Borrowed Emanations: Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the Kabbalistic Body

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In the wake of renewed interest in Theosophical theurgy, the authors explore the precedent set by its forerunner Spiritualism. Grounded in Neoplatonic emanational theology, Spiritualism set the stage for a theurgical understanding of the divine with the interdependence and interpenetration of the living and the dead. Spiritualists, following Swedenborg's Grand Man concept, posited that the image of the cosmos was replicated in the individual body, which fostered a theurgical relationship humans and the semi-divine spirits of the heavens. Articulated in terms of sexuality, medicine, and even technology, this Spiritualist theurgy paved the way for clearer Kabbalistic influence on Theosophy, with both movements claiming an ancient and universal truism in emanational theology that was played out in different cultures across the centuries.

Keywords: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Kabbalah, Body, Emanation

In 1852, a crowd gathered in Lynn, Massachusetts, in order to build a new savior. A gift to the living from the spirit world, this would be a machine that was to be brought to life, quickened by an unnamed woman called the Mary of the New Dispensation. This event among several others in the history of Spiritualism relied on two interrelated concepts of an emanational view of the cosmos in which the earthbound, as the stepping stone to the seven-tiered heavens, interacted with and influenced the ladder of the divine. We will argue that this theological disposition constituted an overlooked form of American theurgy. Amid the growing interest in the influence of Kabbalah on Theosophy (Chajes and Huss, 2016; Huss et al 2010), we will examine Spiritualism as it shaped and was shaped by early Theosophy. We will argue that Spiritualism's insistence on the centrality of the body and a Neoplatonic schema of heaven ad-

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vanced a rudimentary framework for theurgy. Examining the theurgic Spiritualist precursors to Theosophy, we will focus on the intereliance between the living and the dead as well as the macrocosmos of the Great Man. Such concepts, most of which were only available to Spiritualist authors several generations removed from their origins, were amenable to analogies and interpretations of Kabbalah that were later articulated more fully by H. P. Blavatsky and her cohort.

Both Spiritualism and Theosophy undermined normative Christianity's exclusive theology. Rejecting a singular salvation designed only for Christians, each movement sought and endorsed multiple explanations of the divine. Spiritualists introduced widespread trance lectures and séances where talking to the dead revealed that all humanity is destined for heaven. The ultimate truth claim of most Christian thought in the era – that there were distinct afterlives of the saved and the damned – was ultimately incompatible with Spiritualism's universal salvation. Early Theosophists articulated a conspiratorial history of Christianity, and its founder Helena Blavatsky was actively hostile to the church, blaming it for willfully obscuring the truth from the masses. Both movements were perennialist, claiming that ultimate truths were universal and merely expressed differently across time and cultures.

To a large extent, neither Spiritualism nor Theosophy were much interested in the personified figure of God, preferring instead an abstract idea of perfection and focusing on interacting with semi-divine intermediaries. Much like contemporary practices in New Age movements, people could participate in Spiritualist rituals on a number of levels, ranging from sneering entertainment to temporary interest (following the death of a loved one, for example) or embracing the full gamut of theological propositions and their attendant political stances. The inclusion of all races and religions in the afterlife was wed to progressive politics in this one--the living improved social and material conditions while the dead increased in knowledge and spiritual well-being.

Founders of religions and any concomitant claims to religious exceptionalism were routinely demoted to one among many wise men preaching similar values to different audiences. Cora Hatch, perhaps the most beloved medium of her day, delivered a common sentiment at a trance lecture when she said,

«And when we view the history of Jesus of Nazareth, we find that Pythagoras, Aristotle, Confucius, all uttered many sayings recorded as being original with Jesus; that Confucius taught you to be good and kind to your neighbor, expressing the golden rule in a little different language, but with no different meaning as that rule given by Christ. What, therefore, must be our conclusion from this? Not that Jesus of Nazareth was the originator of these truths, but that he was the personified representative of them» (Hatch 1858: 165). As the watershed moment for multiculturalism in America, Spiritualism affected a naive but heartfelt religious equality by claiming universal truths may have been stated differently but could be understood by all. This leveling of specificities across time and geography would also be taken up by Theosophists who sought a single truth buried in the past and obfuscated by the church. Nascent religious pluralism began with creating an apparent consensus across cultures.

Spiritualism also lacked a central authority and housed a number of different theories under its capacious label but the sine qua non of Spiritualist beliefs was the dismantling of hell. While many followers were able to make Spiritualism compatible with Christianity, this compromise was effected by either ignoring the selective salvation claims of Christianity or by bracketing the universal inclusion of Spiritualism. Spiritualists were well aware of the stakes involved in attacking Christianity directly and generally declined to do so. Indeed, other progressive Protestant denominations concealed "closeted" Spiritualists who could not find their way out of the confines of Christian language but agreed with an open-door policy in heaven (Buescher 2004). In general, however, Spiritualists and later Theosophists adopted the rhetoric of being pro-Jesus but against common forms of Christianity. Renowned Spiritualist leader Andrew Jackson Davis, about whom we shall say more later, exemplifies this stance in one of his many discussions about the misguided role of the clergy and scripture. Delivered to the well-attended and quite famous in its day Hartford Biblical Convention, Davis squarely outlines the problems and the perpetrators of exclusion: «*We are not anti-Christ;* but WE ARE anti-bigotry, anti-slavery, anti-supernatural, *anti-everything* which militates in any manner against the development of human love and brotherhood. ... Greek, Hebrew and Latin terms, however classic and high-sounding [are] a mere battle of texts.

The clergy should feel grateful to us for taking the trouble to show them the battle-field of this century» (Davis 1854: 17). Unmoored from the New Testament, these groups cast backward for their identities to Plato, Neoplatonism, and Kabbalistic ideas about the self and the divine.

Much excellent ink has been spilled in attempts to define, colonize, or reign in theurgy as a religious category. We will be relying on Moshe Idel's formulation as his is the most elegant and the touchstone for all contemporary discussions of the topic. He delineates three strains of Kabbalah, the first of which, the theosophical-theurgical mode, will concern us here. He writes,

> The role of theosophical mysticism was accordingly to comprehend the higher entities [here the sephirot] and their interrelationship by performing the ritual in an intentional way, allowing the mystic to transcend the mundane and experience the Divine. The nexus between these two levels may be described as a gamut beginning with reflection of the Divine on the material level and ending with the emanational explanation, in which the material world is conceived as the lowest extension of a supermundane force. In the majority of theosophical systems, the transition from one plan to another may be expressed as a process of ascent (Idel 1988: 153).

Discussions of the interpenetration between the human realm and the divine began largely with the recuperation of the Kabbalah as an object of scholarly interest. Briefly stated, Gershom Scholem used the term to recuperate the concept of Jewish mysticism from its historical whitewashing in Talmudic "purity" (Scholem 1954: 2). In turn, Idel recaptured arational and mystical elements within rabbinic Judaism itself and moved the conversation about theurgy from the periphery to the center of normative Judaism. The degree to which this relationship between the human and the divine is or should remain a category best belonging to the study of Judaism remains a contested topic. While Idel continues to define theurgy as primarily a Jewish practice, other scholars of Kabbalah have been more receptive to theurgy outside of the boundaries of Judaism, with Christian interpretations of Kabbalah leading to the adoption of legitimate theurgical positions in adjacent traditions (Wolfson 2012: 312-340). We will attempt to strike a balance between what Wouter Hanegraaff has called in this

context "productive misunderstandings" in which hegemonic ideas of religious propositions as "belonging" to certain groups is not useful (Hanegraaff 2010) However, we also recognize that relocating the origin of specific Jewish articulations of mysticism, as is done by both Spiritualists and Theosophists in this circumstance, is often a purposeful diminution of power particularly vis-a-vis Judaism and thus constitutes at least a passive form of anti-Semitism.

Recently Claire Fanger has argued that Moshe Idel's definition of theurgy as the "proposition that the divine is a dynamic entity in need of human action in order fully to inhabit its correct relation to itself" has historical implications far broader than Jewish mysticism and past Judaism in general (Fanger 2012: 23). In *Invoking Angels*, she writes, «[T]heurgy is not quite fully read as 'coercing' or 'constraining' the divine, because Idel quickly moves to the idea that this 'human influence' on the divine is actually part of what he calls 'intra-divine process' – the implication being not that God is influenced by a humankind whose will and action are held to be external to him, but rather that God and humankind are both involved [in] a single system» (Fanger 2012: 24). We will argue that nineteenth-century American esotericists were deeply involved in such a theurgical practice, due partly to the direct and indirect influences of Kabbalism and its kin, the latter largely through the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg that were extraordinarily influential on American metaphysical thinking.

New Emanations

Although very different in praxis and theory, Spiritualists and Theosophists both interacted with an enchanted cosmos and specifically a Renaissance worldview that rejected a binary division between a distant and judging God and his human subjects. Participation with the divine rather than helpless subordination marked the avant thinking of the day.

Cathy Gutierrez has argued elsewhere that the usually literary designation of the nineteenth century as the American Renaissance should be understood more broadly as a cultural fascination with the Classics and the Renaissance itself. Searching for their rightful place in history, the renegades of the New

World did their very best to reinvent the Old. Paul Anderson has shown that English translations of Plato and Neoplatonists were rife in America, spawning several popular journals as well as societies dedicated to discussions of Plato; improbably, these would sometimes engage in good-natured debates with their nemeses, the Hegel societies (Anderson 1963: 8). In this atmosphere of the rebirth of the ideals of antiquity, Spiritualism may be understood as a cultural expression of Neoplatonic Renaissance thinking refashioned for American use (Gutierrez 2009).

Spiritualism had begun in 1848 with the Fox sisters' "mysterious rappings" in Hydesville, New York[1]. The Fox girls, Kate and Margaret, responded to an apparent poltergeist in the house by attempting to communicate with it through a system called "alphabet raps," one for a, two for b, and so forth. The ghost responded with raps of his own, and the sweeping religious movement of Spiritualism was inaugurated. For adherents, the ability to traverse the threshold of death and communicate with those in the afterlife was the logical conclusion of the age of communication: as the century progressed, the telegraph, the telephone, and photography would all demonstrate that instant and invisible communication across space was possible. Bridging the gulf between heaven and earth was merely the next step.

Spiritualists were also notable for espousing progressive and frequently radical political reforms on nearly every front. In addition to their important contributions to Abolition and women's rights, they also embraced a wide gamut of liberal platforms, from improving the condition of prisons to relatively arcane calls for phonetic spelling and more congenial underwear. As Ann Braude has ably demonstrated, Spiritualism also sounded the death knell for widespread American Calvinism and particularly its policies of infant damnation (Braude 2001: 32-55). By providing grieving mothers with what was understood to be empirical proof of the continued existence of their children in heaven, the movement implicitly and explicitly condemned the view of a God who could callously and capriciously send innocents into the fires of hell.

[1] While clearly analogous phenomena have occurred across centuries, we maintain the traditional dating of Spiritualism's advent because it inaugurated the ability to consciously proclaim one's allegiance with its extremely important and controversial theologies and politics.

The Spiritualist vision of heaven was largely dependent on the writings of Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer" and the founder of the Harmonial Philosophy. Davis had already authored several books when the Fox sisters communicated with their ghost; by allying with the new movement, Davis provided the needed theological backbone that cemented the new appearances of the dead with an established cosmology of the heavens. Relying heavily on Swedenborg's mystical visions of the afterlife, in which three heavens were balanced with three hells, Davis expanded his predecessor's three-tiered heavens to seven tiers that were alive with movement: the dead were not instantly perfected but rather progressed in heaven, climbing the ladder of heavens as they became more knowledgeable and spiritually refined. Heaven was open to all, reflecting the self-identity of the young republic as a meritocracy.

Davis wrote extensively over the course of decades about how spirits move from one sphere to the next. These works are not systematic and are frequently dependent upon information given to him in the course of conversing with the dead. One consistency is that each sphere is linked by magnetic chains of affinity and spirits can traverse up slowly but down at will. Spirits on the higher levels may descend in order to communicate with friends and family, and spirits on the lower levels may even go back to earth to either indulge in material crassness which they have not gotten over or to improve themselves. In 1877, the spirit of Martha Washington, wife of George Washington, delivered a lengthy treatise on the topic of sphere transition through automatic writing. Davis published this piece along with several of his own. The First Lady reports,

> When the spirits of the first sphere above the earth commence to learn that they have changed their garments, and become disembodied from the earthly habitation, it takes even then a long time to prepare them for the next sphere. Many spirits come to earth to be educated; and we hope the time is not far distant, when regular schools will be formed on earth to educate and release unfortunate spirits who have passed from earth in darkness. We most sincerely thank all mediums for the grand and noble work they are doing in this most glorious unfoldment of the greatest boon ever given – the knowledge of a home beyond this earth (Davis 1877: 10).

This interaction and indeed interdependence between the living and the dead is a reversal of most common conceptions, which are predominantly true, that the living learned from the dead in Spiritualism. The opposite, however, is also the case. The basest of the dead often relied on the living as guides for and through the afterlife (see Gutierrez 2013). This studied explanation of movement through the spheres, mostly comprised ascent but also descent with humans having an effect on the dead, is both emanational and dynamic, exemplifying both aspects of Idel's theosophical-theurgical model.

Ladders of Light

The concept of God was also discussed as a totality of its parts, almost none of which were perfect or whole on their own terms. Emma Hardinge Britten was a famed Spiritualist medium who would later become a Theosophist while maintaining the tenets of Spiritualism. While we can find no definitive indication that Britten was directly aware of Kabbalah prior to her association with Theosophy, her writing, among many others, bears a striking resemblance to descriptions of the sephirot, the divine emanations stamped with characteristics of God from the Zohar forward. In 1860, she writes from a trance state, "We also observe that spirit combining within itself intelligence, love, will, power, wisdom– these being the attributes of the spirit ye possess; in the totality forming what we term God" (Hardinge 1860: 59). The connections between Neoplatonic emanational theories and Kabbalistic mythopoesis are difficult to disentangle but similar ladders populate Spiritualist writings, with each layer becoming increasingly abstract – the material world to essences, laws, principles, ideas, and finally God (Davis, 1867).

Emma Hardinge Britten also published *Art Magic* one year after the founding of the Theosophical Society, in 1875, a work which was ostensibly penned by an anonymous author known only as Louis. It is a book on the border of Spiritualism and Theosophy that endorses both and argues for their compatibility. In his carefully annotated edition of the work, Marc Demarest distills the convoluted and frequently contradictory themes of *Art Magic* into a clear cosmological articulation. He argues that the book was intended not for occultist adepts but rather for Spirit-

ualists who were seeking a single source for religious truth. Demarest summarizes, «The proposition, for the audience, was: a short course in a kind of practical occultism consistent with the Spiritualist doctrine and exposure to the skills and knowledge required to invoke, control and dismiss submundane and supermundane spirits. The actual price of admission was less obvious: acceptance of a non-Christian astronomical religion, 'Ancient Freemasonry' and the sciences of Mesmerism and psychology as the basis of one's belief system» (Demarest 2011: xxvi).

In simultaneously overturning Christian salvific discourse and searching for a universal origin of truth, Louis performs a common feat in metaphysical writings from this period. In the American quest for an ever-more legitimating past, Judaism is scrubbed of its particularities and becomes a newer vessel for the ideas of the more ancient past. He writes, «Meantime, we close this brief notice by affirming that the very best and most reliable digests of Cabbalistic wisdom are to be found in the songs of Orpheus, the philosophy of Plato, the doctrines of Pythagoras, Appolonius [sic] of Tyana, and the modern mystics» (Anonymous 1898: 83). This approach was hardly new, having been employed in Renaissance discourses on a prisca theologia, which posited a single chain of wisdom transmitted across the centuries. By structuring all knowledge, or at least all correct knowledge of the divine along a single path, a reassuring picture was shaped in which divine knowledge entered the world and, through an accurate tracing of that knowledge's genealogy, remained accessible.

Kabbalistic knowledge was sometimes added to these genealogies, but was most often seen as derivative, as with Pico della Mirandola who traces Kabbalistic ideas back to Orpheus (von Stuckrad 2010: 33). Pico della Mirandola, through whom kabbalistic ideas were influentially transplanted into Christian thought, also effaced the Jewish identity of this Kabbalistic material. As Wouter Hanegraaff argues, Pico della Mirandola along with the later Christian Kabbalist Johannes Reuchlin «...were not concerned with Jewish esotericism on its own terms, but with the ancient and universal wisdom as they saw it. Simply because this wisdom was true and divine in its very nature and origin, it was 'Christian' by definition, regardless of where it was found: hence, the kabbalah was not really the property of the Jews at all, but had merely been preserved by them» (Hanegraaff 2012:

56). Where Kabbalism's truth was allowed it was instantly subsumed within Christianity. This need to align all knowledge with Christianity was generally not, however, a feature of Spiritualism and Theosophy. Pushing the location of esoteric wisdom back in time and farther east was a project undertaken by Spiritualists and Theosophists alike. They both (quite ironically in the case of Theosophists) also bemoan the obfuscating language in which Kabbalism has wrapped its secrets (Anonymous 1898: 216; Blavatsky 1891: 223).

Borrowed Bodies

The two loci, however, where both Spiritualists and Theosophists were willing to grant Kabbalah both cultural specificity and desirability, arise in discussions of the body. Two such instances were favorites of the American Kabbalistic legacy: the primal androgyne and the primordial man Adam Kadmon. The former is a rabbinic glossing of two apparently contradictory creation stories (*Gen*. 1:26-28 and 2:18-25), which concludes that the first creation, male and female, was androgynous and that the taking of life, or Eve, from the side of the adam recounts their disentanglement (see Boyarin 1995: 31-60). This concept was particularly amenable to adoption by both Spiritualists and Theosophists because it offered a less androcentric account of creation, as well as being easy to slot into a narrative of primordial wisdom. With the narrative of the primal androgyne in place, the argument that men are doubly superior, because they are both created first, and provide the substance (the rib) from which women are created, loses its bite. The account of the primal androgyne was linked with a primal wisdom through its relation to the creation myth recounted by Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium. This account shows the first humans as circular beings with two heads, four arms, four legs, and two sets of sexual organs, either two penises, two vaginas, or a penis and a vagina (Plato, *Symposium* 189e-190b). Like interpretations of the Genesis account that read the text as indicating the existence of a primal androgyne, Aristophanes' account also depicts a creation in which neither men nor women are created first, but are instead united as one. Through the similarity between the rabbinic interpretation of the Genesis account and the Aristo-

phanic account, these stories are more easily unmoored from their historical and conceptual locations and made to support an overarching narrative of primordial wisdom. Of the Kabbalistic elaboration on this model, Elliot Wolfson explains:

> The two attributes of God, expressed in more or less standard rabbinic terminology, are correlated with the masculine and feminine aspects of the divine, which correspond to the earthly man and woman. The author of this text emphasizes that the attributes should not act independently but rather in concert, for to separate the attributes of judgment and mercy would be akin to creating a division in the Godhead between male and female (Wolfson 2005: 168).

In *Art Magic*, the anonymous author with the imprimatur of Emma Hardinge Britten is able to reconstruct this concept fairly well:

> "In certain passages the syllables Isch, signifying a man, and Escha, will be found ... when the two points are combined in the same sentence, they signify God; when one alone is there, the word fire is implied. ... With the interception of the subtle points in the peculiar mode of Cabbalistic writings, the sentence would read, When man and woman agree together, God is with them; when they disagree, fire is between them" (Anonymous 1898: 82).

As Idel has shown, the Kabbalist remains very much in line with rabbinic mythopoetics, and as Wolfson points out, the sole major departure of the Kabbalistic androgyne and the rabbinic one is that the later articulation mapped the sun and moon onto the genders in a positive and complementary equation.

The historical continuity regarding the primal androgyny is lost on the author of *Art Magic*, who is himself torn about the role of sexuality in esoteric ritual. Devoting two full chapters to sex magic in what seems to be a generally approving way, he nevertheless delivers a sustained complaint about the God of the Torah whose obsession with child bearing has led to far too much emphasis on sex in Judaism (Anonymous 1898: 60-62).

In Madame Blavatsky's crafting, the primal androgyne becomes a dialectical movement through which duality is created in each new generation. Informed by Eliphas Levi's writings, the *Kabbala Denudata*, and Francke's translation of the *Zohar*,

Blavatsky elides "Sophia" and "Sephira" as the first woman, who resides within the first Adam, or Adonai: "In the former [Adonai] lies Eva, and she is within Adam Primus, for she is a part of himself who is androgyne. The Eva of dust, she who will be called in Genesis 'the mother of all that live,' is within Adam the Second" (Blavatsky 1891: 223-224). In Blavatsky's centrifugal logic that seeks to eliminate the peculiarities of any exotic religious system across time and space, Kabbalah, the trinity, the Orphites, and the Gnostics have struck upon the same dialogic formula throughout history.

Her comparativism continues: «When the woman separates herself from her androgyne, and becomes a distinct individuality, the first story is repeated over again. Both the Father and Son, the two Adams, love her beauty, and then follows the allegory of the temptation and fall. ... The dualism of every existing religion is shown forth by the fall. 'I have gotten a man by the Lord,' exclaims Eve, when the Dualism, Cain and Abel – evil and good – is born» (Blavatsky 1891: 225). In the topos of the body, Kabbalah is allowed to flourish in the Theosophical imagination but at the expense of all originality – Kabbalah, like all laudable writings in H. P. Blavatsky's secretive world, is an expression of an archetype that is preexistent and devoid of either historical or religious specificity.

In addition to the primal androgyne, Spiritualists and Theosophists were in almost universal agreement with a version of the Adam Kadmon, a formulation of creation as coextensive with the divine shaped in the form of a human body. Such a formulation, in the hands of Spiritualists and Theosophists, lends itself to a valorization of the body (or body and spirit together) and to a reaffirmation of the potency of relations between the micro- and macro-cosmos. Particularly in Spiritualism, the body and the soul could not be logically severed in life or in death, and non-Christian (and pre-Cartesian) views of the body were actively sought. The rabbinic declaration that the soul is the lamp of the body stood in stark contrast to the soul being imprisoned in its mortal coil (Boyarin 1995: 57). Although Paul does endorse a spiritual body that continues after death – a subject very dear to Spiritualists who elaborated on this extensively – that body was perfected and not subject to desire or pleasure, which the Spiritualist body most certainly was (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). Those taken early from life grew up in heaven physically as well as spiritual-

ly. Many were posthumously married and a favorite question of séance sitters regarded the possibility of sex in heaven. Some spirits even reported, albeit a vast minority, that the dead could even have spirit babies in heaven. These were a people who needed a body that was not crass matter but rather a divine affair.

In the thirty-fourth edition of *The Principles of Nature*, Andrew Jackson Davis (1886) explicates a microcosmic and macrocosmic view of the divine and the individual. He writes, «The Universe must be animated by a Living Spirit, to form, as a Whole, ONE GRAND MAN. That spirit is the cause of its present organized form, and is the Disseminator of Motion, life, sensation, and intelligence, throughout all of the ramifications of this one GRAND MAN. ... Therefore, there are only two principles existing: one the BODY, the other the SOUL. Man is a part of this great Body of the Divine Mind» (Davis 1886: 124). The human body both contributes to the divine body and receives emanations from it as the pulse of life and thought. Motion in the universe is reflected in the tides, the moon, and the human form – the celestial and the terrestrial are linked.

This vision of the body as replicating the movement of the planets is clearly influenced by the Renaissance articulation of correspondences, and possibly the Kabbalistic concept of the primordial man, Adam Kadmon. In *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg outlines how the design of heaven in toto is in the image of the Grand or Divine Man, and how each subsequent division of heaven represents increasingly smaller but identical images of the human body. He explains that just as each body is composed of parts (organs, vessels, viscera, et cetera) that function as a unified whole, so too does heaven comprise seemingly independent functions that in fact work together with God ruling the universe as he would a single man. Every angel in heaven is in the image of the body and God himself is in the form of man (Swedenborg 1876: §§ 59-86).

Swedenborg laments in numerous places that by his day, the knowledge of correspondences has already been lost but that it remains of primary importance in understanding the workings of heaven. A complicated correspondence exists with the Grand Man, where heaven is divided into two kingdoms that correspond to the heart and the lungs. Multiple smaller and dependent systems branch out from these two main organs. Moreover, precisely where a planet or an angel or a human is

located in the spatial arrangement of the Grand Man will govern the gifts and talents of the beings there, such that those who reside in the head are the wisest in all things, those in the breast the most charitable, the arms the most powerful, and so forth (Swedenborg 1876: §§ 90-101). Swedenborg's explicit reliance on Renaissance correspondences here results in a profoundly corporeal claim wherein the body is not the prison of the soul; instead, returning to scripture to its Jewish roots, humanity is made absolutely literally in the image of God.

The resemblance of Swedenborg's system to Adam Kadmon and the specific powers attributed to the particular sephira is unmistakable. However, Swedenborg is historically perched between two visions of the cosmos and, as Wouter Hanegraaff has shown, he straddles these moments with an ultimate compromise of the esoteric worldview. Attempting simultaneously to accept a fundamentally Cartesian view of the universe in which spirit is elevated over matter and to retain a system of correspondences, Swedenborg eventually accomplishes this only by declaring the natural world null without the spiritual one. Hanegraaff argues, «Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences emerges as an impoverished version of the esoteric original, ... [as it] reintroduces the element of dualism which posits the superiority of spirit over matter» (Hanegraaff 1998: 427-428). This elevation of the spiritual over the physical is ultimately untenable in Spiritualism as dualisms, whether apocalyptic, salvific, or cosmological, do not graft well onto a ladder of eternal progress.

Theurgical Embodiment

Prior to the theoretical articulations of Kabbalah in *Art Magic* and the writings of Madame Blavatsky (though not before the writings of Swedenborg were available in America), a rather eccentric Spiritualist named John Murray Spear began to receive transmissions from spirits that provided instructions for the building of a machine. Spear and his associates depicted this machine in ways that mirror the concepts of the primal androgyne and Adam Kadmon discussed by Swedenborg, Davis, and Blavatsky. In April of 1853, Spear was informed through his own automatic writing that «...a number of persons in the spirit-life, formerly inhabitants of this earth, had associated themselves

for the accomplishment of certain beneficent purposes on this planet, adopting the title of 'Association of Beneficents.' And that they had selected him as their general representative and mouthpiece to mortals» (Newton and Spear 1857: 41). Over the course of John Murray Spear's life, this Association of Beneficents and their colleagues in the spirit world would guide him through a variety of projects including the construction of a functional redesigned sewing machine (Buescher 2006: 237-245) and a boat modeled after a duck (Buescher 2006: 143). The invention for which Spear is best known was his New Motor, a machine Spear's spirits (which included Benjamin Franklin, as well as Swedenborg himself) promised would reveal «...the principle of Perpetual Motion, or Universal Activity» (Newton and Spear 1857: 239). This New Motor would eventually come to be seen by its constructors as a new revelation of the divine on earth, "...the genesis of a new Creation» (Buescher 2006: 102). The divine status of this machine was already hinted at by its intended status as prime mover and source of perpetual motion. These links were further exacerbated by the arrival of Sarah Newton to the site of the machine's construction in Lynn, Massachusetts. Newton was understood to be drawn there to become «...the Mary of a new dispensation» ("New Era," quoted Buescher 2006: 114).

Though a general overview of the New Motor and its purposes gives the impression that this enterprise was more inspired by Christianity than by Kabbalism, the description of the machine itself overlaps with Kabbalistic ideas of a primal androgyne. This new creation, which was understood by Spear and his cohort to have arms, legs, lungs, and all the other elements of a human body, included «various metallic bars, plates, wires, magnets, insulating substances, peculiar chemical compounds, etc., arranged, by careful direction, in accordance with the relations of positive and negative, or masculine and feminine» (Newton and Spear 1857: 240). Here we have an analog to the first Adam, an entirely new creation which, like the rabbinic and Kabbalistic first Adam combined male and female together in a unified whole. Spear and his followers saw themselves as shapers of this new divine entity (albeit shapers acting under strict instructions from dead spirits). Their act of creation was meant to enable a transformed divine presence on earth, a presence not otherwise able to manifest itself. That they saw themselves as a crucial part in this enterprise rather than accidental conduits for a divine rev-

elation happening with or without them is clear from the effort they put into fashioning and refashioning the various components of the machine, at great expense, to facilitate its animation and support the rather bombastic statements about the indispensability of John Murray Spear to the project.

Putting aside the actual mechanical construction of the machine, the way in which Spear and his followers interacted with the machine ably illustrates a potentially practical application of a theurgical concept of the Adam Kadmon in an effort to more tightly interweave human and divine. Spear and his group were not just trying to make a machine that more closely resembled a human, they were trying to make humans who more closely resembled a machine. They worked towards this goal by consuming "in powdered form, some of the same metals, wrapped in tiny packets of oiled silk, they had built into the machine, and thereby made themselves more metallic" (Buescher 2006: 112). Spear also had a sort of carapace made for himself out of various "precious metals, jewels, and other minerals" that he used to facilitate a connection between himself and the machine that was perceived by those looking on as "...a stream of light, a sort of umbilicum, emenating [sic] (from the encased person) to and enveloping the mechanism" (Newton and Spear 1857: 245). In this push towards co-machinehood, there is a modern echo of the concept of the Adam Kadmon in which the divine macrocosm and the human microcosm are meaningfully intradependent, rather than just a prototype and model. Following common Spiritualist intellectual habits, Spear troubles any easy binary divide between human and divine. Neither Spear nor his associates discuss Kabbalism directly, though they do make their debt to Swedenborg clear, but their practice makes them into a sort of intensified and localized Shekinah. Even without explicit ties to Kabbalism, linked concepts were already in the intellectual cartography of nineteenth-century progressive religious thought.

In 1861, as the American Civil War raged and epidemics of tuberculosis took over cities, Andrew Jackson Davis was holding forth on the medical benefits of true love and moderate exercise. Davis's latest work, *The Harbinger of Health*, had gone into its sixth edition in a single year, and the fervor for his medical advice would not die down for another five decades. Throughout the book and elsewhere, however, Davis repeatedly states that the cause of disease is discord. The body was not invaded

by an external pathogen but rather knocked out of alignment from its proper reflection with the soul. Read without the conceptual bulwarks of Spiritualism and Theosophy's Kabbalistic intellectual appropriations, this focus on disease could be read as scientific or as a form of medical self-help. With the shadow of Adam Kadmon reflected over the human body, however, Davis' explanations of how to return a body to perfect harmony are also articulations of how to draw the human back into alignment and identity with the divine. To become "healthy" is, in Davis's work, a theurgical process to more closely knit human and divine together.

Davis takes the efficacy of animal magnetism for granted and his etiology of disease frequently describes an elaboration on the basic principles of that theory. First propounded by Austrian Franz Anton Mesmer in the eighteenth century, animal magnetism posited that the human body contains a magnetic fluid that governs the vicissitudes of health; should the flow of this fluid become blocked or otherwise disrupted, ill health would result. Mesmer proposed that magnetized objects or fellow humans could restore the congenial flow of the fluid and he reported literally hundreds of cures achieved with his system. Davis concurs, writing, "Perfect health is perfect harmony, a state when the immortal spirit circulates equally through every organ and tissue" (Davis 1911: 353).

This view of the body as naturally in harmonious accord with the soul is only the beginning of Davis's understanding of the proper knowledge of health. The care of the body replicates nothing less than the cosmos itself: "The human organism is a world of motions, a solar system, or otherwise a universe in miniature" (Davis 1911: 353). He gets this notion from his immediate predecessor Swedenborg who calls the body a "heaven in miniature," and he in turn is taking this from Plato's *Timaeus*. Health is thus tantamount to the symphonic motions of the solar system: "[T]he internally healthy man, beheld with spiritual perceptions, looks like an illuminated world, a typical summary of the life, beauty, and harmony the universe. ... So accustomed should we become to moving, sleeping, and thinking right that it should be as hard for us to deviate from the regular path prescribed by Nature as for earth to depart from its orbit" (Davis 1911: 355-356). Though the immediate goal is one of personal health, the larger result of this project is the integration of the individual within a

broader flow of a divinized universe. Human and divine are woven together; they are "both involved in a single system" (Fanger 2012: 23). Alive with motion, the healthy body reflects the symmetry of the cosmos and its mirror in the soul.

Davis intellectually inherits the basic template of the Grand Man as well as the importance of reading the world according to a system of correspondences. If Swedenborg effected a compromise between the Cartesian and esoteric paradigms available to him, Davis performed a similar, if less intellectually sustained, feat between the worlds of Swedenborg and Mesmer; he rejoined the spiritual and material worlds.

In the "Morning Lectures" of 1865, Davis delivered a very rare Spiritualist critique of Swedenborg's thought, arguing against Swedenborg's application of the correspondence system to the Bible. Swedenborg had applied the theory of correspondences to writing itself, particularly scripture, claiming that words had interior and exterior meanings, to the extent that a fully interior reading of the Bible would result in a creation that was unrecognizable as dependent on the exterior text. This system rendered every word a stand-in for another concept based on association: for example, a lamb actually signals a gentle disposition and the Israelite temple sacrifice prefigures the bread and wine of the Christian communion (Swedenborg 1876: §§ 110-115; 1941: *passim*).

Davis takes umbrage with this reading strategy and denies Swedenborg's proposition that there is any disjuncture between the interior and exterior truths of anything. After apologizing to the great man for saying so, Davis writes, "The reasoning is sophistical, and all such fanaticism is foreign to a healthy mind. For the rest, the internal and the external of all things are married together and correspond literally to each other, and that which is true inwardly is also true without. … In their proper understanding, word and deed harmonize universally" (Davis: 1911: 267-268). In short, Davis rejects the hierarchical dualism and reinfuses both the body and the natural world with the divine.

While Theosophy would eventually adopt its own binary of exclusion by distinguishing between those initiated and those not, both it and Spiritualism began with an ethos of inclusion. Spiritualism was generally more tame, exoteric, and polite than Theosophy, yet neither was interested in damning entire populations of people in order to uphold the exclusive truth claims of one over the other. For many Spiritualists, this meant a will-

ingness and often a need to look beyond the confines of nineteenth-century America in order to find their place in religious history. The centrality of the body, even its sacrality, brought them beyond Christian thinking and in search of more felicitous notions of corporeality and the divine. Theosophy, with its universalizing tendencies and conspiratorial tone, looked to Kabbalah as one instantiation among many of eternal principles.

Despite receiving – and sometimes outright plagiarizing – their material second- and third-hand, American esotericists accurately recognized significant movements of Kabbalah and more importantly were aware of the young republic's need for the authority of Jewish and other systems of mystical interdependence. One gender was not subordinate to another but rather both were conterminously brought into existence and continually replicated in acts of creation. Humanity was not separate from a distance and judging God but rather actively participated in the divine as its agent and embodiment on earth. In valuing progress and knowledge over the Christian dualism of sin and salvation, American esotericists embraced theurgy and participation in the divine unfolding. Spiritualism and Theosophy looked backward to find the future, and in so doing, Kabbalah continued, often mangled or maligned but still needed older wisdom for new landscapes.

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