice, because time, in being accumulated, deforms it as much as it shapes it. Only time can draw the portrait of a face, since it alone sketches it. Time distinguishes the face, because it marks it—in the taking of flesh, in archive. But there is more: time, as the past accomplished, should never be able to appear if it were limited to passing. Like death, as soon as the moment has come, time is no longer it for me. . . . Completed time manifests itself in what it removes, destroys, and undoes—the phenomenality of ruins of stone, but especially of ruins of flesh.<sup>357</sup>

The inherent link between time as that which abides in passing and the face as that which forever eludes the gaze of the other underscores death as an essential aspect in understanding the texture and tonality of temporality. “To envisage a face,” writes Marion, “requires less to see it than to wait for it, to wait for its accomplishment, the terminal act, the passage to effectivity. That is why the truth of a life is only unveiled at its last instant. . . . And to see the other finally, in truth, would mean, in the end, closing his or her eyes.”<sup>358</sup> A profound paradox is here recovered: the face can be seen only at death, in the closing of the eyes, the instruments of perceptual vision. In the course of life, the face beholds and is not beheld; at death it can no longer behold and is thus beheld.

My reflections on time, truth, and death elicited from and affixed within the kabbalistic orientation, as constructed from representative texts, begin from this hermeneutical standpoint: the temporality of time imparts the meaning of otherness as the otherness of meaning encoded in the secret of the other, the mystery that constitutes the alterity engendered as feminine, the visibly invisible rendered invisibly visible from within the site of hiding, a blindness—bestowed on the modest—that visualizes time in its genealogical heterogeneity.<sup>359</sup> Nicolas Abraham expresses the matter in terms of the category of the “transphenomenal,” which he considers the “special dimension” that “defines the field of psychoanalysis.” “Time,” he writes, “is understood in its internal genesis; it is someone’s time, of course, but it can only be perceived by someone else.”<sup>360</sup> In contemplating the texture of time that may be mined from the works of kabbalistic theosophy, we may read backward from the psychological to the ontological—a turnaround justified by the fact that the onto-theological standpoint of traditional kabbalah (to borrow Heidegger’s locution) precludes the possibility of these two being severed, since the soul not only participates ontically in the substance of God’s being but is the mirror through which the invisible is seen as the true appearance of apparent truth. The discernment at the psychical level that time is always the measure of the inscrutability of the other leads to the realization of time as the mystery of the transcendent other becoming other in relation to itself, the externalization of inner time occasioned by the internalization of exterior space.<sup>361</sup>



Nature revolves but never advances,  
Eternal—that a circle, this a line.

Edward Young

### Encircled Line: A Mythologic of Hebraic Time

Time, like other facets of phenomenal experience, has played a critical role in the history of world religions.<sup>1</sup> In Judaism specifically, numerous opinions, spanning many centuries, geographical localities, intellectual influences, and literary genres, have been expressed about time. Accordingly, I make no attempt here to provide a comprehensive overview of the understanding of time in the variegated history of Judaism.<sup>2</sup> I do take the liberty, however, of making two observations, the generality of which will foster rather than eschew specific historical analyses. First, it is not viable to depict temporality in opposition to or separate from spatiality in Judaism, let alone to privilege the former as the genuine mark of Hebrew spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Practitioners of Judaism in its disparate spatio-temporal instantiations—beginning in the ancient Near Eastern milieu within which the oldest parts of the scriptural legacy began to take shape and continuing through the richly diverse second-temple period to the age of formative rabbinic Judaism and beyond through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and modernity to the present—have cultivated concepts of sacred space and sacred time simultaneously. Indeed, while it is possible to distinguish spatial and temporal coordinates notionally, in lived experience they intersect and converge: time can only be delineated in relation to place and place only in relation to time. The sixteenth-century homilist and exegete Judah Loew ben Bezalel of Prague, differentially referred to by the acronym Maharal, had this confluence in

mind when he noted that “time and place are one matter [ *ha-zeman we-ha-maqom inyan eḥad* ] as is known to those who understand.”<sup>4</sup> The specific context of Maharal’s comment is a discussion on the nature of the revelation of Torah at Sinai in the third month after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. In Maharal’s view, neither the spatial nor the temporal coordinates of the experience were accidental or arbitrary; on the contrary, the transcendental nature of the truth disclosed necessitated the place and time of the event, that is to say, both when and where the epiphany occurred approximated as much as possible the metaphysical constitution of what was divulged in the physical world.

I return subsequently to this theme in the thought of Judah Loew, with special focus on the dimension of time; noteworthy for the moment is his insistence on the inseparability of space and time. This insight cuts a path that can lead to the depths of the religious sensibility that has informed Jewish piety through the generations, an insight enhanced by the philological oddity that the word *olam* can denote both the spatial measure of the “world” and the temporal magnitude of “eternity.” The convergence of space and time that ensues from this dual connotation is further enhanced by the rabbinic etymology that playfully relates the word *olam* to the root *alam*, “to conceal” or “to hide.”<sup>5</sup> The mystery of being is disclosed by the juxtaposition of space and time that characterizes our experience of the phenomenal world.<sup>6</sup> As philosopher and sinologist François Jullien succinctly put it in a more contemporary vernacular, “*Le temps et l’espace ne sont pas dissociables l’un de l’autre: aux portions du temps répondent des parties de l’espace, leurs emblèmes sont communs, chaque période est solidaire d’un climat, chaque orient lié à une saison.*”<sup>7</sup> Particularly in the arena of ritualized behavior, one discerns the concomitant spatialization of time and temporalization of space.<sup>8</sup> Rather than sharply bifurcating the terms paired in the compound “time-space,” it is more useful to note their convergence with/in varied socio-cultural constellations.

Second, from the perspective of Judaism as a religious phenomenon, the assumed mutual exclusivity of time configured as linear and as circular—the arrow and the cycle—a crucial dichotomy that has shaped conceptions of temporality in Western thought, is in fact false; the two cannot so easily be separated.<sup>9</sup> There has been a tendency—based, in the words of Jonathan Z. Smith, on a “groundless distinction”<sup>10</sup>—to correlate linear time with the historical and cyclical time with the mythical, and likewise to correlate the former with ancient Israel and Judaism and the latter with either Near Eastern or Hellenistic models of religious philosophy.<sup>11</sup> But underlying the biblical and rabbinic conceptions of time is a convergence of history and myth that endows ritual performance with historical meaning and historical facticity with ritual transcendence.<sup>12</sup> Recurrent patterns transpire within the narrative framework of linear succession—the timelessness of lived time extending in an attenuated circle of

return<sup>13</sup>—yielding a temporality where the interminably ephemeral is ephemerally interminable.<sup>14</sup> As the philosopher Eric Voegelin observed in his reflections on the historical evolution of ancient Israelite cosmology and eschatology, “When the revelation of the transcendent God has become the experiential center of order and symbolization, the transcendental implications of the compact symbols are set free; and correspondingly the volume of meaning in the symbols shrinks until the ritual renewal of order in time becomes a prefiguration of its ultimate restoration in eternity.”<sup>15</sup> The entelechy of messianic teleology revolves around hope in the future and faith in the past, but the hub, as it were, that makes possible the spinning of the rim, is belief in an eternal present—the moment always a semblance of the moment it will never have been—in which the divine-human drama is continuously and divergently enacted through Israel’s ceremonial practices and obedience to the covenantal law.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the ideal set forth by Voegelin corresponds to what he elsewhere depicts in terms of Plato’s idea of *metaxy*, the “in-between,” which is neither time nor eternity but the erotic tension of lingering betwixt the poles of temporal becoming and eternal being.<sup>17</sup> In this state, which Voegelin identifies as the “philosophical experience,” the two poles endure in their autonomy: “Neither does eternal being become an object in time, nor is temporal being transposed into eternity. We remain in the ‘in-between,’ in a temporal flow of experience in which eternity is nevertheless present. The flow cannot be dissected into a past, a present, and a future of world-time, for at every point of the flow there persists the tension toward eternal being transcending time. The concept most suitable to express the presence of eternal being in the temporal flow is *flowing presence*.”<sup>18</sup>

It is surely wise to mark out carefully the multiple conceptions of time attested in biblical, post-biblical, formative and medieval rabbinic texts. Still, a broad view can be legitimately posited if the taxonomic classifications are examined retrospectively from a redactional standpoint, which must take into account the pluriformity and ongoing evolution of texts that eventually become fixed, albeit relatively so, as an identifiable canon that informs the beliefs and actions of lived liturgical communities. Thus there is cogency in thinking of biblical time in terms of a providential sense of history, moving from creation to revelation. But it is not valid to identify this simply and unqualifiedly as linear time,<sup>19</sup> which is supposedly transformed by the rabbis into what Levi-Strauss calls the “totemic” view of time, that is, the causal explanation of events in terms of a mythological past and eschatological future.<sup>20</sup>

As we may elicit from dicta preserved in various literary sources, the rabbis did not uphold a hard-and-fast distinction between past, present, and future; the present has no reality except as an interlude between an idealized past and

a utopian future, when the matter is considered vertically, or between this world and the world to come, when it is considered horizontally.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the rabbinic conception of time as it pertains to ritualistic matters is not, strictly speaking, a matter of chronometrically measuring the threefold duration of physical events; rather, it is very much a consequence of the intentionality expressed by the agent in relation to these events, an idea typified, for instance, in the ruling that one may add to sacred time by consecrating the profane (*mosifin me-ḥol al qodesh*), the justification for the custom of commencing the observance of Sabbath or a holiday prior to sunset, or the custom (transmitted in the name of R. Ishmael) of inaugurating the fast of Yom Kippur toward the end of the ninth day of Tishrei.<sup>22</sup> This principle is concretized in the maxim *kol maqom she-yesh bo shevut mosifin me-ḥol al qodesh*, “In every place that there is [a matter of] rest, one can add to the sacred from the profane.”<sup>23</sup>

Noteworthy is the application of this principle in a tradition attributed to R. Yudan that the time “in which the creation of the world [*mele’khet ha-olam*] was completed” is the “extra hour wherein the sacred is added onto the profane [*zo sha’ah yeterah she-mosifin me-ḥol al qodesh*].” According to this statement, creation was completed in the luminous shadow of twilight, the borderline moment between the mundane and holy, and hence it is designated as the hour wherein the sacred can be added to the profane. In one midrashic context, the dictum of R. Yudan is linked exegetically to the verse “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God” (Exod 20:9).<sup>24</sup> The philosophical understanding that associates the conclusion of the creation with the inception of Sabbath is tied thematically to the halakhic mandate to initiate the observance of Sabbath on Friday before the official start of the seventh day at sunset. Although other talmudic passages can also be cited to substantiate the point, the one I have mentioned is sufficient to assert that from both halakhic and aggadic perspectives the rabbis did not proffer a rigorous conception of an autonomous “objective” time—and this in spite of the meticulous concern they demonstrated with respect to establishing the proper temporal frame to determine the Jewish calendar based on the sanctification of the new moon (*qiddush ha-ḥodesh*), a ritual obligation often presented in rabbinic literature as an act that distinguishes the Jews from all other nations, who determine their calendar on a solar basis.<sup>25</sup>

It is reasonable to conjecture, moreover, that the roots for the rabbinic fusion of historical and mythical layers of meaning lie in the view of time operative in the ritual conception of covenantal history proffered in the priestly and deuteronomistic codes embedded in the scriptural canon. If we are to speak of a linear conception of history in biblical sources, as many scholars have insisted, we cannot sever it from an equally present cyclical pattern that is related to the

narrative reinscription of the past in sacred text and commemorative ritual anchored to the rhythms of nature. I see no reason to speak of a “change in the treatment of time from the view of the biblical literature to that of the rabbinic literature” as a “transition from a collective historical memory to a collective ahistorical memory.”<sup>26</sup> Historical and ahistorical are not to be polarized respectively as dynamic-optimistic and static-pessimistic models of time.<sup>27</sup> To grasp the concept of time that has informed Jewish religiosity, it is better to speak of linear circularity, or circular linearity,<sup>28</sup> a mythopoeic conception that prevails in the scriptural texts produced by priests and scribes as well as in the pericopae of the rabbis that over time inspired the minds and hearts of Jewish poets, philosophers, exegetes, and mystical visionaries.

The widely proclaimed epistemological insight that human thinking is circular is perceived as a weakness by those who conceive the path of thinking as a journey commencing at a point of departure and terminating at a point of arrival.<sup>29</sup> Yet, the yearning to get somewhere notwithstanding, the human mind, it seems, moves in a manner more like a spiral, winding this way and that way, a kind of circularity that resonates with the envisioning of reading as a mutual round dance, the reader encircling the time of the text encircling the time of the reader. In this twofold encircling is the reversibility of the interpretative timeline, the redoubled reflexivity that provides the epistemic basis for any historical sketch, interpreting the past from the standpoint of the present, which is, in turn, informed by the very past one seeks to interpret. To decode the meaning of a text, one must be able to read from beginning to end and from end to beginning, a hermeneutical axiom articulated by Rosenzweig in the brilliance of *Der Stern der Erlösung*.<sup>30</sup> The possibility of reading in inverse trajectories does not imply a closed circle, as implied in the ancient Greek belief in the cyclicity of time, epitomized in the statement attributed by Aristotle<sup>31</sup> to Alcmaeon of Croton: “Men perish because they cannot join the beginning to the end.”<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, the ability to read bidirectionally presumes an open circle, which necessitates the impossibility of determining the end from the beginning or the beginning from the end; the reversibility of the timeline implies not closure at either terminus but rather an ever-changing flux, which destabilizes the model of an irreversible succession proceeding unilaterally from start to finish.

This idea is encapsulated pithily in the statement *ein muqdam u-me’uḥar ba-torah*, “there is no before or after in Scripture.”<sup>33</sup> The conventional, perhaps even commonsensical, conception of linear time, a succession of moments lurching forward like a stream rushing over intractable rocks of historical facticity, breaks under the weight of this supposition: when we reach the end of the line, we realize the circularity of the path, a return to the beginning that beckons an extending forward of a new progression. In Foucault’s pointed but liberal for-

mulation: “The most direct line is also the most perfect circle, which, in coming to a close, suddenly becomes straight, linear, and as economical as light.”<sup>34</sup> To say “there is no before or after” does not proffer a static conception of the eternity of Torah set in opposition to time and therefore resistant to the fluctuation of historical contingency—a binary considered “traditional” in Western thought<sup>35</sup>—but rather a conception of temporality that calls into question the linear model of aligning events chronoscopically in a sequence stretched invariably between before and after. The hermeneutical principle of the rabbis embraces a notion of time that is circular in its linearity and linear in its circularity. When the scriptural narrative is viewed within this framework, after is before precisely because before is after, but before cannot be after unless after is before.

Underlying the dictum, moreover, is a belief in revelation as the textualization of sacred language—the materialization of text in both graphic and phonic dimensions, to be grasped concurrently and not sequentially—linked to a moment that has no history, the interval of time that intrudes instantaneously and thereby cuts the timeline from any past or future, the fullness of the moment that is both continuous and unique, the perpetual creation of what has eternally been.<sup>36</sup> To be the moment, the moment, at all moments, must pass as the moment on the way to becoming the moment it is to be, but in passing to become the moment it is to be, the moment ceases to be the moment on the way to becoming the moment it is to be. In the Hebraic/Hellenic wisdom of the author of Ecclesiastes, *mah she-hayah kevar niqra shemo*, “that which has been is named already” (6:1)—what has come to pass has by now received its name, and hence cannot, even momentarily, be of the moment when that which is is what will come to be.

A similar conception of a timeless time emerges in a different terminological register from a fragment of Parmenides preserved by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*. According to the wisdom imparted to and by Parmenides, time is not a flux of becoming with past or future but rather the saturation of being characteristic of that which is, the eternity of the *nunc stans*: “It was not in the past, nor shall it be, since it is now, all at once, one, continuous.”<sup>37</sup> Congruently, Plato depicted the instant as the point of transition between motion and rest, the point through and in which what is at rest comes to motion and what is in motion comes to rest. “When, being in motion, it comes to rest and when, being at rest, it changes to being in motion, it must itself not be in one time. It is simply not possible for it to admit being earlier at rest and later in motion and later at rest without undergoing change.”<sup>38</sup> Caught between coming and going, the moment can have no past or future, and consequently no present; strictly speaking, there is no moment in time but only

time in the moment. What makes the triadic constellation of time possible is the positing of a momentary union that resists temporal computation.

The reversible reversibility of the time flow I am describing is evident in the event of reading when viewed as repeatedly hearing anew the text yet-to-be-inscribed, a supposition that rests on the assumption that text and reader evolve correlatively in the unfolding of time through patterns discerned from the interpretative gesture of repeatedly rendering the old as the new initiating the new as the old. The intersection of hermeneutics and temporality may be thought from the expectation of novel life germinating in the ground of genuine repetition.<sup>39</sup> Heidegger raised this very point when he noted that the “first principle of hermeneutics” is to discern that historical thinking is anchored in the possibility of returning to the past as future; indeed, the past is authentic only to the extent that it is futurally present—present in the future as the future of the present.<sup>40</sup> At this crisscross we can discern the momentous circle in which we are chronically ensconced: the thinking of time must be pondered from the time of thinking, but the time of thinking can be reckoned only from the thinking of time.<sup>41</sup> To heed these words is to take to heart the interface of time, truth, and interpretation, an interface effaced in the moment displayed by the ecstatic and horizontal aspects of temporal threefoldness, arising from and giving birth to the primordial unity of past, present, and future.<sup>42</sup> In his reflections on Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Deleuze thus expressed the inherent correlation of time and hermeneutics: “To seek the truth is to interpret, decipher, explicate. But this ‘explication’ is identified with the development of the sign in itself. This is why the Search is always temporal, and the truth always a truth of time.”<sup>43</sup> The search for truth, the quest to establish meaning, invariably is temporal. Timely truth, at all times, is the gift sent and received as the truth of and in time.

### Timeless Time and the Rotation of the *Sefirot*

The task of this book is to elucidate hermeneutically the correlation of time, truth, and death as may be educed from works of kabbalistic theosophy. The path upon which I shall embark to cogitate about this matter is to reflect on each of the letters in the Hebrew word for “truth,” *emet*. From late antiquity a tradition has been transmitted in the name of Simeon ben Laqish pointing out that this word is composed of the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (*alef*, *mem*, and *tau*), signifying thereby that truth is comprehensive of all the semiotic ciphers that weave the fabric of the holy language. In chapter 5, I analyze the rabbinic text in which this idea is preserved.<sup>44</sup> Needless to say, listening to the literary context in which the dictum appears is crucial in determining its precise meaning.

Suffice it here to note that the insight about the orthographic composition of *emet* appears in a discussion concerning the correct judicial behavior, a discussion that provokes, as is typical for the rabbinic imagination, theological reflection on the nature of divine judgment. The cosmic judge is upheld as the model of behavior for human judges and thus a discussion about the latter will of necessity lead to the former. In the context of these pronouncements, we learn of the “seal” (*hotam*) of God, a seal that seals the judgment, the stamp of truth that makes the edict stand. Hence, the adage that the signet of God is truth from which springs the observation that *emet* is composed of the first, middle, and last letters of the alphabet. To think the essence of this matter, to submit to the call of what must be thought,<sup>45</sup> is to discern the correlation of truth and language, or, more precisely, Hebrew, which is depicted in rabbinic lore (and all the more so in the esoteric accretions to the tradition) as the cosmic language, a “pure” or “originary” speech, the proto/verb inscripted as spoken, spoken as inscripted.<sup>46</sup> At this juncture, we do not yet know what this correlation is supposed to communicate, but in time the matter will be unraveled. What can be posited here is that medieval kabbalists introduced (or, at least, made explicit) the link between the consonants of *emet* and the three points that dominate the caricature of time in human consciousness.<sup>47</sup> Alef induces us to consider the past, mem the present, and tau the future.

Prior to delving into the letters and their corresponding temporal modalities, some preliminary remarks are needed on the place of time in the metaphysical ruminations of kabbalists from the Middle Ages to the early modern period.<sup>48</sup> We commence with a negative assertion: From the kabbalists’ vantage point, time is not dependent on the motion of bodies in space (the Aristotelian definition) nor is it the eternal forms’ fleeting shadow in the world of matter (the Platonic model). Time, in its primordially (which is to be understood ontologically and not chronologically) is linked to the ebb and flow of divine energy, the vital force that generates the polarities of motion and rest, light and dark, life and death.<sup>49</sup> Moses Cordovero, a sixteenth-century kabbalist from Safed, expressed the matter epigrammatically: when he wrote that “Time is the secret of the rotation of the emanations [*sod gilggul ha-sefirot*], during the day this particular emanation, during the night this particular emanation, and on Sabbath this particular emanation. The time that was from the day that the world was created, and the emanations rotated, is not the time that evolves from now and forward, but rather there are new aspects, for the order of time [*sefer zemannim*] that is before him has no boundary and no end.”<sup>50</sup>

The ephemerality of time as the constancy of what passes away is associated in the continuation of the above passage with the phenomenon of innovative interpretations of Torah: there are always new meanings to be elicited from the



text of Torah, since, in its mystical valence, Torah is the incarnate form of Ein Sof, the delimitation of the limitless that is manifest in potentially infinite concealments, the ineffable name gesticulated in potentially endless circumlocutions. Like other sixteenth-century kabbalists, Cordovero explicitly affirms the paradox that the hiding of the divine light facilitates its disclosure, and hence the emanation of the *sefirot* is concomitantly their veiling, much as a garment conceals what it reveals by revealing what it conceals. As he says in *Pardes Rimmonim*: “The cause of disclosure is the cause of concealment and the cause of concealment the cause of disclosure [*sibbat ha-hitggallut hu sibbat ha-he’elem we-sibbat ha-he’elem hu sibbat ha-hitggallut*], that is, through the concealment of the great light and its being clothed in a garment it is revealed. Thus the light is concealed, and, in truth, it is revealed, for if it were not concealed, it would not be revealed.”<sup>51</sup> In the section on the term *levushin*, “garments,” in his *Shi’ur Qomah*, Cordovero reiterates the point: “Now in this manner is also the issue of the garments [*malbushim*] in the *sefirot*, for he placed a barrier between himself and the lower existents, and he hid the force of his governance through them. . . . And this matter is addressed in their saying that disclosure is the cause of concealment [*ha-hitggallut sibbat ha-he’elem*], for what he reveals through the intermediary of these *sefirot* is the cause of the concealment of his existence and governance that cannot be comprehended at all by the lower beings.”<sup>52</sup> Insofar as God and Torah are identical, an axiomatic truth of kabbalah from its inception, it follows that Torah in its textual embodiment—the theosophic principle that undergirds the anthropological ideal of corporeality as embodied textuality<sup>53</sup>—is the veil that reveals the infinite by concealing the light it reveals, the voice that declaims the ineffable by muting the name it declaims. It is precisely from the juxtaposition of disclosure and concealment, expanding and withholding, that the texture of time in its ontological comportment can be discerned.<sup>54</sup>

Cordovero’s linkage of innovative explications of Torah and the evolving nature of time underscores the intricate connection in kabbalistic lore between phenomenological hermeneutics and the ontology of time.<sup>55</sup> Paradoxically, the idea of an infinite Torah entails that the text is inherently timeless, for that which is infinite cannot be contained in any temporal frame, which is by necessity finite, yet the meaning of a text that is inherently timeless is manifest only in and through an endless chain of interpretation that unfolds persistently in time; indeed, in its most basic hermeneutical sense, time is the unremitting recitation of the timeless text.

In this matter, as with so many of the themes that shaped the worldview of traditional kabbalists, the mystical sensibility is a deepening of an approach found in older rabbinic sources. While one must be on guard about making general claims with respect to the rabbinic sages, I feel confident that it is con-

ceptually sound, and even methodologically valid, to speak of a rabbinic notion of time that is intimately connected to understanding the revelation of Torah as a recurring phenomenon. By way of illustration, consider the following declaration preserved in the Babylonian Talmud:

R. Judah began [to expound] the honor of Torah, and he explicated the verse “[Moses and the levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying:] Silence! Hear O Israel! Today you have become the people [of the Lord, your God]” (Deut 27:9). Was the Torah given to Israel on that very day? Was that day not at the end of the forty years? Rather this is to teach you that the Torah is cherished by those who study it each day as the day it was given from Mount Sinai.<sup>56</sup>

Leaving aside the redactional issues and the reasonable demand on the part of historically minded text scholars to locate this dictum diachronically on some chronological grid, it is not unwarranted to say that this statement gives voice to a religious belief (for lack of a better term) foundational to the reconstruction of Judaism promoted and sanctioned by the Palestinian and Babylonian sages: study of Torah demands that one be able to imagine each day as a recurrence of the Sinaitic theophany, a reiteration of the past that induces the novelty of the present.

The conception of time as the moment of unique repetition is elucidated further in the theme of reliving the experience of Sinai as it appears in textual aggregates presumed to be earlier than the aforementioned talmudic passage. Two notable examples are sufficient here, though one can find the same approach to time in rabbinic literature in relation to other scriptural subjects.<sup>57</sup> The first example centers on the interpretation of the conclusion of the verse “Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day” (Deut 6:6): “‘With which I charge you this day.’ So that they will not be in your eyes like an obsolete ordinance [*ke-diyotagma yeshenah*] that a person does not heed, but rather like a new ordinance [*ke-diyotagma ḥadashah*] that all run to read.”<sup>58</sup> The second illustration is an anonymous exegesis on the words “on this very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai” (Exod 19:1): “Did they arrive ‘on this very day’ [*ba-yom ha-zeh*]? Rather when you study my words, they should not be old [*yeshenim*] in your eyes but it should be as if Torah were given on that very day [*ke-illu ha-yom nittenah torah*].”<sup>59</sup>

Whatever alternative conceptions of time one may elicit from rabbinic literature, and surely there are others, the one under consideration has special significance insofar as it exposes a deep-seated nexus in the rabbinic imaginary between time and text, revelation and interpretation, poetic envisioning and hermeneutic explication: each interpretative gesture is a reenactment of the rev-

elatory experience, albeit from its unique vantage point, each moment a novel replication of the past. Repetition and novelty, accordingly, are not antinomical; what recurs is precisely what has been that which will recur as what has never been. Paraphrasing the second midrashic gloss cited above, Solomon ben Isaac, the eleventh-century talmudic and biblical exegete better known by the acronym Rashi, wrote on the words *ba-yom ha-zeh*, “on this very day”: “Words of Torah should be new [*hadashim*] for you as if they were given this day.”<sup>60</sup>

This medieval commentator adds nothing substantial of his own, but by newly reiterating the rabbinic dictum more or less verbatim, he elucidates further the original intent; indeed one might say Rashi demonstrates that the rabbis’ principle with respect to the Written Torah can be applied to their own dicta assembled in the Oral Torah: for one who studies either the Written or the Oral Torah, the text must be as new as the Torah was on the day it was revealed to the Israelites who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. The source that likely influenced Rashi’s formulation makes this point exactly:

Ben Zoma said: Why is it written “In the third month [after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on this day they entered the wilderness of Sinai]” (Exod 19:1) “On that day” [*ba-yom ha-hu*] is not written here [but rather] “on this day” [*ba-yom ha-zeh*], as if [*ke-illu*] on this day they came from the wilderness of Sinai. Every day that you are occupied with Torah, you should say, “It is as if we received it from Sinai on this day” [*ke-illu ba-yom ha-zeh qibbaltiha mi-sinai*], and it says, “This day [*ha-yom ha-zeh*] the Lord your God commands you to observe” (Deut 26:16).<sup>61</sup>

The claim made with respect to Torah study represents a more generic understanding of ritual time proffered by the rabbis, a notion of temporality that connects past and present by imaginally enfolding one in the other rather than by connecting them with a line. The past can be experienced as present because the present can be experienced as past, but the present can be experienced as past only because the past can be experienced as present. With respect to this point, consider Maharal’s explication of Rashi’s construal (based on a midrashic precedent)<sup>62</sup> of the words “and has given it to you” (Exod 13:11) as “it should be in your eyes as if [*ke-illu*] it were given to you on this day”:

And similarly the Torah is beyond time in accord with the gradation of the Torah [*we-khen ha-torah hi al ha-zeman le-madregat ha-torah*], for time depends on the sun and the movement of the sphere [*ki ha-zeman hu toleh ba-shemesh bi-tenu’at al ha-galgal*], and the Torah is above [the sun]. . . . And with respect to all matters that are beyond time the matter of time is indifferent [*we-khol ha-devarim asher hem al ha-zeman kol inyan ha-zeman shaweih*], and nothing is in time except for time [*we-eino bi-zeman zulat zeman*]. Therefore they said that

each man is obligated to look upon himself as if he left Egypt,<sup>63</sup> for the cause [that redeemed] those who left is the same cause in each and every generation, and there is here no distinction.<sup>64</sup> With respect to the other things that are under time, since they fall beneath time they are dependent on time, and it is not said about them that one should see oneself as if it were constantly so. However, with respect to the few divine matters [*devarim elohiyyim*] it is thus said, with respect to the gradation that is above time and that is independent of it, it is spoken of in this way.<sup>65</sup>

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss comprehensively the view of time promulgated in Maharal's voluminous corpus, which may be described as a massive exposé of the spiritual depths of rabbinic aggadah and a defense of the wisdom of the ancient sages against contemporary critiques like that in Azariah de Rossi's *Me'or Einayim*.<sup>66</sup> Stylistically, these compositions are marked by copious repetition and reformulation, and hence it would be impossible in this setting to do justice to his religious philosophy. The passage I have cited, however, can serve to illumine the position of the rabbis as preserved in Rashi's words. According to Maharal, the underlying assumption of the rabbinic dicta regarding the need to experience the reenactment of the Sinaitic epiphany when one studies Torah is that the latter is of an eternal nature impervious to the fluctuations and contingencies of time. He occasionally casts the matter in terms of the contrast between *mišwah*, which is "in the body" and thus "temporal" (*lizeman*), and Torah, which is "not physical" and thus "eternally redemptive" (*mašelet le'olam*), that is, it draws one out from the snare of nature and leads one to the final felicity, the life of the world-to-come. Following older philosophic and kabbalistic texts, Maharal depicts this ultimate condition both as the conjunction of the human and divine intellects, the absorption of the particular in the universal,<sup>67</sup> and as the restoration of the sundry discriminate entities in the material world to the immaterial essence of nondifferentiated unity to the point that there no longer is any discernible separation between the spiritual and physical, God and the cosmos.<sup>68</sup> As he puts it in one of his many treatises, "The Torah is rational [*sikhli*], and everything that is rational does not fall under time.<sup>69</sup> Therefore they say that Torah protects forever, as it is appropriate for the thing that is not temporal and does not change, but the commandment [*mišwah*] protects temporarily for it comes to be by the bodily gesture [*ma'aseh ha-guf*] . . . and the body is dependent on and belongs to time."<sup>70</sup> Maharal variously describes Torah as the "absolute intellect" (*ha-sekhelel ha-gamur*),<sup>71</sup> the "supernal intellect" (*ha-sekhelel ha-elyon*), or the "divine intellect" (*ha-sekhelel ha-elohi*)<sup>72</sup> that comprises the "rational order" (*sefer sikhli*) or "intelligible order" (*sefer ha-muskkal*)<sup>73</sup> by means of which the world was created, and thus it belongs to the "intelligible matters [*ha-inyanim ha-sikhliyyim*] whose actions are not in time since

they do not fall under time and they do not act by means of the movement from which there is time, and according to the gradation of their importance they act without time . . . the act of God, blessed be he, is completely without time.”<sup>74</sup>

Prima facie, the position Maharal articulates seems to be at odds with what is implied in the rabbinic dicta and reiterated in Rashi’s paraphrase. However, if one examines the works of Maharal more assiduously, a case can be made that his view, though largely garbed in medieval philosophical language, is a reaffirmation of the stance proffered by the rabbis of old: the portrayal of Torah as intellect beyond time serves as the ideational basis for the belief that revelation of what is received and reception of what is revealed are ongoing; one can, indeed must, reexperience the Sinaitic theophany continuously, for in every moment both text and interpreter are fashioned anew precisely because they were conceived long ago.<sup>75</sup> Judah Loew’s periodic statements that Torah does not fall under time signify not that the law is atemporal but rather that it embodies the measure of time that transcends the threefold division into past, present, and future; in the moment of revelation, what was and what will be are compresent in what is always never the same. From the rabbinic notion of *mattan torah* or *qabbalat torah*, expressions that convey respectively the double gesture of the gift of revelation, giving and receiving, we comprehend the property of time that is independent of body and consequently independent of space, a time that can be attributed without contradiction to incorporeal beings.<sup>76</sup>

Support for this interpretation may be elicited from the following remark of Maharal: “Just as there are actual days for physical human beings, so there is a time that is not actually time [*kakh yesh zeman we-eino zeman mammash*], and it applies to entities that are not corporeal [*devarim bilti gashmiyyim*].”<sup>77</sup> A time that is not actually time, *zeman we-eino zeman mammash*—what kind of time is that? We learn more of this time that is not really time from a second passage that is especially significant, since the topic is the revelation of Torah, the pristine form of intellect beyond temporal demarcation, in historical time:

With regard to the body that falls under time, it is appropriate to say “For every time” [*la-kol zeman*] (Eccles 3:1), but [in the case of] the thing that is exclusively intellect [*sekhel*], as the revelation of Torah [*qabbalat torah*], which is not a corporeal entity [*davar gufani*], it does not fall under time. Concerning this it is said “a moment for every desire” [*et le-khol hefes*] (ibid.), for the present [*attah*] that conjoins the past and future is not time [*zeman*]. That is to say, the matter that is intelligible [*muskkal*] does not fall under time; it comes to pass in the present [*na’aseh be-attah*].<sup>78</sup>

In the above citation, Maharal distinguishes between *zeman*, the mode of temporality that applies to corporeal beings subject to generation and corruption,

and *et*, the mode of temporality that may be attributed to intelligible beings not subject to generation and corruption. The latter is described more specifically as the present (*attah*) that unites past (*avar*) and future (*attid*). The time in which the Torah is given, the time of revelation, reveals something axiomatic about the revelation of time: in the time of the moment, which is experienced at all times as the moment of time, the present, *attah*, is the middle or third term that dialectically bridges past and future. Here we discern a structure that Maharal applies to various speculative schema in his philosophical presentation of Jewish piety.<sup>79</sup> We find it again in the following passage, which concerns the inner significance of the fact that the Sinaitic theophany took place in the third month after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt (Exod 19:1):

Since the Torah does not fall under time and its category, as every rational matter [*davar sikhli*] is not under the category of time, it was not appropriate for it to be given except in the third month, for as we already know every [aspect of] time is divided into past and future, and the present [*attah*] is the third that mediates between them and that fastens time together, for by means of it the past and future time are conjoined. . . . The term *et* is suitable for the rational matter since it does not fall at all under time [*ha-zeman*] . . . . Hence, the present [*attah*] unites the time [of the past and future] for the end of the past and the beginning of the future is the present, as is known to those who know [and comprehend] the matter [and the content of the substance] of time. The present, therefore, is the third that joins together the time that is divided into two parts, past and future, but it is not essentially time [*zeman ba-esset*]. Thus the third month alone was selected for the giving of Torah, as it is written "a moment for every desire" (Eccles 3:1), for the moment [*et*] is the intermediary and the third that is in between the two boundaries of time.<sup>80</sup>

Now we can attempt an explanation of Maharal's paradoxical expression "time that is not actually time," which he ascribes to Torah and other incorporeal entities: the time that is not actually time is the time (*et*) of the present (*attah*) that links past and future and thereby provides cohesiveness and coherence to the narrative of history by supplying a beginning, middle, and end, which correspond theologically to creation, revelation, and redemption—a narratological conception of history that distinguishes the Jewish people from other nations whose time is bound to the sun or the rotation of the sphere<sup>81</sup> in an eternal cycle of return that has no beginning or end and, consequently, no possibility for authentic novelty or creativity in the middle.<sup>82</sup> The esoteric significance of the scriptural account that links the epiphany at Sinai to the third month is to underscore that the temporal modality appropriate to Torah, which

as intellect does not fall under the category of time, is the “singular present wherein there is no division of time at all” (*he-attah ha-meyuḥad she-ein bah ḥilluq zeman kelal*).<sup>83</sup> The timelessness of the moment accounts for its singularity and volatility, the instant marked, as in the Sabbath at the end of creation, by the

reception of form [*qabbalat ha-ṣurah*], which is being without movement [*hawayah beli tenu'ah*] . . . a spontaneous being in which there is no being [*hawayah pit'omit we-ein ba-zeh hawayah*], for every being is in time. . . . for the reception of form is the completion of being [*hashlamat ha-hawayah*] . . . and this matter is not called “work” [*mela'khah*], for there is no work here that has movement; on the contrary, this matter is the acquisition of completion and rest [*qinyan ha-shelemut u-menuḥah*] . . . for the reception of form is on the Sabbath . . . and, consequently, the reception of form has no need for a temporal reality [*hawayah zemanit*], and this is not called “work,” for work involves movement, and movement is related to the body, but the completion of the world in its totality . . . is not in time at all [*eino bi-zeman kelal*].<sup>84</sup>

The spontaneity of revelation is manifest as well in the sabbatical rest that seals the act of creation, and in the salvific repose of messianic redemption.

In this model of time, what is new cannot be surgically severed (either in experience or in theory) from what is old. One of the better known rabbinic formulations of this belief is the aphorism transmitted in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi that the Written Torah (*miqra*) and all the parts of the Oral Torah (*mishnah, talmud, tosefet, haggadah*), and “even what an exceptional student [*talmid watiq*] will say in the future,” were “all spoken to Moses at Sinai, as it says, ‘Look, this one is new!’ (Eccles 1:10), but his friend responds to him, ‘it occurred long ago’ (ibid.)”<sup>85</sup> The excitement that something genuinely novel is uttered, contained in the enthusiastic explosion, “Look, this one is new!” (*re'eh zeh ḥadash hu*) is immediately countered with the sobering “it occurred long ago” (*kevar hayah le'olamim*). Using the distinction made by Maharal, we can say that from the perspective of *zeman*, the conventional linear idea of time, the two statements are contradictory, for what occurred long ago cannot be new nor can what is new have occurred long ago; however, from the perspective of *et*, the timeless time of the eternally recurring present (*attah*), the statements are not contradictory at all, as only that which occurred long ago can be new and only that which is new could have occurred long ago. That which transpires in the moment—*na'aseh be-attah*—does not fall under the category of time, for, as noted above, the triadic division of time is no longer operative when past is experienced as future that is present, present as past that is future, and future as present that is past. Like the wisdom that Nietzsche's imaginary prophet Zarathustra imparted to the

dwarf in the section entitled “On the Vision and the Riddle” (*Vom Gesicht und Räthsel*), the “vision of the loneliest,” a seeing of the abyss, an abysmal seeing, the moment is a “gateway” (*Torweg*) wherein two paths meet without contradiction, one stretching back eternally to the past and the other stretching ahead eternally to the future.<sup>86</sup> From this one may deduce that the truth of time, disclosed always in the time of truth, is not made up of straight lines but rather of what is curved; indeed, in the same section of Nietzsche’s composition we learn that “time itself is a circle” and that just as, from a spatial perspective, the “spirit of gravity” necessitates that what is thrown up must come down, so from a temporal perspective it necessitates that what has come to pass will come to be again, all that has taken place will be cast up by the sea again.<sup>87</sup> In a world of constant change, the only constant is change, the perpetual (un)becoming of the permanent flux of impermanence.<sup>88</sup>

Needless to say, there are critical differences between the sixteenth-century Jewish homilist and the nineteenth-century German philosopher, which I do not mean to ignore or to minimize. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s depiction of the moment as the meeting-point of the eternal past and eternal future provides a useful way to interpret the view articulated by Maharal. Moreover, for both of them, the recurrence of the past in the present entails not a quantifiable and hence predictable repetition of the same, but rather an indeterminable, incalculable iteration of an original occurrence. Such an iteration of the interminable opens up the possibility of thinking about the relation of time to eternity as decidedly nonbinary, that is, eternity denotes neither timelessness nor the endless duration of time, but the mutual simultaneity and succession of past, present, and future in a moment that replicates the identically different, differently identical.<sup>89</sup> The lexical term in the aforementioned rabbinic statements that conveys an analogous intemporal traversing of temporal boundaries is *ke-illu*, “as if,” a semiotic device (employed equally in legal and non-legal, halakhic and aggadic, contexts) that has the analogical power to juxtapose seemingly divergent concepts, to connect disparate spheres of being, or to bridge the historical chasm separating two periods of time.<sup>90</sup> In the particular example under discussion, the benchmark set by the rabbis is that one who studies must be able to experience the Sinaitic theophany as if it occurred anew, an experience that is possible only if what is new is experienced as if it were old.

The kabbalistic approach to time, which I have elicited from the writings of Cordovero, can be seen legitimately as an embellishment of the rabbinic sensibility outlined above. Of the numerous passages that illustrate the point, I have chosen the following comment of Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, the fifth master of the Lubavitch dynasty, renowned for his sophisticated philosophical presentation of Hasidic lore:



By means of Torah and commandments the light of Ein Sof is drawn forth from above the order of concatenation [*sefer hishtalshelut*], and even above the grade that is the source for the order of concatenation, for even though Torah comes forth from *Hokhmah*, it is known that this is only what comes forth from *Hokhmah*, but in its root it is higher than this, for it extends from the aspect of *Hokhmah* that is in *Keter*, which is the inwardness of *Keter* that is above the order of concatenation. Therefore, the Torah is not garbed in time or place, as in the dictum “whoever is engaged in the teachings about the burnt offering, it is as if he sacrificed a burnt offering,”<sup>91</sup> for even though now is not at all the time or place [for offering the sacrifice], even so by means of engagement with the Torah as it pertains to this law, it is as if he actually sacrificed a burnt offering. Since the Torah emanates from Ein Sof, which is above the order of concatenation, it is not garbed at all in time or place.<sup>92</sup>

Inasmuch as Torah emanates from Ein Sof, it cannot be subject to the laws of space and time—just as the destruction of the Temple, and the consequent cessation of the offering of sacrifices, in no way diminished or altered the expiatory effectiveness of Jewish ritual. In a rhetorical quip that captures the rabbinic conception of imaginal time, study of the laws pertaining to sacrifices is placed on equal footing with offering sacrifices. The attitude expressed in terms of this particular rite illustrates the larger claim that the timeless character of Torah thwarts the restriction of commandments to spatial or temporal preconditions. Precisely this quality is what necessitates that the quest for meaning ensue timelessly in time—not as a linear sequence subject to calculation and charting but as a spontaneous flash, a crack in the spatial spread of the timeline, completely in and of the moment—what Sufis call *waqt*, the instant in which, according to al-Qushayrī, the “dispositions of the real” (*tasrif al-ḥaqq*) come involuntarily and inadvertently upon the person,<sup>93</sup> the interval of time that “consists in effacement [*maḥw*] and confirmation [*ithbāt*],”<sup>94</sup> not as binary opposites but juxtaposed in the space of their difference, the moment effaced in its confirmation, confirmed in its effacement,<sup>95</sup> “the instant of rupture with duration, the return of the same without identity,”<sup>96</sup> a time so fully present it is devoid of (re)presentation, so binding it releases one from all causal links to past or future,<sup>97</sup> a split second wherein and wherewith the superfluity of truth divests one of all memory and expectation,<sup>98</sup> the “Time which has (ever) been void of time” in Rūmī’s felicitous expression,<sup>99</sup> or what Dōgen called *jiji*, the temporal occurrence of each moment, unprecedented, unpredictable, not susceptible to replication, neither cyclical nor linear,<sup>100</sup> the time of dharma’s arising, *shihō-kiji*,<sup>101</sup> non-duality of “being-time,” *uji*, permanence of impermanence.<sup>102</sup> For the mystically enlightened, time is not illusory, as some theologians would have it, nor is it dependent solely on the motion of physical bodies, as the philosophers

would have it, but “it is Eternity itself (*‘azli*’), time without beginning; and *abdi*, time without end. . . . ‘Before-ness’ and ‘after-ness’ of things are only relational; otherwise creation and annihilation are in one and the same moment. Time is the eternal attribute of God.”<sup>103</sup> In this moment of confluence wherein time is eternal and eternity temporal, the epiphany of what cannot be calibrated appears, the showing of what cannot be is previewed. Un/covering of truth is necessarily the contingent re/covery of what is enduringly momentary, for only the enduringly momentary—momentarily at least—reveals the return of the momentarily enduring.<sup>104</sup> No event in time is either completely unique or completely repetitive. The middle path dictates that truth hover between extremes; each moment is the same in virtue of being different, different in virtue of being the same.<sup>105</sup>

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to examine in detail the evolution of this idea in the sources that may have influenced Cordovero, but it is necessary to delve more deeply into his representation of time as the “secret rotation of the emanations.” According to Scholem’s assessment, in contrast to other kabbalists, who “maintained that the concept of time had no application to the process of emanation,” Cordovero “held that this process occurred within ‘non-temporal time,’ a dimension of time which involved as yet no differentiation into past, present, and future.”<sup>106</sup> The full implication of Scholem’s view can be gleaned from another comment. In support of his (eminently sensible) claim that cosmogony and theogony are two aspects of one continuous reality, the rhythm of creation mirroring the inner movement of divine life, Scholem writes: “The act which results beyond and above time in the transformation of the hidden into the manifest God, is paralleled in the time-bound reality of every other world.”<sup>107</sup>

I do not take issue with the main point Scholem is making in the second citation, but his distinction between the world of emanation “above time” and the “time-bound” nature of all the other worlds in the cosmic chain is problematic. Moreover, I am not certain of the defensibility of Scholem’s attempt in the first citation to contrast Cordovero and other kabbalists; it seems to me, by contrast, that the notion of non-temporal time, a time that is before the differentiation of past, present, and future but is time nonetheless, is affirmed by many kabbalists and thus should not be trumpeted as a feature that distinguishes Cordovero’s thought. The disagreement is not simply a pedantic squabble between specialists, but rather involves a central issue in comprehending the religious philosophy and worldview promoted by kabbalists. If time is understood exclusively in terms of the material universe, then surely it would be suitable to ascribe to kabbalists the view frequently affirmed in philosophical literature that God is, strictly speaking, beyond time (*intempore tempus*) and beyond space (*illocalis*

locus);<sup>108</sup> just as the divine is omnipresent, everywhere present and hence nowhere present, so God is eternal, not in time but containing all times.<sup>109</sup> As Maimonides, following in the footsteps of Aristotle, put it, “Time is consequent upon motion, and motion is an accident in what is moved.” Since God is not a mutable body, there is no substratum in which the accident of time can inhere. Contemplating a succession of time before the creation of the world, even if that time is the “infinite duration” of God’s existence, is “due to a supposition regarding time or to an imagining of time and not due to the true reality of time. For time is indubitably an accident.”<sup>110</sup>

Here it is apposite to mention a passage in which Cordovero articulates a position that resonates with the Maimonidean perspective and would seem therefore to validate Scholem’s claim: “The *sefirot* preceded the creation of heaven and earth and they do not fall under time [*einam noflim taḥat ha-zeman*]; on the contrary, they are the root of time [*hem shoresh el ha-zeman*], for the six *sefirot* are the root of the six days, and the seventh the day of Sabbath. . . . And concerning them the [sages], blessed be their memory, said,<sup>111</sup> ‘This teaches that there was a prior order of time [*sefer zemannim*].’”<sup>112</sup> Cordovero adopts the philosophical approach even more stringently when delineating the difference between Ein Sof and the *sefirot*:

The emanated beings fall under time but he does not fall under time. I do not wish to speak of “time” as it seems from the straightforward meaning of our words, but rather the intent is that there was a time when they had not yet emanated as in “prior to the emanation,” and this is one of the things that cannot be in Ein Sof since he is not an existence that does not exist, but he is the necessary of existence, and he brought about the existence of time and he is not a temporal being. . . . And this is illustrative of the power of the magnitude of Ein Sof, king of kings, blessed be he, for it instructs about his being, which does not fall under time, but, on the contrary, he brings about the existence of time, and the being of his privation cannot be imagined in any manner in the world. This is one of his many advantages over his emanations for all of them fall under the existence in which there was already a time in which Ein Sof existed apart from them as in “prior to the emanation.”<sup>113</sup>

The expression “necessary of existence” (*meḥuyav ha-meši’ut*), the technical philosophical designation of God that Maimonides<sup>114</sup> appropriated from Avicenna’s *wājib al-wujūd*,<sup>115</sup> is ascribed to Ein Sof, the one being about whom it can be said unequivocally that its existence is necessary. Insofar as the nonexistence of Ein Sof is inconceivable, there can be no time when Ein Sof does not exist, but if there can be no time when Ein Sof does not exist, time cannot be applied meaningfully to Ein Sof. Alternatively, inasmuch as “all existence is

one” in the nondifferentiated unity of Ein Sof, it follows that “all times are equal,”<sup>116</sup> which is theoretically equivalent to saying that time in its triadic division does not apply to Ein Sof.

Cordovero, and every kabbalist I have studied, would have surely assented to the following comment in the anonymous work, *Ma‘arekhet ha-Elohut*, composed in all likelihood in the beginning of the fourteenth century by someone from the school of Solomon Ibn Adret, disciple of Nahmanides: “The negation of corporeality entails that God is not limited, and not a body or a force in a body, and included in the negation is that [God] is not constricted by place or time, but rather ‘it was, it is, and it shall be’ [*hayah howeh we-yihyeh*].”<sup>117</sup> All corporeality is to be removed from the divine; consequently, God cannot be bound spatially or temporally—in terms of the exegetical gloss on the Tetragrammaton well-attested in medieval rabbinic literature: God is the being who was, is, and will be.<sup>118</sup> To say that God is all three tenses in tandem is equivalent, therefore, to saying that God is beyond temporal ascription. As Hayyim Vital, one of the most prominent sixteenth-century kabbalists and a disciple of both Cordovero and Luria, wrote:

The great name, which is the Tetragram, YHWH, is called as such to indicate his eternal being and his everlasting existence [*hawwayato ha-nishit we-qiyumo la‘ad*], he was, he is, and he will be [*hayah howeh we-yihyeh*], prior to the creation, during the time of the subsistence of creation, and after it reverts to what it was. And had the worlds and all that is in them not have been created, it would not have been possible to see the truth of the manifestation of his eternal being, blessed be he, in the past, present, and future, and he would not have been called by the name YHWH at all.<sup>119</sup>

It seems to me plausible to apply to Ein Sof the description of Durgā-Kālī, the Mother Goddess in Śākta Hinduism, as “the ultimate trans-theistic symbol of Timelessness—the Not-Time,” on account of which she merits the name *Ādyakālā*.<sup>120</sup> Leaving aside the important divergence between the Jewish and Indian materials with respect to the gender construction of the formless form of ultimate reality,<sup>121</sup> the characterization of the latter as a “trans-theistic symbol of Timelessness,” the “Not-Time,”<sup>122</sup> well suits the depiction of the infinite in kabbalistic lore: the form of formlessness that transcends all form, even the form of formlessness, the incomprehensible and ineffable (not)being beyond image and word. In this spirit, Cordovero repeatedly insists that the quality of primordality can be attributed only to Ein Sof, whereas all other entities, including the *sefirot*, are considered temporal and contingent in nature. There is, however, a crucial difference between the temporal causality of the *sefirot* vis-à-vis Ein

Sof and the temporal causality of matters in the spatio-temporal sphere: in the case of the latter, an interval separates cause and effect, but in the former there can be no such hiatus because that would imply an alteration in the divine will.<sup>123</sup> To avoid the theological problem of suggesting that there is a change in God's volition, which would attribute to God a state less than perfect, Cordovero utilizes the paradoxical expression *et lo et*, "moment-that-is-no-moment," to demarcate the transition from the temporal eternity of Ein Sof, the "primordial being that has no primordially" (*qadmon beli qadmut*),<sup>124</sup> to the eternal temporality of the *sefirot*.<sup>125</sup> Cordovero fervently insists that Judaism, the "faith that believes in creation" (*kat ha-ma'aminim be-hiddush*), categorically rejects the possibility of there being anything but Ein Sof prior to the emanation. "Thus we find the truth of his essence alone without any other cause, but rather all the other causes are brought about from him in an absolute creation [*hiddush gamur*], for there was no prior existence at all, God forbid. However, in the time-that-was-no-time and in the moment-that-was-no-moment [*bi-zeman she-eino zeman u-ve-et she-eino et*], he brought about every beginning [*hathalah*] for the created entities, and they have no prior beginning, God forbid, other than Ein Sof alone, for he is the origin [*ro'sh*] and beginning [*hathalah*] of all that exists."<sup>126</sup>

The temporal eternity of the infinite is depicted as a state of timelessness, in the sense of being not devoid of but rather replete with time, a time in which all moments are indistinguishably the same, a present that has no past that is not future nor future that is not past (a position reminiscent of Augustine as well as of the notion of *sempiternitas* posited by later Neoplatonists).<sup>127</sup> The eternal temporality of the *sefirotic* emanations, on the other hand, begins in the "moment-that-is-no-moment"—the beginning of time that is marked in this seemingly incongruous phrase, an interval not subject to the contingencies of physical time, the beginning that has no end and consequently no beginning.<sup>128</sup> As Cordovero puts it in another passage: "Thus in the beginning of the disclosure of the emanation of the beings from him [*tehillat gilluy hitpashtut hanimsha'ot me-itto*] there was no moment-that-is-no-moment but rather all the moments were equal [*ein et lo et ela kol ha-ittim shawwot*]. However, the emanation in the will of wills [*hitpashtut bi-rezon ha-rezonot*] was dependent on the moment-that-is-no-moment for it was necessary that the vessel be prepared to receive the emanation."<sup>129</sup>

Cordovero's perspective was elaborated in the eighteenth century by Joseph Ergas in a passage in the second part of *Shomer Emunim* where the fictional interlocutor, Yehoyada—a name, incidentally, that connotes gnosis of God—enunciates six principles of faith (*iqqarei ha-emunah*) to Shealtiel. While explicating the fifth principle, Yehoyada explains why it is legitimate to apply the metaphor of light to the *sefirot* even though they are spiritual and not physical entities: "Light

is forever bound to its source and cause, and it does not separate from it. On account of this the *sefirot* are described as lights, for they proceed and emanate from the divine sun, and they are not separated from it, God forbid, but rather the emanated is forever bound to its source, and the potency of the emanator is continuously in the emanated.”<sup>130</sup> The axiom that the cause is inseparable from the effect of necessity entails the corollary that the effect is inseparable from the cause,<sup>131</sup> and taking both together, it follows that the agency of divine causality cannot be understood in ordinary temporal terms. Ergas articulates this in Yehodaya’s response to Shealtiel’s question concerning why the world was created at the moment it was and not before:

Know that prior to the creation of anything when God, blessed be he, was alone, there was then no reality of time at all [*lo hayah az meši’ut zeman kelal*], for time itself has no reality, as it is an accident that is conjoined to and is consequent to the motion of something that has been generated and continues to exist, for it falls under time and three aspects of time are distinguished with respect to it, namely, past, present, and future. . . . He exists permanently in one manner; before the world was created and after the world will be destroyed, time does not alter him. . . . And even though he was [*hayah*], is [*howeh*], and will be [*yihyeh*], he has no relation to time, for his having been has not elapsed [*he-hayah shelo lo avar*], his being at present is not momentary [*ha-howeh shelo eino rega*], and his being to come is not in the future [*ha-yihyeh shelo eino attid*].<sup>132</sup>

Ergas is adamant that time in its triune division is not applicable to God. Echoing the Aristotelian conception of time, Ergas maintains that time is an accident of a substance that is subject to coming-to-be and passing away. God is impervious to change and hence temporal qualities cannot be attributed to him. From this standpoint, the question regarding why the world was created at a particular moment is erroneous, since prior to the creation there is no before or after and thus no response would be adequate.<sup>133</sup> The traditional understanding of God encompassing past, present, and future concomitantly, which, as noted above, is linked exegetically to the Tetragrammaton, does not challenge the philosophical claim that time cannot be assigned to God, for to say that God was (*hayah*), is (*howeh*), and will be (*yihyeh*) does not imply a past that is no more, a present that is short-lived, or a future that has not yet come to pass. In the continuation of the above passage, Ergas cites in support of his view Naḥmanides’ interpretation of R. Isaac’s remark that the name *ehyeh* occurs three times in God’s response to Moses (Exod 3:14) to assure Israel that he is the same God who was, is, and will be with them in their historical travails.<sup>134</sup> “The explanation of the opinion of R. Isaac,” writes Naḥmanides, “is that the past and future

time are wholly in the Creator in the present, for there is no change or set term in relation to him,<sup>135</sup> and no days at all have passed from him. Therefore, all the tenses [*zemannim*] in him are designated by one name, which instructs about the necessary of existence [*hiyyuv ha-meši'ut*].”<sup>136</sup>

Naḥmanides casts the explication attributed to R. Isaac on the name *ehyeh* in medieval philosophical language: The expression “necessary of existence,” as noted above, is appropriated from Maimonides, for whom the idiom, in consort with Avicenna, signifies that God is the one being whose existence is identical with his essence, that is, it cannot be said that God does not exist, and thus existence is not an attribute added to his essence but rather an expression of what unfolds from it. The inseparability of essence and existence precludes the possibility of any change or modification, and hence all three aspects of time converge in the *nunc stans* of the eternal present.

Ergas thus provides an opening to qualify the categorical rejection of ascribing temporal qualities to God. Let me clarify that I am not suggesting that Ergas wavers on the essential point that ordinary or physical time, that is, time subject to quantifiable measure and calibration, cannot be applied to God; on the contrary, he consistently maintains that it is only the imagination that leads human beings to entertain the possibility of time prior to creation; reason, however, discloses the spuriousness of such imaginings, as the divine being is not subject to temporal oscillation.<sup>137</sup> Citing the view of Menaḥem Azariah of Fano, Ergas insists that neither “time” (*zeman*) nor even the “order of time” (*sefer zemannim*) can be attributed in anything but a figurative and imprecise way to the sefirotic potencies.<sup>138</sup> Notwithstanding the validity of this assertion, I still contend that Ergas would likely have assented to the distinction between conventional time, which is divided into three modalities based on the presumption of the mutability of an immutable subject, and sempiternal time, a time that is not measured by duration or change, common traits associated with matters temporal. God’s existence can be characterized, accordingly, as either *timeless time* or *unending time*, the former signifying the negative assertion that divine time has no past, present, or future, and the latter the assertive negation that there is no past, present, or future in which God does not exist.

Let us consider the following comment on the nature of time and divinity offered by Viṭal:

It is known that the supernal light above is without limit and it is called Ein Sof. Its name attests that with respect to it there is no grasping, not in thought [*maḥshavah*] nor in contemplation [*hirhur*] at all. He is separate and apart from all thoughts, and he is prior to all things emanated [*ne’ēsalim*], created [*nivra'im*], formed [*yešurim*], and made [*na’asim*], and in him there is no time of origin or beginning [*zeman haṭṭalah we-*

re'shit], for he exists permanently [tamid] and persists forever [la'ad], and in him there is no commencement or termination at all [ro'sh we-sof kelal]. From Ein Sof there emanates subsequently the existence of the great light, which is called *Adam Qadmon*. . . . The emanation of this *Adam Qadmon*, and all the more so the other worlds beneath him, have a beginning and end, and they have a beginning of the time of their being and their emanation, which is not the case with regard to Ein Sof, as was stated above. From the moment [et] and time [zeman] that the emanation and concatenation of the above-mentioned lights and worlds began, the being of all the existents began, one after the other, until the matter reached existence as it is now, which comes about according to the order of emanation and the concatenation corresponding to the order of time [seder zemanim], and it was not possible to advance or to delay the creation of this world, for each and every world was created after the world above it. All the worlds were created, emanated, concatenated, and went forth, one following the other, in various and successive times, one after the other, until the time of the creation of this world arrived, and then it was created in the time appropriate to it after the creation of the supernal worlds above it.<sup>139</sup>

In consonance with a long-standing kabbalistic tradition, traceable to the thirteenth century, Viṭal begins by asserting straightforwardly that Ein Sof is beyond human comprehension. Notwithstanding this unambiguous assertion of ineffability, Viṭal describes Ein Sof as the “supernal light” that is “without limit,” an apophatic utterance that is kataphatic in its apophasis, that is, a *negative proposition* as opposed to a *negation of proposition*.<sup>140</sup> Be that as it may, what is crucial for this discussion is Viṭal's remark that time differentiated by beginning and end cannot be applied to Ein Sof since “he exists permanently and persists forever.” Note the precise language: the eternity of the infinite is not set in opposition to time; it is, rather, the embracing of a sempiternal time that cannot be marked in a linear fashion by commencement or termination, a time that is continuous and everlasting. By contrast, all beings beneath Ein Sof in the ontic chain, beginning with *Adam Qadmon*, can be characterized by beginning and end, and hence time can be positively attributed to them.<sup>141</sup> Not only is the emanation of the *sefirot* not outside time, it is the paradigmatic pattern of temporality, the order of time (*seder zemanim*) that gives shape to all that exists.

It should be recalled that Cordovero likewise affirms an apophatic approach with respect to Ein Sof that makes it impossible to speak about God in temporal terms: “Concerning him we cannot speak or form an image, or ascribe to him either judgment or mercy, rage or anger, change, boundary, or any attribute, neither before the emanation nor now after the emanation.”<sup>142</sup> Elsewhere Cordovero states explicitly that temporal images used to describe the divine potencies must be construed figuratively because “the divinity does not fall



beneath time.” In the same context, however, he refers to *Tif’eret* and *Malkhut*, respectively the sixth and tenth emanations, as the “essence of the governance” (*iqqar ha-hanhagah*) and the “order of time” (*seder ha-zeman*), “for time comes to be by means of the circumference, which is the *waw*, the six extremities, and *Malkhut* is *he*, the two of them being the attribute of day and the attribute of night. Therefore *Tif’eret* and *Malkhut* were in thought prior to the emanation.”<sup>143</sup>

The critical expression *seder ha-zeman* is derived from an aggadic annotation, which Cordovero explicitly cites, on the scriptural refrain “it was evening and it was morning,” *wa-yehi erev wa-yehi voqer* (Gen 1:5): “R. Judah bar Simon said: It is not written ‘it will be evening’ [*yehi erev*] but ‘it was evening’ [*wa-yehi erev*]. From here [it can be deduced] that there was an order of time [*seder zemanim*] prior to this.”<sup>144</sup> Underlying this rabbinic teaching is not only the assumption of an existence prior to the creation of the world—an idea reiterated in the teaching of R. Abbahu placed immediately after the dictum of R. Judah that God created worlds and destroyed them until he created this world—but also the conjecture that time is not dependent on the physical universe, or, at least, not on the physical universe of our sentient experience. The fuller ideational background of the rabbinic notion of *seder zemanim* is not quite obvious. What is clear, however, is that the idea served as grist for the kabbalists’ imagination by providing them with a term to convey the concept of “time out of time,”<sup>145</sup> that is, a time, in Cordovero’s own language, “that has no boundary and no end,” the time of limitless delimitation, delimited in the delimited limitlessness of the ten emanations, the world of unity (*olam ha-yihud*, *alma de-yihuda*).<sup>146</sup> The time of the immeasurable is measured, more specifically, by the lower seven gradations comprising the attributes of day and night, *Tif’eret* and *Malkhut*, the last two letters of the Tetragrammaton (*waw-he*), which existed in thought—that is, *Hokhmah*, the second *sefirah* represented by the first letter of the name (*yod*)—prior to their emanation.<sup>147</sup> Time, in its timeless becoming, is expressed most fundamentally in the alternating pattern of night and day, contracting darkness and expanding radiance, gendered respectively as the feminine and masculine aspects of the divine androgyny.<sup>148</sup>

Cordovero affirms the temporalizing depiction of the sefirotic pleroma, at least the lower seven emanations, in other passages in his literary *oeuvre*. I cite here one text wherein the liturgical distinctiveness of the Jewish people and their ontological connectedness to the divine is expressed in precisely these terms:

The matter of the change of times [*shinnuy ha-zemanim*] depends on the supernal *sefirot* and the providence [*hanhagah*] that ensues from them to us, for concerning us, the nation of the Lord, all our behavior [*hanhagatenu*] and our time cycles [*gilggulei zemanenu*],

we rotate verily by means of the spheres of the emanations [*galggallei ha-sefirot*], since we are in the secret of our minds, spirits, and souls, sparks hewn from the light of the emanations [*or ha-sefirot*], and all of our effort is to be like that which is above as far as it is possible, to be bound to the supernal roots, to cleave to our Creator as far as it is possible, and this was the intent of our creation as it says “Let us make man in our image and in our likeness. And God created man in his image etc. in the image of God he created him” (Gen 1:26–27).<sup>149</sup> Therefore our essence is to become like the supernal emanations . . . and the Torah reveals to us the variations of the emanations [*shinnuyei ha-sefirot*] and the division of their providential aspects [*hilluqei behinatam lehanhagatam*], and the holy One, blessed be he, made physical vessels like their matter so that through them we could know the supernal providence [*ha-hanhagah ha-elyonah*]. And this is what it says “They shall serve as signs for set times—the days and the years” (ibid. 14). He set the seasons of the years [*tequfot ha-shanah*] and the motions of the stars [*mehalkhei ha-kokhavim*] so that [we may] know from their signs the supernal providence according to their manner in the land of Israel.<sup>150</sup>

Cordovero presents divine providence in the natural world, the overflow from the sefirotic pleroma, in strictly temporal terms. Natural time, the “change of times” (*shinnuy ha-zemannim*) or the “seasons of the year” (*tequfot ha-shanah*), which come to pass according to the motion of the celestial lights, is related to the ritual behavior and time cycles (*gilgulei zeman*) of the Jewish people, which follow the rotations of the emanations (*galggallei ha-sefirot*). For Cordovero, echoing a sentiment broadly attested in previous kabbalistic treatises, time in its essential nature, that is, sacred as opposed to mundane time, is a unique property of Jews, for their souls alone are rooted ontically in the sefirotic pleroma, the perpetuity of time in its primordial permutation. Holiness itself is intricately connected to the covenantal incision in the fabric of time, undoing the threads of expectation and retention by seizing the moment of what comes to be in having been. The *raison d’être* of the people of Israel is to emulate and thereby be conjoined to God, a divine status that guarantees an intrinsic connection between the ceremonial conduct (*hanhagah*) of the Jews below and the supernal providence (*ha-hanhagah ha-elyonah*) determined by the emanations above. Temporal changes are thus related to the “variations of the emanations” (*shinnuyei ha-sefirot*) revealed by Torah, which, in the mind of kabbalists, is indistinguishable from the divine essence encoded in the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet comprised in the Tetragrammaton.<sup>151</sup>

In light of these passages, I think it better, contra Scholem, to distinguish two vectors of time according to kabbalistic teaching, one that applies to the physical universe, the world of discriminate beings (*olam ha-nifradim*, *olam ha-perud*, *alma di-*

*peruda*), and the other to the unfolding of the enfolded light of the divine pleroma, the world of integration (*olam ha-yiḥud*, *alma de-yiḥuda*). Surely, I am not advocating a dualism when I speak of two vectors nor do I deny that kabbalistic tradition presumes an analogical relation between the two spheres such that one gains knowledge of the latent from the manifest and of the manifest from the latent—an ancient Hermetic teaching with roots in Platonic philosophy that had a profound impact on the esoteric teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as they evolved in the Middle Ages. It is worthwhile mentioning one extract from Cordovero where he frames the kabbalistic teaching in these terms: “From the lower beings we discern the supernal beings, as it says ‘From my flesh I would behold God’ (Job 19:26), and by means of them a man can discern divinity. After a man contemplates the supernal beings from the lower beings, he will return from above to below, and he will discern the greatness of the lower beings for they are dependent on the supernal beings; hence the order of the comprehension of hidden matters is from posterior [*ha-me’uḥar*] to anterior [*ha-qodem*] and subsequently from anterior [*ha-qodem*] to posterior [*me’uḥar*].”<sup>152</sup>

In the cosmological progression, the world of emanation (*ašlut*) is “prior” to the worlds of creation (*beri’ah*), formation (*yeširah*), and doing (*asiyyah*), but from the epistemic point of view, buttressed by the ontic presumption of a continuous chain of being extending from and unified within the supreme “cause of all causes” (*sibbat kol ha-sibbot*), knowledge of the *sefirot* is adduced from the cosmos. The hierarchical relation is problematized, however, by the fact that the mundane is discerned from the divine in the same measure that the divine is discerned from the mundane. The subversion of the hierarchy is expressed in the inversion of chronological time affirmed at the conclusion of the passage in language reminiscent of the hermeneutical dictum discussed above: *ein muqdam u-me’uḥar ba-torah*. Just as the reader need not assume an absolute temporal order operative in Scripture that would prevent undermining the criterion of before and after, so one need not presume that in the nature of existence anterior and posterior are aligned in an unwavering causal relationship. Encircling the linear pattern holds the key to comprehending the kabbalistic notion of timeless time, the time-devoid-of-time, that is, the void of time that engenders the time of void that reverses the sequential pattern of antecedent and corollary.

If we were to consider temporality only from the perspective of the corporeal world, then we would have to uphold Scholem’s point that for kabbalists the realm of emanation is not subject to time. However, there is no reason to be so restricted, as we can plausibly speak of another dimension of temporality, a “metaphysical” as opposed to “physical” conception of time that well applies to the eternal;<sup>153</sup> indeed, I would go so far as to say that in kabbalistic teaching, time in its primordality is not extrinsic to God but is the radiance of divine

becoming recounted in the narratological telling of enumerated iteration. The twofold depiction of the *sefirot* as line and circle<sup>154</sup> suggests that the interminable telling of the timeless time proceeds linearly but in a succession that is subject to disruption by the eruption of the cycle of the eternal return of the moment that has perpetually never been. In this linear circularity, the emanations “are unified in a true unity in their connecting beginning to end and end to beginning,”<sup>155</sup> and hence the distinction between beginning and end is destabilized.

The comment just cited is from a passage in Cordovero’s *Pardes Rimmonim* where he interprets the depiction of the *sefirot* in the first part of *Sefer Yeṣirah*, “their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end” (*na’uṣ sofān bi-teḥillatan u-teḥillatan be-sofān*).<sup>156</sup> This uroboric symbol notionally and visually conveys the fusion of the linear and cyclical, the innovative and repetitive. In one of the earliest kabbalistic commentaries on *Sefer Yeṣirah*, a text that preserves the teachings of the Provençal master Isaac the Blind,<sup>157</sup> one can already find an articulation of the notion of time connected to the paradoxical image of the end fixed in the beginning: “A wellspring that spreads forth—all that spreads forth is from the source, and if the source ceases, everything ceases, and since they emanate in every moment [*be-khol et*], the beginning has no end [*teḥillah ein lah sof*]. Therefore it says ‘their end in their beginning.’”<sup>158</sup> In his own commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah*, Cordovero elucidates the matter of “the bond of the emanations, the first in the last and the last in the first [*qesher ha-sefirot ri’shon be-sofān we-sofān be-ri’shon*],” in terms of his doctrine of the two types of light: the “straight light,” or *yashar*, that issues from *Keter* to *Malkhut*, and the “restored light,” or *hozer*, that is reflected back from *Malkhut* to *Keter*.<sup>159</sup> “This is the way the wheel turns and rotates without end or limit [*we-khen derekh ha-galgal hozer u-mitggalgal ad ein sof we-takhlit*].”<sup>160</sup>

Needless to say, the turning and rotating suggest a circular motion indicative of the *sefirotic* activity, but the forms of the straight and restored light by which the latter is also described are manifestly linear. Insofar as the world of discrete entities continues to exist, a condition to which Cordovero refers in blatantly apocalyptic terms—“as long as the world is impaired on account of the filth of the serpent and the shell [*kol od she-ha-olam be-qilqul me-zohamat ha-naḥash we-ha-qelippah*]”—the providential power of God is manifest under the guise of the “time of action,” *zeman ha-ma’aseh*, which fluctuates in accord with the dual movement of procession and return. However, when the semblance of all particularity is annihilated and everything is brought back to the primal unity of nondifferentiation, then the “time of action” gives way to the “time of perpetuity,” *zeman ha-qiyum*, the “time of resurrection,” *zeman ha-teḥiyyah*,<sup>161</sup> that is, the time of eternity, the eternal time, so resolute that it timelessly endures the duration of time, extending circuitously, revolving sequentially.

In an earlier study dedicated to a close reading of the kabbalistic teachings ascribed to Elijah ben Solomon, the Gaon of Vilna, I explored the intricate interweaving of temporality and textuality in kabbalistic theosophy: the emanation of the *sefirot* can be viewed concurrently as the narrative recitation of time and as the temporal inscription of narrative.<sup>162</sup> It is precisely this hermeneutical assumption that underlies the kabbalistic *perushei ma'aseh bere'shit*, commentaries on the first chapter of Genesis, which read the biblical text in a twofold sense, as a tale with both theogonic and cosmogonic applications—in the words of Naḥmanides, *ha-katuv yaggid ba-taḥtonim we-yirmoz ba-elyonim*, “Scripture speaks of lower matters and alludes to supernal matters.”<sup>163</sup> I thus concur with Idel’s assessment that Cordovero “envisions time, *zemanim*, as pointing simultaneously to theosophical powers and to their mundane, temporary manifestations. . . . ‘Time’ is conceived to be but another term for the *historia divina*.”<sup>164</sup> Just as events below are in the mold of what is above, so time itself may be viewed on two planes of reality: the transitory patterns in the physical universe partake of the “timeless time” of divine energy in which everything is contained contemporaneously, the fullness of time calibrating the never-ending depletion of the infinite will. In the language of one zoharic passage: “R. Hezeqiah began to expound and said, ‘There is a time for everything, and a moment for every desire under heaven’ (Eccles 3:1). Come and see: With respect to everything that the holy One, blessed be he, made below, he established a fixed instant and time. . . . What is [the meaning of] ‘a moment for every desire?’ A time and occasion for everything, for the whole of the will that is found below.”<sup>165</sup>

Affixed to every temporal event below is an appropriate time above that expresses the eternal will as revealed in the procession of the sefirotic potencies from the infinite. Time and eternity, accordingly, are to be construed not as logical antinomies resolved by a dialectic synthesis that effaces difference in the affirmation of the nonidentity of identity but as ontic variations held together in the identity of nonidentity, an indifference that preserves the distinctiveness of one and the other, the time of eternity manifestly concealed in the eternity of time.<sup>166</sup>

Already in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, long considered one of the most important early textual aggregates to espouse the mytho-theosophic orientation that has been identified as the singular contribution of the medieval kabbalistic tradition, the days of creation are interpreted as semiotic ciphers of the divine attributes.<sup>167</sup> Building on the ancient wisdom transmitted in the *Bahir*, subsequent kabbalists made a point of locating the ontological root of time more specifically in the seven lower attributes, designated *sefirot ha-binyan*, “emanations of the edifice,”<sup>168</sup> that is, the potencies that correspond to the temporal dimensions of finitude, which are sometimes called *yamim ri'shonim*, “primordial days” (Deut 4:32),<sup>169</sup>

yemot olam, “days of old” (ibid. 32:7),<sup>170</sup> or, in the language of the zoharic kabbalists based on these earlier formulations, *yomin ila’in*, “supernal days,”<sup>171</sup> and *yomin qadma’in*, “primeval days.”<sup>172</sup>

The tenor of this temporality is brought into clearer focus in the following passage from the thirteenth-century work *Sefer ha-Yiḥud* by the Provençal kabbalist Asher ben David:

On the basis of the tradition all of these attributes in the six extremities are also called “garden” [*gan*], as it says, “The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east” (Gen 2:8), that is to say, from before [*mi-qedem*]<sup>173</sup> the creation of the world . . . and, in truth, Eden refers to *Hokhmah*, the inception of all the emanations [*ro’sh le-khol ha-sefirot*], which is intimated in the word *bere’shit* (ibid., 1:1), and the Targum Yerushalmi translates it as *be-ḥokhmata* [“by means of wisdom”], and the rabbis, blessed be their memory, said,<sup>174</sup> “even [the word] *bere’shit* is [to be considered] a saying” [in the tally of the ten sayings by means of which the world was created]. Hence, Eden is the inner Wisdom [*ha-ḥokhmah ha-penimit*] in which are engraved the thirty-two paths of wisdom, and it is like a spring and like the root for all of them and for the garden. And the garden is like a tree that has many branches, from its head to its foundation, and it is nourished constantly from the root, which is the spring that comes forth from Ein Sof, and it spreads forth from the source without separation and without cessation, without day or hour, even a second, and this is the intent of what is written “the river goes forth from Eden to irrigate the garden” (Gen 2:10). River [*nahar*] is from *nehora*, and this is the inner light [*ha-or ha-penimi*] that issues constantly from Eden. Therefore it says “goes forth” [*yose*] and it did not say “went forth” [*yaša*] for it does not cease, and in every moment it emanates in the attributes [*we-khol et hu mitpashet ba-middot*].<sup>175</sup>

Along similar lines, Azriel of Gerona applied the rabbinic idiom *seder zemannim* to the sefirotic emanations as they are the “designs of creation,” *sidrei bere’shit*, manifest in the phenomenal plane of existence: “The order of the emanations [*seder ha-sefirot*], which is a boundary without boundary [*gevil mi-beli gevil*], is called<sup>176</sup> in *Bere’shit Rabbah* the ‘order of time’ [*seder zemannim*], as the rabbis, blessed be their memory, said [the verse] ‘it was evening and it was morning’ [*wa-yehi erev wa-yehi voqer*] indicates that there was an order of time before this,<sup>177</sup> and they are called the ‘designs of creation’ [*sidrei bere’shit*].”<sup>178</sup> The divine emanations—whether understood in essentialist or instrumentalist terms—embrace a fundamental paradox enunciated in Azriel’s evocative expression *gevil mi-beli gevil*, “boundary without boundary,” that is, the *sefirot* are bounded from the perspective of being limited in number—they are ten and not eleven, ten and not nine, and so forth—but they are unbounded inasmuch as they embody/enclothe the light of the infinite.<sup>179</sup> Analogously, the expression *seder*

*zemanim* communicates the paradox in temporal terms: the *sefirot* may be described as *time without time*, a fourth dimension of time beyond the three-dimensionality of mundane time.<sup>180</sup>

The matter is clarified in another remark by Azriel in his commentary on select talmudic legends. In consonance with one of the standard philosophical approaches that prevailed in the Middle Ages, Azriel asserts that “time [*zeman*] is in the class of things that are created, and before the world was created there was no moment [*et*] and no time [*zeman*].” How, then, he asks, is one to understand the words “a source of delight [*sha’ashu’im*] every day [*yom yom*]” (Prov 8:30), the prooftext utilized in rabbinic dicta<sup>181</sup> to anchor the idea that the Torah was created two thousand years prior to the world’s coming into being?

Those days are not the days of humanity [*yemei adam*], for the measure [*middah*] of the days of humanity was not yet made, and those days were from the days whence are the years that cannot be probed, as it is written, “God is greater than we can know; the number of his years cannot be counted” (Job 36:26), and it is written, “Are your days the days of a mortal, are your days the years of a man?” (ibid., 10:5). Rather, when it arose in thought to bring the will that does not cease [*ha-raṣon she-eino poseq*] into actuality [*le-ma’aseh*], the Torah was created, which preceded [the world] by two thousand years, which are the two days. . . . These years and days that cannot be probed already were prior to the apportioning of the splendor of wisdom to create therefrom the Torah that comprises its paths . . . and in its power are found the moments [*ittim*] and times [*zemanim*] that are for the need of this world. . . . It says in *Bere’shit Rabbah*, “R. Judah bar Simon said: It does not say ‘let it be evening,’ but rather ‘and it was evening.’ From here [we can deduce that] there was an antecedent order of time [*sefer zemanim*].” The order of time refers to the years that cannot be probed, as it says, “your years never end” (Ps 102:28). . . . And the import of *sefer zemanim* according to the opinion of the sages is that the order does not cease since they emanate from a cause that does not cease, but the finite times [*ha-zemanim ha-mugbbalim*] cease since they are from the potency of a finite order [*sefer mugbbal*], and they resort to being as they were initially, and thus it will be permanently, for in their end they return to their beginning.<sup>182</sup>

At first glance, it would appear that the distance separating the divine and mundane modes of temporality is not traversable: The time that can be spoken of in conjunction with the *sefirot* is a time/less time, a time that is the measure of the immeasurable stream issuing forth without pause from the infinite source; by contrast, the time ascribed to corporeal bodies is, like the bodies themselves, finite. Yet there is one aspect of the latter that mirrors the former: the circular quality of the lifecycle, the trajectory extending backward to the beginning that reverts forward to the end. In another passage, which may have

been the fitting continuation of the above citation,<sup>183</sup> Azriel explicates the following midrashic comment on the verse “On the day that Moses finished” (Num 7:1): “Rav said that in every place where it says ‘and it was’ [wa-yehi], it refers to something that stops for many days and it returns to what it was.”<sup>184</sup> According to Azriel, “From here we can learn that even though the times cease because they have reached the end of their limit, and they cease in the cessation of everything finite, the order that causes them does not cease from being, for there is no end to its cause, and even the finite times [ha-zemannim ha-mugbbalim] revert to what they were, and it causes them to return to their beginning.”<sup>185</sup>

For Azriel, then, *sefer zemannim* is interpreted as a *terminus technicus* to denote what I have been calling timeless time, the measure of the order of the *sefirot* that “does not cease since they emanate from the cause that does not cease, but the finite times cease since they are from a finite order, and they revert to what they were in the beginning, and thus it is permanently such that in their end they return to their beginning.”<sup>186</sup> Mundane time approximates the ceaselessness of timeless time in the nature of cosmic cyclicity, things returning in their end to their beginning, the luminal emanations themselves often depicted in medieval kabbalistic literature by the description of the *sefirot* in *Sefer Yeşirah* mentioned above: “their end is fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end.” In the final remark concerning the “permanent” return of all things to their beginning, Azriel alludes to the eschatological doctrine of *apokastasis*, the return of the many to the one, which, in this context, is formulated in temporal terms.<sup>187</sup>

However, as Azriel explicitly notes in another passage, it is possible to view the lower *sefirot* through the prisms of place (*maqom*) and time (*zeman*), attested, for instance, in the fact that they are referred to as “seven extremities of place,” *sheva qeşawwot maqom*,<sup>188</sup> and/or as “seven days of creation,” *shiv‘at yemei bere’shit*.<sup>189</sup> From this vantage point, time and space cannot be separated.<sup>190</sup> Certainly, no kabbalist would predicate either space or time as coordinates of the physical world to God, since God is thought to be beyond the material universe.<sup>191</sup> But there is an alternative understanding of space and time that emerges from using spatial and temporal metaphors to describe the divine; indeed, for the kabbalist, time and space in the mundane sphere should ideally be understood from this symbolic perspective. The realm of sefirotic potencies is constructed imaginatively as a continuum of events that can be envisioned either as an externalization of the internal or as an internalization of the external, the former yielding the idea of space that is without boundary and the latter the idea of time that is without limit. A formulation of the early-romantic poet Novalis is especially pertinent, even though it obviously reflects a different hermeneutical perspective: *Zeit ist innerer Raum—Raum ist äußere Zeit*, “Time is inner space—space is external



time.”<sup>192</sup> The dimensionality of each instant/point charted in the timespace of the sefirotic graph can be demarcated as the duration of a blink or the extension of a swerve.

## Temporal Ontology/Eventful Grammar

The correlation of the seven days of creation with the seven lower *sefirot*, widely attested in kabbalistic literature, seems to suggest that the upper three *sefirot* transcend temporal classification altogether. Todros Abulafia, a Castilian kabbalist active in the second half of the thirteenth century (possibly a member of the zoharic circle, perhaps even the historical model for the fictional master of the imaginary fraternity Simeon ben Yoḥai, known honorifically by the acronym Rashbi)<sup>193</sup> appears to have adopted this view: “It is known that the *sefirot* are called ‘days’ [*yamim*] and they are called ‘sayings’ [*ma’amarot*]. There is no day that can be applied to the first three, but six of them correspond to the days of creation in which all supernal things emerged from potentiality to actuality and corresponding to them in the lower things, and the seventh is the ‘sabbath to the Lord’ (Exod 20:10) ‘for in it he rested from all his labor’ (Gen 2:3).”<sup>194</sup> What inspired this comment is the obvious discrepancy between two symbolic images applied to the divine emanations: the biblical motif of the seven days of creation, on the one hand, and the rabbinic doctrine of the ten sayings by which the world was created, on the other. How can the emanations be called both “days” and “sayings” when there are seven of the former and ten of the latter? To maintain the symmetry of the two symbolic grids, not to mention avoiding a division within the Godhead, a single rubric is needed that combines the characteristic of time implied by the concept of “days” and the characteristic of language implied by the concept of “sayings”—an ontology of temporality that discloses a grammar of eventuality. Precisely at the coupling of the temporal and linguistic, the autogenesis of that which always is, which fosters the redemptive possibility of return to what has never been, must be thought.

Not surprisingly, some kabbalists have explicitly maintained that the concept of time extends to all ten *sefirot*. An interesting formulation of this idea is found in Joseph Karo’s sixteenth-century mystical diary, *Maggid Mesharim*, in a passage on the traditional *qaddish* prayer. Commenting on the words “in your days,” Karo writes of “the unifications of the *sefirot*, which are called ‘days,’ that is, the flux of life in *Tif’eret*, and from there is the overflow of life to all the *sefirot* and through this they are all unified.” Even more telling is Karo’s interpretation of the words “in a proximate time”: “in the drawing close and union of the *sefirot*, which are called ‘time’ [*zeman*], in the secret of ‘this instructs that there was an order of time [*sefer zemannim*] before this,’ which is said about the *sefirot*.”<sup>195</sup>

In a second passage from his diary, Karo elaborates on the conception of divine temporality as it relates to the issue of ritual purification of the leper:

If so the import of “in the day of his cleansing” (Lev 14:2) is that on the day that his cleansing is attained he will be cleansed, for matters are not renewed each day, as it says, “There is a time for everything, and a moment for every desire” (Eccles 3:1), that is, all the emanations overflow to *Yesod*, for “everything” [*kol*] refers to *Yesod*, and “time” [*zeman*] refers to the *sefirot* that are above it in the secret of [the rabbinic dictum] “this teaches that there was an order of time [*sefer zemanim*] prior to this.” And the “moment” [*et*] refers to the Assembly of Israel [*keneset yisra’el*], and “desire” [*hefes*] refers to the *sefirot* above her, that is, an overflow comes to the Assembly of Israel from the *sefirot* that are above her. Thus there are days and gradations designated for this matter and others for other matters. And this is [the import of] “under heaven” [*taḥat ha-shamayim*] (Eccles 3:1), that is, in the seven emanations of the edifice [*sefirot ha-binyan*] that are beneath the supernal heavens, which are the three upper ones, for there everything is unified and there is no differentiation of gradations [*perishu de-darggin*].<sup>196</sup>

Karo presents the emanative overflow from above to below as a temporal process, linking it specifically to the verse *la-kol zeman we-et le-khol hefes taḥat ha-shamayim*, “There is a time for everything, and a moment for every desire under heaven” (Eccles 3:1). Parsing the verse kabbalistically, Karo remarks that *zeman*, “time,” denotes the influx of light to *Yesod*, designated by the term *kol*, an idea he connects (following much older sources) with the rabbinic notion of *sefer zemanim*, the order of time prior to creation. Karo also deduces from this verse that *Shekhinah* is *et*, the “moment,” which likewise receives the influx from above, the desire (*hefes*) expressive of the execution of the divine will. The sefirotic pleroma is thus divided: the lower seven, which correspond to the days of creation, are marked by the transition from night to day, whereas the upper three are unified in a manner beyond differentiation, a time that allows for no temporal distinctions.

To illustrate the point, I will cite and analyze a passage from *Pitḥei She’arim*, a treatise composed by the nineteenth-century Lithuanian kabbalist Yiṣḥaq Isaac Ḥaver, that highlights the nexus of temporality and textuality in the theosophic ruminations of the Gaon of Vilna briefly alluded to above.<sup>197</sup>

This is the principle of time, which is divided into three stages, past, future, and present, and there are three books by means of which the world was created, which are the three names of YHWH, for each book [*sefer*] is a name [*shem*] . . . and this is the secret of the threefold Torah. It says, “days were formed” (Ps 139:16), the

secret of created time, the seven days of creation, wherein everything is contained [ha-kol bi-khelal] . . . and they are dependent on the six primordial ones. These are alluded to in the seven words of the verse “In the beginning etc.” (Gen 1:1), and from there volition is suspended. “And to him one belongs” (ibid.),<sup>198</sup> the secret of the first three aspects of the head-that-is-not-known, for there he is above time [le-ma’alah me-ha-zeman] and there he is in the secret of the unity [sod ha-yihud], for the revealed time [ha-zeman ha-galuy] of the six days of creation is hidden there in the alef, for, as it is known, alef is the most hidden of all the letters, and it instructs about the secret of the unity of the three aspects of the head-that-is-not-known concerning which there is no comprehension. Thus, the Torah did not begin with alef but with beit, bere’shit, for it is from the secret of the lower seven aspects of Atiq and below. Therefore [the word lo] is vocalized orally with a waw, and it is written with an alef, in thought and not in speech.<sup>199</sup>

The long-standing assumption on the part of kabbalists that time depicts the dynamic recounting of the divine potencies is expressed here through the symbolic correlation of the three tenses of time, the threefold repetition of the Tetragrammaton, and the three books by means of which the world was created—an idea based on the numerical equivalence of *sefer*, “book,” and *shem*, “name,” that is, both words equal 340, and also on the opening paragraph of *Sefer Yesirah*, where it is stated that God created the world by means of three books.<sup>200</sup> The triadic temporal structure is associated as well with the rabbinic idiom *oryan telita’ah*, “threefold Torah.”<sup>201</sup> Use of this terminology is predicated no doubt on the presumed identity of Torah and God, a belief affirmed axiomatically by kabbalists through the ages. Insofar as Torah is identical with God, it follows that the three divisions of Scripture depict a triunity within the divine.

In the beginning of the section from which the above citation is extracted, Ḥaver distinguishes between the upper three and lower seven aspects of the highest configuration of God, which is called Atiq, the “ancient one.” In the upper three, designated (following zoharic jargon)<sup>202</sup> the “head-that-is-not-known,” are “fixed” the “temporal department everlastingly [hanhaqat ha-zeman le-nishiyut] since they rise to the secret of the primal anthropos [adam qadmon] in which there is a disclosure of the unity in truth [gilluy ha-yihud be-emet].” In the place of Atiq, we can locate the attributes of knowledge (*yedi’ah*) and volition (*behirah*), which are described en passant as objects that the “wise of heart” (*hakhmei lev*) desire. Concerning the former, we can only say that it is inscrutable and thus is associated symbolically with the upper three aspects. By contrast, volition is linked to the lower seven aspects, for it stems “from the secret of the union of forty-five and fifty-two that is in each and every soul.” Forty-five and

fifty-two connote two permutations of YHWH, *ywd he waw he* (10+6+4 5+1 6+1+6 5+1) and *ywd hh ww hh* (10+6+4 5+5 6+6 5+5)—two gesticulations of the name that correspondingly symbolize overflowing masculine mercy and constricting feminine judgment. The temporalizing of the supernal will is manifest in the dyad of gender dimorphism,<sup>203</sup> but the male and female potencies comprise the lower seven aspects, which correspond to the seven days of creation, also associated with seven of the eight kings of Edom. In contrast to the lower seven, in the upper three the “temporal deportment” (*hanhaqat ha-zeman*), which is identified as well as the “root of time” (*shoresh ha-zeman*), is fixed everlastingly. In that root, temporality and eternity are set not as polar opposites but as two facets of one reality.

Another passage from *Pithei She’arim* elaborates upon this matter:

In every day new emendations are produced, and after all the emendations are expended, then the six thousand years will be completed, and they will all ascend to the Mother in the seventh millennium, to the secret of eternity [*sod ha-nishiyut*], and there they will receive their reward and they will rise from level to level until Arikh Anpin who is above time, for his growth is not by way of time as in the case of Ze’ir Anpin. The division of time into five gradations—minutes, hours, days, months, and years—is a deep matter, for time is in the male and female, the secret of the forty-five and fifty-two.<sup>204</sup>

Kabbalistically interpreting the eschatological conception of the cosmic sabbatical cycle transmitted in the name of R. Qaṭina—six thousand years of history followed by a thousand years of desolation<sup>205</sup>—Ḥaver characterizes the seventh millennium as the elevation of everything to the mother, a standard designation of the third emanation, *Binah*, the womb whence the lower seven *sefirot* emerge and whither they shall return.

A similar account of the eschatological return of everything to *Binah* in the seventh millennium is presented in the commentary on *Sifra di-Ṣeni’uta* attributed to Elijah ben Solomon:

The matter is that the six thousand years are the six days wherein the six extremities [*Hesed to Yesod*] are operative, and the seventh is *Malkhut*, and *Malkhut* depends on *Binah*, and she returns to her source. And this is the secret of Sabbath and the sabbatical year [*sod ha-shabbat u-shemittah*] in which work is forbidden, and the secret of the Jubilee [*sod ha-yovel*] . . . and the world-to-come, which is in the secret of *Atarah* returning to *Binah*, and she is “the woman of valor, crown of her husband” (Prov 12:14). Then *Binah* rules and everything returns to *Binah*, to the womb of their mother, and this is the secret of the destruction of this world [*hurban ha-olam ha-zeh*], which is governed by

means of *Binah*, the supernal world. . . . Thus in the end of the sixth millennium all of them are rectified by means of the eighth king,<sup>206</sup> the mercy that is revealed in the world, and afterwards in the seventh millennium all of them will return to their mother, and the earth will be destroyed for it will be restored to its mother. . . . And this is the secret of Sabbath, but Sabbath does not return to her root, to *Binah*, but rather *Binah* illumines her, not by means of the six extremities, the six days of creation, and she is equivalent to her, and thus the time for copulation [*zman ha-zivvug*] is in it. The world-to-come, however, is in the pattern of Yom Kippur . . . and then the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads,<sup>207</sup> the “crown of her husband” [*aṭeret ba’lah*], and then there is no eating, no drinking, no procreation, as on Yom Kippur, the gradation of *Binah*, as it says in the *Tiqqunim*,<sup>208</sup> for then she is in the secret of the crown [*taga*], a diadem on the head, and “whoever makes use of the crown perishes” [*we-khol ha-mishtammesh be-taga ḥalaf*],<sup>209</sup> for there is no intercourse [*shimmush*] when *Malkhut* is on the head of her husband, and there are no new souls, therefore “there is in it no eating etc.” And this is the secret of “the earth was destroyed,” and *Binah* remains alone, for all of them are concealed in her midst.<sup>210</sup>

The eschatological state of redemption characteristic of the seventh millennium, the cosmic Sabbath or desolation that follows the cycle of six millennia, is depicted both as the return of all things to the womb of *Binah*, the maternal fountainhead in the sefirotic pleroma, and as the elevation of *Malkhut* to the head of her husband. The latter image conveys the asceticism appropriate to redemption, a point underscored by the symbolic connection between *Binah*, the world-to-come, and Yom Kippur. In her transformed condition, the female is a crown on the male rather than a separate vessel to receive the seminal fluid, and consequently there is no intercourse. The transposition of the female to the status of the crown signifies, therefore, the ascetic eroticism suitable to the final phase of salvation.<sup>211</sup> The temporal dimension of this transmutation is underscored by the fact that the seventh millennium is associated with the “secret of eternity,” the cosmic Sabbath, attained with the restitution of the six millennia, which correspond typologically to the six days of creation, to their ontic source, an ascent that culminates not with *Binah* but with *Ariḥ Anpin*, literally the “long-faced” and metaphorically the “long-suffering,” the supreme manifestation of the Godhead, *Keter*, which is “above time.” The “root of time” is positioned in *Ze’ir Anpin*, literally the “short-faced” and metaphorically the “impatient,” the lower gradation, which, in contrast to *Ariḥ Anpin*, is characterized by the opposition of left and right, judgment and mercy, female and male, night and day.

We may deduce from this that temporality is inherently connected to a binary structure, the fluctuation from darkness to light, engendered in kabbalistic literature respectively as feminine and masculine, whereas the attribute

that is beyond polarity and the dimorphic interplay of gender, the moment/place characterized by the coincidence of opposites, is above time. The matter is rendered more complex, however, by the fact that, according to the mythologic deployed by kabbalists through the generations, attested already in thirteenth-century texts, *Keter* is the indifferent one, that is, the ontic source wherein all things are unified in an identity of in-difference, the same identically different in the difference that is identically the same.<sup>212</sup> From this perspective it can, nay must, be said that the “secret of eternity” is not in opposition to temporality, but rather is a more subtle manifestation of time, a timeless time, as it were, *zeman she-eino zeman*, according to Cordovero’s formulation mentioned previously—that is, a time beyond the nocturnal/diurnal division, a time that ensues from an act of volition so spontaneous, so fully in the moment, that it can have no past or future and, consequently, no re/presentable present.

An allusion to this conception of time-that-is-no-time, the time/less time of the moment that is all-time, is found in a remark from *Tiqqunei Zohar*, the literary stratum of zoharic literature, composed in all likelihood in the first half of the fourteenth century in Castile. This passage occurs in an exposition of the theosophic principle (well-entrenched by the time of this text’s composition) that the various names of God are correlated with different limbs of the “imaginal body,” a term I have employed to describe the constellation of *sefirot* as they are visually configured in the kabbalist’s imagination:

Ehyeh [*Keter*] [is set] atop being [*al hawayah*], and this breath-of-the-heart [*hevel de-libba*] governs<sup>213</sup> the voice of YHWH [*Tif’eret*]; it is the cause of all causes [*illat al kol ha-illot*], hidden and concealed, and it is not revealed, and it governs and rules [*rakhiv u-shalit*] over everything. Ehyeh indicates that the cause of causes [*illat ha-illot*] was, is, and shall be [*hayah howeh we-yihyeh*], and it is the breath that rises to Ein-Sof by means of which the cause of all causes governs [*hevel de-saliq ad ein sof u-veih rakhiv illat al kol ha-illot*].<sup>214</sup>

Without exaggeration one could devote a whole chapter to the elucidation of this passage. Withstanding that temptation, however, I will confine my remarks to points most essential to our analysis. The name *ehyeh*, which is assigned to *Keter*, uppermost of the ten emanations, is described as “atop being,” *al hawayah*. The term *hawayah* may have a twofold signification in this context: first, as a generic noun that denotes the composite of being as such, that is, the being that comprises all beings, and second, as a proper name assigned to that which can have no proper name, the (in)effable name, *shem ha-meforash*, the Tetragrammaton (*yhwh* consists of the same letters as *hwyh*), though in this case, as in numerous others, ascribed to *Tif’eret*. This interpretation is confirmed by the continuation whence we learn that *Keter* is the breath-of-the-heart, *hevel de-libba*,

which governs the “voice of the Tetragrammaton,” *qol yhwh*, a symbolic reference to *Tif’eret*. *Ehyeh* is, moreover, the supernal cause that executes providence over (literally, “rides upon”) all that exists, the supreme concealment that shows the way to the infinite, designated “cause of causes” (*illat ha-illot*) in an effort to distinguish the ontic foundation from *Keter*, which is designated “cause of all causes” (*illat kol ha-illot*). The first of the emanations renders visible an aspect of *Ein Sof* inasmuch as it conveys the paradoxical compresence of the three tenses comprised in the name; that is, the ineffable name, whether declaimed as *ehyeh* or as *yhwh*, alludes symbolically to the fact that, in the infinite, was, is, and will be, *hayah howeh we-yihyeh*, past, present, and future, are unified—the mystery of the threefold unity that is a unified trinity, a mystery apprehended as mystery by the spirit carried on the wings of the upward breath, the breath-of-the-heart, that ascends to and vanishes in the impenetrable infinite.<sup>215</sup>

The conception of temporality proffered in the aforementioned passage is enhanced by considering the interpretation of this passage found in the commentary on *Tiqqunei Zohar* that purports to transmit the teachings of the Vilna Gaon:

“*Ehyeh* is upon *hawayah*,” that is to say, upon being [*al meši’ut*], for *ehyeh* connotes being [*hu leshon meši’ut*], and as the commentators have explained, the verse *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (Exod 3:14) instructs about what was, is, and shall be [*moreh al hayah howeh we-yihyeh*]. That is to say, *ehyeh* is iterated there three times, as it says, *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, “I was with you etc. and I shall be with you etc.”<sup>216</sup> And afterwards it says, “*ehyeh* [sent me to you]” (*ibid.*), this [alludes to] the redemption in the present [*ha-ge’ullah be-howeh*].<sup>217</sup>

The name *ehyeh*, in particular, illumines the secret of time as it demarcates the junction of eternity and temporality instantiated in the moment wherein past, present, and future are no longer distinguishable. The Gaon of Vilna perceptively remarked that the third occurrence of *ehyeh* alludes symbolically to “the redemption in the present.” The intent of this comment, I propose, is that salvation beckons the release from time through time.<sup>218</sup>

The paradoxical nature of the intemporal temporality exhibited by *Keter* is captured as well in the observation of Menaḥem Azariah of Fano that the number seven is linked to the “seven primordial kings,” which are designated the

beginning of the aspect of time in the supernal beings [*tehillah li-veḥinat ha-zeman ba-dyonim*], as it is written, “inquire about the first days” (Deut 4:32), and above them are *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, concerning which the Torah said “I was a delight every day” (Prov 8:30), in the secret of the day of the holy One, blessed be he, consisting of one thousand years, thus the Torah preceded the world by two thousand years,

and these are the order of the times [*sefer zemannim*] specified by the Torah without doubt, for *Keter* has no relation whatsoever to the aspect of time on account of its hiddenness, and this is a reason why [the word] *bereshit* is also a saying [*ma'amar*], for it is naught but the principle [*kelal*] of what consequent to it is action [*ma'aseh*].<sup>219</sup>

The lower seven *sefirot* correspond to the seven days of creation, *Binah* and *Hokhmah* to the order of time (or the two thousand years) prior to the creation, and *Keter* to the principle (*kelal*) of action (*ma'aseh*) that is before any and all differentiation—the first of the ten sayings (*ma'amarot*) by means of which God created the world, according to the ancient rabbinic teaching, which were interpreted kabbalistically as one of the symbolic ways to depict the ten gradations of the pleromatic fullness of divine wisdom. Significantly, *Keter* is encoded in the opening word of Torah, *bereshit*, “in/at the beginning,” the primary utterance that contains the other nine utterances, the boundless will manifestly hidden in the temporal unfolding of the eternally enfolded light hiddenly manifest in the eternal enfolding of the temporally unfolded light. Time proceeds timelessly from the beginningless inception of the origin coterminous with the before that has no after but the after that has no before.

We can gain a better sense of this notion of time-that-is-no-time from the following remark of David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid, another kabbalist who may have been part of the circle responsible for the early stage of the literary production of the zoharic anthology:<sup>220</sup>

The secret of the venerable prayer is that it grows stronger, and it ascends from *sefirah* to *sefirah* until it reaches the will [*raṣon*] that is conjoined to *Keter*. Therefore it is said at the end [of the prayer] *yihyu le-raṣon imrei fi* (Ps 19:15). When prayer reaches the place of the will [*meqom ha-raṣon*], then all the gates from above to below are opened before him, and there is no obstacle or impediment to his demands, for he is conjoined to the world of mercy [*olam ha-raḥamim*] and, consequently, he can exact all his needs and requests. There is nothing opposing him for he draws forth from the source of the will [*meqor ha-raṣon*], and he is able to renew new miracles and wonders [*leḥaddesh otot u-moṭtim ḥaddashim*] as if in that very hour [*sha'ah*] the world were created, and nothing stands opposing him. This is the secret of the dictum of the rabbis, blessed be their memory, “Progeny, livelihood, and sustenance are not dependent on merit [*zekhuta*] but on fortune [*mazzla*],<sup>221</sup> for everything depends on the world of mercy, which is the source.<sup>222</sup>

Through the weave of rabbinic and mystical themes that make up the fabric of this text, the reader is afforded an opportunity to contemplate some of the key hermeneutical assumptions that have informed the kabbalistic ontology of



time. The initial thing to note is the nexus between temporality and prayer<sup>223</sup>—if one plumbs the depth of the mystery of worship, one will comprehend the dynamics of time, a theme to which I return below. Reiterating what was by his time the standard kabbalistic understanding of prayer, David ben Yehudah characterizes the liturgical rite as an ascent of the worshipper's will through the sefirotic pleroma to the will that is conjoined with *Keter*. This will is the expression of the infinite potency of Ein Sof in the ten sefirotic gradations whence it overflows to the chain of being that extends from the angelic to the mundane worlds.<sup>224</sup> The mystical dimension of prayer, therefore, entails the contemplative elevation of the will to the "source of the will" (*maqor ha-raṣon*), the dimension of infinity that is manifest in *Keter*. The telos of worship is captured in the words from Psalm 19:15, *yihyu le-raṣon imrei fi*, "May the words of my mouth be acceptable to you," which are part of the meditation recited after the *amidah*, the traditional standing-prayer. When the worshipper has climbed to the top of the ladder of prayer, the *scala contemplativa*, and he is bound to and absorbed in the "source of the will," all his petitions are fulfilled, since this source is the "world of mercy" (*olam raḥamim*)<sup>225</sup> that has no opposing force of judgment, the *coincidentia oppositorum* wherein all demerits are rendered meritorious, all guilt transmuted into innocence.<sup>226</sup> In this place of conjunction—a place tellingly designated in one zoharic passage as "the place that is no place"<sup>227</sup>—there is perfect harmony, indeed convergence, of the human and divine wills.

Moreover, in this place that is no place, the space of pure mercy, there is no opposite, nothing contrary. Here one can ascertain the temporal pulse of divine creativity, identified as fortune (*mazla*), which the rabbis contrasted with merit (*zekhuta*), that is, the superfluity of grace that overflows every computable measure of justice, every demarcated boundary of law. One who is conjoined to this spot is able "to renew new miracles and wonders [*lehaddesh otot u-moṭtim ḥaddashim*] as if in that very hour [*sha'ah*] the world were created." By considering this formulation of David ben Yehudah one may discern the secret of creation that is enshrined within the confines of fate. How, then, does one renew that which is new? Prima facie, this charge seems to be contradictory: if something is to be renewed, it cannot be new, and if new, it cannot be renewed. Yet the language of renewing what is new expresses well the paradoxical (non)identification of change and permanence, novelty and repetition, characteristic of time. The one conjoined to the infinite through prayer comprehends time as the momentous and momentary renewal of what has always never been, an understanding that entails the ability to act miraculously, wondrously, in a manner unbound to causal sequence, recreating, as it were, the moment when the world was brought into being from nothing.

A passage in the *Idra Rabba* section of the zoharic compilation clarifies the mat-

ter further. The verse “But there shall be a continuous day [yom eḥad]—it will be known to the Lord—not day nor night, and at the time of evening shall be light” (Zech 14:7) is applied exegetically to Arikh Anpin, or Atiqā Qaddisha, the highest manifestation of the divine, also referred to in that context as Atiq Yomin, the Ancient of Days, a title derived from the vision of the enthroned deity in Daniel 7:9:

In the time [zimna] that Atiq Yomin is aroused in the supernal arrayments, that one [ha-hu] is called the “continuous day” [yom eḥad], for in the future his beard will be glorified [de-veih zamin le’oqir diqneih] by means of it, as it is written, “But there shall be a continuous day [yom eḥad]—it will be known to the Lord” [yom eḥad hu yewwada la-yhwh]. “It” [hu] alone, more than everything else, that which comprises all [hu de-khalil kola], that which is called by the name that is known [hu itqerei vi-shema yedi’a]. As it has been taught: In the place that there is day there is night, for there is no day without night, and because that time to come [zimna zeman] will be the glory of the beard [diqara de-diḡna], and it [hu] alone will be found, it is not called either “day” or “night.”<sup>228</sup>

An attentive reading of this passage yields important and fundamental insights into the kabbalistic conception of time. The first thing to note is that time is not set in diametric opposition to eternity; rather, one discovers two tiers of temporality that correspond respectively to two formations of the divine: Arikh Anpin (or Atiq Yomin), which is in the position of Keter, and Ze’ir Anpin, which comprises the sefirot from Ḥokhmah to Yesod.<sup>229</sup> Insofar as opposites coalesce in Arikh Anpin, the world wherein judgment is contained fully in mercy, the feminine in the masculine, an idea mythopoeically conveyed by the symbolic image of the single eye situated in the middle of the forehead,<sup>230</sup> it is appropriately designated the “continuous day,” yom eḥad, that is, the interval of time beyond the polarity of night and day, a temporal span that is continuously diurnal—all shadows of dark dissolved in the shimmer of light. By contrast, the lower form, Ze’ir Anpin, contains judgment and mercy as distinct attributes, and thus it is characterized by the sequence of night and day. What is critical to emphasize is that even though there is neither day nor night in Arikh Anpin, the event of its arousal is designated by the temporal term zimna, which I have rendered “moment” to capture the sense of spontaneous diremption or recurrent irruption, that is, the summoning of what-will-be in the expectation of what-has-been the summoning of what-will-be, zimna zeman, the moment to be, momentous, momentary.<sup>231</sup>

Ḥaver, in accord with the symbolic language of Luria, positions Adam Qadmon, the “primordial human,” above the world of emanation, which is divided into

five configurations (*paršufim*): *Arikh Anpin*, *Abba*, *Imma*, *Ze'eir Anpin*, and *Nuqba*. Ḥaver describes Adam Qadmon as the

root of roots [*shoresh ha-shorashim*] . . . above the aspect of temporal governance [*hanhagat ha-zeman*]. Yet he is the root for the temporal governance [*shoresh le-hanhagat ha-zeman*] . . . and everything is in the aspect of roots and the disclosure of the supernal wills to attain the end of the intention of the order of the governance of the emanation [*takhlit ha-kawwanah shel siddur hanhagat ha-ašilot*] wherein there is the aspect of vessels [*kelim*] and attributes [*middot*], that is, there is a vessel [*keli*] that instructs about measure [*middah*] and boundary [*gevul*] . . . for just as a vessel constricts the matter placed within it, the actions of the lights of governance of emanation [*pe'ulot orot ha-hanhagah shel ašilot*] are ordered according to time and boundary; they are called “attributes” [*middot*] and “vessels” [*kelim*] for they give boundary to the dissemination of the disclosure of the soul [*hitpašṭut gilluy ha-neshamah*] that is within them. However, *Atiqā Qaddisha* is above the category of boundary, measure, and time. Therefore, there is no aspect of vessel or measure there at all; rather, they are eternal [*lefi ha-nišhiyyut*]. Yet, it is impossible to reach the quality of limitless perfection and the matter of eternity, which is the reward for the souls, except by means of volition [*behirah*] and temporal governance [*hanhagat ha-zeman*]. Consequently, the root for vessels [*shoresh la-kelim*] is there, but they are not disclosed, only potentialities [*hakhanot*].<sup>232</sup>

On the one hand, *Adam Qadmon* is beyond space and time, and hence it is inappropriate to ascribe a “vessel” to it. In the world of emanation, by contrast, where space and time prevail, we can speak of the duality of container and contained. On the other hand, since there is no way to reach the imaginal plenum of the boundless and timeless except through the emanations, which exhibit boundary and temporality, it is possible, indeed necessary, to speak of the potentiality for a vessel in *Adam Qadmon*. If this were not the case, there would be deficiency in the infinite; but since the infinite comprises everything, it cannot be deficient in any manner, it cannot lack anything—not even lack, the potential to receive, rendered metaphorically by the image of the vessel. In the root (*shoresh*), the universal (*kelal*), which contains the vessel (*keli*), is the perfect unity beyond time (*le-ma'alah min ha-zeman*), the interminable temporal deportment (*hanhagat ha-zeman le-nišhiyyut*) whence there is a transition to the flow of revealed time (*ha-zeman ha-galuy*). Significantly, the three stages of time, symbolized by the three books through which the world was created according to the opening section of *Sefer Yeširah*,<sup>233</sup> the three occurrences of YHWH in the priestly blessing (Num 6:24–26), and the three parts of the masoretic division of the scriptural canon, derive from the place of unity above time. It follows, therefore, that the

fullness of divine temporality consists of the lower seven aspects together with the upper three aspects.

### In This Moment: Engendering Time and Feminine Indeterminacy

Time marks the pulsation of absence coming into presence as the nameless revealed in the veil of the ineffable name.<sup>234</sup> In the circumspection of this circumscription, each moment appears unique, singular, wholly other in relation to what comes before and what comes after—no past, no future, no present. This secret is alluded to in the divine name proclaimed to Moses, “I will be as I will be,” *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, a name that names no-thing we can know since this name denotes that what it is to be for this divinity is to become what it will be in having been what it is to become, every manifestation a congruence of the infinite simplicity of simple infinity, the “metasemantic matrix”<sup>235</sup> that comprises the predictably unpredictable possibility of each moment, the persistent presence of the unprecedented present that makes possible awaiting the past in recollecting the future.<sup>236</sup>

In its character as enduring flux, it would seem that time should be gendered as masculine, the *élan vital*, which, when formulated within a phallogocentric frame of reference, will be linked ontically to the fecundity of the *membrum virile*. There are surely kabbalistic texts that support this interpretative stance: time as pulsating forward and resurging backward—or *yashar* and *or hozer*, extending light and returning light, in Cordoverian terminology—is troped in phallic symbolism, whereas space as the curbed receptacle, emptiness gauged by the degree of its vacuity, is gendered as feminine, the capacity to receive that gives structure through imposing limit on the power to overflow. Insofar as time is the divine impulse, which is marked by the dialectic of contracting and extending, it stands to reason that it will exhibit both male and female characteristics, and that these will correspond respectively to light and darkness, day and night. Yet, as suggested by the image in one bahiric passage—the precious pearl that is at once the inseminating seed and the inseminated womb that gives birth<sup>237</sup>—the nocturnal and diurnal aspects are both localized in what I have called the “androgynous phallus” in an effort to indicate that, according to the traditional kabbalistic construction of gender, masculinity and femininity are ontologically located in the attribute that assumes the function and role of the divine phallus.<sup>238</sup>

To elucidate the point, I focus on a zoharic homily that deals with the mysterious demise of the two sons of Aaron “when they drew near before the Lord” (Lev 16:1). Following a long exegetical trajectory, the zoharic authors

seek to comprehend why Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, suffered such a fate. To uncover the notion of time expressed in the homily one must attend more carefully to the biblical verse interpreted by the anonymous kabbalist, "And the Lord said to Moses, Speak to Aaron your brother and do not come at any moment to the shrine," *we-al yavo be-khol et el ha-qodesh* (Lev 16:2). From this prohibition one may assume, though it is not stated explicitly, that the entry of Nadab and Abihu into the sanctuary was ill timed. At an earlier point in the narrative the reader is told that Aaron's sons offered a "strange fire" (*esh zarah*) before the Lord (Lev 10:1; see also Num 3:4, 26:61), but we still do not know how this relates to the question of what constitutes the "wrong" or "right" moment.<sup>239</sup> Through the voice of R. Abba, a member of the fraternity clustered around Rashbi, the zoharic homilist begins the discourse by eliciting the following moral from the biblical narrative: it is suitable to ask one's requests during propitious times, when divine beneficence is found in the world, and not at times when severe judgment reigns.<sup>240</sup> To pray effectively one must be attuned to the different time zones, as it were, which reflect disparate states within the divine mirrored in the providential forces that govern the world, primarily the alternating periods of judgment and mercy, which correspond respectively to the altering templates of night and day. The author of the zoharic passage, through the mouthpiece of Rashbi, draws the obvious conclusion:

We have established the matter in interpreting "[to give them food] in his moment" [*latet okhlam be-itto*] (Ps 104:27), and this is certainly so. Thus the holy One, blessed be he, came to warn Aaron not to err in the transgression with respect to which his sons erred, for this moment [*hai et*] is known. Therefore, they should not err by joining the other moment [*et ahra*] to the king, as it is written, "do not come at any moment [*be-khol et*] to the shrine," that is, even though he sees that it is the time that the other hand has been given power to rule in the world and it has been given to him to unite with it and to draw it close to the holy, for "I and my name are one" [*ana u-shemi had hu*]. Therefore "do not come at any moment to the shrine." If you want to know by means of what he should enter—"through this" [*be-zo't*]. "Through this Aaron shall enter into the shrine" [*be-zo't yavo aharon el ha-qodesh*] (Lev 16:3), this *zo't* is the moment [*et*] that is attached to my name, through this yod, which is inscribed in my name, you will enter the shrine. It has been taught: R. Yose said, it is written, "He has made everything beautiful in its moment" [*et ha-kol asah yafeh ve-itto*] (Eccles 3:11). This word was established by the holy flame [Simeon ben Yohai], and thus it is, as it has been taught, "He has made everything beautiful in his moment" [*et ha-kol asah yafeh ve-itto*], and thus it is verily [*wadda'y*]. "Everything" [*et ha-kol*]—verily [*wadda'y*]. "He made it beautiful in his moment" [*asah yafeh ve-itto*], one in the other, so that the others will not be mixed in with them. "In his time" [*ve-itto*], precisely [*mammash*], and not in another. Therefore there was a warning to Aaron "do not come at any time to the

shrine.” Through what should he enter? “Through this” [*be-zo’t*], as it has been established, “Through this Aaron shall enter into the shrine.”<sup>241</sup>

The secret of the correlation of time and prayer—a correlation suggested by the evocative scriptural locution *wa-ani tefillati lekha yhwh et raṣon*, “As for me, may my prayer come to you, O Lord, at a favorable moment” (Ps 69:14)<sup>242</sup>—the “propitious time,” *et raṣon*, the necessity of which is deduced from the injunction given to Aaron, *be-zo’t yavo aharon el ha-qodesh*, “Through this Aaron shall enter into the shrine,” offered as a corrective to the lethal misdeed of Nadab and Abihu, a violation that brought about the interdiction “do not come at any time to the shrine,” *we-al yavo be-khol et el ha-qodesh*. But what did the sons of Aaron do wrong? The author of this homily assumes that their transgression consisted of trying “to join the other moment to the king.” To comprehend the import of the expression “other moment,” *et aḥra*, it is necessary to mull over the meaning of the word *et*.<sup>243</sup> Rashbi established the intent of this term when interpreting the expression *be-itto* in the verse *latet okhlam be-itto*, “to give them food in his time” (Ps 104:27): “This is the Matrona who is called the ‘time of the righteous one’ [*itto de-ṣaddiq*], and thus all await this moment.”<sup>244</sup> We may deduce, therefore, that the word *et* is one of the indexical markers of Matrona, a commonly used designation of Shekhinah or Malkhut in zoharic *derashot*, the tenth of the sefirotic emanations, a point we encountered above in the exposition of a passage in Karo’s mystical diary. This is the intent as well of the expression “moment of the righteous one,” *itto de-ṣaddiq*, that is, the moment, engendered as feminine, belongs to the *ṣaddiq*, the righteous one, a standard reference in kabbalistic lore to the ninth emanation, Yesod, the phallic potency of the divine.<sup>245</sup> The “moment of the righteous one” symbolizes the union of Shekhinah and Yesod, an incorporation that portends the messianic redemption, which seems to me to be the underlying intent of the comment at the conclusion of Rashbi’s words, “all await this moment,” *kullehu meḥakan lehay itto*.

With this symbolism in hand we can decode the rest of the homily. If the word *et* denotes Shekhinah, then *et aḥra*, the “other moment,” will refer to the corresponding force on the “other side,” *sitra aḥra*, the technical name of the demonic realm coined by Castilian kabbalists of the zoharic circle. The sin of Nadab and Abihu consisted of their attempt to unite the demonic feminine, elsewhere identified as Lilith, with the king on the side of holiness, which in this case is Tif’eret. Although not stated explicitly, it is likely that the zoharic interpretation was inspired by the expression *esh zarah*, “strange fire,” used in conjunction with Nadab and Abihu in several verses, as noted above. The “strange fire” they offered before the Lord, rendered symbolically, denotes

their desire to mix the unholy and holy—a reading attested in other zoharic passages. For example, the following appears in the stratum of Zohar known as *Sitrei Torah*:

There is a holy fire [*esha qaddisha*], the feminine [*nuqba*], and a foreign fire [*esha nukhra'ah*], the “strange fire” [*esh zarah*], and thus it is written “do not come at any moment to the shrine” (Lev 16:2), this is the feminine from the evil inclination [*nuqveta min yešer ha-ra*]. The holy spirit [*ruah qaddisha*] is male [*dekhar*], and there is a spirit of impurity [*ruah mesa'ava*], which is the evil inclination [*yešer ha-ra*], as it says, “From the stock of the serpent sprouts an asp” (Isa 14:29). There is holy ground [*afar qaddisha*] and unholy ground [*afar mesa'ava*].<sup>246</sup>

As still other zoharic comments demonstrate, the symbolic ascription of the strange fire to the feminine aspect of the demonic is enhanced by the exegetical link made to the expression the “estranged woman,” *ishshah zarah*. “It is written ‘they offered a strange fire before the Lord’ (Lev 10:1); it is written here ‘strange fire’ and it is written there ‘to guard you from the estranged woman’ (Prov 7:5), and it is all one matter.”<sup>247</sup> In the symbolic imaginary of the zoharic kabbalists, the expression from Proverbs *ishshah zarah* alludes more specifically to the Christian woman, for Christianity, the prototypical idolatrous religion (the faith and piety of *sitra aħra*), is associated with sensual lust, the power of eros from the left, which parallels the power of eros from the right, manifest most ideally in the yearning to cleave to the divine through contemplative prayer and study. Indeed, as I have analyzed at length in an earlier study, there is a homology between the lure of Christianity as idolatry in the theological plane and as the crux of sexual seduction in the social sphere.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, as Yitzhak Baer observed long ago, zoharic homilies well attest that for kabbalists in northern Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one of the greatest challenges for the male Jew was not to succumb to the attraction of Christianity in either domain.<sup>249</sup> Nadab and Abihu are exemplary of biblical figures—with a pedigree no less impressive than being in the lineage of the high priest—who were not able to overcome the sexual temptation of the other side. It is likely, then, that the meaning of their offering a “strange fire” was that they cohabited with gentile women.<sup>250</sup> The point is drawn explicitly in the following passage.

R. Judah began to expound, and he said: “It is the moment to do for the Lord, for they have broken your Torah” (Ps 119:126). “It is the moment to do for the Lord” [*et la'asot la-yhwh*]. What is [the gist of] this? It has been established that *et* refers to the Assembly of Israel, which is called *et*, as it says, “do not come at any moment to the shrine” (Lev. 16:2). What is the meaning of “do not come at any moment” [*we-al*

yavo be-khol et]? It is, as it is said, “to guard you from the estranged woman” (Prov 7:5), and this is [alluded to in the words] “they offered a strange fire before the Lord” (Lev 10:1). What is the reason for *et*? For there is a moment [*et*] and time [*zeman*] for everything, to come close, to be illumined, to be united, as is appropriate, as it is said, “But as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord, at a propitious moment” [*wa-ani tefillati lekha yhwah et raṣon*] (Ps 69:14).<sup>251</sup>

As one might expect from a medieval Jewish mystical text, the mixing of unholy and holy has dire consequences. In line with the scriptural maxim of justice as measure-for-measure, the sons of Aaron were consumed by the holy fire, *Shekhinah*, the medium that executes divine judgment, for, symbolically, having intercourse with an estranged woman is on a par with offering a strange fire on the altar. Yet one may also discern between the lines of the zoharic text recognition of the spiritual proximity and kinship between idolatry and worship, sexual temptation and erotic piety. The one who is captivated by the ecstatic fervor of the epiphanic moment will recognize that moment’s duplicitous nature, holding forth both the possibility that one will succumb to the temptation of *et alḥa* to combine what should be kept separate and the possibility that one will seize the moment of *et raṣon* to worship the divine with no admixture of evil. One might say, accordingly, that the moment of ecstasy, *et la’asot la-yhwah*, is a two-edged sword, *ḥerev pifiyyot* (Ps 149:6), not only in the sense that the instant breaks into time in such a manner that it is severed from “before” and “after,” as discussed above, but also in the sense that it has the potential to sever one’s connection to the path.

I am here reminded of the following description of the moment, *al-waqt*, in the eleventh-century treatise on the basic principles of Sufism composed by al-Qushayrī:

They say: “The moment is a sword,” that is, just as the sword is cutting, so the moment prevails in what the real brings to pass and completes. It is said: “The sword is gentle to the touch, but its edge cuts. Whoever handles it gently is unharmed. Whoever treats it roughly is cut.” Similarly for the moment, whoever submits to its decree is saved, and whoever opposes it is thrown over and destroyed. In this regard they composed the following verse:

Like a sword—if you handle it gently  
its touch is gentle,  
but its edges, if you treat it roughly  
are rough.

When the moment favors someone, the moment for him is just a moment. When the moment opposes someone, the moment for him is loathing.<sup>252</sup>



Let me state emphatically that there are important and irreducible differences between the kabbalistic and Sufi views on the nature of the moment and its visionary propensities. Nonetheless, both discern an implicit danger in encountering the truly real that is always in and of the moment. As the twelfth-century Persian visionary Suhrawardī, the *shaykh al-ishrāq*, “master of illumination,” put it, flashes of light come forth from the divine presence “like a sudden lightning-bolt that comes unexpectedly and swiftly departs.” These “flashes” are called “times,” for time in its elemental form displays the quality of incisiveness, erupting like a knife that cuts the fabric of its sheath. “It is for this reason,” continues Suhrawardī, “that one says ‘Time is sharper than a sword.’ It is also said, ‘Time is a cutting sword.’”<sup>253</sup> Commenting on the same dictum several centuries before Suhrawardī, al-Hujwīrī, the author of what is considered the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, wrote, “The Shaykhs have said, ‘Time is a cutting sword,’ because it is characteristic of a sword to cut, and ‘time’ cuts the root of the future and the past, and obliterates care of yesterday and to-morrow from the heart.”<sup>254</sup> The aspect of time that merits being compared to a sword is the moment (*waqt*), for the one who lives fully in the present is cut off from the burden of recollecting the past and anticipating the future. The ordinary time-line, we might say, is undercut by the time of the moment, eternally renewed as what has eternally never been.

In kabbalistic gnosis as well, the moment, which is the feminine, is a two-edged sword, the temporal interval that opens and closes, binds and unbinds.<sup>255</sup> This duplicity is captured in the zoharic comment on the scriptural expression *herev ha-mithappekhet*, “ever-turning sword” (Gen 3:24), which is applied to *Shekhinah*: “It changes from this side to that side, from good to evil, from mercy to judgment, from peace to war, it changes in everything, good and evil, as it is written, ‘the tree of knowledge of good and evil’ (ibid., 2:17).”<sup>256</sup> The alternation between good and evil attributed to the divine presence portends the incisive quality of time, the fullness of the moment realized in the cut that binds, the fork in the road that splits into a path to the right and a path to the left. The sojourner on the way knows, however, that the two paths are not to be construed dichotomously, as they spring forth from one and the same font.

I suggest that this insight underlies the statement from the zoharic homily with which we began: “even though he sees that it is the time that the other hand has been given power to rule in the world and it has been given to him to unite with it and to draw it close to the holy.” The remark is offered as the rationale for the restriction imposed on the priests not to enter “at any moment into the shrine,” for when contemplating entry into the shrine the priest apprehends that even the demonic is not absolutely other in relation to the divine. The experience of God’s oneness discounts the possibility of ontological dual-

ism—an idea expressed by kabbalists, as well as by mystics in other traditions, in the image of the coincidence, and in some cases identity, of opposites. Hence the high priest is tempted to draw the strange fire into the shrine, to traverse the boundary and thereby unite demonic and divine, to affirm, in the zoharic language, God’s declaration, *ana ve-shem ḥad hu*, “I and the name are one.” Although the monistic claim is metaphysically true, in the unredeemed world, the mandate for the pious Jew is to keep pure and impure separate. When confronting the sacred in the form of the erotic energy of the feminine, the priest must resist the enticement to render the disjuncture of the moment—the slashing of the instant—conjunctive by blurring the boundaries separating holy and unholy.

### Phallic Fecundity and the Spatio-Temporal Enshrining of Prayer

There is one more layer of meaning to expose in the zoharic homily, one that will help us uncover the most recondite dimension of the ontology of time and the kabbalistic phenomenology of prayer. We have established that the moment, *et*, corresponds to *Shekhinah*, the feminine potency of the divine. The matter of gender construction, however, is more complex than meets the eye. Let us recall the following comment:

If you want to know by means of what he should enter—“through this” [*be-zo’t*]. “Through this Aaron shall enter into the shrine” [*be-zo’t yavo aharon el ha-qodesh*] (Lev 16:3), this *zo’t* is the moment [*et*] that is attached to my name; through this *yod*, which is inscribed in my name, you will enter the shrine.

The intent of this passage is to relate that the ascription of the temporal category *et* to the feminine is dependent on her receiving the seminal efflux of divine energy from the supernal *sefirot*, which are fashioned imaginally as male.<sup>257</sup> The point is enunciated in the following comment by David ben Yehudah he-Ḥasid: “This is [the import of] ‘Your garments should be white in every moment’ (Eccles 9:8), verily ‘in every moment’ [*be-khol et*], and this is the secret of ‘do not come at any moment to the shrine’ (Lev 16:2), for all the lights of the supernal crown [*keter elyon*] illumine this moment [*me’irim le-hai et*], as it says, ‘It is the moment to do for the Lord’ [*et la’asot la-yhwh*] (Ps 119:126), a moment ‘for every time and a moment for every desire’ [*la-kol zeman ve-et le-khol hefeš*] (Eccles 3:1).”<sup>258</sup>

The context for this remark is an exposition of the words “he does not remit all punishment,” *we-naqqeh lo yenaqqeh* (Exod 34:7), which appear in the biblical

verses whence rabbinic interpreters eisegetically derived the thirteen attributes of divine mercy. Building on previous rabbinic texts, the medieval kabbalist accorded theurgic power to these verses; their recitation by Israel induces God to bestow a “free gift” (*matanat hinnam*) in the form of his forgiving all transgressions through the conduit of “the attribute of whiteness [*middat ha-lavan*], which is the whiteness of the skull [*loven shel ha-gulgolet*].” With this in mind we can better comprehend the interpretation of the verse “Your garments should be white in every moment” (Eccles 9:8): the nature of the moment can be fathomed from Keter, the ancient one, coterminous with the infinite and yet renewed, albeit unremittingly, as that which has eternally been what is yet-to-become; inasmuch as the supernal emanation is depicted as the “attribute of whiteness” or as the “whiteness of the skull,” it is incumbent that an individual’s garment be white in every moment.

In the zoharic passage cited earlier, the gender transformation of this process is brought into sharper relief. *Shekhinah* assumes the posture of the moment (*et*) when she receives from and is thereby incorporated into the male. The transposition is alluded to in the claim that the word *zo’t*, the feminine demonstrative pronoun, is the *yod* that is inscribed in the divine name. The reference obviously is to the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, which is *yod*, more specifically in this context to the *yod* that is the letter/sign of circumcision; through that letter, *Shekhinah* is attached to the name. To appreciate the full import of this claim, it is necessary to recall that zoharic homilists, like other kabbalists of their time, linked *Shekhinah*, which is called *atarah*, with the corona of the phallus, *ateret berit*.

As I have discussed this symbolism in several separate studies, I will not dwell on the point here, except to emphasize the particular relevance of this transposition to understanding the nexus of time and prayer. The *et*, which initially was identified as the female aspect, the Matrona, in the end is assimilated into part of the male organ, the *yod*, which is also inscribed in the name. By what means does the priest enter the shrine? Through *zo’t*, which is the *yod*, the sign of circumcision. With this we reach the point of perfect symmetry in the homiletical rhetoric exhibited by the zoharic author: Nadab and Abihu cohabited with gentile women and thereby placed the sign of the covenant in an unworthy place. From this transgression the high priest learns that he can only go into the shrine through the potency of *zo’t*, the letter of the name inscripted on the flesh, the *yod*, the feminine dimension of the phallic potency, identified as *ateret berit*.<sup>259</sup> Exposure of the corona facilitates access to the sacred space in the sacred moment at hand, *be-zo’t yavo aharon el ha-qodesh*, for the site of the covenantal incision is the ontic root of time in its alternating phases of night and day. In this manner, the erotic ecstasy of the instant, whose incisive cut tears the fabric of time, is properly restrained by restoring the female to the male in the form

of the sign of circumcision, *zo't* reincorporated into *zeh*. The containment of the female in the male ensures that boundaries will not be traversed and that the distinction between holy and unholy will be preserved. When the potentially threatening force of the unruly, transgressive feminine is properly reined in, then crossing the threshold at the propitious moment—indeed, the moment is the threshold that one crosses, entering and departing not as sequential acts but as one contemporaneous gesture—facilitates the meeting-point of time and space, a concurrence that bespeaks the mystery of prayer, which serves as a paradigm for human worship generally. In the words of Shalom Dov Baer Schneersohn, “The worship of man is to join time and space and to unify them in divinity” (*leḥabber zeman u-maqom u-leyaḥadam ba-elohut*).<sup>260</sup>

This association of the feminine and the phallic corona accounts for the essential link between time and memory affirmed repeatedly by kabbalists, the masculine (*zakhut*) branded as the locus of memory (*zikkaron*).<sup>261</sup> The generative force is envisioned, moreover, as the twenty-two Hebrew letters, which are contained within the name YHWH. These letters, in turn, allude to the ten *sefirot*, the luminous emanations arrayed in various images in the visionary’s imagination, especially the image of an anthropos. Philosophically speaking, envisioning the infinite entails the paradox of delineating the limit immeasurable in its delineation, enunciating the word unspoken in its enunciation, recollecting the trace forgotten in its recollection. This insight, which characterizes the kabbalistic orientation from early on, is well captured by Immanuel Hai Ricchi, the eighteenth-century Italian kabbalist and poet. Following earlier Lurianic sources, Ricchi asserts that the letters emerge in the space that comes to be as a consequence of *šimšum*, the contraction of the divine essence, which he refers to by the technical term “first cause” (*sibbah ri’shonah*). The act of withdrawal is related to the “secret of judgment, the weakening of this place like a female when his cause goes out from him, and he separates the place of withdrawal [*meqom ha-šimšum*] so that it will be filled afterward with the mercy of the extension of the line [*hitpashtut ha-qav*] that will expand in it.”<sup>262</sup> The paradox of the letters materializing in the “place of withdrawal” engenders another paradox (or perhaps more accurately, another aspect of the same paradox): the infinite is absent from the very absence from which it is absent, a threefold absence that alone can (re)present the (non)presence beyond representation. Ricchi articulates the matter with specific reference to the relationship between God and the most sacred of divine names:

Thus we have proven that the force of the first cause is in the letters of the Torah, for they were the first generated being [*yesh ha-meḥudash ha-ri’shon*] that came to be in all the created beings, which were created by means of them. Since their force

is found in them we do not have to search anymore for the root of their existence and persistence, to know who he is, for it is known that he is Ein-Sof, blessed be he, who has concealed his force in the letters of the Torah with which all created beings have been created. From the abundance of his concealment he did not reveal the name of his essence in any matter from the matters of the Torah and not in any name from the holy names, for even the holiest of names is created. His first cause shines its light in it more than in the other names. Therefore, it is superior to all of them, for it is called by his name all the time that he illumines it. Thus, when the force of his cause is removed from it, even this name is removed.<sup>263</sup>

Ein-Sof conceals the limitless force in the delimited letters of the Torah whence all things were created. This concealment, as noted above, ensues from the paradoxical withdrawal of the infinite from itself, a withdrawal that creates the space within which the secret comes forth in the secretion of letters. The letters, therefore, can be construed collectively as the veil that veils what is not to be (un)seen. Ricchi formulates the absence in radical terms (echoing earlier sources such as the fourteenth-century anonymous *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*) by stating that no word or letter in the Torah scroll and none of the divine names refer to the substance of Ein Sof.<sup>264</sup> The distinctiveness of the Tetragrammaton, designated alternatively as *shem ha-meyuḥad*, “unique name,” or *shem ha-meforash*, “explicit name,” is that the light of Ein-Sof shines in it more than in any other name, yet even with respect to this name the light shines therein only to the extent that it is occluded.

In the place of withdrawal, the erasure is erased and the name inscripted. Time is precisely the measure of this “narrative space” arising from the infinite withdrawing into the sheltering-open of its hidden disclosure,<sup>265</sup> alef secreted in the opening of *beit*. From a kabbalistic vantage point we can speak of the overcoming of time but only in the timelessness of time’s perseverance as that which lingers in the lapsing of lingering and lapses in the lingering of lapsing. There is no eternity over and against time, but rather the timeless time of temporal eternity measured against the timelessness of eternal temporality, like the halo of silence enveloping the periphery of the verbal, the haze of invisibility permeating the showground of the visible.<sup>266</sup>

### Day That Is Entirely Long: Temporal In-Difference

I conclude this chapter with a brief excursus of a rather lengthy discourse on the kabbalistic meaning of time and eternity penned by Dov Baer Schneersohn, the second master of the Habad dynasty, as his explication pulls together many of

the themes examined here. The critical comment is in Dov Baer's interpretation of the rabbinic motto, "King David shall live everlastingly" (*dawid melekh yisra'el hai we-qayyam*):<sup>267</sup> "This is the elevation of Malkhut to the essence of the light of Ein Sof, Malkhut of Ein Sof prior to the contraction [*šimšum*]." <sup>268</sup> The messianic proclamation of David's everlasting existence is interpreted theosophically as the ascent of Malkhut to Ein Sof, a return to the state of affairs prior to the ineptual act of withdrawal that eventuated in the male androgyne being split into discrete masculine and feminine potencies. In the boundlessness of Ein Sof, there is no autonomous female that stands over and against the male; on the contrary, the potentiality for femininity is contained fully in the male; to be even more specific, it is located ontically in the corona of the phallus (*aṭeret berit*),<sup>269</sup> not the phallus of the genital area but the phallic potency situated in the head, sometimes identified as the *yod* in the brain that corresponds to the *yod* inscribed on the circumcised phallus.<sup>270</sup> Thus far there is nothing exceptional about Dov Baer's teaching. The innovative element surfaces in his explication of this motif in terms of time and eternity.

The aforementioned eschatological teaching is part of a lengthy account of Judaism's monotheistic declaration, *shema yisra'el yhwh elohenu yhwh eḥad*, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4), and the utterance that immediately follows it, *barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam wa'ed*, "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever." The former corresponds to the supernal unity and the latter to the lower unity. That the compresence of the three modes of temporal eternity within YHWH—what was, what is, and what shall be (*hayah howeh we-yihyeh*)—parallels the compresence of three tenses of eternal temporality within Malkhut—past, present, and future (*avar howeh we-attid*) may be deduced from Dov Baer's analysis:

The root of the becoming of time [*shoresh hithawwut ha-zeman*] is in the aspect of Malkhut, which is specifically the aspect of the feminine [*nuqba*], and this is the matter [of the rabbinic principle] that women are exempt from time-dependent positive commandments for time is in the feminine,<sup>271</sup> but the name YHWH, that is, what was, what is, and what will be as one [*hayah howeh we-yihyeh ke-eḥad*] is above the aspect of past, present [and future] time . . . for the essence of the light of Ein Sof, which is entirely above time [*ašmut or ein sof she-lema'alah min ha-zeman legamrei*], shines through the aspect of time of the feminine [*ya'ir bi-veḥinat ha-zeman de-nuqba*] . . . and, consequently, the aspect of time will also be without limit [*biltti mugbal*] and it will be eternal without cessation [*nišhi beli yufsaq*], and this is [the intent of the expression at the end of the liturgical formula *barukh shem kevod malkhuto*] "forever" [*le'olam wa'ed*], in the eternity [*nišhiyyut*] of Ein Sof, for it is itself verily the aspect and gradation above time, but it is garbed in time. And this is [the meaning of the rabbinic slogan] "King David shall live everlastingly" [*dawid melekh yisra'el hai we-qayyam*],

eternally [le'olam]. And this is specifically in the future to come, as is known, as it is written in Daniel, "The Ancient of Days [atiq yomin] was sitting" (Dan 7:9) and then "his kingdom will be an eternal kingdom [malkhuteih malkhut olam] (ibid., 27). And this [is the intent of the claim that] *barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam wa'ed* is above the YHWH of the supernal unity [*shema yisra'el yhw' elohenu yhw' eh'ad*], for the name YHWH comprises past, present, and future as one, but even so it is not in the aspect of that which is entirely above time; on the contrary, it is the source of time. However, when time is without bound, as described above, that which is entirely above time, the essence of the light of Ein Sof, illumines it as it was before the withdrawal [*sims'um*] . . . and this is in the seventh millennium, which is called the "day that is entirely long"<sup>272</sup> [*yom she-kullo arokh*].<sup>273</sup>

Three levels are distinguished in this passage: the root of the becoming of time in its triadic emplacement—past (*avar*), present (*howeh*), and future (*attid*)—ontically linked to the aspect of *Malkhut*, the last of the ten *sefirot*; the compresence of the three temporal modalities—what was (*hayah*), what is (*howeh*), and what will be (*yihyeh*)—as one unity, which is associated with YHWH, the ineffable name that symbolizes the rest of the sefirotic gradations; and, finally, the light of Ein Sof that is utterly beyond time. In the infinite, "the two parts, past and present, are equal, and there is no before with respect to the past nor after with respect to the future, but the two of them are as one in the Nothing, and the antecedent is consequent and the consequent antecedent, as it is devoid of the aspect of time."<sup>274</sup> Dov Baer's position is rendered more clearly in the following comment by his father and mentor, Shneur Zalman of Liady, which is based on the comment of Viṭal cited previously in this chapter:

Thus, in truth, "For I, the Lord, have not changed" (Mal 3:6), for there is no alteration in God, blessed be he, from before the world was created when he and his name were alone<sup>275</sup> . . . (and, similarly, prior to the coming-to-be of the aspect of time, for time similarly was created and generated anew, but there was an order of time [*seder zemannim*] prior to the creation of this world, that is, from the moment of the emanation and coming-to-be of the spiritual worlds [*et asilut we-hithawwut olamot ha-ruhaniyyim*] . . . but prior to this no order of time was appropriate [*qodem lazeh lo hayah shayyakh shum seder zemannim*], for he, blessed be he, is entirely beyond time [*lema'aloh me-ha-zeman legamrei*]), and so it will be after the world is destroyed, and also now in the time of the creation and subsistence of the world, before him everything is verily considered to be nothing [*kulla mamashh ke-lo hashiv*]<sup>276</sup> just as it was before the world was created . . . but with respect to us the world is considered as something and as a thing unto itself, and it hides the divinity and hence is called "world" [*olam*] on account of "the concealment" [*ha-he'elem*], for it conceals the divinity and hides it.<sup>277</sup>

One can speak properly of the coming-into-being of time with the emanation of the *sefirot*, a temporal unfolding/enfolding of spiritual entities that cannot be situated in corporeal space, a process encoded semiotically in the Tetragrammaton, which conveys the compresence of what was, what is, and what shall be.<sup>278</sup> The attribution of time to the divine is related more specifically in Habad philosophy, including the passage of Dov Baer just cited, to the quality of governance, and therefore it is ascribed to *Malkhut*, the last of the *sefirotic* emanations, the point of liminality situated between the world of unity and the world of multiplicity. Given the centrality of this notion in the Habad understanding of time, it is not be extraneous or digressive to cite another comment of Shneur Zalman of Liady:

And this is [the import of] “Your kingship is an eternal kingship and your dominion is for all generations” [*malkhutekha malkhut kol olamim u-memshalttekha be-khol dor wa-dor*] (Ps 145:13), “eternal” [*olamim*] refers to the aspect of place [*maqom*] and “for all generations” the aspect of time [*zeman*]. Everything issues forth from the aspect of “your kingship” [*malkhutekha*], for time and place are created and come to be from nothing to something [*me-ayin le-yesh*]. Prior to the creation of the world there was no aspect of time or space at all, and there could be no created entities delimited in the aspect of time and place except by means of the aspect of his kingship [*malkhuto*], blessed be he, to which the aspect of time belongs, “he reigned [*malakh*], he reigns [*melekh*], and he will reign [*yimlokh*],”<sup>279</sup> which is not the case in the light of *Ein Sof*, blessed be he, for he is as his name, and he has no limit.<sup>280</sup>

The identification of *Malkhut* as the ontic source of time is supported by the liturgical formula that affirms God’s dominion in the past, present, and future, an idea repeated often in Habad literature.<sup>281</sup> Space and time cannot be applied to any of the divine attributes except for *Malkhut*, for this is the attribute that most precisely conveys the sense of divine governance (*adnut*). From this vantage point the inherent correlation of temporality and the feminine becomes evident. It must be noted, however, that some statements offered by the various Habad masters problematize this characterization to an extent by locating the root of time in the masculine potency that bestows the efflux upon the feminine. Thus, for example, Dov Baer writes: “Evening and morning is the time of night and day whose root is in *Ze’ir Anpin*, which is called the ‘source of the coming-to-be of time that is in *Malkhut*’ [*meqor hithawwut ha-zeman she-be-malkhut*], ‘[he ruled], he rules, and he will rule,’ as it has been explained in another place with regard to the explanation of the name YHWH, ‘he was, he is, [he will be]’, for it comprises everything that is in the past, present, and future in the aspect of the time of *Malkhut*.”<sup>282</sup>



This distinction is sometimes framed in terms of the rabbinic notion of *seder zemanim*, which is set in contrast to *zeman* proper, the former linked to Ze'ir Anpin and the latter to Malkhut.<sup>283</sup> The matter is rendered even more complex by the fact that, according to Habad's acosmic philosophy,<sup>284</sup> there is only one reality, the light of Ein Sof, but this light, which cannot be delimited either spatially or temporally, assumes the semblance of independent beings subject to physical laws of space and time. Shneur Zalman ardently insists, therefore, that in relation to the "substance" (*mahut*) and "essence" (*ešem*) of the infinite, the aspects of place and time "are verily nullified in existence [*beteilim bi-meši'ut mammash*] . . . in the way that the light of the sun is nullified in the sun [*ke-vittul or ha-shemesh ba-shemesh*]." <sup>285</sup> When viewed through this prism, the cosmos (*olam*) is the concealment (*he'elem*) that reveals the light that cannot be revealed but through concealment.<sup>286</sup> Menahem Mendel, the successor to Dov Baer, deftly delineated this feature of Habad acosmism, reiterating almost verbatim the language of Shneur Zalman:

The root of time comes to be only in the aspect of Malkhut, for the aspect of Malkhut has the aspect of "he reigned, he reigns, and he shall reign" [*malakh melek yimlokh*] . . . but above the aspect of Malkhut time does not apply at all [*lema'alah mi-behinat malkhut ein shayakh zeman kelal*]. In the midrash it says that this teaches that there was an order of time [*seder zemanim*] before this."<sup>287</sup> The intent is that [the locution] "before this" applies to this world, prior to this world's generation, but prior to the emanation of the supernal worlds even the order of times was not at all suitable. Therefore it is not appropriate to ask why the creation of the world was not earlier since there was no time, and it does not apply at all either before or after, for before or after there only applies an aspect of time [*behinat zeman*]. What emerges from this is that he and his name were alone prior to [the creation] and will be so after the world is destroyed as well, and there will be no time. Therefore, even now in the midst of time before him [everything] is considered as nothing, and everything that is closer to being before him is considered more as nothing, and only in relation to us it becomes concealment [*he'elem*] and occlusion [*hester*], and thus the [cosmos] is called *olam* from the word *he'elem*.<sup>288</sup>

Time is associated uniquely with Malkhut, the attribute of the divine to which governance in the world is assigned, but time should in fact be thought of as an illusion, since the world is not accorded independent ontic status. The playful etymology that links *olam* and *he'elem* drives home the point that the world is a garment that reveals the light of the infinite (or *ein sof*) by concealing it, for had the light not been concealed, the world would have been extinguished in the infinite, just as the ray of sunlight is absorbed the orb of the sun.<sup>289</sup> Just it is meaningless to speak of time prior to creation when contemplating the divine,

so it is pointless to speak of time when considering what will be after the world is destroyed. We may conceive of time, therefore, as a bridge suspended over an abyss bounded by the nothing-that-is-everything at one end and the everything-that-is-nothing at the other end. The release from time is possible, however, even in the middle, even in the course of one's lifetime, when the emptiness of being is contemplated from the standpoint of the infinite. Attaining this state of annihilation, turning *yesh* back to *ayin*, is the eschatological consciousness through which and in which time as the primordial pulse of creation is covertly revealed, openly concealed.

According to the passage from Dov Baer cited above, the messianic moment, rhetorically expressed in the rabbinic slogan "King David shall live everlastingly" (*david melekh yisra'el hai we-qayyam*) and in the liturgical formula "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever" (*barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam wa'ed*), is characterized as the elevation of *Malkhut* to *Ein Sof*, but also as the illumination of *Malkhut* by *Ein Sof*, two figurative ways of describing her restoration to the position she occupied within the boundless prior to the primal act of divine contraction.<sup>290</sup> Time is thereby transformed since it no longer has a limit—a philosophical idea communicated by the mythopoeic depiction of the seventh millenium as one elongated day, that is, the day beyond partition into the nocturnal/diurnal binary. As Dov Baer says in another context: In the eschaton, both sun and moon will be limitless in their power, a balancing that neutralizes any priority or privilege accorded one over the other, but it is still possible, indeed necessary, to speak of an attribute of day [*middat yom*], albeit "a day that is entirely long, entirely good [*yom she-kullo arokh she-kullo tov*] . . . above male and female, which are called sun and moon."<sup>291</sup>

In the state of redeemed time, the dyadic structure of night and day, marked by the dialectic of extension (*hitpashtut*) and withdrawal (*histalqut*),<sup>292</sup> gives way to the nondifferentiated unity in which opposites are no longer distinguishable as opposites. Consistent with what is affirmed in earlier kabbalistic sources, however, the overcoming of the dimorphism does not imply difference of identity but rather identity of difference. The ultimate reality is described therefore as one elongated day that comprises both day and night rather than a span of time that is neither day nor night; identity of difference, as opposed to difference of identity, entails the absorption of one antinomy in the other such that we can speak of night contained in day, dark in light, left in right, female in male. As a representative illustration of this point, consider this remark of the Vilna Gaon:

Thus on the seventh day it does not say "And there was evening [and there was morning]," for there male and female are not disclosed, and there they are one and contained [one within the other], the female contained in the male, as is

known, in the secret of *waw* within the supernal *he*. And even the day [*ha-yom*] is there in concealment, and this is [the import of] what is written, “there shall be a continuous day [only known to the Lord] that is neither day nor night, and there shall be light at eventide” (Zech 14:7). This is the seventh day that is entirely Sabbath, as is known.<sup>293</sup>

In a touch of historical irony, on this key doctrinal point (though surely not exclusively on this point) there is a basic agreement between the Lithuanian kabbalist and the view espoused by the Lubavitch masters. Focusing especially on the gender implications of this eschatological conception of time as the reconstitution of the male androgyne, the comment of Shneur Zalman on the verse “On that very day Abraham was circumcised,” *be-ʿešem ha-yom ha-zeh nimmol avraham* (Gen 17:26) is relevant:

Abraham merited the disclosure of the aspect “the Lord will circumcise your heart” (Deut 30:6), and thus it is written “Abraham was circumcised” (Gen 17:26). And this is [the import of] “On that very day [*be-ʿešem ha-yom ha-zeh*] Abraham was circumcised” (ibid.), that is, in the essence of that day [*be-ʾasmiyyut shel ha-yom ha-zeh*], and that day is the day that is entirely long and entirely good [*ha-yom she-kullo arokh kullo tov*]. The essence of that day is the great disclosure that will occur in the future, the disclosure of the aspect of “the abundance of your goodness” (Ps 31:20, 145:7), and this [is the aspect of the day] that is entirely good, and when the aspect of the “essence of that very day” was revealed to him, Abraham was circumcised.<sup>294</sup>

To do justice to this passage, one would have to examine in greater detail its fuller exegetical context, an eminently worthy task but one that lies beyond the concerns of this chapter. Suffice it to note, however, that the circumcision of Abraham, which is emblematic of the eschatological moment, is identified as the “second circumcision” (*milah sheniyyah*), an act performed from above to below, the “arousal from above” (*itaruta di-leʿila*), in contrast to the “first circumcision” (*milah riʾshonah*), the halakhic rite, which is performed from below to above, the “arousal from below” (*itaruta di-letata*). The latter is focused on the ritual act of circumcising the flesh, whereas the former is expressive of the circumcision of the heart, a spiritual state described as higher than Torah.

Thus concerning this second circumcision, which is after the ingathering of the exiles and after the fulfillment of the entire Torah, it is written, “Who among us can go up to the heavens” [*mi yaʿaleh lanu ha-shamaymah*] (Deut 30:12), the first letters [spell] *milah*, and it is above the aspect of Torah, for with respect to the Torah it says “it is not in heaven” (ibid.), as it is humbled below. . . . Circumcision is above the

Tetragrammaton, and thus [milah] is [alluded to] in the first letters, whereas the name YHWH is [alluded to] in the final letters,<sup>295</sup> and it is from the aspect of and gradation of the heavens, above the aspect of Torah, which is humbled below the aspect of these heavens. Regarding this the rabbis, blessed be their memory, said, “Great is circumcision [gedolah milah] for thirteen covenants were decreed on the basis of it.”<sup>296</sup> The [words] “great is circumcision” [gedolah milah] portend the aspect of the “great circumcision” [ha-milah ha-gedolah] from above to below, [signified by the verse] “the Lord will circumcise your heart” (Deut 30:6). . . . The disclosure and overflow of the aspect of the great circumcision come about by means of the thirteen attributes of mercy, which are above wisdom and intellect. Therefore it is above the aspect of the name YHWH and above the aspect of Torah (just as the thirteen attributes of mercy are the aspect that is above the Torah and hence forgiveness of transgression is found there). . . . Through this one can understand the matter of Abraham having fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given, but he did not fulfill the commandment of circumcision, as he wanted to attain that great circumcision from above to below. Therefore, he fulfilled all of the Torah that is below that circumcision and afterwards he merited that great circumcision that is above.<sup>297</sup>

The circumcision of Abraham’s *membrum virile* resulted from his having merited the circumcision of the heart, a spontaneous gesture that issues from the highest manifestation in the sefirotic pleroma, Arikh Anpin, a term derived from the scriptural elocution *erekh appayim* in Exodus 34:6,<sup>298</sup> the place that is pure mercy and consequently beyond the strictures of law and its implied system of reward and punishment.<sup>299</sup> Needless to say, the position articulated by Shneur Zalman should not be confused with the Pauline argument so influential in the history of Christianity that circumcision of the spirit (identified with the rite of baptism) replaces circumcision of the flesh. For Shneur Zalman, there is no substitution or replacement; to locate the circumcision of the heart in a gradation superior to the law of dichotomy implies not an abrogation of that law but rather a deepening of it by adhering to its source in *Keter*, the realm of unmitigated mercy and unwarranted forgiveness—hence the identification of the thirteen covenants mentioned in conjunction with circumcision and the thirteen attributes of mercy.

The second circumcision, which foreshadows the eschatological moment, triggers the transmutation of the carnal body into the semiotic body, that is, the body composed of the twenty-two Hebrew letters, which are contained, in turn, in the Tetragrammaton, the mystical essence of Torah, configured as an anthropos in the imagination of the visionary. In brief, we can say that the esoteric gnosis of kabbalah, which underlies the Hasidic teaching championed by Shneur Zalman, advocates the transubstantiation of the flesh into word—in

contrast to the Christological incarnational emphasis on the word becoming flesh.<sup>300</sup>

The implication of body transposing into letter for the kabbalistic understanding of time may be inferred from the scriptural statement that Abraham was circumcised “on that very day,” *be-’ešem ha-yom ha-zeh*, which, read hyperliterally, is decoded as “in the essence of that day,” *be-ašmiyyut shel ha-yom ha-zeh*. The import of circumcision illumines and is illumined by the essential nature of the day, which is conveyed by the eschatological images employed in rabbinic literature: “the day that is entirely long,” *yom she-kullo arokh*, and “the day that is entirely good,” *yom she-kullo tov*. Circumcision of the heart, which induces the spontaneous circumcision of the flesh—rather than its abnegation, as Paul and countless Christian thinkers who followed in his wake argued—draws our attention to the redemptive capacity of time, or, to be more specific, to the redemptive capacity of the moment in which time is redeemed by time. In this moment opposites coincide and difference is effaced in the identity of indifference, an ideal conveyed, as noted above, by the image of day without night, or alternatively, good without evil—rather than by the image of a time that is neither day nor night or a state that is neither good nor evil.

To experience the temporal overcoming of time one must be conjoined to *Keter*, the “aspect that is intermediate between that which is bounded in actuality and that which is boundless . . . the root of the coming-to-be of the order of time [*shores hithawwut seder zemanim*] . . . which is intermediary between Ein Sof itself and the emanation,” the locus of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, which is called “Ancient of Days” (*atiq yomin*), “for it is the eternality of the days [*nišhiyyut ha-yomin*].”<sup>301</sup> That the temporal overcoming of time, an over-coming that ensues from under-going, is the esoteric intent of Shneur Zalman’s eschatological teaching may be adduced from another passage, where he sets out to explain why the Sinaitic epiphany took place in a “desolate desert” (*midbar hareivah*):

The matter is that the essence of engagement with Torah is to be in the aspect of complete annihilation in the light of the infinite, blessed be he [*iqqar eseq ha-torah hu lihyot bi-vehinat bittul be-or ein sof barukh hu legamrei*]. . . . The meaning of the expression “desolate desert” [*midbar hareivah*] is [related to] what the rabbis, blessed be their memory, said regarding the seventh millenium [that it is] the one that is desolate [*had haruv*],<sup>302</sup> and this is on account of the strength of the disclosure of the light of the infinite [*osem gilluy or ein sof*], the day that is entirely Sabbath [*yom she-kullo shabbat*], the day that is entirely long [*yom she-kullo arokh*]. The corporeality of the world [*gashmiyyut ha-olam*] could not receive the vitality [*hiyyut*] from there so that it might be like it is now in the aspect of a being that is a separate entity [*yesh davar nifrad*].<sup>303</sup>

In a manner reminiscent of the view of Maharal discussed above, for the progenitor of Habad philosophy, the Torah was revealed in the desert because, of all the habitations in the physical universe, the wilderness is the most appropriate for depicting the insubstantiality of the infinite. Going beyond the monistic tendency evident in Maharal's thought, Shneur Zalman and his successors emphasize that although the cosmos appears to be composed of independent entities, when the veil of epistemic ignorance is removed, it becomes clear that these entities have no independent ontic status as they are naught but aspects of the light of Ein Sof. Torah provides the means by which one is conjoined to the light of the infinite and so attains the state of annihilation, construed temporally as the day that is entirely long, the day that is entirely Sabbath, that is, the temporal span wherein night is contained within day.

The most basic feature of time according to kabbalistic wisdom concerns the eternal recurrence of what is recurrently ephemeral, the self-same repetition of what is repeatedly different, the chronic coming-to-be of what has perpetually never-come-to-pass. Time weaves its web of luminal darkness, concealing truth disclosed in the disclosure of untruth concealed. The play of antinomies characterizes both the inscribed erasure and the decoding thereof by the kabbalist, who comprehends that eternity is the elongation of time's rotating wheel, the curvilinear withholding of what is extended forward, instigated by the illumination of Malkhut by Ein Sof and the consequent ascent of the former to the latter. Again, to cite Dov Baer:

The matter is as it is said "eternity" (1 Chron 29:11)—this is the construction of Jerusalem<sup>304</sup> . . . for the construction of Jerusalem in the future will be eternal in time [*nišhi bi-zeman*] without any cessation at all, for the aspect of the kingship of David and the Messiah in the future will also be eternal, as it is written, "That it may be firmly established . . . now and evermore" (Isa 9:6), as it said, "King David shall live everlastingly,"<sup>305</sup> as it is known concerning what is written, "He asked you for life" (Ps 21:5), in the aspect of the eternal life of Ein Sof verily [*hayyim nišhi de-ein sof mammash*], for he will be illumined from the aspect of Malkhut of Ein Sof itself, concerning which it is said "The Lord will reign forever" (Exod 15:19), verily in the aspect of the eternal world. Even though now the divine light in the aspect of Malkhut of emanation enters [the worlds of] creation, formation, and doing in the limited temporality of past, present, and future, "he reigned," "he reigns," and "he will reign," and these are "the six thousand years in which the world exists,"<sup>306</sup> for, as it is known, the essence of the boundary of time [*de-iqqar ha-gevu'ul di-zeman*] is in Malkhut, but it is known that he will be illumined from the essence of the light of Ein Sof that is above space and time, precisely in the aspect of the time of Malkhut. Therefore, the aspect of the division of time will be eternal [*hithalqut ha-zeman yihyeh nišhi*] without any cessation at all, for it is called "eternal life" [*hayyei olam*].<sup>307</sup>

Cosmic time, represented by the cycle of six thousand years, is subject to the threefold division of past, present, and future, but this time is transcended in the eschatological Sabbath, wherein time no longer reflects the triadic fragmentation. In the redeemed state, the gender binary of temporal existence (*hayyei sha'ah*) gives way to the eternal life (*hayyei olam*), wherein the feminine is restored to the

inner aspect of *Keter*, prior to the division into the three lines [of time] . . . and also above the aspect of the source of time [*lema'aloh gam behinat maqor la-zeman*], that is, the aspect of *Malkhut* of *Adam Qadmon*, and the inner aspect of *Keter*, which is above time, for even when it comes in the garment of time [*be-hitlabshut bi-zeman*], the time is not terminable [*ha-zeman einah kalah*], as is known in the matter of “the Ancient of Days is seated” (Dan 7:9) “and his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom” [*malkhuteih malkhut olam*] (ibid., 27), enduringly [*le'olam wa'ed*], which is the aspect of *Malkhut* of *Ein Sof*, just as it was [before creation] when he and his name were alone.<sup>308</sup>

In the end, as in the beginning, eternity and time are not diametrically opposed;<sup>309</sup> on the contrary, eternal temporality best approximates the promise of a temporal eternity to be realized in the messianic future when *Malkhut* ascends to and is exterminated in the light of the essence of *Ein Sof*, the source of time that radiates incessantly beyond the margin of time.<sup>310</sup>

Wachs,  
 Ungeschriebnes zu siegeln,  
 das deinen Namen  
 erriet,  
 das deinen Namen  
 verschlüsselt.

Celan, "Mit Brief und Uhr"

Before *alef* comes *beit*—here in a nutshell lies the wisdom of kabbalah. This parabolic utterance finds expression in what is presumably an older mythologoumenon preserved in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, long considered one of the earliest sources that contains, albeit in rudimentary form, the panoply of theosophic symbols expounded by kabbalists through the generations.<sup>1</sup>

A translation of the passage that has served as the basis for my reflections is followed by a philosophical analysis of its content that links the salient images to other statements in the *bahiric* anthology. The intent of this chapter is to shed light on the hermeneutical dilemma of the beginning: How does the beginning begin without having already begun? If, however, the beginning cannot begin without having already begun, in what sense is it a beginning? John Sallis succinctly expressed the logical impossibility of affirming a beginning: "To begin will always be (or prove to have been) redoubling—which is to say no beginning at all."<sup>2</sup> The mythic saying of the *Bahir*, which may well tell us something originary about kabbalistic epistemology, relates in the first instance to this ontological problem:

R. Reḥumai sat and expounded: Why is *alef* at the head [*ba-ro'sh*]? For it<sup>3</sup> preceded everything, even Torah.

And why is *beit* next to it? Because it was first [*tehillah*].<sup>4</sup>

And why does it have a tail? To show the place whence it came, and there are some who say that from there the world is sustained.

Why is *gimmel* third? For it is third and to indicate that it bestows kindness [*gomelet hesed*].<sup>5</sup>

But did R. Aqiva not say: Why is *gimmel* third? Because it bestows [*gomelet*], grows



[megaddelet], and sustains [meqayyemet], as it says, “The child grew up and was weaned” [wa-yigddal ha-yeled wa-yiggamal] (Gen 21:8).

He said to him: This is [the intent of] my very words, for [the *gimmel*] grew and bestowed kindness [gamal *hesed*], its dwelling was with him, and it was a “confidant with him” (Prov 8:30).

Why is there a tail at the bottom of *gimmel*?

He said to them: The *gimmel* has a head on top and it resembles a pipe. Just as the pipe draws from what is above and discharges to what is below, so *gimmel* draws by way of the head and discharges by way of the tail, and that is *gimmel*.<sup>6</sup>

Preserved in this text is what I presume to be an ancient mythic teaching according to which the divine powers are represented by the first three letters of the Hebrew alphabet.<sup>7</sup> Alef is the foundation, “at the head,” *ba-ro’sh*,<sup>8</sup> but not the beginning, *tehillah*, for the beginning is *beit*, which is second. And what of *gimmel*? It is third, exemplifying a threefold character—bestowing, growing, and sustaining. At last, we come to a letter that coincides with its numerical value, for *alef* is first but not the beginning, and *beit* is the beginning that is second.<sup>9</sup> Does the first not begin? How is the beginning not first?

Useful in understanding the distinction between first and beginning, origin and inception, is a remark of Rosenzweig: “Regarding essence, one inquires about origin, but regarding action, about the beginning,” *Beim Wesen fragt man nach der Ursprung, bei der Tat nach dem Anfang*.<sup>10</sup> Rosenzweig, in great measure indebted to Schelling’s later philosophy, which he links notionally to the cosmological speculation of Lurianic kabbalah,<sup>11</sup> distinguishes between “origin” and “beginning,” *Ursprung* and *Anfang*; the former relates to the void of the divine nature and the latter to the projection of the divine into the void of nature. “Origin” is an ontic demarcation, a name ascribed to the abyssal state that is the essence of God (*des göttlichen Wesens*), the whither and whence of all that comes to be in the cycle of becoming; “beginning,” by contrast, is a chronological demarcation that marks the initiatory moment of the temporal enfolding of divine action (*der göttlichen Tat*). Origin, accordingly, belongs to “the way of negation” (*der Weg der Verneinung*), beginning to “the way of affirmation” (*der Weg der Bejahung*).<sup>12</sup>

It is helpful to interject the view of Heidegger, which not only illustrates an interesting affinity with Rosenzweig, but also exposes another element that strikes a resonant chord with kabbalistic teaching. Heidegger contrasted “beginning” (*Beginn*) and “origin” (*Anfang*) in an essay on the history of Western thought published in 1954: “The beginning is, rather, the veil that conceals the origin—indeed an unavoidable veil. If that is the situation, then oblivion shows itself in a different light. The origin keeps itself concealed in the beginning.”<sup>13</sup>

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to conduct a systematic investigation

of the terms *Beginn* and *Anfang* (to which one would also have to add *Ursprung*) in Heidegger's thought.<sup>14</sup> Suffice it for our purposes to focus on the difference between beginning, on one hand, and origin and inception, on the other, cast in terms of concealment, which invariably implies disclosure, not as polarities resolved in a dialectical identification but as opposites belonging together in their opposition. Let me acknowledge that I am extracting Heidegger's terminology from its original context, which concerned the history of Western philosophy.<sup>15</sup> This is a legitimate move, however, since Heidegger himself plainly and repeatedly affirmed a parallelism between the history of being and the history of thought<sup>16</sup>—a basic tenet of Western philosophy and science intimated in the dictum of Parmenides *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, “for the same thing can be thought as can be,”<sup>17</sup> and epitomized centuries later in the principle of Spinoza: *Ordo et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum*, “Order and connection of ideas is the same as order and connection of things.”<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, the assonance between *ordo idearum* and *ordo rerum* on Heidegger's path of poetic thinking is quite distinct from the parallel juxtaposition on the path of Spinoza's metaphysical monism—indeed, one could credibly discount the need on the part of Heidegger to posit two orders rooted in the idealist/materialist distinction still reverberating in Spinoza's cosmological axiom—but the fact of their being analogous nonetheless remains constant.

How, then, can we formulate the difference between beginning and origin? Beginning is the advent of something that begins at a discrete juncture in the past and will be brought to a conclusion at some time in the future. A pattern of causal sequentiality is presumed and grafted onto the aggregate of experiences believed to take shape on a horizontal plane of temporality. What occurs at the onset, however, becomes increasingly less significant as the temporal event unravels. As Heidegger put it in another context, “Being a beginning [*Beginn*] involves being left behind in the course of the process. The beginning is there just to be abandoned and passed over. The beginning is always surpassed and left behind in the haste of going further.”<sup>19</sup>

Origin, by contrast, is not an occurrence that commences and terminates at specific times and places; it is the ground “from which something arises or springs forth.”<sup>20</sup> It is the point of departure “from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin [*Ursprung*] of something is the source of its nature.”<sup>21</sup> Essence and nature should not be understood in a static sense (logocentrically, one might say). On the contrary, origin comes to be in the course of an event, and it is thus fully clear only at the end of that which cannot begin. Heidegger's notion of *Ursprung* is elucidated by Benjamin's comments in the *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* regarding the “dialectic which is inherent in origin:”

Origin [Ursprung], although an entirely historical category, has, nevertheless, nothing to do with genesis [Entstehung]. The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance. . . . That which is original is never revealed in the named and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand, it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and reestablishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. There takes place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which an idea will constantly confront the historical world, until it is revealed fulfilled, in the totality of its history. Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar gesture, reflecting on the Greek word *arche*—in which one should hear the resonance of origin (Ursprung) and incipience (Anfang)—Heidegger notes that it is “that from which something emerges, but that from which something emerges retains, in what emerges and its emerging, the determination of motion and the determination of that toward which emergence is such.”<sup>23</sup> The origin, therefore, “is a way-making [Bahnung] for the mode and compass of emergence. Way-making goes before and yet, as the incipient [Anfängliche], remains behind by itself. . . . In this we perceive that from whence there is emergence is the same as that back toward which evasion returns.”<sup>24</sup> On the way there are perspectives, but solely in the end is the indeterminacy determined, and only then can we speak of destiny, of having been sent forth in historical resoluteness to chart the circular extension of primordial temporality, that is, time in its originary sense as the expectation of what is recollected in the recollection of what is expected.<sup>25</sup> Beginning and origin have diametrically opposite trajectories: beginning is what stands behind us, origin what stands before us. The origin invades the future by awaiting us in the past, advancing beyond all that is to come by returning to where it has been.<sup>26</sup> To see what lies ahead one must be mindful of what is at the head. Beginning is a veil that shrouds what has come before, and thus origin keeps itself concealed in the beginning.

Surprisingly, I have found in the words of Heidegger a key to unlock the bahiric symbolism. Before proceeding to unpack this symbolism, let me briefly comment on using the views of a twentieth-century philosopher to explicate an esoteric theosophy crystallized in the Middle Ages. In spite of the blatant differences between medieval kabbalists and Heidegger, too obvious to warrant delineation, applying the poetic thinking of the latter to the former is justifiable on two accounts. First, historical connections (especially through secondary channels of influence like Schelling)<sup>27</sup> between Heidegger and kabbalah cannot be ruled out

unequivocally. In the first chapter, I discussed briefly Schelling's characterization of the abyss, the primordial being, as an identity of two independent and irreducible forces rendered equal in their opposition, the affirmative force of outpouring and the negative force of withholding. I noted the probable influence of kabbalistic theosophy on Schelling through the German theosophy of a figure like Böhme, and I also suggested Heidegger's indebtedness to the latter.

The second rationale for turning to Heidegger to explicate medieval kabbalistic symbolism is the significant conceptual affinities between the two ways of thinking.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the path of Heidegger's later thought turns in a paradoxical manner—predicated, as it is, on a poetological heeding of the unspoken in what is spoken—particularly appropriate for the study of kabbalah.<sup>29</sup> The charge of anachronism is dismissible, in my judgment, as the philological insistence that a text be studied in a historical context construed in an exclusively synchronic fashion, though surely valid up to a point, need not be accorded hegemony when it comes to the hermeneutical task of reconstructing meaning. I am certainly not advocating an interpretative model of academic study that discards philological competence on the spurious grounds that all readings are equally valid; on the contrary, as even a cursory perusal of my work indicates, I embrace the discipline of philology as a legitimate means for reconstructing historical meaning and thereby situating a text in its proper literary context. Beyond this determination, however, the meaning one imparts or elicits from a text need not be constricted by chronological proximity. Moreover, as I have discussed in detail elsewhere,<sup>30</sup> one's hermeneutical orientation cannot be disentangled from presumptions regarding human experience and especially concerning the complex role memory plays in identity formation. If one were to subscribe to the theoretical possibility of time reversibility, then one could not be certain that the future does not continue to flow into the past through the present,<sup>31</sup> and, if the past may be as much determined by the future as the future by the past, then it is perfectly reasonable to propose that a thinker like Heidegger could provide a meta-discourse to disclose structures of thought in kabbalistic literature. Lest there be any misunderstanding, however, let me also state emphatically that I am not proposing that Heidegger's thinking should be privileged as the only viable or even the best hermeneutical method to approach kabbalistic texts in a contemporary critical idiom.

To return to the symbolism of the *Bahir*, the beginning, we can say, is *beit*, while *alef* is the origin. *Beit*, accordingly, is a veil that conceals *alef*, but can what is hidden be veiled?<sup>32</sup> How does the (un)veiling of the veiled take place? Through the agency of the third, *gimmel*, the conduit that draws from *alef* and disseminates to *beit*.<sup>33</sup> For the moment, we must concentrate on origin and beginning, and thus return to *alef* and *beit*, laying *gimmel* aside temporarily.

If we are to maintain the distinction between “origin” and “beginning,” the origin cannot begin nor can the beginning originate. To render this in the bahiric idiom, what is “at the head,” *ba-ro’sh*,<sup>34</sup> is not the “beginning,” *tehillah*, even though there is no way to the head but through the beginning.<sup>35</sup> To know *alef*, we start with *beit*, for before *alef* there is nothing but *beit*. That is why Torah begins not with *alef* but with *beit*, the beginning that is before the origin that precedes it.<sup>36</sup> The beginning is second and hence points to that which comes before. Thus, we are told, the function of the scribal tail on the backside of the *beit* is “to show the place whence it came, and there are some that say that from there the world is sustained.”<sup>37</sup> The *beit*—a trace of what was before it was after<sup>38</sup>—reverts back to *alef*, the source that sustains the world through bestowing, a quality that is attributed to *gimmel* on account of its etymological link to *gomel*.<sup>39</sup> The secret open of *alef* is manifest in the open secret of *gimmel*.<sup>40</sup>

To begin, then, we start with *beit*, the beginning that is second. Ironically, the first discourse about *beit* in the redacted form of *Bahir* begins somewhere in the middle of a conversation that has already begun, we know not when:

And why does it<sup>41</sup> begin [*mathil*] with *beit*? Just as [the word] *berakhah* begins.

How do we know the Torah is called *berakhah*? As it says, “And the sea<sup>42</sup> is full of the Lord’s blessing” [*u-male birkat yhwh yam*] (Deut 33:23), and the [word] *yam* is nothing other than Torah, as it says, “and broader than the sea” [*u-rehavah minni-yam*] (Job 11:9).

What is [the meaning of] “full of the Lord’s blessing” [*male birkat yhwh*]? In every place, *beit* is blessing [*berakhah*],<sup>43</sup> as it is said, “In the beginning” [*bere’shit*], and the [word] “beginning” [*re’shit*] is nothing other than wisdom [*hokhmah*], and wisdom is nothing other than blessing, as it is said, “And God blessed Solomon,”<sup>44</sup> “And the Lord gave wisdom to Solomon” (1 Kings 5:26).

To what may this be compared? To a king who married his daughter to his son, and he gave her to him as a gift, and said to him, “Do with her as you please!”

What can we heed [*mai mashma*]? That *berakhah* is from the word *berekh*, as it says, “to me every knee shall bend” [*ki li tikhra kol berekh*] (Isa 45:23), the place to which every knee bows down.

To what may this be compared? To ones who seek to see the face of the king but they do not know the whereabouts of the king. Initially, they ask about the house of the king [*sho’alim beito shel melek tehillah*], and afterward they ask about the king. Therefore, “to me every knee shall bend,” even the supernal ones, “every tongue shall pledge loyalty” (ibid.).<sup>45</sup>

Torah begins with *beit*, for the first letter of the word for “blessing,” *berakhah*, is *beit*, and Torah is blessing, for blessing is associated with *yam*, the “sea,” and the

sea is symbolic of Torah, and Torah is the fullness of divine blessing, *male birkat yhw*, that is, the fullness (*male*) that is the blessing of the Lord (*birkat yhw*), the beginning (*re'shit*) that is the wisdom (*hokhmah*) given to Solomon. The bestowal of wisdom is compared parabolically to the gifting of the daughter as a conjugal offering to the son by their mutual father.<sup>46</sup> From this parable the reader is encouraged to heed the connection between “blessing” (*berakhah*) and “knee” (*berekh*). How so? The “blessing” is the “place to which every knee bows down.” But what is this place? To understand this, we need another parable: Before one asks about the king, one must first ask about the dwelling of the king, *sho'alim beito shel melekh tehillah*. The house (*bayit* that is the *beit*)<sup>47</sup> about which one initially inquires (*sho'alim tehillah*) is the beginning (*tehillah*) that shelters but also exposes the king.<sup>48</sup> To this house prayers are directed in bending the knee and pledging the tongue.

The blessing is the dwelling, the sheltering-exposing; the question of its location marks the beginning of the path. Here philological attunement is most expedient: the word *tehillah* stems from the root *hll*, to perforate, to make a hole, to open, to be an opening. At/in the beginning is the gesture of opening. What can we say of this opening? That it opens, and as a consequence—or perhaps as a cause—that it is opened. But what is (en)closed in the opening that can be further opened? An opening, no doubt, but how and why might an opening be opened if it is already opened? To open the open, the open must be en(closed), for the opening of opening is enclosure, the circumference that encircles the center, the limit from without that delimits the limit within. Beginning, the *beit* with which Torah begins (*mathil*), is the opening that encloses the enclosing that opens, the questioning utterance that silences the silence of *alef* by exposing the shelter of the sheltered exposure.

Why is *beit* closed on every side and open in front?<sup>49</sup> To teach you that it is the house of the world [*beit olam*]. Thus, the holy One, blessed be he, is the place of the world but the world is not his place.<sup>50</sup> Do not read *beit* but *bayit*, as it is written, “Through wisdom a house is built” (Prov 24:3).<sup>51</sup>

The shape of *beit*—closed on three sides and open in front—attests that wisdom/Torah is *beit olam*, that is, the enframing opening of the world.<sup>52</sup> Borrowing another insight of Heidegger to enunciate a kabbalistic perspective, nature may be viewed as the clearing that allows beings to appear.<sup>53</sup> More profoundly, Heidegger notes that *phusis*, “nature,” signifies the confluence (*Fügung*) of openness and self-concealment. “The occurring of openness allows for self-concealing to occur within its own occurring of openness; self-concealment can only occur, however, if it allows the occurring of openness to ‘be’ this

openness.” To understand this coincidence of opposites one must be able to clarify what the “enigma of the essential ambivalence of *phusis* conceals,” and this would be tantamount to naming the “essence of the beginning.”<sup>54</sup>

To think the essence of the beginning in *bahiric* terms is to ruminate over *beit*, enclosed opening of opened enclosure. The author of the text just cited considered the question in terms of the letter’s shape. *Beit* is enclosed on three sides but open in front, signifying that it is *beit olam*, the dwelling within which temporal beings come to be in passing-away and pass away in coming-to-be. The measure of this dwelling in the stream of coming-to-be and passing-away is determined by and from wisdom, gnostically conceived as a potency of God, but its way is open, for in front there is empty space whence new possibilities abound. From the kabbalistic perspective this is the intent of the rabbinic dictum that God is the place of the world but the world is not his place. That is, all things in timespace are God even if God is not all things in spacetime.<sup>55</sup> The notion of world implicit in the hoary myth is dependent on the paradox of determinate indeterminacy,<sup>56</sup> that is, a structure that is at once closed and open, formed and formless.<sup>57</sup> This is the esoteric significance of the orthography of *beit*, the mark that inscribes the beginning that is second. The inscription, however, is concomitantly an erasure, for the *beit* that begins Torah veils the *alef* whence it originates. The role of Torah as preserving the concealment of that which must be concealed is alluded to in the following *bahiric* text:

R. Bun said: Why is it written “From eternity [*me-olam*] I was fashioned, out of the origin [*me-ro’sh*], before the earth” (Prov 8:23). What is “from eternity” [*me-olam*]? The matter that must be hidden [*lehe’alem*] from the entire world, as it is written, “he also puts the world in their hearts” (Eccl 3:11), do not read “the world” [*ha-olam*] but “concealment” [*he’elem*].<sup>58</sup> The Torah said: I was first [*qiddamti*] in order to be the origin of the world [*ro’sh le-olam*], as it says, “From eternity I was fashioned, out of the origin.”<sup>59</sup>

Based on a wordplay upheld in an older midrashic reading of the word *le-olam*, “everlastingly” (Exod 3:15) as *le’alem*, “to conceal,”<sup>60</sup> the author of the above passage connects *ha-olam* and *he’elem*. Insofar as *olam* connotes both temporal perpetuity and spatial extension, as I noted briefly in chapter 2, an intrinsic link is forged between three ostensibly disparate concepts: worldhood, eternity, and concealment. The rallying point of the three concepts is Torah, which is identified with the wisdom that is the subject of the verse “From eternity I was fashioned, out of the origin, before the earth” (Prov 8:23). The expressions *me-olam*, “from eternity,” and *me-ro’sh*, “out of the origin,” are synonymous. The intent of the verse, therefore, is to affirm that Torah derives from the origin (*ro’sh*, which is *alef*) that

precedes the beginning (*re'shit*, which is *beit*). Only if we appreciate this will we be in a position to comprehend the significance of interpreting *me-olam* as *lehe'alem*, “to be hidden.” In proclaiming its primordially, Torah is asserting, albeit cryptically, that it conceals the “matter that must be hidden from the entire world,” which is the head, the illimitable origin, whence it springs forth. This, too, is the esoteric sense of the statement attributed to Torah: “I was first in order to be the origin of the world.” The phrase that I translate as “origin of the world” is *ro'sh le-olam*. I have opted for a literal rendering, but this may obscure the intended meaning. The context demands that the word *le-olam* be vocalized as *le'alem*, “to conceal.” Once that is understood, then the expression assumes an altogether different valence. *Ro'sh le-olam* should be read as *ro'sh le'alem*, “the origin that must be concealed.” Torah, which declares itself as the first (*qiddamti*) of all entities,<sup>61</sup> hides the origin before its beginning. Here we recall the comment of Heidegger cited above, “The origin keeps itself concealed in the beginning.”

More concerning the beginning is disclosed in another *bahiric* unit that I consider expressive of an older layer of tradition:

R. Amora sat and expounded: Why is it written, “And the sea is full of the Lord’s blessing, take possession on the west and south” (Deut 33:23)? In every place, *beit* is blessed, for it is the fullness [*ha-male*], as it says, “And the sea is full of the Lord’s blessing” [*u-male birkat yhw*]. From there he gives drink to the needy and from the fullness he took counsel at the beginning [*tehillah*].

To what may this be compared? To a king who wanted to build his palace with hard granite. He cut out rocks and carved stones, and there emerged for him a well of abundant living water. The king said: Since I have flowing water, I will plant a garden and I will delight in it [*eshta'ashe'a bo*], the whole world and I, as it is written, “I was with him as a confidant, a source of delight [*sha'ashu'im*] every day” (Prov 8:30).

The Torah said: For two thousand years I was delighting in his lap [*be-heiqo sha'ashu'im*], as it says, “every day” [*yom yom*], and his day [*yomo*] is one thousand years, as it says, “For in your sight a thousand years are like yesterday” (Ps 90:4).<sup>62</sup> From here forward it is temporarily [*le-ittim*], as it says, “in every time” (Prov 8:30), but the remainder [*ha-she'ar*] everlastingly [*le-olam*], as it says, “my glory I will hold in for you” (Isa 48:9).

What is “my glory” [*tehillati*]? As it is written, “a praise [*tehillah*] of David, I will extol you” (Ps 145:1).

What is the praise? For “I will extol you” [*aromimkha*]. And what is exaltation [*romemut*]? For “I will bless your name forever and ever” (*ibid.*).

And what is the blessing? To what may this be compared? To a king who planted trees in his garden, even though rain has fallen, the [garden] draws constantly and the ground is moist, he must irrigate [the trees] from the spring, as it says, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, a sound understanding for all who



practice it" (ibid., 111:10). If you say she will be lacking something, thus it says, "Praise of him [tehillato] is everlasting" (ibid.).<sup>63</sup>

The *beit* is the fullness with which God took counsel at the beginning—an obvious allusion to Torah, which is depicted in similar terms in the rabbinic tradition, based on the image of wisdom in Proverbs 8:30 as the playmate with which God is enrapt two thousand years prior to creation. Note, again, that the word for beginning is *tehillah*, the expression used in conjunction with the question of the whereabouts of the *bayit* that shelters and exposes the king, the *beit* that begins Torah, beginning of the opening that is the opening of beginning.<sup>64</sup> The author of the *bahiric* passage renders the aggadic motif of the God of Israel bemusing and amusing himself with Torah by the parable of a king who happens upon an abundant spring as he cuts through the quarry of stone he is using to build his palace. The latter, we are to suppose, will be surrounded by a garden, but only if there is a flow of living water can the king plant the garden in which he and the inhabitants of the world will delight.<sup>65</sup>

The fullness of wisdom encompasses both the source of irrigation and the garden that is irrigated. The poetic images convey in visual terms the two principles that depict the basic dialectic within the divine nature, according to kabbalistic theosophy:<sup>66</sup> the outpouring power of mercy and the constraining force of judgment.<sup>67</sup> Although not stated explicitly, one may infer that the spring (*ma'ayan*) and garden (*gan*) betray these characteristics gendered respectively as masculine and feminine.<sup>68</sup> Wisdom is *beit*, for it is both the (phallic) spring that overflows and the (vaginal) garden that is watered, projecting-in and opening-out, exposed enclosure of enclosed exposure. The doubling of self to be the other stands at the beginning of the way.

But what words are appropriate to begin the account of the beginning, *ma'aseh bere'shit*, the beginning that calls forth the duplicity of the beginning? God delights with his fullness.<sup>69</sup> What kind of delight is intended? At this point, attentiveness to language is most warranted. The frolic of God with Torah/wisdom is designated *sha'ashu'a*, an archaic locution attested in several critical places in Hebrew scripture (Prov 8:30–31 and Ps 119:24, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174). The term denotes delight connected to wisdom (and, by extension, to Torah) on the part of God and on the part of the human.<sup>70</sup> This connotation is implied in the *bahiric* text, but what novel interpretation of the ancient word may be discerned from the medieval collection of kabbalistic lore? What new thought is repeated, what new teaching is reiterated?

We must listen more carefully to the term *sha'ashu'a*. Apparently, it stems from the root *she'a*, which means to divide, to separate. To apprehend the nature

of *sha'ashu'a*, therefore, it is necessary to think through the alliance of delectation and division. What delight is there in dividing and parting? The *jouissance* of beginning, for beginning entails the rapture of irruption and cohesion of separation, the doubling and splitting of which I have already spoken.

*Sha'ashu'a* must be thought from the vantage point of the nexus of beginning and division. To appreciate the fuller implications of this connection, a proximity that promotes rather than impedes difference, one would do well to consider another *bahiric* text. Interestingly, in the pertinent passage, disclosure of the kabbalistic secret is portrayed as the task of students expounding before their master, R. Berechiah:

They began and said: Originally—one [*bere'shit ehad*]. “Spirit before me is faint, I am the one to create souls” (Isa 57:16). “The channel of God is full of water” (Ps 65:10). What is the “channel of God” [*peleg elohim*]? Thus our master taught us that the holy One, blessed be he, took the waters of creation and divided them. He placed half of them in heaven and half of them in the ocean, as it is written, “God divided the fullness of water.” By means of them a man studies Torah, as it is said, “Through the merit of acts of kindness [*gemilut hasadim*] a man studies Torah, as it says, ‘All who are thirsty come for water, even if you have no money’ (Isa 55:10), go to him and he will act with kindness towards you, and ‘you will stock up on food and eat’ (ibid.).”<sup>71</sup>

The secret here—as elsewhere in the *bahiric* anthology—is revealed through mytho-theosophic exegesis, that is, reading Hebrew scripture as a narrative about the inner nature of God, a narrative that may have been shaped by older mythical dicta transmitted independently of the scriptural text but nonetheless anchored therein and deduced therefrom.<sup>72</sup> More specifically, the exegesis placed in the mouth of R. Berechiah’s students, which includes a teaching received directly from the master, is meant to explain the ontic transition from the incomposite oneness prior to creation to a division within the one, God’s becoming-other, which logically entails three modes of relatedness: for the other, with the other, in the other.

The first word of Torah, *bere'shit*, alludes to the unity before the threefold othering of the one, a unity that technically is before there is one, for in being one there would be two and consequently one to divide. Thus, *bere'shit* is interpreted by the gloss *ehad*, that is, *ehad* is apposite to *bere'shit*: *bere'shit ehad*, “originarily—one.”<sup>73</sup> Division, on the other hand, is tied exegetically to Isaiah 57:16, *ki ruah mi-lefanay ya'atof u-neshamot ani asiti*, “for spirit before me is faint, I am the one to create souls,” and to Psalm 65:10, *peleg elohim male mayim*, which I will leave untranslated for the moment. The *bahiric* homily engages the meaning of the

latter verse but is completely silent about the former. The silence notwithstanding, it is appropriate to begin with a brief comment about this verse. A distinct meaning was evidently assumed by the exegete whose words (at least in part and in some form) have been preserved in the written recensions of *Bahir*, and we must try to recover something of it by listening assiduously.

Ki *ruah* mi-lefanay ya'atof u-neshamot ani asiti, "for spirit before me is faint, I am the one to create souls." I assume this verse should also be read mytho-theosophically. We must first ascertain who is speaking. The answer is offered in the poetic-liturgic utterance of the prophetic text itself: *ram we-nissa shokhen ad we-qadosh shemo*, "high and exalted, everlastingly dwelling, holy is his name" (Isa 57:15). The intent of the verse, when read kabbalistically, is to emphasize that souls are created by this high and exalted one whose name is holy, not by the spirit (*ruah*) that falters before him.<sup>74</sup> If we were to translate the mythopoeic imagery into Neoplatonic terms, we could speak of the creation of souls evincing the movement from the one beyond one to the one that is many, the one that encompasses division issuing from the one that is indivisible.<sup>75</sup> This transition marks the beginning and hence it is symbolized by *beit*, the second that is first.<sup>76</sup>

Further support may be adduced from the verse *peleg elohim male mayim*. Its plain sense is: "the channel of God is full of water." The esoteric exegete, however, read (in the double sense of interpreted and vocalized) the word *peleg* as *palag*, "to divide," thereby changing the syntax of the verse. The proper noun *peleg elohim*, "channel of God," is turned into predicate and subject, *palag elohim*, "God divided." Moreover, the expression *male mayim* is not the predicate nominative "is full of water," but the nominative "fullness of water." The overall meaning of the verse, therefore, is that God divided the fullness of water. To what does this refer? To the primordial division of waters, an ancient theme in Israelite cosmogonic myth.

In the *bahiric* text, what else do we hear about the separation of upper and lower waters? We are told that by means of these waters one studies Torah. This statement is equated with a maxim, presented anonymously in some manuscript recensions and attributed to a specific rabbi in other recensions,<sup>77</sup> that one merits studying Torah through acts of kindness, *gemilut hesed*. I have not succeeded in locating a source or even a precise parallel to the maxim as it is cited in *Bahir*, but it is easy enough to list a number of rabbinic dicta wherein a tight connection is drawn between Torah and charitable, compassionate behavior.<sup>78</sup> On balance, it seems to me, the *bahiric* text offers an interpretation of a maxim that circulated independently in either oral or written form. If, for the sake of argument, we assume this to be case, then the critical question is: how did the author of the *bahiric* text understand the maxim?

By the merit of the water that was divided at the beginning—indeed the division that is the beginning—one studies Torah. The fullness of water, *male mayim*,

refers technically to the effluence of divine wisdom, the sea that is Torah,<sup>79</sup> the daughter beloved to her father and given as a matrimonial gift to her brother. It thus makes perfectly good sense to associate the division of waters and the study of Torah. Moreover, the latter is connected to acts of kindness. This connection is interpreted in the following way: he who wishes to study must go to the source of the water, the *beit-bayit* that is the beginning, the plentitude of wisdom/Torah, and from there a flood of mercy will issue forth.<sup>80</sup> The overflow of wisdom is expressed as the generosity of spirit that bestows deeds of kindness in the world, *gemilut ḥasadim*. We encountered this force before in the description of the *gimmel* at the beginning of the path, which we abruptly laid aside. Now, however, it is time to take hold of the matter, to grasp the symbolic intent of this letter.

What is *gimmel*? It bestows (*gomel*) like a spring that erupts and waters the garden with the light/seed of wisdom that is hidden in the head (*ba-ro'sh*),<sup>81</sup> the origin that is before there is one to begin because there is no second. Through the bestowal of the seed the distance separating *alef* and *beit* is bridged. Hence, *gimmel* may be viewed as the division that unifies that which is divided by dividing that which is unified. The possibility of *gimmel* is there from before *alef*, for without positing the third term, which is the link, one cannot conceive the division that is the beginning, the *beit-bayit* that exposes by sheltering *alef*.

It might be protested that no mention of the letters is made in the *bahiric* account of waters parting at the beginning; how, then, can I introduce them into the mythologoumenon? This is a legitimate concern, one for which I have no decisive answer. I conjecture, however, that the myth of the division of the waters can be semiotically encoded and thereby linked to the passage that preserves and transmits the tradition regarding *alef*, *beit*, and *gimmel*. The one that is first before the beginning is signified by *alef*; the division of waters at the beginning by *beit*; the channel connecting upper and lower in the beginning by *gimmel*. This is the significance of the reference to *gemilut ḥasadim* in this context, for what sustains the earth is the overflow from heaven, the beneficence that comes by way of the conduit that bestows wisdom.<sup>82</sup> A similar beneficence facilitates the study of Torah.

The full intent of this image is conveyed when one considers the implicit gender characteristics at work behind the letter symbolism. Although he did not state so explicitly, one can well assume that the author/transmitter of this passage conceptualized the upper waters as masculine and the lower as feminine, a cosmological theme attested in classical rabbinic literature. The relevant references in the older texts make it unambiguously clear that the gender imagery has a decidedly sexual nuance. Thus, in the dictum of R. Levi, “the supernal waters are masculine and the lower feminine,” the earth that opens to receive the heavenly overflow, which is linked exegetically to Isaiah 45:8, is depicted

as “a woman opening for the man.”<sup>83</sup> If the upper is male and the lower female, the link connecting the two is presumably the phallus. This surmise would go well with the phallic image of the spring to which I have already referred, the spring of wisdom that emerges spontaneously from the rocks and waters the garden in which the king and his world delight. In an alternative mythic formulation, *gimmel* is the son that bridges the distance between *alef* and *beit*, father and daughter.<sup>84</sup> *Gimmel*, moreover, occupies a central role in the erotic play of *sha’ashu’a*. Indeed, the impetus for the division of the fullness that is the beginning arises from the springing-forth of *gimmel*, the will to bestow that stems from *gemilut hesed*, love as the incessant overflowing, projecting-open opening into the opening of the open-projection.<sup>85</sup> Prior to that point—which is technically no point at all, since for one to conceive a point one must conceive a line but conceiving a line is not possible without conceiving two points—there is nothing but the oneness that transcends number. In the beginning is the splitting of the waters, a rupture in the beginning. Thus the beginning is *beit*, signifying the duplicity brought about through division of the one before all division. Where do we see this divide most wholly? In time, in the beginning, at the beginning—for to begin, the beginning must have begun, otherwise it is no beginning. What begins, therefore, can only be what has already been what is yet to come.

The kabbalistic import of the myth places *sha’ashu’a* at the beginning—following the rabbinic identification of wisdom as Torah—the first stirring that is the trace of what came before, the *beit* that begins Torah, the time of beginning in the beginning of time. The correlation of beginning and *sha’ashu’a* underscores the temporal comportment of the primal ecstasy, which, quite literally in the kabbalistic symbolism, is an *ek-stasis*, standing out, an elongation of the line to be encompassed in the circle.<sup>86</sup> The connection between time and *sha’ashu’a* is already intimated in the verse from Proverbs wherein wisdom describes herself as being the delight before God “every day,” *sha’ashu’im yom yom*, and playing before him “in every moment,” *mesaheqet lefanav be-khol et*. Insofar as wisdom was frolicking before God from the beginning—indeed, the beginning is nothing but this frolic—*sha’ashu’a* bears the footprint of temporality in the cyclical linearity of linear circularity.

From the beginning we can deduce some general characteristics about time: To begin with, as I have already remarked, the beginning cannot begin, yet that which cannot begin cannot end. To be always beginning, then, is to be never ending, but to be never ending is to be always of the moment. To be always of the moment is to always be of the moment, that is, to begin in the beginning that cannot begin because it has already begun if it is the beginning that can(not) begin. The beginning is, in the language of Nagarjuna, the renowned

Indian philosopher of the Middle Way (*Mādhyamika*), the “primary arising” that produces the “arising of arising.”<sup>87</sup> The arising of arising entraps the mind in the insurmountable paradox of simultaneously affirming and denying the possibility of arising: If there is an arising of arising, the arising will have already been, since in the absence of its having been we could not speak of its having arisen, but if it has already arisen, we cannot speak of it arising and consequently there can be no arising of arising. Temporality is measured by the moment that belongs to this primary arising of arising, the impossible that makes time possible, the beginning that cannot begin but as the ending that cannot end the beginning that cannot begin. What will be in time is the same as what was in time by virtue of being different than what is in time—different, that is, in virtue of being the same. Here, again, Heidegger is helpful:

What is in time and is thus determined by time, we call the temporal. . . . Time and the temporal mean what is perishable, what passes away in the course of time. Our language says with greater precision: what passes away with time. For time passes away. But by passing away constantly, time remains as time. To remain means: not to disappear, thus, to presence. . . . Time is not a thing, thus nothing which is, and yet it remains constant in its passing away without being something temporal like the beings in time.<sup>88</sup>

Applying the paradox of time poetically captured by Heidegger to the kabbalistic symbolism, we can say of *sha’ashu’a* that it persists in its passing, that it is most evidently when it is no more. The bliss at the beginning cannot be the beginning of bliss, for the beginning does not begin and remain beginning. *Sha’ashu’a* is thus always of the beginningless, and correspondingly endless, moment—no before, no after, no recollection, no expectation, momentary elation, present in its absence, ephemeral in its recurrence, eternal in its transience. The joy at the beginning—the ecstasy of beginning that congenitally resists being the beginning of ecstasy—never was, for it never will not be. Yet, we must take to heart a distinction made in the bahiric text itself: There is a difference between the two thousand years before creation and the span of time that follows creation. The former is characterized by *sha’ashu’a* that is “everlasting” (*le-olam*), whereas the latter is characterized by *mesaheqet lefanav*, “toying before him,” which is from time to time (*le-ittim*).

The transition from perpetual musing to intermittent play requires holding back and the setting of a boundary. The notion of withdrawal, itself withdrawn and thus not stated overtly, is a secret exegetically derived from the verse *lema’an shemi a’arikh appi u-tehillati ehetam lakh le-vilti hakhritekha*, “For the sake of my name I will postpone my wrath and my glory I will hold in for you so that I will not

destroy you” (Isa 48:9).<sup>89</sup> The plain sense of the prophetic dictum relates to divine mercy expressed as God’s long-suffering, the capacity to restrain his rage. The expression *tehillati ehetam*, literally “my glory I will hold in,” is parallel to *a’arikh appi*,<sup>90</sup> “I will postpone my wrath.” One may surmise that at some point in ancient Israel the notion of a vengeful god yielded its opposite, the compassionate god who holds in his fury. In the bahiric text, only the second part of the verse is cited because the focal point is the constriction of *tehillah*, which has been rendered as the divine glory.

But what resonance did the author of the bahiric passage hear in the scriptural verse that inspired his exegesis? The self-limitation expressed as inhaling the breath and holding in the glory makes possible the periodic moments of joy that God experiences with Torah/wisdom. Prior to the withholding, the father’s musing on the daughter had no temporal bounds; consequent to the withholding, it is temporally bound. The contraction of divine glory through the holding in of spirit/breath facilitates the movement from *le-olam*, “everlastingly,” to *le-ittim*, “ephemerally.” Time, which begins with the beginning that cannot begin, arises as a consequence of the constriction. The reader is told, moreover, that the glory that is held in for Israel: *u-tehillati ehetam lakh* (Isa 48:9), is the “praise of David,” *tehillah le-dawid* (Ps 145:1),<sup>91</sup> the praise that is exaltation (*romemut*), the blessing of the name. These are different ways of referring symbolically to the glory, for it is comprised of the blessings of Israel and it is the praise that is uplifted to be placed again as a crown on the head.<sup>92</sup> The blessing is said to be “forever and ever,” *le-olam wa’ed*, eternally, but it must always be of the moment, *be-khol et*, in every moment, from time to time, *le-ittim*. The rhythms of prayer are set by the seemingly primordial turning of time: the fading of night into day and day into night, the return of the same as different and the evolution of the different as same.<sup>93</sup> This is the mystery of song, the secret of prayer. In every moment there is a beginning, and hence each moment is identical but distinctive, nay, identical because distinctive. To what may this be compared? To the king who waters his garden from the spring even though the ground is sufficiently wet from rainfall. This image casts a shadow from which we may glean something about the beginning of time in the time of beginning. Time, as opposed to eternity, which is marked by the characteristic of having always been, must have a point of beginning, but to begin it cannot have begun without compromising its status as the beginning that will begin. The beginning, then, never ends; yet only that which ends everlastingly never ends. In bahiric imagery, the fount of wisdom—the phallic aspect of God, which is symbolized by *gimmel*, the force that bestows (*gomel*) goodness—ceaselessly overflows from *alef* to *beit*, but it is never depleted. Each time implies every time, from time to time, timelessly beginning, eternally returning.

*Sha'ashu'a*, the father's be/musement for the daughter, the king's contemplation of wisdom, stands at the beginning; indeed, it is the beginning, for it cannot begin. In this musing/amusing is the primordial divide, what-is becoming self and other, the springing into being of what has been, the fullness that is depleted, the trace of *alef* in *beit*, which comes before it. The musing discloses something fundamental about the composition of time: each moment is because it incessantly becomes other than what it is. This is the way of *sha'ashu'a*, projecting out to hold in.

The parabolic image of a king cutting rocks and carving stones in the effort to build his palace in all likelihood alludes to divine creativity through inscription, since inscribing, too, involves removing material, hollowing out a space on the stone surface, as the letters are engraved or etched. If this surmise be accepted, then *sha'ashu'a* should be depicted as a bemusing tied to the act of writing and the object written. Especially against this background, the holding-in of the glory becomes palpable as the persistence of speech in the silencing of silence, the reverberation of inscription in the erasing of erasure. Moving beyond the positing of two elements that would have to be resolved dialectically, we can imagine a convergence such that opposites are recognized as identical because they are different. After all is said and done, can we think of a going-out that is not taking-in, a taking-out that is not going-in, an inside that is not outside the outside that is inside, an outside that is not inside the inside that is outside, a beginning that ends the ending that does not begin?

In the bahiric parable I have found support for Heidegger's contention that the "ontological condition for the understanding of being is temporality itself."<sup>94</sup> For kabbalists, this condition is related to the contemplative musing of which I have spoken above, a be/musing that presupposes a division of the one, the doubling of *beit*, the beginning that is second. I would add that in bahiric fragments, and in subsequent kabbalistic literature based thereon, the correspondence of *sha'ashu'a* and temporality underscores the erotic dimension of time. Significantly, the bahiric text highlights, perhaps intensifies, the erotic quality of *sha'ashu'a* that may have been at play from the beginning. The imagery of irrigation, which has come up already, should be interpreted in light of this erotic/contemplative delight. The argument is bolstered by other fragments in the bahiric anthology wherein the image of water spreading over the garden more clearly alludes to sexual union—through phallic discharge—between male and female.<sup>95</sup>

Here we also have to consider the accounts of the father's desire for and cohabitation with the daughter scattered throughout the textual landscape of *Bahir*. I have discussed this motif elsewhere,<sup>96</sup> and I will not reproduce all the relevant texts again; but let me simply emphasize that the father's amusing



himself through the daughter is inseparable from—indeed identical to—the father’s musing over the daughter. Two points that follow from this are worthy of consideration: First, the basic myth that explains the movement from the first that is not a beginning to the beginning that is second, from eternity to temporality, involves the splintering of wisdom into three—father, daughter, son—and the consequent yearning to restore a sense of integration and wholeness. That desire is expressed in terms of either the father and daughter or the son and daughter, but both representations relate to the drive to reinstate the elemental unity of wisdom. Eros from this perspective may be viewed as the longing to retrieve a detached aspect of self. The impulse for the other, which underlies the *sha’ashu’a* that God has for Torah, the father-king for the daughter-princess, is an expression of this narcissism.<sup>97</sup>

The second point of note is that the correlation between eros and noesis implied by the poetic image of *sha’ashu’a* in the bahiric fragment has persisted among kabbalists through generations. In a number of previous studies, I have posited that the epistemological matrix that informed the lived experience of medieval kabbalists allows us to speak concomitantly of the noetic quality of eros and the erotic quality of noesis. In the beginning, God contemplates his wisdom, the father delights with his daughter. Contemplative eros ensues from and results in the projecting-open, springing forward to leap back, drawing forth to let go. Logically, one can imagine projection without reception, but, ideally, the mythopoeic orientation of the kabbalists embraces both concurrently. This dialectic marks the beginning, *beit*, of Torah, stuttering to be heard in the beginning of the way, setting out to break open the open that is broken. In the beginning that cannot begin, time comes to be in its having been.

We are surely justified in translating the term *sha’ashu’a* as it is used in *Sefer ha-Bahir* and in later works of kabbalah by the Lacanian expression “jouissance,” that is, the ecstatic state of orgasmic unity wherein the self of consciousness does not relate to the other in its heterogeneity.<sup>98</sup> The happiness that does not concern the other, the drive that has no other, is jouissance, the surplus enjoyment that defies signification, what Lacan himself calls “knowledge of the real.”<sup>99</sup> No sooner do we inch forward on the path than we are sent back to the beginning. What is a drive without an other, a turning-toward without regard for the other? How can consciousness that has only itself as other be described? Even self-consciousness, consciousness of self, is predicated on the othering of other in the other of othering. This drive, what Lacan deems the “real” that resists being signified, has been described aptly as the “self-sufficient closed circuit of the deadly compulsion-to-repeat. The paradox is this: that which cannot ever be memorized, symbolized by way of its inclusion into the narrative frame, is not some fleeting moment of the past, forever lost, but the very insistence of

drive as that which *cannot ever be forgotten* in the first place, since it repeats itself incessantly.”<sup>100</sup> Precisely in the incessant compulsion to repeat lies the psychological import of the myth of *sha’ashu’a*, the crisscrossing of time and being, language and eros, in consciousness that seeks itself as other. The drive to repeat is the beginning that can never be forgotten, since it has yet to be remembered.

We can thus speak of an inexorable link between time, being, and eros in kabbalistic ontology from its very inception. This, I suggest, is the philosophic intonation of the mythic saying regarding *alef*, *beit*, and *gimmel*. To this saying we have tried to listen, but what can one hear of the sound made before *alef*, where beginnings end?

Unlesbarkeit dieser  
Welt. Alles doppelt.

Celan

Concerning the beginning, we have learned that it cannot begin if it has not already begun. To speak of the beginning, therefore, is to begin always in the middle, to begin at the beginning that is not beginning. But how do we speak of the middle? Surely from the middle. But what can be spoken from the middle? By what sign do we mark the spot in the middle where beginnings end and endings begin?

The letter *mem* signifies repetition of difference, re/marking the beginning, for the beginning, we recall, is branded by *beit*, the letter duplicitous in its singularity: to be itself it must be before that in relation to which it is after. Like *beit* at the beginning, *mem* in the middle reverberates in its iteration. Stammering in the middle, however, is not the same as stuttering in the beginning. The latter consists of the retrieval of what has never appeared, the former the return to where one has never been. Accordingly, *mem*, especially in its final or closed form, which is close in appearance to a square, is typically associated in kabbalistic texts with the divine potency that conveys both the mystery of *teshuvah*, repentance, literally, re/turn, and the secret of *yovel*, the jubilee that heralds the messianic redemption. The fusion of these two symbolic meanings yields a paradox that illumines a fundamental tenet of the kabbalistic approach to time: to look ahead one must turn back, a restoration to a past that is always yet to come in the present of the future. Subsequently, we shall have the opportunity to pursue this symbolism in more detail, but suffice it to note at this juncture that the salvific import of contrition is linked to the redundancy of *mem* imprinted in and from the middle.

Let me turn now to the depiction of *mem* in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the same text that served as the basis for our analysis of *alef*. Departing, however, from the textual strategy deployed in the previous chapter, it will be necessary here to introduce other kabbalistic sources, including especially passages from zoharic literature, which will assist us in decoding the esoteric significance of *mem* and by consequence the symbolic status of the middle, which corresponds to the present tense. By heeding the assonance of *mem*, we attempt to take hold of the moment at hand, to grasp what cannot be grasped except by letting-go, clutching the reiteration of what has yet to be acclaimed.

What is the open *mem*? The open *mem* is comprised of male and female, and the closed *mem* is made like the womb from above. Did R. Reḥumai not say that the womb is like *ṭeit*? What he spoke of was from within and what I spoke of was from without.

What is *mem*? Do not read *mem* but rather *mayim*. Just as these waters are moist so the womb is always moist.

Why is open *mem* comprised of masculine and feminine and the closed [*mem*] masculine? To teach you that the essence of *mem* is masculine. The opening [of *mem*] is added for the sake of the feminine. Just as the male does not give birth through the opening so the closed *mem* is not open, and just as the female gives birth and is open so the *mem* is closed and opened. Why did you include an open and closed *mem*? For it is said, do not read *mem* but rather *mayim*. The woman is cold<sup>1</sup> and thus needs to be warmed by the male.<sup>2</sup>

Appropriately, the letter that corresponds to the middle has not one but two orthographic shapes, open (*petuḥah*) and closed (*setumah*), varying in accord with the place it occupies in a given word. The sign in/of the middle must be twofold, transferential, liminal, elusive, demarcating the point that divides what recurs before from what persists after, delimiting the unrepresentable present. To speak of that which is in the middle is to seize the intermittent becoming of what has continuously been.

*Mem*, the letter in the middle, imparts this sense of fluency and ephemeral density. This is the meaning of the exegetical injunction “do not read *mem* but *mayim*,” which coincidentally, or perhaps intentionally, is repeated twice in the bahiric fragment. *Mem*, most elementally—that is, when heard at its philological root—denotes “water,”<sup>3</sup> which in the present context is associated with the womb, designated by the term *beten*,<sup>4</sup> source of engenderment, matrix of life. Thus, it is posited that *mem* relates to the shape of the womb, or, to be more precise, the womb can be envisioned as *mem* when viewed from outside; when viewed from inside, it has the shape of *ṭeit*.

The gender dimension of the letter symbolism provides a key to opening the text interpretatively, but to appropriate that key, one must examine the literary context where the bahiric description of *mem* occurs. Significantly, this is occasioned by an explanation of the last letter in the word *ozen*, “ear,” which consists of the three consonants *alef*, *zayin*, *nun*. The path mandates, therefore, that the reader attend the cadence of *mem* through the channel of *ozen*. The homilist begins by interpreting the verse “A prayer of the prophet Habakuk through rapture,” *tefillah la-havaquq ha-navi al shigyonot* (Hab 3:1):

“A prayer” [*tefillah*]—it should have been “praise” [*tehillah*]! Rather [it is to instruct that] he who turns his heart from matters of this world and contemplates the work of the chariot [*mistakel be-ma’aseh merkavah*] will be received before the holy One, blessed be he, as if he prayed all day, as it says, “A prayer of the prophet Habakuk.” And what [is the meaning of] “through rapture” [*al shigyonot*]? As it says, “be rapt in her love constantly” [*be-ahavatah tishggeh tamid*] (Prov 5:19). To what does this refer? The account of the chariot.<sup>5</sup>

In this citation, prayer assumes a mystical valence, as it is correlated with the pietistic practice of withdrawing from the world, which facilitates contemplation of the chariot.<sup>6</sup> The exegetical link forged between *al shigyonot*, “through rapture,” and *be-ahavatah tishggeh tamid*, “be rapt in her love constantly,” intimates that in the illumined state the heart partakes of the lover’s abandon, absorbed in and with the beloved continually. In the mind of the anonymous homilist, the prophet is enrapt in envisioning the chariot, a rapture that has the quality of prayer. One is reminded of the contemplative ideal of *avodah sikhlit*, “intellectual worship,” which Maimonides presents at the end of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, an ideal achieved only by the spiritual elite, the philosophically enlightened members of the faith community; for them, true prayer consists of the employment of intellectual thought in constantly loving God, an experience attained preferentially in solitude and isolation (*hitbodedut*).<sup>7</sup> Intellectual worship is characterized by a passionate love (*ishq*) of God proportionate to one’s apprehension of God. This contemplative ideal is called in traditional theological language knowledge of the name, the ultimate datum of divine science, the metaphysical speculation that Maimonides associates with the study of the chariot, an exegetical discipline that some ancient rabbis considered esoteric and hence to be guarded from public dissemination. In this state, the mind is filled with an “excess of love, so that no thought remains that is directed toward a thing other than the Beloved.”<sup>8</sup> Needless to say, the content of the chariot vision presumed in the bahiric text is quite distinct from the Maimonidean understanding, but there is conspicuous similarity with regard to the connection made between prophecy,

contemplation of the chariot, and worship that expresses an all-consuming love of God.<sup>9</sup> Although a number of thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalists reacted negatively to followers of Maimonides who supplanted the traditional liturgical practice of verbal enunciation with the silent prayer of philosophic contemplation,<sup>10</sup> it is also the case that the kabbalists themselves—including some who were critical of the spiritualization of prayer proffered by those inclined to an allegorical interpretation—cultivated an ideal of contemplative worship that featured the ascent of the mind to the sefirotic pleroma and its conjunction with divine thought, *maḥshavah ha-deveqah*.<sup>11</sup> This contemplation climaxes in the apophatic affirmation of that which extends infinitely beyond elocutionary language, the (ad)verbial gesture of speaking-away what is spoken, not through not-speaking but by speaking-not, which is a way of speaking nonetheless.<sup>12</sup> Apophasis and kataphasis should not be viewed as antinomies, for from the mystical standpoint the liturgical utterance ensues from the spot of transition from nothing to something, a site marked by the coincidence of opposites. Speaking and not-speaking meet in the middle ground of speaking-not, that is, speaking the unspeakable, a saying that renders the ineffable effable and thereby preserves its ineffability.<sup>13</sup>

The phenomenological contours of the contemplative consciousness are outlined in the continuation of the bahiric homily through the guise of an exegesis on the next verse in Habakuk's vision, *yhwḥ shama'ti shim'akha yare'ti*, "Lord, I heard your teaching, I was in awe" (Hab 3:2). In spite of the obvious ocular nature of contemplation, attested in the technical locution *mistakkel be-ma'aseh merkavah*, referring to the prophet's gazing at the narrative account of the chariot—revelation and interpretation cannot be separated in the mind of the medieval kabbalist responsible for this text—the primary emphasis is placed on giving ear to the teaching that has been written/spoken.<sup>14</sup> "Hearing" indicates understanding and "teaching" the "place wherein they listen to him" (*maqom she-shom'in bo*).<sup>15</sup> This place is not a physical site but rather a divine gradation, as we encountered in the preceding chapter with respect to the attribute of God referred to as the "place to which every knee bows down," the "dwelling of the king" to which prayers are directed.<sup>16</sup> In the passage considered here, "place" signifies the locus of prophetic revelation, which is portrayed in auditory as opposed to visual terms.<sup>17</sup> But what did the prophet hear in this imaginal place that led him to declare a sense of marvel?

Why [does it say] "I was in awe?"

On account of the ear, which is in the image of *alef*, and *alef* is the first of all the letters [*ro'sh le-khol ha-otiyot*]. Moreover, *alef* causes the existence [*qiyyumam*] of all the letters.

*Alef* is in the image of the brain, for just as you open your mouth when you men-

tion *alef*, so too thought [*maḥshavah*] [is opened] when you contemplate without end or limit [*ḥoshev le-ein sof we-takhlit*].

From *alef* all the letters emerge, and thus you see that it is their beginning [*she-hi bi-tehilatan*], and it says, “the Lord is at their head” [*wa-yhwh be-ro’sham*] (Micah 2:13).

It has been established with respect to every name written *yod he waw he*, that the holy One, blessed be he, is unified and sanctified in holiness [*meyuḥad ha-qadosh barukh hu mequddash ba-qodesh*]. What is “in holiness?” In the holy palace [*be-heikhal qodesh*]. Where is the holy palace? I would say in thought and that is *alef*, as it is written, “Lord, I heard your teaching, I was in awe.”<sup>18</sup>

In this passage, much is disclosed about the meditational discipline cultivated by the Provençal kabbalists responsible for the redaction of *Bahir* in the second half of the twelfth century.<sup>19</sup> The pietistic routine, as may be gathered from several *bahiric* fragments and corroborated by other kabbalistic sources, consisted of elevating one’s thought to the limit of thought that extends limitlessly beyond thought.<sup>20</sup> Expressed semiotically, *alef*, which is compared to the ear and brain, is symbolic of the uppermost gradation of the divine—the thought that expands infinitely to the thoughtless, to that which thought cannot comprehend (*she-ein ha-maḥshavah masseget*), in the locution employed in the commentary on *Sefer Yeṣirah* that purports to preserve the teachings of Isaac the Blind.<sup>21</sup> *Alef* is identified, moreover, as the “holy palace” (*heikhal qodesh*),<sup>22</sup> and is linked to the Tetragrammaton, an association based exegetically on the expression “the Lord is at their head” (*wa-yhwh be-ro’sham*), that is, YHWH, the name that is “at the head”—“in the beginning”—is *alef*, which is the “first of all letters” (*ro’sh le-khol ha-otiyot*). In later kabbalistic literature, the identification of *alef* and YHWH is explained by decomposing the orthography of *alef* into *yod* on top and *yod* on bottom connected by *waw* in the middle.<sup>23</sup> The numerical value of *yod*, *yod*, and *waw* is twenty-six ( $10 + 10 + 6$ ), which is the sum of YHWH ( $10 + 5 + 6 + 5$ ). I think it unlikely that the author of this text assumes this numerology. I mention it, however, because the principle expressed by this numerological equivalence, the interchangeability of *alef* and YHWH, is the secret that is being divulged, albeit through a somewhat more circuitous route. *Alef*, representative of the letters more generally, is the palace in which the invisible is rendered visible and the name by which the ineffable is addressed. Through the inscription of YHWH—in every place where we confront the appearance of this name—the holy One is unified and sanctified in the holy palace of *alef*, first of the letters of the alphabet (the means for the exploit of creation) and first of the letters of the Decalogue (the narrative recounting of the event of revelation).<sup>24</sup> It is the letter that comprises all the other letters that come forward from it, the letter compared to the image of the ear and brain, the letter that signifies God’s

infinite thought, which calls forth the enunciation of the name that cannot be enunciated but through the veil of the epithet, the garment/text of the other confronted in the projecting-out of the turning-in.<sup>25</sup>

In the continuation of the homily, the connection between *alef*, the ear, and the thought of God that is without limit, is reiterated. “I heard” (*sham’ati*) is again glossed as “I understood” (*hevanti*). But what did the prophet hear that left him astonished?

He contemplated the thought of the holy One, blessed be he [*hevin mahshavto shel ha-qadosh barukh hu*]. Just as thought has no limit, for men think they can descend even to the end of the world, so the ear has no end and it cannot be satiated, as it is written, “the ear cannot have enough of hearing” (Eccles 1:8). Why is this so? For the ear is in the image of *alef*, and *alef* is the essence of the ten commandments [*aseret ha-dibberot*]. Therefore, the ear cannot have enough of hearing.<sup>26</sup>

The theosophic deciphering of the letters comprising *ozen* is presented as “another explanation” (*davar aher*) of Habakuk’s prophetic pronouncement, “Lord, I heard your teaching, I was in awe,” *yhwh shama’ti shim’akha yare’ti* (Hab 3:2). The “hearing” (*shemi’ah*) is decoded as a matter of contemplating and the “teaching” (*shim’ah*) as a reference to God’s thought (*mahshavah*). The ear is an appropriate metaphor to depict this process, for just as divine thought has no limit and consequently cannot be thought except as the unthought, so the path to attain it can have no boundary and hence cannot be approached except as the unapproachable. The allegation that the ear has no limit rests on the presupposition that this organ can never be satiated, that is, one can never have listened enough. The ear is thus correlated with the mystery that can be re/covered in the uncovering of *alef*, the “essence of the ten commandments” revealed to the Israelites at Sinai. It is likely that in the *bahiric* text, based on older rabbinic sources, the ten words refer metonymically to Torah, for the ten commandments comprise the totality of 613 precepts.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the initial letter in the first word of the Decalogue, *anokhi*, “I” (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), is *alef*, the secret of YHWH, which encapsulates the entirety of Torah. We may presume further that in the passage from *Bahir* the ten commandments assume a theosophic intent inasmuch as they allude symbolically to the ten potencies through which God is manifest, a theme that was further embellished and creatively expanded in the historical unfolding of kabbalistic interpreters.<sup>28</sup>

The homily continues with an explanation of *zayin*, the second letter in *ozen*:

And what of *zayin* in *ozen*? As they say with respect to everything that the holy One, blessed be he, created in his world, he gave its name in accordance with its matter



[inyano], as it is written, “whatever Adam called each living creature, that would be its name” (Gen 2:19), that is, its very being was in this way [hu gufo hawei kakh]. Whence do we know that its name was its very being [di-shemo gufo hawei]? As it is written, “the name of the righteous is invoked in blessing, but the name of the wicked rots” (Prov 10:7). Does his name rot? Rather his being [gufo]. Here also [the name] is its very being [hakha nami gufo].

What is this like? The root of the tree [shores ha-ilan], and the root of the tree is bent [me’uqam]. The second shin [in the word shoresh], what is its function? To teach you that if you take a branch and plant it, the root will return.

And zayin, what is its function? It is as the number of days of the week, to teach you that each day has a power [koah].

And what is its function here? To teach you that just as there is great wisdom in the ear without limit, so there is this force in all the limbs. What are the limbs? The seven ones that are in man, as it is written, “he created him in the image of God” (Gen 1:27), in all of his limbs and in all of his parts.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to *alef*, which denotes limitless thought and is thus imaged by the ear whose listening comes to no end, *zayin* relates to that which is delimited, for it communicates that the name is essential, since it necessarily partakes of the substance (*inyan*) that it names. The relation between name and manifestation is portrayed by the analogy of the transplanted branch that becomes thereby the root of the tree, an idea linked exegetically to the repetition of *shin* in the word *shoresh*. *Zayin*, moreover, alludes to the seven potencies, which are correlated with the seven days of creation. We may reasonably suppose that the seven potencies, seven days, and seven limbs are symbolic ciphers that allude to the seven divine attributes. In the continuation of the passage, the limbs are delineated as two hands, two thighs, head, torso, penis and corresponding female genitalia [*berit milah we-zugo*], which are counted as one, to make the total of seven.<sup>30</sup>

The mystery of the divine pleroma is encoded in the first two letters of *ozen*, for they betoken the limitless one (*alef*) delimited in the measure of seven (*zayin*).<sup>31</sup> In other *bahiric* passages, the realm of godly power is also conceived as an enumeration of seven attributes or, in the language of one text, seven holy forms (*šurot qedoshot*).<sup>32</sup> When the letter symbolism is viewed philosophically, the demarcation of divine potencies by *alef-zayin* suggests that apophatic and kataphatic elements cannot be separated.<sup>33</sup> That is, theosophic gnosis encompasses envisioning the limitless that withdraws limitedly (*alef*) and the limit that extends limitlessly (*zayin*). But even the former, it should be remembered, is represented anthropomorphically.

Before we return to *mem* to unravel the muddle of the middle, we are left with the task of ascertaining the function of *nun*, the final letter of *ozen*.

And what is *nun*? To teach you that the brain is the essential part of the spinal cord and from there it draws constantly. If not for the spinal cord, the brain would not exist, for the entire body is for the sake of the brain, and if the entire body did not exist, the brain would not exist. Thus the spinal cord pours forth to the whole body from the brain, and this is the bent *nun*. But this *nun* [in *ozen*] is the elongated *nun*! The elongated *nun* always comes at the completion of a word to teach you that the elongated *nun* comprises the bent and the elongated, but the bent is the foundation. This teaches you that the elongated *nun* comprises male and female.<sup>34</sup>

With the last letter of *ozen*, the *nun* that opens our path to *mem*, the anthropomorphic imagery grows concomitantly more vivid and more obscure. *Zayin*, which has the numerical value of seven, signifies the limbs of God's bodily form; *nun* alludes to the brain, which is portrayed as the essential part of the spinal cord,<sup>35</sup> for the spinal cord draws constantly from the brain and pours forth to the other parts of the body.<sup>36</sup> The reader is told, moreover, that the *nun* at the end of a word comprises both orthographic forms, elongated (*arukhah*) and bent (*kefufah*). In addition, the elongated *nun* is described as comprising both masculine and feminine. The bent *nun*, by contrast, must be gendered as either male or female. Given the identification of the bent *nun* with the brain and spinal chord, it stands to reason that the former possibility is more likely.

To what body part, then, does the elongated *nun* refer? Which of the limbs can account for the gender dimorphism linked to this letter? The elongated *nun*, I propose, is correlated with the *membrum virile* as the extension of the brain and spinal chord, which are demarcated by the bent *nun*.<sup>37</sup> The contextualization of the male-female binary in the phallus implies that the feminine is ontically derived from and therefore comprehended in the masculine.<sup>38</sup> That ontological primacy accorded the masculine is affirmed in the *Bahir* by the assertion that the bent *nun* is the letter's "foundation" (*kefufah yesod*).

It is at this seam in the text that the discussion of the open and closed *mem* with which we began the chapter appears. Fittingly, the deliberation on *mem* is interposed in the middle of the conversation on *nun*. The letter that is the signpost of the middle displays itself by breaking into the middle, inter/posing, inter/rupting, rupturing, creating the semblance of with/out, with/in. To ascertain the intent of this interposition, we need to take into account the concluding remarks on *nun*, which succeed the comment that the woman is cold and thus needs to be warmed by the male: "And why did you include [the double form of *nun*]? As it is written, 'while the sun lasts, his name will be *yinnon*' (Ps 72:17), on account of the double *nun*, the bent and elongated *nun*, and he must come to be through male and female."<sup>39</sup>

The bahiric text is based on the aggadic decoding of the word *yinnon* as a

proper name of the messiah.<sup>40</sup> Scholem surmised that the double *nun* in *yinnon* indicates that messianic redemption proceeds from the union of masculine and feminine aspects within the Godhead. This exegetical remark thus validates the earlier observation that the bent and elongated forms of *nun* correspond respectively to male and female.<sup>41</sup> According to Scholem, moreover, the “Jewish gnosis” preserved in this bahiric passage is to be contrasted with the “antinomian and encraticist” tendencies expressed in gnostic gospels, that is, medieval kabbalistic teaching portrays redemption as the union of masculine and feminine, whereas the ancient gnostic soteriology posits the overcoming of sexual differentiation. In my judgment, this distinction is erroneous, for the kabbalistic ideal of redemption is predicated on a similar ontological conception of the male androgyne according to which the female is comprised within the male.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, I concur with Scholem’s surmise that gender dimorphism is the critical element of the “Jewish gnosis” promulgated in the bahiric passage, though I would cast the matter of the *nun* in a different historical register, one that provides an opening to the mystery of *mem*.

The exegesis of the double *nun* in *yinnon* can be seen profitably as a response to the doctrine of the virginal conception of Jesus promoted in medieval Christian polemical treatises against Jews, which were especially prominent in the twelfth century when the attempt to convince Jews of the “mechanics of the Incarnation” was based on an appeal to observable natural phenomena perceived by the senses and understood by reason.<sup>43</sup> The remark that the messiah must be propagated through the conjunction of masculine and feminine (*ṣarikh lihyot al yedei zakhar u-neqevah*) appears to be a direct challenge to the foundational dogma of the Church.<sup>44</sup> Needless to say, in the period of the redaction of the *Bahir*, Christianity was not monolithic—indeed, at no time in history has it been—and surely some authors could have accommodated the notion that Jesus came to be from the union of male and female. None, however, could have comfortably interpreted the matter somatically, presuming thereby that Jesus was conceived in a womb fertilized by semen discharged physically by an actual man.<sup>45</sup> But it is precisely this view that underlies the bahiric explication of the double *nun* in the name *yinnon*, offering a naturalistic conception of the birth of the messiah that is antithetical to the supernatural understanding implied in the doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>46</sup>

The polemical point is sharpened when we examine more carefully the symbolic value assigned to the letter, for the parabolic approach deployed by the kabbalists responsible for the (relatively final) redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir* is predicated on the hermeneutical assumption that the inner core safeguards and solidifies the external shell. Hence the double *nun* in *yinnon* not only signifies the birth of the messiah from the coupling of man and woman; it also marks the

ontological locus of sexual differentiation within the divine. This, I surmise, should be identified as the phallus, or more precisely, the circumcised phallus, which is the vantage point, the angle of vision, whence the male-female polarity is specularized. The phallogocentric orientation in relation to the letter *nun* is indicated overtly in another passage in the *bahiric* anthology, which, in my opinion, preserves an older mythologoumenon: “What is *ṣaddi*? *Yod nun*, *ṣaddi* and his mate, *yod* and *nun*. Thus it is written, ‘Righteous, foundation of the world’ [*ṣaddiq yesod olam*] (Prov 10:25).”<sup>47</sup> Orthographically, *ṣaddi* can be decomposed into *yod* perched on top of *nun*, an alignment that expresses symbolically the privileged posture of man and woman cohabiting. The letter is a sign that brings to mind the image of sexual union, but that image itself portends something other than what it is, namely, the phallic potency of God, *ṣaddiq*, *yod-nun*, the righteous one who is the foundation of the world. The contextualization of both genders in the masculine eradicates sexual difference, not by creating the space for genuine otherness either through affirming two irreducible identities (there is both male and female) or by moving beyond dimorphic polarities altogether (there is neither male nor female) but by positing the reign of the same, which I identify as the law of the phallus operative in the semiotic phallogocentrism of kabbalistic texts.<sup>48</sup>

The possible Christological resonance is enhanced by the following allusion to Jesus in the interpretation of the letter *ṣaddi* preserved in one of the recensions of *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, a relatively late midrashic compilation that preserves in rudimentary form older esoteric teachings:

*Ṣaddi*, why does it have two heads? Because this refers to Jesus who took hold of two heads, one of Israel and the other of Edom, and he went and caused people to err. When the Jews saw him they stood over him, captured him, and hung him on the cross. As they interpreted “If your brother, your mother’s son, entices you” (Deut 13:7), it does not say “your father’s son.”<sup>49</sup>

Later kabbalistic sources, as attested in a key passage in *Zohar*,<sup>50</sup> combine the *bahiric* decomposition of *ṣaddi* into *yod-nun* with the midrashic interpretation of *ṣaddi* as a symbolic reference to Jesus. It has been suggested that *yod-nun* in the *zoharic* text serves as an acrostic for *yeshu nošri*.<sup>51</sup> Even if we do not assume this was the *bahiric* author’s intent, can we propose the Christological myth as its conceptual underpinning? Did the anonymous kabbalist intend to turn an axiom of Christian eschatology on its head? Did he wish to assert that the real *ṣaddiq* is not the messianic redeemer born of a barren womb never polluted by seminal fluid but the cosmic foundation, the mundane manifestation of the

androgynous phallus in the sefirotic pleroma, the divine potency ritually embodied in the circumcised flesh of the Jewish male semiotically sealed with the inscription of the divine name?<sup>52</sup> As I have suggested, this is precisely the metaphoric implication of the double nun in *yinnon*.

We are now in a better position to comprehend the bahiric interpretation of the two shapes of *mem*. Insofar as the essence of *mem* relates to the masculine—*iqqar ha-mem hu ha-zakhar*—it follows that the closed *mem*, which is depicted as masculine, discloses the symbolic nature of the letter. But the closed *mem*, we have already noted, is associated with the shape of the womb “from above” or when it is looked at “from without.” How do we account for this apparent discrepancy?<sup>53</sup> The masculine depiction of the closed *mem* and the image of the womb evinces that, in the absence of male seed, the woman is like the man who does not give birth through his opening, presumably the aperture of the penis. By contrast, the open *mem*, which comprises male and female, is a sign of the fertile womb because it contains both male and female.<sup>54</sup> Encoded in this passage is a highly complex relationship between the male organ and the womb, a conceptual mesh that one might well expect in an androcentric worldview: even the womb, the source of generative power that biologically distinguishes woman from man, is pilfered by the male imaginary and rendered in phallic terms. The womb yet to be filled with semen is compared to the hole of the male organ, for without a ground in which to plant its seed the penis is not procreative.<sup>55</sup> Yet the womb, represented by closed *mem*, is essentially masculine. To pro/ject, to open its opening, the womb must receive the seed of the male, a receiving that transforms the status of the feminine receptacle to masculine benefactor. The gender metamorphosis is conveyed in the midrashic gloss of *mem* as *mayyim*, that is, the watery texture of the womb renders it necessary for the woman to be warmed by man. Consequently, the womb that retains the semen is portrayed as open *mem*, the joining of masculine and feminine.

The tradition preserved in the *Bahir* presumes that the closed *mem* represents the womb that has not been inseminated; such a womb being infertile, it thus could not have conceived the messiah described as the “son born of woman.”<sup>56</sup> An exegetical frame for this hermeneutical conflict may be located in the messianic meaning ascribed to the closed *mem* in the expression *le-marbbeh ha-misrah*, “In token of abundant authority” (Isa 9:6). In response to Christian exegetes who interpreted the closed *mem* as a reference to the virgin womb and the savior-god born therefrom, the kabbalist insinuates that the letter in this orthographic shape signifies sterility, an inability to extend the body of engenderment, in Mospik’s telling phrase.<sup>57</sup> One zoharic homily, in particular, is an especially significant locus for the kabbalistic polemic against the Christological doctrine of the virginal conception and birth of the messiah.<sup>58</sup> Briefly, the hom-

ily focuses on two letters, final *mem* and *he*, which are assigned to Binah, referred to as the “supernal world” (*alma ila’ah*) or the “world of the masculine” (*alma di-dekhura*), in contrast to Shekhinah, the “lower world” (*alma tata’ah*) or the “world of the feminine” (*alma de-nuqba*). When Binah is consolidated as a point sealed within the supernal thought (*Hokhmah*), she is depicted iconographically as the final *mem*, in the shape of a square closed on all four sides. In this state, Binah, the divine mother, cannot give birth, as the zoharic author explicitly declares: “This is the mystery of Abram, *ever mem*, this one does not reproduce, for it is the closed *mem*, and it is not generative.”<sup>59</sup> However, when the *he* is added to Abram, his name is changed to Abraham, which can be decoded as *ever-he-mem*, that is, the organ (*ever*) that turns *mem* into *he*, the open womb that signifies fertility and reproductivity. I translate here the section of the homily in which the polemical intent of the messianic explication is rendered overtly in the specific terms of circumcision, a long-standing issue that divided the religious sensibilities of the two liturgical communities:

When the *he* is added [to Abram], that final *mem* opens up . . . and that organ [*ever*] produces offspring, and this is the mystery of [the name] Abraham, *ever he-mem*, this is the one that reproduces and brings about progeny. . . . [T]his organ was not rectified until the *he* came along. . . . Whence do we know that this organ is rectified only by the *he*? When [his name was] Abram, that organ was not circumcised and it was not rectified. After the *he* came along, that organ was rectified, and it was circumcised to produce offspring by means of the final *he*. When the supernal world is sealed in the final *mem*, that organ was not rectified, the foreskin existed without having been circumcised. The lower gradation exists in the form of the foreskin in the letter *dalet*, within the impoverished one. When the supernal world is within the concealment in the mystery of the letter of the final *mem*, the lower world is impoverished in the mystery of the letter *dalet*. When the supernal world opens from the final *mem* and becomes a *he*, then the phallus [*berit*] is rectified and the foreskin is removed. . . . And this is the mystery of “In token of abundant authority and of peace without limit upon David’s throne and kingdom, that it may be firmly established” (Isa 9:6). *Mem rabbah* [is derived from] *le-marbbeh*, and this is the mystery of when the letter *mem* has abundant authority, for the overflow above is augmented, and it opens up and becomes a *he*, and then [we can speak] “of peace without limit” [*u-leshalom ein qes*]. What is “of peace”? “Of peace” refers to the organ that is the foundation of the world [*ever yesoda de-alma*], for the foreskin, which is surely called the “end of all flesh” [*qes kol basar*] (Gen 6:13), is removed from it. “Of peace without limit”—the [foreskin] is removed, and peace sits “upon David’s throne and kingdom, that it may be firmly established in justice and in equity.” All this occurs when the final *mem* opens, and the foreskin is removed, and the *dalet* is transformed, as it has been said, and this is the mystery of “This is the blood of the covenant [*dam ha-berit*] that the Lord now makes” (Exod 24:8).<sup>60</sup>

The instrument that opens the womb and thereby effects the transformation, which is both semiotic and gendered, is the circumcised phallic potency, which is linked historically and emblematically to the figure of Abraham. The fecundity of the womb is notionally correlated with the phallocentric rite of circumcision, as it is the blood of the covenant—the word for blood is *dam*, which is composed of *dalet* and *mem*—that opens the *mem*, the womb of the mother, and transposes the *dalet*, the sign of poverty and infertility, into a *he*, the sign of effluence and fertility. The messiah, according to the Jewish tradition, will emerge from a womb that has been impregnated by male seed. In the bahiric text, the fecund womb is demarcated not by the *he* but by the open *mem*, the fusion of male and female, the event in the mundane cosmos symbolically homologous with the heteroerotic conjunction in the Godhead,<sup>61</sup> a theme that is expressed in the zoharic passage by the image of the phallic gradation, which is designated “peace” (*shalom*), sitting upon the throne of David.<sup>62</sup>

An admittedly later source, the thirteenth-century Christian work *Pugio Fidei*, supports this interpretive stance. In this treatise, Friar Raymond Martin affirms that the closed *mem* of *le-marbbeh ha-misrah* alludes to the virgin womb whence Jesus was born. Furthermore, he relates this exegesis to two talmudic dicta.<sup>63</sup> It is worth considering these two texts carefully, as Friar Raymond’s readings may sensitize us to nuances at play in the kabbalistic sources, particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The first talmudic text preserves a homiletical reflection attributed to Bar Qappara in Sepphoris and transmitted by R. Tanḥum.<sup>64</sup> Inquiring about the obvious orthographic anomaly of the closed *mem* appearing in the middle of the word *le-marbbeh*, Bar Qappara responds by saying that the closed form alludes to the fact that God yielded to the protestation of the attribute of judgment (*middat ha-din*) not to make Hezeqiah the messiah, since he did not utter a hymn expressing gratitude for the miracles wrought on his behalf. The postponement of the divine intention and the (temporary) closure of the hope for messianic redemption are symbolized by the closed form of the letter placed where we would have expected the open form. In the continuation of the homily, another explanation is offered for the closed *mem*, one that leads the reader deeper into the maze of rabbinic myth. The earth is said to have opened its mouth and beseeched God to ignore the urging of the attribute of judgment. Imploring God to make Hezekiah the messiah, the earth promised to offer a song in his place. The proof-text cited to bolster the argument is “From the end of the earth we hear songs, glory to the righteous one” [*mi-kenaf ha-areṣ zemirot shama’nu ṣevi la-ṣaddiq*] (Isa 24:16). The angelic archon of the world (*sar ha-olam*) intercedes on behalf of the earth, “Master of the world! Perform his will [*ṣivyono*] for this righteous one,” but a voice from heaven (*bat qol*) responds by citing the continuation

of the verse, “it is a mystery to me, it is a mystery to me” (*razi li razi li*). According to the rabbinic homilist, these words herald that Hezekiah would not be proclaimed messiah, for the redeemer, who is the righteous one (*šaddiq*), remains hidden with God, an occlusion encoded in the closed *mem* of *le-marbbeh*. When the prophet inquires how long this concealment will last, the voice from heaven responds by citing the rest of the verse: “The faithless have acted faithlessly; the faithless have caused faith to be veiled” (*bogdim bagadu u-veged bogdim bagadu*). The almost incantational utterance informs us that the messiah is hidden until the time of blasphemy—from the root *bgd*, to cover over, to hide one’s intent, to act under false pretense, to sever the enclosure of faith.

The Christological interpretation is buttressed by the second talmudic statement, according to which the open *mem* denotes *ma’amar patuah*, the “revealed saying,” and the closed *mem*, *ma’amar satum*, the “concealed saying.”<sup>65</sup> As might be expected, Friar Raymond renders *ma’amar* as *verbum Dei*, the divine logos. In his mind, both aggadic aphorisms intimate that the closed *mem* of *le-marbbeh* bespeaks the dis/closure of Christ from the sealed womb in which he was occluded.

Are these associations implicit in the relevant *bahiric* texts? To deal with this question adequately would necessitate exploring the various currents of esotericism that run through the textual landscape of the *Bahir*. Such an undertaking will have to await another opportunity; for now, suffice it to note that even if we lay aside the disputatious strategy, the symbolic decoding of *mem* and *nun* undeniably suggests at the very least a messianic context: *nun* refers to messiah and *mem* to the womb whence he comes to be.<sup>66</sup>

To speak of *mem* steadfastly, in the stammer of its forbearance, we would do well to mull over the relationship between the messiah and the middle. Should we not expect the messiah at the end? What has the messiah to do with *mem*? Can the middle give an account of the end without necessitating the end of the middle? What is underway from before to after?

Messianic expectation—awaiting the end—is entwined with the point that belongs squarely in the middle of the circle. This we learn from the final *mem*, whose quadrangular shape marks the way to discern the nature of *teshuvah*, “repentance,” the promise of return sheltered within the hope of sending forth. To grasp more fully the sway of this symbol, we must be attentive to the image of the mother’s womb whence the entrusting of time comes back in the giving before, the for/giving,<sup>67</sup> for the key that allows us to comprehend the temporal dimension of *mem*, as situated in the breach in the middle of the beginning that mends the end, is the image of the mother. Admittedly, the link between the final *mem*, repentance, and the divine mother is not articulated explicitly in the *bahiric* fragments and thus to continue the journey we need recourse to other books. The *Bahir*, however, undoubtedly served as a basis for later devel-



opment; in fact, the seeds of the correlation between *mem* and the image of the mother are found in the following bahiric passage:

R. Reḥumai said: Why is it written, “Let the mother go, and take only the young, in order that you may fare well and have a long life” (Deut 22:7). It does not say “Let the father go,” but “Let the mother go,” corresponding to the one who is called mother in the world, as it is written, “You shall call understanding mother” (Prov 2:3).<sup>68</sup>

What [is the meaning of] “and take only the young”?

R. Reḥumai said: The very children that she raised. And what are they? The seven days of Tabernacles.<sup>69</sup>

This fragment apparently reflects a later redactional stratum based on a more fully developed theosophic doctrine of ten potencies. The immediate context is focused on clarifying the relationship of the lower seven attributes to the source whence they come to light. The source, presumably the eighth emanation, is identified as “understanding” (*binah*)<sup>70</sup> and also as “mother in the world” (*em ba-olam*), and the lower seven are designated as the seven children nurtured by this mother, and also as the seven days of Tabernacles. In the continuation of the text, the maternal hypostasis is designated *ašeret*, one of the terms used by the rabbis to refer to the holiday of Pentecost. The author of the bahiric text observes that the expression *miqra qodesh*, “sacred occasion,” is used with respect to both Pentecost (Lev 23:21) and Tabernacles (*ibid.*, 35–36), although in the case of the former only one day is so called, whereas in the case of the latter the first and last days are so described. Accounting for this distinction, he notes:

Why is *ašeret* one day?

Because the Torah was given to Israel on it, and when the Torah was initially created the holy One, blessed be he, ruled in his world alone with her, as it is written, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord” (Ps 111:10).

He said: Since it was so your holiness will be for you alone.<sup>71</sup>

A connection is forged between *Binah* and Pentecost, the festival that, according to rabbinic lore, celebrates the Sinaitic epiphany and the giving of Torah to the Jewish people. The singularity of the event is enacted ritually in a one-day celebration, which also attests to the theological belief that there is only one divine power, the God of Israel, who governs the world by means of Torah. The link between this divine potency and Torah is reiterated from a different perspective in a second passage, where explicit reference is made to the older rabbinic motif of ten *logoi* (*ma’amarot*) by means of which the world was created.<sup>72</sup>

In that section, the enumeration proceeds from top to bottom. The attribute associated in the previously discussed passage with *ašeret*, the one that complements the seven, is here counted as third, succeeding *keter elyon*, the “supernal crown,” and *hokhmah*, “wisdom,” the second that is first (*re’shit*). The third saying is described as the “quarry of Torah” (*maḥṣav ha-torah*), the “treasure of wisdom” (*oṣar ha-hokhmah*),<sup>73</sup> the “quarry of the spirit of God” (*maḥṣav ruah elohim*) in which the forms of the letters of Torah were engraved.<sup>74</sup> Insinuated here is a tradition, expanded in the symbolic gesticulations of later kabbalists, especially in the Castilian circle, related (in ways still unclear) to the composition and redaction of zoharic material. I have in mind the portrayal of *Binah* as a womb that receives the seminal fluid of *Hokhmah*, a kabbalistic notion rooted in the widely held anatomical conception that semen originates in the brain and descends through the spinal column to the penis whence it overflows in ejaculation. For the kabbalists, the seed-fluid is identified more particularly with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Within the receptacle of *Binah* the letters germinate and gestate into more tangible form, into the bodily limbs of the divine anthropos, which is identified, moreover, as the four-letter name, YHWH, and as the primordial Torah. The converging of the semiotic and somatic imparted here opens the way to comprehending an essential feature of the incarnational element in medieval kabbalistic theosophy. Briefly put, “body” is a linguistic marker inscribed within the imagination as symbolic form. This imaginal body is literal in a very precise, indeed hyperliteral, sense, as it is composed of nothing but letters.<sup>75</sup>

What does this have to do with time? To get back on track, we must consider again the nexus between *Binah* and the world-to-come. In the continuation of the bahiric enumeration of the ten cosmological logoi, the sixth one, the throne of glory, is designated the “dwelling of the world-to-come” (*beit ha-olam ha-ba*), whose “place was engraved in wisdom” (*meqomo haquq ba-hokhmah*). The throne, which rests on the ground of wisdom, alludes symbolically to *Shekhinah*, also identified as the dwelling of the world-to-come. A dwelling, we observed in the preceding chapter, both shelters and exposes. How does the throne shelter and expose the world-to-come? A hint is provided in the prooftext: “And God said ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen 1:3). The word “light” is mentioned twice, corresponding to two lights in the divine realm, the world-to-come and the glorious throne, which is its dwelling. The lower light discloses the upper light in the manner that it is concealed. Thus, the bahiric text continues:

R. Yoḥanan said there were two great lights . . . and concerning both of them it says, “it was good.” And the holy One, blessed be he, took one and hid it for the righteous in the future to come,<sup>76</sup> as it is written, “How great is your goodness that

you hid for those who fear you, that you did for those who take refuge in you in the full view of men” (Ps 31:20).

This teaches that no creature could contemplate [*lehistakkel*] the first light, as it is written, “And God saw all that he made, and behold it was very good” (Gen 1:31), it was shining and resplendent. He took [a portion] from his good light and comprised within it thirty-two paths of wisdom, and he gave them to this world [*olam ha-zeh*]. Thus it is written, “For I have given you good instruction, do not forsake my Torah” (Prov 4:2), that is to say, the treasure of the Oral Torah.

And the holy One, blessed be he, said: If they guard this attribute in this world, for this attribute is considered to be in the category of this world [*nehshvet bi-khelal ha-olam ha-zeh*], and it is the Oral Torah, they will merit the life of the world-to-come [*yizku le-hayyei ha-olam ha-ba*], which is the hidden good [*ha-tov ha-ganuz*].

And what is it? The glory [*uzzo*] of the holy One, blessed be he, as it is written, “and the splendor will be like the light” [*we-nogah ka-or tihyeh*] (Hab 3:4). In the future, the splendor [*nogah*] taken from the first light will be like the light if my children fulfill the Torah and commandment that I have given to instruct them,<sup>77</sup> as it is written, “My son, heed the discipline of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother” (Prov 1:8). It is written, “And it gives off rays on every side—there is the concealment of his glory” (Hab 3:4). What is the “concealment of his glory” [*heyon uzzo*]? That light that he concealed and hid, as it says, “that you hid for those who fear you.” Regarding that which remained, “you did for those who take refuge in you,” in this world. They guard your Torah, fulfill your commandments, sanctify your great name, and unify it secretly and openly, as it says, “in the full view of men.”<sup>78</sup>

The two lights correspond respectively to the third and sixth of the ten sayings—the brilliant light of the world-to-come and the radiant splendor of this world; the treasure of wisdom, which is the quarry of Torah, and the treasure of the Oral Torah.<sup>79</sup> The eschatological imagery culled from rabbinic dicta is theosophically transformed in the bahiric text, or, to state it more prudently, the theosophic intent is rendered more explicit in the *Bahir*: The world-to-come is an epithet for the supernal light, which is the concealment of the glory, the fragment of light withdrawn and stored away for the righteous. From the residue of light emanates the lower light, the *Shekhinah*, the attribute that comprises the thirty-two paths of wisdom.

To move still closer to our goal of ascertaining how the world-to-come relates to the issue of temporality we would do well to consider yet another bahiric passage:

R. Berechiah sat and expounded: How is it that every day we speak of the world-to-come [*olam ha-ba*], but we do not know that of which we speak?

The world-to-come is translated [in Aramaic] as the world-that-is-coming [*alma de-atei*]. What is the world that is coming?

This instructs that prior to the world having been created, it arose in thought to create a great light [*or gadol*] to shine, and a great light, over which the eye of no creature could prevail, was created. The holy One, blessed be he, saw that they could not bear it. He took a sevenfold [*shevi'it*], and placed it for them in his place, and the remainder he hid for the righteous in the world-to-come. He said: If they are meritorious with respect to this sevenfold and they guard it, I will give them this in the other world.

Thus it is written the world-to-come [*olam ha-ba*], for it has already come from the six days of creation [*she-kevar ba mi-sheshet yemei bere'shit*], as it is written, "How great is your goodness that you hid for those who fear you, that you did for those who take refuge in you in the full view of men" (Ps 31:20).<sup>80</sup>

R. Berechiah seeks to penetrate the secret of the world-to-come by examining the philological assonance of the expression *olam ha-ba*. To grasp what it conveys we need to heed the Aramaic rendering, *alma de-attei*, the world-that-is-coming. In what sense is it coming? Inasmuch as it has already come (*she-kevar ba*). Whence does it come? From having been. The fold of time enfolds from the diminution of light created in the beginning. God took a sevenfold of this light and "placed it for them in his place" [*sam lahem bi-meqomo*]; the remainder was stored away for the righteous in the world-to-come. The sevenfold relates to the seven folds of light that proceed from the opening of the womb of the mother, the world-to-come, *Binah*. The location of the sevenfold is God's "place," that is, the last of the seven lower emanations, *Shekhinah*, also identified as this world [*olam ha-zeh*], as God is the place of this world even though the world is not God's place.<sup>81</sup> If the righteous in this world protect the sevenfold light, they merit the rest of the light, which has been hidden. The world-to-come is thus the world that has already come, that is, the light, stored away for the righteous, from the seven days of creation. The latter, as we have already seen, are semi-otic ciphers that point symbolically to the divine potencies, the ontic source of light.

Threading together various textual strands from the *Bahir*, later kabbalists characterized *Binah* as the final *mem* that marks the end discernible in and from the middle, womb of the mother, fiftieth gate of understanding, jubilee, great Sabbath, Yom Kippur, secret of return, world-to-come that "is coming" from having "already come."<sup>82</sup> In this secret of closure in the middle, suspended between the end open in the beginning and the beginning open in the end, is the extending of time to eternity in the persistence of what comes and goes, expectation of before and retention of after, the moment at hand, seemingly always beyond our grasp, the light restored as light to light whence it lingered as light. In this abiding transience is the power of forgiving, the giving before

there is another to receive. The mystery of forgiveness elucidates the ontological implication of repentance as the perpetual return of what has never been. Forgiving comes to pass from the mediated sense of time's immediacy, indeed from the experience of time as the immediate and irreducible possibility of there being something, even if that something be nothing. Forgiveness is thus the giving-before that grounds the fecundity of time in the ever-coming retrieval of what is to be. In the moment of forgiving, time endures, and no more turns into not yet. Only by recovering the future that withdraws as what has been can we uncover the past that remains as what is to come.<sup>83</sup> With this insight, recollection of the beginning of the end from the end of the beginning, we have come to the middle of the end in the end of the middle.

Wir schälen die Zeit aus den Nüssen und lehren  
 sie gehn:  
 die Zeit kehrt zurück in die Schale.  
 Celan, "Corona"

In the end, we come to where one cannot come except by not-coming, the manner in which many have come before and others will come after. We arrive at the terminus delimited as the limit always yet to be delimited, the limit beyond which there is no limit, and hence the limit of what cannot be delimited. Death, Jean-Luc Marion perceptively remarked, is "a phenomenon that can be phenomenized only in its coming to pass, for outside of this passage it cannot properly be; it appears, then, only to the extent that it comes to pass; if it didn't, it could never be."<sup>1</sup> In the receding advance of the forward retreating, the inscripting of death's erasure, truth is laid bare. Disclosing that erasure is a matter to be written from the evasiveness of the end that comes-to-be as the future that is always still-to-come, the time that is measured by *différance*, the deferral of meaning that can be apprehended only in and through the endless play of interpretation.

"Time," wrote Paul Claudel, "is the way offered to all that will be to be no longer. It is the *Invitation to die*, for every phrase to decompose in the explicative and total concordance, to consummate the speech of adoration addressed to the ear of the *Sigè* the Abyss."<sup>2</sup> In its incessant passing, a necessary corollary to its interminable coming, time exemplifies something elementary about the nature of life as discerned from the (non)event of death, the "possibility of impossibility," in Heidegger's formulation.<sup>3</sup> Human time-keeping is indebted to death as the signpost at the beginning of the end that illumines the way back to the end that was the beginning, the gathering of what will be scattered in and from the abyss of silence resounding in the sound of silence. But how does one speak

of what cannot be spoken? How does one write of what comes to pass by pulling away? How does one inscribe death, crossing the line of the coming of one's time—as in our saying “one's time has come”—commemorating the absence of presence in the presence of absence, the sudden, unexpected, albeit altogether anticipated effacement of the face?<sup>4</sup> Surely, by the sign of the end must one finally be re/signed to the end of the sign.

In this matter, we can find our footing in a zoharic text that correlates death and truth through the insight that *tau*, the last letter of the alphabet, seals both the words *mawet*, “death,” and *emet*, “truth.”<sup>5</sup> This mark perforce serves as a re/mark, marking again what has been marked before, the remarkable that brings to mind truth obscured in the correlation of truth and death—the truth of death invariably linked to the death of truth—not because it has been forgotten or occluded but because it is inherently unknowable, mysterious to the core. Even the typically enigmatic Heraclitus, according to a citation of Clement of Alexandria, addressed the mysteriousness of mortality unambiguously, “What awaits men at death they do not expect or even imagine.”<sup>6</sup> Death's impenetrability, however, is not to be explained solely by appealing to its unpredictability. On the contrary, from another vantage point death is eminently (if not immanently) predictable, indeed, it is the most certain aspect of our finite existence, a measure of stability in a field of impermanence and fluctuation. Yet inevitable though it may be, death persists as the mystery that disrupts abruptly. The veridicality of death is inseparable from its cryptic character as an occurrence that is technically non-sense. Death—the end that comes not at the end, for the end comes not except as the end to come, the silence that lingers between notes played in the middle—opens consciousness to the moment that escapes objectification and thematization, a moment that may be rendered poetically as con/frontation with the face, which is most fully visible when it can be seen no more. In this encounter, at the intersection of being and nothing, truth as the wholly other is disclosed, albeit in the concealment of its disclosure.

Levinas has expressed the matter by insisting that death is an “affectivity without intentionality” that evokes a disquietude of the psyche “wherein an interrogation interrogates itself yet is not convertible to a response” other than the “responsibility of the questioning itself or of the one who questions,”<sup>7</sup> an “awaiting or anticipation, without any anticipating aiming; it must thus be considered as having engulfed its intentionality of awaiting, in an awaiting that is patience or pure passivity . . . a non-taking upon oneself or a non-assumption of what is equivalent to no content.”<sup>8</sup> The duration of time culminates in the irruption of death, the “impossible thought,”<sup>9</sup> “nonknowledge” (*non-savoir*), “disquieting (*inquiétude*) of the Same by the Other, without the Same ever being able to comprehend or encompass the Other,”<sup>10</sup> “awakening to the unab-

sorbable alterity of the other . . . the beyond-measure (*démesure*) or the infinity of the other,”<sup>11</sup> intimacy of the “affection of the present by the nonpresent.”<sup>12</sup> The apparent migration at death from being to not-being should not be understood as a transition from one state to its opposite (as the egological consciousness too often assumes) but as a suspension of the very possibility of such a transition; indeed, if death is at all phenomenally possible, it is as the possibility of the impossible, which engenders in its supplemental desire—desire for the supplement—the character of pure possibility.<sup>13</sup> The sign at the end signifies that which (properly speaking) cannot be signified, the transcendent alterity opening time to eternity, not to be rendered in the Platonic sense of an immutable realm that stands over and against the temporal, but rather in the apprehension of the eternality of time and the temporality of eternity, a middle way that renders the traditional binary between evanescence and permanence obsolete.<sup>14</sup>

From a semiotic perspective, the inevitability of death as the ultimate (non)event in subjectivity compels human consciousness to articulate its own limit, positing a signifier that signifies what lies beyond signification. Expanding on Kant’s notion that the sublime consists of unattainability (*Unerreichbarkeit*) becoming a form of presentation (*Darstellung*), Thomas Weiskel remarked, “The absence of a signified itself assumes the status of a signifier, disposing us to feel that behind this newly significant absence lurks a newly discovered presence.”<sup>15</sup> Death may be considered the quintessentially sublime moment (if it can be designated a moment at all), the signifier with no/thing to be signified. As Levinas put it, death is a “struggle between discourse and its negation . . . an ambiguity that perhaps indicates another dimension of meaning than that in which death is thought within the alternative to be/not to be. The ambiguity, the enigma.”<sup>16</sup> The mark at the end is the marking of this enigma, “to think more than one thinks, to think of what withdraws from thought,” the ambivalence that blurs the ontological division of nothingness and being, the desire for the infinite that summons the “generosity of sacrifice outside the known and the unknown, without calculation, for going on to infinity.”<sup>17</sup> Not to be prevails as the decisive way to be. Should we have expected otherwise? Is expectation not this very coincidence of opposites, to await the return of what has never departed? To be at the end is to live from the clarity of this obfuscation.

In this part of the journey, we take our textual cue from a passage in zoharic literature, as the *Bahir* is decidedly silent with regard to the letter that bespeaks the silence of the end. Indeed, in the *bahiric* fragments that have been preserved, there is no reference, implicit or explicit, to *tau*, a reticence that resonates in the saying of the unsaid, a doubling of secrecy that conceals the disclosure and thereby discloses the concealment. The relevant text is from a section of *Zohar* that recasts several older aggadic themes clustered about the belief that



Torah—in her capacity as wisdom—served as God’s confidant, the (female) consort with whom he was bemused and with whom he took counsel prior to creation (images culled from Prov 8:14 and 30). Insofar as creation is viewed primarily as a linguistic act in rabbinic cosmogony, it makes perfectly good sense that Torah, which can be decomposed into the twenty-two Hebrew consonants, would have been depicted symbolically as God’s playmate.<sup>18</sup>

The narrative preserved in *Zohar* recounts how each of the letters presents itself before God in an effort to be chosen as the primary instrument through which the world would be created. This is based on much older literary sources. Particularly relevant is the beginning of the second recension of *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*: “These are the twenty-two letters through which Torah in its entirety was given to the tribes of Israel, and they were engraved by a flaming pen on the awesome and splendid crown of the holy One, blessed be he. When the holy One, blessed be he, desired to create the world, immediately all of them descended and stood before the holy One, blessed be he, and each one said before him ‘Create the world through me.’”<sup>19</sup> There is much of interest here that calls for interpretative embellishment, but we must restrain our steps and keep to the main path.

Significantly, the mythic account of creation, *ma’aseh bere’shit*, in *Zohar* begins from the end, *tau*, the seal of *emet*, truth exposed in its concealment. The zoharic version is framed in terms of R. Hamnuna the Elder’s observation that the order of *alef* and *beit* is reversed in the beginning of Torah, that is, the first two words, *bere’shit bara*, begin with *beit* and the next two, *elohim et*, with *alef*. Taking hold of the inversion of *alef* and *beit* at the incision of the inception opens the way to re/covering what has been uncovered.

When the holy One, blessed be he, wanted to create the world, all the letters were hidden. For two thousand years prior to the creation of the world, the holy One, blessed be he, was contemplating and bemusing himself with them.<sup>20</sup> When he desired to create the world, all the letters came before him from the end to the beginning.

Initially, letter *tau* began to enter.

It said: Master of the worlds, let it be pleasing before you to create the world through me, for I am the seal of your signet “truth” [*hotama de-gushpanqa dilakh emet*], and you are called “truth.” It is appropriate for the king to begin with the letter of “truth” [*ot emet*] and to create the world through me.

The holy One, blessed be he, said to it: You are worthy and you are commendable, but you are not worthy enough for the world to be created through you since in the future you will be inscribed on the foreheads of faithful men who fulfilled the Torah from *alef* to *tau* and through your marking [*reshimu dilakh*] they will die. Moreover, you are the seal of death [*hotama de-mawet*], and since this is the case, you are not worthy for the world to be created through you.

Immediately, it departed.<sup>21</sup>

The argument placed in the mouth of *tau* is crafted on the basis of two older and originally discrete motifs, the depiction of *emet* as the signet (*hotam*) of God and the identification of this word as a proper divine name. Regarding the former, it is important to mention the talmudic dictum, “Reish Laqish said, ‘Tau is the terminus of the seal of the holy One, blessed be he’ [*sof hotamo shel ha-qadosh barukh hu*], for as R. Ḥanina said, ‘The seal of the holy One, blessed be he, is truth’ [*hotamo shel ha-qadosh barukh hu emet*].”<sup>22</sup> With respect to the second motif, especially germane to the zoharic formulation is the beginning of another recension of *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*:

Rabbi said: Alef. What is alef?

This teaches that the Torah said: “Truth teaches your mouth” [*emet lammed pikha*] so that you will merit life in this world. “Your mouth teaches truth” [*pikha lammed emet*] so that you will merit life of the world-to-come.<sup>23</sup>

Why is this so? Because the holy One, blessed be he, is called “truth” [*emet*] . . . as it says, “the Lord is truly God” [*yhwh elohim emet*] (Jer 10:10).<sup>24</sup>

Combining these two themes, the author of the zoharic account has *tau* pleading that it deserves to be the agency of creation since it is the conclusion of *emet*, which is both the signet of God and one of his epithets. God responds that despite these merits, *tau* is not worthy enough. Two reasons are given, although I think it possible to view them as two versions of one explanation.

The first reason is related to the vision in Ezekiel (9:4–6) where the “men who groan and moan” because of the abominations committed against God in Jerusalem are marked on their foreheads by the “man clothed in linen with the writing case at his waist.” The individuals so inscribed are instructed by the angelic man to slay all those who are guilty. Compliant with the biblical text, the mark (*tau*) empowers the faithful so that they may participate in the dispensation of divine judgment.

The second interpretation attested in *Zohar*, by contrast, is based on a homily transmitted in the Babylonian Talmud in the name of R. Aḥa ben Ḥanina.<sup>25</sup> The narrative about God’s punishing the Jerusalemites in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel is presented as the sole textual source for an exception to the theological axiom that a “good measure” (*middah ṭovah*) does not go forth from God and change into evil. According to the exegesis of R. Aḥa, the “man clothed in linen” refers to Gabriel,<sup>26</sup> who was commanded by God, “Go and mark the foreheads of the righteous with a *tau* of ink so that the angels of destruction will not prevail over them, and [place a] *tau* of blood on the foreheads of the wicked so that the angels of destruction will prevail over them.” The attribute of judgment (*middat ha-din*), however, mounts a persuasive argument before God that the righteous

who did not try to prevent others from sinning also deserve to be put to death. This idea is supported textually by R. Joseph's reading of *u-mimmiqddashi taḥellu*, "begin at my sanctuary" (Ezek 9:6) as *u-mimeqddashai taḥellu*, "begin with my sanctified ones," that is, "the people who fulfilled the Torah entirely from *alef* to *tau*," an opinion also transmitted in the name of R. Samuel ben Naḥman.<sup>27</sup> The moral intent of the prophetic vision, then, is to stress that a righteous man who does not prevent others from sinning justifies the attribute of judgment's altering of the divine will by transforming God's good intention into evil.

Before returning to the medieval kabbalistic source, we would do well to note that the singular mark of the biblical text becomes two marks in the rabbinic homily: an ink spot on the foreheads of the righteous and a bloodstain on the foreheads of the wicked, the former serving as an apotropos to deflect the angels of destruction and the latter as a lure to attract them. Three crucial points in the talmudic source may be clarified with the help of Saul Lieberman's analysis.<sup>28</sup> First, in all probability, the exegetical decoding of *tau* in Ezekiel as referring to the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet was enhanced by the phonetic affinity between *tau* and the Greek *theta*, which was used as an abbreviation for *thanatos* (death) in capital sentences in Gentile courts. Second, the doubling of the mark may be explained by the fact that *tau* was almost identical in form with *chi* and in sound with *theta*. While the latter was deployed as a mark of execution, the former was a mark of the canceling of debts and, by extension, a sign of freedom from bondage. Thus, the mark of liberty was placed on the foreheads of the righteous and the mark of death on the foreheads of the wicked. The dual function of *tau* is captured in a statement attributed to Rav in the same talmudic context that this letter concomitantly signals *tiḥyeh* and *tamut*, "you shall live" and "you shall die." Furthermore, the black-mark of death (*nigrum theta*) is depicted in the rabbinic homily as the blood-mark (*tau shel dam*), which is set in contrast to the ink-mark (*tau shel deyo*). This may be explained as a rejoinder on the part of some rabbis to an exegetical tradition cultivated by early Church Fathers that connected the *tau* of Ezekiel with the paschal lamb, the symbol of salvation. This possibility is enhanced by the evidence (supplied, for example, by Origen) that Jewish Christians interpreted the *tau* of Ezekiel as a sign of the cross (related, as we have seen, to the shape of the letter in the ancient script) placed on the foreheads of Christians.<sup>29</sup> Apparently responding to this interpretation, rabbinic exegetes emphasized that the mark of blood signals destruction rather than deliverance.<sup>30</sup>

This rabbinic concern underlies the zoharic comment that the "faithful men who fulfilled the Torah from *alef* to *tau*" would die because of the *tau* with which they were marked. One should note the stroke of literary ingenuity: the righteous who fulfill the whole of Torah, from beginning to end, will be brought

down tragically on account of the mark of the end. The metaphysical insight the medieval kabbalist elicits from the talmudic text is made explicit in the second explanation for why *tau* was disqualified: because it is the concluding letter of *mawet*, “death.” The midrashic explanation that the inscripting of *tau* on the heads of the righteous was a sign of their culpability suggests an intricate connection between this letter and death, made more overt in the observation that *tau* seals both *emet* and *mawet*, “truth” and “death.” By focusing on this ostensibly trivial point, the author of the zoharic text prompts us to ponder the showing of time in the concealment of truth.<sup>31</sup> This patently obvious observation puts into sharp relief the existential truth that time beckons in the chronic withholding of death. In death we come to know the secrecy of time in (un)knowing the time of secrecy. In this unknowing, we clasp the moment as the momentary letting-go of the moment, unassimilable in the withdrawal of its transcendence. The experience of death, if indeed we can speak of death as an experience,<sup>32</sup> provides us with a phenomenological model of time that is circular in its linearity: What is yet to be reverts to what has already been in the form of what is yet to be what has already been. We traverse the quadrilateral span of time in linear progression, but the inescapability of our temporal demise paradoxically occasions the continual deferral of the end, which recurs precisely because it has never been. The time of our death is determined exclusively by the death of our time, but the death of our time can be ascertained only from the time of our death.

Philosophically, we may educe from the zoharic text the epistemic axiom that death reveals the truthfulness of time by concealing the timeliness of truth. Something, however, remains curiously uncertain about the certainty of this truism, as one is still left to ponder why the universe could not have been created by *tau*. Would it have not made perfectly good sense for the temporal world to come into being through the letter that denotes concurrently the endurance of death and the ephemerality of time? Is the resoluteness of death not an appropriate determination of truth in this world? The ambiguity in the correlation of *emet* and *mawet* needs further consideration if we wish to get to the bottom of this concern.

To clarify how death unveils truth even while truth remains veiled, we would do well to revisit the image of truth as the signet of God, particularly as it appears in the talmudic passage briefly discussed in the preface. Careful examination of this passage will position us to understand better the juxtaposition of truth and death in kabbalistic lore, which in turn will allow us to grasp time as the linear circularity of the middle extending to the beginning that returns to the end. It is this ontological conception of temporality that informed the hermeneutical perspective of kabbalists as readers of Scripture, mystically identified as the textual body of YHWH, the most sacred of divine names.

It has been taught, “Do not judge alone, for only one judges alone.”<sup>33</sup> R. Judah ben Pazi said: Even the holy One, blessed be he, does not judge alone as it says, “all the hosts of heaven stood upon him from his right and from his left” (1 Kgs 22:19), those who advocate and those who condemn. Although he does not judge alone, the seal [*hotam*] is singular, as it says, “I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth” (Dan 10:21).

R. Yoḥanan said: The holy One, blessed be he, never does something in his world until he takes counsel with the court above. What is the reason? “The word was true in a great multitude” (ibid., 10:1). When is the seal of the holy One, blessed be he, true? When he takes counsel with the court above.

R. Eleazar said: In every place that it says “the Lord,”<sup>34</sup> it refers to him and to his court. The principle for all of them is “And the Lord spoke evil about him” (1 Kgs 22:23).

What is the seal of the holy One, blessed be he? R. Bebai in the name of R. Reuben said: Truth [*emet*].

What is truth?

R. Bun said: “[The Lord is truly God] he is the living God and everlasting king” (Jer 10:10).

Reish Laqish said: *Alef*—the beginning of the alphabet, *mem* in the middle, and *tau* in the end, to indicate that “I, the Lord, am first” (Isa 41:4), for I did not receive from another. “And there is no god but me” (ibid., 44:6), for I have no partner. “And of the last ones, I am he” (ibid., 41:4), for in the future I will not hand it over to another.<sup>35</sup>

The mythical image of God’s seal appears in the talmudic explication of the judicial maxim that one should not judge alone, for only the divine judge can adjudicate on his own. According to the opinion attributed to R. Judah ben Pazi, however, even God does not render judgment without consulting the heavenly court. God’s autonomy is nonetheless upheld by the claim that there is only one seal (*hotam*) of judgment, that is, it may be necessary for God to consult with others in rendering judgment, but he alone bears responsibility for the judgment that is eventually rendered. This idea is supported textually by the image of the “book of truth” (*ketav emet*) drawn from the apocalyptic vision of Daniel, an image that conveys the quality of truth as durable or steadfast, for what is inscribed in a book was thought even from antiquity to stand the test of time.<sup>36</sup> As another rabbinic aphorism states, “Truth stands, deceit does not stand” (*qushṭa qa’ei shiqra lo qa’ei*).<sup>37</sup>

The correlation between the seal and truth is even more pronounced in the tradition that the seal of God is truth. Two explanations are offered to explain the nature of this truth. In the opinion of R. Bun, *emet* is the seal of God, for it is one of the terms by which God is named (as in Jer 10:10); in the opinion of

Reish Laqish, *emet* is the seal because it comprises the first, middle, and final consonants of the Hebrew alphabet—*alef reishei de-alfa beita mem ba-emša'itah tau be-sofah*. The consonants, in turn, are assigned temporal significance: *alef* is aligned with the past, *mem* with the present, and *tau* with the future. Theological meaning is attributed to the three consonants as well, for they signify the uniqueness of God in the three temporal modes: *alef* intimates that YHWH was alone at the beginning, *mem* that he has no partner now, and *tau* that in the future there will be no other god. The view of Reish Laqish is linked exegetically to two verses from Deutero-Isaiah, “Who has wrought and created, calling the generations from the beginning; I, the Lord, am first, and of the last ones, I am he” (Isa 41:4) and “Thus says the Lord, king of Israel, and his redeemer, Lord of hosts, I am first and I am last, and besides me there is no god” (ibid., 44:6). It is possible that the version of the dictum of Reish Laqish preserved here is accurate and we should not be surprised at the combination of disparate verses, a well-attested phenomenon in rabbinic literature easily explained by the fact that the sages typically cited biblical texts from memory. There is, however, a gnawing sense that in this case something is amiss. Interestingly, an alternative version is found in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, a collection of midrashic dicta organized around the verses of the Song. From the standpoint of redactional history this version is later than the one in the Palestinian Talmud, but from the perspective of textual transmission, it is, in my view, earlier and superior.

Reish Laqish said: Why is it *emet*? *Alef* is at the beginning of the letters [*be-ro'sh ha-otiyot*], *mem* in the middle [*be-emša*], and *tau* in their end [*be-sofan*], to indicate that “I am first and I am last, and besides me there is no god” (Isa 44:6). “I am first,” for I have not received my dominion [*malkhuti*] from another, “and I am last,” for I will not hand it over to another one who is not in the world, “and besides me there is no god,” for he has no second.<sup>38</sup>

This version of Reish Laqish’s teaching brings into even clearer focus that the letters of *emet* attest to the singularity of God’s being in the beginning, middle, and end. The philosophical maxim is elucidated by images extracted exegetically from the prophetic utterance. Hence, “I am first” indicates that, in the beginning of creation, God did not receive his dominion (*malkhut*) from another; “I am last” shows that in the end, at the appointed time, there is no other to whom the dominion will be transferred; and the continuation of the verse, “and besides me there is no god,” signals the triumph of monotheistic faith in the present historical epoch.

The interpretation transmitted in the name of Reish Laqish possibly encodes a response on the part of some rabbis to the emerging Christian belief in the

divine nature of Jesus, expressed as both his demiurgic collaboration in the beginning and his messianic dominion at the end.<sup>39</sup> Especially relevant is the revelation of Jesus concerning what will come to pass “soon,” as bequeathed to John through an angel. Jesus is described in that revelation as the “firstborn of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth” (Rev 1:5), the one who has “freed” human beings from their sin “by his blood” (ibid., 6) and thereby transformed believers into a “kingdom of priests” (a locution based on Exod 19:6) to whom belong the “dominion and glory” everlastingly (Rev 1:6). The surmise that Reish Laqish’s statement is responding to the Christological doctrine is substantiated by the celebrated poetic flourish that ends the opening prayer of John’s apocalypse: “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (ibid., 8).<sup>40</sup> This utterance is very likely based on God’s proclamation “I am the first and I am the last” (*ani ri’shon wa-ani aharon*) in Deutero-Isaiah (44:6).<sup>41</sup> In the New Testament context, the temporal classification is expressed linguistically, and thus the beginning and end are termed *alpha* and *omega* respectively. The additional description, “who is and was and is to come,” suggests that the present is to be added to past and future. Even though there is no mention of a letter that corresponds to the present, we may surmise that preserved here is an older, Jewish mythologoumenon that viewed the beginning, middle, and end of the alphabet as the semiotic markers signifying the triune manifestation of divine temporality.<sup>42</sup>

The midrashic text’s exegetical framework may highlight another dimension of the ancient tradition: that the trinitarian nature of time is ontologically grounded in the truthfulness of God’s seal, YHWH, the ineffable name that intones that God was, is, and shall be.<sup>43</sup> The possibility of such an interpretation is enhanced by Isaac ben Jacob Joseph Halevi in his commentary *Hadrat Qodesh* on the words *emet hotamo*, “truth is his seal,” in the liturgical poem *we-amkha telu’im bi-teshuvah*, which is included in the traditional prayerbook (*maḥzor*) for Rosh ha-Shanah: “*Alef* is the first of the letters of the alphabet, *mem* in the middle, and *tau* at the end, to indicate that he was, is, and will be.”<sup>44</sup> By heeding the philosophical understanding of the name we gain insight into the nature of time, that is, the connection established between the name and God’s being in the past, present, and future indicates that temporality is an expression of the eternality of the divine essence. A similar point may be elicited from a statement attributed to R. Isaac (briefly discussed in chapter 2) explaining the threefold repetition of the name *ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14: “The holy One, blessed be he, said to Moses: Say to them I am he [*ani hu*], I am the one who was, I am the one now, and I am the one in the future.”<sup>45</sup> It has been suggested that this dictum may be a tacit reaction to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>46</sup> The polemical aspect seems plausible enough, but what is important to emphasize for our purposes is the con-

ceptual link, implicit in the rabbinic text, between the manifestation of God in time and the name, which is etymologically derived from *hwh*, the Semitic root that discloses being in its multiple veils.

This nexus is fundamental to the kabbalistic understanding of time as the measure of the immeasurable.<sup>47</sup> Surely, medieval kabbalists were cognizant of the more conventional understanding promulgated by the rabbinic elites of their time: that the Tetragrammaton, depicted since the formative rabbinic period as the ineffable name (*shem ha-meforash*), signifies the being that cannot be signified. Kabbalists, too, embraced the explication of YHWH as denoting that God was, is, and shall be. The threefold unity with regard to God's way of being suggests that he is not subject to the contingencies of time, that he persists eternally through the flux of time from beginning to end. Eternity, however, is not the absence of time, which would be implied by a conception of timelessness, but rather the full presence of time in the compresence of past, present, and future in the moment at hand. Thus we can speak of divine temporality in an apposite sense: the divine is surreptitiously revealed in the guise of temporality; what is temporal comports itself as a veiled manifestation of divinity. To employ the insight of the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness, which I discussed at length in chapter 1: In the stream of time, the flow of consciousness, what endures is change, and hence only what is old can be new. In not being, time becomes eternally, in the interval of the swerve, the pulsation of the moment, returning as never having been. The narration of time's becoming, which inverts the causal sequence such that past is foreseen in the future and future recollected in the past, translates the eternal temporality of transcendence into the temporal eternality of immanence.

At this juncture, we again turn to Heidegger to find a suitable way to express an idea elicited from kabbalistic sources. In one context, Heidegger describes the juxtaposition of time (*zeit*), eternity (*ewigkeit*), and the moment (*augenblick*) in the following way: "The eternal is not what ceaselessly lasts, but rather that which can withdraw in the moment, in order to return once again. That which can return, not as the same but as what transforms unto the new, the one-only, be-ing, such that in this manifestness it is at first not recognized as the same."<sup>48</sup> What persists in time is what is withdrawn, for in being withdrawn it can return, in the moment—*augen-blick*, literally, the glance of the eye—through which one beholds the totality of the fragmented whole.<sup>49</sup> Heidegger's thinking on this matter is indebted to Husserl's *Zeitbewusstsein*, which, as we recall, presumes not only that consciousness is always of the present, but that in the present consciousness is the confluence of past and future, an ever-expanding chain of retentive and protentive intentionality. Thinking within the same tradition, Merleau-Ponty wrote, "Time must be understood as a system that embraces everything—



Although it is graspable only for him who is *there*, is at a present.”<sup>50</sup> In a moment’s blink, all is (un)seen, presence-effacing-absence-etching-presence.

Time is not to be conceptualized, accordingly, as a sequence of uniform moments held together in the imagination as backward and forward extensions. A proper understanding of the structure of temporal intentionality yields the insight that retentions of the past, impressions of the present, and expectations of the future are interwoven in the garment of time. Such a transcendental character of the experience of time signals that human temporality is determined by the indeterminacy of the coming-to-be of what-has-been in the passing-away of what will be. From this perspective we can invert the commonsense understanding of time and speak meaningfully of expecting the past by remembering the future. The conception of time’s linearity, buttressed by the vulgar or commonsense experience of coming into and departing from the world at particular temporal junctures as well as by the historicist predilection to interpret the past from the prejudices and idiosyncrasies of any given moment, is challenged by the disruptive effect of the ecstatic unity of temporality. In this state, the “future is *not later* than the having-been, and the having-been is *not earlier* than the present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future that makes present, in the process of having-been.”<sup>51</sup>

In my judgment, the explication of YHWH in ontological terms of temporal comportment, that is, referring to the name as the sign that points to the being who was, is, and shall be, is well served by an analysis in terms of the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness expounded in the particularly Heideggerian sense I have outlined.<sup>52</sup> To accept, or at the very least to make sense of, this claim, two other presumptions about kabbalistic ontology must be made explicit. First, the nature of being cannot be separated from consciousness; indeed, kabbalists have insisted repeatedly that one being, portrayed as infinite light, ineffable name, and limitless thought, permeates all beings. In the splintering of light through the cloud of darkness, the articulation of the name through the tremor of silence, and the infringement of thought through the shroud of ignorance, one may fathom the measure of time’s flowing.

The second, not unrelated, point is that medieval kabbalists did not unequivocally embrace the substantialist ontology articulated in the philosophical discourse of their day, which was based, to a great extent, on a synthesis of Aristotelian hylomorphism and Neoplatonic emanationism. From the kabbalists’ vantage point, in the Godhead, being and not-being, *yesh* and *ayin*, are not to be construed as logical antinomies but rather as polar opposites identical in virtue of being different. One of the most poignant articulations of this coincidence was offered by Azriel of Gerona in response to a hypothetical philosophical query regarding the possibility of *creatio ex nihilo*: “The One who brings forth

something out of nothing is not depleted, for the something is in the nothing in the manner of the nothing, and the nothing is in the something in the manner of the something.”<sup>53</sup> In my judgment, the *coincidentia oppositorum* formulated by Azriel expresses an axiom affirmed or assumed by kabbalists without exception through the centuries: something and nothing within God are identified in the place of the conjunction of their difference. To take seriously the claim that God is indivisible and indifferent, something and nothing must be identical in the (non)being of the infinite, but such a stance underscores the extent to which medieval kabbalah problematizes the discourse of its own ontological presuppositions, resisting the dissolution of something into nothing or the reification of nothing into something.

A logical consequence of the assumption that every mode of being attributed to God is not-being (since being and not-being are not distinguishable in the infinite) is that every affirmation is a negation, every disclosure a concealment. In the sixteenth century, Solomon Alkabetz coined the expression *sod ha-hithappekhut*, the “secret of inversion,” to name the dialectic long presumed true by kabbalists: *ha-he’elem hu gilluy we-ha-gilluy hu he’elem*, “concealment is disclosure and disclosure concealment.”<sup>54</sup> To speak of God’s being is to affirm that the being of whom we speak is precisely not in the manner we say it is to be. Alternatively, the obfuscation of the ontological difference between being and non-being can be expressed as the impossibility of separating the apophatic and kataphatic perspectives: not to speak and to speak are one verbal (non)gesture. Levinas depicted death in precisely these terms, though ostensibly without ontological referent. From my perspective we may lay aside this distinction, for what is crucial is the illumination of the kabbalistic symbolism by our staying attuned to the indecipherable quality of death as the confounding of the distinction between being and not-being. *Tau*, the seal of truth, is concomitantly the mark of life and the mark of death—in the words of Rav, *tau tihyeh tau tamut*. The luminosity of death darkens the division that stands in the beginning and end of the ontic circuit, determining our way of being-in-the-middle.

With this insight we may return to the zoharic narrative that set us on our way in this chapter. On the face of it, *tau* is not worthy to be the instrument of creation because its negative association with *mawet* cancels out the positive value assigned to it on account of its role in the formation of *emet*. It would seem, then, that the deleterious ramifications of death outweigh the beneficial consequences of truth. Reflecting, however, on the correlation of death and truth as they relate to the seal of divine judgment raises a question as to why these two are set in diametric opposition; on the contrary, there is no apparent justification for separating truth and death, as divine judgment may deem death

the most appropriate implementation of truth. What, then, can we learn from the severance of truth and death foisted upon us by the zoharic text?

Perhaps the deeper significance of the disqualification of *tau* is the admission that there can be no semblance of natural order without supposition of the ontological difference that death renders problematic. The identity of being and not-being is possible, indeed necessary, in the realm of non-differentiation, the sphere of divine unity, which is accessible through contemplative exercises, but it is not readily applicable to the created world of separation; in the mundane cosmos of temporal-spatial phenomenality, the coincidence of opposites is distressing, destabilizing, disorienting. The confluence of death and not-being in the space of world-time is thus to be distinguished from the same nexus in the timespace of the world of emanations, manifest in veils of disclosure, the inversion of which I have already (mis)spoken. The root of endless time implanted in Ein Sof, like the description of Chronos as Ageless Time in Orphic theogony,<sup>55</sup> is the principle of unity that transcends all contraries, including the contrary between life and death.

Another dimension of the symbolism of *tau* needs mention too, as it will instruct us about the character of truth revealed in the concealment pertinent to the end time. As noted above, the rabbinic refracting of the prophetic image yields a doubling of *tau* as the mark of ink and the mark of blood, the sign of life and the sign of death. The esoteric implication of this aggadic motif is not revealed in the narrative embedded in the zoharic text. Fortunately, we have a source close in time to the production of zoharic literature that may contribute to our understanding of this mystical doctrine as promulgated in the tightly knit circle of Castilian kabbalists responsible for the literary fabrication of *Zohar*. I refer to the commentary on the talmudic aggadah by ʿTodros ben Joseph ha-Levi Abulafia.<sup>56</sup>

The opening line of Abulafia's remarks on the relevant passage from the Babylonian Talmud bodes an auspicious beginning as he reminds the reader that in the words of the rabbis there are "several deep secrets, several hidden mysteries, and several hidden matters." The secret, we soon learn, concerns the emanation of judgment from the left that parallels the emanation of mercy from the right. In Abulafia's time, this idea was treated as one of the most recendite components of the tradition and revealed to only a handful of initiates, who used this teaching to delve deeply into the truth of the divine nature.<sup>57</sup> Abulafia links this mystery to the aggadic distinction between the *tau* of life and the *tau* of death. In this connection, he quotes two passages from the *Bahir*, one depicting God (on the basis of Job 25:2) as making peace between Michael on the right and Gabriel on the left,<sup>58</sup> the other describing Satan as the evil power

on the north side of the divine (related exegetically to Jer 1:14), a force that assumes the shape of a hand and is identified as chaos, *tohu*, the matter that confounds people until they sin.<sup>59</sup> After citing the latter text, Abulafia comments:

What they said concerning the seal of the holy One, blessed be he, being truth, this is “truth and peace you must love” (Zech 8:18),<sup>60</sup> and *tau* alludes to the name of the splendor [*le-shem tif’arto*] of the holy One, blessed be he,<sup>61</sup> for everything is beneath the dominion of the blessed One, and this is [the meaning of] *tau*—you shall live [*tiḥyeh*], *tau*—you shall be graced [*taḥun*], *tau*—you shall die [*tamut*], this is the one that was changed into evil.<sup>62</sup>

The *tau*, according to Abulafia, symbolizes *Tif’eret*, the attribute positioned in the center between left and right, which is also designated as “truth” and “peace”. The theosophic interpretation of the rabbinic dictum thus imparts to us a depiction of truth as the synthesis of opposites, a balance struck between the extremes of judgment and mercy, an interplay of withholding and overflowing. This accounts for the kabbalist’s adding the word *taḥun* to the talmudic pair *tiḥyeh* and *tamut*. In contrast to the destabilization of the distinction between being and non-being brought to the fore by the inscrutable nature of death, the identification of the seal with the attribute of *Tif’eret* overcomes the polarization of good and evil by the constitution of truth as mediating between the two ends of the spectrum. As Azriel of Gerona put it in his commentary on the liturgical expression “for your holy name in truth is pronounced upon us” [*ki shem qodshekha be-emet niqra aleinu*]: “through the power of his truth, which disseminates in mercy [*raḥamim*] and judgment [*din*], for the one corresponds to the other.”<sup>63</sup> The term *shalom*, “peace” or “wholeness,” is ascribed to the attribute also associated with truth, for truthfulness expresses the equilibrium that ensues from the synchronization of judgment and mercy.

Abulafia elucidates the point by citing another *bahiric* passage, one that sets out to explain the symbolic intent of the blue thread (*tekhelet*) used in the traditional fringe garment, as well as the reason why there are thirty-two threads.<sup>64</sup> The matter is clarified by a parable: a king appoints a guardian (*shomer*) to watch over his garden, which contains thirty-two paths. The guardian in turn appoints a guardian for each of the paths. The thirty-two threads symbolize these guardians. The blue thread is the sign (*siman*) that removes all doubt that the garden belongs the king. But there are two signs (*shenei simanim*) to be accounted for, inasmuch as the fringe garment itself is a sign. The two signs, the fringe garment and the blue thread, are troped respectively as a sign of the garden and a sign of the thirty-two paths. The doubling of the sign is reinforced by yet another parabolic image of the king and the princess possessing individual signs

that they hand over to their servants to protect them. The apotropaic function of the double sign is connected exegetically to the repetition of the word “guard” (*shamar*) in the verse “The Lord shall guard you from all evil, he will guard your soul” (Ps. 121:7).

The truthfulness of God’s seal is displayed in the duplication of *tau*, the mark of ink and the mark of blood, a graphic inscripting of the kabbalistic doctrine of the competing forces of holiness and impurity, ten emanations on the right and ten emanations on the left. Abulafia thus concludes his exposition with the admonition:

Know that the knowledge of the emanation of the left side is a deep knowledge hidden from the eyes of the great kabbalists who received the true tradition in the secrets of Torah and the order of the emanation of the right side to the point that most of them do not pay attention to this . . . but a few of them who go more deeply have inquired, investigated, and expounded well . . . until the correct order arose in their hands with respect to that which emanates from the emanator, level after level, gradation after gradation. . . . Know that just as there are ten fingers in man from the right side to accomplish through them his will, so there are ten fingers from the left side, these accomplish the labor entrusted to them and those the labor entrusted to them. Analogously, just as there are ten holy aspects from the right side, so there are ten aspects from the left side,<sup>65</sup> from the ones emanate several worlds and from the others emanate several worlds, but there is a difference in their existence and subsistence, to which I do not have permission to allude.<sup>66</sup>

Abulafia’s remark brings to light another essential component of the nexus of truth and death, which has paved our path in the middle from beginning to end. The play of energy in the world of bounded space and measured time requires binary structures—shadow and light, left and right, male and female, good and evil, judgment and mercy, pure and impure. But in the realm of divine unity—the world of unbounded space and immeasurable time, not to speak of the unspeakable beyond the *pleroma*—the poetic balance is such that, at root, shadow is light, left is right, male is female, good is evil, judgment is mercy, and pure is impure. For many kabbalists, according to Abulafia’s testimony, not to mention non-enlightened Jews, truth is predicated on a discrimination between opposites that preserves their antinomical difference. The phenomenon of time is an illustration of this larger point. As Ralph Waldo Emerson aptly put it, “The wings of Time are black and white, / Pied with morning and with night.”<sup>67</sup> For select initiates, however, enlightenment consists of discerning the divine unity in the alchemical identification of dual forces as the same through their difference.<sup>68</sup> In this light, the wings of time would no longer

appear as black and white; indeed, in the state of ontological indifference, one can no longer discriminate between black and white, morning and night.

Support for this interpretation is found in the following passage from a fragment of a work by Moses de León, one of the Castilian kabbalists responsible for the composition and dissemination of textual units that were eventually woven into the fabric of *Sefer ha-Zohar*:

Know that the secret of the attribute of truth [*sod middat emet*] is the one that incites and overflows to the place of death [*meqom ha-mawet*], for life motivates death. Indeed, the attribute of truth is the justice that overflows and emanates blessing upon the bundle of souls. The one who performs an act of kindness with the deceased disseminates blessing and emanates the efflux from the place of truth to the place of death, that is, he arouses the attribute of truth in relation to the attribute of death. . . . Thus I will alert you concerning a matter of the great and deep secret . . . and it is the matter of the attribute of truth, which is the comprehensive attribute [*ha-middah ha-kelulah*] . . . it holds on above and below, indeed it holds on to the four corners of the world. The matter is in the secret of its letters: Know that the secret of *alef* is that it is the letter that comprises all the levels and the secret of all the gradations are contained within it. On account of this it was placed as the first [*ro'sh*] of [the letters of] Torah, and you already know that Torah is the attribute of truth. Thus truth [*emet*] comprises all the letters of Torah and since this attribute is Torah it is called *emet*. *Emet*—beginning, end, and middle, for you find that *alef* is the first of all letters, *tau* the last of all letters, and *mem* the middle of all letters. Thus the totality of Torah is the secret of the letters *emet*. As we have said, the secret of *alef* is the matter of Torah, and it is the containment of everything [*kelal ha-kol*], and since it is life [*hayyim*] there is joined to it death [*ha-mawet*] so that it would be within it. Thus you will find [in the word *emet*] *alef met* [*mem* and *taw*], so that [death] would be contained within it inasmuch as the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil were contained one within the other, and thus this is the secret of *emet*, all together as one. To return to what we were discussing: when someone passes away and is depleted of life, the one who acts charitably with the deceased causes the *alef*, which is the secret of life, to overflow to the attribute of death, so that [the letters] *met* will be comprised in [the letter] *alef*, and he causes the completion of the attribute [*tashlum ha-middah*] to be *emet*, everything in one union [*ha-kol be-hibbur ehad*].<sup>69</sup>

Demonstrating his ability to present a complex philosophic theme in relatively simple terms, Moses de León sets out in the above passage to affirm the intricate relationship between truth and death. To apprehend the kabbalistic intent of de León's comments, one must bear in mind that the "attribute of truth," associated with the letter *alef*, Torah, and the Tree of Life, is the eman-

tion of *Tif'eret*,<sup>70</sup> and the “place of death,” which is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, is *Malkhut*.<sup>71</sup> Encoded in the word *emet* is the mystery of the sacred union of masculine and feminine,<sup>72</sup> the merging of *alef* and the letters *mem* and *tau*, which spell *met*,<sup>73</sup> and thus truth is called the “completion of the attribute,” for life and death are in “one union.” This is the esoteric import of the rabbinic tradition that the act of true mercy (*hesed shel emet*) involves attending to the needs of the deceased.<sup>74</sup> This designation, which on a basic level intones that there is no expectation of recompense in such a case, portends in a deeper sense that, through such an act, truth infuses death with life to the point that the one is comprised in the other (*lihyot met kalul be-alef*), just as the two trees were intertwined in the garden of Eden or, invoking another symbolic idiom, utilized by de León at the conclusion of this passage, just as the Oral Torah is contained in the Written Torah.<sup>75</sup>

The nexus of death and truth—the truth of death in the death of truth as an element opposing untruth—points to the mystical enlightenment that discerns that death is contained in life, that the demonic is in the divine. Interestingly, one zoharic passage, concerning the secret of the catharsis of evil from God, and classified in the printed versions as part of the *Tosefta* section, presents the containment of darkness in light—and the eventual separation of these two forces as a consequence of the transition from concealment to disclosure—in densely mythical images:

The vapor of the pure vapor ascends above until the place of the house of dwelling is not found, the place that is no place is not found above or below, it is removed from everything, it is destroyed from everything. Destruction [*avaddon*] is the male, Samael, who emerges from the dross of the strength of Isaac, and death [*mawet*] is his female, primordial serpent, woman of harlotry, as it is written, “her feet descend to death” (Prov 5:5). And these two, destruction and death, heard the strength of the will of the king, the secret, supernal hidden mystery, concealed from everything, hidden from ideas and thoughts. The one who is drawn after these is led astray from everything, for everything is its opposite. Praiseworthy is the perfect man like Jacob who ascends and whose eyes are not darkened by this smoke and he merited to draw close to truth, the seal of the holy king.<sup>76</sup>

The continuation of the text describes the emanation of the *sefirot* as they relate to the letters of the Tetragrammaton. The holy powers emerge only after the purging of the impure forces from the divine, a theme that evolved into one of the cardinal tenets of sixteenth-century Lurianic kabbalah. Important for our purposes here is the reference to the two forces of evil, masculine Samael and feminine serpent, respectively (on the basis of Job 28:22) as “destruction” and

“death.” The demonic potencies occupy the place of utter destitution, the “place that is no place” (*atar law atar*), which is found neither above or below. Significantly, this gnosis, exemplified by Jacob, is presented as a way of coming to know the seal of God, which is truth. One must be wary of being drawn to these potencies, since they may lure one into implementing the destabilizing wisdom that everything is its opposite, that truth is deception, that good is evil, that holiness is sin. Yet it is precisely this insight that is at the heart of the mystical vision, the apprehension of the secret of faith, the affirmation of the identically different in the oneness of what is differently identical. This is the moment of which I spoke in chapter 2, the moment that affords one the opportunity to see with two eyes, one eye seeing unity and the other duality, though there must be a third eye to which the one and the other are the same difference, differently the same.<sup>77</sup> This is expressed in the following zoharic passage in terms of the ostensible contrast between Lilith and *Shekhinah*:

Come and see what is written: “Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold of Sheol” (Prov 5:5). And what is written concerning the mystery of faith? “Her ways are pleasant ways, all her paths, peaceful” (*ibid.*, 3:17). These are the ways and paths of Torah. All is one, this is peace and that is death, each the opposite of the other.<sup>78</sup>

This passage sheds further light on a crucial aspect of the nexus between truth and death that we discerned in Abulafia’s commentary. To know truth in the fullest disclosure, one must plumb the depths of deceit portrayed in images of desolation.<sup>79</sup> This gnosis, which, as Abulafia and other kabbalists in late-thirteenth-century Castile emphasized, is limited to a small number of adepts, guides one on the path to discerning the obliteration of the dichotomy between the divine and the demonic in the Godhead. Dwelling on the identity of difference implied thereby might prove especially dangerous, as one could easily be led astray by the recognition that everything is its opposite, and life itself would be experienced most fully as death, abiding in the annihilation of abiding, but still more in the annihilation of annihilation.<sup>80</sup> The mark of the end signals a return to this beginning, not as the restoration of all things to a timeless source of time, the now of eternity that encompasses the fullness of time, but the splintering of *jouissance* into the threefold craving that compulsively yields the will to give birth to oneself as the other, to become what one has everlastingly not been, the beginning marked by the deadly truth of the truth of death.



## CONCLUSION

The beginning and the end are shared  
in the circumference of a circle.

Heraclitus

The precise turn of thought charted in this book opens the possibility of a temporal triumph of temporality, the conquering of time through time.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to pave the way to this possibility, I have explored the nexus of time, truth, and death as it emerges hermeneutically from the symbolic world of medieval kabbalah. I have not adhered to the familiar methodology adopted by scholars of Jewish mysticism, focusing on a particular historical period or individual personality; I have organized my thoughts instead around the letters *alef*, *mem*, and *tau*, the consonants of the word *emet*, “truth,” which stand respectively for beginning, middle, and end, the three points of the curvature of the timeline.

Utilizing profound—I am tempted to say abysmal—imaginative ruminations on time elicited from kabbalistic sources, I have sought to articulate an ontology of time that is a grammar of becoming. The correlation of truth and divinity underscores that truth, which embodies in its semiotic constellation the triadic structure of temporality, is the mark of the divine eternally becoming in time—a formulation that is still too dichotomous, as the divine becoming is not an event in time but the eventuality of time, an eventuality instantiated in the momentous eruption of the moment wherein life and death converge in the coming to be of that which endures everlastingly and the endurance of that which comes to be provisionally. By heeding the letters of *emet* we have come to discern something of the truth of time manifestly concealed in the time of truth, the beginning that cannot begin if it is to be the beginning, the middle that re/marks the place of origin and destiny, and the end that is the figuration

of the impossible disclosing the impossibility of figuration, the finitude of death that facilitates the possibility of (re)birth, the closure that opens the opening that closes.

Here, at the end, we would do well to recall a powerfully poetic account of eternity's conquest of time offered by Rosenzweig<sup>2</sup> in the concluding section of *Der Stern der Erlösung*:

To live in time means to live between beginning and end. He who would live an eternal life, and not the temporal in time, must live outside of time, and he who would do this must deny that "between." But such a denial would have to be active if it is to result, not just in a not-living-in-time but in a positive living eternally! And the active denial would occur only in the inversion. To invert a Between means to make its After a Before, its Before an After, the end a beginning, the beginning an end. And that is what the eternal people does. It already lives its own life as if it were all the world and the world were finished. In its Sabbaths it celebrates the sabbatical completion of the world and makes it the foundation and starting point of its existence. But that which temporally speaking, would be but starting point, the law, that it sets up as its goal. Thus it experiences no Between for all that it naturally, really naturally, lives within it. Rather it experiences the inversion of the Between. Thus it denies the omnipotence of the Between and disavows time, the very time which is experienced on the eternal way.<sup>3</sup>

In this passage, Rosenzweig articulates his celebrated theological notion of the metahistorical destiny of Judaism set in contrast to the historical fate of Christianity, eternal life's surmounting of the eternal way.<sup>4</sup> For the one who lives beyond history, the beginning is the end, the end the beginning. The surpassing of time is experienced in the fullness of time, the spontaneous recurrence of what has never been—only that which has never been can recur—in the instant that has no before or after.<sup>5</sup> Linear time is eternalized in the circular rhythms of the sacred time of liturgy and ritual, a process exemplified especially in the celebration of Sabbath.<sup>6</sup> The Jewish Sabbath instantiates the coalescence of past, present, and future, the temporal correlates of the theological categories of creation, revelation, and redemption. In the life of the Jew, who lives in and from the end, time has been proleptically redeemed and the experience of the between fulfilled. The disavowal of time does not imply an abrogation or even a dialectical surpassing of temporality, but rather its radical deepening, an eradication of time by rooting oneself more deeply in the ground of time. Eternity, accordingly, is not the metaphysical overcoming of or existential escape from time but rather the merging of the three-dimensional structure of

lived temporality through eternalization of the present in the continuous becoming of the being that has always been what is yet to come.<sup>7</sup>

Without denying the profundity of Rosenzweig's thinking about time, I would argue that the kabbalistic tradition, building on themes and subtleties of thought evident in older sources, fosters an understanding of the radical becoming of time-being in its being-time, an interruptive narration that militates against the feasibility of constructing a contemporaneous myth in which past, present, and future converge in an absolute that is all-in-all. Fundamentally, Rosenzweig would have concurred with the insight of Kierkegaard: "Like freedom, truth is the eternal. If the eternal is not, there is neither truth nor freedom."<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the correlation of time and truth I have elicited from the Jewish esoteric tradition presumes a rupture in being's center, a tear that opens the prospect of retrieval, restoration, return to a world that is eternally coming from the origin secreted in the terminus of its exposé.<sup>9</sup> "The Visions of Eternity," wrote Blake in the second chapter of his epic *Jerusalem*, "by reason of narrowed perceptions, / Are become weak visions of Time & Space, fix'd into furrows of death; / Till deep dissimulation is the only defence an honest man has left."<sup>10</sup> In the furrow of death—the crevice of being, to borrow the poetizing language of Benjamin—is the "center of the interval," the "womb of time, whence the self radiates outward," the "countermovement of things in the time of the self."<sup>11</sup> The time of death bespeaks not the death of time, but time (im)mortal, the moment of truth that bestows on the truth of the moment an endless beginning of a beginningless end, the truth of death encountered incessantly in retracing steps of time yet to be taken—between, before, beyond.



## NOTES

### Preface

1. For references, see ch. 2 n. 44.
2. Text cited in Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 245 n. 305.
3. Gorfée, *Semiotics*, pp. 176–178.
4. Smith, “Twice-Told Tale,” pp. 143–145.
5. On the midrashic quality of bahiric parables, see Dan, “Midrash,” pp. 127–139, and Stern, *Parables*, pp. 216–224.
6. My thinking has been informed by Varga, “Absence,” pp. 341–346.
7. To comprehend the point one must bear in mind that the consonants of the word *alef* can be rearranged to spell *pele*, “mystery.” Kabbalists exploit this letter transposition to underscore the idea that *Keter*, the highest of emanations, virtually indistinguishable from *Ein Sof*, is associated with the letter *alef*, the locus of mystery.
8. From an anthropological perspective it may very well be that the distinctively human conception of marking time, and the consequent cultivation of historical consciousness of both an oral and written nature, stem from an initial awareness of mortality. See Clark, *Space, Time and Man*, pp. 39–43. The philosophical argument I have proffered, which builds on the thinking of others, preserves an element of the archaic sensibility, as time is still conceived primarily from the vantage point of death.
9. Kojève, *Le Concept*, pp. 249–260.
10. Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 244.
11. Dainton, *Time and Space*, p. 107.

12. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 134.
13. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 54.
14. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, pp. 162–168.
15. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 284.
16. With respect to this matter, Deleuze was clearly indebted to Bergson. See, in particular, Deleuze, *Bergsonism*; Braidotti, “Tetratologies,” pp. 161–162; and Grosz, “Deleuze’s Bergson,” pp. 214–234, esp. 230, 232–233.
17. Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*.
18. My formulation is indebted to the analysis in Lorraine, “Living a Time,” pp. 30–45, esp. 32–39.

## Chapter One

1. Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, pp. 68–73.
2. Prior, “Two Essays,” p. 47.
3. My formulation is indebted to a passage in Heidegger’s review of Karl Jaspers’s *The Psychology of Worldviews*, completed before 1921, as cited in Krell, *Intimations*, p. 17. The original appeared as Heidegger, “Anmerkungen,” p. 89. For a more recent translation of this essay, see Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, pp. 1–38. The relevant passage appears on p. 25.
4. Pescaor, “Temporal Description,” pp. 142–150. See also Plessner, “On the Relation of Time to Death,” 233–263.
5. Clark, *Space, Time and Man*, pp. 39–59.
6. Lauer, *Temporal Man*, p. 2.
7. Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 167. On Kristeva’s view on the temporal structure of narrative, see Pimentel, *Metaphoric Narration*, pp. 83–113; Aviram, *Telling Rhythm*, pp. 171–195.
8. Simplicius, *Corollaries*, 795.27–35, p. 117.
9. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, p. 232. For discussion of Heidegger’s identification of Aristotle’s notion of time as the vulgar or ordinary view set in contrast with the original or primordial time, see Chanter, “Heidegger’s Understanding,” pp. 131–157. Chernyakov, *Ontology of Time*, explores in great detail the relationship of being and time in the philosophies of Aristotle, Husserl, and Heidegger.
10. Aristotle, *Physics* 218a 9–30.
11. Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.1 5–10.
12. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.14.17, p. 230. For a reiteration of the Augustinian insight, see Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 49. On the aporia of the experience of time in Augustine, see Severson, *Time, Death, and Eternity*, pp. 38–48.
13. For a relatively recent treatment and attempted solution to Zeno’s paradox, see Strobach, *Moment of Change*. See also Papa-Grimaldi, “Why Mathematical,” pp. 299–314; Lepoidevin, “Zeno’s Arrow,” pp. 57–72.
14. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.16.21, p. 230. It is of interest to note a parallel

to the sentiment expressed by Augustine in Nāgārjuna, the third-century Buddhist exponent of Mādhyamika, the school of the Middle Way. The relevant passage occurs in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 19:5, cited and translated in Kalupahana, *Nāgārjuna*, p. 278: "A non-static time is not observed. A static time is not evident. Even if the unobserved time were to be observed, how can it be made known?" "Non-static time" is the temporal flux that cannot be grasped, the instant "where future continues to flow into the past through the present. Any attempt to grasp it would be futile, for by the time the attempt is made the present has disappeared into the past." See Jacobson, *Heart of Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 62, 68–79, 108–112; Varela, "Pour une phénoménologie," pp. 131–133.

15. Simplicius, In Aristotelis physicorum, p. 695, cited in Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, pp. 229–230.

16. Whitehead, *Concept of Nature*, p. 73.

17. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, p. 229.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 228 (emphasis in the original). See *ibid.*, p. 266.

20. Brumbaugh, *Unreality and Time*, p. 2.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–16, 27–44. For an earlier statement of the author's thesis, see Brumbaugh, "Kinds of Time," pp. 119–125.

22. Spiegelberg, *Phenomenological Movement*, 1:78–79; Paci, "Über einige Verwandtschaften," pp. 237–250.

23. Brumbaugh, *Unreality of Time*, pp. 17–25, esp. 22–23. For discussion of the critical notion of concrescence in Whitehead's temporal ontology, see Kline, "Concept," pp. 133–151. See also Pred, *Onflow*, pp. 121–244.

24. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.3.5, pp. 223–224. For an elaborate analysis of this theme, see Ayres, "Discipline," pp. 261–296.

25. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.6.8, p. 225.

26. *Ibid.*, 11.7.9, p. 226.

27. *Ibid.*, 11.6.8, p. 226.

28. *Ibid.*, 11.7.9, p. 226.

29. Augustine, *On the City of God*, 11.6, and the analysis in Knuuttila, "Time and Creation," pp. 103–115.

30. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.11.13, p. 228.

31. It is of interest to recall Augustine's depiction in *De Trinitate*, 9.1, of human perfection as a perpetual oscillation between seeking and attainment. The position embraced by Augustine is predicated on the interplay of knowledge and faith, which occasions the paradoxical identification of opposites such that seeking is itself attainment and attainment seeking. When translated into temporal terms, the end of the quest can never be separated from the beginning nor the beginning from the end. See Augustine, *On the Trinity: Books 8–15*, p. 24: "For the safest purpose for him who seeks is to continue seeking until he has laid hold of that towards which we tend and for which we are striving. . . . Let us, therefore, so seek as if we were about to find, and so find as if we were about to

seek." See Schuld, *Foucault and Augustine*, p. 80; Severson, *Time, Death, and Eternity*, pp. 48–54.

32. The words of Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, p. 28, cited by Brown, *Augustine*, p. 255, in the context of discussing Augustine's preoccupation with the mystical body of Christ.

33. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.13.16, p. 230.

34. Leftow, "Timeless God," pp. 274–275; idem, *Time and Eternity*, pp. 20–49, 267–282. On the development in ancient Greece of the notion of eternity in the life of the gods signifying "permanence in an eternally immobile identity," as opposed to the "perpetual rebeginning of that which ceaselessly renews itself by returning to its beginnings," see Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, p. 90.

35. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.13.16, p. 230.

36. Ibid., 11.8.10, p. 226.

37. Ritschl, "Some Comments," pp. 73–76.

38. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 28–54, 31.5.2–3, pp. 33–34.

39. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.15.20, p. 232.

40. Ibid., 11.11.13, p. 228.

41. Ibid., 11.13.16, p. 230.

42. Ibid., 11.11.13, pp. 228–229.

43. Ibid., 11.30.40, pp. 244–245.

44. Ibid., 11.20.26, p. 235.

45. Bettetini, "Measuring," pp. 43–47. On the coupling of time and consciousness viewed from both the philosophical and neurophysiological perspectives, see Achtner, Kunz, and Walter, *Dimensions of Time*, pp. 18–26.

46. Steel, "Neoplatonic Doctrine," p. 19; Porro, "Angelic Measures," p. 151.

47. Lyotard, *Confession of Augustine*, p. 19. For an extended discussion of Augustine and Husserl on time and the "stretching of the mind," see Brann, "Augustine," pp. 243–252; idem, *What, Then, Is Time?* pp. 111–156. See also Castoriadis, "Time and Creation," pp. 42–48.

48. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.27.36, p. 242. On the circle of narrative and temporality in Ricoeur's reading of Augustine, see Severson, *Time, Death, and Eternity*, pp. 32–38, 131–156.

49. On the utilization of synesthetic discourse, the convergence of the visual and auditory, in Augustine's writings, see Chidester, *Word and Light*, pp. 53–72.

50. Consider Augustine's account in *Confessions*, 7.10.16, pp. 123–124, of his inner vision of God, an "ascent by introspection," inspired, as the author himself acknowledges, by "Platonic books," *platoniorum libri* (Chadwick, p. 123 n. 18, refers the reader to Plotinus, *Enneads* V.1.1; for a more detailed discussion, see Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. O'Donnell, 2:434–437).

51. Augustine, *On the Trinity: Books 8–15*, p. 7.

52. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.7.9, p. 226.

53. Plato, *Parmenides* 140e–141e. See Plato and *Parmenides*, trans. Cornford, pp. 127–129; Plato's *Parmenides*, trans. Allen, pp. 23–25, 241–243; Turnbull, *Par-*



*menides and Plato's Late Philosophy*, pp. 57–58; *Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Socolnicov, pp. 34–35, 89–91. The conclusion of the first hypothesis is reiterated in the sixth hypothesis, *Parmenides* 163b–d; Cornford, pp. 231–232; Allen, p. 60; Turnbull, pp. 134–135; Socolnicov, p. 158. By contrast, in the second hypothesis, *Parmenides* 151e–155d, Plato analyzes the theorems and corollaries that support the view that the One does participate in time and hence may be considered a tensed being. The paradoxical conclusion, which challenges the principle of noncontradiction, is stated explicitly in the third deduction of the first hypothesis (155e–156a): Concerning the One, we must say that it is both one and many, neither one nor many, participates in being and does not participate in being, and, consequently, participates and does not participate in time. See Cornford, pp. 184–197; Allen, pp. 41–47; Turnbull, pp. 103–113; Socolnicov, pp. 125–132.

54. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.11.13, p. 228.

55. Macdonald, “Divine Nature,” pp. 84–86. Needless to say, in the thought of Augustine, the apophatic portrayal of God is related to the presumption regarding divine incorporeality. See Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief,” pp. 107–114; Griffin and Paulsen, “Augustine,” pp. 97–118.

56. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.11.13, p. 228.

57. Sherover, *Are We in Time?* p. 7.

58. MacKendrick, *Immemorial Silence*, pp. 10, 71–80, esp. 78–79. The textual nature of temporality in Augustine's thinking is explored in detail in Corradini, *Zeit und Text*.

59. This dimension of Augustine's thought accords with the Platonic tradition according to which recollection (*anamnesis*) is not the psychic tool to access the perpetual flux of time but rather the way to escape it. See Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, pp. 92–94.

60. Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.17.23, p. 127.

61. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, p. 196.

62. Husserl, *On the Phenomenology*, p. 3. I have also consulted the following edition of the original German: Husserl, *Texte zur Phänomenologie*; all parenthetical German expressions are inserted on the basis of this edition. A similar point is made by Minkowski, *Lived Time*, p. 18. See also Sherover, *Are We in Time?* pp. 11–13; Jullien, *Du “temps,”* pp. 32–34. See the comment of Brentano referred to in n. 12, this chapter.

63. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 89–90, pp. 42–43. See idem, *Blue and Brown*, p. 6. By contrast, consider the formulation offered by Weyl, “On Time,” p. 93: “Since the human mind awoke to freedom, it has always experienced time consciousness, a temporal course of the world, and becoming as deeply enigmatic; their mysteriousness constitutes one of the ultimate metaphysical problems for whose clarification and solution philosophy has incessantly struggled throughout the whole breadth of its history.” According to Weyl, the inscrutableness of time is related to the experience itself and not

merely in the attempt to account for the experience. For an interpretation of Augustine that puts the emphasis on the psychological dimension of the experience of time, see Knuuttila, "Time and Creation," pp. 109–113.

64. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.20.26, p. 235.

65. *Ibid.*, 11.26.33, p. 240.

66. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 28–54, 48.6.3, p. 233.

67. Bergson, *Duration*, p. 42. For an analysis of the antinomies of time and the theme of spatialization, see Kolakowski, *Bergson*, pp. 12–23; Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, pp. 22–23, 80, 85–86, 104–105; Mullarkey, *Bergson*, pp. 16–21. The spatial conception of time has been more recently affirmed in contemporary philosophical accounts such as Quentin Smith's presentism, the view that the present is the "universal subject" of all propositions and the "metaphysical subject" of every state of affairs. See Nerlich, "Time as Spacetime," pp. 119–134.

68. Bergson, *Creative Mind*, p. 176; *idem*, *Time and Free Will*, 124–139; Mullarkey, *Bergson*, 150–155. For critical engagements with Bergson's concept of *durée*, see Kümmel, "Time as Succession," pp. 46–49; Bachelard, *La Dialectique*, pp. 1–30; Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, pp. 37–49, 73–89; Sandbothe, *Temporalization*, pp. 73–78. It is of interest to note, finally, the view expressed by Deleuze, *Negotiations*, pp. 55–56, that the nexus between the concepts of temporality, the whole, and openness in Bergson's thought is best captured in the time-image of cinema crafted in the three cinematographic processes, framing, cutting, and the production of the montage.

69. Numerous scholars have explicated Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness. For representative studies, see Sokolowski, *Formation*, pp. 74–115; McNerney, *Time*, pp. 94–117; Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Introduction*, pp. 101–114; Kockelmans, *Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology*, pp. 270–277; Patocka, *Introduction*, pp. 107–135; Turetzky, *Time*, pp. 156–173; Brann, *What, Then, Is Time?* pp. 127–131; Wood, *Deconstruction*, pp. 53–109; Sandbothe, *Temporalization*, pp. 78–83; Kortooms, *Phenomenology*; Zahavi, "Inner Time-Consciousness," pp. 157–180; Alweiss, *World Unclaimed*, pp. 52–66.

70. Patocka, *Introduction*, pp. 110–111, duly notes this critical difference between Husserl and thinkers like James and Bergson. Also worthy of consideration is the comparative study by Fizer, "Ingarden's Phases," pp. 121–139; and Duval, "Durée," pp. 81–106. See n. 180, this chapter.

71. Welton, *Other Husserl*, pp. 147–148, 182. For a similar approach based on the "incessant interweaving" of past, present, and future in an open circle of time, see Kümmel, "Time as Succession," pp. 49–52.

72. By referring to the ego-self in Husserl's thought I do not mean to deny that he was critical of positing an independent substantial ego that endures through time. On the contrary, a crucial aspect of his phenomenology was aimed at describing experiences without presuming an empirical bearer in the form of an abiding ego. As Sartre, influenced by Husserl, was later to make clear, the presumption of an ego is not necessary since consciousness unifies

itself through the stream of temporalization. See Zahavi, "Three Concepts," pp. 52–55. The nonegological stance notwithstanding, it is still the case that Husserl posits an ego as a product of a reflective operation, the introspective self-awareness, which, it seems to me, betrays the double movement of the subject constituting and being constituted in the course of time.

73. On this aspect of temporal self-constitution in Husserl's thought, see Schües, *Changes*, pp. 185–186.

74. Lauer, *Temporal Man*, pp. 52–85, esp. 57–67.

75. Brockelman, *Time and Self*, p. 24.

76. Craig, "On the Mind-dependence," pp. 129–145; Sherover, *Are We in Time?* pp. 123–139; Dastur, *Dire le temps*, pp. 55–71, and the English translation of the first edition, *Telling Time*, pp. 17–35. On the presentation of the three modalities of time as active forms of psychic life, see Loewald, *Essential Loewald*, pp. 43–52, 138–147. My gratitude to Michael Oppenheim for drawing my attention to the work of Loewald.

77. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 414.

78. Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, p. 197.

79. Plato, *Timaeus* 37d. See the analysis by Harris, "Time and Eternity," pp. 464–482. On time and eternity in the thought of Plotinus, see also Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, pp. 289–312; Smith, "Eternity and Time," pp. 196–216; Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity," pp. 15–38; Turetzky, *Time*, pp. 44–51.

80. Aristotle, *Physics* 219b 1–2.

81. Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.8, 50–59 (my emphasis). Cf. Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics* 4.1–5, 10–14, 738.8–27, p. 149.

82. Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.11, 42–43.

83. Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.11, 44. For an extended analysis of this theme, see Plotinus, *Über Ewigkeit und Zeit*, pp. 35–49.

84. Aristotle, *Physics* 218b 23–30. The point is acknowledged in the review of Aristotle's conception of time offered by Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 50.

85. Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy*, 2.7.3, in *Hobbes: Selections*, p. 70.

86. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 50, p. 49.

87. *Ibid.*, props. 45–47, pp. 47–49.

88. *Ibid.*, prop. 51, p. 51.

89. Aristotle, *De Caelo* I.9.279a, 25–28.

90. Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.4, 42–43.

91. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 52, p. 51. On the definition of eternity (*aion*) as "that which always is" (*o aei on*), see Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* 3.15.11–13. On the implications of this understanding of eternity as the conceptual basis for an anachronic conception of time, see Lukacher, *Time-Fetishes*, pp. 23–26.

92. Meijer, "Participation," pp. 66–68; Slorvanes, *Proclus*, pp. 134–136.

93. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 53, p. 51.

94. *Ibid.*, prop. 54, p. 53. See MacIsaac, "Projection," pp. 88–91.

95. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 55, p. 53.
96. Ibid., prop. 55, pp. 53–55.
97. Proclus, In *Platonis Timaeum commentaria* 3.12.8.
98. Ibid., 3.12.7–8.
99. Ibid., 3.3.7–9.
100. Ibid., 3.15.28–31.
101. Ibid., 3.3.28–29.
102. Ibid., 3.4.5–7.
103. Ibid., 3.32.27–30.
104. Ibid., 3.7.9–12. For a similar account, see Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, 5.74.4–7.
105. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 199, p. 175. On the intermediate positioning of soul as well as the celestial body between the measure of eternity and time, see Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics* 4.1–5, 10–14, 742.2–19.
106. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, p. 301.
107. For discussion of the representations of the spiritual power as a continuum progressing from the strongest to the weakest and as a cycle of procession and return, see Gersh, *KINHΣΙΣ AKINHΤΟΣ*, pp. 60–72. On movement in the intellect, see also the analysis in Nikulin, “Plotinus on Eternity,” pp. 27–30.
108. Proclus, *Proclus' Commentary*, 7.1213, pp. 556–557.
109. Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, pp. 64–65.
110. The expression “mythic account” is meant to capture the entwining of *mūthos* and *logos* in Parmenides; see *ibid.*, pp. 83–84.
111. Ibid., pp. 122–135.
112. Ibid., pp. 151–153.
113. See Palmer, *Plato's Reception*, pp. 199–206.
114. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 200, p. 175.
115. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.26.33, p. 240.
116. Turetzky, *Time*, pp. 56–62. For other references to analyses of Augustine and Husserl on the notion of time, see n. 47, this chapter.
117. Sandbothe, *Temporalization*, pp. 63–111.
118. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A36/B52, p. 181. See discussion in Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem*, pp. 32–34.
119. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A34/B50, pp. 180–181; A39/B56, p. 183.
120. Ibid., A99, p. 228.
121. Ibid., B68–69, pp. 189–190; A107–108, pp. 232–233; B132, pp. 246–248.
122. Ibid., A362, p. 423.
123. For discussion of this dimension of Kant's philosophy, see Rotenstreich, *Experience*, pp. 30–32. See also Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 59–63; Walsh, “Kant,” pp. 164–166; Winterbourne, *Ideal*, pp. 44–52. Summarizing Kant's view, Winterbourne writes: “Our representation of time could not be acquired empirically, since neither coexistence nor succession, with which we

are acquainted through experience, are possible without the presupposition of time itself. . . . Time is a necessary representation that underlies all our intuitions, both outer and inner" (p. 50).

124. Searle, *Rediscovery*, p. 127. For further elaboration of this point, see Keller, *Kant*, pp. 113–140.

125. Note that even in quantum physics the determination of spacetime intervals depends on transforming units of time into units of space by taking the time difference between the point of origin and point of destiny and multiplying it by the speed of light. Time, then, is not simply the fourth dimension of space, nor is it evidently clear how time emerges continuously from a dimension of space according to the big bang theory of Hartley-Hawking. For a relatively lucid and nontechnical account, see Davies, *About Time*, pp. 188–192.

126. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness*, p. 88 (emphasis in original).

127. Derrida, *Problem of Genesis*, p. 77, was critical of this very point: "It is not clear how the becoming of this 'consciousness' region can 'appear to itself.' Even less, how it can appear to itself as the same as that of the other regions. There is thus no answer given to the problem of time [as] posed in *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*: How to explain the fact that constituting and constituted coincide?" For an elaboration of this point in Husserl's thought, see Macann, *Presence and Coincidence*, pp. 16–17, 49. See also Marrati-Guénoun, *La genèse*, pp. 9–37.

128. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 34d, pp. 127–129. See Paci, *Function*, pp. 9–10, 19–20, 53–57; Sheroover, *Are We in Time?* pp. 24–26.

129. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness*, p. 97. See Broekman, *Phänomenologie und Egoologie*, pp. 127–130.

130. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 43 (emphasis in original).

131. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, p. 545.

132. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 54b, p. 185. In some passages in his *œuvre*, Husserl suggests that to account for the unity of the stream of consciousness we must posit an ego that is a separate entity. See Marbach, *Das Problem des Ich*, pp. 74–120; Kortooms, *Phenomenology of Time*, pp. 240–241.

133. On the intricate link between intentionality and temporality in Husserl's phenomenology, see the detailed study by Rinofner-Kreidl, Edmund Husserl, and Drummond, "Structure of Intentionality," pp. 65–92, esp. 75–81. On the temporal comportment of presentation (*Präsentation, Gegenwärtigung*) in Husserlian phenomenology, see Saraiva, *L'imagination selon Husserl*, pp. 141–153.

134. Poellner, "Existential Moments," pp. 62–63.

135. Paci, *Function*, p. 10; Broekman, *Phänomenologie und Egoologie*, pp. 43–86.

136. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 53, pp. 178 and 181.

137. *Ibid.*, § 53, pp. 178–179. See Ingarden, "About the Motives," pp. 95–117; Drummond, "Realism," pp. 87–106, and reference to other scholarly discussions on p. 87 nn. 1–2.

138. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 53, pp. 179, 181.

139. Ibid., § 54, 182. On the paradox of subjectivity in Husserl's notion of the transcendental epoché, see Paci, *Function*, pp. 130–136; Ströker, *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology*, pp. 197–205. For discussion of the "I" and the notion of the person, see Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Introduction*, pp. 205–216.

140. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 54, pp. 182–184.

141. Ibid., § 54, p. 184. On the question of transcendental solipsism and its overcoming in Husserl's thought, see Ströker, *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology*, pp. 117–145, esp. 138–143. For discussion of the multiple facets of the notion of community in Husserl, see Hart, "I, We, and God," pp. 125–149.

142. Husserl, *Crisis*, § 54, p. 185. On the horizontal condition of *Entgegenwärtigen*, depresencing, see Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl*, pp. 231–234.

143. Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, p. 99. On the correlation of temporality and identity in Husserl's phenomenology, see Gurwitsch, "On the Intentionality," pp. 77–81.

144. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (hereafter cited as *Ideas I*), p. 215.

145. Ibid., p. 217 (emphasis in original).

146. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* (hereafter cited as *Ideas II*), pp. 126–127.

147. See Bernet, "Is the Present," pp. 85–111; Brough, "Presence and Absence," pp. 3–15; Larrabee, "There's No Time," pp. 85–111; Perrin, "Husserl," pp. 71–106, esp. 90–98. For an elaboration of Husserl's perspective, see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 76, and Chernyakov, *Ontology of Time*, pp. 195–196.

148. On Husserl's intellectual relationship to Brentano, see Rollinger, *Husserl's Position*, pp. 13–67.

149. Brentano, *Psychology*, p. 326 (emphasis in original). For a brief but incisive analysis of the four stages in the development of Brentano's speculation on time-consciousness, see Mulligan, "Brentano," pp. 78–81.

150. Parsons, "Brentano," pp. 179–181.

151. For further discussion of the intuition of time as a continuum of modes of presentation, see Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 1–48, 78–83, 87–93.

152. The notion of "presentation" (*Vorstellung*), which plays a critical role in Brentano's psychology, is predicated on the blurring of an ontic distinction between the external and internal axes of human experience, a theme that assumed a central place in the subsequent development of phenomenology. For summary account, see Brentano, *Psychology*, p. 198, and discussion in McAlister, "Brentano's Epistemology," pp. 150–155, 158–159; Parsons, "Brentano," pp. 179–181.

153. Brentano, *Psychology*, p. 355 (emphasis in original).

154. Parsons, "Brentano," pp. 181–185; Chrudzimski and Smith, "Brentano's Ontology," pp. 197–219.

155. Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 92.

156. Ibid., p. 93.

157. *Ideas II*, pp. 30–31.

158. *Ideas I*, p. 245.

159. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness*, p. 89. Poellner, “Existential Moments,” pp. 61–62, duly notes Husserl’s emphasis on the “now” as encompassing past and future and its relation to the protentive-retentive structure of consciousness.

160. Ballard, “‘Alms for Oblivion,’” pp. 168–187; Saraiva, *L’imagination selon Husserl*, pp. 218–223.

161. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, pp. 61–62. See idem, *Problem of Genesis*, pp. 20–22. For a related critique of Husserl’s emphasis on the present betraying the influence of traditional metaphysics, see Ijsseling, “Hermeneutics,” pp. 1–16, esp. 7–8.

162. See Wood, *Deconstruction of Time*, pp. 267–291, esp. 288–289, where parallels between Derrida and Husserl are noted. See also Welton, *Other Husserl*, pp. 176–177, 278; Gallagher, “On the Pre-Noetic,” pp. 134–148; Mohanty, *Phenomenology*, pp. 62–76; Ferraris, “Apoira,” pp. 85–86. For an insightful and far-reaching challenge to the critique of a metaphysics of presence in Husserl, see Mensch, *Postfoundational Phenomenology*.

163. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness*, p. 72.

164. Ibid., pp. 345–346 (emphasis in original).

165. Ibid., p. 346 (emphasis in original). See the recently published analysis by Bruzina, *Husserl and Fink*, pp. 229–230.

166. Paci, *Function*, p. 23.

167. Richir, “Monadologie,” pp. 151–172.

168. Paci, *Function*, p. 24.

169. Brough, “Emergence,” pp. 298–326, reprinted in Elliston and McCormick, *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, pp. 83–100; Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, pp. 200–201, 208–209; Bernet, “Die ungegenwärtige Gegenwart,” pp. 16–57; Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Introduction*, pp. 103–105.

170. Cited from an unpublished manuscript in Mensch, *Postfoundational Phenomenology*, pp. 71–72 n. 5.

171. Cited in ibid., p. 72 n. 6. For a more detailed discussion of this dimension of Husserl’s thinking, see Rodemeyer, “Developments,” pp. 125–154.

172. Keller, *Husserl and Heidegger*, p. 64. See also Sokolowski, *Formation*, p. 115: “All time, both subjective and objective, arises from the now-retention-protention structure. Every now-instant is surrounded by its horizon of retentive and protentive phases, and in them we directly experience the structure of temporality in its most primitive form. Even the present-past-future form of objective time has its basis here. It is built up from inner time through objective constitution.” In this matter, it seems to me, Husserl anticipated Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the reversibility of time and the understanding of temporality as diacritical difference as opposed to triadic sequentiality, which, ironically enough, is framed as a cri-

tique of Husserl. See Gallagher, "Disrupting Seriality," pp. 97–119, esp. 100–108. Husserl's reflections on time are discussed in conjunction with Merleau-Ponty in Schües, *Changes of Perception*, pp. 165–184. I have commented on this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thinking in *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. xxi–xxxi.

173. On the double intentionality of the stream of consciousness, see Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, pp. 105–110, 157–160. On the reversibility of the time-line and the possibility of speaking of the future in recollection, see Rubenstein, "Experiencing the Future," pp. 159–169.

174. Welton, *Origins*, pp. 166–183; Ströker, *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology*, pp. 146–164, esp. 147; Bernet, Kern, and Marbach, *Introduction*, pp. 195–204.

175. The point is expressed as well by Mensch, *Postfoundational Phenomenology*, p. 71: "By virtue of such protentional chains, we thus expect an ordered sequence of contents, for example, the tones of a melody, each with a distinct temporal position corresponding to its protended futurity." The use of music as a metaphor to describe the experience of time and the structure of temporalization calls for a comparison with Bergson, who used the succession of notes in a musical piece to describe the texture of the inner duration of consciousness. See Bergson, *Creative Mind*, p. 176; idem, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 100–101, 127, 147; and discussion in Bruzina, "There Is More," pp. 67–84, esp. 69–72. On the presentation of music as a "temporal art," see the philosophical analysis in Zukerkandl, *Sound and Symbol*, pp. 197–264; Keyes, "Art and Temporality," pp. 63–73; Dürr, "Rhythm," pp. 180–200; Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, p. 70. It is apposite to recall here as well the distinction made by Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, p. 195, between the epical nature of visual arts and the lyrical character of music, the former correlated with space and the latter with time.

176. For an illuminating discussion of the intellectual and personal relationship between teacher and student, see Hopkins, "Husserl-Heidegger Confrontation," pp. 125–148. See also Welton, *Other Husserl*, pp. 120–130.

177. Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, p. 23. On the illustration of sound as a "purely sensorial nonintentional component of experience" in Husserl's otherwise ocularcentric phenomenology, see Muldoon, "Silence Revisited," pp. 289–292.

178. *Ideas II*, p. 171.

179. *Ibid.*, p. 188 (emphasis in original).

180. On the stream of consciousness and the temporal concreteness of experience in James, see the recent analysis of Pred, *Onflow*, pp. 21–54. On the affinity between Husserl's phenomenology of time and the philosophical ruminations of James, see Wilshire, *William James*, pp. 119–123; Stevens, *James and Husserl*, pp. 57–66, 84–86; Harris, *Reality of Time*; Brann, *What, Then, Is Time?* pp. 132–133. For an attempt to distinguish between James and Husserl with special focus on the notion of the "specious present," see Gallagher, *Inordinance of Time*, pp. 32–52. See n. 70, this chapter.

181. From Husserl's manuscript *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis*, which covers the



period from 1918–1926, cited in Ströker, *Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 148. See Welton, *Origins*, pp. 220–232.

182. Cited from an unpublished manuscript of Husserl in *Mensch, Postfoundational Phenomenology*, p. 77 n. 14.

183. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness*, p. 67.

184. See Feist, “Husserl and Weyl,” pp. 153–172, and Bell, “Hermann Weyl’s,” pp. 173–185.

185. Weyl, “On Time, Space, and Matter,” p. 98.

186. Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, p. 27.

187. Texts cited in Bruzina, “Aporia,” pp. 107–108. See Byers, *Intentionality*, p. 91.

188. My discussion of Husserl has benefited from the analysis in Van Buren, *Young Heidegger*, pp. 216–219.

189. See, by contrast, Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, pp. 249–266. In his analysis of time-consciousness and historical consciousness, Carr criticizes Husserl for basing his phenomenology of time on the experience of space as we find, for instance, in his notions of temporal field, focus, and horizon (pp. 253–259).

190. Snow, Schelling, p. 59.

191. Schelling, *Idealism*, p. 71.

192. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A34/B50, p. 180, cited and analyzed in Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 32–33. For a contemporary restatement of the Kantian perspective on the inherent temporal comportment of the human mind, see Sherover, *Are We in Time?* pp. 123–139.

193. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, p. 33 (emphasis in original).

194. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

195. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

196. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sec. 70, pp. 335–336. On the themes of ontology, temporality, and constitution of *Dasein* in Heidegger’s thought, see Werkmeister, *Martin Heidegger*, pp. 46–83; Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, pp. 17–51. See also Hoffman, *Doubt, Time, Violence*, pp. 65–114. The primacy accorded time over space in Heidegger’s early thought should be seen in conjunction with the representation of time as the truth of space in Hegel. Concerning the latter, see Brann, *What, Then, Is Time?* pp. 22–29.

197. Sugarman, *Rancor against Time*, pp. 97–120.

198. For extensive discussion of this terminological distinction, see Heinz, *Zeitlichkeit und Temporalität*.

199. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, p. 228. For an analysis of this aspect of Heidegger’s thought, see Sheehan, “Heidegger,” pp. 17–31; Rapaport, “Time’s Cinders,” pp. 218–233; Rosemann, “Heidegger’s Transcendental History,” pp. 501–523, esp. 516; Sandbothe, *Temporalization*, pp. 83–110; Ricoeur, *Memory*, pp. 343–411. For a challenge to the notion that Heidegger offers a “genuine theory of time,” see Harman, *Tool-Being*, pp. 60–67.

200. Gallagher, *Inordinance of Time*, pp. 118–119.

201. Vallega, *Heidegger*, pp. 4 and 14.
202. *Ibid.*, p. 9. On the influence of Heidegger's spatial metaphors on Derrida, see Wigley, *Architecture of Deconstruction*, pp. 183–190.
203. *Ibid.*, p. 159 (my emphasis).
204. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, pp. 213–214 (emphasis in original). See Sallis, "Time Out," pp. 139–147.
205. See Zarader, *Heidegger*, pp. 207–225; Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Critique," pp. 239–243; Benjamin, "Time and Task," pp. 212–245.
206. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sec. 41, pp. 178–183. See Wood, *Deconstruction*, pp. 179–219; Heinz, "Das eigentliche Ganzseinkönnen," pp. 169–197; Chernyakov, *Ontology of Time*, pp. 178–180, 190–192.
207. Harman, *Tool-Being*, pp. 64–65.
208. Heidegger, *Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 80–83 (emphasis in original).
209. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85 (emphasis in original). See Chernyakov, *Ontology of Time*, pp. 200–203.
210. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 23 (original German in Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 24). For an analysis of the temporal comportment of *ereignis*, see Zarader, *Heidegger*, pp. 227–256. The hybridization "time-space" in Heidegger's later thought may itself reflect the language of Husserl. See, for instance, *Ideas II*, p. 145. On the distinction between "immanent time" and "space-time," see *Ideas II*, p. 188, and the more elaborate account on pp. 215–216.
211. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 7 (German edition: *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 5).
212. See discussion in ch. 3 and references therein, nn. 13–15.
213. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 259. I have also consulted Heidegger, *Beiträge*; all references to the German original are taken from this edition.
214. With respect to this matter, Heidegger's thought may be considered a poetic meditation on Anaximander who identified the principle or essence of all things as the indefinite (*apeiron*), which is further characterized by the dialectical play of generation and destruction, the rendering of justice and reparation from one being to the other from their mutual injustice. See Serres, "Anaximander," pp. 135–143; Dastur, "Heidegger on Anaximander," pp. 179–190, esp. 185–188.
215. Needless to say, many scholars have addressed the Heideggerian notion of the fourfold. See, in particular, Levin, *Philosopher's Gaze*, pp. 116–169.
216. Heidegger, *Contributions*, pp. 259–260.
217. *Ibid.*, pp. 259, 260, 264 (emphasis in original).
218. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
219. Koyré, *La Philosophie*, pp. 279–301, 320–327; Caputo, *Mystical Element*, p. 98; Walsh, *Mysticism*, pp. 30–32; Helting, *Heidegger und Meister Eckhart*, pp. 56–58. For more detailed discussions on the influence of the theosophical gnosis (primarily through Böhme) on Schelling, see Weeks, *German Mysticism*, pp. 228–

229; Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, pp. 12–13; Brown, *Later Philosophy of Schelling*; Kosolowski, *Philosophien der Offenbarung*, pp. 565–771.

220. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 237.

221. *Ibid.*, p. 276 (emphasis in original). For a critical analysis of the concept of difference in Schelling, see Oiserman, “Zur Frage,” pp. 305–312.

222. See Rang, *Identität und Indifferenz*.

223. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 277.

224. There is thus a critical shift in the connotation of the term “indifference” in the different stages of Schelling’s thought. In the early phase of the Identity-Philosophy, “indifference” names the absolute identity of freedom and necessity in the first principle or “ground” (*Grund*), the “source” (*Quelle*) and “root” (*Wurzel*) of all beings. (It stands to reason that an important source in this phase was Giordano Bruno, about whom Schelling did write a book.) On the centrality of the coexistence of identity and difference in Bruno, see Calcagno, *Giordano Bruno*. In the latter phase of the post-Identity-Philosophy, “indifference” denotes the nonground in which all oppositions shatter, not through identity of difference but through difference of identity. See Marx, *Philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling*, pp. 10, 67, 84; Kojève, *Le Concept*, pp. 262–277.

225. Schelling, *Ages*, pp. 6, 8. In preparation of this study, I have consulted the original German of *Die Weltalter* in Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8. It is possible that Scholem’s account in *Major Trends*, p. 218, of the emanation of the *sefirot* as the autogenesis of God’s personality, the transformation of the void of no-identity into the constellation of the “I,” from *ayin* to *ani* (in Hebrew these two words have the same consonants), is indebted to German idealism, and especially Schelling. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that in this very context Scholem characterizes the emanation of the *sefirot* as a “dialectic process whose thesis and antithesis begin and end in God.” Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, p. 137, already noted that “Scholem’s repeated use of the word ‘dialectical’ and the philosophical account he gives to the Kabbalah suggests his explicit assumption of affinities between the Kabbalah and dialectical philosophies such as Hegel’s and Schelling’s.” See Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, p. 113, where the author acknowledges having learnt about kabbalah from *Philosophie der Geschichte oder Über die Tradition*, a work written by Molitor, a pupil of Baader and Schelling. The influence of “romantic kabbalah” on the youthful Scholem is discussed by Kilcher, *Sprachtheorie*, pp. 331–345. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, pp. 5, 39, 39, 54–56, 159–160, expands the claim, tendering the provocative thesis that the theosophic ruminations of the esoteric Romantic philosophers Hamann, Schelling, Pasqually, Saint-Martin, Molitor, and Baader, traceable to Böhme and Christian kabbalists of the Renaissance, helped shape the “mythocentric” and “mystocentric” approach of all three historians of religion to the point that the very discipline functioned in their minds as a kind of Christian kabbalah. For the particular influence of Schelling’s narrative philosophy on Scholem, see *ibid.*,

pp. 100–101. Wasserstrom’s thesis dovetails Idel’s conjecture that “contemporary scholarship” on kabbalah, by which he means primarily Scholem and his disciples, has been informed by the overemphasis on the speculative, philosophical, and hermeneutical dimensions of the esoteric tradition promulgated in Renaissance Christian kabbalah and German idealism. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 7–8, 262–264. On Reuchlin’s rendering of kabbalah as a symbolic mode of thought and its influence on Scholem’s allegedly “harmonistic” and “monolithic” understanding (which may be traced to Schelling) of kabbalah as a “narrative philosophy,” see Idel, “Introduction,” pp. xv–xvi, xviii–xix. For the influence of Christian kabbalah on Scholem, including Renaissance figures (Pico, Reuchlin, Postel, and Rosenroth) and German romantics (Baader and Molitor), see Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, pp. 30–32, 76, 99, 121.

226. Scholem, *Origins*, p. 440, utilizes the expression “indifferent ‘en-sof’” to characterize the viewpoint of Azriel of Gerona, which Johannes Reuchlin compares in *De Arte Cabalistica* to Nicholas of Cusa’s *coincidentia oppositorum*. The technical term “indifferent,” however, must be distinguished from coincidence, insofar as indifference means precisely that the opposites do not coincide but remain distinct.

227. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 53.

228. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

229. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

230. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

231. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

232. Walsh, *Mysticism*, pp. 68–70; Magee, *Hegel*, pp. 38–42. Böhme himself may have been influenced by Christian kabbalah; see Weeks, *German Mysticism*, p. 171, and the detailed analyses in Schulitz, *Jakob Böhme*, and Schmidt-Biggemann, “Jakob Böhme,” pp. 157–181.

233. I have explored the matter in more detail in *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 100–104. The discussion here is a condensed version of that analysis. On the affinity between Schelling and kabbalah, see Schulze, “Schelling,” pp. 65–99, 143–170, 210–232; Benz, *Mystical Sources*, pp. 47–58; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 409 n. 19 and p. 412 n. 77; *idem*, *Kabbalah*, pp. 134 and 200; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 264; Beach, *Potencies of God(s)*, pp. 1–2, 6–13, 25–45, 226–230; also Courine, “Schelling,” pp. 95–114; Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, pp. 83–85, and see the detailed study of Schulte cited in n. 250, this chapter. Here we should also recall the important comment in the “Urzelle” to *The Star of Redemption*, in Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, pp. 56–57 (see reference to Haberman cited, *op. cit.*, p. 57 n. 23). In describing the “God that is before all relation, whether to the world or to Himself,” the “seed-point of the actuality of God,” Rosenzweig mentions Schelling’s “dark ground,” “an interiorization of God, which precedes not merely His self-externalization, but rather even His self,” an idea that he further associates with what “Lurianic kabbalah teaches.” See Idel, “Franz Rosenzweig,” pp. 166–167. This source, which in my “Facing the

Effaced" I regrettably neglected to mention, confirms my surmise regarding the influence of Lurianic kabbalah through the channel of Schelling in Rosenzweig's discussion in the first part of *The Star* of the self-negation of the divine Naught that yields the positive Aught of creation. See Wolfson, "Facing the Effaced," pp. 75–76. See also the brief comment in idem, "Divine Suffering," p. 151 n. 87. For a sustained discussion of the influence of Schelling's positive philosophy on Rosenzweig, see Freund, *Franz Rosenzweig's Philosophy of Existence*, pp. 17–45. See also Rubinstein, *An Episode*, pp. 19–25, 72–73. On kabbalah and new thinking, see the extended discussion in Goodman-Thau, *Aufstand der Wassen*, pp. 118–157, esp. 123–131 and 145–146, where the theme of time is discussed.

234. See the brief comments on this work by Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 200, 416–419, and the more detailed treatment in Coudert, *Impact of the Kabbalah*, pp. 100–136, esp. 118–119. For a similar argument regarding this anthology serving as the source for Hegel's knowledge of kabbalah, see Magee, *Hegel*, p. 167.

235. Schulze, "Friedrich Christoph Oetinger," pp. 268–274; Marx, *Philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling*, p. 61; Weeks, *German Mysticism*, pp. 196–198; Kilcher, *Sprachtheorie*, pp. 199–201; Magee, *Hegel*, pp. 65–67, 167, 173.

236. For an elaborate explication of the problem of the identity of the Absolute in Schelling's philosophy and its repercussions, see Bowie, *Schelling*, pp. 55–90.

237. Scholem, *Origins*, p. 439. Apparently reflecting the influence of Schelling, Scholem uses the expressions "indifferent with regard to the opposites" and "indifference of unity" to render the notion of *hashwa'ah* as applied to Ein Sof. As Scholem emphasizes, the notion of God's indistinctness implies the equalization or coincidence, and not merely a conjoining, of opposites (he refers the reader to Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* 4:25 as an illustration of the alternative). It seems to me that Scholem has incorrectly equated the Schellingian "indifference" and Cusa's "coincidence," for the former connotes the indeterminate that contains all determination in the preservation of opposites, whereas the latter signifies the rendering of all determination indeterminate in the collapse of opposites. See n. 224, this chapter. Also of interest in this connection is Scholem's description of the "abyss of nothingness in which the world appears," *der Abgrund des Nichts, in dem die Welt erscheint*, in the poem "Media in Vita," recently published in Scholem, *Fullness of Time*, pp. 96–97. Even more enigmatic is Scholem's further description of the world as "the reflection of that second face / which negates me, without tears," *die Spiegelung des zweiten Gesichts, / das mich unerbittlich verneint*.

238. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 7.

239. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

240. Schelling may have influenced Scholem's account of Ein Sof and the *sefirot* in *Major Trends*, p. 208.

241. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 52. For an analysis of Schelling's interpretation of the two Hebrew names of God, see Courtine, *Extase de la raison*, pp. 211–219 (the possible influence of kabbalah is explicitly mentioned on p. 218).

242. A possible biblical basis for the phrase “angel of the countenance,” *der Engel des Angesichts*, is the expression *u-mal’akh panav*, “and the angel of his face,” in Isaiah 63:9. This expression, attested in Jubilees and several Qumran sources, was most likely the basis for *sar ha-panim*, the “archon of the face,” a term applied to the highest angel, which includes predominantly Yahoel, Michael, and Metatron, according to a strand of Jewish angelology attested in later rabbinic and Heikhalot literature. The expression “angel of the Lord,” *der Engel Jehovahs*, is found in a number of scriptural verses, to wit, Gen 16:7, 9–11; 22:7, 15; Exod 3:2; Num 22:2–27, 31–35; Judges 2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11–12, 20–22; 13:3, 13, 15–16, 18, 20–21; 1 Kgs 19:7; 2 Kgs 1:15; 19:35; Isa 37:36; Zech 1:11–12; 3:1, 6; Mal 2:7; Ps 34:8; 1 Chron 21:16. On the exegetical linking of *mal’akh ha-panim* and *sar ha-panim* as technical theophanic expressions and the aforementioned verse from Isaiah, see Olyan, *Thousand Thousands*, pp. 105–109, and Idel, “Metatron,” pp. 36–41. For a selected list of other scholarly discussions of the relevant terms, see 3 Enoch, pp. 83, 118–119; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 52, 63; Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 189, 220–238, 307–324; Schäfer, *Hidden*, p. 36; Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien*, pp. 3–4, 14, 40 (and see n. 76 *ad locum* for discussion of the angel of the Lord as Logos or preexistent Christ in the Christian tradition), 55, 95–96, 204, 238; Deutsch, *Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 99–111; idem, *Guardians*, pp. 43, 152–157; VanderKam, “Angel,” pp. 378–393; and see references to some of my own work cited in n. 245, this chapter. Wirth in Schelling, *Ages*, p. 142 n. 62, suggests that Schelling’s term *der Engel des Angesichts* is from Luther’s translation of the Bible and refers to the “messengers that bring one to a mediating face to face [*Angesicht zu Angesicht*] with the all-consuming fire of the God-head.” This explanation does not exclude the etymology I have suggested.

243. See the instructive comments of Corbin, *Paradoxe*, p. 154. Notably, a similar interpretation of the angelic epiphany is offered by Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, 9:108, no. 6831. Swedenborg may have served as Schelling’s immediate source, but it must be pointed out that the interpretation of Jesus, the “Divine Human” (*Divinum Humanum*), as the angelic “Grand Man” (*Maximus Homo*) is itself reminiscent of the kabbalistic notion of the anthropomorphic form of the glorious angel or angelic glory. See references to my studies in n. 245. Idel, “World of Angels,” pp. 64–66, points out that Swedenborg was influenced by this motif in Jewish mystical sources. The influence of kabbalah on Swedenborg is reconsidered by Williams-Hogan, “Emanuel Swedenborg,” pp. 343–360.

244. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 53. On the use of the image of fire to picture God, see *ibid.* pp. 20 and 84.

245. Hurtado, *One God*. See also Barker, *Second Angel*, pp. 190–232; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*. The blurring of the boundary between the glory and the angel has been the focus of a number of my earlier studies. See Wolfson, “Secret of the Garment,” pp. 25–49; idem, “Image of Jacob,” pp. 131–185, revised English version in idem, *Along the Path*, 1–62; idem, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 63–64, 184 n. 247, 216, 224–228, 255–263, 310 n. 147, 312–313. See also Abrams,

"Boundaries," pp. 291–321, and the succinct summary in Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 85.

246. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 74.

247. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

248. The thematic connection between the Lurianic doctrine of *šimšum*, which is an act of limitation, and the primacy accorded the divine attribute of judgment in the older rabbinic teaching is noted by Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 263. For an elaboration of this trajectory, see Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 27–28.

249. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 83. The association of wrath and contraction is found as well in Oetinger's writings, which, in turn, influenced Hegel. See Magee, *Hegel*, p. 173.

250. Schulze, "Schelling," pp. 154–166. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 412 n. 77, comments on the similarity between a statement of Schelling and the Lurianic notion of *šimšum*. See idem, *Kabbalah*, p. 134, and the comment from the Scholem Archive in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, cited by Kilcher, *Sprachtheorie*, p. 26. Interestingly, Scholem repeated this point in the last lecture he gave in Berlin, several months before his passing in 1982, on the place of kabbalah in European intellectual history. See Scholem, *Explications*, pp. 328–329. For a more comprehensive study of this topic, see Schulte, "Zimzum," pp. 21–40. The similarity between Lurianic kabbalah (as presented by Scholem) and Schelling's later philosophy is alluded to as well by Marx, *Philosophy of F. W. J. Schelling*, p. 95 n. 20. It is also of interest to recall the passing comment of Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 344, that the doctrine of *šimšum* is "linked to the mythology of 'Louria,' but it can also arise by way of 'Hegel,' 'Boehme,' etc."

251. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 17.

252. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

253. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

254. See Wolfson, "Divine Suffering," pp. 110–117.

255. Schelling, *Ages*, pp. 86–87 (emphasis in original).

256. Böhme, *Vom dreyfachen Leben des Menschen*, 1.35, cited in Walsh, *Mysticism*, p. 58.

257. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 16.

258. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

259. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

260. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

261. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

262. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

263. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

264. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 86.

265. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

266. *Ibid.*

267. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

268. Scholem, "Traces," pp. 165–170, reprinted with updated bibliography in idem, *Studies in Kabbalah (I)*, pp. 46–53; idem, *Origins*, pp. 341–343, 430–439;

Wijnhoven, "Mysticism," pp. 146–149; Wilensky, "Isaac Ibn Latif," pp. 202–205, 212–215; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 270. Scholem's exposé in *Major Trends*, pp. 216–217, of the first *sefirah* as the "abysmal will" or as the "abyss of nothingness," which is the "pure absolute Being," reflect the language of Böhme and Schelling. Scholem explicitly compares Böhme's *Ungrund* and Azriel of Gerona's identification of the divine will with *ayin*; see *Origins*, p. 436 and idem, *Über einige Grundbegriffe*, p. 76 n. 39. The zoharic authors follow the precedent of other kabbalists by associating the will with the first *sefirah* and thought with the second even though there are vestiges of the alternative view (attested, for instance, in passages in the bahiric anthology, the writings attributed to Isaac the Blind, and the compositions of Ezra of Gerona) that elevates thought to the supreme position. See *Zohar* 1:65a; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 19, 42a, and sec. 22, 68b (in that context, the "concealed thought" is identified as the "supernal crown" from without and as Ein Sof from within; on the attribution of the term *ein-sof* to *Keter*, see the section from *Tiqqunei Zohar* printed in *Zohar* 2:42b, and the passage from Ra'aya Meheimna in *Zohar* 3:258a); and see discussion in Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 126–131, 272–280; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 302 n. 4.

269. For discussion of the relation between Ein Sof and *Keter*, see Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 276–277, 443–444; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 242–246; Gottlieb, *Studies*, pp. 265–266, 271. According to some kabbalists, the concealment of Ein Sof is so great that one cannot attribute even the most minuscule inkling of will or desire to it. For example, compare the formulation of Azriel of Gerona, *Perush Eser Sefirot*, printed in Ibn Gabbai, *Derekh Emunah*, 4a, also cited in Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1:8, p. 17; and Cordovero, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 10b–c (to be precise, in that context the author distinguishes two aspects of will, *raṣon* and *hefeṣ*, both of which are said to be within *Keter*, though neither can be ascribed to Ein Sof).

270. See Scholem, *Über einige Grundbegriffe*, pp. 75–84; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 280–281; Matt, "Ayin," pp. 121–159.

271. Moses ben Shem Ṭov de León, *R. Moses de León's Sefer Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 5. See Fishbane, "Mystical Contemplation." On the apophatic interpretation of the term *ayin*, see also the text from Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Ṣedeq* published in Gottlieb, *Studies*, pp. 139–140, and his comments, *ibid.*, p. 272.

272. My description is based primarily on *Zohar* 3:135b, a passage from the *Idra Rabba* section that may have been known to Schelling from the Latin translation in Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbala Denudata*, 2:387–520; the passage I refer to appears on pp. 450–451. See also *Zohar* 3:26b, where *Keter* is called the "supernal will," the "concealed of all that is concealed," and the "nothing" that "knows and does not know" the Infinite (*ein sof*), which is demarcated further as the "concealment" within which is the "will of all wills." At the same time, it is said that "there are no desires, lights, or sparks" in the Infinite. While it is not stated explicitly, I would suggest that the intent of this passage is to underscore that the supernal will is that which wills nothing, and in willing nothing it produces everything. Early kabbalists did speak of the dissemination of the



will. Consider, for example, Asher ben David, *R. Asher ben David*, p. 62. This Provençal kabbalist, the nephew of Isaac the Blind, explains that the divine potencies are called *middot*, literally “measures,” to express the “expansion of the will [*hitpashtut ha-raṣon*] from side to side.” I would surmise that the paradoxical notion of the infinite will demands logically that the expansion is a contraction, and thus that the attempt to mark a unique turn in Lurianic kabbalah by placing the withholding prior to the emanation is somewhat overstated and probably determined by excessive lexical concerns. On the idea of withdrawal in early kabbalah, see Idel, “On the Concept,” pp. 59–112.

273. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 107.

274. The paradox of the plenum-vacuum as it pertains to the pure consciousness associated with the mystical phenomenon is discussed in detail by Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 161–178, concluding with a brief discussion of the kabbalistic *Ein Sof* based on comments in Scholem’s *Major Trends*.

275. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 14.

276. Wolfson, “Divine Suffering,” pp. 117–135.

277. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 101.

278. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

279. This seems to be Schelling’s interpretation of the first word of Scripture, *bereshit*, “in the beginning,” which he renders as “in the most supremely ancient time,” in *der allerältesten Zeit*, that is, in the primordial time, the eternal time, that preceded the time of creation. See *ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

280. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 20.

281. *Ibid.*, 87.

282. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

283. For discussion of the themes of eternity and time in Schelling set against a Neoplatonic background, see Beierwaltes, *Platonisme et Idéalisme*, pp. 126–128.

284. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 20.

285. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

286. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43. See *ibid.*, p. 80, where Schelling writes that the “eternity before the world immediately vanishes into nothing, or what likewise says as much, vanishes into a mere moment.”

287. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

288. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

289. *Ibid.*, p. 76. Schelling’s view may have been anticipated by Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Names*, ch. 10, 940A, p. 194: “There is a time in the writings when eternity is glorified as being in time and time as being eternal. But if we more greatly and properly know these, we shall call and designate those beings which are by eternity and those beings which are subject to genesis by time. It is therefore necessary that we do not conceive those which are called eternal to be co-eternal with the God which is before eternity. . . . Further, we should interpret those beings which in some way [partake in] eternity and in some way [partake in] time to be intermediate between those which are and

those which come to be.” In the continuation of the passage, God is extolled as being both eternity and time and beyond eternity and time. As one might expect from a Neoplatonist committed to Christian dogma, Dionysius views Jesus as the being in whom the opposites cohere. See *ibid.*, ch. 1, 592B, p. 111: “From this the simple Jesus was ineffably composed; the everlasting received a temporal dimension and came to be equal in our nature with its unchanging and steady founding of those things which are fitting to it. Nevertheless, according to every nature, it exceeds every nature beyond every manner of being.”

290. Schelling, *Ages*, p. 45, and see references cited on pp. 140–141 n. 52.

291. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

292. For further elaboration of this theme, see Vater, “Schelling’s Neoplatonic,” pp. 275–299; Courtine, *Extase de la raison*, pp. 220–236; Challiol-Gillet, *Schelling*, pp. 179–195. On the transcendence of the antithesis of time and timelessness in Schelling’s notion of original indifference, see the brief but incisive remarks of Tillich, *Mysticism*, p. 102. See also Orsini, *Coleridge*, p. 210.

293. See Scheier, “Die Zeit,” pp. 28–39.

294. On Heidegger’s indebtedness to Schelling’s notion of the *Ungrund* and the dual function of language to reveal and conceal truth, see Bowie, *From Romanticism*, pp. 177–178.

295. Heidegger, *Contributions*, pp. 264–265 (emphasis in the original).

296. Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, p. 550.

297. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 2.

298. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 265.

299. *Ibid.*, p. 261. It lies beyond the scope of this study to discuss the Heideggerian idea of timespace as the *Abgrund* in conjunction with the notion of the spacetime continuum as a fundamental in Einstein’s theory of relativity, but the matter is worthy of contemplation.

300. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

301. *Ibid.*

302. On Heidegger’s alleged essentialism and the “mythologic” of being, see Caputo, *Demythologizing*, pp. 118–130.

303. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 261.

304. *Ibid.*, p. 264. With respect to this matter there is an interesting affinity between the later thought of Heidegger and the philosophy of the Japanese Zen master Dōgen, who similarly depicted existence-time in concurrent and inseparable spatial and temporal terms. See Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, p. 145. See further references cited in ch. 2 n. 102.

305. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 269.

306. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

307. Schallow, *Heidegger*, p. 117.

308. *Ibid.*, p. 119. See also Malpas, “Uncovering,” pp. 208, 212–214, 218–219, 222–223.

309. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 268.

310. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 10.
311. *Ibid.*, p. 14. On the possible mystical underpinnings of the fullness of the moment in Heidegger's notion of temporality, see ch. 5 n. 52.
312. Casey, *Getting Back*, pp. 6 and 10.
313. On the possibility that the conception of the passage of time is oriented by a picture of mythical space, see Neumann, *Origins*, p. 108.
314. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 9. For a similar tendency to devalue time, even to the point of spatializing the temporal, in the thought of Foucault, see Mohanty, *Phenomenology*, p. 87.
315. Casey, *Getting Back*, pp. 11–12, 15.
316. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
317. Casey, *Remembering*, pp. 214–215.
318. For a rich analysis of this bias in Newtonian and Einsteinian physics, see Christensen, *Space-Like Time*. An argument for the priority of a mode of temporality that characterizes the nature of subjectivity is attempted by Shalom, "Temporality," pp. 184–199.
319. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 25.
320. Consider the formulation in Jakobson, *Language*, p. 31: "Time gets involved in all spatial dimensions. We cannot define the geometrical form of a body which is in motion in relation to us. We define always its kinetic form. Thus our spatial dimensions occur in reality not in a three-dimensional, but in a four-dimensional variety."
321. Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth*, § 107, p. 39.
322. *Ibid.*, § 99, p. 37.
323. Casey, *Remembering*, p. 204.
324. Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 169.
325. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
326. *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 191.
327. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
328. *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 203–204.
329. On the narratological quality of temporal consciousness, see Ricoeur, "Human Experience," pp. 17–34; *idem*, *Time and Narrative*. See also Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History*; McInerney, *Time and Experience*, pp. 177–251; Luckmann, "Constitution," pp. 151–166; Jacobs, *Telling Time*.
330. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:31–51.
331. *Ibid.*, 2:61.
332. *Ibid.*, 1:3. For an application of the nexus between time and narrative in Ricoeur's philosophy, see Lloyd, *Being in Time*. See also Warnock, *Imagination and Time*, pp. 87–144, and Kristeva's rendering of Proust in *Time and Sense*, p. 204: "Narration, which is an action that takes place in time, is called on to retrace the span within which the critical points of an exorbitant sensation are connected. The Word is embodied within this space recovered from time" (emphasis in original).

333. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 28; idem, *Difficult Freedom*, pp. 181–201; idem, “Foreword,” in Mosès, *System*, pp. 13–22. Rosenzweig’s influence on Levinas has been noted by Handelman, *Fragments*, pp. 36, 198–201, 252–253, 266–268, 286–288. For two illuminating comparative studies of Rosenzweig and Levinas, see Gibbs, *Correlations*, pp. 36–40, and Cohen, *Elevations*. See also Mosès, “Rosenzweig et Lévinas,” pp. 137–155.

334. Wolfson, “Facing the Effaced,” pp. 55–63, 67–70; Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, pp. 189–191. See also Schwartz, *Metapher und Offenbarung*, pp. 83–93. For a notion of the temporal embodiment of the eternal that has affinity to Rosenzweig, see Aronowicz, *Jews and Christians*, pp. 24–30, 95–103.

335. Rosenzweig, Franz Rosenzweig’s “New Thinking,” p. 82. References to the German are taken from Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, pp. 210–234. On the intrinsic nexus between time and speech thinking, see Freund, *Franz Rosenzweig’s Philosophy of Existence*, p. 11.

336. Rosenzweig, Franz Rosenzweig’s “New Thinking,” p. 83.

337. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

338. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87. On the interconnectedness of temporality, hermeneutics, and the dialogic response to the other, see Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation*, pp. 50–52, 77–79. Mention should also be made of a similar insight expressed by Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 63: “The present—not that which is like a point and merely designates whatever our thoughts may posit at the end of ‘elapsed’ time, the fiction of the fixed lapse, but the actual fulfilled present—exists only insofar as presentness, encounter, and relation exist. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being.” On the proximity of Buber’s thought and Bergson’s notion of *durée*, see *ibid.*, p. 81 n. 8.

339. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 119, mentions Rosenzweig, together with Bergson and Heidegger, as the thinkers who have “opened the problematic of modern thought” by seeking the “deformalization of the most formal form that is, the unity of the I think” by “starting from a concreteness ‘older’ than the pure form of time: the freedom of invention and novelty.” For discussion of the nexus of time and alterity in the thought of Levinas, see Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise*, pp. 59–87; Peperzak, *Beyond*, pp. 99–101; Gallagher, *Inordinance of Time*, pp. 120–126; Cohen, *Elevations*, p. 133–161. Some recent scholarship has shown that Husserl’s account of internal time-consciousness—specifically, the de-presentation of primal presence entailed by the insight that temporality is constituted by a retentive and protentive structure—already anticipated the link between time and openness to the other. See discussion in Zahavi, *Husserl*, pp. 65–77. On the nexus of temporality and the other, see also the pertinent remarks of Yandell, *Carpe Corpus*, pp. 82–84.

340. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 156. See idem, *Alterity and Transcendence*, pp. 53–76.

341. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 74. On the complex question of nonbeing and the meontological tradition in Rosenzweig and Levinas, with

special reference to “the role of the other in messianic anticipation,” see Kavka, *Jewish Messianism*, pp. 129–192.

342. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 30–32. On time and the effacement of the other in Levinas, see Gallagher, *Inordinance of Time*, pp. 167–170.

343. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 3.

344. *Ibid.*, p. 18. For an incisive analysis of the nexus between temporality and saying, see Chanter, *Time, Death, and the Feminine*, pp. 140–169.

345. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 75.

346. On this aspect of temporality in the thought of Levinas, see Derrida, “At This Very Moment,” pp. 11–48. See also Bouretz, *Témoins du futur*, pp. 933–950.

347. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 24–25 (emphasis in original).

348. My thinking reflects the analysis of Lacapra, “Temporality,” pp. 118–147, esp. 137.

349. Levinas, *Face to Face with Levinas*, p. 21 (emphasis in original).

350. The status of the feminine in the thought of Levinas has been the subject of several critical studies; for the theme of this study, see most importantly Chanter, *Time, Death, and the Feminine*, and Kayser, *Emmanuel Levinas*, pp. 131–187, esp. 134–148. For a representative sampling of other relevant essays and monographs, see Irigaray, “Questions,” pp. 109–118; *idem*, *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, pp. 185–217; *idem*, “What Other,” pp. 67–81; Chalier, “Ethics and the Feminine,” pp. 119–129; Cohen, *Elevations*, 195–219; Ainley, “Feminine, Otherness, Dwelling,” pp. 7–20; Sandford, *Metaphysics of Love*; *idem*, “Levinas, Feminism, and the Feminine,” pp. 139–160; Shapiro, “On Thinking Identity Otherwise,” pp. 299–323; *idem*, “‘And God Created Woman,’” pp. 159–195; the essays assembled in Chanter, *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*; Katz, *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine*; *idem*, “From Eros to Maternity,” pp. 153–175. In spite of Irigaray’s critique, the nexus that she herself affirms between femininity, the becoming of the body, and the disruption of temporality does share some important features with Levinas. See Irigaray, *Le Temps de la différence*; Ziarek, “Toward a Radical,” pp. 60–75.

351. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 86–87.

352. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, pp. 37–38.

353. Levinas, “Wholly Otherwise,” pp. 3–10, esp. 6–7.

354. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 7; *idem*, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, pp. 112–114; and see analysis in Katz, *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine*, pp. 12–17.

355. Crignon, “Figuration,” pp. 100–125.

356. Marion, *In Excess*, p. 115. For an analysis of the invisibility of time and the phenomenology of the “inapparent” (*unscheinbar*), drawn mostly from the writings of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, see Dastur, *Dire le temps*, pp. 71–82; *idem*, *Telling Time*, 27–35.

357. Marion, *In Excess* p. 95.

358. *Ibid.*, pp. 122–123.

359. My thinking betrays the influence of the relationship between poetry

and prophecy described in a different cultural context by Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, pp. 76–79: “The bard and the diviner share the same gift of ‘second sight,’ a privilege for which they have had to pay with their sight. They are blind in the light of day, but they can see what is invisible. The god who inspires them shows them in a kind of revelation the truth that eludes the sight of men. This double vision relates, in particular, to the parts of time which are inaccessible to mortal creatures, namely, what happened in bygone days and what is yet to come. . . . But unlike the diviner, who usually has to solve problems concerned with the future, the poet’s activity is almost exclusively concerned with the past. . . . He knows the past because he has the power to be present in the past. . . . The past thus revealed represents much more than merely the time prior to the present: it is its very source. By going back to it the process of recall seeks, not to situate events within a temporal framework, but to reach the very foundation of being, to discover what is original, the primeval reality from which the cosmos emerged and which makes it possible to understand the whole process of becoming. The genesis of the world . . . has a before and an afterwards but it does not unfold in one homogeneous period, in one single time. The rhythm of this past depends not upon a single chronology but upon *genealogies*” (emphasis in original).

360. Abraham, *Rhythms*, p. 111.

361. The attuned ear will discern an influence of kabbalistic and Hasidic perspectives on time in the remark of Heschel, *Sabbath*, p. 99: “Time, however, is beyond our reach, beyond our power. It is both near and far, intrinsic to all experience and transcending all experience. It belongs exclusively to God. Time, then, is *otherness*, a mystery that hovers above all categories” (emphasis in original). In light of this passage, I would take issue with the conclusion regarding Heschel’s phenomenology offered by Kaplan, *Holiness*, p. 85: “Time, not symbols, can partake of transcendence . . . but time as such cannot ‘symbolize’ the Divine.” Kaplan’s opinion is based on the presumed correlation between space and symbolic-mediated knowledge, on one hand, and time and immediate-intuitive insight, on the other (p. 175 n. 11). See idem, “Sacred versus Symbolic,” pp. 213–231. This is not the place to enter into a lengthy discussion on the role of the symbol in Heschel’s thought, let alone the connection of the symbolic to the modalities of time and space, but suffice it to say that in some passages he does seem to equate time with godliness in a manner that is unthinkable with respect to space. See *Sabbath*, p. 100: “Things of space . . . conceal the Creator. It is the dimension of time wherein man meets God, wherein man becomes aware that every instant is an act of creation, a Beginning, opening up new roads for ultimate realizations. Time is the presence of God in the world of space, and it is within time that we are able to sense the unity of all beings.” Closer to the mark is the observation concerning the “analogy between the dimension of time and the dimension of God’s glory, or between our rela-

tion to time and our relation to the glory” proffered by Merkle, *Genesis*, p. 103. See ch. 2 n. 3.

## Chapter Two

1. For an overview, see Hart, “Phenomenological Time,” pp. 17–45.

2. For a far-ranging study of various constructions of time in Jewish history, see Goldberg, *La Clepsydre*. Stern, *Time and Process*, challenges the notion that there was an abstract concept of time in ancient Judaism, a taxon that for him includes the biblical, Qumran, apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, and rabbinic corpora, as well as inscriptions. In Stern’s view, what we find, rather, are temporal processes demarcated by various signposts. Notwithstanding the interesting challenge set forth by Stern, I would still argue that it is reasonable to assume some conceptual structure underlying the terminological signposts that demarcate the temporal processes.

3. On the contrast between Hebrew-temporal and Greek-spatial thinking, see Dobschütz, “Zeit und Raum,” pp. 212–223; Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, pp. 123–183. The correlation of Jewish sensibility and time is advanced as well in many of the writings of Heschel. See *Earth Is the Lord’s*, pp. 13–17; *Sabbath*, pp. 3–10, 41, 48, 79–83, 96–101; *God in Search of Man*, pp. 200–201. This is not to say that Heschel thought it possible from a Judaic perspective to do away with the spatial coordinate; indeed, he duly recognized the interrelatedness of space and time. See *Sabbath*, pp. 6, 116–117. It is nevertheless legitimate to say that he privileged time over space as the more indigenous religious expression of Judaism, associating the spatial with idolatry and the temporal with monotheism. See Graeber, “Heschel,” pp. 44–56; Kaplan, *Holiness*, pp. 23–24; Merkle, *Genesis*, pp. 193 and 198; and the brief discussion in ch. 1 n. 361. A similar orientation is attested in Néher, “View of Time,” pp. 149–167. Finally, it is of interest to recall the conclusion reached by Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 159, that according to Proust “Jewishness,” as opposed to “Judaism,” is an “inspiration for art” insofar as it is “the path of pure time embodied.” Here, too, an innate connection is made between Jewish experience and temporality.

4. Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 26, p. 390. See idem, *Derashot Maharal mi-Pra’ag*, p. 79: “Just as [the Torah] was given in the desert, which is the place that is most appropriate and prepared for it . . . so [the Torah] was given in the moment and time worthy and ready for it. Time and place belong and are related to one another, for place is in the earth and time depends on the celestial order and the spheres.” On the identification of time with body, which is interchangeable with space, see idem, *Gevurot ha-Shem*, vol. 1, ch. 46, pp. 213, 216; *Be’er ha-Golah*, vol. 2, 6:4, p. 187. On the equation of time and space in Maharal’s writings, see Sherwin, *Mystical Theology*, p. 142. See also Idel, “Sabbath: On Concepts of Time,” pp. 79–81.

5. See references, ch. 3 n. 60.
6. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, p. 58.
7. Jullien, *Du "temps,"* p. 35. For a more technical discussion on the analogousness of space and time, see Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, pp. 87–98.
8. Endsjø, "To Lock," pp. 375–378.
9. Gould, *Time's Arrow*, pp. 10–16.
10. Smith, *Imagining Religion*, p. 29. See also idem, "Slip in Time," pp. 68–70, and Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, pp. 125–126: "According to Aristotle, therefore, we must represent time by the image of a line (more accurately: by the image of movement along a line), either a circular line to indicate objective, physical, astronomical, and measurable time, or a straight line as demanded by the grammatical time of past, present, and future in which are laid those actions that we express in temporal terms. It is an illusion to believe that these two ways of looking at time are so different that they cancel each other out; they do have in common the principal feature, conception of time by the metaphor of a line, and what form the line takes is epistemologically of no importance or, in any case, only incidental." For a challenge to the distinction between linear and cyclical modes of time, see Starr, "Historical," pp. 24–35.
11. An influential source for the presumed difference between Hebraic and Hellenic conceptions of time was Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit*; English translation: *Christ and Time*. See also Brandon, *Time and Mankind*, pp. 59–120, 179–180; De Vries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*; idem, "Observations," pp. 263–276; Achtner, Kunz, and Walter, *Dimensions*, pp. 54–64. On the privileging of the "primitive circularity of time" in Hellenic cosmological speculation, see the brief but incisive comments of Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae*, pp. 168–171. Also pertinent here is the phenomenology of religion articulated by Mircea Eliade based on the correlation of sacred time and the myth of eternal renewal. I offer a modest sampling of Eliade's studies that deal with this theme: *Sacred and the Profane*, pp. 68–113; *Myth and Reality*, pp. 21–91; *Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp. 3–92; *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp. 388–409. For a challenge to the presentation of the ancient Greek conception of time as cyclical becoming, see Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, pp. 88–90. According to Vernant, an alternative conception of time as an "irreversible line" emerges with the birth of lyric poetry in the seventh century BCE.
12. McConville and Millar, in *Time and Place*, demonstrate the complex interweaving of past, present and future as it relates to spatial and temporal dimensions of the deuteronomist's conception of Israelite history. See also Sasson, "Time . . . to Begin," pp. 183–194. For a critique of the linear-cyclical models of time predicated on the conclusion that both are chronological accounts, see Ricoeur, "History," pp. 13–30; idem, "Myth," pp. 276–281. In place of the scientific paradigm, Ricoeur suggests a cyclical approach based on mythical time. See also Dumézil, "Temps," pp. 235–251; Meletinsky, *Poetics*, pp. 158–163. On the intersection of linear and cyclical impressions of time in the history



of Judaism, see Steensgaard, "Time in Judaism," pp. 63–108. More recently, Brin, *Concept of Time*, offers an exhaustive philological, but relatively feeble theoretical, analysis of different terms for time in the biblical and sectarian literature. A more theoretically driven analysis related specifically to the rhythmic nature of ritual time is offered by Chilton, *Redeeming Time*.

13. Rappaport, "Ritual," pp. 5–30, has suggested that ritual provides a mode of organization alternating between time and eternity, the latter being the real mark of sanctity.

14. Long after having written this chapter, though obviously prior to sending the manuscript off for publication, I came upon the essay of Sternberg, "Time and Space," pp. 81–145. Sternberg's presentation proceeds from an entirely different methodological perspective, but my analysis intersects with his on the crucial point of what he refers to as the "self-division" of "biblical poetics," "an internal divergence between levels within its composition: between the ordering of narratives (up to episodic units) and of narrative (cycles, books, canonical history), blocks and architectonics, micro-plot and macro-plot if you will" (p. 83). Without entering into the details of Sternberg's discussion, it is sufficient to note that he, too, discerns linear and circular patterns of narrative time at work in the biblical text. See also Goldberg's studies cited in n. 27, this chapter. Finally, the dismantling of the dichotomization of linear/historical and cyclical/mythical modes of time may have implications for undermining another binary presumed by many scholars, *mythos* versus *logos*. The bibliography on this topic is vast and I will here mention only the study by Stróżewski, "Logos and Mythos," pp. 175–188, as it provides an explanatory model that I find congenial to my own thinking: *mythos* is the way of understanding *logos*.

15. Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 1., p. 352.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 395–396. At some point in the historical evolution of Christianity as a natural outgrowth from Judaism, the eschatological overwhelmed the historical, but the prophets of ancient Israel did not posit the two as antinomical. For an analysis of Voegelin's views, see Hughes, *Transcendence*, pp. 40–53. A still useful discussion of the role of history and eschatology in early Christian thought is Quispel, "Time and History," pp. 85–107. Finally, it is worth recalling here the thesis of Peuch, "Gnosis and Time," pp. 38–84, that the mythological orientation of ancient gnosticism rejected the linear temporality of Christianity and the cyclical atemporality of Hellenism. From another perspective, however, the mythic perspective of the gnostics was a "bastard conception," clumsily uniting the two worldviews in a manner that the temporal penetrated the atemporal and the atemporal absorbed the temporal. It strikes me that with regard to this crucial issue medieval kabbalah is to be distinguished from gnosticism, for the kabbalists' embrace of rabbinic ritual enabled them to affirm both the teleological indeterminacy of history and the narratological redundancy of myth.

17. Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, p. 325.

18. Ibid., p. 329 (emphasis in original).

19. Ricoeur, "History," takes issue with the view that the biblical conception of time is exclusively linear, noting that festivals and ceremonial rites partake of a cyclical notion of time. See also Barr, *Biblical Words*; Finegan, *Handbook*, pp. 6–138; Robbins, "Time-Telling," pp. 71–88. On the cyclical dimension of biblical time, connected especially to the theme of retribution, see Trompf, *Idea of Historical Recurrence*, pp. 116–178. The rabbinic propensity to divest time of its linearity has been noted by several scholars. See Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, pp. 5–26, esp. 17: "Unlike the biblical writers the rabbis seem to play with Time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will. Where historical specificity is a hallmark of the biblical narratives, here the acute biblical sense of time and place often gives way to rampant and seemingly unselfconscious anachronism." See also Bregman, "Past and Present," pp. 45–59; Neusner, *History*, vol. 5, p. xv; Rubenstein, "Mythic Time," pp. 157–183; and the summary account in Rudavsky, *Time Matters*, pp. 4–10.

20. Rubin, "Historical Time," pp. 11–12; Rubin and Kosman, "Clothing," pp. 156–159.

21. The effacement of a cogent distinction between past, present, and future in paradigms of a world order proffered in the rabbinic canon is intelligently documented by Neusner, *Handbook*, pp. 179–198. I am in agreement with Neusner on the whole, but I do not accept his conclusion that the blurring of the difference between past, present, and future implies that for the rabbinic sages "time is neither linear nor cyclical but unremarkable" (p. 181). See also p. 187: "time in a system of perfection can be neither linear nor cyclical; time in historical dimensions simply is not a consideration in thinking about what happens and what counts. Instead, paradigms for the formation of the social order of transcendence and permanence govern, so that what was now is, and what will be is what was and is." For a more detailed analysis, see Neusner, *Presence*, pp. 39–60. It is equally plausible to speak of a convergence of the circular and linear to account for the rabbinic sensibility regarding the timeless nature of time and the timely nature of timelessness. Also relevant to this question is the analysis of Agus, "Innere Zeit," pp. 87–111, and the brief comments regarding the Jewish indifference to time in Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, pp. 253–254.

22. Palestinian Talmud, Berakhot 4:1, 7c (cited according to the *editio princeps*, Venice 1523–24); Babylonian Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah 9a; Yoma 81b; Sifra on Leviticus, Emor 14:5, 107b. In the latter case, the rabbinic ruling is derived exegetically from the scriptural admonition: "on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath" (Lev 23:32).

23. Babylonian Talmud, Rosh ha-Shanah 9a; Yoma 81b.

24. Genesis Rabbah, 9:14, p. 74. See parallel in Pesiqta Rabbati, vol. 1, 23:6, pp. 556–557.

25. For instance, see Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Bo, 1, p. 7; Pesiqta Rabbati, vol. 1, 15:48, pp. 316–317. See also Wolfson, "Face of Jacob," pp. 235–238.

26. Rubin and Kosman, "Clothing," p. 158.

27. For an independent analysis of Jewish conceptions of temporality that likewise seeks to avoid the traditional duality of cyclical versus linear time, see Goldberg, *La Clepsydre*; idem, "Questions," pp. 267–286; idem, "Les Jeux du temps," pp. 155–168.

28. The coincidence of circularity and linearity in a manner consonant with kabbalistic sources was affirmed by Nicholas of Cusa. See, for instance, *De Theologicis Complementis* 9, in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises*, p. 761. To be more precise, according to Cusanus, within the infinite circle the minimum/maximum of curvature is equal to the minimum/maximum of straightness. On the coincidence of the straight line and infinite circle, based on the insights of Cusanus, see Calcagno, *Giordano Bruno*, pp. 118–119. For discussion of time and eternity in the writings of Cusanus with special emphasis on his eschatological teaching, see Senger, *Ludus Sapientiae*, pp. 162–180.

29. For a representative study of this much-discussed motif, see Bontekoe, *Dimensions*.

30. See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. xi–xxxi. Regarding the hermeneutic reversibility in Rosenzweig, see idem, "Facing the Effaced," pp. 55–63.

31. Aristotle, *Problemata*, 17.3, 916a 33.

32. The version I have cited is from Freeman, *Ancilla*, p. 40. See also Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 235; Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, p. 87.

33. Palestinian Talmud, Sheqalim 6:1, 49d; Babylonian Talmud, Pesahim 6b. See also Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Shirata, 7, p. 139; Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 240–243; Schlüter, "Creative Force," pp. 59–84.

34. Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, p. 33.

35. On the distinction between *tehillah* as "beginning" and *re'shit* as "principle," see Maimonides, *Guide*, 2.30, p. 348. See, for instance, Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 205: "Traditionally, time has been divided into two opposing modes—irreducible, split, both symptom and cause of schizoid condition. The first is an atemporal 'basis' from which there surges an infinitely repeatable, resounding impulse, cutting an inaccessible eternity into uniform or differentiated instants. The second is the, let me call it 'biblical,' succession of numbers, chronological development, evolution with an infinite goal; this is generally called *historical time*" (emphasis in original). I do not think this binary can be exegetically elicited from or eisegetically imposed upon Hebrew scripture or later Jewish literary sources. For a discussion of the paradox of reversible motion in scientific theory, which raises similar questions with regard to the cause and effect relationship, see Park, *Image of Eternity*, pp. 45–65.

36. On the comparative accounts of perpetual creation in Islamic mysticism and Zen Buddhism, with specific reference to the depiction of the moment as what is "cut off from before and after," see Izutsu, *Creation*, pp. 141–173. On the paradox of the permanence of impermanence in the Buddhist conception of atemporal temporality, see also the analysis of Wayman, "No Time," pp. 51–

53; Mansfield, "Time in Mādhyamika Buddhism," pp. 10–27; idem, "Time and Impermanence," pp. 305–321. See also Eliade, "Time and Eternity," pp. 190–193. On the conception of time as simultaneously temporal and atemporal, which serves as the ontological basis for the psychological notion of "personal nonduality" or the "continuity of discontinuity," see Kopf, "Temporality," pp. 229–233.

37. Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 273, and see the comments on this passage in Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 2, p. 283.

38. Plato, *Parmenides* 156e. I have availed myself of Turnbull's translation, pp. 111–112.

39. My thought is indebted to the analysis of the temporality of hermeneutics and the hermeneutics of temporality in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* in Heine, *Dream*, pp. 21–31.

40. Heidegger, *Concept of Time*, p. 20.

41. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, p. 125. On time and the hermeneutical enterprise, see Pöggeler, "Temporale Interpretation," pp. 5–32; Risser, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 119–138; Wood, *Deconstruction*, pp. 319–334; Rosenthal, *Time*, pp. 119–131. On the close connection between time and consciousness in Buddhist teaching, which displays some phenomenological similarity to Heidegger, see Thera, *Abhidhamma Studies*, pp. 93–114.

42. Boer, *Thinking*, pp. 33–37, 79–113.

43. Deleuze, Proust, p. 17. A similar conclusion is reached by Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, p. 191 (part of the relevant passage is cited in ch. 1 at n. 326).

44. Palestinian Talmud, Sanhedrin 1:1, 18a. For alternative versions of this passage, see *Genesis Rabbah*, 81:1, p. 971; *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 1:10; *Song of Songs Rabbah*, 1:9, p. 38.

45. I am here indebted to the formulation of Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 24. Stambaugh's rendering of the original German *es sich Geheiß des zu Denkenden fügt* (*Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 25) is superb, as she deftly captures the nuance and drift of Heidegger's thought. Thinking, for Heidegger, consists of heeding the ancient word that repeatedly calls forth new readings on the path of listening/appropriation. The possibility of interpreting Heidegger's notion of truth in essentialist terms is curtailed by his further insight (expressed in the same literary context) regarding the "ancient something which conceals itself in *a-letheia*." Inasmuch as that which is ancient (*Uralte*) hides itself (*sich verbirgt*) in the uncovering—*a-letheia*, the word that Heidegger uses to name the event of truth as unveiling—truth can never be uncovered except by being re/covered.

46. For discussion of this central theme in Jewish esotericism, with particular focus on medieval kabbalah, see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 197–202, 212–220.

47. A correlation between the letters of the alphabet (the beginning and end are explicitly mentioned and the middle presumed) and the presence of God in

the past, present, and future, is found in Revelation 1:8. See ch. 4 n. 3, and discussion in ch. 5.

48. For a comparative study of theories of time in theosophic and ecstatic kabbalah, see Idel, "Some Conceptions," pp. 153–188. As representative of theosophic kabbalah, Idel discusses Cordovero, including some of the passages I have analyzed here, but I have offered my own translations and analyses.

49. With respect to this mythological sensibility, an attentive reading of scriptural passages shapes the kabbalistic worldview where the change of times is intimately connected to the divine. See Brin, *Concept of Time*, pp. 225–246. For a brief survey of the ascription of time to God, see Achtner, Kunz, and Water, *Dimensions of Time*, pp. 138–166.

50. Cordovero, *Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar*, vol. 15, p. 89.

51. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 5:4, 25d.

52. Cordovero, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 6a. For the citation and analysis of other passages wherein this principle is articulated in the works of Cordovero and other sixteenth-century kabbalists, including his teacher Solomon Alqabes and his student Hayyim Vital, see Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 95–100, 232; Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 14, 57 n. 2, 169, 256 n. 43; Wolfson, "Divine Suffering," pp. 110–114.

53. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 242–255.

54. On the kabbalistic depiction of Torah as limitless, see Idel, "Infinites," pp. 141–157; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 88–89, 94–108. Cordovero's view on the eternally changing character of that which eternally endures was affirmed by kabbalists from earlier periods. For instance, in his *Perush ha-Tefillot*, MS Oxford-Bodleian 1938, fol. 206b, Azriel of Gerona observes that in the daily blessing expressing gratitude to God for giving the Torah, the language is *noten*, in the present, rather than *natan*, in the past, to instruct us that "in each and every moment he gives" (*be-khol et wa-et noten*).

55. For discussion of this theme in later Hasidic sources, see Wolfson, "Cut That Binds," pp. 108–110. On the nexus between the novelty of time and the rabbinic phenomenon of *hiddush*, innovative textual interpretation, see the account of *temps talmudique* as *temps herméneutique* in Ouaknin, *Méditations érotiques*, pp. 80–82.

56. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 63b.

57. For instance, see the interpretation of the formulation connected to the promise of the land of Canaan to the Israelites "and has given it to you" (Exod 13:11) in *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Bo, 18, p. 70: "So that it should not be in your eyes like the inheritance of your fathers, but rather it should be in your eyes as if [*ke-illu*] it were given to you today."

58. *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, 33, p. 59. The dictum is transmitted in the name of R. Eleazar in *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, 12:5, pp. 206–207. In that context, however, the loan word from Greek to denote the royal decree to which Torah is compared

- is *prozigma* (πρόσταγμα) instead of *diyotagma* (διάταγμα). See *ibid.*, 12:12, p. 213. For an alternative expression of this idea, see *Midrash Debarim Rabbah*, p. 117.
59. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*, 12:21, p. 219. For parallel, see *Midrash Tanḥuma*, ed. Buber, Yitro, 13, 38b.
60. Solomon ben Isaac, *Perushei Rashi al ha-Torah*, p. 238 (ad Exod 19:1). See *ibid.*, pp. 213 (ad Exod 13:11), 530 (ad Deut 6:6), 537 (ad Deut 11:13), 576 (ad Deut 27:9). Needless to say, Rashi draws on earlier rabbinic sources; see references, nn. 56–59, this chapter.
61. *Midrash Tanḥuma ha-Yashan*, in *Midrash Tanḥuma*, vol. 1, appendix, p. 109.
62. See passage from *Mekhilta* cited in n. 57, this chapter. The source is noted by Judah Loew of Prague, *Gur Aryeh ha-Shalem*, vol. 3, p. 254.
63. *Mishnah*, *Pesaḥim* 10:5.
64. Compare Judah Loew of Prague, *Gevurot ha-Shem*, vol. 1, ch. 36, p. 162: “Moreover, know that it was impossible for Israel to depart from servitude except by means of the holy One, blessed be he, himself, and not from the side of a constellation [*mazzal*] and not by any other aspect except this. . . . Therefore Israel did not go out by means of a gradation in which there is time but by means of a gradation that has no time, for all things fall under time and are created in time except for God, blessed be he, who does not fall under time. . . . Israel went out to freedom through the divine gradation that has no time.”
65. Judah Loew of Prague, *Gur Aryeh ha-Shalem*, vol. 3, p. 255.
66. See Elbaum, “Rabbi Judah Loew,” pp. 29–31; Neher, *Le Puits*, pp. 81–94; Veltri, “Science,” pp. 128–132.
67. See, for instance, Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 39, p. 597, and references to other sources cited in n. 33 *ad locum*.
68. Judah Loew of Prague, *Neṣaḥ Yisra’el*, ch. 47, p. 789; *idem*, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 14, pp. 217–218, 221–223. Maharal’s ascetic interpretation bears close resemblance to the standpoint articulated in Ḥabad philosophy; see the passage from Shneur Zalman of Lyady’s *Liqqutei Torah* cited in n. 277, this chapter.
69. Judah Loew of Prague, *Netivot Olam*, vol. 1, *Netiv ha-Torah*, ch. 3, p. 13; *idem*, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 14, p. 217; ch. 25, p. 376; ch. 39, p. 597.
70. Judah Loew of Prague, *Netivot Olam*, vol. 1, *Netiv ha-Torah*, ch. 3, p. 6.
71. Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 26, p. 391; see passage from *Derashot Maharal mi-Pra’ag* cited in n. 73, this chapter.
72. Judah Loew of Prague, *Netivot Olam*, vol. 1, *Netiv ha-Torah*, ch. 3, p. 10.
73. Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif’eret Yisra’el*, ch. 8, p. 132; *idem.*, *Derekh Ḥayyim*, pp. 356, 434, 641. See also *Derashot Maharal mi-Pra’ag*, p. 31, where Torah is designated *sekhel iyyuni*, the “theoretical intellect.” See *ibid.*, pp. 8, 49, and esp. 54–55, where the rabbinic maxim that Torah is not sustained except by one who kills himself over it (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 83b), is interpreted in the following way: “Since Torah is the absolute intellect [*sekhel gamur*], and the intellect is entirely separate from the body, how is it possible for two opposites to be in one subject, that is, the Torah, which is an absolute intellect, and man who is

corporeal? Therefore, it is impossible for the Torah to exist except in one who kills himself and removes his body entirely. However, when one removes his body entirely, then surely the rational Torah will subsist in him, and if not the Torah will not subsist in him." See parallel interpretations in *Derekh Hayyim*, p. 434, and *Derashot Maharal mi-Pra'ag*, pp. 54–55.

74. Judah Loew of Prague, *Gur Aryeh ha-Shalem*, vol. 3, p. 215.

75. Maharal's appropriation of the rabbinic notion of an ongoing revelation of the Written Torah is expanded by him (based, of course, on allusions in the rabbinic corpus itself) to include the Oral Torah. At the same time, however, Maharal adamantly insists that there is a decline through the generations that has created a chasm distancing the reader of his own time from the wisdom expressed by the rabbis. On this theme, see Elbaum, "Rabbi Judah Loew," pp. 30–31; Veltri, "Science," pp. 133–134. The possibility of recovering this wisdom is predicated, it seems to me, on the hermeneutical bridging of past and present, a possibility buttressed by the ontological presumption concerning the time of the moment and the novel recurrence of what has been.

76. To be more precise, Maharal distinguishes three different levels of immaterial being, which correspond to three forms of holiness implied in the Trisagion (Isa 6:3): the soul (*nefesh*), which has a force (*koah*) in the body; the intellect (*sekhel*), which has a connection (*heqsher*) with the body; and God who is completely separate from all things bodily. See Judah Loew of Prague, *Netivot Olam*, vol. 2, *Netiv ha-Perishut*, ch. 1, p. 113.

77. Judah Loew of Prague, *Hiddushei Aggadot*, vol. 3, p. 101.

78. Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, ch. 25, p. 376.

79. On the dialectic role of the "middle" or "intermediary" (*emsha*) in Maharal's thought, see Neher, *Le Puits*, pp. 47–56, 133–143; Gross, *Le Messianisme juif*, p. 94 n. 28.

80. Judah Loew of Prague, *Derashot Maharal mi-Pra'ag*, pp. 79–82.

81. For instance, see Judah Loew of Prague, *Gur Aryeh ha-Shalem*, vol. 2, pp. 19–20; vol. 3, p. 255; vol. 4, p. 105.

82. Gross, *Le Messianisme juif*, pp. 322–323.

83. Judah Loew of Prague, *Gevurot ha-Shem*, vol. 1, ch. 47, p. 224.

84. Judah Loew of Prague, *Tif'eret Yisra'el*, ch. 40, pp. 615–616.

85. *Leviticus Rabbah*, 22:1, pp. 496–497. Parallels in other rabbinic sources are cited by Margulies in his expository apparatus *ad locum*.

86. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 3.1–2, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 268–270. Compare Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, sec. 1066, p. 548: "Nothing can prevent me from reckoning backward from this moment and saying 'I shall never reach the end,' just as I can reckon forward from the same moment into the infinite." See Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought*, pp. 35–41; Thomas, *Reading Nietzsche Rhetorically*, pp. 119–122.

87. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, sec. 1065, p. 548.

88. Although Nietzsche steadfastly rejected the traditional metaphysical pre-

sumption regarding an enduring substance or subject, his embrace of a doctrine of the eternal return of the same functionally approximates such a conception. See, for instance, *Will to Power*, sec. 462, p. 255: "In place of 'metaphysics' and religion, the theory of eternal recurrence (this as a means of breeding and selection)."

89. Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought*, pp. 103–112.

90. See Bregman, "Past and Present," pp. 47–49; Wolfson, "Iconic Visualization," p. 141, and other references cited on p. 157 n. 37.

91. Babylonian Talmud, *Menaḥot* 110a.

92. Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-Ma'amarim*—5663, vol. 2, p. 199.

93. Al-Qushayrī thus referred to the Sufi as the "son of his moment," *ibn waqtihi*, that is, the Sufi is distinguished by the fact that he lives fully in the moment in which he must fulfill his religious duty. See Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 100; Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, 1:132–133, 3:1426. The intrinsic connection between Sufism and being-in-the-moment is repeated elsewhere by al-Qushayrī. See, for instance, Qushayrī, *Principles of Sufism*, p. 41: "They say concerning the meaning of renunciation, 'Each speaks from his own moment [*waqt*] and indicates his own limit.'" And, *ibid.*, p. 303: "'Amr b. 'Uthman al-Makki was asked about Sufism, and he asserted, 'It is that the servant acts according to whatever is most fitting to the moment.'" Also pertinent is the remark of al-Junayd accounting for the different presentations of the teachings of al-Bistamī, translated in Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 214: "The accounts passed down from Abū Yazīd are various and the raconteurs differ in what they heard. That might be—God knows best—because of the difference in the moments (*awqāt*) that had come upon him and the difference in stationings (*mawātin*) alternating in what was bestowed specially upon him." On the term *waqt*, see the comments of al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 96–104. The use of the term *waqt* by Sufis to denote the moment of epiphany was probably inspired by the use of the term in the Qur'ān to refer to the "appointed time" of the day of judgment (15:38; 38:8; 56:50) as well as another term derived from the same root, *mīqāt*, which refers in some verses to a meeting with God (7:142, 143, 155) or to the time appointed for the last judgment (44:40; 78:17). See Gardet, "Moslem Views," pp. 198–199. The Sufi use of *waqt* should be considered in light of the atomistic conception of time attested already in Qur'ānic verses. According to this occasionalist perspective, time (*zamān*) does not exhibit continuous duration but consists rather of discrete atoms or instants (*ānāt* or *awqāt*); every moment, therefore, is considered an accident of ephemerality that is a product of a constant re-creation (*khalq fī kull waqt*). See Massignon, "Time," pp. 108–114; Peeters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 130; Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, pp. 29–31, 32–33, 57–64, 112–114.

94. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 128.

95. From this vantage point, *waqt* is the temporal instantiation of the dialectic of *fanā'* and *baqā'* according to Sufi psychology, that is, the passing-away of the discrete self and abiding in what is real. Just as the moment exemplifies the dialectic of effacement and confirmation, so the awakened heart must abide in



passing away and passes away in abiding. See ch. 5 n. 80. The nexus between the conception of mental entities as momentary and the doctrine of metaphysical selflessness is attested in Buddhist sources as well, as noted by Rospatt, *Buddhist Doctrine*, p. 117.

96. MacKendrick, *Immemorial Silence*, pp. 109–110.

97. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, p. 230 n. 22. On the mystical pilgrimage of the heart to the heart, symbolized by the Ka'ba, as liberating one from the "bondage of time" (*riqq al-awqāt*), see the passage from Ibn 'Arabī in Elmore, op. cit., pp. 171 and 247. Consider also the formulation of Ibn 'Arabī, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, p. 60: "When the influence of the Moment befalls him, he will receive it. Let him beware of becoming enamored of [the influence of the Moment] but let him remember it, for it will be necessary to him if he instructs. . . . The Moment lengthens and shortens in accordance with the presence of the one who partakes in it." The full implications of Ibn 'Arabī's remarks are drawn out in the commentary of 'Abdul-Karim Jili cited, op. cit., pp. 99–100 n. 40: "'The Moment' (*waqt*) is an expression for your state in time. The state does not attach itself to the past or the future. It is an existent between two nonexistents. And if your Moment is the wellspring of your state, you are the son of your Moment, and your Moment determines what you are, because it is existent and you are nonexistent, you are illusory and it is affirmed. . . . And whoever mourns over the past and fills the present moment with the past, he is one of those made distant. For he lets slip by what the current state demands, engrossed in what will not return. This is the essence of nonexistence. And whoever occupies himself with the future is in the same state." For further discussion of the problem of time in Ibn 'Arabī's writings, see Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī," pp. 28–30; Böwering, "Ibn 'Arabī's Concept of Time," pp. 71–91.

98. Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 367: "*Waqt* is that whereby a man becomes independent of the past and the future, as, for example, when an influence from God descends into his soul and makes his heart collected (*mujtami'*) he has no memory and no thought of that which is not yet come. All people fail in this, and do not know what our past has been or what our future will be, except the possessors of *waqt*, who say: Our knowledge cannot apprehend the future and the past, and we are happy with God in the present (*andar waqt*)." Al-Hujwīrī goes on to say that occupation with the future is a "great distraction" that veils one from God. It is of interest to recall here the account of "eternity" offered by Plotinus, *Enneads* III.7.5: "And if someone were in this way to speak of eternity as a life which is here and now endless because it is total and expends nothing of itself, since it has no past or future—for if it had, it would not now be a total life—he would be near to defining it." The description of eternality as a simultaneous whole is affirmed as well by Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 52, p. 1; see Smith, "Eternity and Time," pp. 202–203.

99. Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, 1:1440.

100. Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, pp. 163–169. Consider the description of

enlightenment of the Bashashita in Jōkin, *Denkōroku*, p. 134: “At this point we should not say that the physical body breaks up and scatters whilst something tranquilly continues on as an eternal spirit. What kind of thing could such an ‘eternal spirit’ possibly be? It is only a matter of manifesting the abandonment of one body and the receipt of another, therefore we should say that ‘before’ and ‘after’ are not two separate things for past and present are not different. Thus, IT should not be called the body nor should IT be called the mind. Since IT is not divided into body and mind, we should not divide IT into past and present. Therefore, IT is THAT WHICH IS.”

101. Kim, “‘Reason of Words and Letters,’” p. 65.

102. For fuller discussions of the rich insights into the nature of time and being in Dōgen, and particularly the comparison of his thought with Heidegger’s conception of ecstatic temporality, see Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions*; Kim, *Dōgen Kigen*, pp. 137–157; Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha-nature*; Abe, *Study of Dōgen*, pp. 77–144. For an alternative perspective on Heidegger’s conception of time and a Buddhist perspective, see Loy, “What’s Wrong with Being and Time,” pp. 239–255. I am grateful to the author for sending me a copy of his study. The contrast between the attempt to overthrow the privilege granted to the present in Heidegger and Derrida and the critique of Nāgārjuna’s middle way is explored as well in Loy, *Nonduality*, pp. 252–255. For a learned discussion on the nature of time in different but related historical-literary contexts, see Rospatt, *Buddhist Doctrine*. The central contention of the author is that “the doctrine of momentariness is primarily based on the analysis of change in terms of substitution and on the conviction that things are always changing” (p. 217). On the notion of the moment (*khana*) as a central component of the Buddhist conception of timeless time, that is, the instantaneous awakening (*ekaksanābhisambodhi*) of the now that eternally endures as that which has no duration, see also Coomaraswamy, *Time and Eternity*, pp. 43–48. On the related Chinese concept of *wujiu*, literally, “without duration,” in Mohist doctrine, see Reding, *Comparative Essays*, p. 99: “We can safely assume that the concept of *wujiu* is not to be understood in the sense of a time-atom, but rather as a boundary for periods of time. . . . This interpretation of *wujiu* as a boundary is also the more plausible one on the ground that the Later Mohists have developed a theory of potential infinity to solve the paradoxes of infinite divisibility.” On the Buddhist theory of atoms, see the brief but insightful discussion in Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, pp. 118–121. There are also grounds, both philological and conceptual, for studying Heidegger’s thinking in relation to the view of the moment as the fullness of eternity articulated by Meister Eckhart. For references, see ch. 5 n. 52.

103. Gazūr-I-Ilāhī, *Secret of Ana’l-Haqq*, pp. 54–55.

104. This account is an elaboration of my comment in “Divine Suffering,” p. 115.

105. My explication of the kabbalistic conception has benefited from the discussion in Thera, *Abhidhamma Studies*, p. 96. See also Loy, *Nonduality*, pp. 216–224.

106. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 103. In the same passage, Scholem does mention that, according to Azriel of Gerona, all the *sefirot* with the exception of the first one “had a beginning in time.” My point, however, is that this conception of non-temporal time is not exceptional in kabbalistic literature.

107. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 223.

108. For example, Abraham bar Hiyya, *Hegyon ha-Nephesh ha-Atzuvah*, pp. 40–41, and see editor’s remarks on pp. 18–19; Maimonides, *Guide*, 2.12, p. 276; 2.15, p. 288; Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-Iqqarim*, 2:18, 80a. It is worth noting that in the aforementioned section of *Sefer ha-Iqqarim*, 80b, Albo does refer to the rabbinic notion of *sefer zemanim*, which he contrasts with *zeman*: the latter is the time that is measurable in accord with the movement of the heavenly sphere, and thus it can be characterized in terms of before and after, whereas the former is not subject to measurement since it is the flux that precedes the existence of the sphere (*ha-meshekh she-hayah qodem mesi’ut ha-galgal*).

109. My formulation is indebted to Resnick, *Divine Power*, pp. 94–95. For a philosophical appraisal of the intelligibility of ascribing “timelessness” to God, see Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, pp. 144–185.

110. Maimonides, *Guide*, 2.13, p. 281. For this reason Maimonides is perplexed by the rabbinic dicta (see following note) that posit an order of time before the time of creation or a series of alternate worlds that were created and destroyed. See *Guide*, 2.30, pp. 349–350.

111. *Genesis Rabbah*, 3:7, p. 23. Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 211–221, suggests that the notions of a “sequence of times prior to the world and worlds that preceded our world” found in rabbinic literature is a response to the gnostic conception (influenced by Platonic philosophy) of a world of eternity set in diametric contrast to the created world of time.

112. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 6:6, 30b. For analysis of this theme, see Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 246 and 260.

113. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 3:1, 11b; Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, p. 56.

114. Maimonides, *Guide*, 1.57, p. 132, and 1.63, pp. 154–155 (in that context, Maimonides explicitly interprets the expression *ehyeh asher ehyeh* as signifying the necessarily existent); Altmann, “Essence and Existence,” pp. 294–315, reprinted in Altmann, *Studies*, pp. 107–127.

115. See Goichon, *La distinction de l’essence et de l’existence*; Rahman, “Essence and Existence,” pp. 1–16; Morewedge, *Metaphysica of Avicenna*, pp. 206–249; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics*, pp. 200, 204–205, 219–225, 239–243, 245–249; Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 156–159.

116. Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati*, 5b.

117. *Ma’arekhet ha-Elohut*, ch. 2, 5b.

118. See, for instance, Bahya ben Asher, *Be’ur al ha-Torah*, vol. 2, p. 29 (ad Exod 3:13); Zohar *Hadash*, 17b (*Midrash ha-Ne’elam*); and the passage from Nahmanides cited n. 136, this chapter. See also Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, ch. 2, p. 81.

119. Viṭal, *Eṣ Hayyim*, 1:1, 11a.

120. Beane, *Myth, Cult and Symbols*, p. 152.
121. See discussion in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 67–68.
122. Compare the language in *Maitrāyana-Brahmana-Upanishad*, 6:15, cited in Müller, *The Upaniṣads*, vol. 2, p. 317: “There are two forms of Brahman, time and non-time. That which was before the (existence of the) sun is non-time and has no parts. That which had its beginning from the sun is time and has parts.”
123. An argument along these lines is found in Jacob ben Sheshet, “*Sefer Sha’ar ha-Shamayim*,” p. 116.
124. Even the attribution of “primordially” to Ein Sof is problematic, inasmuch as this characteristic is a correlative term and hence to speak of Ein Sof as primordial is to place it within a temporal sequence. To avoid this dilemma, Cordovero uses the phrase *qadmon beli qadmut*, which I have rendered as “primordial without primordially.” Cordovero is thus in basic agreement with the apophatic position adopted by Albo, *Sefer ha-Iqqarim*, 2:18, 80a: “The matter of primordially and eternity [*inyan ha-qadmut we-ha-nišhiyyut*] spoken with respect to him is a negative matter, the negation of privation qua beginning and qua end.”
125. Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati*, 3a-b; Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 194–195, 202, 212, 224.
126. Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati*, 5c.
127. As noted by Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 103. For discussion of the Neoplatonic influence on conceptions of space and time in Renaissance kabbalistic texts, see Neuser, “*Raum und Zeit*,” pp. 93–101.
128. Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 293, 308–309.
129. Cordovero, *Elimah Rabbati*, 26c.
130. Ergas, *Shomer Emunim*, 2.11, 33d.
131. *Ibid.*, 2.21, 37b.
132. *Ibid.*, 2.17, 36b–c.
133. In *Sefer ha-Beri’ah*, MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1581, fol. 1b, Nathan of Gaza reports the following response to this philosophical question, which he claims to have received from Sabbatai Şevi: “And I heard an answer from the mouth of Amirah [*adonenu malkkenu yarom hodo*, “our master, our king, his majesty be exalted,” a fixed title used by Sabbatians to refer to the presumed messiah] that had he created them previously, you would have asked ‘why did he create them now and not before?’ And thus in this way there is no end to this question, and since it was necessary for there to be a beginning, thus all times are equal, and it is certainly within the range of his capability to give a time for bringing forth his thought into actuality.”
134. *Exodus Rabbah* 3:6. See ch. 5 n. 45.
135. Based on Job 10:17.
136. Moses ben Naḥman, *Perushei ha-Torah le-Rabbenu Moshe ben Naḥman*, vol. 1, p. 292 (ad Exod 3:13).
137. Ergas, *Shomer Emunim*, 2.17, 36c.
138. *Ibid.*, 36d. The relevant passages of Menaḥem Azariah of Fano that Ergas

cites or alludes to are from *Yonat Elem*, chs. 2, 12, and 20. See Menaḥem Azariah of Fano, *Sefer Ma'amerei ha-Rav Menaḥem Azariah Mi-Fano*, vol. 1, pp. 3, 16, 25.

139. Viṭal, *Eṣ Ḥayyim*, 1:2, 11b.

140. See Turner, *Darkness of God*, p. 35. For discussion of this theme in medieval kabbalistic literature, see Katz, "Utterance," pp. 279–298; Wolfson, "Negative Theology," pp. v–xxii.

141. It is of interest to mention here the following comment in a work (*Shem Olam*, p. 12) attributed by some scholars to the colorful and controversial eighteenth-century figure Jonathan Eybeschuetz: "The words of the Ari, blessed be his memory, attest that the emanation was in time [*bi-zeman*]. . . . If this is so, then the beginning of the name YHWH is also in time. This is not the opinion of the Zohar or *Pirquei Rabbi Eli'ezer*, which prove that the name YHWH is eternal in its primordially [*qadmon be-qadmuto*] and it does not fall under time [*we-eino nofel taḥat zeman*], God forbid." See *ibid.*, p. 159: "The emanation, which [consists of] the garments [*ha-malbushim*], was not from eternity [*mi-qedem*], for they fall under time, as the Ari, blessed be his memory, wrote." *Ibid.*, p. 245: "If you say that the *sefirot* are eternal [*qadmonim*], you contradict the words of the Ari, blessed be his memory, who said that the emanation was in time [*bi-zeman*], and even *Adam Qadmon* of [the world of] creation [*beri'ah*] was in time, as is known." On the eternality of the *sefirotic* emanations, see *ibid.*, pp. 142, 156, 158, 174. The view that the ten *sefirot* were comprised in the potency of Ein-Sof is expressed in another work attributed to Eybeschuetz, *We-Avo ha-Yom el Ein ha-Hokhmah*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 955, fol. 112a.

142. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 4:4, 17d.

143. *Ibid.*, 18:3, 84c.

144. See n. 111, this chapter.

145. I borrow this expression from Rappaport, "Ritual," p. 12.

146. The kabbalistic understanding of time as attributable to the divine nature is reminiscent of the identification of Allah as time (*dahr*) attested in various dicta (for example, *fa inna Allāha huwa al-dahr*, "God himself is time") traceable to an old strand in the Islamic tradition, indeed, a tradition transmitted in the name of God as the speaker (*ḥadīth qudsī*): "God said: Man insults Me in blaming time (*dahr*); I am time (*Anā al-dahr*). In My hands is the command (*amr*), and I cause the alternation of night and day." See Bowering, "Ideas of Time," pp. 206–207. Consider also the remark of Ibn 'Arabī, *Divine Governance*, p. 240: "Our Master, the Messenger of Allah, said: Do not curse Time, for Allah is Time. pointing out that Allah's being is free from likeness or equals or partners, but is manifest in eternal time." For discussion of the ascription of temporality to the divine centered around the terms *dahr* (aeon) and *zamān* (time), see Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God*, pp. 128–132. In a manner strikingly analogous to the kabbalistic idea, time is treated in Sufi teaching as divine and related specifically to the nocturnal-diurnal oscillation. For similar implications in the Zoroastrian depiction of *Zurwān*, see n. 166, this chapter. The impact of the

Zoroastrian conception on Islamic perceptions of time is duly noted by Bowering, "Ideas of Time," pp. 211–212. See also Corbin, "Cyclical Time," pp. 115–172, esp. 144–151, and the comment regarding the Muslim tradition of the snake encircling the throne being "possibly identical with the cosmic snake usually associated with Zervan Akaranan (the god of uncreated time)" in Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology*, p. 185.

147. On the symbolic identification of the rabbinic idiom *seder zemanim* as *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, see Cordovero, *Or Ne'erav*, ch. 7, p. 65. Needless to say, Cordovero was not the first kabbalist to adopt this symbolism. See, for instance, Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1:22, p. 52; 4:5, p. 424.

148. This understanding of temporality underlies the comment of Cordovero's student Abraham Azulai, *Hesed le-Avraham*, 6:4, p. 244, that the reality of the different gradations of soul (*nefesh*, *ruah*, and *neshamah*) is "dependent on the time of the supernal coupling [*zeman ha-ziwwug ha-elyon*]." Azulai's point is that the precise disposition of the soul, created as a consequence of the union in the divine will, is determined by the constellation of forces above at the precise moment of conception below. This idea rests on the understanding of time articulated in the body of this chapter.

149. Cordovero, following a long-standing kabbalistic tradition, assumes a homologous relation between primal Adam and the Jewish male. See Wolfson, "Ontology," pp. 131–155. In the extended version of this study, which appears as the first chapter in *Venturing Beyond*, I cite and analyze some of the relevant Cordoverian texts. On this theme, see the independent study by Hallamish, "Relation to the Nations," pp. 289–311.

150. Cordovero, *Tefillah le-Moshe*, 190a.

151. It is of interest to compare Cordovero's view on the relationship between time and Torah to the explanation of the phrase *seder zemanim* in Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1:23, p. 54: "Time is subservient and compliant to Torah, for it was created by means of it, and thus it and everything that is beneath it are ready to be submissive to keepers of the Torah. Before Israel stood [at Mount Sinai] it was in the hands of the holy One, blessed be he, but after Israel stood and received the Torah, which is above time, it was given to them to abrogate his warnings from evil to good, to remove his judgment, and to restore it to its nature as it was prior to the primal sin by means of Torah, which is above the order of time."

152. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 4:6, 19d.

153. The distinction between "physical" time and "metaphysical" time that I have applied to kabbalistic ontology resonates with Newton's concept of absolute time, which he distinguishes from relative time. The latter is the measurable time kept by human devices, whereas the former is rooted in the everlasting duration of God's eternal being. See Craig, "Relativity," pp. 91–127; McGuire, "Predicates," pp. 92–94.

154. For discussion of this theme in kabbalistic literature, see Pachter, "Cir-

- cles and Straightness," pp. 59–90; English translation in idem, *Roots of Faith and Devequt*, pp. 131–184.
155. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 4:5, 18d.
156. Gruenwald, "Preliminary Critical Edition," p. 142, sec. 6.
157. For an extensive discussion of this text and its presumed author, see Sendor, "Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah," vol. 1, pp. 25–50.
158. Isaac the Blind, *Perush Sefer Yeşirah*, p. 6.
159. See Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 268–274.
160. Cordovero, *Sefer Yeşirah*, p. 70.
161. Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 2:6, 9d.
162. Wolfson, "From Sealed Book," pp. 145–178.
163. Moses ben Naḥman, *Perushei ha-Torah*, vol. 1, p. 15 (ad Gen. 1:2). See Wolfson, "By Way of Truth," pp. 110–111 n. 25. On the problem of creation and commentaries on *ma'aseh bere'shit* in thirteenth-century kabbalah, see Gotlieb, *Studies*, pp. 18–28, 59–87.
164. Idel, "Some Conceptions," pp. 163, 165.
165. *Zohar* 1:194a. For an extended discussion of the kabbalistic notion of time as an expression of the divine will, see Pedaya, *Naḥmanides*, pp. 274–313.
166. I am here influenced by the description of sacred time in Kristensen, *Meaning of Religion*, pp. 377–388, esp. 386–387. Kristensen focuses on the example of Zervan, the supreme God of Zoroastrianism, who is identified as infinite time and in whom opposites are united, transforming finitude into infinity and temporality into eternity. See Zaehner, *Zurvan*. It is of interest to recall in this connection the comments of Rubin, *Heidentum und Kabbala*, pp. 33–34, on the temporal implications of the designation *Atiqā*, the "ancient one," one of the zoharic terms for the uppermost emanation. Rubin links the kabbalistic symbol to archaic traditions regarding the divine nature of time, including the Zoroastrian deity, *Zurvan*, and the Greco-Roman *Chronos*, or *Saturn*.
167. *The Book Bahir* (hereafter *Bahir*), § 55, p. 151.
168. On the use of the term *binyan* to denote the sefirotic edifice, see Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, *Perush Shir ha-Shirim*, p. 483; Vajda, *Le commentaire d'Ezra de Gérone*, pp. 169–170; Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, p. 49; idem, "Seridim ḥadashim," p. 222; commentary on creation by Joseph ben Samuel in Jacob ben Sheshet, *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, p. 193.
169. For instance, Moses ben Shem Ṭov de León, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, p. 6; *Zohar* 2:22a, 232a.
170. Moses ben Naḥman, *Perushei ha-Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 30–31 (ad Gen 2:1); vol. 2, pp. 166 (ad Lev 25:2), 413–414 (ad Deut 15:11), 486 (ad Deut 32:7). On the use of the related expression *yemei olam*, see *Perushei ha-Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 18 (ad Gen 1:7), 32 (ad Gen 2:5), 416 (ad Exod 21:6), and vol. 2, pp. 166 (ad Lev 25:20), 394 (ad Deut 11:18). On the technical terminology used by Naḥmanides to denote the divine conception of time manifest in creation, see Pedaya, *Naḥmanides*, pp. 213–232.

171. *Zohar* 1:3b. In *Zohar* 3:89b, the attribute of *Binah*, the third from the top, is called *shiv'at yamim*, “seven days,” since it comprises the lower seven *sefirot*, which are the supernal days that correspond to the days of creation.

172. *Zohar* 3:134b. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 283.

173. The expression *mi-qedem* can assume two connotations: “from the east” (the *sensus literalis* of the verse) and “from before” (the meaning assumed by Asher ben David).

174. Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 32a.

175. Asher ben David, *R. Asher ben David*, p. 75.

176. This word is lacking in the printed editions that I consulted (Berlin, 1850 and Warsaw, 1890). I have restored it on the basis of the citation of Azriel's passage in Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1:8, p. 17.

177. See n. 111, this chapter.

178. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush Eser Sefirot*, 4a. See also “R. Azriel of Gerona—*Perush ha-Tefillah*,” p. 22: “The supernal, elevated things are called the order of creation [*sidrei bere'shit*], the times [*zemanim*] are from the potency of mercy [*koah rahamim*].” For the French translation, see Sed-Rajna, *Commentaire sur la liturgie quotidienne*, p. 71. For a learned presentation of the philosophic (mostly Neoplatonic) and gnostic elements that may have contributed to the representations of time in Azriel's treatises, see Gavarin, “Conception of Time,” pp. 309–336. Although the rabbinic idiom *sefer zemanim* is not used explicitly, it is implied in the interpretation of Genesis 1:5 in Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, *Perush Shir ha-Shirim*, p. 506.

179. This paradox is reiterated by Azriel in his explanation of the term *eser sefirot belimah* in *Perush Sefer Yesirah*, p. 453: They are called *sefirot* “because they are the potency of everything delimited in the quantity of ten,” and the adjective *belimah* denotes that “they are the opening to the infinite, for God cannot be fathomed, he has no substance [*mahut*], and he is without-whatness [*belimah*].”

180. See the comment of Judah Loewe of Prague, *Be'er ha-Golah*, vol. 1, 4:16, p. 533: “The time that was before [creation] is the order of time [*sefer zemanim*], not a particular time [*zeman meyuhad*], for if there were a particular time, Scripture would have mentioned it, but rather the order of time, that is, the matter of time [*inyan ha-zeman*].” For other relevant passages in Maharal's oeuvre, see the sources provided by the editor, op. cit., nn. 1278–1279.

181. *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:1, pp. 1–2, 8:2, p. 57; *Exodus Rabbah*, 30:9; *Leviticus Rabbah*, 19:1, pp. 412–413; *Song of Songs Rabbah*, 5:7, p. 131.

182. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, pp. 101–102.

183. See comment of Tishby, in Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, p. 102 n. 17.

184. I have translated the passage as it appears in the published version of Azriel's text; see following note for reference. The text reconstructed in *Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, Naso, 24, is slightly different (parallel sources are noted by Buber, op. cit., p. 37 n. 121). The interpretation attributed to Rav is ascribed



therein to Simeon ben Yoḥai, which is posed as an alternative explanation attributed to Rabbi, “in every place that it says ‘and it was’ [wa-yehi], it is something novel [*davar ḥadash*].”

185. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, p. 113.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

187. On *apokastasis* in the early kabbalah, see Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 298, 470; *idem*, *Major Trends*, pp. 224 and 402 n. 65. See also the more recent analysis in Pedaya, *Nahmanides*, pp. 233–273.

188. The expression *sheva qeṣawwot maqom* is attested in a manuscript version (MS Moscow, Guenzburg 133, from late-fifteenth- or early-sixteenth-century Germany) of the long recension of *Sefer Yeṣirah* 4:3. See Gruenwald, “Preliminary Critical Edition,” p. 157, sec. 38; Asher ben David, *R. Asher ben David*, p. 84. The more accepted reading is *sheva qeṣawwot*, which correspond to the seven double letters, one of the three divisions of the twenty-two Hebrew letters according to the second part of *Sefer Yeṣirah*. As the relevant passage makes clear, the seven extremities comprise the six directions (above, below, east, west, north, and south, which are designated as the “six extremities,” *shesh qeṣawwot*; see also 1:13) and the holy palace that is set in the middle. Azriel’s usage is preceded by Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona, *Perush Shir ha-Shirim*, pp. 488 and 507. It is of interest to note that in the commentary to this passage in *Sefer Yeṣirah*, which preserves the teachings of Isaac the Blind, the seven doubles are described as the “inner realities,” *penimiyyot*, which have branches, *anafim*, corresponding to the “seven days, seven weeks, seven years, and seven sabbaticals.” The author of this statement places the focus on the temporal as opposed to the spatial implied by the “seven extremities of place.” See Gavarin, “Conception of Time,” p. 310.

189. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush ha-Aggadot*, pp. 80–81.

190. The convergence of time and space in kabbalistic doctrine has been noted independently and with a different emphasis by Pedaya, “Divinity as Place and Time,” p. 85.

191. This is not to deny that some kabbalists expressed a monistic orientation, but, in my judgment, those who did so were more inclined to an acosmism that denies the independence of the world vis-à-vis God, rather than to a pantheism that undermines the transcendence of God vis-à-vis the world.

192. Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, cited in Weeks, *German Mysticism*, p. 222.

193. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 130, 135–138.

194. Abulafia, *Sha’ar ha-Razim*, p. 58.

195. Karo, *Sefer Maggid Mesharim*, pp. 53–54.

196. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

197. For reference, see n. 162, this chapter.

198. That is, following the oral tradition of the masoretic reading (*qeri*), *we-lo eḥad ba-hem*, “and to him one belongs,” as opposed to the orthographic tradition (*ketiv*), *we-lo eḥad ba-hem*, “and not one of them.”

199. Haver, *Pitḥei She’arim*, pt. 1, *Seder ha-parṣufim*, § 10, 84a.

200. Gruenwald, "Preliminary Critical Edition," p. 140, sec. 1.

201. The expression is derived from the Aramaic blessing uttered by a Galilean (*galila'ah*) before Rav Hisda as it is preserved in Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 88a: *Berikh raḥamana dihav orya'n telita'i le-am telita'i al yedei telita'i be-yom telita'i be-yarḥa telita'i*, "Blessed be the merciful one who gave the threefold Torah to the tripartite nation through the agency of the one who is third on the third day of the third month." This motif is found elsewhere in rabbinic texts, expressed, however, in the equivalent Hebrew formulation, *torah meshulleshet*. See Midrash Tanḥuma, Yitro, 10, p. 317; *Pesiḳta de-Rav Kahana*, 12:13, pp. 213–214; Midrash Mishle, ch. 22, pp. 153–154. From these passages it is clear that the threefold character of Torah refers to the Tanakh, the tripartite division of the canon: *torah*, *nevi'im*, and *ketuvim*.

202. Zohar 3:288b, 289a, 289b (*Idra Zuṭa*). In Zohar 1:65a, there is reference to the "will that is not known," which is also depicted as the "head that is more concealed above."

203. Ḥaver, *Piṭṭei She'arim*, *Gadlut di-ze'eir anpin*, § 36, 53b.

204. Ibid., *Seder ha-parṣufim*, § 10, 83b. See *ibid.*, *Netiv Olam ha-Tiqqun*, §§ 9–10, 68a–69b.

205. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a.

206. That is, Hadar, the last of the eight kings who reigned in the land of Edom according to the delineation in Genesis 36:31–39.

207. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 17a.

208. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, Introduction, 11b, and compare passage from *Ra'aya Meheimna* in Zohar 2:116a.

209. Mishnah, Avot 1:13.

210. Elijah ben Solomon, *Be'ur ha-GR"A le-Sifra di-Ṣeni'uta*, p. 38.

211. See discussion in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 365–366.

212. Ibid., pp. 95–105.

213. The expression I have translated as "governs" is *rakhiv al*, which literally means "rides upon." My rendering reflects a metaphorical meaning of the semantic root *rkhh* known in the time of the composition of this kabbalistic treatise. A likely source would have been Maimonides, *Guide*, 1.70, p. 171; see discussion in Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 44–45.

214. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 70, 122b.

215. Both connotations, "ascend to" and "vanish in," are implied by the root *slq*.

216. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 9b.

217. Elijah ben Solomon, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Be'ur ha-GR"A*, 141b.

218. The kabbalistic gnosis, it seems to me, is conveyed by the Vedic wisdom expressed in the *Maitrāyana-Brahmana-Upanishad*, 6:14, cited in Müller, *The Upaniṣads*, vol. 2, p. 317: "he who worships time as Brahman, from him time moves away very far."

219. Menaḥem Azariah of Fano, *Yonat Elem*, ch. 38, in *Sefer Ma'amerei ha-Rav Menaḥem Azariah Mi-Fano*, vol. 1, p. 48.

220. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 89, 107, 111, 112, 114–115, 119, 123, 126–134.

221. Babylonian Talmud, Mo'ed Qatan 28a.

222. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, *Book of Mirrors*, pp. 266–267. On *Keter* as the source of time, see the comment of David ben Yehudah, op. cit., p. 194. I will not concern myself with the aspect of temporality linked to the kabbalistic conception of cosmic cycles (*shemittot*). For a brief background of this idea, see *Book of Mirrors*, introduction, pp. 31–33.

223. The thematic connection between liturgical worship and temporality expounded by medieval kabbalists should be seen as a sensitive attunement to the rabbinic institution of three daily statutory prayers. This is not the opportune place to elaborate on this issue, but suffice it to say that from a phenomenological standpoint the rabbinic conception of prayer, modeled on the priestly sacrificial rite, is intricately bound with the diurnal and nocturnal patterns of time. For discussion of the historical development of this rite, see Fleischer, “On the Beginnings,” pp. 397–441. Finally, it is worth recalling the insightful observation of Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 59: “prayer is not in time but time is in prayer.”

224. On the relationship of Ein Sof and *Keter* in the thought of David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, see *Book of Mirrors*, introduction, p. 22.

225. It should be mentioned that in *Book of Mirrors*, p. 264, the expression *olam ha-rahmim*, “world of mercy,” is applied to the upper three *sefirot*, as opposed to the first one exclusively.

226. Wolfson, “Beyond Good and Evil,” pp. 117–122.

227. *Zohar* 1:161b; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 233 and 375.

228. *Zohar* 3:134b (*Idra Rabba*).

229. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 270; Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 297.

230. Wolfson, “Gender and Heresy,” pp. 247–249; idem, “Beyond Good and Evil,” pp. 114–116. The kabbalistic notion of the single eye may be compared favorably to a similar symbol utilized by Böhme to depict the primal manifestation of the *Ungrund*, the mirror in and through which the imageless Absolute is manifest. See Koyré, *Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, pp. 331–336. On the possible kabbalistic influence in the writings of Böhme, see essays by Schulitz and Schmidt-Biggemann cited in ch. 1 n. 232.

231. An illustration of this conception is found in Shalom Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Quntres u-Ma'ayan mi-Beit ha-Shem*, p. 84: Time is linked to the emanative process from *Hokhmah* to *Malkhut*, the garbing (*hitlabshut*) of the light of intellect (or *ha-sekhel*) from the head to the feet of the divine anthropos; the will, which is linked to *Keter*, is not connected to any particular vessel or limb, and thus acts instantaneously and concurrently in the head and foot.

232. Haver, *Pithei She'arim*, *Netiv orot aḥor u-fanim de-atika qaddisha*, § 23a.

233. Gruenwald, “Preliminary Critical Edition,” p. 140, sec. 1; idem, “Some Critical Notes,” p. 483.

234. Compare the depiction of time in kabbalistic thought in Shoham, *Bridge to Nothingness*, p. 238, as the “breaking of the vessels, which signifies the exile into demiurgical temporality.”

235. Mosès, *L’Éros et la Foi*, pp. 43–64, esp. 55 where the author employs the expression that I have borrowed, “la matrice métasémantique.”

236. Isbell, “Divine Name Ehyeh,” pp. 101–118.

237. Bahir, § 49, p. 145, and see analysis in Wolfson, *Circle*, pp. 86–87. See also Offerman, *Kabbalah and Consciousness*, p. 53 n. 15: “The matriarchs are the spiritual or soul sources for space-consciousness, the patriarchs are the source of time-consciousness in the psyche.” It is reasonable to consider the kabbalistic perspective in light of the general Western perception encapsulated in the slogan “Father Time,” which is conjoined to “Mother Nature.” For discussion of this image, see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 69–91, and, more recently, Griffiths, *Sideways Look at Time*, pp. 294–318. It is also pertinent to recall here the image of truth as the daughter of time. See Saxl, “Veritas Filia Temporis,” pp. 197–222; Yates, *Astraea*, p. 80. In *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 69, 101b, the androgynous nature of time is cast in terms of the distinction between the “hour” (*sha’ah*), which is feminine, and the “day” (*yom*), which is masculine. See Elijah ben Solomon, *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar im Be’ur ha-GR”A*, 115b: “Man [*adam*] and time [*zeman*] correspond to male and female, spirit and soul [*ruah we-nefesh*] . . . in time itself the day [*ha-yom*] is male and the hour [*sha’ah*] is female. Therefore *yom* is grammatically masculine and *sha’ah* is feminine.”

238. I have explored this matter in many studies. Here I shall note the most recent sustained analysis, which has the merit of making more explicit the connections between kabbalistic phallocentrism and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory: “Circumcision, Secrecy, and the Veiling of the Veil,” pp. 58–70, and the expanded version in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 111–141.

239. It is worth mentioning the injunction to the priests (Exod 28: 42–43) to wear linen breeches to cover their genitals, literally, the “flesh of nakedness,” *besar erwah*, lest they enter the tabernacle in an immodest posture and bring upon themselves a death decree. Perhaps it would be fruitful to consider these verses in relation to the death of Nadab and Abihu.

240. *Zohar* 3:58a–b.

241. *Ibid.*, 58b. It is instructive to compare the thematic nexus of prayer and the mystery of time related to the divine in zoharic texts and the comments in *Mysteries of Purity*, pp. 184–185. Ibn al-‘Arabī relates the esoteric gnosis to the qur’ānic verse “Allah’s is the command before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice” (30:4).

242. Also relevant is the verse *koh amar yhwah be-et raṣon anitikha u-ve-yom yeshu’ah azartikha*, “Thus said the Lord: In a moment of favor I will answer you, and on the day of salvation I will help you” (Isa 49:8). It is of interest to consider the principle derived or linked exegetically to this verse by Abraham bar Hiyya, *Hegyon ha-Nephesh ha-Atzuvah*, p. 80: “The holy One, blessed be he, does not heed

the prayer of man in accordance with the will of the worshipper but rather in accordance with the will of his Creator, as it is written 'As for me, may my prayer come to you, O Lord, at a favorable moment' (Ps 69:14), a moment in which the will is before you [et she-yihyeh raṣon mi-lefanekha]."

243. Needless to say, the word *et* has a long history in Hebrew texts, beginning in scripture where it is used to designate events of time perceived not chronologically but as distinct manifestations of divine volition. See Brin, *Concept of Time*, pp. 39–48, 294.

244. *Zohar* 3:58a.

245. See, by contrast, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 21, 43a, where the expression *itto de-saddiq* refers to *Yesod* and not to *Shekhinah*. In *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 69, 101b–102a, there is a lengthy discourse on the symbolic identification of *Shekhinah* and time, related especially to the word *et*; the monthly lunar cycle is divided into 28 *ittot*, 14 from the side of mercy and 14 from the side of judgment, which are linked exegetically to the 28 occurrences of the word *et* in Ecclesiastes 3:2–8. On the association of the term *et* and *Shekhinah*, and a decoding of the expression *itto* as referring to the union of *Shekhinah* and *Yesod*, in the thirteenth-century Spanish kabbalist Joseph Gikatilla, see Wolfson, "Fore/giveness," pp. 165–166 n. 11.

246. *Zohar* 1:80a.

247. *Zohar* 1:73b, 148b.

248. Wolfson, "Re/membering," pp. 214–246.

249. Baer, *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1, pp. 256–257, 259–260. See also Assis, "Sexual Behavior," pp. 25–59, esp. 27.

250. *Zohar* 3:57b. See the passage from the *Ra'aya Meheimna stratum* in *Zohar* 3:33b–34a, where the "strange fire" is interpreted as cohabiting with a menstruating Jewish woman; insofar as Christian women are always in the status of menstruating women, the interpretations are thematically congruous; in *Zohar* 3:37b, the different explanations of the sin of Nadab and Abihu are cited.

251. *Zohar* 1:116b. See *ibid.*, 194a.

252. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 100–101; Böwering, "Ideas of Time," p. 88. A similar image is attested in the Buddhist tradition, where the weapon of Indra, the thunderbolt or diamond cutter (*vajra*), is utilized to depict the "non-conceptual, ever-fresh awareness, supreme and indestructible," the discerning vision that cuts through obstructing elements to make a space for the "primordial state of pure and total presence." See Manjusrīmitra, *Primordial Experience*, pp. 73–74.

253. Suhrawardī, *Mystical and Visionary Treatises*, p. 91.

254. Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 369.

255. In some zoharic passages, the sword functions as an androgynous symbol and thus it is associated with *Yesod*, the phallic gradation, which comprises male and female. In other contexts, the image of the sword is associated more specifically with *Shekhinah* in the feminine facade of divine judgment, though

even in this case the female is portrayed in decidedly masculine, even phallic, terms, the “sword that shall execute the vengeance of the covenant,” *herev noqemet neqam berit* (Lev 26:25); expressed otherwise, the symbolic figuration of judgment is the feminine dimension of the male. See Tishby, *Wisdom*, p. 1365; Wolfson, *Circle*, pp. 87 and 204 nn. 36–37.

256. Zohar 1:221b. In a section from the Tosefta stratum printed in Zohar 2:27b–28a, the scriptural image of *lahat herev ha-mithappekhet*, “fiery ever-turning sword” (Gen 3:24) is applied to both Binah and Malkhut, the former insofar as “it changes from judgment to mercy to bestow upon the righteous their reward in the world-to-come,” and the latter insofar as “it changes from mercy to judgment to judge the wicked in this world.”

257. The point is made in slightly different terminology in the commentary of Nahmanides to the scriptural expression “this is the blessing,” *we-zo’t ha-berakhah* (Deut 33:1), *Perushei ha-Torah*, vol. 2, p. 491: “By way of truth, ‘this’ [*we-zo’t*] is the ‘blessing’ [*ha-berakhah*], ‘for from the Lord this [*zo’t*] was’ (Ps 118:23), and, similarly, with respect to Jacob it is said ‘and this [*we-zo’t*] is what their father said to them’ (Gen 49:28). ‘This is the blessing’—this is what was spoken by David, ‘This [*zo’t*] has been my lot, for I have observed your precepts’ (Ps 119:56). This alludes to Zion, the city of David, ‘there the Lord ordained blessing, everlasting life’ (ibid., 133:3), and the enlightened will comprehend [*we-ha-maskil yavin*].” Nahmanides reads the expression *we-zo’t ha-berakhah* as an appositive rather than constructive, that is, *zo’t* is the *berakhah*, thereby forging an essential link between *Shekhinah* and blessing, a link that is dependent, moreover, on the fact that *Shekhinah* is like a vessel that holds the overflow of the blessing received from the emanations above her. At the conclusion of the relevant passage, Nahmanides draws the obvious conclusion: “for the word ‘this’ [*zo’t*] alludes to the blessing [*berakhah*], which is the Torah, and this is the covenant [*berit*], as it is written ‘this is my covenant’ [*zo’t berit*] (Isa 59:21).”

258. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sefer ha-Gevul*, MS JTSA Mic. 2197, fol. 25b.

259. In Zohar 2:51a, the verse *be-zo’t yavo aharon el ha-qodesh* (Lev 16:3) is cited to anchor the idea that the way to approach the king is through the angelic mediator, *sheliha de-malkka be-kholla*, “the angel of the king in all things.” This angelic being, also designated by the technical terms “angel of God,” *mal’akh ha-elohim* (Gen 31:11; Exod 14:19, Judges 6:20, 13:9; 2 Sam 14:20), and “guardian of Israel,” *shomer yisra’el* (Ps 121:4), refers symbolically to *Shekhinah*, the symbolic referent of the pronoun *zo’t*. While there is nothing explicit or implicit in this passage to justify positioning the divine presence in the corona of the phallus, it seems to me nevertheless reasonable to presume that the gender of the angelic glory, which is the glorious angel, is masculine.

260. Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Quntres u-Ma’ayan*, p. 113.

261. For a more detailed exploration of this theme, see Wolfson, “Re/mem-bering,” pp. 224–226; idem, “Cut That Binds,” pp. 103–106.

262. Ricchi, *Yosher Levav*, 15a.
263. Ibid.
264. *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, ch. 7, 82b.
265. For an elaboration of the philosophical underpinnings of my thought, see Wood, "Time-shelters," pp. 224–241.
266. The kabbalistic conception of time is based on the intermingling of temporality and luminosity; the motion of the infinite light refracted through the prism of the emanations produces the sensibility of duration. For an interesting conceptual analogue, see Huyghe, "Color," pp. 129–165.
267. Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 25a.
268. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Imrei Binah*, 40c.
269. Wolfson, "Divine Suffering," pp. 121–135; idem, "Gender and Heresy," pp. 254–262; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 181–186, 382–388.
270. See, for instance, Isaac the Blind, *Perush Sefer Yeşirah*, p. 2.
271. Regarding this rudimentary tenet of rabbinic halakhah, see Wegner, *Chattel or Person*, p. 152; Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood*, pp. 164–165.
272. The locution "day that is entirely long," *yom she-kullo arokh*, which is attested in earlier medieval sources (for instance, *Tosafot ha-Ro'sh*, Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 13a), is based on the more frequently used rabbinic designation for the eschatological state, the "world that is entirely long," *yom she-kullo arokh*, which parallels the expression "world that is entirely good," *olam she-kullo tov*—terminology that is linked exegetically to the reward mentioned in conjunction with the command to honor one's parents, "that you may endure, and that you may fare well," *lema'an ya'arikhun yameikha u-lema'an yitav lakh* (Deut 5:16). See Babylonian Talmud, *Qiddushin* 39; *Hullin* 142a. And compare Palestinian Talmud, *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77b, where the related turn of phrase, "future that is entirely long," *atid she-kullo arokh*, appears as a parallel to "the world-to-come that is entirely good," *le-olam ha-ba she-kullo tov*. In that context, the exegetical reference is the scriptural reward for setting the mother bird free when taking the fledglings from the nest, "in order that you may fare well and have a long life," *lema'an yitav lakh we-ha'arakhtta yamim* (Deut 22:7). Mention should also be made of the related eschatological expression "day that is entirely Sabbath," *yom she-kullo shabbat*. See Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a; *Sanhedrin* 97a; *Tamid* 3b; *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, version A, ch. 1, 3a. On the designation of the world-to-come as the "elongated world," *olam arokh*, see the passages from the *Ra'aya Meheimna* stratum of zoharic literature, *Zohar* 3:215b, 232a, 252b.
273. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Imrei Binah*, 40c.
274. Ibid., 40d. Cf. Dov Baer's formulation in *Derushei Ḥatunah*, p. 676: "And it is known that this is the aspect of the effluence [*beḥinat ha-hamshakhah*] that surrounds the supernal Keter, which is called by the name YHWH, it was, it is, and it will be [*hayah howeh we-yihyeh*], above the aspect of time and place [*lema'alah mi-beḥinat zeman u-maqom*], for it has not yet come in the aspect of the disclosure of the light and overflow for the sake of the coming-into-being of the worlds from

nothing to something [beḥinat gilluy or wa-shefa bishevil hithawwut ha-olamot me-ayin le-yesh].”

275. Pirquei Rabbi Eli’ezer, ch. 3, 5b.

276. The idiom *ke-lo ḥashiv* is derived from the expression *ke-lah ḥashivin* used in Daniel 4:32 to denote the powerlessness of the nations vis-à-vis God, but the source that is likely to have influenced the acosmic orientation of Habad is the following description of God in *Zohar* 1:11b: “He is the master and ruler, the root and source of all worlds, and everything before him is considered as nothing [we-khola qameih ke-lo ḥashivin], as it is said, ‘all the inhabitants of the earth are considered as naught’ (Dan 4:32).” For similar language, compare the depiction of the splitting of the sea in *Zohar* 2:170a-b, “When the will rose before him, everything was considered before him as nothing [kola qameih ke-ayin hu ḥashiv].”

277. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Liqqutei Torah*, Pinḥas, 70c.

278. On the justification of applying spatial and temporal images to the world of sefirotic emanations, see the comments of Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-Sha’ah Shehiqdimu*—5672, vol. 1, pp. 338–340.

279. Based on the liturgical formulation *yhwh malakh*, *yhwh melekh*, *yhwh yimlokh le’olam wa’ed*. See the first section of Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Seder Tefillot; *Zohar* 1:34a, 2:223a (*Ra’aya Meheimna*), 252a (*Ra’aya Meheimna*).

280. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah Or*, 37a. See also idem, *Liqqutei Amarim*: Tanya, pt. 2, ch. 7, pp. 162–163. See *ibid.*, pt. 1, ch. 25, p. 62, where the divine light, garbed in the souls of Israel, is described as “not being in the aspect of time at all [beḥinat zeman we-sha’ah kelal], for it is above time [lema’alah me-ha-zeman], and it governs and rules over it as is known.” See *ibid.*, pt. 4, ch. 7, p. 219.

281. For a representative list of sources, see Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Liqqutei Torah*, Devarim, 16; Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Derekh Mišwotekha*, 73a; idem, *Or ha-Torah*, Bemidbar, vol. 3, pp. 884, 996.

282. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Perush ha-Millot*, 59c.

283. Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, *Sefer ha-Ma’amarim*—5685, p. 186; “The existence of place and time is from the aspect of Malkhut, as it is written, ‘Your kingship is an eternal kingship and your dominion is for all generations’ [malkhutekha malkhut kol olamim u-memshalttekha be-khol dor wa-dor] (Ps 145:13), ‘eternal’ [olamim] is the aspect of place and ‘generations’ [dor wa-dor] the aspect of time. Everything is from the aspect of Malkhut, and the root of roots is the aspect of Ze’ir Anpin, as they said, ‘there was a prior order of time’ [she-hayah seder zemanim qodem lakhen].”

284. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 341.

285. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Liqqutei Amarim*: Tanya, pt. 2, ch. 7, 82a. See *op. cit.*, pt. 1, ch. 33, 42a, and pt. 2, ch. 6, 81a; idem, *Liqqutei Torah*, Pinḥas, 79b; Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Or ha-Torah*, Bemidbar, vol. 3, p. 918; idem, *Ma’amarei Admur ha-Ṣemaḥ Ṣedeq* 5614–5615, p. 82; Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-Sha’ah Shehiqdimu*—5672, vol. 2, p. 932. A particularly interesting formulation is found in Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Derekh Mišwotekha*, 124b: “He, blessed



be he, is one, and the existence of the world and all that is in it is annihilated [batel bi-meši'ut] to the point that God, blessed be he, is the only thing that exists. It is not that we are saying that there is here no world at all, God forbid, but that according to the truth the annihilation of the world is like the annihilation of the splendor of the sun when it is in the body of the ball of the sun [lefi ha-emet bitlul ha-olam hu ke-vittul ziv ha-shemesh ke-she-hu be-guf kaddur ha-shemesh].” See n. 289, this chapter.

286. Shneur Zalman of Liady, *Liqqutei Torah*, Shelaḥ, 37d: “As it has been explained in another place [with reference to] ‘the Lord is God’ [yhwḥ hu elohim] (Deut 4:35, 39; 1 Kgs 8:60, 18:39; 2 Chron 33:13), the contraction [šimšum] of the name Elohim is itself an aspect of YHWH. . . . Thus with the proliferation of the concatenation the complete contraction comes to be and the great concealment that is concealed in the aspect of the divine potency that sustains the world and it is garbed in many and abundant garments, for [the word] *olam* is from the term *he’elem*, as is known.” For a more contemporary articulation of Habad acosmism, see Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, *Torat Menaḥem: Derushei Ḥatunah*, p. 36: “This is [the meaning of] ‘He planted a tamarisk [at Beer-sheba], and there he invoked the name of the Lord, the everlasting God [wa-yiqra sham be-shem yhwḥ el olam]’ (Gen 21:33), for the world [*olam*] and divinity [*elohut*] are one, for the world is nature [*teva*], but the truth is that nature itself is divinity, and this is [the import of] ‘and there he invoked the name of the Lord, the everlasting God,’ YHWH and Elohim are wholly one, as YHWH is disclosure and Elohim is numerically equivalent to *ha-teva*, for it is the divine light that is hidden like a matter that is submerged in water . . . nature covers the divine light but the essence is divinity.”

287. See n. 111, this chapter.

288. Menaḥem Mendel Schneersohn, *Or ha-Torah*, Bemidbar, vol. 3, p. 996.

289. See references cited in n. 285, this chapter. See Shmuel Schneersohn, *Liqqutei Torah: Torat Shmu’el*, *Sefer* 5627, p. 435: “If existence were by means of the name YHWH alone, the worlds could not have come to be in the aspect of a being that is a separate entity [*yesh we-davar nifrad*] as they are now, but rather they would have been utterly nullified [*betelim be-takhlit ha-bitlul*] like the annihilation of the ray of the sun in the sun. In order for the worlds to be in the aspect of a being that is a separate entity, it is by means of the name Elohim, which conceals and hides the name YHWH, even though ‘YHWH is Elohim’ [see n. 286, this chapter], and everything is one.” And see op. cit., p. 96; idem, *Liqqutei Torah: Torat Shmu’el*, *Sefer* 5632, vol. 2, p. 384; idem, *Liqqutei Torah: Torat Shmu’el*, *Sefer* 5633, vol. 1, p. 32; Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-Sha’ah Shehiqdimu—5672*, vol. 3, p. 1473.

290. Consider the formulation of Dov Baer Schneersohn in his *Aṭeret Ro’sh*, p. 12: The source of time is located in the aspect of *Malkhut* within *Ein Sof*, which prior to the withdrawal (*šimšum*) is found in *Keter*, the “simple will that arose in thought” (*raṣon ha-pashuṭ she-alah ba-maḥshavah*) that comprises “all that will be after the withdrawal” (*kol mah she-attid lihyot aḥar ha-šimšum*).

291. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Derushei Hatunah*, p. 638.
292. See, for instance, Menahem Mendel Schneersohn, *Or ha-Torah*, Bemidbar, vol. 3, p. 884: "This is the aspect of the year [*shanah*] for the root of the becoming of time [*shoresh hithawwut ha-zeman*] is from the aspect of this efflux that comes forth in the aspect of running-and-returning [*raṣo wa-show*] (Ezek 1:14), which is the withdrawal and the expansion [*histalqut we-hitpashtut*], and by means of this time comes to be." See also Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Be-Sha'ah Shehiqdimu—*5672, vol. 1, pp. 339–340.
293. Elijah ben Solomon, *Be'ur ha-GR" A le-Sifra di-Ṣeni'uta*, p. 122.
294. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah Or*, 13d.
295. For discussion of this exegetical tradition, see Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name," pp. 77–112.
296. Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 32b.
297. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah Or*, 13c–d.
298. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 270.
299. In Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah Or*, 85c–d, Shneur Zalman describes Moses drawing forth the efflux from the aspect of *erekh appayim* so that Israel would be forgiven even though or precisely on account of the fact that they did not merit this grace on the basis of their deeds. Nonetheless, Shneur Zalman insists that there still had to be a reason to explain why the people of Israel were worthy of this superfluity of mercy.
300. See the extended discussion in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 190–260.
301. Shmuel Schneersohn, *Liqqutei Torah: Torat Shmu'el, Sefer 5627*, p. 38.
302. See n. 205, this chapter.
303. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Liqqutei Torah*, Bemidbar, 4b–c.
304. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 58a.
305. Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 25a.
306. Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a.
307. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Torat Hayyim: Shemot*, 234a.
308. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Perush ha-Millot*, 59c.
309. On the eternity of time in the will of the Creator, see also Shmuel Schneersohn, *Liqqutei Torah: Torat Shmu'el, Sefer 5627*, pp. 38 and 85.
310. Dov Baer Schneersohn, *Torat Hayyim: Shemot*, 457a–b; idem, *Perush ha-Millot*, 67c.

### Chapter Three

1. For the most comprehensive bibliography to date on scholarship relevant to the study of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, see *Bahir*, pp. 293–336.
2. Sallis, "Doublings," p. 120.
3. The Hebrew pronoun is in the feminine case, but I have opted not to translate it as "she" in order not to confuse readers by inadvertently suggesting that the letter symbolizes a female potency. Letters do assume gender characteristics

in the *Bahir*, but in this context the use of the feminine gender must be taken simply as a grammatical point, without theosophic or mythic implications.

4. The bahiric symbolism is related thematically and exegetically to several rabbinic passages centered on the question why the world was created with *beit*, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which is the first letter of Torah, presumed by the authors of the relevant texts to be the instrument and matrix of creation. See, for instance, *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:10, pp. 8–9; Palestinian Talmud, *Hagigah* 2:1, 77c; *Pesiqta Rabbati*, vol. 1, 21:52, pp. 502–503. In other midrashic passages, where the exegetical focus is on *anokhi*, the first word of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2), it is emphasized that Torah begins with *alef*. See *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:10, p. 9; *Pesiqta Rabbati*, vol. 1, 21:56, pp. 506–507.

5. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104a. In the teaching on the *alef-beit* attributed to the “infants” (*darddaqei*), *gimmel* and *dalet* are interpreted as *gemol dallim*, to bestow charity on the poor. See also *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, p. 345: “If there is no *gimmel*, there is no *dalet*; if there is no *dalet*, there is no *gimmel*. If there is no charity (*gemilut hasadim*), there would be no poor (*dallim*); if there are no poor in the world, there would be no charity.” On the link between *dalet* and *dal*, see *Bahir*, § 19, p. 129.

6. *Bahir*, § 13, pp. 123–125.

7. For discussion of this presumably older mythical structure in the bahiric anthology, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 73–75. In that context, I also explore the alternative expression of this mythologoumenon, which relates the totality of divine potencies to the three letters of the word *ish* (*alef*, *yod*, *shin*), “man.” The prooftext cited as biblical support for the anthropomorphic portrayal of God is “The Lord is a man of war” (Exod 15:3). See *Bahir*, § 18, p. 127, and the later reworking of this passage in § 84, p. 171. Finally, mention should be made of the interpretation of the letters of the divine name offered by Arnaldo de Villanova in *Allocutio super Tetragrammaton*, which was composed in 1292: *yod* refers to the Father, which is described as the “principle without beginning” (*principium sine principio*), *waw* to the Son, which is the “principle of beginning” (*principium ex principio coeternum*), and *he* to the Holy Spirit that emerges from the first two principles. See Scholem, “Beginnings,” p. 25. Although the doctrine of ten potencies became the prevalent theosophic view as kabbalah evolved in the thirteenth century, vestiges of the older mythologic structure are discernible. This is so, for instance, in the approach attested in zoharic literature (especially prominent in the *Idrot strata*) whereby the Godhead is depicted as comprising three configurations (*paršufim*): *Arikh Anpin* (or *Atiqā Qaddisha*), *Ze’ir Anpin*, and *Haqal Tapuḥin Qaddishin*, which correspond to the hybrid of *Ein Sof* and *Keter* (represented in some passages by the image of three heads), the sefirotic edifice from *Hokhmah* to *Yesod*, and *Malkhut*. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 270; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 245–246; Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 170–171 n. 65; Wolfson, “Constructions,” pp. 46–53. On the correlation of these configurations and the three obligatory meals of Sabbath, see *Zohar* 2:88b. The link between this zoharic pas-

sage and the trinity in Sabbatian theology was noted by Tishby, *Studies in Kabbalah*, p. 955. On the triadic representation of the Godhead, see the account of the arrayment (*tiqqun*) of the letter *alef* in *Zohar Hadash*, 60d, into a *yod* above (implied and not mentioned explicitly), *waw* in the middle, and *dalet* below: “The image and mystery of Adam in two forms, the head above is the primordial point that ruled over everything through the inscription, for it is crowned to disseminate below. *Waw*, which is the secret and image of Adam, he and his spouse, the *dalet* below that is attached to his side, and this is the perfection of Adam.” For a different decomposition of the orthography of *alef*, see ch. 4 n. 23.

8. The letter *alef* is connected to *ro’sh* as well in *Bahir*, § 18, p. 127 (see previous note).

9. In the enumeration of the ten utterances (*ma’amarot*) in *Bahir*, § 96, p. 181, the second, which is identified as *hokhmah*, is also given the name *re’shit*, the beginning (linked to Ps 111:10).

10. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, p. 26. For an alternative English rendering, see *Star of Redemption*, p. 24.

11. See ch. 1 n. 233.

12. The association of “origin” and the “way of negation” in Rosenzweig’s thinking reflects Hermann Cohen’s account in his *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* (1902) of the “principle of origin” (*Ursprungsprinzip*) as the nothing (*das Nichts*) that constitutes the “true abyss of thought” (*Abgrund für das Denken*), the not-being (*Nicht-sein*) that is the fount of being (*Sein*). For Rosenzweig, as for Heidegger, the idealist conception proffered by Cohen is mythologized as a narratological recounting of the springing forth of a pre-cognitive nothing, the unthinkable negativity of ontological difference, the particularity of the unassailable nought that severs the dialectic identity of thought and being. See Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, pp. 48–51, 169. For discussion of these themes in Heidegger, see White, “Ontology,” pp. 95–102.

13. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* p. 152. See idem, *Basic Concepts*, p. 92 (*Grundbegriffe*, p. 107): “The incipience [*Anfänglichkeit*] of being resists duration. But this very incipience withholds itself from what has been commenced [*Angefangenen*].” See n. 15, this chapter.

14. See Schürmann, *Heidegger*, pp. 120–151; Zarader, *Heidegger*, pp. 17–30; and the analysis of temporality and the problem of origin in Marrati-Guénoun, *La Genèse*, pp. 143–164, and Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl*, pp. 248–251.

15. The distinction between *Anfang* and *Beginn* figures prominently in Heidegger’s presentation of the destinal character of philosophy in the infamous Rectoral Address delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1933, *Die Selbst-behauptung der deutschen Universität*. For a translation see Heidegger, “Self-Assertion,” pp. 467–502, esp. 471–474. The distinction is elaborated further in Heidegger’s *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, delivered as a lecture course in the 1935 summer session at University of Freiburg and first published in 1953. For the political ramifications of this distinction, see Janicaud, *Shadow*, pp. 57–58. For a detailed analysis of Heidegger’s

thought as a philosophizing towards “another beginning” (*andersanfänglich*) and the specific role of the poet, see Marx, *Reason*, pp. 77–113.

16. Many texts could be cited in support of this claim, but I will offer here only one striking illustration. See Heidegger, *Basic Questions*, p. 133: “For thinking means here to let beings emerge in the decisiveness of their Being and to let them stand out before oneself, to perceive them as such and thereby to name them in their beingness for the first time.”

17. Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 269.

18. Spinoza, *Ethics*, pt. 2, prop. 7.

19. Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, p. 93 (*Grundbegriffe*, p. 108).

20. From Heidegger’s 1934/35 lecture on Hölderlin cited in McNeill, *Glance*, p. xviii. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 97, explains that the “pure intuitions” are “original,” for they are “presentations of what is intuitable which allow [something] to spring forth: *exhibitio originaria*.”

21. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 17 (idem, *Holzwege*, p. 1).

22. Benjamin, *Origin*, pp. 45–46.

23. Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, p. 93.

24. Ibid. (*Grundbegriffe*, p. 108).

25. It seems to me that the Heideggerian distinction between originary temporality and the ordinary conception of time may be relevant to articulate the temporal difference between origin/inception, on the one hand, and beginning, on the other. See Dastur, “Ekstatico-horizonal Constitution,” pp. 158–170; Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*, pp. 89–229; Boer, *Thinking*, pp. 61–77.

26. My articulation is based on Heidegger’s own description of *Anfang* in the Rectoral Address of 1933. See Heidegger, “Self-Assertion,” p. 473.

27. On affinities between Schelling and kabbalah, see nn. 57 and 67, this chapter.

28. For two different attempts to place Heidegger within a Jewish hermeneutical framework, see Zarader, *La Dette impensée*; Scult, *Being Jewish/Reading Heidegger*.

29. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 19–25.

30. Ibid., pp. xv–xxxi.

31. My formulation of the causal relation of the past to the future is indebted to Kalupahana, *Nāgārjuna*, p. 278. The relevant expression occurs in Kalupahana’s commentary to a passage in the nineteenth chapter of Nagarjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*.

32. See *Bahir*, § 33, p. 137: “It has been taught ‘the glory of God is to conceal the word’ (Prov 25:2). What is the ‘word’? ‘The beginning of your word is truth’ (Ps 119:160).” In this passage, a connection is made between the “beginning” and concealment of the word—or truth—appropriate to the divine glory. For a different interpretation of the image of the beginning of God’s word, which is related to the same verse, see *Bahir*, § 40, p. 141, and § 50, p. 147. On the connection between truth and the head, see *ibid.*, § 26, p. 131.

33. In *Bahir*, § 56, p. 151, the spinal cord (*ḥuṭ ha-shidrah*) is depicted in terms

similar to the *gimmel*, for it draws from the brain and disperses to the rest of the body. This text is discussed in ch. 4 at n. 34. See § 104, p. 187, where the seventh of the ten sayings is identified as the east of the world whence the seed comes to Israel, “for the spinal cord draws from the brain and comes to the penis and from there is the seed, as it is written, ‘from the east I will bring my seed’ (Isa 43:5).” On the spinal cord (linked to the palm branch, *lulav*, which is part of the four species of *Sukkot*), see also § 67, p. 159.

34. It is of interest to recall here the observation in Liesen, *Full of Praise*, p. 123, that in ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature the expression *me-ro’sh* has two meanings: the “temporal-empirical, referring to the first or most important position in a chain of events (‘beginning’), or logical-ontological, referring to a foundational event outside time (‘principle’).” My reading of the bahiric fragments advocates that the second meaning is intended by cognate terms such as *bere’shit* and *ba-ro’sh*.

35. The distinction between origin and beginning is cast in slightly different terminology in *Zohar* 3:26b, where the “primordial” one (*qadma’ah*), also identified as *Ein Sof*, is contrasted with the first, *ro’sh*, the “supernal point” (*nequdah ila’ah*), the “beginning of everything” (*reisha de-khola*), and the “concealed one that exists within thought” (*setima de-qayyama go mahshavah*). The beginning, which clearly should be identified with the attribute of *Hokhmah*, produces the “terminus” (*sof*), which is also identified as the “end of the word,” *sof davar*, that is, *Malkhut*. *Ein Sof*, in and of itself, is incomprehensible and it cannot be depicted by either beginning or end.

36. The view I have attributed to the bahiric passage can be profitably compared to the remark in Elias, *Death before Dying*, p. 56: “Those who find the Beloved in the letter *alef* need not open the Qur’an to read it. / When they blow with the breath of love, the curtains are pushed aside.” *Alif*, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, stands metonymically for Allah. The shape of the letter, a vertical line, is identical to the figure that signifies the number “one,” and hence it may be seen as symbolic of divine unity. The one God can be found in the breath of love that is outside and beyond the scriptural text. Analogously, in the bahiric parable, *alef* is the first that precedes Torah, which begins with *beit*, the beginning.

37. The matter of the tail of *beit* is repeated in what appears to be a somewhat garbled text in *Bahir*, § 11, p. 123: “To what may *beit* be compared? To a man who is created through wisdom, for he is closed on every side and opened in front. The *alef* is open from behind. He said: The tail of *beit* is open from behind it, for if it were not so man could not exist. Similarly, if not for the *beit* in its tail, the world would not exist.” For a later development of the bahiric imagery, see Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Me’irat Einayim*, pp. 12–13:

“In the beginning” [*bere’shit*] (Gen 1:1), the *beit* is enlarged, and similarly *Sefer Yesirah* begins “By means of thirty-two etc” [*bi-sheloshim u-shettayim*], for the *beit* alludes to

*Keter*, for it is the abode [*bayyit*] of all the *sefirot*, and thus it is enlarged. And there are those who say that the stem [*oqes*] of the *beit* instructs that there is one [*ehad*] that is prior to the beginning [*re'shit*], which is the nothing [*ayin*]. . . . The word [*bere'shit*] is crowned with the crown of the *beit*, which alludes to [the fact that] *beit* is *Keter*. Therefore the account of creation begins with *beit*, which alludes to *Keter*, which is Thought [*maḥshavah*], and everything is within it.

38. In *Bahir*, § 17, p. 127, reference is made to the light hidden by God until the suitable time. This aspect of the primordial light is deduced from the fact that the verse proclaims “Let there be light” (*wa-yehi or*), rather than “and there was light” (*we-hayah or*). The description of the light as “already having been” (*she-kevar hayah*), parallels the account of the *beit* as pointing with its tail to its source, *alef*.

39. See n. 5, this chapter. In *Bahir*, § 92, p. 177, the attribute of love, *middat ḥesed*, is attributed to Abraham, who was said to bestow kindness upon the world, *gamal ḥesed ba-olam*. This passage reflects the theosophic interpretation of the fourth, fifth, and sixth of the ten *sefirot* that was current amongst kabbalists at the time of the redaction of *Bahir*. The three attributes of the divine—love (*hesed*), fear (*paḥad*), and truth (*emet*)—are correlated respectively with the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See also §§ 129, 131–132.

40. The notion that *gimmel* is the realization of *alef* is possibly the intent of the enigmatic remark in *Bahir*, § 20, p. 129, regarding the relationship of *gimmel*, *dalet*, and *he*. According to that passage, *he* is formed by taking the top part of *gimmel* and the bottom part of *dalet*. The letter *he*, it seems, represents the fullness of divine wisdom, which may be the intent of the comment that there is an upper *he* and a lower *he*, an idea expressed elsewhere in the *bahiric* anthology in terms of an upper and lower *Shekhinah* (see n. 81, this chapter).

41. That is, the Torah, which begins with *bere'shit*, the first letter of which is *beit*.

42. In the verse, the word *yam* does not connote “sea,” but rather the westerly direction. I have rendered the biblical language, however, in light of the parabolic exegesis of the author of the *bahiric* text.

43. The connection between *beit* and blessing is made in earlier rabbinic sources. According to one especially noteworthy exegetical tradition, God created the world with *beit* and not *alef*, since the former is the first letter of the word *berakhah*, “blessing,” whereas the latter is the first letter of *arirah*, “curse.” See Palestinian Talmud, Hagigah 2:1, 77c; *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:10, p. 9; *Pesiqta Rab-bati*, vol. 1, 21:54, pp. 504–505.

44. There is no extant verse in Hebrew scripture to which this refers as noted by Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir*, § 3, p. 6 n. 2.

45. *Bahir*, § 3, p. 119.

46. For discussion of this and other *bahiric* passages with special focus on the nexus between secrecy and the gift, see Wolfson, “Hebraic,” pp. 156–167; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 158–161.

47. That is, *beit* and *bayit* have the same consonants in Hebrew.

48. The identical theme is expressed in slightly different terms in *Bahir*, § 43, p. 141. According to the parabolic image employed in that context, the one who wants to enter within the chambers of the king must first look or contemplate (*yistakkel*) the daughter in whom the king has placed all thirty-two paths of wisdom. On the application of the symbol of the house (*bayit*) to *Shekhinah*, which is also identified as *sukkot*, the temporary booths that commemorate the dwellings inhabited by the Israelites in their sojourn through the desert (Lev 23:43), see *Bahir*, § 74, p. 163. See also § 104, p. 189, where *Shekhinah*, associated with the west (*ma'arav*) since all the seed that comes forth from the east is mixed (*mit'arev*) within it, is referred to as the "house of the father." The utilization of the *beit* to signify the feminine potency is based, in part, on the rabbinic interpretation of the word *bayit* as a metaphorical reference to one's wife. See, for instance, *Mishnah*, *Yoma* 1:1, commenting on Leviticus 16:6, and the fuller discussion in Baker, *Rebuilding*, pp. 34–76.

49. The *bahiric* reflection on the orthography of *beit* being closed on three of four sides is based on a similar line of inquiry found in several rabbinic sources (attributed to R. Levi whose teaching was transmitted by R. Yonah), but in those contexts the shape of the letter is interpreted as an admonition that one should not engage in speculation regarding what is above, below, before, or after creation. See Palestinian Talmud, *Ḥagigah* 2:1, 77c; *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:10, p. 8; *Pesiqta Rabbati*, vol. 1, 21:52, pp. 502–503.

50. *Genesis Rabbah*, 68:9, pp. 777–778; *Midrash Tehillim*, 90:10, pp. 390–391.

51. *Bahir*, § 11, p. 123.

52. On the depiction of the feminine as a matrix for creation, see *Bahir*, § 117, p. 204: "The female is taken from Adam for the upper and lower worlds could not exist without a female."

53. For reference to and discussion of some of the relevant sources, see Boer, *Thinking*, p. 157.

54. Based on passages partially translated in Boer, *Thinking*, pp. 349–350 n. 28. For a skillful philological and philosophical account of *phusis* and the "initial essence of being," see Zarader, *Heidegger*, pp. 33–47. On presencing as the site of concealment in relationship to *techne* as bringing forth (*Hervorbringen*) and *phusis* as the emerging of things of their own accord, see McNeill, *Glance*, pp. 298–299.

55. Here my language reflects the technical term *Zeit-Raum* of Heideggerian thought, the time-space, the *abgrund*, which belongs to the essential sway of truth as the sheltering-enclosure. See Heidegger, *Contributions*, pp. 259–271.

56. The notion of determinate indeterminacy is embraced explicitly in *Bahir*, § 103, p. 187. The context wherein this appears is an enumeration of the seventh of the ten sayings (*ma'amarot*) that help one articulate the nature of being (see § 96, p. 181; see also § 32, p. 135). I will translate the relevant passage: "The seventh? There are only six. Rather, this teaches that here is the holy palace [*heikhal ha-qodesh*], it bears all of them, it is considered as two, and it is the sev-



enth. What is it? Just as thought has no end or limit, so this place has no end or limit.” The seventh, which is apparently in the position of the phallic potency according to a symbolic system attested in this section of the *Bahir*, the east whence the seed disseminates to *Shekhinah*, who resides in the west (see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape*, pp. 93–94) is here characterized in terms that parallel thought, which is the first of the emanations. The latter identification helps us date the material, as it belongs to the stratum of the text reflecting the theosophic symbolism regarding the infinite thought of the divine current in Provence and northern Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This thought is without end or limit and, analogously, the place of the seventh is without end or limit. Here, then, is a utilization of the principle of determinate indeterminacy, albeit with a different symbolic valence.

57. My formulation is indebted to Desmond, *Desire*, pp. 184–185. The ontological theme expressed by the shape of *beit* may also be expressed in terms of the convergence of freedom and necessity, that is, the concurrence of the open and closed aspects insinuates that within the Godhead there is no reason to dichotomize these two elements. God’s absolute freedom stems from the necessity of the divine nature and, conversely, the necessity of divine nature is determined by God’s absolute freedom. For an attempt to collapse the distinction between freedom and necessity in God in a manner that is consonant with kabbalistic ontology, see Schelling, *Ages*, p. 5. See n. 67, this chapter.

58. According to the masoretic text, *ha-olam* is written defectively, i.e., without a *waw*, and thus it can be vocalized as *he’elem*.

59. *Bahir*, § 8, p. 121.

60. Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 50a, *Qiddushin* 71a. There are some who think the word *olam* may in fact be connected etymologically to *alam*, that which is hidden. Through their midrashic playfulness the rabbinic exegetes may have retrieved something of the original intent of the notion of world in ancient Israel.

61. At the conclusion of the *bahiric* passage (see n. 59), the first three words of Torah are cited and explicated: “As it said ‘In the beginning God created’ (Gen 1:1). And what is ‘created?’ The needs of all (*sorkhei ha-kol*), and afterward God (*elohim*). And what is written after it? ‘Heaven and earth.’” The point of ending with this exegesis is to underscore that Torah, which is alluded to in the word *bere’shit*, was the first of all things fashioned. For a more detailed interpretation of this passage, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 72–73. I have modified my translation here in light of a new insight regarding the meaning of the text. See also *Bahir*, § 74, p. 163: “Why is Pentecost [*ašeret*, the rabbinic name for the holiday; see Mishnah, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:2; *Hagigah* 2:4] one [day]? For on it the Torah was given to Israel, and when the Torah was created initially [*re’shit*], the holy One, blessed be he, ruled in his world alone with it, as it is written ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord’ (Ps 111:10). He said, ‘This being so your holiness should be for you alone.’”

62. For references, see ch. 2 n. 181.

63. *Bahir*, § 4, pp. 119–121.

64. The imagery is repeated in *Bahir*, § 37, p. 139, but in that context it is also given an eschatological valence:

What is the *beit* at the end [of the word *zahav*]? As it is written, “Through wisdom the house will be built” (Prov 24:3). It does not say “was built,” but rather “will be built.” In the future, the holy One, blessed be he, will build her and adorn her two thousand times more than what she was, as it is said “Why is the beginning of the Torah with a *beit*?” As it is written, “I was with him as a confidant, a source of delight every day” (Prov 8:30), two thousand years, for the day of the holy One, blessed be he, is one thousand years. Therefore, the Torah begins with *beit*. The *beit* [of the word *bere’shit*] signifies two thousand and afterward is *re’shit*, as it is said “two thousand years belong to him,” for he is the beginning ([*re’shit*]).

65. According to the parable in *Bahir*, § 14, p. 125, God plants the tree that is called *kol*, “all,” so that the “entire world will take pleasure in it” (*lehishta’ashe’a bo kol ha-olam*). The end of that passage alludes to the “secret” that involves the *hieros gamos*, here depicted as God planting and rooting the tree in the ground. For discussion of this passage, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 71–72.

66. In this matter, kabbalistic symbolism is consonant with rabbinic theological speculation on the two primary attributes of God, mercy and judgment, a point I made briefly in one of my earliest published studies. See Wolfson, “Mystical-Theurgical Dimensions,” pp. 63–64.

67. A philosophical presentation of the kabbalistic dialectic is offered by Schelling, *Ages*, p. 6: “Therefore, two principles are already in what is necessary of God: the outpouring, outstretching, self-giving being, and an equivalently eternal force of selfhood, of retreat into itself, of Being in itself. That being and this force are both already God itself, without God’s assistance.” This is precisely what I have found to be the case in my study of kabbalistic documents. The dialectic of mercy and judgment, overflowing and containing, is the balance of life and the measure of eros even unto death. Interestingly, Schelling uses the language of “retreat” to characterize the force of selfhood, of being in itself as opposed to the self-giving being. According to the kabbalistic doctrine of *simšum*, the withdrawal of divine light, the holding in of the breath, is similarly understood to be an expression of limitation, demarcation, and the setting of boundary, qualities that are associated with the traditional attribute of judgment. I have dealt with the matter extensively in “Divine Suffering.” A number of scholars have noted Schelling’s indebtedness to kabbalah, whether transmitted directly or through an intermediary. For references, see ch. 1 nn. 219, 225, 233.

68. Compare *Bahir*, § 15, pp. 125–127. In the parable preserved in this passage, reference is made to the spring, the garden, and the fruit-bearing tree

planted in the garden and sustained by the “spring overflowing with living water” (*ma’ayan nové’a mayim ḥayyim*). See *ibid.*, § 82, p. 169, where the spring is described as possessing twelve pipes, which correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. On the twelve springs, see also § 111, p. 197. In § 105, p. 189, the king is said to have seven gardens and in the middle garden there is a “beautiful spring that flows from the source of living water” (*ma’ayan na’eh nové’a mi-maqor mayim ḥayyim*). See also § 121, p. 205, where the “pipe” is linked exegetically with the verse “You are a garden spring, a well of living waters that flows from Lebanon” (Song 4:15).

69. In *Bahir*, § 90, p. 175, the mythical conception of *sha’ashu’a* is depicted in the image of the troops of the king who bemuse themselves (*mishta’ashe’im*) with the Matrona secluded in his chamber.

70. See Wolfson, *Circle*, pp. 124–125 n. 6 and 190 n. 175; *idem*, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 271–287.

71. *Bahir*, § 34, p. 137.

72. The circle of mythopoeisis and scriptural exegesis has been an integral part of my understanding of kabbalistic hermeneutics. For a summary account, see Wolfson, “Images of God’s Feet,” pp. 143–144. See also Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, pp. 108–109.

73. It would be useful to compare the philological difference between *ḥad* and *beréshit* according to the bahiric exegesis and the distinction Ibn al-‘Arabī made in his theosophic explication of the basic Muslim profession of divine unity, *tawḥīd al-ulūḥa*, between *aḥad*, whence derives the word *aḥadiyya*, and *wāḥid*. See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 244–245.

74. Here it is of interest to note the following exegetical comment preserved in Palestinian Talmud, *Berakhot* 9:2, 13c–d: “R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah said, When the spirit [*ruah*] went out into the world, the holy One, blessed be he, broke it against the mountains and weakened it in the valleys, and he said to it, Be mindful not to harm my creatures. For what reason? ‘For spirit before me is faint’ (Isa 57:16).’ He weakened it as it is said ‘my spirit failed within me’ (Ps 143:4). Why to such length? R. Huna said in the name of R. Aḥa, ‘I am the one to create souls’ (Isa 57:16), on account of the souls that I have made.” It seems to me that implicit in this remark is a presumption regarding a potential conflict between God and spirit; accordingly, the latter is admonished not to harm the souls created by the former. It is curious that a gnostic reading of this verse also seems to be attested in the bahiric fragment. The matter requires more research.

75. In *Bahir*, § 96, p. 181, the first of the ten sayings, the supernal crown (*keter elyon*) is described as the “one of ones unified in all his names” (*ḥad ha-aḥadim ha-meyuḥad be-khol shemotav*). Although this belongs to a later stratum of the bahiric anthology, it expresses in more technical philosophic terms an older mythical notion.

76. I note the affinity to the bahiric perspective found in the chapter on duality in *De occulta philosophia*, one of the most influential Renaissance compendia on

esoteric wisdom, composed by Henry Cornelius Agrippa and published in 1521: “Binarius primus numerus est, quia prima multitudo est. . . . Binarius autem primum unitatis germen et prima procreatio” (Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, 2.5, p. 257; I have also consulted *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, p. 245). The “first number” (*primus numerus*) is “two” (*binarius*) because it is the “first multitude” (*prima multitudo*), that is, it is two, not one, even though it is first and not second, and hence it is appropriate to refer to the number two as the “first branch of unity” (*primum unitatus germen*) and the “first procreation” (*prima procreatio*). Agrippa further describes two as the “number of connubiality and sex” (*numerus connubii et sexus*), as there are two sexes, masculine and feminine, an idea expressed figuratively in the image of two doves (*columbae bina*) that produce two eggs, out of the first emerges the masculine and out of the second the feminine (*ex quorum primo masculum, ex secundo foeminam excludunt*). The number two, moreover, is spoken of the “middle” (*medietas*) since it has the capacity to “partake of good and evil” (*bona malaque participans*), the “beginning of division” (*principium divisionis*), “multiplicity and distinction” (*multitudinis et distinctionis*), that which “signifies matter” (*significat materiam*). A consequence of the characterization of two as the principle of division is that negative images are associated with it, to wit, discord, misfortune, confusion, strife, boldness and even the devil. Agrippa concludes the chapter by delineating a series of items drawn from Hebrew and Greek scripture as well as from cosmological structures that typologically symbolize the dual nature of two, a verbal delineation that is accompanied with a *scala binarii*, a diagram of the different applications of the number, which has in the center of the top row the words Yah [*yod-he*] and El [*alef-lamed*], *nomina Dei duarum literarum*, “names of God expressed in two letters” (*De occulta philosophia*, 2.5, pp. 258–259; *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, pp. 245–247). It should be noted that the diagrams describing the characteristics of numbers that accompany each chapter begin with a Hebrew name or names for God composed of the exact number of letters, for instance, Shaddai is associated with the number three and YHWH with the number four.

77. The anonymous reading is preserved in MS Munich 209, which was used as the basis for the German translation of Scholem and the critical edition of Abrams. In MS Vatican, Or. Barb. 110 (as noted by Abrams in the critical apparatus *ad locum*), the statement is attributed to R. Ḥiyya. In the *editio princeps* (Amsterdam, 1651), which is reproduced in *Bahir*, p. 269, the statement is attributed to R. Ḥama.

78. Mishnah, Pe’ah 1:1, Avot 1:2; Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 8b; Sukkah 49b; Makkot 24a. See *Midrash Zuṭa le-Ḥamesh Megillot*, Ecclesiastes 7:2. According to the dictum reported there in the name of R. Levi, study of Torah leads to acts of kindness.

79. In *Bahir*, § 65, p. 159, the expression “sea of wisdom,” *yam ha-ḥokhmah*, is used to name the attribute that is also referred to as the “earth” or “precious stone,” and corresponding to it is the blue that is used in the fringe garment, a

hue that is reminiscent of the sea, the heaven, and the throne of glory (based on the teaching attributed to R. Meir in Babylonian Talmud, *Menahot* 43b). This passage seems to reflect the doctrine of ten potencies. Accordingly, the attribute designated by these terms is *Shekhinah*, the tenth of the *sefirot*. The older myth, in my opinion, identified the second of the three potencies as the sea that is Torah, the fullness of divine wisdom. In light of this tradition, it is of interest to consider the comment, which apparently is from the period of redaction, in *Bahir*, § 111, p. 197: “The holy One, blessed be he, at first gave them well-springs of water and afterward he gave them stones. . . . What is the reason? For at first the Torah in the world was compared to water and afterward it was fixed in a set place, which is the not the way of water, for today it is here and tomorrow it moves on.”

80. See, however, *Bahir*, § 128, p. 211. Interpreting the rabbinic dictum (*Mishnah*, *Avot* 2:5) that a layman (*am ha-ares*) cannot be a saintly person (*hasid*), the author of the *bahiric* text writes: “How can one do kindness with his master? Through study of Torah, for he who studies Torah bestows kindness upon his master, as it is written ‘riding the heavens through your assistance’ (*Deut* 33:26). That is to say, when you study Torah for its own sake, then you assist me and I ride the heavens, and consequently ‘through the skies in his majesty’ (*ibid.*). What are the skies [*shehaqim*]? I would say the chamber of chambers [*hadrei hadarim*].” In contrast to § 34, where the nexus between Torah study and *gemilut hasadim* was explained in terms of the human being drawing benefit from the divine attribute of mercy, in § 128, it is God who benefits from the human act, which bestows kindness. More specifically, in the latter passage, the theurgical principle is embraced whereby the activity of the human being facilitates the union of the divine, which is portrayed in the scriptural language of God’s riding the heavens in his majesty, *ga’awah*. I propose that this term is employed here as a euphemism for the phallus and that the expression *hadrei hadarim*, which is the meaning offered for *shehaqim*, refers to the female genitals. See *Bahir*, § 85, p. 171. On the term *ga’awah* in earlier Jewish mysticism and its resonance in German Pietistic literature, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 13–14, 57, and reference to other scholarly works given on p. 125 n. 88. In that study, I was hesitant to offer a phallic interpretation of *ga’awah*, but it appears to me that such an explanation is warranted, especially in the passages from the Rhineland Jewish pietists. On the theurgical role accorded Torah study as a means to unite the masculine and feminine potencies of the divine, see *Bahir*, § 137, p. 221, and analysis in Wolfson, *Circle*, pp. 10–13.

81. The characterization of wisdom as light (either explicitly or implicitly) occurs in a number of passages in the *bahiric* anthology. See *Bahir*, §§ 10 and 12, p. 123; § 17, p. 127; and especially § 116, p. 201: “He sat and expounded to them, ‘There is *Shekhinah* below just as there is *Shekhinah* above.’ What is this *Shekhinah*? I would say that it is the light that emanated from the first light, which is wisdom. It, too, surrounds everything as it says ‘the earth was filled with his

glory' (Isa 6:3)." On the description of *Shekhinah* as the light taken from the "first light," which is identified as the "fear of the Lord," and hidden away for the righteous, see § 131, p. 215. See also § 133, p. 219.

82. In *Bahir*, § 71, p. 161, the pillar that connects heaven and earth and sustains the world is identified as the righteous one (*ṣaddiq*). See also § 85, p. 171, where the souls of the righteous are described as issuing from the "spring" (*ma'ayan*) to the "great pipe" (*ṣinnor ha-gadol*) whence they cleave to the tree. The righteous ones of Israel below serve as a catalyst to incite this process. In § 105, p. 189, the eighth of the ten sayings is identified as the righteous one that is the foundation of the world. The activities of sustaining the world and making it prosper associated with this attribute resemble the description of *gimmel* in § 13, p. 125.

83. Palestinian Talmud, *Berakhot* 9:2, 14a; *Genesis Rabbah*, 13:13, p. 122. Also relevant for an appreciation of the medieval kabbalistic symbolism is the fact that the gender attribution of the upper and lower waters is expressed together with the notion that the water that falls from heaven is masculine and the earth that is irrigated thereby is feminine. See *Pirquei Rabbi Eli'ezer*, ch. 5, 13a.

84. For discussion of this mythical structure and the conjecture regarding its archaic provenance, see Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 73–74.

85. Here my language reflects Heidegger. See, in particular, *Contributions*, p. 137.

86. A source for this geometric symbolism that became so crucial in the evolution of kabbalistic thought is found in *Bahir*, § 83, p. 169.

87. The passage from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is cited from Kalupahana's translation in *Nāgārjuna*, p. 162.

88. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p. 3.

89. A number of scholars have reconsidered the origins and evolution of the pivotal kabbalistic doctrine of *ṣimṣum*, withdrawal and/or contraction. To date, the most comprehensive study is Idel, "On the Concept." Idel, *op. cit.*, p. 71, suggests that the image of cutting through the rocks in *Bahir*, § 4, which is found as well in a number of thirteenth-century kabbalistic texts, may allude to a doctrine of *ṣimṣum*. In his argument, Idel did not mention the exegesis of Isaiah 48:9 in the same *bahiric* passage, but my interpretation corroborates his suggestion.

90. It is of interest to wonder whether the reference to this verse implies a technical application of the term *a'rikh appayim*—or the nominative form to which it is undoubtedly related *erekh appayim* (Exod 34:7)—to the aspect of God that is also referred to as the name (*shem*) and the glory (*tehillah*). According to the interpretation I have accepted, these terms denote the feminine potency of the divine, which is also symbolized as wisdom or Torah. Here it must be recalled that in kabbalistic texts from the *zoharic* period the highest aspect of God is designated by the term *arikh anpin* and the lower aspect by *ze'ir anpin* (see n. 7, this chapter). According to some sources, the latter term is applied to *Shekhinah*,

which is the feminine persona. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 119 and 135, and Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 110–114.

91. On the distinction between *tehillah*, “praise,” and *tefillah*, “prayer,” see *Bahir*, § 46, p. 143.

92. Vestiges of what I assume is a much older myth that has had a profound impact on the formation and evolution of kabbalistic symbolism can be found in the bahiric anthology. See *Bahir*, § 12, p. 123 (in that passage, the parabolic image of the king preparing a crown to rest on the head of his son prior to creating his son is employed to explain the notion that light preceded the world), § 61, pp. 153–155, and § 72, pp. 161–163. In my scholarly writings, I have returned to this theme repeatedly, interpreting it as a mythic portrayal of the gender transformation of the fallen female through her restoration to the head of the male. See, for instance, Wolfson, “Coronation,” pp. 301–344. For discussion of some of the applicable bahiric passages, see Green, *Keter*, pp. 134–150.

93. In *Bahir*, § 49, pp. 145–147, time is depicted in terms of the polarity of night and day with the latter being contained in the former. I have analyzed this passage in *Circle*, pp. 86–87.

94. Heidegger, *Basic Problems*, p. 228.

95. *Bahir*, § 90, pp. 175–177. For translation and analysis, see Wolfson, “Hebraic,” pp. 164–165.

96. Wolfson, “Hebraic,” pp. 157–162; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 155, 161–163.

97. I have touched on the implicit narcissism of the kabbalistic understanding of eros as it relates to both the intradivine process and the human-divine relationship. See Wolfson, *Speculum*, pp. 369–372; *Circle*, pp. 60–74, 107–110; “Eunuchs,” pp. 164–174; *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 129–130, 135–136, 271–287, 324–332.

98. See Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan, pp. 75–76; Julien, Jacques Lacan’s Return, pp. 174–175.

99. Salecl, (Per)versions, pp. 59–78, esp. 63–64.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

## Chapter Four

1. The attribution of coldness to the woman is based on the ancient association of coldness and water. Consider the remark of Aristotle *De Generatione et Corruptione* 2.3, 331a5, that water is characterized more by coldness than fluidity. For extended discussion of this Aristotelian text, see Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones* 1.1–2.15, pp. 37–40; and the recent analysis in Mayhew, *Female*, pp. 40–41.

2. *Bahir*, §§ 57–58, pp. 150–153. See my analysis in *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 165–167.

3. That is, the letter-name *mem* in Phoenician and Hebrew can be traced to the zigzag Egyptian hieroglyphic for water. This ancient symbolism is reflected in the second part of *Sefer Yeşirah*, where the three matrix letters, *alef*, *mem*, and *shin*, are correlated respectively with the elements of air, water, and fire. Interestingly, the influence of the water symbol of *mem* is discernible in the Greek letter *mu*, and, in an Orphic verse describing Zeus, *mu* is combined with *alpha* and *omega* to signify “beginning, middle (*meson*), and end.” See Barry, *Greek Qabbalah*, pp. 77–78, 181. Consider the reworking of Isaiah 44:6 in Revelation 1:8. The passage is discussed in chapter 5. In Revelation 21:6, the depiction of God as *alpha* and *omega* is associated with the image of the “fountain of the water of life” (based on the expression *meqor mayyim hayyim* in Jer 2:13). On the role of water to mark both the beginning and end of the ministry of Jesus, see Jones, *Symbol of Water*, pp. 36–88, 178–218.

4. Literally, “the abdomen.” In *Bahir*, § 87, p. 173, it is stated that all of the twenty-two Hebrew letters with the exception of *ṭeit* are comprised in the ten *sefirot*. The reason given for this exclusion is to instruct one that “*ṭeit* is the *beṭen*.” Presumably in this context as well, *beṭen* signifies the womb and not the stomach. If this assumption is granted, then the exclusion of *ṭeit* from the *sefirot* should be interpreted in misogynist terms. The use of *beṭen* to refer to the womb is attested already in biblical Hebrew (Gen 25:23, 24, 30:2, 38:27; Deut 7:13, 28:4, 11, 30:9; Judges 13:5, 7, 16:17; Isa 13:18, 46:3, 49:15; Jer 1:5; Ps 22:11, 71:6, 127:3, 132:11, 139:13; Job 1:21; Eccles 5:14). The usage is attested in medieval Jewish polemical texts as well, which lends support to my explication of the *bahiric* text. See, for example, the passage from *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon Yashan* (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century), published in *Jewish-Christian Debate*, p. 68 (English section; original text in Hebrew section, p. 27): “Certainly, then, you who err in saying that something holy entered into a woman in that stinking place—for there is nothing in the world as disgusting as a woman’s stomach [*ke-veṭen ishshah*], which is full of feces and urine, which emits discharge and menstrual blood and serves as the receptacle for man’s semen—you will certainly be consumed by ‘a fire not blown’ [Job 20:26] and descend to deepest hell.” A similar usage is attested in medieval Judeo-Arabic polemical literature. See Lasker and Stroumsa, *Polemic of Nestor*, vol. 1, pp. 53, 67; and the corresponding original texts in vol. 2, pp. 28, 51.

5. *Bahir*, § 46, p. 143.

6. See *ibid.*, § 66, p. 159, where masters of esoteric wisdom—the “righteous” and “pious” in Israel—who can theurgically elevate God through prayer are identified as those who pledge their hearts to be removed from mundane matters. The ascetic dimension affirmed here fits in well with what we know about Provençal kabbalists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from other sources. See Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 229–233; Twersky, *Rabad*, pp. 25–29; and Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 26–34. See also *Bahir*, § 95, p. 181, where reference is made to the capacity of the enlightened (*maskilim*) in Israel who know



the “secret of the glorious name” (*sod ha-shem ha-nikhbad*) to be answered in their prayers.

7. Maimonides, *Guide*, III.51, p. 621.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 627. On the contemplative pietism advocated by Maimonides, see Rawidowicz, *Studies*, pp. 269–304; Blumenthal, “Maimonides,” pp. 1–16; Fishbane, *Kiss of God*, pp. 24–30; Benor, *Worship of the Heart*, pp. 52–53; Gordon, “Erotics,” pp. 1–38.

9. Another interesting similarity between the *bahiric* passage and Maimonides is the nexus established between prayer and emptying the mind of all mundane matters. Particularly germane is the definition of liturgical intention in *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Tefillah* 4:16. See preliminary remarks in Wolfson, “Mystical-Theurgical Dimensions,” p. 74 n. 131. It is of interest to note that one of the earliest kabbalists in Provence, Asher ben David, links the contemplative approach to prayer in Maimonides to the ancient pietistic ideal of meditation, which resonates with the kabbalistic orientation enunciated in his day. See Asher ben David, *R. Asher ben David*, pp. 80–81; and analysis in Wolfson, “Beneath the Wings,” pp. 226–228.

10. Consider, for instance, the remarks of Nahmanides, Joseph ben Todros Abulafia, and Meir Halevi Abulafia, cited and analyzed by Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, pp. 93–94; Jacob ben Sheshet, “*Sefer Sha’ar ha-Shamayim*,” pp. 22–24, 75–76, 116–117; Vajda, *Recherches*, pp. 357–371; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 950–952; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 397–398 n. 154; *idem*, *Origins*, p. 382; Isaac of Acre, *Sefer Me’irat Einayim*, pp. 58–61, 411 n. 32, 414 n. 16; Moses de León, *Book of the Pomegranate*, pp. 391–392; Matt, “Mystic,” pp. 374–375; Wolfson, “Mystical Rationalization,” pp. 249–250.

11. Scholem, “Concept of Kavvanah,” pp. 165–180; *idem*, *Origins*, pp. 42–49, 51–55, 299–309, 414–430, 946–951; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 946–949; Brody, “Human Hands,” pp. 123–158; Mopsik, *Les Grands Textes*, pp. 88–95; Wolfson, *Speculum*, pp. 288–306; Pedaya, *Name*, pp. 73–102; *idem*, *Vision*, pp. 137–207.

12. See, for instance, *Zohar* 2:213b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, sec. 70, 122b (cited in ch. 2 n. 214).

13. For a more elaborate discussion, see Wolfson, “Negative Theology,” pp. v–xxii.

14. I note, parenthetically, that in medieval Hebrew usage the term “hearing” does not always have an aural implication. On occasion, to “hear” means to read, a connotation that stems from the philological fact that hearing metaphorically signifies understanding, as well as from the social practice of reading in the Middle Ages in the form of listening to oral recitation of a written text. See Wolfson, “Beyond the Spoken Word,” pp. 196–197.

15. *Bahir*, § 47, p. 145.

16. *Ibid.*, § 3, p. 119, and discussion in chapter 3.

17. There is no unanimity in the *bahiric* text, let alone kabbalistic literature

more generally, on this epistemological issue. On balance it seems right that the visual and auditory poles cannot be completely separated. Phenomenologically, synesthesia is the operative term as the object of contemplation is seen as heard and heard as seen. Being is configured concurrently and coextensively as letter and light. See Wolfson, *Speculum*, pp. 287–288.

18. Bahir, § 48, p. 145.

19. See Pedaya, “Provençal Stratum,” pp. 149–153.

20. The impact of the contemplative ideal of mystical worship is evident as well in Bahir, § 60, p. 153. In that passage, the one who visually contemplates the chariot, *ha-mistakkel bi-ṣefiyyat ha-merkavah*, is contrasted with one who ascends in thought, *alah ba-maḥshavah*. The reading in MS Munich 209, fol. 11a, reproduced in Bahir, p. 152, is *ha-mitpallel bi-ṣefiyyat ha-maḥshavah yarad we-aḥar kakh alah*, “the one who prays through the vision of thought descends and subsequently ascends.” In the margins of the manuscript, however, the first three words are corrected to *she-ha-mistakkel bi-ṣefiyya[t] ha-merkava[h]*, “for the one who contemplates the vision of the chariot.” In my judgment, the marginal emendation is correct; the author of the passage wanted to contrast the meditational technique of contemplation of thought and the visualization practice of gazing upon the chariot. The expression “descend,” *yarad*, is used in conjunction with the latter since the visionary field has a terminus; by contrast, *yarad* cannot be applied to thought since it is without limit and therefore impervious to visual terminology, as the continuation of the passage makes clear: *ba-maḥshavah leit bah ṣefiyyah kelal we-leit leih takhlit we-khol deleit beih sof we-takhlit leit lehu yeridah*, “With respect to thought there is no vision at all and it has no terminus, and anything that has no end or terminus has no descent.” The traditional idiom applied to God, *kakh alah ba-maḥshavah*, “thus it arose in thought,” assumes mystical significance in the bahiric text, as the ascension in thought depicts the contemplative ideal. See Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 129–130; Pedaya, “Provençal Stratum,” pp. 154–155.

21. Isaac the Blind, *Perush Sefer Yeṣirah*, p. 4. See *ibid.*, p. 3, where it is said of the divine thought, the first of the emanations, that it has no measure, *akh ha-maḥshavah ein lah shi’ur*. The possible Neoplatonic background of these formulations has been noted by Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 270–277.

22. On the identification of *alef* as the holy palace, see Bahir, § 84, p. 171. See also § 103, p. 187, where the “place” of the holy palace, the seventh of ten *ma’amarot*, is described as having “no end or limit” in the manner of “thought that has no end or limit” (*maḥshavah she-ein lah sof we-takhlit*).

23. See, for instance, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, introduction, 16b; *Zohar Ḥadash*, 107b (*Tiqqunim*); and discussion in Wolfson, “Constructions,” pp. 45–46 n. 111.

24. For references to this symbolism in earlier rabbinic sources, see ch. 3 n. 4.

25. The bahiric text was understood this way by later kabbalists, as may be adduced from Jacob ben Sheshet, “*Sefer Sha’ar ha-Shamayim*,” p. 104:

It begins with *alef*, for one [*ehad*] is their root, “the Lord is at their head” (Micah 2:13), and this corresponds to an inner and hidden essence [*hawayah*

penimit we-nisteret], “bolted and barred” (Josh 6:1), ascending way above wisdom, “no one among us who knows how” (Ps 74:9) it is united without end or limit . . . and it is called “will” [raṣon], for the creator does not change as he alters every matter, from construction to destruction and from destruction to construction, “he acts according to his will” (Dan 8:4), ‘his nothing is something, his something nothing’ [Sefer Yeṣirah 2:5].

26. Bahir, § 53, p. 149.

27. For references, see Wolfson, “Mystical Rationalization,” p. 224 n. 42. See following note.

28. In Bahir, § 84, p. 171, the ten sayings through which the world was created are said to be comprised within the Torah of truth (*torat emet*). See *ibid.*, § 94, p. 179, where *torat emet*, which is positioned within the attribute called “Israel,” is described as sustaining the ten sayings even though it is to be counted as one of them. See *ibid.*, § 87, p. 173, where the ten *sefirot* through which heaven and earth were sealed correspond to the ten commandments, which are described further as comprising the totality of the 613 commandments.

29. Bahir, §§ 54–55, pp. 150–151.

30. In Bahir, § 114, p. 199, the divine attributes are delineated as the “eight extremities” in man, to wit, left and right hands, left and right feet, head, body, penis, and the woman who is the mate of the man. Insofar as the body and the penis are considered to be one (*de-guf u-verit ḥad hu*), the eight can be reduced to seven. See also § 116, p. 201, where the seven holy forms of God are correlated with seven bodily parts in the human being, right and left thighs, right and left hands, penis (referred to as *guf bi-verito* suggesting that here the word *guf* is used to designate the male organ, which is given the name *berit*; see n. 36, this chapter), head, and the female counterpart who completes the male’s embodiment.

31. See, however, Bahir, § 95, p. 181, where the word *az* is interpreted as an allusion to the divine potencies, which are referred to as the ten sayings by means of which the world was created. *Alef* comprises the first three potencies and *zayin* the remaining seven. Interestingly, in that context, the “enlightened” (*maskilim*) in Israel who know the “secret of the glorious name” (*sod ha-shem ha-nikhbad*) can raise their palms to heaven in prayer, a possibility that is linked exegetically to the verse “Then, when you call, the Lord will answer” [*az tiqra wayhwh ya’aneh*] (Isa 58:9). The kabbalists know the secret of the name, which is translated into their worshipping by means of the ten emanations comprised in the word *az*. In my judgment, this passage reflects the theosophical conception that evolved in the period of the redaction of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, which presumed a plentitude of ten divine powers. See also *ibid.*, § 134, p. 219, where the request of Moses “Show me your glory” (Exod 33:18) is interpreted as a desire “to know the knowledge of the glorious name” (*leda yedi’at ha-shem ha-nikhbad*). In the continuation of the passage, this knowledge is explained more specifically as understanding how thought (*maḥshavah*) disseminates in the potencies (*koḥot*) of

the divine. The line of thinking is continued and extended in the comment attributed to Simeon ben Yoḥai in *Zohar* 1:65a about the nature of prayer as the means to ascertain the moment of transition in the Godhead from nothing to something, from silence to speech.

32. For instance, *Bahir*, §§ 39, p. 139; 105, p. 189; 114, p. 199; 116, p. 201 (in this context, the idiom of “seven holy forms” is employed to characterize the attributes of God that correspond to seven parts of the human body; see n. 30, this chapter).

33. In a number of studies, I have commented on the inseparability of the apophatic and kataphatic elements of the contemplative experience. See Wolfson, “Negative Theology;” idem, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 9–38; idem, “*Megillat Emet*,” pp. 58–62. See also Gerhart, “Word Image Opposition,” pp. 63–79.

34. *Bahir*, § 56, p. 151. On the androgynous nature of the elongated nun, see *Zohar* 1:18b–19a, 147a; 3:155a, 156b, 285b, 274a.

35. See *Bahir*, § 67, p. 159, where the spinal cord, which is correlated symbolically with the palm branch (*lulav*), the “crown of the tree” (*nof ha-illan*) or the “trunk of the tree” (*guf ha-illan*), is designated the “essence of the body” (*iqqar ha-guf*).

36. The word *guf* in *ibid.*, § 56, p. 151, should perhaps be understood as a circumlocution for the penis. The intent of the passage, then, would be that the brain overflows to the spinal cord, and from there the flux of energy spreads out to the male organ. Support for this reading can be adduced from § 104, p. 187: “the spinal cord draws from the brain of man and it comes to the penis [*ammah*] and from there comes the seed as it is written, ‘from the east I will bring your seed’ (Isa 43:5).” See also § 116, p. 201, where the main part of the penis is referred to as *guf bi-verito*; see n. 30, this chapter. And *ibid.*, § 126, p. 209, where the word “body” (*guf*) in the talmudic dictum that the messiah shall not come until “all the souls in the body perish” (Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 62a) is associated with the phallic potency of the divine, which is identified as the seventh attribute, the goodness of God, Sabbath, the eternally living one (*hei olamim*), the all (*ha-kol*) in whose hand is the treasury of souls (*oṣar ha-neshamot*).

37. It is possible that the phallic connotation of nun is related to the association of this letter with the demonic potency of the serpent (*naḥash*) in *Zohar* 3:180b. See Wolfson, *Along the Path*, p. 220 n. 158.

38. See *Bahir*, § 139, p. 223, where the palm-tree (*tamar*) is first identified as feminine and then as comprising masculine and feminine, for the branch of the tree is masculine and the fruit is masculine from the outside but feminine from the inside. The nucleus of the date is linked symbolically to the vagina, which in turn is associated with the power of the moon. In this passage, one discerns as well the ontological assumption regarding the containment of the female in the male.

39. *Ibid.*, § 58, p. 153.

40. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98b; *Pirquei Rabbi Eli’ezer*, ch. 32.

41. Scholem, *Origins*, p. 142.
42. Wolfson, "Woman," pp. 166–204; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 142–189.
43. Abulafia, *Christians*, pp. 81–85, 101, 108–113.
44. Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 84–86. The analysis here is based on my previous discussion. Compare the remark of Nahmanides in his report of the Barcelona disputation in 1263, translated in Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, p. 134: "The truth is that the Messiah will come and he will be completely human, the son of a man and a woman from their intercourse just like myself." On the possible influence of Marian veneration on the formation of the bahiric symbol of *Shekhinah*, see Schäfer, "Daughter," pp. 221–242; idem, *Mirror*, pp. 147–216. Although Schäfer refers to my study on the Jewish-Christian context of a central bahiric symbol-complex, he does not consider the dimension of my study that casts the issue in terms of the medieval setting. The lack of attentiveness is most apparent in Schäfer's summary of my view in *Mirror*, pp. 237–238, where he focuses on the part of my argument that proposes an ancient mythologoumenon but totally ignores the other part that addresses the issue of the presentation and modification of the older teaching in light of the twelfth-century milieu. See also the parenthetical comment of Schafer, "Jewish Mysticism," p. 18, that the "obviously Christian context" (emphasis in the original) of *Sefer ha-Bahir* "hasn't been explored at all." For another attempt to highlight the Marian dimension of kabbalistic representations of *Shekhinah*, see Green, "Shekhinah," pp. 1–52. Alas, Green, too, neglected to mention the work I have done that focuses on the complex relationship between Christian imagery and kabbalistic symbolism in general or the analysis of the bahiric symbolism in particular.
45. On the sense of disgust related to a presumed physical birth of the Son of God, which would entail both the pollution of the seminal flux and the impurities of the womb, see the extensive analysis in Cuffel, "Filthy Words," pp. 117–212.
46. An assault on the irrationality of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is not uncommon in medieval Jewish texts, and in some cases this mode of argument was meant to counter Christian polemicists who argued for the rational and naturalist conception of the virgin birth. See Cuffel, "Filthy Words," pp. 283–350; Chazan, *Fashioning*, pp. 264–265, 268–273, 334, 349–350.
47. *Bahir*, § 42, p. 141.
48. See Wolfson, "Circumcision, Secrecy," pp. 59–61.
49. I have translated the passage as it appears in *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva ha-Shalem*, p. 112. This version is based on the edition of the two recensions published by Wertheimer in *Battei Midrashot*, 2: 343–418. Regarding this passage, see Adler, "Un Fragment," pp. 129–130.
50. *Zohar* 1:2b.
51. Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 154–158.
52. Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name."
53. The point is sharpened by the reading preserved in MS Vatican Or. Barb.

110, which is transcribed in *Bahir*, p. 230: “The closed mem. What is it made like? Like a female, as the womb from above.”

54. See, however, *Bahir*, § 25, p. 131. In that context, the open mem is associated with the aspect of the head upon which is placed the crown or phylacteries. This attribute is also depicted parabolically as the throne upon which the king sits and the phylacteries that he places upon his arm. It seems that the text is describing the *hieros gamos* in the divine world through various images, including that of coronation, that is, the crown is feminine, and the head, or more specifically the open mem of the head, is the masculine. Scholem, *Origins*, p. 60, interprets the open mem as a symbol of the feminine. See also Stern, *Parables*, p. 221. For discussion of this bahiric parable and the other passages that utilize these images, see Wolfson, “Images,” p. 161.

55. The symbolic implication of the bahiric passage is made explicit in later kabbalistic texts. See, for example, *Ṣemaḥ*, *Ṣemaḥ Ṣaddiq*, 37b: “the covenant is garbed in the secret of the feminine [*hitlabshut ha-berit be-sod ha-neqevah*] and then there is rectification of the world [*tiqqun ha-olam*] and his opening overflows.”

56. This is the locution of Paul in Galatians 4:4. See Dunn, *Christology*, pp. 38–44.

57. Mopsik, “Body of Engenderment,” pp. 49–73.

58. *Zohar Ḥadash*, 72b–c. See also *Zohar* 1:34b; 3:155b, 236b (*Ra’aya Meheimna*); *Zohar Ḥadash*, 120b (*Tiqqunim*); *Hebrew Writings*, pp. 36–37. For a similar analysis based on a different zoharic passage, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 146–152.

59. *Zohar Ḥadash*, 72c.

60. *Ibid.*

61. An interesting exception is found in the Sabbatian teaching promulgated by Israel Ḥazzan, disciple of Nathan of Gaza, in his *Perush Tehillim*, MS Budapest-Kaufmann 255, fol. 110a:

In the account of the chariot itself, in the beginning of its existence, there is an allusion to the closed mem, that is, the two *ḥetin* that are joined together and covered by the straight line [*qaw ha-yashar*], and they are made like two *daltin* and two *yodin*, and the two *daltin* form a closed mem, that is, the closed door [*delet ha-nisggeret*], “This is the gate to the Lord the righteous will enter through it” (Ps 118:20), for to be included in the inner light of each and every world it is necessary to enter through the mem, which consists of the two doors [*delatot*], for in the entrance of every sacred edifice [*binyan qodesh*] there must be two doors just as there were in the Temple [Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 8a]. Moreover, it says there that it is already known that when the messianic king arrives the lower space [*ha-tehiru ha-tahton*] will be rectified, and then there will be as in the essence of the beginning of thought the mem closed in the entirety of the withdrawal.

For a parallel account with slight variations, see Nathan of Gaza, *Sefer ha-Beri’ah*, MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1581, fols. 27b–28a.

62. For a later development of the zoharic symbolism, see *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*. 79d. In that context, the messiah, who is designated the “ruling archon” (*sar ha-moshel*), is linked symbolically to the closed *mem* in the middle of the word *le-marbbēh* (Isa 9:6) and to the final *mem* of *adam*. See *Zohar* 1:34b.

63. Martin, *Pugio Fidei*, pp. 531–532; see also p. 452. The thematic link between the passage from *Pugio Fidei* and the *Bahir*, as well as some passages from *Zohar*, are duly noted by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 148–149. For a lucid exposition of the historical and literary background of *Pugio Fidei*, see Chazan, *Daggers*, pp. 115–136. For a later formulation indebted to Martin’s exegesis of the closed *mem* as symbolic of Mary’s virginity, see *Epistle of Secrets*, pp. 12–14. On the Marian interpretation of the closed *mem* in Nicholas of Lyre and the Trinitarian approach proffered by Pico della Mirandola, see Copenhaver, “Number,” pp. 53–56.

64. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 94a.

65. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104a.

66. Notably, however, Azriel of Gerona cites this passage together with an allusion to the second aggadic passage in his expansion of the comment of his older colleague, Ezra ben Solomon, on the dictum, attributed alternatively to R. Jeremiah and to R. Ḥiyya bar Abba (Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 2b), that the letters *mem*, *nun*, *ṣaddi*, *pe*, and *kaf*—that is, all the letters with closed and open forms—were articulated by the prophets, *sofim*, literally, the visionaries. In his commentary on this statement, R. Ezra quipped, “May God open our eyes to comprehend mysteries from his Torah.” Azriel elaborates, “The twenty-two elemental letters and the five double letters all [allude] to the secret of redemption [*sod ha-ge’ullah*], and all of them are at the end of the word except for the closed *mem* in the expression *le-marbbēh ha-misrah*.” The connection established between the five double letters and the secret of redemption is based on yet another aggadic tradition cited by Azriel from *Pirquei Rabbi Eli’ezer*, ch. 48, 116a. See *Perush ha-Aggadot*, pp. 49–50, already noted by Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 233 n. 45. On the nexus of *mem* and the “secret of redemption” (*sod ha-ge’ullah*) from another thirteenth-century kabbalistic source, see Abulafia, *Imrei Shefer*, MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek 40, fol. 244a (printed edition, p. 90). See also the Hebrew composition by the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* referred to in n. 58, this chapter.

67. For further discussion of this motif, see Wolfson, “Fore/giveness,” pp. 153–169.

68. I have translated the verse in accord with the intent of the author of the *bahiric* passage. The literal rendering of *ki im la-binah tiqra* is “If you call to understanding,” but the tacit assumption from the context is that the word *im* should be read as *em*, “mother,” and hence the translation “You shall call understanding mother.”

69. *Bahir*, § 74, p. 163.

70. *Binah* is also mentioned in *ibid.*, § 129, p. 213, in an enumeration of six

attributes that are derived exegetically from the verse “The spirit of the Lord shall alight upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and valor, a spirit of knowledge and reverence for the Lord” (Isa 11:2).

71. *Bahir*, § 74, p. 163.

72. *Genesis Rabbah*, 17:1, p. 161; *Mishnah*, *Avot* 5:1.

73. The expression *oṣarah shel torah* appears in *Bahir*, § 129, p. 213, and *oṣar ha-torah* in § 137, p. 221.

74. *Ibid.*, § 96, p. 181.

75. For a more elaborate discussion of this hyperliteral conception of body, see Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 190–260.

76. *Genesis Rabbah* 3:6, pp. 21–22; Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 12a.

77. Based on *Exod* 24:12.

78. *Bahir*, §§ 97–98, pp. 183–185.

79. See *Bahir*, § 131, p. 215. In that context, the first light, which had to be hidden for the righteous in the future on account of its greatness, is identified as the fear of the Lord, the attribute of all the treasures (*seḥorot*) in the world, the precious stone that is called (on the basis of *Esther* 1:6) *soḥaret*, “marble,” and *dar*, “mother of pearl.” The latter is the jewel constructed from one thousandth of the splendor of the former, and it comprises all of the commandments. Presumably, the reference here is to the third and tenth emanations, *Binah* and *Malkhut*. See, however, *ibid.*, § 116, p. 201, where the lower and upper *Shekhinah* are identified respectively as the light of the all-encompassing glory that emanates from the first light, which is wisdom. And *ibid.*, § 131, p. 215.

80. *Bahir*, § 106, p. 191.

81. See ch. 3 nn. 50 and 51.

82. This paragraph is based on the textual analysis in Wolfson, “Fore/giveness,” pp. 153–169.

83. My formulation here was inspired by the following remark in Heidegger, *Elucidations*, p. 57: “However, permanence and endurance come to appearance only when persistence and presence light up. But this occurs in the moment in which time opens itself up in its dimensions. Since man has placed himself in the presence of something lasting, he can expose himself to the changeable, to what comes and goes; for only the persistent is changeable.” See also the passage from Heidegger’s *On Time and Being* cited in ch. 1 n. 310.

## Chapter Five

1. Marion, “Event,” p. 94 (emphasis in original).

2. Claudel, *Art Poétique*, p. 57, cited in Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 179 n. 16 (emphasis in original).

3. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sec. 262, p. 242.

4. My thoughts here were inspired by the ruminations of Emmanuel Levinas in his lecture course “Death and Time,” published in *God, Death, and Time*, espe-



cially his hermeneutical insight that death takes its meaning from the death of another (p. 10). When someone dies, the face of that person becomes a mask, that is, the non-reified becomes reified. In death, there is a glimmer of the face becoming some-thing, some one whose face, ironically, is no longer here (pp. 12–13).

5. According to the speculation on the letters in Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104a, the last two letters of the alphabet, shin and tau, stand respectively for *sheqer* (deceit) and *emet* (truth).

6. Kahn, Art, p. 67. By contrast, see *ibid.*, p. 69: “Death is all things we see awake; all we see asleep is sleep.”

7. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, p. 17.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

13. Dastur, *La mort*, pp. 51–56.

14. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 36. See *idem*, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 50.

15. Weiskel, *Romantic Sublime*, p. 26.

16. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, p. 14.

17. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 76. See also *idem*, *God, Death, and Time*, pp. 22, 33.

18. See Oron, “Narrative,” pp. 97–109.

19. *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, p. 396. See also *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim*, 5:11, p. 99: “‘His head is finest gold’ (Song 5:11), these are the letters of the supernal crown [*keter elyon*], for when the holy One, blessed be he, wanted to create the world, all of them descended and stood before him.” The use of the expression *keter elyon*, in contrast to the parallel in *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, is significant and requires an independent analysis. A third source wherein the aggadic theme of the letters presenting themselves before God in reverse order is mentioned is the beginning of *Midrash Aseret ha-Dibberot*. See *Beit ha-Midrash*, 1:62.

20. For references to some of the relevant sources, see ch. 2 n. 181.

21. *Zohar* 1:2b. The concluding words “immediately, it departed,” do not appear in either the Mantua or Cremona editions of *Zohar*. The earliest edition to which I was able to trace these words is Amsterdam, 1800.

22. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 55a.

23. That is, the first words of both expressions, *emet lammed pikha* and *pikha lammed emet*, are decoded as acronyms for the letters that make up the word *alef*.

24. *Midrash Otiyyot de-Rabbi Aqiva*, p. 343.

25. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 55a. Portions of the homily are found in other rabbinic sources, for example, *Midrash Eikhah Rabbah*, 2:1, pp. 98–99, and *Midrash Tanhuma*, Tazri’a, 9, pp. 549–550.

26. In the parallel to this tradition in the second version of *Midrash Otiyyot de-*

Rabbi Aqiva (Battei Midrashot, 2: 396), the “man” is identified as the “angel of death,” *mal’akh ha-mawet*.

27. In *Midrash Eikhah Rabbah*, 2:1, p. 98, this opinion is recorded in the name of R. Judah.

28. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 185–191.

29. Lieberman, *op. cit.*, p. 187, also noted that Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3:22, remarked that the tau of Ezekiel was the sign of the cross. So also, in his *Homilies on Genesis*, Jerome similarly applied the tau of Ezekiel to the sign of the cross, emphasizing the apotropaic effect of this mark by noting that no one inscribed with the tau could be struck by the devil. Jerome’s text is cited in Barry, *Greek Qabbalah*, p. 140. On the possibility that the letter tau, which in the ancient Hebrew script had the shape of two crossed lines, functioned as a shorthand symbol for the divine name insofar as it is the last letter of the alphabet, see Finegan, *Archaeology*, pp. 220–260; Gieschen, “Divine Name,” pp. 133–134. Lastly, it is worth recalling here that the archaic symbolism lived well into the Middle Ages, as we may adduce, for example, from the case of Francis of Assisi, who considered the tau a symbol of redemption and thus worthy of being his order’s coat of arms. See Goffen, *Spirituality*, pp. 5, 89–90 n. 36; Emmerson and Herzman, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 46–48, 52–53, 68, and references to other scholars cited on p. 197 n. 25.

30. The polemical dimension of the rabbinic dicta is developed further by Liebes, *Studies in Zohar*, pp. 235–237 n. 56.

31. As Oron, “Narrative,” pp. 100–101 notes, according to the earlier sources, the case that tau presents before God rests on its standing at the start of the word *torah*, whereas, according to the *Zohar*, the case rests on the fact that tau terminates the word *emet*. The shift underscores that the link between truth and death is paramount in the zoharic text.

32. This is precisely the problem Heidegger deals with in *Being and Time*, sec. 47, pp. 221–224. The transition from being-there to no-longer-being-there cannot be experienced. Consequently, the experience of one’s own death is accessible only through the death of the other, a point that Heidegger relates to the more general ontic claim that the being of Dasein is a being-with others. The death of the other opens the possibility of experiencing one’s own death as the terminus that constitutes the being of Dasein from the beginning. Heidegger insists, however, that death is experienced not as a “being-at-an-end” but as “being toward an end” (*ibid.*, sec. 48, p. 228). On Heidegger’s grappling with the complexity of death and phenomenological representation, see Wood, *Deconstruction*, pp. 183–188, and the astute remarks of Philipse, *Heidegger’s Philosophy*, pp. 364–365. For a different perspective, which culminates with a Christian interpretation of death as a mystical experience that fully embraces life, see Landsberg, “Experience,” pp. 193–231.

33. The dictum is transmitted in the name of R. Ishmael ben R. Yose in *Mishnah*, Avot 4:8.

34. In the *editio princeps* of the Palestinian Talmud (Venice 1523–24), which was based on the Leiden manuscript copied in 1289, the reading is *yhw h'elohim*, “Lord God.” I have followed the version of the text found in later editions, as the one preserved in the first edition appears to be corrupt. The proof-text cited in this context (see following note), as well as parallels in other rabbinic sources, indicates that the correct reading centers on the exegetical decoding of *wa-yhw h'*, “and the Lord,” as an allusion to God and his supernal court, *yhw h' u-veit dino*. See *Genesis Rabbah* 51:2, p. 533. It is possible, however, that since the juxtaposition of *yhw h'elohim* likely refers to the combination of mercy and judgment, the intent may be equivalent to the cooperation of God and his court encoded in the expression *wa-yhw h'*, that is, *yhw h'*, the attribute of mercy, and *beit dino*, the court that stands metonymically for the attribute of judgment. See *Genesis Rabbah* 12:15, pp. 112–113.

35. Palestinian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 1:1, 18a. See also *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 1:10; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:9.

36. The durability of writing in contrast to oral speech is duly noted by Martin, *History*, p. 87. It is of interest to note here the comment preserved in *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:9 (ed. Dunaski, par. 45, p. 38) in response to the citation of Daniel 10:21, “If it is true [*emet*], why is it inscribed [*rashum*], and if it is inscribed, why is it written? Rather, prior to the sealing of the judgment, it is inscribed, but after the decree of judgment is sealed, it is true.”

37. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 104a.

38. *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:9 (ed. Dunaski, par. 45, p. 38).

39. This possibility was suggested by Dunaski, *op. cit.*, p. 38 n. 14.

40. Plato, *Laws* V, 715e, reports an old tradition according to which God is described as holding in his hands “beginning, end, and middle of all that is.”

41. In Revelation 1:17, the statement attributed to Jesus, “I am the first and I am the last,” is a verbatim reiteration of the language of Isaiah 44:6. See also Revelation 21:6 where the alpha and omega are glossed respectively as the beginning and the end. In Revelation 22:13, all three traditions are combined as Jesus is described as the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. See Bauckham, *Theology*, pp. 25–28. The influence of the depiction of God in Isaiah 44:6 is also attested in Qur’ān 57:3.

42. Further support for this line of thinking may be culled from a remark preserved in *Midrash Mishle*, ch. 22, p. 153, regarding the threefold character of the letters of Torah, which comprise the letters of the word *emet*, *alef*, *mem*, and *tau*. Bracketing the exegetical context wherein this dictum is preserved, we may recognize here an older teaching predicated on the presumed identity of Torah and truth. The truthfulness of Torah is expressed in the three letters of the *emet*.

43. The threefold nature of truth, related to the three names of God mentioned in the scriptural confession of monotheism (Deut 6:4) and the rabbinic identification of *emet* as the seal of God, is affirmed in *Zohar* 3:162a.

44. *Mahzor ke-Minhag Ashkenazim*, pt. 2, 72b.

45. *Midrash Shemot Rabbah*, ed. Shinnan, pp. 127–128.
46. According to Shinnan, *op. cit.*, p. 128 n. 10.
47. This is not to deny that kabbalists on occasion rejected the literal attribution of temporality to God, since time ostensibly implies change and God was thought to be incorporeal and incomposite. See, for instance, Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, 1:13, p. 30. Ibn Gabbai interprets the midrashic source (see n. 44) to affirm God's immutability.
48. Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 259 (emphasis in the original). On the notion of *augenblick* in that work, see Wohlfart, "Der Augenblick," pp. 27–55; *idem*, *Der Augenblick*; McNeill, "Time of Contributions," pp. 129–149.
49. See Casey, "Time of the Glance," pp. 79–97; Chernyakov, *Ontology of Time*, pp. 193–194, 210. On the visual implication of the notion of *augenblick* in Heidegger's thought, see also Jonas, *Phenomenon of Life*, p. 136.
50. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, pp. 190–191.
51. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 321 (emphasis in the original).
52. For a related attempt to utilize Heidegger in an exposition of the disclosure of God's name, though in regard to the biblical narrative of the epiphany of the burning bush, see Motzkin, "'Ehyeh,'" pp. 173–182. On the possibility that Heidegger's notion of temporality as the event of the appropriation of being, wherein the three dimensions of time are unified in the future as "anticipatory resoluteness" (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) that "makes present in the process of having been" (*Being and Time*, sec. 65, pp. 299–300), may parallel Eckhart's conception of eternity as the fullness of the now (*nunc, nū*), in which all modes of time are comprehended, see Sikka, *Forms*, pp. 177–180. For a different view, see Caputo, *Mystical Element*, pp. 216–217, 225–226. A number of scholars have discussed Heidegger's ruminations on time and being in light of Dōgen's philosophy; see ch. 2 n. 102.
53. Azriel of Gerona, "Seridim ḥadashim," p. 207.
54. *Liqqutei Haqdamot le-Ḥokhmat ha-Qabbalah*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1663, fols. 175a–b, cited in Ben-Shlomo, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 268–269. Regarding this principle articulated in sixteenth-century material, see references in ch. 2 n. 52.
55. Guthrie, *Orpheus*, pp. 86–91; Vernant, *Myth and Thought*, p. 88.
56. On the relation of Ṭodros Abulafia to the zoharic circle, see Liebes, *Studies in Zohar*, pp. 130, 135–138.
57. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 235–239; *idem*, *Mystical Shape*, pp. 56–87; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 447–474; Liebes, *Studies in Zohar*, pp. 17–18.
58. *Bahir*, § 9, pp. 121–123.
59. *Ibid.*, § 109, pp. 193–195.
60. I have translated in accordance with the reading preserved in the Satmar edition of Abulafia's *Oṣar ha-Kavod*, 22b.
61. In the Satmar edition (see previous note), the reading is a bit different, "and tau alludes to the name of the holy One, blessed be, which is the splendor [*ha-tif'eret*]."

62. Oṣar ha-Kavod ha-Shalem, 10c.

63. Azriel of Gerona, "R. Azriel of Gerona—Perush ha-Tefillah," p. 31.

64. Bahir, § 62, p. 155.

65. The version in the Warsaw edition is corrupt: "just as there are ten supernal holy powers from the right side, so there are ten holy powers from the left side." I have translated the text as it appears in the Satmar edition, 22b.

66. Oṣar ha-Kavod, 10c.

67. Emerson, *Essays*, p. 283.

68. For extended discussion of this motif, see Wolfson, "Beyond Good and Evil."

69. MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek 47, fols. 339a–b. For discussion of this still unpublished text, see Scholem, "Eine unbekannte," pp. 109–123.

70. On occasion, the symbol of the Tree of Life is associated with Yesod, the phallic potency and the ninth emanation. One way or the other, this tree is allied symbolically with the masculine as opposed to the Tree of Knowledge, which is the feminine.

71. In zoharic symbolism, Malkhut is linked symbolically to the Tree of Knowledge, which is identified further as the Tree of Death, based on *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah*, p. 24. See *Zohar* 1:35b; 3:120b; Moses de León, *Book of the Pomegranate*, p. 83; Scholem, *Mystical Shape*, pp. 76 and 109; Tishby, *Wisdom*, pp. 375–379.

72. In *Zohar* 3:163b, the scriptural expression *ya'aqov ish tam*, "Jacob, an unblemished man" (Gen 25:27), is interpreted symbolically as "the husband of this unblemished one," *ba'lah deha-hu tam*, that is, *Tiferet*, consort of *Shekhinah*. When the masculine potency, which is symbolized by *alef*, is conjoined to *tam*, the word that is formed comprises all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, *alef* the first, *mem* the middle, and *tau* the last; these letters spell *emet*, "truth," which is the "totality of male and female together" (*kelal dekhmar we-nuqba ka-hada*). See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 23:1, 6d, s.v. *emet*.

73. On the decoding of *emet* as a combination of *alef* and *met*, see Moses de León, *Sefer Or Zaru'a*, p. 255. In that text, presumably composed before the untitled fragment extant in MS Munich 47, *alef* stands for the one God, the source of life for all that exists; if one removes *alef* from *emet*, what remains are the letters *mem* and *taw*, which spell *met*, "a thing lacking all essence" (*davar mufar mi-kol iqqar*).

74. *Genesis Rabbah* 96:5, p. 1196; *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Wayehi*, 3.

75. MS Munich 47, fol. 340a: "Thus you can understand that the secret of truth [*sod ha-emet*] consists of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, the one contained in the other [*kalul zeh ba-zeh*], and everything is one matter and an appropriate secret for the one who understands."

76. *Zohar* 1:161b–162a.

77. My language is indebted to the discussion of the Sufi notion of *dhu al-'aynayn*, "man of two eyes," in Izutsu, *Creation*, p. 19. According to Izutsu, the

title refers to one who has realized in the experience of *wajd* the *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the “finding” of being, the oneness of existence, the formless form, hidden under the apparent forms of the phenomenal world of differentiation (*farq*). In other words, the binocular vision is the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the one and the many, the hidden and the revealed, the face and the veil.

78. Zohar 1:190a.

79. In the text attributed to Eybeschuetz, *Shem Olam*, p. 100, the rabbinic notion that truth is the divine seal (*hotama de-gushppanqa*) is interpreted to mean that “truth contains falsehood” (*emet kolel sheqer*).

80. The discerning ear will hear the traces of Sufi doctrine in my formulation, *fanā’* and *baqā’*, passing and abiding, and the ultimate attainment, *fanā’ al-fanā’*, the passing of passing, the double negation that is affirmation, *baqā’*. The process can be expressed in other images as well, including especially moving from the world of separation (*farq*) to union (*jam’*), and then to union of union (*jam’ al-jam’*), which is the oneness of all beings experienced through the separation, that is, the coincidence of opposites such that there is no more distinction between union and separation. See Izutsu, *Creation*, pp. 14–19, and ch. 2 n. 93.

## Conclusion

1. The locution is based on T. S. Eliot’s remark in “Four Quartets,” in *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 120: “Only through time time is conquered.” The fuller context of the poem indicates that the conquering of time by time comes about in remembrance of the moment, which comprehends past and future.

2. For a preliminary investigation of the similarity between the kabbalistic ontology of time and the view on temporality articulated by Rosenzweig, see Wolfson, “Facing the Effaced,” pp. 51–63.

3. Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, p. 420, and see Wolfson, “Facing the Effaced,” pp. 56–57.

4. On Rosenzweig’s conception of the metahistorical status of Judaism, which removes Jews from the turmoils of historical time, see Altmann, “Franz Rosenzweig,” pp. 194–214; Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, pp. 120, 253, 291–295.

5. In this matter, one can discern the influence of Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same, which denies the “timeless eternity” of a supernatural being (in the Platonic-Christian tradition) and affirms the “eternity of the ever-creating and destroying powers in nature and man.” See Pfeffer, *Nietzsche*, pp. 130–131; Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 260–293; Sugarman, *Rancor Against Time*, pp. 56–96; Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy*; Lukacher, *Time-Fetishes*, pp. 7–8, 116–138. To be sure, in contrast to, and perhaps even as a response to, Nietzsche, Rosenzweig sought to affirm the transcendental other, the basis for revelation, which, in turn, legitimates creation and redemption as meaningful theological categories. It is nevertheless the case that the experience of eternity in this world is predicated on a convergence of the same and the different that

is a crucial aspect of Nietzsche's doctrine. Moreover, it is not impossible that Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence was itself inspired by and rooted in a personal experience of a mystical nature. See, for example, Gutmann, "'Tremendous Moment,'" pp. 838–842.

6. See Braiterman, "Cyclical Motions," pp. 215–238. The position of Rosenzweig is well summarized by Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, p. 153: "The ritualism of the religious communities, in its periodicity, is lived as a circularity of time. It breaks the linear 'temporalization' and delineates the image of a fixed eternity: an eternity that is at once signified and anticipated. The symbolism of the rite is not portrayed as being some deficiency in knowledge, but a surplus, halfway between the signifying of the signified and its accomplishment." For further elaboration, see Steinkamp, "Eternity and Time," pp. 207–222.

7. Freund, *Philosophy of Existence*, pp. 11–12, 184; Gibbs, *Why Ethics?* pp. 358–360. Rosenzweig's perspective on time and eternity accords with the following assessment of Heidegger in Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, p. 5: "If, on the basis of Heidegger's approach to time, something like eternity is still thinkable, it would have an entirely different meaning and be based upon a temporary thought in a more original way. Time can no longer be thought of on the basis of eternity, but, on the contrary, eternity must be thought of on the basis of time." For an elaboration of this affinity, see Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, pp. 185–205.

8. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, p. 206.

9. The gloss on the rabbinic eschatological idiom "world-to-come" as the "world that came" is found in *Sefer ha-Bahir*. See *Bahir*, § 106, p. 191. The passage is discussed above in chapter 4.

10. Blake, *Complete Poetry*, p. 198.

11. Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, pp. 15–16. On Benjamin's rejection of a progressive view of history and the implied linear conception of time, see Tiedmann, "Historical Materialism," pp. 175–209, esp. 176–181.





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