**Thelema & the Hegelian Dialectic
as Applied to the Tree-of-Life**

**Paul Joseph Rovelli**

It should be pointed out that the Qabalah was originally an exponent of Jewish mysticism that while having textual references dating back to the first century ev, doesn’t really come together as a discipline until about the twelfth or thirteenth century ev. And actually, it has always been an amalgamation of Jewish mysticism, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism; making it as much authentically Hermetic, as it is Jewish. For the Jews, it was a complement to other literary traditions that already existed in their religious structure. For the Hermeticists, it became a far more necessary complement, as there wasn’t really that much of a literary tradition extant at the time. And when Knorr von Rosenroth publishes his Kabbala Denudata (Kabbalah Unveiled), the Pietist movement is flourishing in Europe, which fully informs MacGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn, as well as George Hegel.

Rosenroth actually was a Pietist, as was Hegel. And theirs was a distinctly eighteenth century pietism, as the earlier movements resulted in what is today, modern Lutheranism and Methodism in the U.S. But in Germany, where Hegel hails from, and in the German philosophical tradition, Pietism became a metaphysical philosophy whereby the individual meditated on the Divine in a Gnostic approach that was said to lead to a direct apprehension of the godhead. But rather than portraying the godhead as an all-knowing God, the concept of the Ain Soph Aur detailed the struggle of the godhead to come to know itself; to find a self-relation and attain to a perfect state of self-knowledge. To do this, the Ain had to become the Ani or the “I,” which we understand as it concentrating a center so that it could generate a reflection of itself, which came to be called Kether, the crown.

This center then stands by itself, the ‘eternal now’ and outside time; above a generation of emanations that it emits until its telos brings it to one final emanation, Malkuth (the Kingdom); called Adonai—the god that knows itself in fullness and as fully human. Malkuth or Malka (the Daughter) is also called the Glory of God and its alternate name is Shekinah; the Divine Presence. It is represented by the Goddess or bride of God and presents the idea of God reaching down into the world of space/time. The symbol for Malka is the Vesica Piscis or vagina, as the totality of the emanating Sefirot culminates with Yesod, which is presented as a penis. In this way, the God emanates its telos by inserting its Spirit into the manifested Universe.

Kether then is indeterminate and without any characteristics; a ‘blank oneness’ that can be barely discerned from the Ain Soph Aur; generally being the ‘abysmal will’ of God to know itself. And it is from this point then that Pietist dialectic begins. But as the movement is involutionary, we should avoid the idea of the Supernal Triad at this time, as that really belongs to the evolutionary climb on the Tree-of-Life. In the evolutionary direction, Kether forms a triad with Chokmah and Binah; lying solely above the Abyss. But in its evolutionary fervor, Chokmah (Wisdom), the Universal Unity becomes the new ‘1’—a determinate oneness that is moving towards manifestation. It is a oneness that identifies a determinate nothingness and represents the Universal contracted into an undifferentiated whole.

Binah (Understanding) then becomes its counterpoint in the dialectic; being a wholeness that represents a specification or particularization of the Universal. It is said to be an understanding of the womb and wherein the One becomes the All; a system of universals. But in the thirteenth century, the need to synthesize the differences between Chokmah and Binah meant that an external aspect needed to be recognized for Kether and this external became Da’at (Knowledge/Gnosis); representing the temporal present and time itself. Da’at is then the transcendent point in the dialectic with Chokmah and Binah by representing the external aspect of Kether and symbolized by the Pietists as the Holy Spirit. And so there are two triads, the Supernal for the evolutionary impulse coming from below and the Abysmal (as Da’at sits on the Abyss) for the involutionary impulse coming from above.

To better explain this, note that Da’at is said to be the invisible Sefira and not really on the Tree-of-Life at all; well, the Tree-of-Life is said to exist outside time and Da’at is time itself. And while noting that time has as of yet, not been explained by modern physics, Da’at is the contact point for the Qabalist with the Sefirot. This comes of course, by way of Yesod, which would be the gateway to Da’at. But it is in the Abyss where the Qabalist or Mage traverses both time and eternity (not time) simultaneously, which is why the experience of the Abyss is so psychically dangerous.

The second dialectic triad represents the forces of expansion and contraction. Starting with Chesed (also called Gedulah and meaning Mercy), we get the infinite expansion that juxtaposes Geburah (also called Din and meaning Severity or Stern Judgment/the fire and wrath of God), which represents the infinitesimal contraction. The transcendent point is then Tiphareth (Beauty), which is the idea ofthe Universe or God in Its self-expression; having a dualistic nature that is also expressed in the two ways that the Tree-of-Life flows (Involution and Evolution). Hence the creative expansion is given to an aesthetic nature by the diminutive contraction, which disciplines and defines the chaos.

The third dialectic triad is shown by the connection between Netzach and Hod; representing revelation and prophecy, as a speaking forth; the holy fiat, as found in Genesis:I.3—And the Lord said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” These two Sefirot are connected by the Hebrew letter Peh, which means mouth. They are therefore, a representation of the Will of God (Thelema) as eternal and yet unfolding in time, hence the utterances of God. Netzach means Victory and represents eternity and success; both being found specifically in two verses from Liber AL vel Legis:

AL:I.59 “**My incense is of resinous woods & gums; and there is no blood therein: because of my hair the trees of Eternity.**”

We find in this verse, Nuit, as the light that is the milk of the stars, spread through eternity; itself beyond time, as is the whole of the Tree-of-Life, with the exception of Da’at. The resinous woods and gums are a wonderful analogy for the milky light of the stars that is the fabric of Nuit, as they show this light to be the substance that binds the whole together and are therefore a reflection of the original dialectical triad.

AL:III.69 "**There is success.**"

In Liber AL, this demonstrates the revelation of the holy book is fulfilled as intended by the Universal Mind. Prophecy is at the heart of revealed religion, which itself must have a scientific basis or it would devolve into superstition. This goes to the heart of what Hegel aimed for in his philosophical system. Hence, God is revealed in the world and indeed, is the world in the form of the Son, which is quite a different idea about the second part of Christianity’s holy trinity. And so to Hegel, as we discover ourselves individually and as members of the human community, so the godhead comes to realize itself in the person of the Son of God.

Netzach is counter-determined with Hod (the Splendour), which is the reverberation and majesty of the godhead. This also has found an expression in a verse from Liber AL:

AL I.61: "**But to love me is better than all things: if under the night-stars in the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with a pure heart, and the Serpent flame therein, thou shalt come a little to lie in my bosom. For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all; but whoso gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour. Ye shall gather goods and store of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels; ye shall exceed the nations of the earth in splendour & pride; but always in the love of me, and so shall ye come to my joy. I charge you earnestly to come before me in a single robe, and covered with a rich headdress. I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!**"

Hod as Mercury is the one with the wings that is being called by Nuit; Binah in her lower manifestation, as Venus. And in arousing his coiled splendour, Mercury then takes the form of the male sexual organ, which is represented by Yesod (Foundation); demonstrating for us the true nature of the solar/phallic mythos and also well described in Liber AL vel Legis:

AL II.26: "**I am the secret Serpent coiled about to spring: in my coiling there is joy. If I lift up my head, I and my Nuit are one. If I droop down mine head, and shoot forth venom, then is rapture of the earth, and I and the earth are one.**"

We see also implied in this verse, again, the dual expression of Tree-of-Life as an evolutionary and involutionary epistemological paradigm. Hegelian science is indeed a Scientific Illuminism; expressed through the dialectic in the Romantic Philosophical tradition of 19th Century Pietism in Germany. Note that the Golden Dawn draws heavy from the German mystical tradition that led European Hermeticism in the 19th Century ev by claiming to have found certain German manuscripts by which they finally gained ‘permission’ to formulate the original lodge.

And so the Serpent shoots forth his venom, as described above, from the penis that is Yesod and the rapture of the Earth is the divine presence that is the Shekinah that is Malkuth; the Kingdom of God. The original desire for the Ain Soph Aur to know itself is symbolically represented by Babalon, Our Lady and Goddess of the holy Gnostic Church of L.V.X. –that light that is the body of Nuit and the milk of the stars that is itself the fabric of the Universe; there being nothing that is not God and all of us being divine expressions of the primordial One that is NOT.

From this, we can determine that the movement from involution to evolution is the divine love, which in Thelema is called Agape and equals 93 in the Greek Qabalah. So we can dispense with all the platitudes of divine love that is but a blind moralism; declared in Liber Cheth as just such a blind when it states in verse 20: “This Path is beyond Life and Death; it is also beyond Love; but ye know not, for ye know not Love.” We must come to recognize that Agape is the energy that is the engine of the Universe, just as Thelema, the Will of God that also equals 93 in the Greek Qabalah, is the individual aesthetic engine harnessed by each of us to bring meaning to life in the Gnostic experience of the godhead coming to know itself.

And so, the formula: Love under will and the resolution of the seeming contradiction when Liber AL first proclaims: Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. For this thou is the individual expression of the godhead. But then later Liber AL proclaims: Love is the law, love under will. And it would seem that either Love or Will, as gematric equivalents are scientific law and not to be obfuscated by human moralism. But Will is the whole of the law, which is that whole that is Chokmah; and as can only be expressed by Nuit or Binah, Agape is the system of universals that makes Love the universal law that is the force of the Universe in its ALL or the many. This leads us to the final annihilation that is the mystery of Kether: Not self is self.