On the Origins of Language and the True Name of Things

On the Origins of Language

In a collection of commentaries on Genesis first redacted in the third or fourth century, an idea was suggested which was to have a lasting impact on Jewish speculation concerning the nature of language: that the Torah was created before creation itself.[182] Like a mysterious new discovery which the sayings of the Proverbs were to fuel — "The Lord made me as the beginning of his way," "I was beside him like a little child, I was daily his delight" — it was believed that something proceeded the story of Genesis itself.[183] Various proposals as to what could have possibly been beside God before creation were made in this text, known as *Bereshit Rabbah*. Some argued for the angels, others championed a throne of glory. Then came a rather convincing suggestion: God's creating intentions preceded the creation of the world. In the act of creation, the Torah stood beside God as a divine note pad in which His thoughts were jointed down or scribbled out as prototypes on the complicated task before Him. God formed several models of the earth and universe in the tradition of the sages, furiously creating and destroying His prototypes before coming up with the creation of the world.[184] The Torah thus began to function as a divine construction plan or blueprint of how the world should be created, guiding Him through seven days of work.[185]

This interpretation set the stage for a host of further speculations concerning the origins of the Torah,[186] the divine hierarchy, the possibilities of knowledge, and

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[182] *Bereshit Rabbah* contains a host of interpretations on how the Torah existed before the world. Something, however, was with Him in His work [I:I-II / Proverbs 8:30-31]. Six things are suggested to have either come before creation, or were at least considered candidates for creation. Three seem to take priority over the others with the intention of God's creation being seen as the most probable of the three. [I:V]

[183] Proverbs 8:22, 8:30-1

[184] *Bereshit Rabbah* I:I-II

[185] *Bereshit Rabbah* I:I. In agreement with the basic terms of Jewish linguistic speculation, Benjamin lends his voice to the idea that creation was a linguistic event but appears undecided and ultimately unimpressed with the notion of Hebrew being the language of revelation. His argument: even if Hebrew was God's language, the profane form is merely a representation. The fact that he does not take up Hebrew as the original language, however, should not be misinterpreted as a statement on Hebrew as a "national" language, as we shall see in Molitor. The chances that he was aware of *Bereshit Rabbah*, despite the availability in the *königliche Bibliothek* in Berlin of a translation [Wunsche, A. (ed.), *Der Midrasch: Bereschit Rabba*, Leipzig: 1881], from this perspective is slight (aside for the reference to a second Genesis story). On the other hand, Molitor, who he did read, was familiar with this text and was convinced of the linguistic revelation only occurring in Hebrew. The consequences of such a theory without Hebrew might have led to ambiguity which Benjamin admits to Scholem in a letter from March 30, 1918 in [briefe I: 181-3].

[186] *Bereshit Rabbah* VIII:II has it that the Torah was created 2000 years before the world.

foremost on the origins and purposes of language. The story of Genesis was no longer to be considered merely a passive description of creation but a grammatical explanation on how God gave acoustic expression to his written plans. The Hebrew word for light, *Or*, had a hidden dimension, one which was able to create the thing it referred to by being expressed. *Or* was not merely a symbolic sign for light, it was the insignia of the inner expression of light itself. In this way, Genesis was to be interpreted as providing clues to an original language which harbored no distinctions between the thing and its name, in which the existence of a thing was inextricably tied to its linguistic expression.

Since the fourth century, the influence of this idea was to extend into a wide range of Jewish thought and was later to play host to works like *Sefer Yezirah* as well as a series of linguistic speculations in the Kabbalah.[187] For our purposes here, in order to gain a better understanding of the notions which were to form the groundwork of Benjamin's early linguistic theory, I have sought to articulate a Genesis-inspired or genesic orientation to the origins of language from a tradition first introduced into religion and the arts by *Bereshit Rabbah*. Such an orientation can be seen as forming the backround to Benjamin's essay "Über Sprache überhaupt und die Sprache des Menschen."[188] Perhaps somewhat ironic concerning this "Jewish" inheritance is its "Christian" source, as we shall see. Nevertheless, it is certain that Genesis lies at the heart of Benjamin's study. At the beginning of his essay, he states rather clearly his reasons for pursuing the story of Genesis for an approach to a linguistic philosophy:

> Wenn im folgenden das Wesen der Sprache auf Grund der ersten Genesiskapitel betractet wird, so soll damit weser bibelinterpretation als Zweck verfolgt nocht auch die Bibel an dieser Stelle objektiv als offenbarte Wahrheit dem Nachdenken zugrunde gelegt werden, sondern das, was aus dem Bibeltext in Ansehung der Nature der Sprache selbst sich ergebt, soll aufgefunden werden; [II:147]

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[187] The growth and development of this idea is truly a study of its own. See for example, J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, Atlanta: Scholars, 1988; J. Neusner, *Genesis and Judaism: the Perspective of Genesis Rabbah*, Atlanta, Scholars, 1985; A Wüsche, *Kleine Midraschim zur jüdischen Ethik, Buchstaben- und Zahlen Symbolik*, Volumes I-IV, Leipzig, 1907-1909; *Commento alla Genesi*, a cura di Tommaso Federici, Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1978.

[188] For a contrary opinion, see Winfried Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980. An analysis of Benjamin through the "Kabbala" (read Judaism), he argues, promotes "die Dunkelheit von Benjamins Texten, statt sie zu erhellen, vollends ins Ungreifbare und Unsinnige abgeleiten." [190-191] Scholem's own response to these lines in the margin of his copy reads rather unsurprisingly characteristic: "Nein. Leere Behauptung!" Further on page 77 where the author opposes a mystical-materialist approach to the late Benjamin, replies Scholem: "Frech, aber falsch." Scholem Library, National and University Library, Jerusalem.

Should one take the first part of this statement by itself, it might be possible to assume that Benjamin's use of Genesis was rather accidental to the subject matter at hand.[189] But the second part of this paragraph clarifies the degree to which the genesic example is in fact essential:

> und die Bibel ist *zunächst* in dieser Absicht nur darum unersetzlich, weil diese Ausführung im Prinzipiellen ihr darin folgen, daß in ihnen die Sprache als eine letztem nur in ihrer Entfaltung zu betrachtet, muß notwendig die sprachlichen Grundtatsachen entwickeln. [II:147]

It is fairly certain that Benjamin could not have hoped that his essay would be viewed as a midrashic companion to Genesis. For such, he would have been rather unequipped, both in his knowledge of the Torah and Jewish tradition as a whole.[190] Rather than wishing to perform a biblical interpretation or engage in pure, theological proofs of the objective, "revealed truth" [II:147] of creation (which few theologians since the scholastics have been tempted to do), Benjamin chose to enter into metaphysical speculations on the nature of language itself, which if not explicitly postulated in Genesis, is certainly then contained in the commentary and tradition that was to follow.[191] The bible, he argues, can be read philosophically; it can be read as an exposition of principles based on an idea of language. His argument is such: if the bible is to be understood as revelation, it must therefore offer the basis for metaphysical speculations concerning the origins and the nature of language.[192]

To begin a linguistical analysis by way of the story of Genesis is not, in itself, a particularly mystical undertaking. By the same token, it cannot be denied that such speculation is indeed embedded in a religious tradition to which mysticism

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[189] Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, 22.

[190] He was also under no illusions concerning this matter. See Benjamin's own views of his knowledge of Judaism in letters to Scholem [briefe I:182] and Scholem's estimation of this period in [freund:92-93].

[191] For Menninghaus, this statement shows "wie wenig es Benjamin in dieser Sprachphilosophischen Ergründung des Religionsphilosophischen Begriffs der Offenbarung um eine Retheologisierung der Sprachphilosophie geht" rather then a determination of the nature of his metaphysical approach to Genesis. See *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, 22. Menninghaus is criticized in 'theological' terms by Rudolf Speth, *Wahrheit und Ästhetik*, Würzburg: Könighausen und Neumann, 1991, 257. but whose own reliance on a "jüdisch-christlichen Geschichtserfahrung" [263] is purely chimerical at best. Menninghaus is also criticized along similar lines by Michael Bröcker, *Die Grundlosigkeit der Wahrheit. Zum Verhältnis von Sprache, Geschichte und Theologie bei Walter Benjamin*, Würzburg: Könighausen und Neumann, 1993, 105-6.

[192] In this sense, Benjamin's study needs to be be divorced from the mystery which shrouds this discussion. I am referring to the opinion that (a) to compare Benjamin with Jewish thought is tantamount to "unkritischen Mystizismus" (as if a critical mysticism is meaningful), or that linguistic speculation informed by Judaism is necessarily Kabbalistic. See Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, 189-191.

is hardly a stranger. But while it has long been accepted practice to conduct philosophy with examples drawn from Christian theology on their own merits without ever having to question the convictions of the author, it has not been the case with Judaism. The integration of Christianity and philosophy was surely to reach new dimensions in Hegel, where even the most modest barriers fell into disarray. A Jewish philosopher, however, who draws from religious example is either categorized as a Jewish theologian or placed in the context of Christianity. Benjamin was acutely aware of this and was compelled to situate his work within these confines.[193]

With these precluding remarks aside, we may now begin a survey of Benjamin's ideas, focusing initially on the distinction of linguistic essence. He begins the discussion with the following citation:

> Jede Äußerung menschlichen Geisteslebens kann als eine Art der Sprache aufgefaßt werden, und diese Auffassung erschließt nach Art einer Wahrhaften Methode überall neue Fragestellungen. [II: 140]

If we begin by establishing a corollary to the idea presented by *Bereshit Rabbah*, that the Torah existed before creation and that the plan or intention of creation was enacted in the pronunciation of words, Benjamin's assertion could be understood in relation to the idea that words were once the concentrated intentions of God's plan, his *Geistesleben*, his being and thinking combined.[194] God established the primal model of the relationship between word and deed in which the medium of conceptual and linguistic expression is shared by humans to the degree that they are imbued with a linguistic dimension of thinking. If they think in language, every aspect of their intellect can be understood as manifested language and can be expressed in language. This opens up a host of questions when we ask: it this true?[195]

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[193] In pre-Nazi Europe, the discussion of explicitly Jewish religious notions were largely confined to Jews or scholarship of Judaism. Even today, there is scant acknowledgement of the role that Jewish religious speculation has played in the humanities. The discussion of Judaism in the realm of philosophy is still not a generally open and accepted practice.

[194] This interpretation of Genesis immediately draws attention to an unwanted opposition between God's intention and his act. It is difficult to determine conclusively if this problem lies inherent in Benjamin's early essay. It is certain, however, that he brings the question of intention to the forefront of his work, particularly in the later *Trauerspiel* book.

[195] The focus here is not upon reducing observations on the nature of language in pursuit of reason but of truth. For this reason, there is no shying away from the paradoxical in Benjamin analysis, should that serve the interests of truth. That the truth may very well be unreasonable is not a position that the author may have indeed sought to deny. This is all the more noteworthy in light of the scholarship which sometimes mistakes the truthful for the reasonable, an assumption which modern theology has shown to be problematic.

In this sense, Benjamin is clearly not referring to the *Geistesleben* being expressed in a technical language, in terms which are only selectively applicable. The concept of language in the present study is shaped by the exploration into the possibility of the expression of *geistigen Inhalt* (spiritual or intellectual content), located with its subject matter, in which the context of a given object is neither compromised by its expression, nor of its form to content. In short, it concerns the "being of language" [II:140], extending beyond mere human expression to all created things. As Benjamin explains:

> Es gibt kein Geschehen oder Ding weder in der belebten noch in der unbelebten Natur, das Nicht in gewisser Weise an der Sprach teilhätte, denn es ist jedem wesentlich, seinen geistigen Inhalt mitzuteilen. [II:140-1]

If language is the expression of *geistigen Inhalt*, the concentration of *geistigen Inhalt* must be recognizable in the language of human endeavor; for example, in poetry and law. Both fields rely on linguistic expression and are measured by the degree to which they accurately match their given content. Thus, a poem may only be as true as the expression it finds for its subject, just as a law might be said to be the linguistic expression of rule in which its only determinate is the degree to which it expresses the absolute of rule in momentary form. Similar in both of Benjamin's examples, language is a substance contained within the expression which is externalized and completed in the act of speaking. The external expression of language begins with a divine model, guarantying its profane existence in a rendered form in human language. The substance of this external expression is present in everything but resides undivided in the heart of language itself. Benjamin concludes that there is nothing of the living, of the past, nor of the eternal (that is, of the divine or of the profane) which is not in someway a part of nature to the degree that it shares an inner core of language and can not help but express this inner core in language, as it exists i.e. in the expression of its substance of the intellect, its *geistige Inhalt* or *geistige Wesen*.

If language is the expression of the spiritual or intellectual content of a thing, what is a metaphor? Benjamin turns to the *existing* aspect of linguistic expression to distinguish that from what he terms metaphoric expression:

> Eine Metapher aber ist das Wort "Sprache" in solchem Gebrauche durchaus nicht. Denn es ist eine volle inhaltliche Erkenntnis, daß wir uns nicht vorstellen können, das sein geistiges Wesen nicht im Ausdruck mitteilt. [II:141]

Since a metaphor is the representation without the existence of a thing, Benjamin suggests that it cannot be understood here within the linguistical framework which he establishes.[196] His argument concerns the impossibility to conceive of inner knowledge (of a thing) without conveying its existence at the same time. According to Benjamin, language implies just that: the knowledge of its inner existence. A metaphor also presents us with a difficult problem in relation to the genesic model. In Jewish religious speculation, there is no obvious place for the concept of metaphor, just as there is no word for mysticism as it is understood in Christian theology (and now in scholarship in general). A mystical metaphor, or the spiritual expression of a religious content, be it an idea or an event, is a *geistige Inhalt* which for many years could not be expressed in the Hebrew language.[197] Thus when Benjamin speaks of a metaphor which is not contained in language, being unable to express its *geistige Wesen* and therefore fully understood, the problem concerns that of the expression of an image, that is, the problem of how we view the fact that Adam was created in the image of God but is not God himself. How are we to understand the notion of an image if all of God's utterances in creation were drawn-up in the Torah and executed without flaw or delay? The notion of metaphoric

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[196] Benjamin's concept of the metaphor, particularly in relation to a separate notion of the symbolic, undergoes a tremendous development in his work as a whole, beginning with his earliest texts, such as the essay on language, taking on more complicated form in the dissertation on the Romantics, and again receiving attention in the *Trauerspiel* book as well as in many places in the later writings. The difference between metaphor and symbol was also to concern Scholem, even at any early stage. This makes a definition of the term metaphor for our purposes here extremely difficult. After reviewing the later texts, I have come to the conclusion that the understanding of the term here is somewhat different then in, for example, the *Trauerspiel* and have therefore sought to begin with a *pashut* (simple) interpretation instead of attempting to incorporate the real complexity which the term takes on in the later work. A full analysis of the concept of metaphor, however, is surly due in future study.

[197] For mysticism, modern Hebrew has merely borrowed the Latin term. See Joseph Dan, "The Language of the Mystics in Medieval Germany" in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. by K. Grözinger and J. Dan, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995, 6-7.

representation, or in theological terms, spiritualization, is something which is therefore resisted by these primary genesic assertions on language.

Because a metaphor suggests a part of the substance of the intellect which is inexpressible, the smallest degree of consciousness in the representation of the object as a metaphor does not alter the very problem, he asserts. This is to say that whether a thing is animate or inanimate, the question of an inexpressible substance pertaining to the intellect or to the spirit (which here will have to be encompassed under the term intellect) applies to both.[198] Thus if a metaphor is the pure representation of a thing without, at the same time, being the thing itself, it is a representation without existence, in other words, a mere abstraction. In the context of an expression, a non-existent representation would be something which communicates absences rather than substances. In its representation, the substance is left behind and merely the form is projected. Thus from the question on the origins and meaning of language, a theological metaphor is the "völlige Abwesenheit der Sprache in Nichts." [II:141] It is divorced from its concrete expression, in which the idea has a being but one totally removed from a genesic conception of language. The unrepresented being of a metaphor is hence an abstraction. Benjamin extends this notion of abstraction to the realm of ideas, whereby in comparison to the notion of metaphor, the existence of ideas are generally more certain than their meaning. The question is whether such existence is real or metaphorical. In this regard, Benjamin treats us to a very different statement:

> Ein Dasein, welches ganz ohne Beziehug zur Sprache wäre, ist eine Idee; aber diese Idee läßt sich auch im Bezirk der Ideen, deren Umkreis diejenige Gottes bezeichnet, nicht fruchtbar machen. [II:141]

Whether the idea of an existence without language belongs to a circle of ideas which God does not permit to be fruitful, or if this circle determines the proximity of certain ideas to God's ideas (those being fruitful ideas) is left rather grammatically ambiguous in this citation.[199] Nevertheless, to speak of God as anything less than the source of ideas would be so far from the idea of God itself that it would bear little meaning. It must therefore be understood as a description of

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[198] Since rendering the term *Geist* in the English language leaves little choice but to select from one of the two directions contained in the German, I have favored here the term intellect.

[199] For a very different philosophical interpretation of high caliber, see Peter Fenvis, "The Genesis of Judgement," in *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, ed. by David S. Ferris, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, 81-82. Fenvis's own interpretation, however, may not draw the reader much closer to that of Benjamin's.

an idea which is rejected by God. But can there be a human idea independent of God? Surely no human idea escapes God if we understand by the word the originator and safekeeper of all ideas. So what is meant by the notion of God having ideas which are capable of being known but which are non-productive or unhelpful to the understanding? This is similar to asking: Is it possible to conceive of a notion which cannot be expressed in language, itself an absence or a representative of one, and still be conceivable? Certainly modern linguistic philosophy would argue against such an idea. It is most likely that Benjamin too deemed it rather improbable, not so much from a scholastic notion of the goodness of God, but rather from an unwillingness to divide thinking from linguistic expression.

Expression therefore is language in its full and complete being. It is the substance of a given object in its existence. Behind this statement lies axiomatic properties on the nature of substance upon which the existence of a thing is premised. Benjamin expressed this in the following way: in order to understand the substance of a thing, one can search for the expression unique to it, as each substance of the intellect is bound to its expression from which it can not be severed. If this is so, one is prone to ask which belongs to which i.e. which expression is constituted to match which substance of the intellect buried within a thing? Given a particular substance, we may ask: what is its expression, which is the same as saying, how is a given substance expressed? By way of an answer to this question which is able to transcend the quagmire of attempting to establish a theory of direct correlation, Benjamin emphasizes that substance expresses itself in language and not through it. Naturally, the German language is his example:

> die deutsche Sprache z. B. ist keineswegs der Ausdruck für alles, was wir *durch* sie — vermeintlich — ausdrücken können, sondern sie ist der unmittelbare Ausdruck dessen, was *sich* in ihr mitteilt. [II:141]

If we reverse the question from the content of a thing to its expression, and begin with a definition of an expression, we are able to condition the discussion from the start if we said that the expression is not everything which is possible to express but rather the transference of its *unmediated expression*, itself linguistically communicable, here called its *geistige Inhalt/Wesen* or what I would prefer to term its substance of the intellect. The reflexive pronoun in the citation above, *das Sich*, is emphasized in its German construction to indicate that it is its substance. But it is also the primary indicator that substance is expressed in language. Benjamin argues that the idea of a substance of a thing, existing only in language, is a proposal which all linguistic theory has thus far fallen pray to. He claims that the same

contradiction is passed on to the substance and its difference from its expression, leaving a paradox in the existence of the substance to begin with.

In order to better understand the element which remains outside of language, Benjamin returns to a central axiom of his discussion: Language communicates its substance of the intellect, the substance which is alone determined for it.[200] This is to say that each thing has a language and each thing has a substance of the intellect, regardless of the fact of whether it is living or not. This substance is not transmitted through language but rather within it, as anyone who has had the experience of being a speaker of a foreign language has surly felt.[201] This same principle holds true for the intellectual substance of a particular thing (*geistige Wesen*) which is actively engaged in its linguistic substance (*sprachliche Wesen*). The two are in fact identical to the degree that the substance of a thing is communicable; what is communicable is its linguistic substance. However, the only linguistic difference between the two resides in the fact that while language communicates unconditionally the linguistic substance of a given object, it can only express the communicable portion of its substance of the intellect.

Language expresses itself within the vernacular of expression to the degree that its substance is communicable: "Jede Sprache teilt sich selbst mit," such that "Das spracheliche Wesen der Dinge ist ihre Sprache." [II:142] Here Benjamin introduces the rather odd example of a lamp and its language in order to draw attention to the thesis of an indifference of substance to the animate or inanimate state of the object (as far as the principle is concerned). He make the bold assertion that there is such a thing as a vernacular of the inadimate such as a lamp which also expresses its subject of the intellect to the degree that it is communicable. But in the case of all inanimate objects, the substance of the intellect communicable or understandable must be minute, for what would a lamp possibly express if it were to communicate? Since it does not think or write, to what degree can we say that an inanimate object has a *geistige Wesen*? This would appear to be a rather untenable position.

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[200] "Was teilt die Sprache mit? Sie teilt das ihr entsprechende geistige Wesen mit." [II:142]
[201] That a foreign speaker of a particular language has no choice but to communicate what he or she is capable of in that language is all the more apparent in the exchange between a first language which is radically different from a second. It may appear that a foreign speaker is communicating an idea generated in a first language and expressing it merely through the second but this reveals itself to be nothing more than an impoverished translation of the former when more complex forms of expression are undertaken by the foreign speaker, yielding more fully formed ideas in the latter language.

There are explainations for his assertion and, in this sense, it might be helpful to repeat the condition upon which such a statement is made: an inanimate object has a *sprachliche Wesen* to the *degree* that it can be communicated. It is also plausible that the *sprachliche Wesen* of a thing would be considered a language by way of the fact that its linguistic substance is attributable to its appearance, that its appearance is, in itself, an expression.[202] Benjamin's analysis is not to stop at this rather classical division between appearance and essence but rather seeks to bridge the gap between the two forms of substance. He continues in the following assertion that "Das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge ist ihre Sprache [und ist] das, was an einem geistigen Wesen mitteilbar ist [...]" [II:142] In short, the linguistic substance of a thing is its communicable substance, which is of its intellect, and therefore its language.[203] This proposition is not meant as a division of appearance from essence, not that the substance of the intellect of a thing is only that which appears clearly expressed in language but rather is language itself, "Oder: die Sprache eines geistigen Wesens ist unmittelbar dasjenigie, was an ihm mitteilbar ist." [II:142] If the substance of the intellect of a thing is communicable language, in which the non-communicable is no longer considered a part of language, then language would not truly be able to express the complete substance of the intellect i.e. the complete substance of the intellect would not be linguistic.[204] Creation in these terms would be God's expression in the language of the communicable (audible, comprehendible) substance of the intellect from which each thing and being was created.[205]

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[202] One commentator attempts to explain this problem in the following way: "Die Sprachen umschließen nicht nur die menschliche, worthafte Sprach und das Gebiet aller anderen menschlichen Geistesäußerungen, sondern auch die Natur, die unbelebte, materielle Welt sowie das Geschehen in ihr, so daß der Bereich der Natur wie die Kultur als Ausdruck menschlicher Tätigkeiten gleichermaßen als Sprachen zu beschreiben sind. Auf der äußeren Sinnebene gilt somit alles als Sprache, was sich mitteilt, ausdrückt, darstellt — ungeachtet der Unterschiede in der Weise, *wie* sich etwas mitteilt." Regine Kather, *"Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen." Die Sprachsphilosophie Walter Benjamins*, Frankfurt: Lang, 1989, 37.

[203] One might be tempted to formulate this in German such that *sprachliche Wesen ist geistige Wesen mitteilbar.*

[204] We could turn to no other explanation of this paradoxical statement than to the creational model.

[205] A reasonable explanation must give way therefore to a theological one, if every language is understood as communicating itself in itself.

If God expressed a language of communicable substance in creation, it would imply that He expressed His audible revelation, rather than a translation of His expression rendered audible. It may also be that God did not express His entire substance but only those aspects of His substance directed towards the profane. Would this be a contradiction of Benjamin's thesis?

> Das Mediale, das ist die *Unmittel*barkeit aller geistigen Mitteilung, ist das Grundproblem der Sprachtheorie, und wenn man diese Unmittelbarkeit magisch nennen will, so ist das Urproblem der Sprache ihre Magie. Zugleich deutet das Wort von der Magie der Sprache auf ein anderes: auf ihre Unendlichkeit. [II:142-3]

Magic is understood as the original problem of language. The medial is thought to be at the center, locating the means therefore as the critical problem of linguistic philosophy. This aspect of language alone, however, cannot explain the immediacy of all *geistige* communication, what Benjamin proposes here as magic. To us, it may appears as magic, for its means are not apparent in the connection between substance and expression; it is deemed existent but unexplainably so. Only when creational linguistics is applied is there a model for the transparency of its means. To speak of magic, however, is to point to an immediacy of eternity to which only God could be associated. Eternity is expressed in language when unlimited by any external measures or by anything other than the substance inside a given thing: "Darum wohnt jeder Sprache ihre inkommensurable einziggeartete Unendlichkeit inne." [II:143] Only its linguistic substance determines this border, which is the same as saying its (primary) substance and not its 'verbal content.' This is true for things as well as for people but in a distinctly different way, for humans communicate in words and express their primary substance in naming.[206]

We have arrived at the following conclusions: the substance of the intellect which is communicable is that which is revealed in the process of naming. The difference between humans and objects is an active *geistige Wesen* and a passive *geistige Wesen*. The active makes itself understood by naming that which it sees, the passive by that which it is or communicates itself to be. The active is a naming language, the passive, an implicit language. The linguistic theoretical view that active language is the only form of linguistic expression is mistaken, says

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[206] "Der Mensch teilt also sein eignes geistiges Wesen (sofern als mitteilbar ist) mit, indem er alle anderen Dinge benennt." [II:143]

Benjamin. But if human language expresses its *geistige Wesen* in naming, to whom is it being expressed? Human expression occurs not only in one direction, but in multiple directions with two primary or necessary quadrants: reception is necessary for that which is being expressed. Thus expression is not void of reception; it is in fact undoubtedly a necessary part of it. It is often that we know how a thing should be received before it is even expressed.[207] This is to say that we assume we know what it is that we intend to express, before we express it and this knowledge is mediated in part by its reception. According to Benjamin, we find this very same principle at work with things and animals.[208] How could humans have named a thing without communicating with it in some form or other? Is there any reason to believe that a *lamp*, a *mountain-range* or a *fox* is able to communicate with us in such a way that we should know that they are called such and not, *Lampe, Gebirge*, or *Fuchs*, for example? Is there anyway to know if the name we attribute to a thing is truly its proper name and not somehow a case of mistaken identity?

Benjamin gives us another example as to why, if we are to accept that humans are endowed with the ability to express their *geistige Wesen* in naming, this expression must be done in and not through language. Through mere naming, in the sense of arbitrary words which are passed on through language, humans are not able to express substance. The bourgeois conception of language is just this, he states, viewing all communicative acts as corresponding to a need or that a particular need has a direct correlate to an expression. But his emphasis is on the authority of linguistic creation, without means, object or addressee, which relies on the genesic process of naming. In the establishment of the name, the substance of the intellect communicates with God:

> Der Name hat im Bereich der Sprache einzig diesen Sinn und diese unvergleichlich hohe Bedeutung: daß er das innerste Wesen der Sprache selbst ist. Der Name ist dasjenige, *durch* das sich nichts mehr, und *in* dem die Sprache selbst und absolut sich mitteilt. [II:144]

The name is the inner substance of language. Drawn from genesic naming, it is that part of its medial which is not communicable in its origins. God is the creator of language and in God's language, things were shaped from the substance of the intellect (*geistige Wesen*), in that they were formed and imbued by substance. The

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[207] Think, for example, of mediums and situations where the communication of a particular substance is essential: an important letter, conversation, presentation. For a further development of Benjamin's thought in the direction of media with a distinctly analytical component, see the work of Werner Konitzer, *Sprachkrise und Verbildlichung*, Würzburg: Könighausen und Neumann, 1995.

[208] [II:143] Clearly the type of questions Benjamin proposes leads us back to theological speculation on Genesis.

original name which does not express itself and is not expressible through language is indeed modeled after the divine name of God, for which no other name of God can be compared. In language, God was to express his *geistige Wesen* as He was surely to express Himself acoustically in Genesis. Thus what other substance could He be made out of than *geistige Wesen*? In language, He was to enact creation, construct Adam and everything else in His image. The name therefore must be the quintessential point from which the *geistige Wesen* of a thing or a person is expressed or expressible. The Tetragrammaton, the unpronounceable name, as the model of the original name, would then be at the core of every name. Since God's infinity must yield a point from which finite matter can be imitated and thus generated, the name becomes the very unchangeable basis from which everything else is creatable. Benjamin articulates this in the following way: "Der Name als Erbteil der Menschensprache verbürgt also, daß *die Sprache schlechthin* das geistige Wesen des Menschen ist." [II:144] Humans are their inner *geistige Wesen* which was given to then by God or transferred to them from out of his unpronounceable name. This utterance is ostensibly the reason why only *geistige Wesen* is completely communicable and why humans stand divided once again from all created forms i.e. from nature itself: because we speak in names, we speak pure language.

Communicable nature is expressed in language, more specifically in human language, which itself is expressed in naming. Naming then is the expression of human substance and the communicable substance of nature: "Alle Natur, sofern sie sich mitteilt, teilt sich in der Sprache mit, also letzten Endes im Menschen." [II:144] We understand that humans are *geistige Wesen* if we assume that they are the expression of their substance of the intellect. But if *geistige Wesen* is language, are we to assume that humans themselves are language and, if they are their own language, are they the medium of nature as well? Since nature has no voice, must it express itself anthropomorphically in human language? The argument here implies that since nature expresses itself in language, it expresses itself through human beings. This places humans here, as elsewhere, at the helm of creation and of nature.

Adam was the first at the helm. He was to acquire the knowledge of things outside of himself by naming those very things which he encountered in language: "Gottes Schöpfung vollendet sich, indem die Dinge ihren Namen vom Menschen erhalten, aus dem im Namen die Sprache allein spricht." [II:144] In Benjamin's rendition of Genesis, God's final approval of the names which Adam gave to the animals sanctifies creation and forms a symbiosis between God and humans. In

Adam's articulation of imbued, created substance, his language of naming formed a "language of language," if what is meant by this is a medium of expression and not a means, in the sense of prime motion.[209] Humans are alone the speakers of the language of languages and in this role, language encompasses a specifically "metaphysische Erkenntnis." [II:145] A metaphysical question corresponds: is *geistiges Wesen* truly linguistic? Here we witness a repetition of an earlier discussion when we receive a reply in the affirmative: "Sprache ist dann das geistige Wesen der Dinge." [II:145] This conclusion, however, does not distinguish itself in substantially from the initial discussion if the "insofern" part of the argument — that language is the "communicable" portion of the *geistige Wesen* of a thing — is removed.[210] What we are left with is the proposition that *geistiges Wesen* is equivalent to *sprachliches Wesen*.

Adam is thus the namer but, at the same time, the *human* speaker of language. The metaphysical question as to the centrality of knowing is bound up with the role of the namer: "Der Name ist aber nicht allein der letzte Aufruf, er is auch der eigentliche Anruf der Sprache." [II:145] For the first profane speaker of language, naming is the last appeal or calling out, out of the generality of a thing to its first specific name while its only true language becomes its proper name. Naming is the "intensive Totalität der Sprache," in the concentrated totality of a thing within (its completely communicable *geistige Wesen*) and at the same time, its "extensive Totalität" to the degree that it presents a universal substance of being which it names. [II:145] Thus follows: "Der Mensch allein hat die nach Universalität und Intensität vollkommene Sprache." [II:145] This statement is however problematical for several reasons. Firstly, because in the present, indicative form, it does not reflect the loss of linguistic, human capacity after the first naming. It suggests, rather, the permanence of such capacity. It has already been said that Adam was let in on a divine task; he was creating, so to speak, 'in God's image.' However, it cannot be suggested that we still retain the ability to will a perfect language. If there is a language in human nature which is perfect, imbued in our creation, which called perfection into life simply out of intention, we can hardly say that we are in possession of it today. A "Metaphysik der Sprache"

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[209] [II:144] Stéphane Mosès detects three languages in Benjamin's analysis: an original, divine, an Adamic and a fallen language. It is a question to what degree Mosès understands a final, redemptive, restitution of language to be a true return to origins. See his "Benjamin's Metaphors of Origin" in *Jewish Writers, German Literature*, ed. by Bahti and Sibley Fries, Ann Arbor: 1995, 140-142.

[210] "Es wird das geistige Wesen also von vornherein als mitteilbar gesetzt, oder vielmehr gerade *in* die Mitteilbarkeit gesetzt, und die Thesis: das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge ist mit ihrem geistigen, sondern letzteres mitteilbar ist, identisch, wird in ihrem 'sofern' zu einer Tautologie. *Einen Inhalt der Sprache gibt es nicht; als Mitteilung teilt die Sprache ein geistiges Wesen, d.i. eine Mitteilbarkeit schlechthin mit*." [II:145-46]

therefore must recognize that our language is not the same as that of Adam's or of creation, even if a distant relative.[211]

Rather than being pre-endowed with divine qualities, two dimensions emerge intertwined in linguistic naming independent of intention: the "Mitteilenden (Benennenden) und das Mitteilbaren (Namen) in der Mitteilung." [II:146] Communicating as naming and the communicable as name is expressed by the nature of their metaphysical division. They are always radically separate but join together in naming: "Für die Metaphysik der Sprache ergibt die Gleichsetzung des geistigen mit dem sprachlichen Wesen, welches nur graduelle Unterschiede kennt, eine Abstufung allen geistigen Seins in Gradstufen." [II:146] Here, in a metaphysical analysis of language in the equation of *geistigen Wesen* with *sprachlichen Wesen*, a nuancing of "geistigen Sein" occurs. Through the reduction of the difference between the *geistigen Wesen* and *sprachlichen Wesen* of a thing, we are permitted to bare likeness to the divine.[212] This metaphysical differentiation occurs within the *geistigen Wesen* of a thing itself and no longer permits itself to be subsumed under a "higher category."

Theologically-informed metaphysics, the course of which began for him before the First World War and came to a crescendo in his 1921 political-theological theses, makes apparent in which direction Benjamin intends to direct his study. The following citation points again to the theological and metaphysical focus of the essay:

> sie [the higher category] führt daher auf die Abstrufung aller geitigen wie sprachlichen Wesen nach Existenzgraden oder nach Seinsgraden, wie sie bezüglich der geistigen schon die Scholastik gewohnt war. [II:146]

This higher category leads to the differentiation of *geistigen Wesen* from *sprachliche Wesen* in grades of being. The differentiation of these categories is metaphysically relevant for it harkens back to a central linguistical tension while, at the same time, demonstrating its inner connection to the philosophy of religion and the notion of revelation. Here we encounter the conflict between the "Ausgesprochen und Ausprechlichen mit dem Unaussprechlichen und

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[211] [II:146] We are compelled to note the inconsistency in the division of the divine and the profane here, a point which he was to stress towards the end of his early writings in the thesis of 1921. A similar weakness appears once again in the essay on Hölderlin, where the divine qualities of the poet seems to supersede the partition of humans and God. But since we also know from later passages in this essay on language that Benjamin did not intend to confound this division (see, for example, [II:150]), one might be lead to assume that if humanity posses a complete and universal language, it carried it unknowingly through the profane.

[212] See citation below. The reference is to [II:146].

unausgesprochenen," what linguistics have since to express in terms of the signifing and the signified. [II:146] In this confrontation, one sees the unpronounceable as the last *geistige Wesen* which opens up the problem of the equation of the two forms of substance, intellectual and linguistic.

SYMBOLIC REVELATION

> Genau das meint aber der Begriff der Offenbarung, wenn er die Unabtastbarkeit des Wortes für die einzige und hinreichende Bedingung und Kennzeichnung der Göttlichkeit des geistigen Wesens, das sich in ihm ausspricht, nimmt. [II:146]

Should the name be the bearer of substance buried within the object and the act of naming — the communication of the substance with the name,— the process by which the name is able to apprehend substance would therefore be a revelation of a substance which is not self-evident. And if the imbuing of substance is a divine act, the subject under investigation would concern the archetecture of divine revelation and the possibility of its symbolic representation. Revelation is used here in the context of the impenetrability of the word as a precise reference to the divinity [Göttlichkeit] of *geistigen Wesen*. If the word presents itself as a symbolic representation of the substance of divinity, perceivable in the profane, revelation would then be the transference of the divine substance of the intellect/spirit in finite form, rendering it knowable: "Das höchste Geistesgebiet der Religion ist (im Begriff der Offenbarung) zugleich das einzige, welches das Unaussprechliche nicht kennt." [II:147] The unpronounceable is the very thing which is withheld from revelation, being nameless and therefore having no expression. At the same time, the inexpressive is the very thing which expresses the finite character of revelation. This enables religion to be the conduit of paradox in which its highest *geistige Wesen* is formed by humans and the language in them.[213]

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[213] Benjamin introduces here a quotation from Hamann which interrupts the flow of ideas from the paragraph before it. (The beginning of the next paragraph picks-up where the last ended). The same quotation is found in Scholem's essay and seems to have yielded a common basis if we take into account Scholem's view that Benjamin's "Metaphysik der Sprach" was to be the linguistic continuation of Hamann and Humboldt. [letter, Scholem to Benjamin, March 1931, reproduced in full in freund: 284] While a legacy of the latter was refuted by Menninghaus in his study [11-12], the former is taken up as the well springs of Benjamin's thought. Several commentators have noted the fact that both author's appeared to draw from Rudolf Unger's book *Hamanns Sprachtheorie in Zusammenhange seines Denkens* Munchen: 1905 where the citation "Bei mir ist weder von Physik noch von Theologie die Rede, sondern Sprache, die Mutter der Vernunft und Offenbarung, ihr A und Ω," [Hamann to Jacobi, 28 Dec. 1785] is found on the title-page. Benjamin's linguistic theory, however, differentiates itself from that of Hamann and ultimately Molitor, as we shall see, in that he does not attribute an incarnation of Christ to a theory of letters or to the magic of worldly revelation. Hamann's attempt to establish parallels between the letters and an "Offenbarung Gottes im Fleisch" as it is conceived in the "fleischgewordene Logos" of John's evangellium — in short, a entire theory of incarnation based on the word of God and the body of Christ — is entirely absent in Benjamin. [Unger, 66-7] In addition, there is reason to believe Benjamin rejected an emphasis on the physical in creation in his rather oblique references to the formation of Adam. [II:147] The notion that Judaism is the "Universalgeschichte" of Christianity, [Letter to Herder (1. Jan. 1780), Unger, 113], that "Die Erlösung der ganzen sichtbaren Natur von ihren Windeln und Fesseln [beruht] auf der Offenbarung des Christentums" [Hamann, *Schrift,* VI:20-1 (Roth, hg.), Unger, 121] and that God revealed "in niedriger Gestalt, in seinem 'Worte,' im Logos, d.h. in der irdischen Erscheinung Christi

Language, seen here in a distinctly esoteric dimension, is then again not fully expressed in things, being that the language of things is imperfect and ultimately mute: "Den Dingen ist das reine Sprachliche Fromprinzip — der Laut — versagt." [II:147] They are unable to concretize their *geistige Wesen* without the acoustic dimension of communication. They express themselves in an association of materials, an immediate, infinite "magical" collectivity. Human language, however, is purely immaterial in its magical association with things. The work of art, according to Benjamin, is itself formed from the creation of objects out of the language of "dinglichem Sprachgeist," the language of completed *geistigen Wesen*. [II:147] Sound is the symbol of the magical association of things. This is 'symbolically' expressed when God blew into the nostrils of Adam, rendering "life, spirit, language," Benjamin states. Here the tripartite explanation of the Hebrew word *ruach* in this passage on Adam would better be translated perhaps as spirit, breath, wind. Other than the word "spirit," Benjamin's rendition touches only upon the borders of the word *ruach*. What is missing are the words "breath" and "wind," the two rather physical connotations of the word.[214] It it therefore not surprising that Benjamin challenges a physical interpretation of the passage:

> — Die zweite Fassung der Schöpfungsgeschichte, die vom Einblasen des Odems erzählt, berichtet zugleich, der Mensch sei aus Erde gemacht worden. Dies ist in der ganzen Schöpfungsgeschichte die einzige Stelle, an der von eine, Material des Schöpfers die Rede ist, in welchem dieser seinen Willen, der sonst doch wohl unmittelbar schaffend gedacht ist, ausdrückt. Es ist in dieser zweiten Schöpfungsgechichte die Erschaffung des Menschen nicht durch das Wort geschehen: Gott sprach —und es geschah —, sondern diesem nicht aus dem Worte geschaffenen Menschen wird nun die *Gabe* der Sprache beigelegt, und er wird über die Natur erhoben. [II:147-148]

The second chapter of Genesis begins with a short synopses of the first seven days of creation, also sometimes referred to as a second version of creation.[215] In chapter two, verse seven, God brings together the dust of the earth and forms the anatomy of the first human. Whether he resembled a clay sculpture (like a Golem) or merely a loosly formed pile, God took this dust figure and blew into it His spirit of life. The Torah draws a distinction between Adam and all other

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und in der Schrift, dem Zeugnusee des Heiligen Geistes" [Unger, 137] all run counter to Benjamin's expressed goals in this essay. A further analysis of one of the main-stays of Christian theology, however, is at least implicitly addressed (if not explicitly) in Benjamin's notion of translation. See the discussion in the chapter entitled "Reception as Translation.".

[214] On the physical dimension of creation.

[215] Benjamin's reference to a "second version" of creation is not one which the editors of the collected works were able to identify. Nevertheless, one might be tempted to read this as an oblique reference to *Bereshit Rabbah* which would have been available to him in German, should he have sought it at the time. Molitor, however, is a more likely source for such ideas.

created beings, comments Samson Raphael Hirsch in his translation of Genesis.[216] Hirsch emphasizes the "individuality" of God's human creation, being modeled after His countenance. In contrast to his worldly, material creation, God sought in the creation of humans "eine fernere, höhere Entwickelung der von ihm geschaffenen Erdwelt einleiten will, [... er nahm] Staub von dem Menschen-Boden, und hauchte in sein Antlitz Odem des Lebens, da ward der Mensch zu einem lebendigen Wesen."[217] The collection of the dust is underplayed in Hirsch's commentary where "bei der Schöpfung seines Leibes, war die Erde passiv."[218] Only the activity of divine spirit being passed on to His creation marked the creation of Adam. The dust itself was not considered the material of creation, not having been created from itself out of itself, which left spirit as the sole source of creative activity, the "lebendige Wesen" of creation. Dust is neither the active source, nor an integral building block of creation, but merely a passive means. The word, on the other hand, is the only recognized immaterial medium of creation.

It is just this material element that Benjamin sees here as an impediment to the linguistic analysis of creation, the only point in which physical matter is spoken of directly. This is not true of course; we know for example that Adam's rib or rib-cage was used to create Eve. One therefore has to wonder why Benjamin decided that this portion of creation should suddenly be understood as symbolic, whereas, for example, naming should not be.[219] Apparently he views the act of blowing as more physical than speaking. But even the spoken word was an act of God. Is blowing therefore any less anthropomorphic than speaking? Would we say that since the word *Or* was spoken in the creation of light, it is too physical to be understood as pure light itself and therefore must be symbolically interpreted? God's will is clearly expressed in this passage. Here it is not His words which form Adam but his actions. But if the Torah is to have existed before the creation of the

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[216] Benjamin was apparently to have consulted Hirsch at this time. See the letter to Scholem from 11 November 1916 [briefe I:129] and later in [freund:50]. It is therefore also far more likely that Benjamin consulted the Hirsch translation rather then the Lutherian as the editors of Benjamin's *Gesammelte Werke* suggest. See [II:935].

[217] *Der Pentateuch*, übersetzt und erläurtert von Samson Raphael Hirsch, Frankfurt: 1920. (first edition, 1904), 47.

[218] op., cit., 47.

[219] It is indeed possible that Benjamin sought to distinguish himself from Hamann (and Christian mysticism in general) in terms of the incarnation of the body of God in language. Menninghaus presents this "Mit Hammans eigenen Wortern: 'Der Geist Gottes in seinem Worte offenbart sich wie das Selbständige — in Knechtgestalt, ist Fleisch'" but remains unable to articulate this crucial difference which touches the very heart of German Jewry. See Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, 209 and the attentive discussion in Bettine Menke, *Sprachfiguren*, München: 1991, 60-66.

earth, God's intentions would have cetrainly existed before the act.[220] But why should it not be possible that God merely spoke as to how the dust of the earth should be drawn together to form man, just like he did with the seas and the land. That he gathered the waters does not necessarily mean he took a pump and formed a great pool but could have equally gathered them by a command, linguistically. One thing is certain: it is just not accurate to say that this is the only point where the material of creation is discussed. In the transference of *ruach* from God to Adam, a transference of a higher task in humans verses all other created things took place. The various aspects of the act of creation facilitated an exemplar from which the importance of the human act takes a new turn in the cast of naming. This may have been reason enough for Benjamin to have emphasized the expressive nature of divine *geistige Wesen* rendered linguistic rather than incarnate.

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[220] *Bereshit Rabbah* III:VII presents a very active God playing even perhaps a physical part in creation, not just as a speaker but someone busy creating and destroying worlds.

There is no reference to the material of creation in Genesis, according to Benjamin, even if each time it is written 'he created,' a creation from material was intended.[221] The rhythm of creation is: it was, he created, he named. The first and last in this list are to stand for the explicitly immaterial, he says: with the power of language, he created. Language is the creating, perfecting, word and name. There is nothing which is more material in the word than the manifestation of the name, nor the name more spiritual that the word. They are both conceived in a distinct, genseic relationship to one another: "In Gott ist der Name Schöpferisch, weil er Wort ist, und Gotteswort ist erkennend, weil er Name ist." [II:148] It is, in fact, through manifestion that the divine understanding emerges, for only in the name did God see that creation was good:

> Das Absolute verhältnis des Names zur Erkenntnis besteht allein in Gott, nur dort ist der Name, weil er im innersten mit dem schaffenden Wort identisch ist, das reine Medium der Erkenntnis. Das heißt: Gott machte die Dinge in ihren Namen erkennbar. Der Mensch aber bennent sie maßen der Erkenntis. [II:148]

God made things knowable and Adam named them according to his created knowledge. In this way, God appears to have considered the relationship between humanity and language and provided for the release of the linguistic element in Adam to serve Him in creation rather then Adam being ordered by language. Thus "Gott ruhte, als er im Menschen sein Schöpferiches sich selbst überließ. Dieses Schöpferische, seiner göttlichen Aktualität entledigt, wurde Erkenntnis." [II:149]

In this interpretation, God rested not after seven days but after He transferred His linguistic force of creation to man. If this is so, the redemptive aspect attributed to His rest would have to be carried over into language itself, giving it a role which the Sabbath is poised to represent: a pre-figurative, redemptive moment within the profane. The restitution of adamic names therefore would be an act of redemptive importance, not only for the future, but in the correction of the past. Creation itself is embedded in human language and the

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[221] Benjamin also makes reference to the passage in Genesis 1:27 where the word "created" appears three times in conjunction with God's act.

collapse of creation in exile from Eden would thus be attainable linguistically, just as it was in the beginning.[222]

God is fully retired in this picture; His creation is completed in the transference of linguistic power and linguistic responsibility. The conversion in this sense does not only pertain to the transformation of power but also the transformation of linguistic meaning, for now the creative act has been transferred to the human realm. Although not fully traversed, the division between divine and profane has been transpired in that the language of creation becomes knowledge. God's differentiation in creation — the heavens from the earth, the sun from the moon, the waters from dry land — is coupled with linguistic power. Language is now not only creation but knowledge.

However, the transference of the divine is driven only to a point and not beyond, as humans are distinguished from God to the degree that He is still the Creator and they, the 'knowers.'[223] God created himself in an image, Benjamin states, so that His knowers could be formed in the image of the Creator. The word is the concentration of creation, God's *sprachlichen Wesen*. Human language is a reflection of the word in the name. Despite the transference of the divine, the name cannot truly replace the manifestation of the word, just as knowledge of creation is not a substitute for the act. In this way, Benjamin attempts to remain within the parameters that he was later to express in the 1921 Fragment: until a messianic destruction of the division of holy and profane, humans are confined to the finite.[224] This observation extends to their language in exile as well: "Die Unendlichkeit aller menschenlichen Sprache bleibt immer eingeschränkten und analytischen Wesens im Vergleich mit der absoluten uneingeschränkten und schaffenden Unendlichkeit des Gotteswortes." [II:149]

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[222] One sees this idea of the Sabbath, for example, is the *Stern der Erlösung*, where Rosenzweig situates it within the necessary stages of redemption. The dire necessity of a perfect Sabbath to redeem the world in a Lurianic sense can be linked to the original cessation of labor. A return to creation is, for Rosenzweig as well as Benjamin, a cornerstone of the messianic idea. See [SdE§337,339,346].

[223] One would have to disagree with Irving Wohlfarth when we writes "Die adamitische Namensgebung ist die Übersetzung einer stummen in eine wörtliche Sprache. Sie nimmt am großen Kreislauf des göttlichen Logos teil." The emphasis in Benjamin appears to be on a transference of linguistic power, on Adam discovering the divine insignia for each thing God created, not the invention of an acoustic language which surely God must of known if Adam was participating in His divine plan nor the incarceration of a Hamannian Logos in the body of the word. This discrepancy may be caused by Wohlfarth's image of Benjamin at a 'standstill' which permits his movement from the early to late work with little hesitation. See "Die Willkür der Zeichen. Zu einem sprachphilosophischen Grundmotiv Walter Benjamins" in *Perspektiven kritischer Theorie. Eine Sammlung zu Hermann Schweppenhäusers 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by C. Türche, Lüneburg: 1988, 134.

[224] See section one, chapter two on the idea of division of the holy and profane.

Naming is articulated as an act within the relations between God and humanity, representing the "tiefste Abbild dieses göttlichen Wortes."[225] The notion of proper names, in this way, rests on the "Grenze der endlichen gegen die unendliche Sprache." [II:149] This border is precisely that which Benjamin seeks to understand, a frontier isolating the difference between divine transference in language, which elevates humans above all other created forms, and the finite realm in which their linguistic task is brought to fruition: "Von allein Wesen ist der Mensch das einzige, das seinesgleichen selbst benennt, wie es denn das einzige ist, das Gott nicht benannt hat." [II:149] Adam is the only part of creation which is permitted to name his own kind.[226] In *Bereshit Rabbah*, we find Adam naming not only Eve but the animals, himself and even God.[227] Benjamin associates this act with the tradition of giving a child a name at birth, be it a "Christian" or "Hebrew" name: "Mit der Gebung des Namen weihen die Eltern ihre Kinder Gott." [II:149-150] This name, however, does not correspond "metaphysically" to any particulars of knowledge, nor should it correspond etymologically to any person, past or present. The proper name remains the word of God, only here it is pronounced humanly.[228]

Humans are thus likened to God through their name, expressed in their capacity to create.[229] This likeness in the proper name is linked to the creating word of God; His transference is therefore not the only aspect of the "Sprachgemeinschaft" between Adam and God. [II:150] Through the word (and here one has to wonder why Benjamin did not apply the first principle of "in" instead of "through" in this sentence), the language of things is coupled with humanity; the human word is the name of things. In this way, bourgeois linguistic theory is fundamentally opposed to a "mystische Sprachtheorie," [II:150] in which language is proposed to be shaped by the convention of establishing the symbol of a thing or the knowledge thereof. But in opposition to a purely mystical linguistic theory, Benjamin voices the argument that the essence of a thing is not in the word;

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[225] [II:149]. In the "Fragment," an "Abbild" is the form in which a mystical conception of history is perceivable.

[226] Genesis 2:20.

[227] *Bereshit Rabbah* XVII:IV.

[228] It is a common practice in Jewish tradition to name a new-born in honor of a close family member recently deceased. Scholem was the first to draw out Benjamin's interest in this tradition in his analysis of Benjamin's mystical text "Angesilaus Santander." See *Walter Benjamin und sein Engel*, 41f.

[229] In connection with the first chapter, where Benjamin presents Messianism in light of the tragic hero, he here also comments that Greek tragedy had it that the name was linked to fate. [II:150] This conception of the name was to have serious messianic implications for Scholem. See section one, chapter seven as well as the conclusion of the third section, chapter eight.

rather that the thing is created from God's word and knowable in Adam's. The knowledge of a thing is therefore not spontaneous creation, not creation from out of its eternity and limitlessness but from the name which humanity gives it and in the form in which humanity expresses it:

> Im Namen ist das Wort Gottes nicht schaffend geblieben, es ist an einem Teil empfangend, wenn auch sprachempfangend, geworden. Auf die Sprache der Dinge selbst, aus denen wiederum lautlos und in der stummen Magie der Nature das Wort Gottes hervorstrahlt, ist diese Empfängnis gerichtet. [II:150]

Benjamin's relationship to mysticism is an ever reoccurring question. Mystical theory may be inclined to avoid the sharp delineations which he requires of his *Midrash* and so, in this sense, would not be appropriate. On the other hand, the linguistic theory which he develops here has a distinct relationship to the independent thought which mysticism is able to embody.[230] The distinction which Benjamin employes here, between God's creative word and humanity's naming one, cannot really be said to be alien to mystical thought.[231] Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how Benjamin decides to overcome the problem presented in the interpretation of Genesis: that in performing creation, God spoke in words that can be repeated, to the degree that they are presented, but which do not have the same "magical" effect. Thus: *or*, light, does not create light when we utter the word — not even in Hebrew, suggesting that in the transition from divine to human, the creating aspect of language was not transferred in full. Only knowing was given in the language of naming. But this too could not have been complete, for a linguistic theory of absolute knowing would not distinguish itself from mystical linguistic theory in any meaningful way.[232] The creating aspect of language was therefore partly received in the language of things where the unspoken word of God enters nature's silence. And this is what appears to be magic — that God's revelation is embedded in the still language of things and His insignia corresponds to human naming. Magic is the incidental reception of revelation or the appearance of revelation in the incidental thing but it is not the mystical oneness within which all distinction is collapsed. The reception of revelation thus becomes the next question which arises out of this speculation.

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[230] Scholem explains mystical activity as both authority-forming and authority-destroying in his essay on authority and mysticism. See [zur Kabbala:21,27-28,48] [on the Kabbala:12,16-17,31].

[231] despite a long history of linguistic mysticism, it remains for many a scathing critique. One can only suppose that a similar drive lead Rosenzweig to attack mysticism so forcefully in the *Star of Redemption.* (His goal, as he interpreted it, was *in philosophos!*). The question of his or indeed Benjamin's relationship to mysticism, however, cannot be settled by the mere disclaimers of either author.

[232] On 'mystical' disclaimers of magic, see, for example, the discussion of Abulafia in this section.

What is to happen to nature when it is moved to a lower form of blessedness? According to Maler Friedrich Müller, Adam saw the nobility [Adel] of each animal and was thereby able to give each a name.[233] But with the expulsion from paradise, nature's silence took on a "tiefe Trauerigkeit" [II:154] caused by its lack of language with lamentation the only linguistic expression lent to it. Redemption is not limited to the poet but lodged in the existence and the expression of humanity:

> Die Klage ist aber der undifferenzierteste, ohnmächtige Ausdruck der Sprache, sie enthält fast nur den sinnlichen Hauch; und wo auch nur Pflanzen rauschen, kingt immer eine Klage mit. [II:155]

The lamentation is the lowest form of protest, the least differentiated statement of intention which suggests merely the complaints of senses. But even where the plants rustle, there is a sounding of a lamentation.[234] Because nature is speechless, it mourns. But because it is mourning, it is also speechless: "Es ist in aller Trauer der tiefste Hang zur Sprachlosigkeit, und das ist unendlich viel mehr als Unfähigkeit oder Unlust zur Mitteilung." [II:155] Mourning is the link to its sadness, not its incapacity to speak. Even when being named in a paradisiacal language, nature was given a secondary position. But being named in an uncountable number of languages, in which the name itself has already begun to whither, evokes the

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[233] Maler Friedrich Müller, *Adams erstes erwachen und erste seelige Nächte*, Mannheim: 1779, 49, "(Erscheinung Gottes). Gott kündigt Adam seinem Beruf an. Adam Giebt vor Gott den Theiren Namen." See [II:936].

[234] In formulating a conception of lamentation in relation to mourning, Benjamin may very well be drawing on discussions with Scholem on the subject. We know that Benjamin received an unpublished text of Scholem's entitled "Über Klage und Klagelied" [Scholem arc 4o 1599/277, National and University Library, Jerusalem] which he discusses in a letter to Scholem from March 30, 1918, nearly a year and a half after completing this essay on language. In it, he compares his "Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie" [II:137] of November 1916, nearly contemporaneous with the reflections on language, to Scholem's essay. Central to Benjamin's reading is the difference between the German and Hebrew languages: "Jetzt sehe ich nun in Ihrer Arbeit daß die Fragestellung die mich damals [the period of these two earlier text] bewegte auf Grund der hebräischen Klage gestellt werden muß." [briefe I:182] Benjamin alludes to a distinction which he sought to make in "Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie" between mourning and tragedy which is not reflected in Scholem's thesis but which, in both his own though and in Scholem's, is "nicht genügend ausgearbeitet um diese Frage lösen zu können." He also questions Scholem's approach to the German language as the receiving vernacular of his translations (Laminations and the Song of Songs): "Ob sich die Klagelieder jenseits einer solchen Beziehung auf das Deutsche auch noch die Sprache übersetzen lassen vermag ich natürlich nicht zu entscheiden und Ihre Arbeit scheint es zu verneinen." [briefe I:183] This difference in the notion of Hebrew as a translatable language must have indeed been a point of contention based on the interpretation of the meaning of the word of God. Although Scholem does articulate a unique status for the 'original' language, the very fact that he is engaged in its transference to another language implies a certain degree of faith in the integrity of such an undertaking, rather then the "Unfähigkeit oder Unlust zur Mitteilung" which Benjamin subscribes to lamentation itself. [II:155] See also [freund:67]

deepest stake of mourning. As a consequence, the multiplicity of profane languages and phenomenon of over-naming in each language comes to fill linguistic expression with an abundence of purly arbartrary signs and names. Only in God would nature be able to find its proper name again:

> Überbenennung als tiefster sprachlicher Grund aller Trauigkeit und (vom Ding aus betrachtet) allen Verstummens. Die Überbenennung als sprachliches Wesen des Trauigen deutet auf ein anderes merkwürdiges Verhältnis der Sprache: auf die Überbestimmtheit, die im tragischen Verhältnis zwischen den Sprachen der sprechenden Menschen walten. [II:155-6]

Over-naming is the same as calling things by their wrong names. It is said to be the linguistic origins of the mourning of nature and its silence. Over-naming, in becoming the *geistige Wesen* of nature, becomes over-determination which rules the tragic connection between language and humans. In the various spheres of art, there are languages for each artistic form based on the language of things and, at the same time, translations of a higher form. However, the nameless, non-acoustic languages of the material world can be expressed as the material collectivity of things, rather then a mere, undifferentiated whole. The pursuit of artistic knowledge is therefore bound to the integrated search for the languages of nature. It must be studied in connection with the problem of signs in the composition of language in its writen form, expression and medium. [II:156]

The word has been given a divine insignia. It also receives the nameless in the name as the translation of languages that pertain to things in human language. For Benjamin, translation is the mode of reception most capable of receiving revelation. The maxim for this is: "daß jede höhere Sprache (mit Ausname des Wortes Gottes) als Übersetzung aller anderen betrachtet werden kann." [II:151] On the question of the perception of God's revelation, several factors come to the fore. Firstly, it is clear the word of God is not translatable, for if His name is untranslatable — the heart, so to speak, of the word of God — neither is a word which is peripheral. Secondly, a higher and a lower language exist which correspond to a divine and a profane language; thirdly, that this higher language can be seen as a translation of all other languages.[235] This last proposition is already expressed once in Benjamin's observations on translations: "Die Übersetzung ist die Überführung der einen Sprache in die andere durch ein Kontinuum von Verwandlungen. Kontinua der Verwandlung, nicht abstrakte Gleichheits- und Ähnlichkeitsbezerke durchmißt die Übersetzung." [II:151] The transition from a divine creating language to a human language was already a translation, the transporting of one language to another in the continuum of transformation and creation. This is Benjamin's answer to the *or*-problem (let us call it an or-problem). If the language of creation is transformative, and God transfered at least a part of the creating word in the *ruach* of Adam, human language must also be transformative. Translation is thus the capturing of an element of this transformative aspect in language:

> Die Übersetzung der Sprache der Dinge in die des Menschen ist nicht nur Übersetzung des Stummen in das Lauthafte, sie ist die Übersetzung des Namenlosen in den Namen. Das ist also die Übersetzung einer unvollkommenen Sprache in eine vollkommenere, sie kann nicht anders als etwas dazu tun, nämlich die Erkenntnis. [II:151]

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[235] It is interesting to compare once again Benjamin's own history of the reception of language to Hamann's rather expressionistic views on translation. "Reden ist Übersetzen — aus einer Engelsprache in eine Menschensprache, das Heißt, Gedanken in Worte — Sachen in Namen — Bilder in Zeichen; die poetische oder kyriologische — historisch oder symbolish oder hieroglyphisch — und philosophisch oder charakterisctisch sein können." [Briefe an G.E. Linder, Königsberg (3 Aug 1759), Unger, 146] In contrast to Hamann, Benjamin views the higher, divine language in constant transformation of the lower form, rather then the word of God being constantly transformed in worldly translations. While the former is Benjamin's own formulation based on an understanding of creation, the latter is endemic to Christianity. It seems apparent to this author that Benjamin did have in mind here this central aspect of the idea of revelation in Christian theology (which he also encounters, to some degree, in Molitor) and distinguishes his own views accordingly.

The unyielding, transformative dynamic would even apply to divine scripture from this perspective, for even the Torah would appear incomplete if not for God's acoustic expression, rendering scriptural intention into act. The acoustic is not merely the verbal sounding of the written but a translation of the creating word. Sounding of a word is a translation but it is also a transformative act in the language of things. The translation from the mute to acoustic asigns the meaning of word to it. If a word has lost its acoustic form, that is if it is no longer prouncable, then it is no longer meaningful as well. In effect, the acoustic attributes the knowledge of a thing in its pronounciation.[236] The naming of things is therefore that which draws them closer to the perfection of the divine realm. Knowledge is a medium in this transition, to be used and to be gained, but the absolute knowledge of things remains solely in the realm of God. In creation, God posited the creating name in them and thus created the basis of the knowing of the name. In this sense, Adam may be the distributor of the name but God is its ultimate creator. Naming is the expression of the identity of the creating word and the knowing word as name in God. God does not really abdicate His responsibility in the translation of His language into a human one. To the degree that Adam received the silent, nameless language of things and translated it mimetically into pronounceable names, he merely extended an activity already established by God. This would not have been possible if both the language of God and the language of Adam were not originally located in God Himself, springing from the same creating word in which both things and human language as knowledge shared a common origin, in the "Mitteilung der Materie in magischer Gemeinschaft," [II:151] their "Sprachgemeindschaft."

The connection here between appearance and the act of naming is the inner communicable silence of things and animals in human language:

> In demselben Kapitel der Dichtung spricht aus dem Dichter [Müller], daß nur das Wort, aus dem die Dinge geschaffen sind, ihre Benennung dem Menschen erlaubt, indem es sich in den mannigfachen Sprachen der Tiere, wenn auch stumm, mitteilt in dem Bild: Gott gibt den Tieren der Reihe nach ein Zeichen, auf das hin sie vor den Menschen zur Bennung treten. Auf eine fast sublime

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[236] In the transition of the "Stummen in das Lauthafte," one must keep in mind the structure of the Hebrew language in its written form which, in very often being formed without vocalization signs, can very well arrive at a word whose pronunciation is unknown. This may give rise to an unpronounceable divine name such as YHVH or a list of divine names which best resemble strings of largely unintelligible consonants in cacophonous patterns. In the acoustic transformation of the silent into the recognizable, the process by which the Hebrew language is spoken, discovered and rediscovered, could serve as a model for the idea of a constant translation. Joseph Dan interprets the unpronounceable name as representing a semiotic conception of language. See his "The Name of God, the Name of the Rose, and the Concept of Language in Jewish Mysticism," in *Medieval Encounters*, volume 2, No. 3, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 228-248.

> Weise ist so die Sprachgemeinschaft der stummen Schöpfung mit Gott im
> Bilde des Zeichens gegeben. [II:152]

Adam named the word from which the thing was created, not the thing itself. The animals came before Adam with a sign that was handed out to them by God, one by one. So in "sublime fashion," the linguistic association of God with his silent creation is portrayed here in the imagery of the sign. Thus the silent sign which Adam discovered in God's creation, permitting him to locate their names, lies buried deep in human knowledge. Profane translation itself could only occur after the fall from grace:

> Die Sprache der Dinge kann in *die* Sprache der Erkenntnis und des Namens
> nur in der Übersetzung eingehen — soviel Übersetzungen, soviel Sprachen,
> sobald nämlich der Menschen einmal aus dem paradiesischen Zustand, der
> nur eine Sprache kannte, gefallen ist. [II:152]

The development of the plurality of language was set to occur after the fall from paradise when knowledge and names had to be translated into many different languages.[237] The paradisiacal language must have been perfect if knowledge was later to be endlessly differentiated in it until the point when it had reached the most profane, common level. Only then could creation be expressed in the name.

At the same time, the notion of a language of absolute knowing is contradicted by the tree of knowledge. In the seventh day, Benjamin explains, God had already introduced the meaning of good and evil by the fact that He expressed His approval of creation. The apple was only to transform the meaning of good and evil into knowledge through the act. Even though God had introduced the definition of good, the knowledge of it remained nameless.[238] Thus it is termed an "evil" knowledge, merely external to naming and linguistic knowledge, as the "unschöpferische Nachahmung des schaffenden Wortes." [II:153] Benjamin explains this as the origins of the division between divine and profane language:

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[237] The proximity of historical events to the transformation of language, once a common notion of the middle ages, is brought to the fore here in Benjamin's analysis. The power of language is historical: "La condizione storica dell'uomo è inseparabile dalla sua condizione di essere parlante ed è iscritta nella modalità stessa del suo accesso al linguaggio [...]" See Giorgio Agamben, "Lingua e storia. Categorie linguistiche e categorie storiche nel pensiero di Benjamin" in: *Walter Benjamin. Tempo, storia, linguagio*, Roma: 1983, 70. Agamben's discussion on pages 74-75 of the only universal language considered in our time, Esperanto, is indeed a coherent outgrowth of Benjamin's thought.

[238] Benjamin describes this namelessness, interesting enough, as the only evil known in paradise. In the analysis of evil, it appears the discussion is drawn, in part, from Kierkegaard. We shall return to Kierkegaard and a discussion of *Der Begriff Angst* in chapter one of section three on the origins of evil and the concept of justice.

> Der Sündenfall ist die Geburtsstunde des *menschlichen Wortes*, in dem der Name nicht mehr unverletzt lebte, das aus der Namensprache, der erkennenden, [...] der immanenten eigenen Magie heraustrat, um ausdrücklich, von außen gleichsam, magisch zu werden. [II:153]

Exile is the point in which Benjamin marks the transition from the creating word to a language which is no longer able to express creation. The magic of this expression, in which linguistic creation was also immanent revelation communicable, was at once lost with the expulsion from paradise. In this, the nature of revelatory language was to change along with its magic. If language was once used to express the unfolding of God's divine plan, it was now the mere appearance of the knowledge of how this plan works, a mimicking which is reduced to mere imitation of the creating word. Now that the word must express something outside of itself, it typifies "der Sündenfall des Sprachgeistes." [II:153] No longer is the spirit of the word able to be expressed in its name, as all things are to turn faceless in regards to their proper names. The word expresses outwardly as a condition of the lost identity of the object, caught between the merely externally expressing words.

From the damaged immediacy of language to the departure of meaning associated with the word, the linguistic confusion which was to follow was a short step. "Zeichen müssen sich verwirren, wo sich die Dinge verwickeln." [II:154] Language became enslaved to nonsense as did things:

> Ohne diese bleibt überhaupt jede Sprachphilosophie gänzlich fragmentarisch, weil die Beziehung zwischen Sprache und Zeichen (wofür die zwischen Menschensprache und Schrift nur ein ganz besonderes Beispiel bildet) ursprünglich und fundamental ist. [II:156]

The connection between language and sign is of primary concern for linguistic philosophy, without which it would remain fragmentary. This is an indication that Benjamin saw his own work in this light.[239] For a future development of linguistic speculation:

> Sprach [ist] in jedem Falle nicht allein Mitteilung des Mitteilbaren, sondern zugleich Symbol des Nicht-Mitteilbaren. Diese symbolische Seite der Sprache hängt mit ihrer Beziehung zum Zeichen zusammen, aber erstreckt sich zum Beispiel in gewisser Beziehung auch über Name und Urteil. Diese haben nicht allein eine mitteilende, sondern höchstwahrscheinlich auch eine mit ihr eng verbundene symbolische Funktion [...].[240]

The symbolic side of language begins with the problem that language presents not only the communicable but also often stands in place of it. That is, it carries within itself a replication of noncommunicable substance. This makes aspects of language already symbolic before any intention is applied, linking it in a most direct way with the sign, particularly as the sign which is expressed in divine language and understood in a human one. Thus naming and judgment both stand in relationship to the divine and maintain a symbolic functioning of the divine order, where justice is applied in judgment and knowledge in naming:

> Die Sprache eines Wesens ist das Medium, in dem sich sein geistigen Wesen mitteilt. Der ununterbrochene Strom dieser Mitteilung fließt durch die ganze

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[239] In this regard, see his letter to Scholem of March 30, 1918 [breife I:182].

[240] [II:156]. Benjamin ultimately develops the notion of knowledge as the center point of divine transference into a call for a linguistic order of knowledge in his programmatic on the coming philosophy "Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie." [II:157] The expulsion from paradise tarnished an original knowledge far broader then the "mathematical-mechanical" view which dominates epistemology. A correction would be rightly defined as a metaphysic of language, he writes. [II:168] For a discussion of this critique, see Regine Kather, *"Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen." Die Sprachsphilosophie Walter Benjamins*, 73-77.

> Natur von niedersten Existierenden bis zum Menschen und vom Menschen zu Gott. Der Mensch teilt sich Gott durch den Namen mit, den er der Natur und seinesgleichen (im Eigennamen) gibt, und der Natur gibt er den Namen nach der Mitteilung, die er von ihr empfängt, denn auch die ganze Natur ist von einer namenlosen stummen Sprache durchgezogen, dem Residuum des schaffenden Gotteswortes, welches im Menschen als erkennender Name und über dem Menschen als richtendes Urteil schwebend sich erhalten hat. Die Sprache der Natur ist einer geheimen Losung zu vergleichen, die jeder Posten dem nächsten in seiner eigenen Sprache weitergibt, der Inhalt der Losung aber ist die Sprache des Postens selbst. Alle höhere Sprache ist Übersetzung der niederen, bis in der letzten Klarheit sich das Wort Gottes entfaltet, das die Einheit dieser Sprachbewegung ist. [II:157]

The language of an essence is the medium through which language expresses its *geistigen Wesen*. The expressing of *geistigen Wesen* occurs in every part of nature, in humans, reaching all the way to God. Humans communicate with God through the naming of nature and themselves. Nature, however, is engaged in the process of naming, for it too was created out of the creating word of God. Nature responds to the search for its name by expressing to humans the intentions which God implanted in it as a substance of the intellect. This is the residuum of the divine in every aspect of creation. This residuum for humans remains in the name of knowledge and as judgment. Here a certain degree of uncertantity settles in. The pursuit of a true language of nature is an attempt to uncover the index by which every substance of the intellect is continuously transferred to another language. The solution to this problem of a true language may lie in the position which one language takes in relation to its transference to another. In this regard, every higher language is a translation of a language which came before it, all the way to the final and complete clarity in the unfolding and revelation of the word of God, which is understood as the unity of all the movement of language. We have located this final unity of language in the unpronounceable name.

> Die Erkenntnis der Dinge beruht in Namen, die des Guten und Bösen ist aber in dem tiefen Sinne, in dem Kierkegaard dieses Wort faßt, "Geschwätz" und kennt nur eine Reinigung und Erhöhung, unter die denn auch der geschwätzige Menschen, der Sündige, gestellt wurde: das Gericht. [II:153]

Knowledge of good and evil is presented as false knowledge, corresponding to sin which will only be corrected through judgment. Judgment may also be magical but it represents a markedly different form of magic. Judgment is associated with a word which executed the expulsion from paradise, a judging word which humanity itself expounds_from an eternal law. But the judging word which performed the expulsion did so at the same time as enduring the punishment inflicted upon humanity: "In Sündenfall, da die ewige Reinheit des Namens angetastet wurde, erhob sich die strengere Reinheit des richtenden Wortes, des Urteils." [II:153] In the purity of its act, judgment became the purest word upon which the fallen creating language was to rely: justice.[241] This punishment went beyond the expulsion to include a heavy burden, a plague upon the "Sprachgemeindschaft" itself: language became a means, a mere sign [*bloße Zeichen*] infinitely multiplied, developing what Benjamin termed a "damaged immediacy." Its damaged immediacy reduced expression to the arbitrary production of mere signs, divided among themselves into multitudes of languages. But in this state of profound decay of the agency of naming, the very condition which is viewed as an infliction of punishment gave rise to the conditions of restitution of language itself. Thus within the state of expulsion into which humanity carried the word, "eine neue, Magie des Urteils" [II:153] was lodged, enabling a full and ultimate redemption of language. This redemptive element, harbored in judgment as justice, was no longer in itself purely divine, now having been located in the world of the profane: "daß aus dem Sündenfall als die Restitution der in ihm verletzten unmittelbarkeit des Namens eine neue, die Magie des Urteils, sich erhebt, die nicht mehr selig in sich selbst ruht." [II:153] Justice, which we shall come to see in the next section as a divine state and not a subjective

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[241] Gillian Rose detected a measure of uncertainly in the emergence of the notion of judgment from the pains of expulsion when she wrote "Judgment is ambiguous: both a new immediacy and the mediation of abstraction." By associating the mythical origins of law to this ambiguity, she appears to view it as paradox. On the other hand, a messianic lodging of the pure word in the midst of the decline of language might be the linguistic equivalent of Rabbi Akiva laughing at the destruction of the Temple while knowing full well that the birth of the Messiah has come. See her *Judaism and Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, 185.

judgment, engenders a magic in the profane which enables it to restore itself to the purity of divine judgment.[242]

Language's damaged immediacy gave birth to a multiplicity of languages and served as the impetus for translation, generating its imperative in the profane. The very task of abstraction which translation employed in transporting the transitive *geistige Wesen* of a thing into another profane language may have lost the linguistic spirit it presented as a consequence of the expulsion. At the same time, it created the need for the abstract: "Daß auch der Ursprung der Abstraktion als eines Vermögens des Sprachgeistes in Sündenfall zu suchen sei." [II:154] The idea of the abstract within the profane is also therefore a qualification of its magic.

Since good and evil were already in existence before the tree of knowledge, the name was only able to form the concrete elements of language before the expulsion, and while both good and evil remained nameless before the partaking of the fruit of the tree, they were inexpressive before the expulsion:

> Der Baum der Erkenntnis stand nicht wegen der Aufschlüsse über Gut und Böse, die er zu geben vermocht hätte, im Garten Gottes, sondern als Wahrzeichen des Gerichts über den Fragenden. Diese ungeheure Ironie ist das Kennzeichen des mythischen Ursprungs des Rechts. [II:154]

The notion of good and evil existed before the state of exile, before even the tree of knowledge. Thus the tree stood as a monument to an event that had yet to take place. It therefore comes to memorialize the paradox of judgment; it is to be alive in the moment, and at any moment, but rests upon a notion of divine justice itself momentary unatainabile. Only judgment, in a magical association with divine justice, is thus deemed capable of expressing the abstract, the unpronounceable element in language:

> Die abstrakten Sprachelemente aber [...] wurzeln im richtenden Worte, im Urteil. Die unmittelbarkeit (das ist aber die sprachliche Wurzel) der Mitteilbarkeit der Abstraktion ist im richterlichen Urteil gelegen. Diese Unmittelbarkeit in der Mitteilung der Abstraktion stellte sich richtend ein, als im Sündenfall der Mensch die Unmittelbarkeit in der Mitteilung des Konkreten, den Namen, verließ und in den Abgrund der Mittelbarkeit aller Mitteilung, des Wortes als Mittel, des eitlen Wortes verfiel, in den Abgrund des Geschwätzes. [II:154]

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[242] Scholem comes to understand the purity of divine judgment in the *Aufschub* or postponement of its execution. See the chapter of prophetic justice in the third section.

The capacity of the abstract, which was once set in the naming word and was lost in the expulsion, has been lodged in judgment. A new magic was born in the darkest moment of exile in which all hope was placed on the judging word, a new magic of the word to usher in an ultimate restitution of justice in the dawn of a messianic age. This new magic is therefore also undoubtly messianic transformation.

JEWISH LINGUISTIC THEORY AND CHRISTIAN KABBALAH

Franz Joseph Molitor and his book *Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition*, (1827, revised 1857) perhaps the last in a tradition of Christian Kabbalists along the Rhine, was to make a great impact on Scholem in his first attempts at unlocking the secrete, inner chambers of the Kabbalah. Documenting the importance of Molitor for Jewish history and justifying his own early fascination, Scholem was to remark that Molitor was to understand considerably more about the Kabbalah then many of the Jewish theologians of his time.[243] Accordingly, the early journals demonstrate a particular interest in Molitor's linguistic theory (based on rabbinic and kabbalistic sources), the historical breath and depth of which, not to speak of Molitor's emphasis on Hebrew as the divine language, lead Scholem to call his work "eine wahrhafte Ideologie des Zionismus,"[244] despite the obvious partiality of his "liberal" Catholicism.[245] On the 18th of November 1916, Scholem made the following entry in his journal:

> "Die Buchstaben, *welche der Ausdruck geistiger Kräfte sind* (könnte wörtlich Hirsch im Pentateuchkommentar geschrieben haben!), *haben ihre Wurzeln oben*" (Molitor I), d.h. in der Wahrheit. [tag I:422]

In the same period that Benjamin is thought to have written his essay on language, there is rements of an intense exchange with Scholem (October—November 1916). He makes several reference in these two months to heated discussions with Benjamin on Zion, the concept of justice,[246] references to Samson Raphel Hirsch's commentary on Genesis and Franz Joseph Molitor's *Philosophie der Geschichte*.[247]

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[243] Scholem was to mention this in his autobiography as well as in an article on Molitor for Encyclopedia Judaica. David Biale comments "It is possible [..] that Scholem's early positive attitude toward the Kabbalah was more a result of his reading of Molitor than of any Jewish historian." See his *Gershom Scholem. Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 32.

[244] [tag I:405]. Zionism here is only understandable in the context of Scholem's early religious notions of Zionism, capable of viewing Molitor's historical and religious writings as a contribution to a cultural—political, ultimately religious Zionism which is described in chapter eight of first section. It would not be understandable in terms of his later conception of Zionism.

[245] Despite its "grundlos [...] christologische Wendung," remarks Scholem on the meaning of Molitor for his and Benjamin's early discussions, "ist das Buch noch immer beachtenswert." [freund:53]

[246] Including a newly discovered text from Benjamin on the subject entitled "Notizen zu einer Arbeit über die Kategorie der Gerechtigkeit" (entry of 8/9 Oct. 1916) [tag I:401]. In the next section, we will explore the importance of this text for Scholem.

[247] In a well publicized letter to Zalman Schocken, Scholem makes it clear what an central role Molitor was to play in his decision to study the Kabbalah. Though Molitor, "So kam ich mir der Absicht, nicht die Historie, sondern die Metaphysik der Kabbala zu schreiben." [B I:471] We know, however, that it could not have been Molitor alone who introduced the notion of creating a metaphysic of his own, even if a interest in metaphysics can be found in the *Philosophie der*

In connection to the latter, Scholem was to approach the problem of a philosophy of language in a way that we have already seen as forming the foundation of Benjamin's essay. He writes: "Ihre Aufgabe [der Sprachphilosophie] ist die Untersuchung der Sprache als Offenbarung der Wahrheit, sie hat den Wahrheitsgehalt der Sprache zu bestimmen."[248] He continues a bit farther on in the same passage:

> In der Thora als einem göttlichen Buche erscheint dies Problem am ehesten und unproblematischsten: als Sprache Gottes muß sie notwendig Sprache der Wahrheit sein, *jeder* Wahrheit, und die in jedem Satze ausgedrückte allgemeine und besondere Wahrheit muß notwendigerweise eine Funktion der angewandten Worte sein [...] Man kann durchaus mit Recht sagen, *daß* hier *die Wahrheit eine stetige Funktion der Sprache sei*. [tag I:421] (18 Nov. 1916)

One is able to see in the following citation a link to Benjamin in both the terms of a philosophy of language which seeks truth in the claims of revelation and the language of God, as well as a temporal connection.[249] Since Molitor played such an important role in the formation of Scholem's early thoughts on language which he reports discussing with Benjamin begining in 1915, a comparative analysis of Molitor in relation to Benjamin is all but necessary.[250] Because he was able to articulate established currents in this tradition in a highly concise form, Molitor could have easily provided a key building-block for the theological groundwork of Benjamin's essay. The immediate parallel of themes in the following chapter makes the connection between the two, in fact, rather suggestive.[251]

Geschichte. Rather it was Benjamin who voiced a constant search for a metaphysic in discussions with Scholem and in his early writings, as we have been able to see here.

[248] [tag I:420]. Scholem goes on to claim that, upon this statement, Wilhelm von Humboldt should be considered a linguistic philosopher. Humboldt connection to Scholem's own religious speculations on language, however, is far from apparent here. Benjamin's own views on Humboldt, who, according to Benjamin, overlooked the "magische Seite der Sprache," were quite negative. See "Reflektionen zu Humboldt," VI:26-27, VI:648-652, suspected to having been written around 1925-28.

[249] Benjamin's interest in Messianism also extended to the Romantics. In his doctoral thesis, it becomes important at a certain stage to reformulate the meaning of Schlegel's apparently affirmative stance to progress in order to maintain a coherent view of him as messianically inspired. Benjamin's understanding may have also been deepened by the Romantics. In his doctoral dissertation, he quotes Schlegel "Der Buchstab' ist der echte Zauberstab" and Novalis "Mehrere Namen sind einer Idee vorteilhaft" in this respect. See [I:92-93]. Marcus P. Bullock, in his book *Romanticism and Marxism*, New York: Peter Lang, 1987, believes that the thesis adds very little to the understanding of matters which it claims to deals with, suffering under the weight of apriori messianic notions.

[250] Scholem was to note, for example, in his copy of Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, 191, that, in his opinion, it was Molitor and not Franz von Baader who was to have a critical influence on Benjamin. On Scholem's discussions of Baader's, *Vorlesung über eine künftige Theorie des Opfers oder des Kultus*. (Münster: 1836) with Benjamin, see section three, chapter two.

[251] In 1981, Scholem wrote a short but highly critical review of Werner Fuld's *Walter Benjamin. Zwischen den Stühlen. Eine Biographie*, München, 1979, focusing on Fuld's argument that Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) was based on Franz von Baaders

The seventh chapter of Molitor's *Philosphie der Geschichte* presents us with a concise presentation of his linguistical theory entitled "Über den Ursprung der Sprache und Schrift bei den Ebräern" which, in many ways, could still be considered a faithful discussion of Jewish linguistics.[252] He begins with the following statement:

> [...] die jüdische Tradition [...] behauptet, das Ebräische sey die erste Ursprache gewesen, die Adam im Paradiese gesprochen. Obgleich nun solches nicht nach dem buchstäblichen Sinne genommen werden darf, indem die Ursprache, welche der Mensch in seiner Geistigkeit vor dem Falle geredet, von ganz anderer Art als alle jetzt bestehende Sprachen gewesen, so muß doch, wenn die Bibel das Buch der göttlichen Offenbarung seyn soll, die ebräische Sprache ein zwar geschwächter verkörperter, aber doch treuer Abdruck jener ersten, reinen Ursprache seyn. [1827:329-30]

Molitor begins his treatise with a point which affords well with a general linguistical conception of creation in Judaism, born from a notion of the Hebrew language as the center of his linguistic theory: If there had once been an original, divine and creating language, narrated in the book of Genesis, then surely it was Hebrew. Further, if Hebrew today is not itself this genesic language, then it still must be the most splendid profane language known to humanity, uniquely derived from the divine. Should the latter be the case, it would be right to assume that Hebrew is the first, original, profane language which, because of its unique proximity to divine language, would certainly have maintained divine elements severely reduced in further derivations.[253] In this opening citation, Molitor first establishes the basis for Jewish speculation on the divine nature of the Hebrew language, whose existence would be no different than the Hebrew we are familiar with; only its meaning and divine character is, as of yet, unknown. Even if not "taken to the letter" (as Molitor playfully suggests) that an original language existed

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"Elementarbegriffe über die Zeit" (1831). Scholem thoroughly rejects Fuld's thesis. However, a secondary comment by Scholem on Molitor confirms again the content of letters from Benjamin to Scholem from 1917 [briefe I:134-139], on the occasion of receiving Molitor's work. It would not be too speculative to suggest that Benjamin was already somewhat familiar with Molitor before ordering the four volumes, care of Scholem. As I have already suggest, a copy of the book was available in the library in Berlin during the period that he wrote his essay. See Scholem, "Benjamin and Baader" in *Walter Benjamin und sein Engel*, 201-203.

[252] Albeit in catholic guise which I shall discuss in this chapter.

[253] Certainly another possibility not formulated by Molitor is that both a divine, creating language and a semi-divine naming language existed from which profane language derived; Adam's naming language being a lesser but still divinely imbued form. Hence a genesic and an adamatic language. Hebrew, which would have then been a language transferred to the Torah, would have to belong to a third category. The possible speculations in this regard are seemingly endless. Important here are only the general parameters of the discussion which are able to determine the species of linguistic considerations i.e. if a given analysis is able to be considered a part of genesic speculations.

which was once spoken by humans but one radically different from the languages which exist today, we are still left with the notion of scripture as divine revelation. Clearly Hebrew must then be an authentic reproduction [Abdruck] of a divine language, regardless of whether it is merely a weaker reflection [Abglanz] of its divine origins. He continues in the same passage:

> Denn gleichwie der Mensch auch noch in seinem gefallenen Zustand den Abglanz [*Abdruck*] seiner ehemaligen geistigen Hoheit an sich trägt, so muß auch seine Sprache wenigstens die Spuren jenes magischen Schöpfungsgeistes der frühern Ursprache noch behalten haben; die in seinen Nachkommen sich immer mehr degenerirte, je tiefer das Menschengeschlecht nach und nach sank.[254]

Human beings were created *bezelem*, in the image of God, out of the expression of divine *ruach* which God blew into the nostrils of Adam. In this sense, just as we have been endowed with hidden, divine substance, also embedded within the Hebrew language are divine shards of a pure language. Moreover, the tie which binds humanity to its original, profane language also reflects its conditon: should an original Hebrew be in a state of decline, it would be in no different a condition in this respects then exiled humanity. Only a "magischen Schöpfungsgeistes" afforded to an original, creating language of God could redeem this sunken state of human expression. A higher language transfers to a lower one its substance of the spirit/intellect which would be maintained by the lower in a condensed and sealed fashion.

Summarized and problematized here in a very precise and clear formulation, Molitor would have presented Benjamin with robust inspiration, formulated in relation to *midrashic* tradition on the nature of Hebrew as the original, divine language. He would have also incidentially ignited a challenge to Christian interpreters including even the revered Hamann.[255] He writes:

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[254] [1827:330] In parentheses, I have included the word *Abdruck* which he substitutes for *Abglanz* in his "zweite, neu bearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage" of 1857. It is interesting to note how the term *Abglanz* finds expression in Benjamin's aesthetic speculation, beginning with the prohibition of the image and its contiguity toward *Abdruck*.

[255] Like Molitor, Hamann uses a *midrashic* interpretation to explain Christian principles and does not distinguish himself here from the body of Christian Kabbalists from Reuchlin to Molitor. What is particularly remarkable in Molitor, however, is the length to which he goes to remain philologically (and otherwise) faithful to *midrashic* tradition in the first volume of the *Geschichte der Philosophie oder über die Tradition* (1827). This integrity is all the more apparent in contrast to the second version of 1857 which, under the influence, in part, of Franz von Baader, he was to alter many of the passages of this chapter to emphasize Christian aims in the study of Kabbalah, particularly where he chooses to employ a Trinitarian structure which ends up merely hovering over the citations below.

> Es bleibt also hier kein Mittelweg übrig: entweder ist die Schöpungsurkunde eine bloße jüdische National-Mythe, in welcher alle Namen ebräisirt sind, wie die Neologen behaupten; oder wenn die Bücher Moscheh aus göttlicher Offenbarung geflossen, so muß zugleich auch die Sprache, in der sie verfaßt sind [ist], und die von dem Inhalte der Erzählung völlig untrennbar ist, von höherer Abkunft, und der Abglanz der wahren Ursprache seyn. [1827:330]

If Hebrew is merely another profane language, a mere linguistic thesis of a dead language would do. But if Hebrew is the living words of God's revelation — not the "bourgeois" linguistic theory which views language as a means — than no division is possible between revelation and the language in which it is transmitted, claims Molitor. Only then could revelation itself be considered a divine reflection, stemming immently from up-high. The indivisibility of content from form is clearly the intention of Molitor's opening remarks.[256] The meaning which comes from the syntax of scripture, he goes on to say, is only comprehensible in the context of Hebrew. Particularly in the language of creation and the first act of naming by God — how else would one explain the name Adam if not for the word *adama*, the earth from which God formed him. [1827:330] In an inserted passage to the 1857 edition, Molitor continues in the same vein by claiming that only in Hebrew do biblical passages have "wirkliche Bedeutung [...], indem hier das Wort und der Begriff der Sache untrennbar sind, woraus also unleugbar folgt, daß die Genesis ursprunglich nur in der ebräischen Sprache gedacht und zunächst für ebräisch redende Personen ausgesprachen sein kann."[257] He proceeds to give several etymological explanations for the origins of names in order to further demonstrate that Hebrew is unquestionably "der irdische Abglanz der wahren Ursprache" from a biblical perspective.[258] He concludes with Hieronymus that Hebrew must be the only "reine heilige Ursprache." [1827:332]

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[256] Molitor was in fact ahead of more contemporary critics of Benjamin's genesic speculations. If the notion of Hebrew as a divine language could not be reduced to "eine bloß jüdische Nation-Mythe" in 1827, one has to wonder why we are left with only two choices in interpreting Benjamin's early conception of language, either private and mystical, perhaps part national-myth, or rationalist, Universalist and ultimately Christian.

[257] [1857:526] This is taken from the 1857 edition to illustrate a point which is expressed generally in the first edition. After a rather close examination of the two editions, it is highly likely that if Benjamin were indeed to have consulted Molitor, he would have found a more precise rendition in the first edition of 1827. Although the second edition contains most everything of that the first, the latter places undue emphasis on the independence of God and Christianity (particularly its victory through reason), suggesting the possibility that the later inserts were meant as a response to a contrary position or critique. Scholem suggests the influence of Baader in the second edition in his article on Molitor in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Moreover, despite the several new references to *Bereshit Rabbah* which would, in themselves, not have been of particular interest to Benjamin thematically, the first edition could have formed the basis of a mystical, linguistic theory.

[258] [1827:331]. "Irdische Abglanz" should be noted as being the preferred wording of Benjamin on several occasions.

The first argument conerns the hebraic origins of revelation being embedded in language. He introduces next the notion of script (in the sense of scripture) as written revelation. Naturally, the discussion of the written word in the Torah does not concern profane language but exclusively a written form of expression of God's will:

> Die ganze Untersuchung über den Ursprung und die Beschaffenheit der Urschrift hängt eigentlich von der ersten Vorfrage ab: ist die Schrift blos das Werk einer künstlichen, durch das äußere Bedürfnis geweckten Reflexion, oder liegt ihr etwas Inneres, Nothwendiges, Absolutes im Menschen zum Grunde? [1827:336]

This proposition is bound to the question if humans themselves are perfect, created by a perfect God, free to implement His will as He chooses. The answer determines the "naturalist" from the "spiritualist" in the theory of the origins of language, he claims. Though "wenn wir mit glaubigem Gemüthe dem Sinne der Bibel folgen," there can little room for a naturalist theory of "willkührlichen Zeichen" [1827:337] in which language is seen as merely a technical aid of meaning. Here Benjamin's critique of languague as a means, the necessity of meaningful expression in divine language and the breakdown of divine language into its opposite, "bloßen Zeichen" compared to the "Wahrzeichen" of divine judgment conincides with Molitor's own analysis.[259]

In a genesic conception of language, "der Mensch und sein ganzes Leben und Thun [erhält] eine viel edlere und erhabenere Bedeutung." [1827:338] Humans are not the product of natural forces, leaving little in the way of "innere geistige Selbständigkeit und Freiheit," not a consciousness built from "passiver Reflex der empfangenen äußern Eindrücke" but "wie uns die heilige Schrift lehrt, das ebenbildliche Geschöpf einer unendlichen, über allen Naturzwang erhabenen, absolut freien Intelligenz [...], ein lebendiger Spiegel der Gottheit [..]" [1827:338] Humans embody a self-generating expression from an internal substance of the intellect. They are their expressive language just as they inhabit the image of His creating holiness.[260] The form this takes in the profane is knowledge: "*Als Ebenbild der Gottheit ist* das intellektulle Erkennen *des Menschen* ein endliches creatürliches Nachbilden der unendlichen Ideen Gottes."[261] Similar to what we have seen in

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[259] The quotations and references summarizing Benjamin can be found on the following pages: [II:141,147,153,154].

[260] The 1857 edition contains an explained discussion of a "Ebenbild - Spiegelbild" [548-549] dynamic but with particular emphasis on the autonomy of humanity and God in relationship to the question of good.

[261] [1827:338/*1857:549*] The italicized sections are from the second version.

Benjamin, knowledge is that which typifies God's image in human beings, the essence of the *ruach* imparted to them. Divine implies all knowing and as such its created (and not creating) form is knowledge of the intellect. He continues in the same passage:

> [...] und in sofern ist der Mensch mit seiner idealen Gedankenwelt ein creatürliches Abbild der Gottheit, welche von Ewigkeit die Idee der Schöpfung in sich trägt. [...] Das Wort ist der Übergang von der innern Ideal — zur äußern Realwelt, das Sprechen ein Hinausbilden und außer sich Stellen des innern Gedankens; da nämlich die reine Geistigkeit des Denkens sich beschränkt, und in dem Wort ein äußeres Abbild von sich erzeugt. [1827:338]

Knowledge is partly the eternal knowledge of creation which the imparted word contains as an inner ideality. One is however obliged to recognize a distinct movement away from Benjamin's own concerns in the argument. Where Molitor works to express the pure, inner idea made explicit in its outer reception, in which its multiplicity is expressed through spirit in language, Benjamin steers clear of both of an idealist interpretation of Genesis and its Christian implications i.e. in the rendering of spirit to flesh. Benjamin's analysis remains within the realms of the word embodying the transition from an inner ideal in the thoughts of God as a creating language to an outwardly naming one, which is formed by the same act which creating language has at its base i.e. the knowledge of its vocalization.[262]

In this aspect of linguistic theory based on the concretization of language in speaking, Benjamin lends voice to a perspective beyond Molitor's conclusions. For Molitor, "ist das Sprechen gewissermassen das Bild des unendlichen Schaffens, oder das hervorbringen der ewigen urbildlichen Idee als ein Daseyn außer Gott" [1827:338] and thus conceives of speaking as the existence of the divine idea outside of the divine realm, being that the idea within God is unexpressed (or perhaps inexpressible). But for Benjamin, as we have seen, "ein Dasein, welches ganz ohne Beziehung zur Sprache wäre, ist eine Idee; aber diese Idee läß sich auch im Bezirk der Ideen, deren Umkreis diejenige Gottes bezeihnet, nicht fruchtbar machen." [II:141] Benjamin seems to believe that existence-less speaking is an idea which does not bear fruit in the ream of God. God is to think His ideas and express them vocally such that only the idea in acoustic fashion has an external existence.

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[262] A reasonable objection to Benjamin's thesis might concern the notion of time in the divine world offering a God an opportunity to think apart from action but seen from the perspective on his remarks on time elsewhere and his profound awareness of the eternity of the divine, the separation of thought and existence would have no meaning, for him, in the divine world. We can recognize this in the following citation which speculates on the existence of a thought which is unknown to God. [II:141]

Where Molitor finds a model for the relationship between the spoken and written word in the Trinity,[263] Benjamin seeks to view God's idea as expressive in creation and thus rejects a division between the God and his written word, His ideas and their articulation, ultimately between idea and thing. Be that as it may, Molitor himself does not remain trapped by this division for very long, and after a short deviation into the moments of the Father and Son, returns to the notion that the spoken word is, in the end, "untrennbar vom Denken und stets bei dem Denken. Denn das Denken selber ist nicht anders, als ein inneres geistiges potentiales Reden, und die Gedanken sind gleichsam geistige potentiale Worte." [1827:339] Benjamin also returns to a similar conclusion. In the implanting of the intellectual/spiritual substance by God into that which He created, Molitor articulates a theory of insignia [Signatur] which Adam was later to discover:

> Alle Gestalten der irdischen Dinge sind also Abbildungen und Ausdrücke geistiger Kräfte und intellektueller Ideen, und alle Formen liegen selbst auf höhere Weise in den geistigen und intellektuellen Principien; jedes Wesen trägt daher in seiner Gestalt die Signatur an sich, die seine inneren Eigenschaften ummittelbar ausdrückt. [1827:340]

All profane creation is reflection and expression of God's spiritual and intellectual ideas, based on rather platonic, divine models. Each created thing carries with it a signature of its craftsmanship and the written form is considered here again the expression of the inner idea in its outer form.[264] For Molitor, however, this division btween implicit and explicit expression is reduced to a minimum of importance, for "Alle Formen in der äußern Natur sind lauter göttliche Schriftzüge, die ganze sichtbare Natur ist die eingegrabene Schrift Gottes oder das äußere schriftliche offenbarte Wort, das mündliche hingegen ist blos innerlich im Geiste vernehmbar." [1827:340]

For Christian Hebraists of Molitor's caliber, heaven is a an open book which humans were once taught to read. Having lost this ability in exile, humanity was to lose its *via mystica* to divine language while retaining merely the arduous task of spelling out the word of God in the profane; for although language was created with Adam, a description of the art of writing is nowhere to be found in the Torah, exclaims Molitor. For this reason, things are able to maintain their insignia despite

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[263] The father represents thinking, the son, speaking and the holy spirt, realizing, "wirken" or "wesenhaft machen." [1827:339]

[264] Compare Scholem [j3:36] and chapter thirteen on micro-linguistic speculation in this section. Scholem, in contrast to Benjamin, develops the notion of the written form as opposed to its acoustic pronunciation.

losing their access to the open transference of divine meaning. Much like what we have seen in Benjamin, this transference is what Molitor refers to as *magic*:

> So wie das Wort der Ursprache ein reiner Abdruck des Gedankens ist, und das Wort ursprünglich selber eine magische Kraft hat, so war auch die Urschrift des Menschen, wie jegliches Wert und jegliche That der figurirte Ausdruck des magischen Wortes, und darum selber magisch in ihren Wirkungen.
>   Die Urschrift bestand daher eben so wenig aus willkührlichen Zeichen, als die Ursprache aus willkührlichen Tönen. [1827:341]

There is nothing arbitrary in the original language, be it in written or spoken form. Both are reflections of the divine insignia as its magic, its inner substance reflecting God's spirit/intellect. Profane language is then "eine Nachahmung Gottes, [...] des göttlichen Redens und Schreibens" in which "die Gottheit ist der einzige, unendliche, allmächtige Redner, in dem ewig fortdauernden Akte der Schöpfungs-Sprache, womit sie immer aufs neue die Schöpfung hervorbringt."[265] Speculation on the nature of human language, being a divinely imparted imitation of God's writing and speaking, leads to the question of the letters themselves being able to contain the hidden concentration of the power of creation. Molitor here comments on the power of those who is able to wield the letters and harnes their power:

> daß die Buchstaben Abdrücke göttlicher Kräfte sind, daß Gott durch die Magie der Buchstaben Himmel und Erde erschaffen, und derjenige, welcher die Versetzung der Buchstaben verstehe, Wunder zu wirken im Stande wäre. [1827:342]

But the power of the letters are not to be had, he now concludes, for the Hebrew language as we know it today cannot be the exact language which God spoke but a second rendition, as if perhaps a broken dialect of a divine language with divine fragments. He terms it an "abbildliche Reste jener alten heiligen Ursprache und Schrift." Modern Hebrew would then be the left-overs of the divine creating language. But better the left-over building blocks of a divine palace then one of the many profane bricks encircling the tower of Babel:

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[265] [1827:341]. The messianic implications of the return of language to creation did not go unnoticed by Molitor. Nevertheless, a distinct conflict between the messianic and an "Enlightenment" notion of history is detectable in Christoph Schulte's article on Scholem and Molitor. Rather than a conversion of the Jews or a secularization of redemption in Enlightenment fashion, Molitor believed that the "Geschichte, auch Weltgeschichte, ist und bleibt im Kern die Heilsgeschichte des auserwählten Volkes," explains Schulte. Although one can be rest assured that the reversal of both Catholic and Enlightenment dogma here would have appealed to both Scholem and Benjamin, in remains to be seen if the notion of a *Heilsgeschichte* can truly express a messianic conception of history. See Christoph Schulte, "'Die Buchstaben haben . . . ihre Wurzeln oben.' Scholem und Molitor," in *Kabbala und Romantik*, ed. by Goodman-Thau, G. Mattenklott and C. Schulte, Tübigen: 1994, 162.

> So wie nun der eigenthümliche Bau der ebräischen Sprache auf eine innere Verwandtschaft mit der Ursprache hindeutet, so beurkundet auch die Gestalt der ebräischen Quadratschrift eine höhere Abkunft. Die ursprünglich wahren Schriftgestalten können nämlich keine willkührliche Zeichen, sie mußten die plastischen Ausdrücke der Töne und Sprachaktionen selber gewesen sein. [1827:343][266]

From this point, it would not have been difficult for Benjamin to construct a theory of translation following roughly along the lines of analysis that Molitor establishes in regards to the origins of the Hebrew language and the descent into "arbitrary sign." As building blocks of divine construction, it cannot be so that the letters themselves are arbitrary mediums of communication. Rather they embody "die Spuren ihres Ursprungs." [1827:346] Surely these divine blocks must contain within them the power of creating language; it must simply be a matter of their application. But their application was not handed-down to Adam among the things he received in the divine package, in the transference from creating to naming. Thus even at the beginning, we might be able to conclude with Benjamin that human language can be seen as a transference where part of its divine substance was withheld. Such a conclusion is not radically different from the direction in which the argument here is moving. Benjamin's own contribution is his emphasis on complete transference, in which Hebrew is no more privileged than any of the other lonely languages which awate their restitution to their original splendor.

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[266] These architectonic observations on the form and shape of Hebrew letters, which was to play such a major role in mystical speculation in Jewish linguistics, particularly in relation to the printed word, appears not to have made much of an impression on Benjamin at this stage. What is even more surprising is the fact that it also forms a very small part of Scholem's late analysis of language. For a discussion of a semiotic conception of divine language, which reflects the visual but not syntactic, as opposed to a semantic conception, see Joseph Dan, "The Name of God, the Name of the Rose, and the Concept of Language in Jewish Mysticism," in *Medieval Encounters*, Volume 2, No. 3, 1996, 228-248, esp. 229, 231-234, 247-248.

GERSHOM SCHOLEM AND THE NAME OF GOD: 'ON LANGUAGE AS SUCH' RECONSIDERED

> Die Bewegung, in der die Schöpfung zustande kommt,
> ist also auch als Sprachbewegung deutbar. [j3:33]

Linguistic speculation is metaphysical speculation. With this conclusion from Benjamin's early essay of 1916, Scholem was to draw a grand survey of Jewish, linguistic speculation in his 1970's essay "Der Name Gottes und die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala." Should this essay achieve that which Benjamin had earmarked for himself many years before — to apply his work and spirit to Hebrew literature as did Scholem — is something which we will never know.[267] But what is certain is that more than fifty years after Benjamin's influential essay, Scholem returns to many of the same themes and categories which Benjamin set out in 1916.[268] A fairly close reading of Scholem's late essay reveals an on-going dialogue with a silent partner whose "instinktiv," "tiefste Intution"[269] in regards to Judaism is finally match up with the Kabbalah.[270]

Scholem's opening assertions in this late essay begin with the most primary texts in Judaism, emphasizing the fact that metaphysical speculation of a linguistic nature was not initiated with the most esoteric currents of Jewish thought but with the Torah itself: *rosh d'var'cha emet* — the begining of thy word is truth.[271] In

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[267] That Benjamin was never truly able to understand the Hebrew language is surly a great loss to this and future generations of Hebrew speakers.

[268] This is also the opinion of David Biale, *Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 80-81.

[269] See Scholem's description in his 1964 essay on Benjamin in *Walter Benjamin und sein Engel*, 29, 34 respectively.

[270] Scholem sought in fact to write on the linguistic philosophy of the Kabbalah in 1919 and again as the subject of his dissertation. However, to formulate "die Sprachtheorie der Kabbalah" during those early years, he states in his autobiography, "war jugendlicher Überschwang, wenn nicht gar Hochmut." He continues: "Als ich an die Sache ernstlich heranging, mußte ich bald erkennen, daß ich viel zu wenig wußte, um dieses Thema wissenschaftlich verantwortungsvoll abzuhandeln, und besser systematischer und vor allem bescheidener anfangen sollte. In der Tat habe ich die Arbeit über die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala, vor der ich 1920 resignierte, genau fünfzig Jahre später geschrieben." [von berlin: 134]   In this respect, purpose of this chapter is a philosophical study of the concepts behind Benjamin's essay and the influence which they were to exercise upon Scholem into his mature years. Needless to say, it cannot be, at the same time, a linguistic history of the Kabbalah which took Scholem himself over fifty years to construct. Should this essay serve as an explication of the early (and perhaps for some researchers even cryptic) influences, it would meet the intention of the author.

[271] Scholem gives the following translation: "Der Anfang [oder auch: das Wesen] seines Wortes ist Wahrheit." Psalms 119:160. The English translation above is slightly augmented to match Scholem's. The Jerusalem bible translates *rosh* as "sum."

Psalms 119:160, language and truth are viewed in a continuum in which the measure is eternity. The concept of revelation is conceived here (and in rabbinical Judaism in general), as the message of God delivered in a word, this word being itself naturally synonymous with the truth. As such, revelation is immediately linked to a metaphysical conception of truth and, if the study of revelation is the study of truth, a metaphysical conception of revelation is also intentionally or inadvertently linguistic. Revelation in words means, first and foremost, that God spoke His words in the form of acoustic manifestations and secondly, that the truth of God itself was conceivable: "Wahrheit war in dem zuerst von Judentum konstituierten Sinn das Wort Gottes, das akustisch = sprachlich vernehmbar war." [j3:7] This is not to suggest that every word of God was receivable; in point of fact, not every word of God is acoustic. Rather, from the perspective of rabbinical Judaism, only those words are receivable which reflect an expressible part of truth.[272]

Acoustic revelation is therefore the medium of divine revelation and is set apart from visual revelation expressly. In contrast to God's acoustic message, there has never been a visual component,[273] nor is speculation concerning visual imagery warranted.[274] Thus we know that imagery which is thought to represent God is sacrilege and only His voice is to carry the word of His revelation. From this, one is rest assured that in the medium of human language, God's message is potentially receivable and understandable, simply on the idea of prophecy. [j3:7]

Revelation, seen from the mainstays of Judaism, can therefore be postulated in the context of metaphysical speculation on the nature of truth in language in which truth is expressed and received in purely profane expression. That humans being are able to receive the word of God is taken as proof alone that the acoustic word can be transformed to embody profane, acoustic expression, thus forming a link between the divine and profane. But more importantly, it raises again the question put forward by Molitor of whether God's acoustic language was Hebrew as such or whether Hebrew is the transliteration of God's creating language. One way

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[272] In Scholem's dissertation of *Sefer Bahir*, he explores its linguistic mysticism in some detail. On acoustic expression, see §32 on the importance of sounds of His words, [Ex 20:18, Deut 4:12] in which his voice was expressed in a single word. Scholem cites a long history concerning this tradition, beginning with *Midrash Tanchuma*. See *Das Buch Bahir*, (Leipzig, 1923), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970. Henceforth [bahir:35]

[273] Deuteronomy 4:12 reads: "And the Lord [YHVH] spoke to you out of the midst of fire: you heard the voice of the words, but saw no form; only a voice."

[274] "Though shalt have no other gods beside me. Thou shalt not make for thyself any carved idol, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them." Exodus 20:3-5.

to view Scholem's essay is a search for an answer to this question within the history of Jewish mysticism and while his methodology is historical and philological, it is one of the aims of this chapter to show to what degee his approach to the question is distinctly metaphysical in nature.

Seen from a "Metaphysik der Sprache," [II:146] that which Scholem articulates as the unifying principals of Jewish mysticism are remarkably similar in word and deed to the categories we find in the early Benjamin:

> Daß die Sprache, das Medium, in dem sich das geistige Leben des Menschen vollzieht, eine innenseite hat, einen Aspekt, der in den Beziehungen der Kommunikation zwischen den Wesen nicht restlos aufgeht. Der Mensch teilt sich mit, sucht sich dem andern verständlich zu machen, aber in all diesen Versuchen schwingt etwas, was nicht nur Zeichen, Kommunikation, Bedeutung und Ausdruck ist. Der Laut, auf den alle Sprache gebaut ist, die Stimme, die sie gestaltet, aus ihrem Lautmaterial aushämmert, ist für diese Ansicht schon *prima facie* mehr, als je in die Verständigung eingeht. [j3:7-8]

These first few pages in Scholem's essay might appear as a direct commentary on the 1916 essay. Language is the medium by which humans express that part of their being which is integral to the intellect and spirit and by doing so, complete their creation.[275] The linguistic aspect of this act is based on the expression of the spiritual or intellectual substance of a thing, in this case understood as its essence which is brought to the fore by the communicative act — the will to be understood and to understand — an act far more comprehensive that the mere linguistic categories it finds as its expression. Linguistic substance pertaining to human beings is drawn to the tonal form as its principle linguistic foundation which then, in profane vernacular, is expressed as voice in the very same order and structure that it is to be understood in its genesic model.

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[275] In §54 of *Das Buch Bahir* on creation, Scholem translates the content of divine creation based on the expression of the "Inhalt" of God's name. [bahir: 55]

TOWARD A STRUCTURE OF SYMBOLIC MYSTICISM

If language is formed from a prearranged set of symbols and meanings or based on platonic essences is a question which lies at the heart of both Scholem's and Benjamin's studies. Should language be considered more than mere communication, adds Scholem, then the question undoubtedly turns to a "Geheim" dimension of linguistics which was to captivate mysticism in every age. [j3:8] This hidden dimension can be ascertained by one category alone: "Der symbolische Charakter der Sprache, der diese Dimension bestimmt." [j3:8] In being able to represent a thing without its existence, the symbol comes to take the place of the notion of metaphor in Benjamin's essay.[276] But since Benjamin was not of the opinion that the substance of the intellect of a thing could be expressed metaphorically without its existence in language, one is confronted with the problem of "magical" expression. And this, in fact, is the very direction that Scholem wishes to take the notion of the symbol in his work: the truth of the inexpressible expressed in the symbol. Its magic would be the presence of its substance in every moment where it expresses itself, not merely as a symbol, but as solitary revelation of the inexpressible. Is the magic of the symbol therefore its appearance-less existence or is the symbol a verbal expression of its existence with neither a visual component nor mere communicative meaning? These are Scholem's metaphysical questions which he clearly links to those of Benjamin:

> daß aber sich hier in der Sprache etwas mitteilt, was weit über die Sphäre hinausreicht, die Ausdruck und Gestaltung gestattet; daß ein Ausdrucksloses, das sich nur in Symbolen zeigt, in allem Ausdruck mitschwingt, ihm zugrunde liegt und [...] durch die Ritzen der Ausdruckswelt hindurchscheint, [...] (So war W. Benjamin lange ein reiner Sprachmystiker). [j3:8]

Collective aspects of mystical theory in Scholem's estimation is premised on the view that the symbol stands at the center of the inexpressible, in the very thing which language cannot give form to in the expression. Benjamin's ideas are coalesced under this tier.[277] The paradoxical nature of all symbolism, according to Scholem, expresses that which cannot be in any other way expressed but which

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[276] "Eine Metapher aber ist das Wort 'Sprache' in solchem Gebrauche durchaus nicht. Denn es ist eine volle inhaltliche Erkenntnis, daß wir uns nicht vorstellen können, das sein geistiges Wesen nicht im Ausdruck mitteilt." [II:141]

[277] A determination of whether Benjamin's ideas are truly mystical prerequisites a valid notion of what is mysticism. Should one seek the curtaining off of rationalism from esoteric speculation, then it would only be possible to view his linguistic study in the context of the latter. But in terms of the characteristic and pursuits of mystics that one finds in the Kabbalah, Benjamin's mysticism appears rather inconclusive.

nevertheless finds its way into expression. This is the task of the mystic who discovers in language an "immanent dimension" within its structure, "was nicht auf Mitteilung eines Mitteilbarung ausgerichtet ist, sondern vielmehr [...] auf eines Nicht-Mitteilbaren, das ausdruckslos in ihr [Symbolik] lebt und selbst wenn es Ausdruck hätte, so jedenfalls keine Bedeutung, keinen mitteilbaren *Sinn*." [j3:9] The immanent dimension of language is inexpressible in the structure of a thing which finds its only expression in the symbolic. Following this view, even if the incommunicable were to be expressed, it would not be received as coherent. Mystical linguistic theory is thus foremost concerned with the symbolic language of God which is itself unquestionably bound to the inner workings of language.

Such theory begins with speculation concerning human language, "um [...] die Sprache als Offenbarung zu finden." [j3:9] Language of redemption is language as such, assuming that a part of the divine can be derived from profane language, given that the divine gave rise to the profane. Such a statement generates a host of problems when "in die gesprochene Sprache hinein sich die Sprache der Götter oder Gottes verflicht und sich aus solcher Verflechtung heraus aufdecken ließe." [j3:9] Such a paradoxical interweaving of God's creating language and that of the profane has introduced a chasm into mystical linguistics which mystics have been unable to circumvent. This chasm opens up in Hamann's recognition of language being both the medium of revelation and of human reason.[278]

On the structure of Jewish linguistical speculation, Scholem presents three theses:

> (1) Die Auffassung, daß Schöpfung und Offenbarung beide vornehmlich und wesentlich Selbstdarstellungen Gottes sind, in die daher, der unendlichen Natur der Gottheit entsprechend, Momente des Göttlichen eingegangen sind, die im Endlichen und Bestimmten alles Erschaffenen sich nur in Symbolen mitteilen können. Damit hängt unmittelbar die weitere Auffassung zusammen, daß das Wesen der Welt Sprache sei.
>
> (2) Die zentrale Stellung des Namens Gottes als des metaphysischen Ursprungs aller Sprache und die Auffassung der Sprache als Auseinanderlegung und Entfaltung dieses Namens, wie sie vornehmlich in den Dokumenten der Offenbarung, aber auch in aller Sprache überhaupt vorliegt. Die Sprache Gottes, die sich in den Namen Gottes kristallisiert und letzten Endes in dem *einen* Namen, der ihr Zentrum ist, liegt aller gesprochenen Sprache zugrunde, in der sie sich reflektiert und symbolisch erscheint.

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[278] [j3:9] On the influence of Hamann on Benjamin (in relation to Scholem), see chapter five in this section.

(3) Die dialektische Beziehung von Magie und Mystik in der Theorie der Namen Gottes nicht weniger als in der überschwänglichen Macht, die dem reinen menschlichen Wort zuerkannt wird. [j3:10-11]

In the first thesis, Scholem proposes creation and revelation as self-presentations of God's infinite character which He illustrates momentarily in finite form. That God manifests Himself at all, under any finite conditions whatsoever, means that all created things must also be capable of being formed in symbolic representation of God's essence, as He is His created object, His symbolic presence in finite matter. This finite symbol beares an essence similar to the substance of all created things as its linguistic being. In the second thesis, the name of God is proposed as the center of language and language as the unfolding of the name.[279] Language is conceived as God's linguistic being, concentrated in his divine name, and in so doing, when the name of God is conveyed, it is merely symbolic. The third thesis puts forward the notion that magic and mysticism exist in a dynamic within the theory of the name of God and are extended as power in the pure human word. In one form, magic proves itself to be theurgic; in another, mystical revelation. Nevertheless we see in both cases God's creative power functioning as a divining rod in the profane.

From Scholem's synopse of Jewish linguistic theory, we can draw comparisons with Benjamin to see to what degee his early linguistic speculations coincedes. To begin with, God concentrating His infinite being momentarily and linguistically in creation as His essence also forms the basis of Benjamin's analysis of the transformation of the substance of the intellect.[280] God is the center of language for both and the center of all linguistic being, which is to say all created being, engaged in the processes of communicating its inner insignia with the name of God. This communicative act thus constitutes the "Grundlage jeder Sprache." [j3:31] Since linguistic things, by their nature, express themselves in relation to God linguistically, they express the experience of an unfolding of revelation, even if only as a glimpse of an earlier state of sanctity. The name of God, nevertheless, remains the center of such symbioses, finding its modest symbolic revelation in language. If the symbolic conveys the magic of the inexpressible, then we should be able to see a convergence of opinion. The last supposition of a dialectical tension between magic and mysticism marks a slight departure from the course Benjamin set out,

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[279] The unfolding of the name takes place in revelation, existing at the same time in language itself.
[280] In his later *Trauerspiel* (1925) work, Benjamin distinguishes allegory and symbolism [I:336-409]. Scholem, however, does not appear to take Benjamin's later categorical distinctions after the debate on the meaning of a metaphor. Later in life, he seems to use the term symbolism more generally in his research into the Kabbalah and rather independent of Benjamin late formulations.

and we shall see to what degree this departure reveals a substantial difference in the textual analysis to follow.

THE CREATING WORD AND THE UNPRONOUNCABLE NAME

The Torah itself does not contain an explicit magical concept of the name of God. Even the Tetragramaton appearing in a thorn-bush in Exodus does not, in itself, demand a concept of magic, according to Scholem, for the expression of God's ultimate freedom to do things which are inherently beyond human reason cannot be said to be magical.[281] Yet whether an event is deemed magical or revelatory, it is thought to bear a special message to its receiver, implying a unique relationship between the imparting and the receiving. The same is the case for the name and the thing being named, which Scholem refers to as its magic. The "magic of the name" is based on the conviction "daß zwischen ihm und seinem Träger eine enge und wesensmäßige Beziehung besteht." [j3:13] This corresponds quite naturally to Benjamin's genesic notion of God's creating language being transposed in naming by the fact that Adam recognized the names which God encoded in each being and thing.[282] Like Benjamin, the name is articulated here as the concentration of force within the word, embodying a cohesive expression of the essence of the bearer of a name. [j3:13] But its magic has found a more definitive focus here than merely the magic of the word. It is explained as an inner substance that extends way beyond the "understanding." In being "das Sinnliche des Wortes vollauskostenden Sprechenden darstellt," magic here resembles a force-field of linguistic might. [j3:14] From this perspective, one can speak of the "power" of the name and its "praktikablen Magie," a power which originates in the "ungeheuren Gewalt" at the root of the name, in which naming itself is the "Inbegriff des Heiligen [...] des durchaus Unantastbaren," for the divine name is "eine innerweltliche, in der Schöpfung wirkende Konfiguration der Macht, ja der Allmacht Gottes." [j3:14] Here Scholem was to underscore the power dimension of the name, what in many ways lies nascent in Benjamin's linguistic study.[283] Power is expressed linguistically in creation, generated at its source in the divine name, and handed-down to profane

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[281] [j3:11] We read in Exodus 3:3-5: "And the angel of the Lord [malach YHVH] appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked and, behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. And Moshe said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord [YHVH] saw that he turned aside to see, God [elohim] called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moshe, Moshe. And he said, Here I am [henayne]." In is interesting to note how God has two names here: he is referred to in the form of His revelation as the Tetragramaton in the most divine moment and as *elohim* when he seeks the attention of Moses to a spatial and temporal, here and now.

[282] Scholem was able to explore the non-syntactic meaning of the divine name in *Das Buch Bahir*, §76, where God's countenance (or face) is interpreted as His name. §79-81 moves into a discussion of the *shem ha-meforash* (see footnote below). [bahir:77-82]

[283] His analysis of violence, which although drawn from the "ungeheuren Gewalt" of the divine realm, is to remain slightly candid in regard to linguistic power, as compared to Scholem.

language in the mediated form of the act of naming. The power of the name is embedded in its eternity, as expressed in Psalms: "Himmel und Erde sind vergänglich, aber 'Dein großer Name lebt und besteht in Ewigkeit.'"[284]

But the theory of names introduces a paradox into religious speculation, Scholem asserts, in which "der Name, in dem Gott sich selber benennt und unter dem er anrufbar ist, sich aus der akustischen Späre zurückzieht und *unausprechbar* wird." [j3:15] Benjamin's distinction concerning the divine name reflects here the paradoxical. His name is His reference; it is that to which one turns to in calling upon God. However, the name ironically is unpronounceable; that is, we are to call upon that which we are unable to call upon. Only on rare occasion is the proper name of God even permitted to be spoken, for examle, concerning the *shem ha-meforash*, in the temple by certain blessings of the priests, thereafter drawing back into its unpronounceablity. As Benjamin was to state fifty years before, the name is no longer merely the last *Aufruf* but now the only *Anruf* of language. [II:145] This is not simply the process by which Adam called out the hidden insignia of each created thing and animal but the avenue by which the unpronounceably divine was to be referred to in human language. Scholem sees this as a cornerstone of its linguistic power:

> Gerade diese Unausprechbarkeit, in der der Name Gottes zwar *angesprochen*, aber nicht mehr *ausgesprochen* werden kann, hat ihn für das Gefühl der Juden mit jener unerschöpflichen Tiefe ausgestattet, von der noch ein so radikaler Repräsentant des theistischen Rationalismus wie Hermann Cohen an einer ergreifenden Stelle zeugt. [j3:15-16]

In this process of shrinking back, the name of God became that which could be called upon but not pronounced, and it was the depth to which the name was thought to bear, engendered by this transition, which was to broadly influence Jewish thinking including Herman Cohen, who was to explicate a messianic understanding of the idea of the name of God.[285]

In first and second century literature, an explanation of the manifold nature of the name is conceived by the term *shem ha-meforash*. Scholem defines *meforash* as "bekanntgegeben" (released), "ausdrücklich erklärt" (thoroughly or explicitly explained), literally "ausgesprochen" (pronounced, spoken), "absondert" and "vorborgen" (isolated and hidden), which is able to capture the nature of this

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[284] [j3:14]. See also Ludwig Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen*, Budapest, 1898, 119-120.
[285] [j3:16]. Hermann Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, volume I, Berlin: 1924, 63.

paradoxical notion, a pronounceable but at the same time secrete name.[286] In the third century, new lists of holy names began to appear, drawn up from bible verses or from unknown procedures which were also identified by this term and were to make their way out of purely mystical speculations and into the mainstay of rabbinic Judaism, Scholem states.[287] A collection of texts from the period make reference to a creating name of God formed from 12, 42 and 72 letters, even a hundred letters, leaving the only certainty regarding the divine name in the idea that it was the sanctifing force behind creation.[288] In the medieval period of rabbinical Judaism, the creating name was often thought to be constructed out of 42 letters, a belief held by such prominent medieval scholars as Rashi and Hai Gaon.[289] A 42 letter divine name did not require that God's name be the unspoken origins of all power, in the sense of being the generating point of creation rather than its fulfillment.[290] This, Scholem explains, is related to the magical element of the divine name:

> Wenn [...] vom Namen Gottes als dem *agens* der Schöpfung die Rede ist, so liegt dem offenkundig noch die magische Auffassung von der Macht des Namens zu Grunde, die sich wieder durchgesetzt hat. Der Name ist eine Konzentration göttlicher Kraft, und je nach der verschiedenen Zusammensetzung dieser hier konzentrierten Kräfte können solche Namen verschiedene Funktionen erfüllen. Das schöperische *Wort* Gottes, das Himmel und Erde hervorruft, von dem der Schöpfungsbericht der Genesis, aber auch der Hymnus der Psalmisten zeugt — "durch Jahwes Wort sind die Himmel entstanden" (PS 33:6) —, ist für die biblischen Autoren noch keineswegs der Name Gottes selber. [j3:19]

The creative word of God was not His name but the name was rather the well-springs of His power. The collapse of this difference in later speculations was to give rise to the confusion between the word and name, between the word, "das etwas mitteilt, zu einem Namen, der nichts mitteilt als sich selber." [j3:19] Scholem

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[286] On the *shem ha-meforash* and its relationship to the Tetragrammaton, See A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927, volume I, 20-23; also *Sefer Bahir*, §81, [bahir:82].

[287] [j3:17] On the idea of language in the rabbinic period, particularly with regard to *Maaseh Merkabah*, see the study by Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent. Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989, esp. introduction and appendix.

[288] We have, for example, in Scholem's edition of *Sefer Bahir*, §63, speculation on the various letters of the name of God. [bahir:64-69,77-83]

[289] [j3:18-19]. The idea that the name sealed and sanctified creation is also to be found in pre-christian apocalyptic texts and in the Greater Hechalot.

[290] The former would be better associated with intention rather than Benjamin's notion of the creating word. [II:150]

puts to use here Benajmin's genesic formula which makes naming possible: "Jede Sprache teilt sich selbst mit." [II:142]

The difference between the creating word and the unpronounceable name is explained as the difference between a thing that communicates something and a thing which communicates nothing but itself. One *midrash* speaks of a pre-creation in which God and his name were alone. From name, the word was created.[291] This took place in the language of God in which "Gott ebensosehr selbst darstellt, manifestiert, als auch sich seiner Schöpfung mitteilt, die im Medium dieser Sprache selber ins Dasein tritt." [j3:20]. The dual nature of God's word as the unspeakable name and the creating word was later able to take on a degree of importance in the Kabbalah. Such a bifurcated linguistic vision of God as word and name was also to place unique emphasis on the letters and, for a Hebrew or Aramaic reader, on the consonants: "Die Buchstaben der göttlichen Sprach sind es, durch deren Komination alles geschaffen ist. Diese Buchstaben sind aber die der hebräischen Sprache als der Ursprache und Sprache der Offenbarung." [j3:20] The letters formed not merely a methodology to uncover further layers of God's revelation but were themseves considered mediums of revelation. Naturally this was to appeal to mystics but the methods of linking letters together or blasting them apart constitute a mainstay of linguistic research, finding expression long before the emergence of the Kabbalah.[292] The power of the word and its proper name was to emerge from a long-standing tradition of genesic thought into a practice that consumed the mystical linguistics of the Kabbalists. The magical, revelatory power of the name fueled their inquiry: "Die schöperische Kraft, die den Worten und Namen innewohnt, das unmittelbar Wirkende an Ihnen, mit anderen Worten: Ihre Magie, ist damit auf die Grundelemente zurückgeführt, in dennen sich für den Mystiker Laut und Schriftbild decken." [j3:20-21] The emphasis on the structure of divine language was to brake this language down into its perceivable parts in an attempt to discover the hidden, divine combinations of letters and words. How this linkage and atomizing process was to begin to develop in Jewish thought is the focus of the next chapter.

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[291] *Pirkei Rabbi Elieser*, Chapter three.

[292] The Talmud reports of certain sages who had even mastered the powers of language, Bazalel being one who is to have known the combinations of the letters that enacted creation. [j3:20]

THE EXISTENCE OF MATTER AND MAGIC IN THE TORAH AND ITS LETTERS

The first question which arises from a linguistic conception of creation is the power which is allotted to the word and letter: is the word to be understood in a material form, literally as the 'building-blocks' of creation?[293] It appears that Scholem also attempted to respond to the question raised by Benjamin as to a second version of Genesis and the materialist conception of God's creation of Adam:

> Daß im Bezerk dieses Denkens der göttliche Anhauch, der den Menschen nach der Erzählung der Genesis zum lebenden Wesen macht, in ihm das Sprachvermögen öffnet, wird durch eine Äußerung von nicht geringem Gewicht bezeugt. Die, sozusagen offizielle aramäische Übersetzung der Tora, die im synagogalen Gottesdienst gebraucht wurde, der *Targum Onkelos*, gibt Gen. 2:7 "Der Mensch wurde zu einer lebendigen Seele" mit "Der Mensch wurde zu einem sprechenden Geist" wieder. Das, was das lebendige Wesen des Menschen ausmacht, ist eben die Sprache. Damit aber verband sich für spekulativ gerichtete Geister bald die Frage, ob nicht in dem Anhauch Gottes selber dies sprachliche Element schon enthalten sein mußte. [j3:21]

While it would be hard to believe that Benjamin made reference to an Aramaic version of Genesis, we are able to turn to his discussion of *ruach* and what he deemed problematic based on the physical interpretation of the gathering of the dust. Scholem however is not prone to attribute any particularly material qualities to this act and moves directly to an explanation of the breath which God transferred to Adam as the very thing which distinguishes humans from other aspects of creation. Should God have given a part of His spirit to Adam in the form of *ruach*, this would have occured in the form of language as the expression of His spirit; his *ruach* is itself therefore linguistic. [j3:21]

In a text which is generally thought to have originated somewhere in the third to seventh centuries known as *Sefer Yetzirah*, *ruach* appears again in the form of an element of the senses or air.[294] Thus *ruach elohim* is once again joined

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[293] Moshe Idel believes that the contradiction posed by a physical interpretation of creation is to rule out a materialist understanding by the mystics. However, he may perhaps be too generous by suggesting that such contradiction makes materialist speculation improbable — unreasonable maybe, but perhaps that much more probable. See his essay "Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism" in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. by Steven T. Katz, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 45-46.

[294] [j3:22] Air or the pneuma of the senses is here identified with the second Sefirah, the first being God's pneuma or *ruach elohim.* See also Scholem, *Die Jüdische Mystik*, For a German translation of *Sefer Yetzirah* which would have also been available to Benjamin had he sought in it a second version of creation, see Lazarus Goldschmidt, *Sepher Jesirah. Das Buch der Schöpfung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969. (reprint)

together with His breath. *Sefer Yetzirah* however is foremost concerned with the methodology of creation in which the letters themselves are seen as the fragments of the creating word, whose power is locked in combinations. Like a divine pad-lock, the proper combination was thought to be capable of releasing the means to create. By the combination of the 22 letters as spheres rotating in opposite directions, 231 combinations arise which are gates through which all created things are said to pass. The thinking behind these magical combinations was the power of the letters themselves: "Das Alphabet ist der Ursprung der Sprache und der Ursprung des Seins zugleich. 'So findet sich denn, daß alle Schöpfung und alle Rede durch einen Namen entsteht.'" [j3:24] For our discussion, what is important is not a detailed description of how these different assemblages of letters were thought to function but the orientation which this type of speculation was to present to the notion of creation. Proceeding from a tradition well established by *Bereshit Rabbah*, *Sefer Yetzirah* was to further emphasize and elaborate upon the dimension of the power to create inside of language. As Scholem explains:

> Alles Wirkliche jenseits des Pneumas Gottes enthält also Sprachelemente, und es ist offensichtlich die Meinung des Autors, daß alles Erschaffene ein sprachliches Wesen hat, das in irgendeiner Kombination jener Grundbuchstaben besteht. Darüber hinaus ordnet er den einzelnen Buchstaben nicht nur feste Funktionen zu, sondern auch die Objekte, wie Planeten und Zodiakalzeichen am Himmel, die Wochentage und Monate im Jahr und die Hauptorgane im menschlichen Körper. [j3:25-26]

Sefer Yetzirah makes the assertion that all created things have a linguistic substance to be found in the combination of letters, ascribed to particular objects. From the smallest particles to the greatest masses, all created things, according to this work, "sind auch in ihrem sprachlichen Wesen deutliche aufeinander bezogen [...]" [j3:26] The substance of creation breathed the same "Sprachgeist" as "der heiligen Sprache zum für uns faßbaren Ausdruck gestalltet hat." [j3:26] If words were believed to contain the power to create when the right letters were placed in the proper order to reconstruct a creating language of names, then the supposition that one could augment the ebb and flow of revelation through the application of specific, theurigical methods was a logical outcome. It is possible that *Sefer Yetzirah* may have been read as just such a manual. [j3:26] Another text of a late or post-talmudic period, *Shimushei Torah* (the "theurgical application of the Torah") reports that when Moses received God's revelation on Mount Sini, he not only received the Torah as it is known today, with its word divisions, but also a series of secrete

letter-combinations, understood as the names which form the esoteric totality of the Torah.[295]

By the time this notion reached early medieval Spain, the mystical character of the Torah was viewed as the all-encompassing name of God. Nachmanides, the respected figure in the Jewish intellectual world of the 13th century, deemed it a genuinely authoritative tradition that the Torah was formed out of the names of God, in which "die ganze Torah aus Namen Gottes besteht, und zwar in der Art, daß die Wörter, die wir darin lesen, auch auf ganz andere Weise abgeteilt werden können, und zwar in [esoterischen] Namen."[296] Nachmanides goes on to explain that it may have been possible at one time to have read the Torah both traditionally "als Geschichte und Gebote" and as a list of holy or esoteric names. [j3:28] Moses received the written Torah in particles, as divisible words from divine names, but he also received teachings acoustically on how to read the Torah as a divine list. This imaginative conclusion branches out from the principles established in the previous sources. Here the name clearly existed before creation and God used it as a tool to form creation. That His name is the non-linguistic substance of His being, i.e. the only non-created thing in existence which does not have an acoustic form, not having itself been formed in creation, explains why the Torah, according to Nachmanides, is not able to be used if it has a letter too few or too many: it is no great leap to think that rather than merely the name of God generating the Torah, the Torah is actually one enormous name of God in its entirety. This was a view shared by many of his contemporaries, particularly that both the Torah and God's throne of glory are the name of God or the "Substanz des verehrungswürdigen Names" as it is termed in *Sefer Ha-Chayim*.[297] The *Zohar* also speaks of the Torah as "ein einziger heiliger mystischer Name."[298]

The notion of the Torah as one extended, divine name of God should be understood as more than mystical speculation. Important here is the emphasis on the coherence of the Torah, that it forms in its entirety a distinct unity of purpose to express the "Kraft und Machtfülle Gottes" concentrated in his name. [j3:30][299] For

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[295] [j3:27]. Although the *Bahir* is not dealt with at any length in Scholem's essay, a large portion is concerned with letter-mysticism (for example, paragraphs 11a,20,21,54,58,63,76,83,95). This might Scholem partly explain Scholem's choice for his first study of the Kabbalah, but it does not explain its absence in the late essay.

[296] The insert here of the word "esoteric" is Scholem's. [j3:28]

[297] This translation is Scholem's. [j3:29]

[298] *Zohar* (ch.3,36a) in Scholem [j3:29fn]

[299] Although not to be mistaken for pure esoteric mysticism, this dimension of linguistic theory also should not be mistaken for "einem rationalen Verständnis der möglichen Kommunikativen und gesellschaftlichen Funktionen eines Names." [j3:30] Thus such theory is neither confined to strictly

the Spanish Kabbalist of the 13th century, Josef Gikatilla, the Torah begins with the Tetragrammaton as the language of God. Drawing on the *Zohar*,[300] it is his view that:

> Die Tora ist also ein lebendiges Gewand und Gewebe, ein *textus* im genauesten Verstand, in den als eine Art Grund- und Leitmotiv das Tetragramm auf verborgene Weise, machmal auch direkt eingewebt ist und jedenfalls in allen möglichen Metamorphoses und Variationen wiederkehrt. [j3:50]

Gikatilla conceives of the Torah as a woven (text)ile of the names of God, names such as *El*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*, all linked inextricably to the Tetragrammaton like the branches and roots of a tree to its trunk. [j3:50] He follows in the footsteps of *Sefer Yetzirah* where the procedure is explained how to link the letters of the Tetragrammaton to the rest of the alphabet, thus revealing its core.

The conclusion here is that the Torah can be read in different ways and differently in various periods of time. The infiniteness of God's name and his language in the Torah means that it is to be re-read and reinterpreted continuously. In this world, the Torah may appear in a particular form, but its "Fassungkraft" in the next will be quite varied. Scholem concludes: "das Wort Gottes, das in alle Welten gelang, ist zwar unendlich bedeutungschwanger, hat aber keine feste Bedeutung. Selber bedeutungslos, ist es das Deutbare schlechthin." [j3:51] How is it that God's word is infinitely giving birth to meaning but itself has no meaning? If the word of God is infinite, it would have no meaning distinguishable from anything else and consequently meaningless to us. The ethical consequences of such a thesis and the implications in terms of revelation would be great.[301]

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mystical texts nor a concept of name which could be reduced to a "bourgeois" functionality as Benjamin was to term it.

[300] Scholem stresses the fact that the Zohar contains surprising little on language, considering the importance of linguistic speculation in Judaism. It does refer to a precursor to emanation as a linguistic event, "[...] denn der innerste Gedanke wird zu einer noch ganz verborgenen, lautlosen Stimme, und diese, aus der alle Sprache geboren wird, wird zum noch unartikulierten Ton." [j3:56]

[301] See [zur Kabbala:63]. In *Tikkenei Zohar* (ca. 1300), a mystical reading is contained within the core of the Torah. The word of God, therefore, yields mystical speculation. See [j3:52] and [zur Kabbala:91-92, 271].

GRAMMARIANS OF THE NAME

   Given that the name stands alone at the center and origins of God's creating word, it might be necessary to suspend the principles of semantic meaning to expose the roots of divine language. It is for this reason, says Scholem, that mystics are not to be mistaken for grammarians:

> In der menschlichen Sprache haben wir einen *Abglanz*, eine Reflektion der göttlichen Sprache, die in der Offenbarung miteinander koinzidieren. Friedrich Schlegel, der große Kopf der Frühromantik, pflegte zu sagen, die Philosophen sollten Grammatiker sein. Von den Mystikern läßt sich das nicht sagen, denn die Sprache Gottes, das 'innene Wort', mit dem diese zu tun haben, hat keine Gramatik. Sie besteht aus Namen, die hier mehr sind als Ideen. [j3:48, my emphesis]

The name is substituted for divine language such that the question of a divine semantical structure is avoided. But in contrast to Scholem's position, if a mystical linguistic theory is to proceed through speculation, then divine language would have to have a grammar, as would the divine name, if the basis of divine language was lodged in a "wahre Abglanz" (to bring Molitor back into the picture) of itself in the profane. Thus if philosophers are the grammarians of reason, as Schlegel would have us believe, then mystics might very well be the philosophers of divine reason and grammarians of their own language. Substituting the name only turns the focus to the syntax of the letter-combinations and does not divert us from the question.

   It is within this discussion of a mystical grammar that we encounter in Scholem the writings of Isaac the Blind. His are thought to be some of the oldest kabbalistic speculations pertaining to language, originating in the Provance in the twelfth century. Drawing on the Hebrew term *davar* which can be translated as both thing and object as well as word and speech, the meaning of "geistige Dinge" (spiritual things) for Isaac the Blind was not to be distinguishable from "geistige Worte" (spiritual/holy words). [j3:34] His etymological analysis was to extend the notion of language to embrace a slight messianic dimension as well. That the Hebrew term, *'ot*, or "letter" derives from the word *'ata*, "coming," and that *otiot*, the plural of *'ot*, can also mean "das Kommende" (the coming/arriving), Isaac the Blind was to conclude that words and letters are also to be understood as bearing prophetic and messianic messages, as "Zeichen, die 'aus ihren Ursachen herkommen', das heißt, die auf die vorborgenen Ursachen hinweisen, aus denen sie, als Signaturen in allen Dingen, entstammen." [j3:33] In this respect, he entertains no

division between the thing and its expression: "in der Welt Gottes gibt es noch keine Verdinglichung, und die *dibb'rim* oder *devarim* sind hier offenkundig noch die Worte als die gestaltenden Kräfte aller Dinge." [j3:34] Drawn from a notion of God's linguistic being, Scholem sees no place in his theory for the concept of alienation — what God projects and what God is, are both to be drawn from the same eternal "in sich versunkenes, sprachloses Denken" which Isaac the Blind was to identify with the infinite core, the *en-sof* ("without end"). [j3:34] In his interpretation of *Sefer Yetzirah*, a world of "pure names" is generated out and stands therefore as the principle element of language. [j3:35]

The Sefirot were to play a considerable role in Isaac the Blind's linguistic speculations, where thinking is identified as the first moment, the direction of thinking to creation (in action) as the second. The second moment is termed the "Anfang der Rede," thus the origins of the language of God. "Es ist noch nicht selbst Sprache, sondern ihr Ursprung und Anfang." [j3:35] He was thus to expose the tension between the thought of creation and its execution, what we were to first encounter in *Bereshit Rabbah*. But rather then perishing in logical turmoil, he was instead to embark on a mystical theory of the pre-states of language in which the written word forms the center of his speculations on God's revelation as language in language. Scholem terms this a unity of word and thing in spirit: "Jedes Sprechen ist in der geistigen Welt zugleich ein Schreiben, und jede Schrift ist potentielle Rede, die bestimmt ist, lautbar zu werden." [j3:35]

This idea may appear to be a slight departure from the first argument on acoustic revelation and as such, it would also have implications for Benjamin's theory on transference in language. But, in point of fact, Scholem presents these notions of language as being rather consistent, fomulating a notion of creation in several linguistic stages: first, revelation was acoustically enacted, even if the written initially preceded it. Written revelation is potentially acoustic but is not always acoustically receivable (as in the Tetragrammaton). Acoustic language can be expressed in writing but written language cannot always be spoken. In the same way, every spoken word has the potential to be written, just as every written word contains the potential to be spoken. Thus in each interaction between word and tone, the division of the spoken and written is only possible with the 'potential' God imbued in all linguistic being. But in Benjamin's theory, the relation of word to its expression took a 'historical' course. He emphasizes the transition of language in the origins of expression and locates a realm of transference in language which was lost in the expulsion from paradise. Genesic language is, however, not to be lost forever

and is to be encountered again in the redemptive aspect of judgment. This messianic potential distinguishes the grammarians of language from the mystical grammarians of divine language, placing Benjamin squarely in the context of those for whom the written bears divine messages. For both Benjamin and the Kabbalists, the inexpressibility of the written word is, according to Scholem, the true mystery of language:

> Die Schrift, dem Philologen nur ein sekundäres und zudem höchst unbrauchbares Abbild der wirklichen Sprache, ist dem Kabbalisten der wahre Abbild ihrer Geheimnisse. Das phonographische Prinzip einer natürlichen Umsetzung von Sprache in Schrift und umgekehrt von schrift in Sprache wirkt in der Kabbala in der Vorstellung, daß die heiligen Buchstaben des Alphabets selber jene Lineamente und Signaturen sind, die der moderne Phonetiker auf seiner Platte suchen würde. Das schaffende Wort Gottes prägt sich legitim eben in jenen heiligen Linien aus. Jenseits der Sprache liegt die sprachlose Reflexion, die das reine Denken ist, das sich selber denkt, man möchte sagen, der stumme Tiefsinn, in dem das Namenlose nistet.[302]

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[302] [j3:35]. The quotation is from *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala*, 244.

MICRO-LINGUISTIC SPECULATION

As the tradition of linguistic speculation began to move from a rabbinic science of creation, focused on filling-in the missing pieces of revelation in order to extend divine coherence, the scientific study of creation embarked on a course of abstract analysis in a decidedly micro-linguistic direction. Just like the modern attempt to split the atom into its integral parts, the revealing aspects of creation were to be broken down into its smallest components to see if it was possible to discover hidden codes that would explain its "magic" properties. This transition from the macro to the microscopic level was also accompanied by a change in focus from acoustic to written expression. In a microscopic view, the words which formed God's message were to be split open to reveal their letters. As the building blocks of revelation, the letters themselves, sure enough, were to become the center of speculation. If one recalls the fact that the Torah is already presumed to have existed before its acoustic pronunciation, then surely the letters (not to speak of the words they form in writing) were also the means of creation. But if, however, the Torah, or that which is known as Torah, is not presumed to have existed before creation, there would be no need to think of *Or* as the true word for light but rather a transliteration of an unknown language into a known one. The written Torah would then merely be a transference of the original story of creation into human language.

Kabbalistic treaties on the letters and the potential for their combination led to a discussion of those letters which constitute the divine name. The anonymous *Sefer ha-Ijjun,* thought to be of the 13th century, expresses a combination of light and linguistic mysticism together with a proposal concerning the divine name in which creation, understood as "intelligible lights," is read, at the same time, as intelligible names.[303] A methodological orientation to the science of creation is expounded upon in this text: the creation of names from letter-combinations is based on the the Tetragrammaton as "the root of all other names." [j3:37] The latter however is taken merely relatively, only appearing "als sinnbildlicher Ausdruck eines der unendlichen Aspekte von Gottes Machtfülle." [j3:37] God's is assumed to be the longest and shortest name that exists; one may take a single letter to express it or consider the entire Torah the totality of His name. [j3:38]

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[303] Whether mystics were inclined to speak in the symbolism of light, the content of their speculation was to grow interchangeable as both light and linguistic symbolism were brought together in a theory of emanation. See Scholem [j3:32-33].

In another text of the *Ijjun* circle, *Ma'ajan ha-Chochma*, "the fountain of wisdom," the *yud* of the Tetragrammaton is proposed as the first silent letter of the unpronounceable name of God and therefore as the origins of the divine name, the symbolic representation of the "Urpunkt der Sprache." [j3:38] The Tetragrammaton itself is the "Einheit der sich aus der Urwurzel verzweigenden Sprachbewegung, die im Uräther, der Aura, die Gott umgibt, entsteht." [j3:39] This leads to the hypothesis that the *alef*, being the first letter of alphabet, was in fact the first silent letter of God's name, its silence expressing the non-acoustic being of the Tetragrammaton itself. In so doing, the *alef* becomes the "Indiffernzpunkt alles Sprechen," [j3:39] according to Scholem, which despite its silence and later disappearance from the Tetragrammaton altogether, remains the standpoint from which all creating language is generated.

Scholem's applies an expressly dialectical analysis to *Ma'ajan ha-Chochma*, focusing on the "Umschlag" which he suspects as the author's fascination with the creating movement of the *yud*. The letter *yud* is described as the source of all linguistic motion, both infinitely extended but returning to its center and origins in its "unfolding." Scholem detected something cyclical in this return to origins:

> Die magische Macht des Sprechenden ist die Macht dessen, der sich an die Wurzel dieser Sprachbewegung zu versetzen weiß und damit alle Sprache und Wesensäußerung umfaßt und ihre Wirkungen zu durchdringen vermag. [j3:39]

In the creating motion of the *yud*, Scholem reads an attempt to split open the atomic core of the divine name of God, unleashing a "magical" power locked at the root of spoken, linguistic motion. The prime motion released in the *yud* is discovered to be at the core of language and therefore the essence of a thing.

In a slight deviation from the micro-linguistic approach, the divine name of God is deemed unrecognizable for all intensive purposes.[304] Another interpretation, perhaps even more radical then the first, is the notion that God's original name is not to be found in the Torah at all or that hidden behind the Tetragrammaton is a "wahre Urname" which has yet to be revealed. [j3:43] Still another formulation found in *Ma'ajan ha-Chochma* is that the original name of God is to be found by drawing from the letters *alef*, *he*, *vav*, *yud* which were considered the generating letters of the alphabet. EHVY is then the name which is thought to be at the core of the divine name from which all other names arose. The same name in *Sefer ha-Ijjun*

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[304] Abulafia advocated this as necessary secrecy. [j3:42]

is proposed as the insignia upon the ring God used to seal creation. [j3:41]. But like many a hypothesis, it will be only proved when events in time and history reveal themselves as such. So too with the divine name of God which, according to some traditions, is not to be truly knowable until the moment of its revelation is at hand:

> Nur im jetzigen Äon ist in der uns lesbar gewordenen Form der Torah das Tetragramm an die Stelle dieses Urnamens getreten, aber in der messianischen Zeit, die das Ende dieses Äons einleitet, wird es durch den Ursprünglichen Namen wieder verdrängt werden. [j3:44]

Born from *Sh'mittot*, the theory of Eons, also known as the phases of creation through which the world is completed, the Torah is believed to take a form unique to the particular age in which it is read or understood. The Torah itself is to actually evolve in the course of time, albeit in enormous periods of slow transformation. At the end of the *Sh'mittot*, everything will return to its origins, no less the name of God itself:

> Am Ende des Weltprozesses aber kehren alle Dinge im 'großen Jubeljahr' zu ihrem Ursprung in der dritten Sefira *Bina* zurück, und alle Emanationen und Welten unter ihr verschwinden. Der wahre Name Gottes, der sich aber auch in diesem Stand der Rückkehr aller Dinge in Gottes Schoß erhalten wird, ist eben dieser Urname, eine Offenbarung des göttlichen Wesens, die an sich selbst, nicht an irgend etwas außerhalb von ihm gerichtet ist. [j3:44-45]

Two positions arise out of the suggestion that the true name of God does not exist in the present but may exist in the future, as Scholem explains. In the first position, God is acutely aware of His name but keeps this name to Himself. The second position, which is presented in the *Zohar*, is that the *deus absconditus* has no name. The Tetragrammaton is called the "essential" or "proper" name of God because it renders the concentrated substance of its endlessness (*en-sof*) immanent in itself, through its emanation. There would therefore be no need for a name beyond it because every name implies a constraint of its unlimitedness.

Thus in the *Ijjun* circle's analysis of a "symbolisch sichtbar" mystical word of God, Scholem was to detect once again a free-flowing relationship between a thing and its language, here between lights and sounds which are both considered linguistic substances of the intellect. [j3:45] In this way, their linguistic mysticism of the name equipt them with a "metaphorischer Ausdruck allgemein theologischer Vorstellungen" in which the "Kondenstationen, Zusammenballungen der Austrahlungen Gottes" in the name was considered part and parcel of a "metaphysischen Sphäre" in which "das Optische und das Akustische koinzidieren."

[j3:46] In short, it provided them with a theoretical framefork for a metaphysics of appearance, drawn from theological principles of a science of creation.

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE DIVINE NAME, ITS SUBSTANCE AND ATTRIBUTES

Research into the proper name of the divine and its relationship to proper names in the profane was to have a lasting impact on Jewish linguistic speculation. The discussion of the Kabbalists concerned the relationship of the name to that which Scholem alternatively refers to as metaphor or symbol — a reference to the qualities of a thing in the context of a symbolic or equally metaphoric reflection of its existence. Although thoroughly relevant to the science of creation, such speculation was not far from the question of the existence of a non-perceivable being in the profane. For Jacob Ha'Kohen of Soria (cerca 1260-70), this question is anything but incidental. At its very basis lies the meaning of the existence of God. Since language was the avenue to metaphysics, it is therefore understandable why Ha'kohen sought to prove that the name of God is not mere appearance but essence as well. As such, the 12, 42 or 72 letters of the name of God should not be treated as mere visual attributes but recognized as belonging to the essence of the name, Ha'kohen reminds his readers. Since they are made up of letters which have the capacity to reach the divine, they too must be apart of the divine. [j3:47] This theory is closely related to a notion of proper names in which the name given to humans is nether accidental nor essential but something "real."[305] The following choice citation of Ha'kohen, which Scholem renders here into German, suggests the profound impact that Greek philosophy was to have on the Kabbalah. At the same time, it points to the clear affinity which Scholem would maintain between it and Benjamin:

> "Der Name ist also etwas anderes als das Wesen und ist weder Substanz noch Attribut und nichts, was konkrete Wirklichkeit hat, während der Körper sowohl Substanz wie Attribut ist, sowie etwas, das konkrete Realität hat. Der Name tritt hier zum Wesen hinzu, die göttlichen Namen aber sind das Wesen selber und sie sind Potenzen der Gotttheit und ihre Substanz ist die Substanz des 'Licht des Lebens' [eine der höchsten Sefiroth]. Aber wenn man es mit den Eigennamen der Menschen ganz genau nehmen will, wird man finden, daß auch sie und die Wesen [die sie bezeichnen] eines sind, so daß der Name nicht vom Wesen getrennt und unterschieden werden kann noch das Wesen

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[305] According to Scholem, this tradition of proper names originates from a well-read but anonymous commentary on the Merkabah vision of Ezechiel, suggesting Moses Zinfa as the possible author. [j3:46-47] But we are also aware of Scholem's own fascination with the meaning of proper names, reading his own name with imbued messianic meaning as both *shalom*, peace, and *shalem*, to make whole. (A larger discussion on this theme is to follow in the final chapter of section three.) We also know to what degree Scholem was to share this rather intense interest with Benjamin though his essay "Walter Benjamin und Sein Engel" (1972) and "Die Geheimen Namen Walter Benjamin" (1978). See *Walter Benjamin und Sein Engel*, 35-78, and Giorgio Agamben, "Lingua e storia. Categorie linguistiche e categorie storiche nel pensiero di Benjamin" in *Walter Benjamin. Tempo, storia, linguagio*, Roma: 1983

vom Namen, denn der Name hängt direkt mit dem Wesen zusammen [...]"
[Scholem's emphasis j3:47]

Here we find a very similar conception of the name to that which Benjamin subscribes to Adam's activities in creation. The name presents something "real" of the thing which it names. Adam delivers it to the thing but it is drawn directly from its essence.[306] Ha'kohen makes the distinction in the first instance between divine and profane names such that the profane is drawn from essence and the divine, synonymous with it. In the last analysis, we see the removal of the first distinction where the distance between the thing and its profane name is deemed a direct, unmediated connection. From this, it is possible to see how Scholem might have had a direct association in mind.[307]

Israel Sarug (a Lurianic Kabbalist, active at the beginning of the 17th century) advocated a theory of linguistic creation, drawn from God's pleasure or joy as the prime motion of all linguistic activity.Envisioned as a 'selbstbegegnung' within the *en-sof* itself, Saruk's mystical "pleasure principle" conceives of God's pleasure within the infinite moment as the transition "'von sich selbst zu sich selbsts', in der sich jene Freude des *Ein-sof* über sich selber ausdrückt, damit zugleich aber auch schon die geheimen Potenzialität allen Ausdrucks." [j3:53] Within this motion, an "Urgewand" [*malbush*] was woven, from which an "Urtora" was communicated. [j3:53] This original material presented an initial stage prior to the spoken and the written, a prime root of a "vorborgene Signatur in Gott" which expressed itself to itself without having an expression, neither in tone nor in image. [j3:53] In the contraction of the *en-sof* in itself, (known in Lurianic Kabbalah as the process of *zimzum*), the original Torah was contained in itself, creating the generation of all creating force and becoming the "Urkraft aller Sprachbewegung." [j3:53] This confrontation in itself, without the elements of expression (in the profane), thus becomes for Saruk the formula for all expression, the *locus clasicus* of all linguistic power. He presents a three-fold version of creation where an initial fabric of original motion gave rise to a Torah of "mystischer Gottesnamen, die such gewisse weitere Kombinationen der ersten Elemente gebildet werden." [j3:54] This original Torah was revealed with its letters as "angelical forms," appearing as a

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[306] In order as not to drive the reader into total confusion (which the discussion of these very categories in Aristotle's metaphysics has been known to do), I have borrowed the term "essence" from Scholem's translation of Ha'kohen here to represent Benjamin's *geistige Wesen*, (what I have previously term the "substance of intellect/spirit") so as not to confuse it with *Substanz.*

[307] Scholars of the Kabbalah such Joseph Dan have often wondered why Scholem was to spend a good portion of roughly ten years of his early carrier on the Kohen brothers. If their linguistic writings could be interpreted along the index of genesic linguistic notions which Scholem and Benjamin were to assemble, it might offer some clues as to the reasons for this profound interest.

series of divine names which were unaccessible to the profane reader. Only in a third moment (i.e. a third world) in which the letters of the Torah were shaped into forms with syntactical meaning was the text to appear, originating out of a first incomprehensible list of implicitly divine meaning. In this final form, the "die Namen aller Dinge und aller menschlichen Wesen," meaning "die Welt der Sprache und der Namen überhaupt," are contained within the Torah. [J3:54] All of language, and all of its syntactical, speculative and metaphysical meaning, is to be found in the Torah:

> Die ursprüngliche, paradiesische Sprache des Menschen hatte noch diesen Charakter des Sakralen, das heißt, sie war noch unmittelbar und unverstellt mit dem Wesen der Dinge, die sie ausdrücken wollte, verbunden. In dieser Sprache war noch das Echo der göttlichen vorhanden, denn im Anhauch des göttlichen Pneuma setzte sich die Sprachbewegung des Schöpfers in die des Geschöpes um. [j3:55]

Just as in Benjamin's initial proposal of an original, creating language which God passed on to Adam in a linguistical and philosophical paradise (as regards to a thing and its meaning), Scholem discovers a "sacral" state of language in Saruk where an "echo" of the divine was lodged in the created though the transference of God's *ruach*. [II:147-50] To the degree that the sacral is identical with the expressed essence of a thing, Scholem returns to the earlier discussion on the substance of the intellect/spirit. [II:140-1] Given that profane language emerged from the decent of divine language, we see Scholem pointing again to the question of the relationship of divine language in the profane or, in Benjamin's words, the translation of a higher language into a lower one. [II:151-2] In a broad view of linguistic speculation in the Kabbalah, Scholem presents Saruk own analysis in light of the widely-held opinion:

> daß der Ursprache, dem Hebräischen, rein vornherein gar nicht zu profanem Gebrauch bestimmt gewesen sei. Die Generation, die den Turm von Babel erbauen wollte, mißbrauchte diese echte sakrale Sprache magisch, um mit Hilfe der Kenntnis der reinen Namen aller Dinge die Schöpfertätigkeit Gottes bis zu einem gewissen Grade nachzuahmen, sich einen 'Namen' zu erschleichen, der für jede Gelegenheit anwendbar sein würde. Die Sprachverwirrung bestand im weitgehenden Verlust dieser Sprache aus dem Gedächtnis, so daß sich die Betreffenden die Benennungen der Einzeldinge neu ersinnen und erfinden mußten [...] [A]uch die heilige Sprache ist seitdem mit Profanem vermischt, so wie in den profanen Sprachen noch hier und da Elemente oder Residua der heiligen stecken. [j3:55]

Just as in Molitor's exposition, fragments of a divine language were thought to have been mixed in the profane, with Hebrew retaining a bit more of the pieces of the

divine than other profane languages.[308] Here the notion of an original language is distinctly linked to Hebrew such that the misuse of the divine language has consequences, some which are even incalculable. Benjamin's analysis appears once again in the concept of the misuse of language in the abuse of the "magical" properties of the name, lodged in the expression of the inexpressible divine insignia. [II:153] He too saw the problem of "over-naming" as a consequence of the descent and confusion of language into the profane. [II:155-6] That the true name of things could be discovered once again may have been a perspective held by many a linguistic Kabbalist with even a remote messianic yearning, but it was also a dream from which Scholem himself was abruptly awaken shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1923.[309]

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[308] Scholem sites however Jechiel Michel Epstein, *Kizzur schnei luchoth ha-brith.* [j3:55-56, ft.63]
[309] See, for example, Scholem's thoughts on language upon arrival in Scholem, *On the possibility of Jewish Mysticism in our Time and other essays*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997, 27-30.

A MICRO-LINGUISTIC SCIENCE OF PROPHECY

The Kabbalist of the late 13th century Spain, Abraham Abulafia, was to open up entirely new realms of linguistical speculation for Scholem in his methodology of the micro-linguistic. He was to take his cue in many respects from Maimonides metaphysics of Judaism, whose essentially rationalizing and normative teachings was applied to a linguistically-based mystical methodology for a prophecy of here and now.[310] He borrows from both Maimonides and Aristotle the notion of a core of a character being eternal and differs only slightly from the theory of creating word of God, suggesting that even divine acoustics were not to remain isolated in God alone. Divine sounds were linked to the profane, according to Abulafia, through the fact that God wrote creation rather than pronouncing it:

> Schöpfung, Offenbarung und Prophetie sind für Abulafia Phänomene der Sprachwelt: die Schöpfung als ein Akt des göttlichen Schreibens, in welchem die Schrift die Materie der Schöpfung gestaltet; Offenbarung und Prophetie als Akte, in denen das göttliche Wort sich nicht nur einmal, sondern letzten Endes immer wiederholbar in die menschliche Sprache eingießt und ihr, wenigstens potentiell, den unendlichen Reichtum unermeßlicher Einsicht in den Zusammenhang der Dinge verleiht. [j3:58]

All major divine events are woven back into a linguistic interpretation, beginning with a genesic starting point that links the word to its expressive medium. But rather than drawing attention to the acoustic sphere, he embarks on a rather unique integration of the various forms of linguistic expression, such that the utterance of the creating word is also an act of divine writing and a divine act of writing is, at once, a momentary act of infinite moments, finding its expression transpired in human language with messianic significance.[311] In terms not unfamiliar to Benjamin, Scholem viewed Abulafia's theory as a conception of "Schöpfung als akt des göttlichen Schreibens, in dem Gott seine Sprache den Dingen einverleibt, sie als seine Signaturen in ihnen hinterläßt, [...]" [j3:58] Focus on the written in creation is a reoccurring theme in his work, setting the stage for extensive micro-linguistic investigations. For him, each letter is itself a symbol of creation, maintaining within

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[310] At the same time that this mystical orientation was to contradict so much of the effect of Maimonides, particularly the movement directly following his death, Abulafia presented his interpretation as revealing the esoteric dimension which always existed in Maimonides teaching, however much hidden. See [j3:57].

[311] Just as in the teaching of the *sh'mittoh*, word combinations which have no meaning in this world, will develop a meaning in the next. Future meanings exist within words and will be exposed when this level of limited knowledge is surpassed, whether through individual enlightenment or through messianic transition. [j3:67] See Elias Lipiner, *Ideologie fun Yidishn Alef-Beis*, Buenos Aries: YIVO, (Yiddish) 1967, 107-155, A.H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, 146.

itself a powerful atomic core. From the powerful, inter forces of letters, Abulafia was to embark on a methodology which he was to term a "science of prophecy." This consisted primarily of research into word-combinations concerning the association between particular words and their acoustic sounds. Through such an undertaking, he sought the precursors of linguistic creation, or the prime forces, just as they had been used in creation.

For Abulafia, the human ability to bear divine aspect of language (*dibbur 'elohi*) was lodged in the Maimonidian active intellect. As such, it took Scholem no time to link this concept to Benjamin's *geistigen Wesen*, for both in Abulafia and in Benjamin, the divine substance of the intellect was lodged in every aspect of the created:

> Jeder der Himmelssphären des ptolemäischen Weltbilds entsprach nämlich hier eine ihr innewohnende Intelligenz, die eine geistige Wirkung des göttlichen Schöpferwillens war. [j3:60]

The *intellectus agens* is here a cosmic potential originating out of creation. It is in the expression of God's intention in creation, forming every creature and thing with a silent, sanctified intelligence. Perhaps for the first time in Jewish linguistic theory, the active part of the intellect is conceived of linguistically. [j3:60] Scholem notes that Abulafia made good use of the medieval attributes of the adjective *devari* which means both "linguistic," as it is here understood, as well as "rational" or "reasonable." Behind Abulafia's mystical methodology and a belief in the experiential practice of prophecy lies a profound conviction in the rationality of his science — in his words, a "'Wissenschaft der höheren, innerlichen Logik'" — what Scholem terms a "mystical logic." [j3:64] This was achieved on the basis of a notion of the logical power of language, as Scholem explains: "Was in der Sprache der Philosophen die Vernuftanlage im Menschen hieß, konnte also auch als Sprachvermögen verstanden werden." [j3:60-61] As Abulafia himself states on the science of prophecy (in Scholem's translation):

> "Die Ursache der Prophetie liegt in der Rede, die von Gott durch das Medium der vollkommenen Sprach, die alle siebzig Sprachen umfaßt, zu den Propheten gelangt." [j3:61]

Despite the association with the transition of the intellect of naming from God to Adam, a mystical science of self-generating prophecy would not necessarily have

appealed to Benjamin. Unlike Abulafia, there is, in fact, every reason to believe that Benjamin's "Sprachmystik" had little to do with religious practice.[312]

Abulafia viewed God's revelation in written language in no sense metaphorically, as we have seen Benjamin's application of this term. [II:141] The most physical aspects of scripture were a part of God's being, expressing the unity of His spiritual/intellectual substance — eternally, but also in the moment. A citation from Abulafia:

> "So sind bei Gott die Herzen die Schreibtafeln und die Seelen wie die Tinte, und die Rede, die zu ihnen von ihm kommt, die zugleich die Erkenntnis ist, ist wie die Form der Buchstaben, die aus den Bundestafeln von beiden Seiten eingeschrieben waren." [j3:62]

Rather than the Tetragrammaton proving itself as 'unreal' in its lack of acoustic expression, its "reality" is no longer determined by the transition from the acoustic to the written. In point of fact, its incommunicability becomes the very measure of its existence: "Alle erschaffenen Dinge habe Realität nur soweit sie in irgendeiner Art an diesem 'großen Namen' Anteil haben." [j3:63]. The unspeakable name is thus existence supreme. Abulafia goes on to formulate the "reality" of the participation of the created in its creating i.e. that the created is always bound to the creating, it itself considered an act of scientific prophecy. The link to God is formed by the fact that every act which expresses itself in letters is an "Erkenntnisakt, auch wenn diese Erkenntnis uns noch verschlossen, nicht dechiffrierbar ist." [j3:63] Knowledge is the cornerstone of linguistic revelation, whether it is acquited or unatainable.

Scholem's description of Abulafia's *hochmah ha-zeruf*, the science of the combinations, has an obvious relationship to Benjamin's theory of the origins of knowledge. The knowledge which was linguistically imparted to Adam by God is not severed from the language which he speaks. In fact the transitive moment in language which finds its expression in translation represents a on-going act of knowledge. [II:151-153] For Abulafia, the idea that language as the locus of knowledge implies that even profane languages such as Greek and Latin are to

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[312] Aside from the later experiments with drugs, for example, and the transcendental practice which such experimentation implies, there is little evidence of a direct interest in mystical practice, despite a theoretical interest in ritual. In this respect, Susan Buck-Morss, in her book *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989, wonders if Benjamin's prayed. But to truly answer this question, one would have to define the meaning of prayer. Would it be, in Benjamin's case, the expression of *geistige Wesen*, for example? Would it be considered communicative or, alternatively, symbolic action?

serve the divine language, in his words, the "Jewish language."[313] As Scholem explains:

> Da alle Sprachen durch Korruption aus der sakralen Ursprache entstanden sind, in der sich unmittelbar die Welt der Namen auseinanderlegt, hängen sie noch mittelbar mit ihr zusammen. [j3:65]

Benjamin's analysis of mimicry after the imparting of divine substance as the abuse of the name finds a precursor in Abulafia. Just as in Benjamin's notion of evil knowledge, [II:153] Abulafia warns against the misuse of the method which brings demonic consequences, even conjuring Satan as the spirit of "unrestituierten Natur." [j3:66] Nature, then, in an unrestituted state is deemed sinister.[314]

In Scholem's rendition, Abulafia is acutely aware of the "unmediated power" of words. [j3:68] Nevertheless, "Er verhält sich aber aller praktikablen Magie und Theurige gegenüber gänzlich abweisend." [je:67-68] According to his own formulations, his system (*hochmah ha-zeruf*) does not fall under the prohibition concerning magical practices for his are mystical techniques which encompass a prophetic and eqally esoteric form of magic. However, despite his objections, "Magie als das nicht-Kommunizierbare, und doch aus den Worten Ausstrahlende ist für ihn existent," argues Scholem. [j3:68] In much the same way as it was defined for us by Benjamin, magic is here also the incommunicable which nevertheless finds a form for its expression. [II:142-43] The expression is then deemed magical as the manifestation of revelation in minute, concentrated form. Abulafia's orientation to the question is such that prophetic magic is an integral part of the unfolding of revelation. But since there is an unmediated power contained within the words and a scientific method of their positive combinations, a negative combination is surely possible and naturally merits concern. Thus the former must also be applied in the neutralization of the latter: "Aus der Versenkung in den Namen Gottes, das Zentrum aller Schöpfung, erwächst ihm die Kraft, 'das Wirken der Magier zunichte zu machen.'" [j3:68] With such a definitive rebuke of the use of

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[313] Abulafia shared Benjamin's position to the ability of divine matter to be conveyed through translation and in profane languages but ultimately Hebrew is considered the original, divine language. Moshe Idel reinforces Scholem's interpretation on the relationship of divine messages to divine language: "'[...] according to the Kabbalah, the divine speech is only attainable by means of the Holy language, although its existence is ascertainable by means of any language.'" [Mafteah ha-Hokmot, Ms. Moscow 133, fol.16b.] See Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* New York: State University of New York Press, 1989, 14-27, esp. 22

[314] The divine name bears its secretes for a purpose. Since God hid his name, Abulafia deemed it unwise to reveal how it was that He came to this conclusion. In his estimation, the combination YHVH was merely a "Notbehelf." Behind it stood an original name. [j3:41-43]

magic by one of the standard-bearers of mysticism in the history of the Kabbalah (and whose method may nevertheless be characterized as employing magical practices), it would be very difficult indeed to regard Benjamin's late claims concerning "der Magie zu liquidieren" [II:213] as an authentic attempt to purge any last mystical tendencies from his work.

ON A MESSIANIC CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

In this section "on the origins of language and the true name of things," we have reviewed some of the central ideas of language in Judaism, beginning with the earlist conceptions in the Torah, in *Bereshit Rabbah* and in rabbanic Judaism in general and extending to the far reaches of mystical speculation in both early and later Kabbalah, nevertheless, a discussion of Jewish linguistics was never the goal. The focus of this section has been to illustrate a second part of Benjamin and Scholem's political theology: the concept of language and its place in redemption. We began with an explication of Benjamin's early ideas on language which were concentrated foremost in the language of creation and we were able to see many if not most of these notions discussed in Molitor's *Philosophie der Geschichte*. Lastly, we were to catch up with Scholem and sought to articulate how his early preocupation with linguistic questions took shape in his mature ideas. To this degree, we have evaluated a short history of linguistic thought, which itself emerged over two thousand years of work, in order to show how, despite all this, we find Scholem formulating many of the same themes and terms which Benjamin first set out in his essay of 1916. We have seen how the notion of all things and beings express themselves by nature in language, which is their language; we have seen how the language of creation was transfered from God to Adam, not metaphorically but linguistically, and we also have seen how, within the fall from linguistic divinity of Eden into the multiplicity and often redundency of profane languauge, the judging word of the divine was implanted, offering messainic hope of a manifestation of the divine in the profane. As to end this section on language, we shall conclude with Scholem's final remarks, representing an extremely concise summery of 60 years of linguistic research, reproduced here in its entirety:

> Der Name Gottes ist der "wesentliche Name", der der Ursprung aller Sprache ist. Jeder andere Name, unter dem Gott benannt oder angerufen werden kann, steht mit einer bestimmten Aktivität in Zusammenhang, wie die Etymologie solcher biblischen Namen ausweist; nur dieser eine Name bedingt keinerlei Rückbesinnung auf eine Aktivität. Dieser Name hat für die Kabbalisten keinen "Sinn" im gewöhnlichen Verstande, keine konkrete Bedeutung. Das Bedeutungslose des Namens Gottes weist auf seine Stellung im Zentrum der Offenbarung eines Sinnes in der Sprache und, wie es die Kabbalisten sahen, durch die Tora, steht dies üben den Sinn hinausragende, ihn erst ermöglichende Element, das ohne Sinn zu haben allem anderen Sinn verleiht. Was aus Schöpfung und Offenbarung zu uns spricht, das Wort Gottes, ist unendlich deutbar und reflektiert sich in unserer Sprache. Seine Strahlen oder Laute, die wir auffangen, sind nicht sosehr Mitteilungen als Anrufe. Was Bedeutung hat, Sinn und Form, ist nicht dies Wort selber, sondern die *Tradition* von diesem Worte, seine Vermittlung und Reflexion in der Zeit.

> Diese Tradition, die ihre eigene Dialektik hat, verwandelt sich und geht
> eventuell auch in ein leises und verhauchendes Flüstern über, und es mag
> Zeiten geben, wie die unsere, wo sie nicht mehr überliefert werden kann und
> wo diese Tradition verstummt. Das ist dann die große Krise der Sprache, in
> der wir stehen, die wir auch den letzten Zipfel jenes Geheimnisses, das einmal
> in ihr wohnte, nicht mehr zu fassen bekommen. [...] nur die Dichter eine
> Antwort haben, die die Verzweiflung der meisten Mystiker an der Sprache
> nicht teilen und die eines mit den Meistern der Kabbala verbindet, auch wo
> sie deren theologische Formulierung als noch zu vordergründig verwerfen:
> der Glaube an die Sprache als ein, wie immer dialektisch aufgerissenes,
> Absolutum, der Glaube an das hörbar gewordene Geheimnis in der Sprache.
> [j3:69-70]

In a final summery of his linguistic survey of the Kabbalah, we have, in fact, a final summery of an early, linguisic, political theology which, at the same time, is drawn into the conclusions of late political and theological reflections. At first, there was an essential Name, the genesis of the substance of the intellect with which every other name is related. The etymology of biblical names — Adam from *adama* in the words of Molitor — are the active expressions of the name of the unmoved mover, itself the most syntatically undefinable proper name in language. But while the divine name attributes meaning to all other names by its insigna, it itself has no meaning. The Kabbalists interpreted the word of God therefore as the infinite in language. In place of a dogmatic of truth, they transpired at best a tradition of contextual meaning. Seen acoustically Hebraic, the word of God was to them not the expresson of context but rather divine calling — a calling which has become silent in the religious anarchism of our day and age.[315] A crisis in language precipitated a crisis in the notion of a divine origins of scripture which can no longer deliver the meaning which it was once retained.[316] This crisis can be described as one of absolutes — as in the damaged immedicy Benjamin hoped would be repared by the judging word — but it can also be understood as a crisis in redemption, which a belief in the messianic design of the revelation of the word at its origins in the profane, a secrete dimension of language, awates its enterance.

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[315] The importance which Jewish speculation was to attribute to the form of the letters, their crowns and acoustic notion find neither a place explicitly in Benjamin's analysis nor is Scholem's late survey where they would surly belong. This absence may point still further to the sheer loyalty which Scholem expressed to the early ideas. See Joseph Dan's important contribution to the mysticism of the shape of the letters in: "The Language of the Mystics in Medieval Germany," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. by K. Grözinger and J. Dan, Berlin: Walter de Gruyer, 1995, 12-13.

[316] These remarks are related to the chapter devoted to Scholem's late political and theological reflections which I have termed "critical anarchism." See chapter twelve in the first section.