

The One-fold God

Singularity & Plurality
in the Name(s) of the Divine :

Brahman
YHVH (the) ALHYM
Abba
Allâh



"Brahman" : the Workless Supreme
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"Brahman" : the Workless Supreme

In Brahmin circles (the high cast priests) the Name "Brahman" stands for the untranslatable eternal, imperishable absolute and refers to everything, both pre-creation & manifest (actually part of Creation). The notion that Brahman is both "formless" & "form", and therefore the first category of a non-dual theology is explicitly suggested in :

"What is perishable, is matter ("pradhâna"). What is immortal and imperishable, is the soul ("hara").

Over both the perishable and the soul the One God ("deva") rules.

By meditation upon Him, by union with Him, and by entering into His being More and more, there is finally cessation from every illusion ("mâyâ-nivrtti")."

Svetasvatara Upanishad, First Adhyâya, 10.

"BRAHMAN" =
the All

In the Nâsadâsîya or "Creation Hymn" from the Rigveda we read concerning pre-creation :

"Who really knows ? Who will here proclaim it ? Whence was it produced ?
Whence is this creation ?

The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe.
Who then knows whence it has arisen ?"

Rigveda : Creation Hymn, 10.129.6. (translated by W.Doniger O'Flaherty, 1983)

This points to the existence of a unique *Creator* who exists *before* the gods & creation. In the case of the Creation Hymn, "Prajâpati" is His name. In the Vedas "Prajâpati" is often named "Lord of Creatures". Together with "Brahmâ" (rarely mentioned) "Pratjâpati" emerged from "Hiranyagarbha", the "golden egg" of the Rigveda, *the animating principle in all creatures whom all gods obey*. "Brahmâ" and "Pratjâpati" are different names for the same, unique Creator.

The Hindu Model

transcendent order

formless "Brahman"

uncreated, creating
Being

imperishable, impersonal "Brahman"	"Nirguna Brahman"	absolute Being
pre-creational immanent order	manifest "Brahman"	the Creator or "Brahmâ"
personal Brahmâ, the start of "mâyâ"	"Saguna Brahman" & "samsâra"	the Supreme Being creates gods
Divine immanent order	manifest "Trimûrti"	create - sustain - destroy
Brahmâ, Vishnu, Shiva	the balance between life & death (dharma)	gods & goddesses ruling the world

For the Hindu yogi, "Brahman" is the impersonal, imperishable absolute salvic goal (cf. "nirguna-Brahman" in Vedânta). But He is also worshipped in many forms. This is His "personal" polarity as both a unique Creator or "saguna-Brahman", called "Brahmâ", "Îshvara" ("Lord of the Universe"), "Pratjâpati" ("Lord of the Creatures") or "Paramâtma" ("Oversoul") and billions of gods & goddesses.

"That which is above the sky, that which is beneath the earth, that which is between these two, sky and earth, that which people call the past and the present and the future - across space alone is that woven, warp and woof. Across what then, is space woven, warp and woof ? That Brahmins call the Imperishable (aksara). It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing (like fire), not adhesive (like water), without shadow and without darkness, without air and without space, without stickiness, odorless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice, without wind, without energy, without breath, without mouth, without measure, without inside and without outside. Verily, at the command of that Imperishable the sun and the moon stand apart."

Brihad-Âranyaka Upanishad, 8th Brâhmana, 7 - 9 (translated by R.E.Hume, 1877)

The Hindu Trinity of three Supreme Gods known as the "Trimûrti" ("Brahmâ" or "Îshvara", "Vishnu" & "Shiva") are the ontological blueprint of creation itself ("Brahmâ"), the sustenance ("Vishnu") & the regeneration-through-destruction ("Shiva") of "samsâra", the realm of illusion ("mâyâ"). In India today, nearly no worship is offered to "Brahmâ". The story goes that after He had created everything, He was left with nothing to do. He remains idle until the day "Shiva" looks at the world and destroys it. At that point "Brahmâ" is again needed to create other gods & another creation, etc.

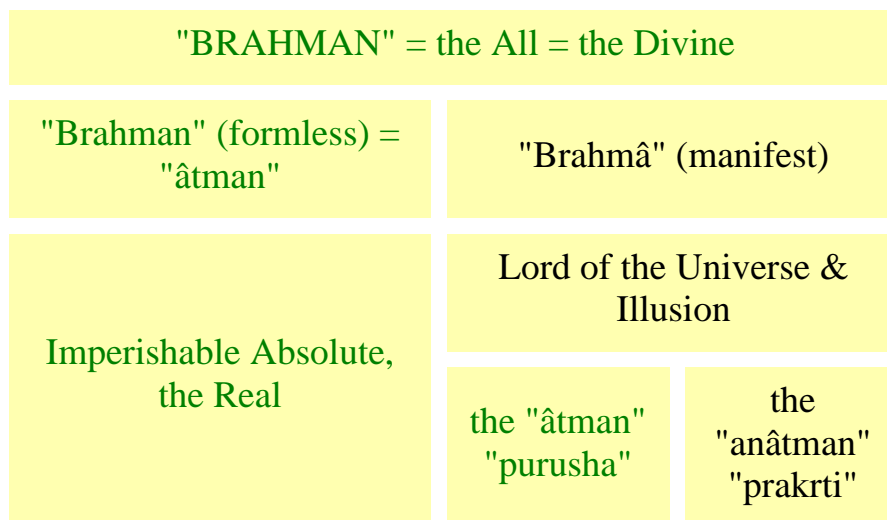
"Îshvara" is the supreme yogi and guides the Hindu mystics in order that they merge

with the Imperishable "Brahman". They intent to leave the creational cycle and so do not want to be caught up in the work of the Creator, considered to be illusionary. Have they not discovered that their soul ("âtman") is nothing less than *the unique, absolute, formless & totally transcendent Imperishable* ("nirguna Brahman") ? Is the enlightened one God because s/he has moved *beyond* the Cosmos (helped by "Brahmâ", i.e. supreme operational illusion - cf. Shankara's view that "Îshvara" is the superimposition of human enlightened consciousness on the Imperishable) ? Unity with "Brahmâ" would not abrogate illusion and Divine suffering, i.e. the *final* release aspired.

"As pure water poured forth into pure
Becomes the very same,
So becomes the soul, O Gautama,
Of the seer who has understanding."

Katha Upanishad, 4th Vallî, 15

In the inner core of the soul ("âtman") the Hindu mystic thinks he discovers "Brahman", i.e. that in essence he is absolute & actually transcends the Cosmos as a whole. Theo-ontologically "Brahman" is always a bi-polar : a "real", imperishable "Brahman" versus the unique "Lord of the Universe" & therefore "Lord of Illusion" ("mâyâ"), i.e. "Brahmâ".



"YHVH" (the) "ALHYM" : the first metaphysical Name of the Divine

The Divine Word given to Abraham was "Elohîms" ("ALHYM"), a plurality of Divine Faces, pronounced as "Eloha" in the singular. To Abraham the "Elohîm" are living, creative forces, able to love and to change the world as they will (the "Sephiroth" of the qabalah).

"And *YHVH* appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamrê as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day ;
And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, *three men stood by him* : and when he saw them,
he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,
And said, Adonai (...)"

Genesis, 18:1-2, my italics.

These Divine energies were more than a collection of "higher beings". They are *the manifold expression of One who's essence remained unrevealed*. But the manifold of Divine expressions are recognised (known) as the energies of a transcendent Divine nature. "Eloha", the first of the "Elohîm", is the Father of all higher beings, the Father of the heavens. "Elohîm" appears as a plurality under the unity of Adonai, the vocal form of the ineffable "YHVH". Abraham was unaware of the Name of the Creator Himself.

Next, Moses climbed the sacred mountain, the Horeb. "YHVH" (the) "Elohîm" revealed the core of Divine exteriority.

"And Moses said to Elohîm, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them,
the Elohîm of Your fathers hath sent me to You ; and they shall say to me, What is His Name ? what shall I say to them ?
And Elohîm said to Moses : "AHYH" (I AM AND WILL BECOME) (...)
And Elohîm said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, YHVH the Elohîm of Your fathers, the Elohîm of Abraham, the Elohîm of Isaac, and the Elohîm of Jacob, hath sent me to You (...)"

Exodus, 3:13-15.

The Name revealed to Moses is "AHYH". "YHVH" implies the transcendent "Ain Soph (Aur)", the ineffable essence of the Divine, or God, described in terms of a reality beyond being, beyond absence of being and veiled by negatives ("Deus absconditus"). "AHYH" is the revelation of the existence of the Divine within the created order, i.e. the transcendent-in-immanence or the "higher being" of the monarchy of a Creative Crown.

"YHVH" being ineffable, is pronounced as "Adonai" (or YHADonaiVH). "ALHYM" (or "Elohîms), a masculine *plural* ("Eloah" is the singular form, "Allâh" in Arab) of a feminine noun, indicating neutral plurality & receptivity to the creative impulse, is the "Divine presence" within the created order (cfr.the "shekinah" of qabalah). "Elohîm" is creational as shown by the first three words of Genesis : "B'RASHITH Ba RA ALoHIM ...", "In the Beginning the "Elohîm" Created ..." "Elohîm said" (343) occurs 10 times (cfr. the 10 Emanations or "Sephiroth"). "Elohîm" is repeated 32 times in the first chapter of the account (cfr. the aleph-beth & the 32 Paths of

Wisdom of the Tree of Life).

"Elohîm" is related to the *majestic revelatoric plurality* of the singular hidden "YHVH" and is translated as "the holy gods" or "gods & goddesses". It expresses the totality of Divine attributes (or exterior) and underlines the variety with which the Divine manifests in creation (God-in-Nature). The "Elohîm" are not idols for no "Eloah" (singular) can constitute Divine existence without reference to "YHVH", the uncreated silence.

"YHADonaiVH est l'Être unique, la matrice de toute vie, *Celui qui a été, qui est et qui sera*. Les Elohîms en expriment les puissances créatrices infinies. (...) N'oublions pas que si YHADonaiVH est Unique, Elohîms est pluriel. Les prophètes n'ont jamais aspiré à voir surgir un univers monolithique : l'Unité qu'ils annoncent n'est pas faite d'uniformité, mais, nous y reviendrons, d'une *universelle et vivante diversité, dans l'unité de l'Être qui la fonde*, YHVH. Mieux que monothéistes, ils sont théomonistes."

Chouraqui, A. : Moïse, du Rocher - Paris, 1995, p.181-182, my italics.

The Divine is conceived as *onefold but bi-polar*. The Unity is called "YHVH". Its exterior or existence is called "Elohîm". The Divine Name indicates a Unity but the Name Itself is a duality. The bi-polarity is expressed in the Name Itself.

Essential Distinction

Closed, Absent, Remote, Potential	Divine bi-polarity	Disclosed, Present, Near, Actual
"YHVH"	One God	"ALHYM"
absolute, eternal, infinite singularity	the Divine one-fold	relative, temporal, finite living plurality

YHVH is singular, ineffable, uncreated & infinite. The "Elohîm" are Divine creative energies, plural & rooted in the infinite but fully part of the created order (i.e. a super-being within cosmos). The Name "YHVH Elohîm" indicates both singular & plural aspects of the Divine and so stands for *the totality of all that is Divine*. The Name "YHVH" can not be vocalized. It indicates a "negative", pre-Cosmic, Divine Absolute Infinity.

The essence of the Divine remains unknown.

First Remark on the Deconstruction of "God"

The use of the word "God" should never be uncritical. Let us try to identify how this word is *used* and with what reality it is *supposed to correspond* (cf. Wittgenstein II). Writing our comments in the margin of the traditional (monotheistic) theologies will be the method.

The original, pre-biblical, pagan meaning is suggested by the etymology of "God", most probably related to the Sankrit "hûta", sacrifice, the one called upon (related to Agni, the god of fire). Only ca.825 A.D. does the word receive its biblical connotation. Before that, the Nordic tribes associated "God" with a superman *able to influence the destiny of Nature and Man* (cf. Sacrificial Kingship). Not unlike the Romans, these people related to "the gods". "Mars" of the Roman Pantheon is called "God", "Eros" is called "God" too. They were very powerful natural forces, to be distinguished from demons or heroes. However, in these polytheist theologies no clear trace of bi-polarity is to be found. The distinction between creation & pre-creation is not made.

The translation of "YHVH" by "Kyrios" (the Greek for "Adonai", "Lord"), "Elohîm" by "ho Theos" and the subsequent identification of "Kyrios" with the god Zeus obliterated the original bi-polarity of the Hebrew Name of the Divine, "YHVH Elohîm" (the latter was given as "YHVH God" and "YHVH" became effable as "Jahweh" or "Lord"). As "Theos" was a singular, the plurality of "Elohîm" was lost too. "Lord God" and "YHVH Elohîm" *do not convey the same meaning*. In the first Latin translations, "Elohîm" became "Deus", "God", "Dieu", "Gott", "Bog" ... These facts serve the deconstruction of "God" well. They show that almost all current translations of the Bible are wrong. *They have not taken the historical bi-polarity into consideration and have corrupted the original texts.*

Divine Name	Old Translation	Better Translation
"YHVH"	"Kyrios", "Domine", "Lord" or "Jahweh"	"Theos", "Deus", "God", "Dieu"
"ALHYM"	"Theos", "Deus", "God", "Dieu"	<i>can not be properly translated</i>
"YHVH ELOHÎM"	"Lord God"	"God the Elohîm"

Hence, the theology of the Old Testament does not figure in the translations ! Both the original theomonist historical reality of the Abramic Semitical tribes & the Mosaic biblical tradition imply that "YHVH" should be identified with "God" but left ineffable and so replaced by "Lord". "Elohîm" is a *plural* and nearly impossible to translate. "YHVH the Elohîm" suggests "Lord the Creators". This is unsatisfactory ("Elohîm" is feminine) and it sounds strange. It is wise to leave "Elohîm" stand untranslated (cf. Chouraqui, 1989).

Peter, John, Paul & the synoptics *uncritically accepted the Greek translation* of the Old Testament. The suggestion that in the Name of the Divine two aspects are operative (a singular hidden essence versus a plural disclosed existence) was lost. Later Thomas of Aquinas interprets "Theos" as "He who sees all" or "He who burns as fire", evacuating all pre-christian connotations. "Theos" was translated as "Deus" and "Deus" as "God".

So every use of the word "God" which is not subjected to the consequences of these historical & linguistic facts is unable to understand the Old Testament properly. The above facts should be primordial to any philosophy of mysticism seeking to characterise the absolute in the religions "of the Book", i.e. Judaism, Christianity & Islâm.

The "Divine" Translators : "Elohîm" becomes "Theos" ...

The translators of the Septuagint (starting in the middle of the 3th century B.C.) identified the Hebrew Name of the Divine "YHVH (the) Elohîm" with the Greek "Kyrios ho Theos", "Kyrios Kyrios" or "Despotes Kyrios", the gods of Hellenism (Chouraqui, 1995). Hellenized Judaism was rejected by mystical & rabbinical currents, but it did influence the writers of the New Testament. Besides traditional Judaism, Hellenized Judaism was influenced by contacts with Iran, for after the end of the Exile many Israelites remained in Media and Babylonia (at Nahardea). At the same time Iran's myths of salvation, apocalypse, eschatology, angels & demons and the dualism between light & darkness influenced Judaism (Widengren, 1955). So Zoroaster was identified with Seth or Balaam, who fortold the Star of Jacob (Numbers, 24:15-17). Hebrew & Pahlavi literatures exchanged literary material *such as visions of holy men caught up into heaven* (like Isaiah, cfr. Haug, 1870).

A lot of this material can be called "gnostic", meaning :

- (a) an initiation by *direct personal knowledge* (or "gnosis") of the Divine and
- (b) the doctrine that *the world was created by an evil god* called "Ialdabaôth" or "Sacla" ("Thou art mistaken, Sacla !", cf. Pistis-Sophia or "the child who traverses places", cfr. Nag Hammadi's Secret Book of John).

Jewish mysticism was nourished by the vision of the Throne towards which the soul of the seer was uplifted on a Chariot through celestial, heavenly spheres which were

guarded and so she (not unlike the dead in the Egyptian Book of the Dead) needed sacred words & seals to move further on. The mystic ascends the heavens. Although more than one parallel with gnostic teachings may be found, scholars are tempted to believe *that is was the gnostic sects who received parts of their theories from Judaism* (Doresse, 1958), for certain mystical themes were developed quite apart from gnosticism and most "gnostic themes" incorporated in Judaism are *in accord with authentically Jewish thought of which the gnostics were not aware*.

Philo of Alexandria (ca.25 B.C. - ca.A.D.50), who considered the Septuagint as divinely inspired (relieving him to refer to the original text), understood God as absolutely "apoiios", qualityless. God is incomparable and ineffable. He draws upon Pythagorean ideas of the One as transcendent "nous", on Plato's ideas about the One in his Parmenides & on the distinction between "hyparxis" (unqualified) and "poiotês" (qualified) being of the Middle Academy. For Philo God's essence in itself is beyond human experience, knowledge or mystic insight, *but his exegesis of the "Divine text" often forced him to contradict his negative theology !*

God is being "per se" (unlimited) as compared to being "per accidens" (limited). God alone has true being. This being is one, i.e. simple, unified, indivisible. It is the first principle, immaterial, unchangeable. This ineffability is elastic for God is also Mind, Maker & Father, acting benevolently and out of His goodness ! These latter features belong to the "via eminentiae" and should not be taken literally. Philo *repeatedly claims that we cannot even make negative statements of God, who is beyond categories altogether*. The various positive properties attributed to God are all subsumed as expressions of the "logos" or "second God", who manifests God as thinker & actor. However, that which differentiates the creature from God is no positive being, but the negation & limitation of the creature whereby *its participation in the unlimited being (of God) is constituted as a being distinct from God*.

With the Name "YHVH (the) Elohim", the *sharp* metaphysical distinction between God's essence & God's existence was not drawn. Clearly the unity of the God of the Hebrews was never disputed. As all of creation is embedded in YHVH. Hence the ontological question of "creation" & "pre-creation" was solved by simply stating that God is One and that all Creations are His. The Greeks (who studied in Egypt) ontologically distinguished being & beyond being (also : before or after being). As polytheists they were not concerned with maintaining the unity of the Divine. It was Plato who defined the Supreme Idea as "beyond being" (Republic, 509b). For Plato the idea of the good was a kind of *limit of limitations*. Later Porphyrius, the pupil of Plotin, would define the One as "not-being beyond being".

This *ineffability of the One God* was taken as an indisputable axiom both by neoplatonic philosophers & medieval mystics. But it was not popular, for how to address prayers & supplications to an absolutely apophatical God ? Stricly speaking, once one has denied the possibility of linguistic description nothing more can or should be said. When the neoplatonic axiom of ineffability is accepted in too strong a

sense, God can not be immanent too. Logically the expression "For any attribute A, God is not A" will in the case of strict ineffability destroy the distinction between "sayable" and "ineffable" (for not-A predicates God and so contradicts itself).

So in the Septuagint plurality, variety & diversity in the Name of the Divine were lost to the advantage of a sterile monotheism leading to the neoplatonic notion of *an absolute transcendent God, infinite & ineffable ground of all beings*. This absolute, transcendent God is none other than "YHVH". Because the plural manifestation of God was abrogated (by translating "Elohîm" as "Theos") the "God of the philosophers" seemed abstract, impersonal, unreachable and hence *impossible to worship*.

Qabalah : God's Creation as Revelation

"See now that I, I am He, and Elohîm is not with Me :
I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal ..."

Deuteronomy, 32:39.

Although nothing can be said about "YHVH", qabalists associate God with "Ain Soph Aur". This formula contains the so-called "negative veils" separating "YHVH" from His Creation (cf. the "cloud of unknowing" of English mysticism).

Ain	there is none (like God) or absolute incomparability
Ain Sof	there is no limit (to God) or Infinite Space
Ain Sof Aur	there is no limit to (God's) Light, or Infinite Light

One of the most original contributions of Jewish mysticism (the qabalah) to metaphysical cosmology is the idea of "tzimtzum" (withdrawal), developed by rabbi Isaac Luria (1534 - 1572), who studied under Moses Cordovero in Safed. This notion was also developed in the texts of the "contemplatives" (cf. the Sepher ha-Iyyun). God creates the cosmos in that area ("tehiru", the Aramaic for "pure emptiness") where He is exiled. Elements of this idea are also to be found in Sepher Yetzirah where it is said that God "engraved" ("chakak") 32 mystical paths of wisdom. To engrave implies that *something is taken out to create & seal meaning*. The notion of withdrawal was also known to hermetism, for in § 15 of the Asclepius we find : "By *space* I mean that in which the ensemble of things is contained. For the whole of this ensemble could not have existed if there had not been a space to support the being of all things (for no thing could have existed without that a place for it had been

prepared)."

Revelation is possible because God choose to be absent. God contracts the Infinite Light of a part of Infinite Space to *a point of absolute singularity* (= the first Sephiroth, called "Kether", Crown), emanating the cosmos. "Ain Soph Aur" equals the uncreated Ineffable ("YHVH" or God) and Kether is the created Creator, emanating the "logos" (= second Sephiroth, called "Chockmah", Wisdom). Kether is God-in-Manifestation. Kether is the alternation-point between uncreated & created, between manifest (actual) and formless, pre-creational (potential). Kether is Creator and so "Elohîm", but Kether is "Elohîm of Elohîm", the Supreme Monarch who is nothing less than God's existence, His "I AM".

The doctrines of the qabalah will be investigated elsewhere. Three mayor literary references should be kept in mind :

- (1) the Sepher Yetzirah, written down between the second & fourth centuries ;
- (2) the Bahir, which appeared in the Provence in the 12th century ;
- (3) the Zohar, composed by Moses of Leon in the 13th century.

In the Zohar the notions of withdrawal & residue are made the cornerstone if its cosmogony.

In the comments on Genesis we find :

"At the outset the decision of the King made a tracing in the supernal effulgence, a lamp of scintillation, and there issued within the impenetrable recesses of the mysterious limitless a shapeless nucleus enclosed in a ring, (...) The most mysterious Power enshrouded in the limitless clave, as it were, without cleaving its void, remaining wholly unknowable until from the force of the strokes there shone forth a supernal and mysterious point. Beyond that point there is no knowable, and therefore it is called *Reshith* (beginning), the creative utterance which is the starting-point of all. (...) There was indeed a "brightness" (*Zohar*). The Most Mysterious struck its void, and caused this point to shine. This "beginning" then extended, and made for itself a palace for its honour and glory. There it sowed a sacred seed which was to generate for the benefit of the universe (...) Thus by means of this "beginning" the Mysterious Unknown made this palace. This palace is called *Elohim*, and this doctrine is contained in the words, "By means of a beginning (it) created *Elohim*" The *Zohar* is that from which were created all the creative utterances through the extension of the point of this mysterious brightness."

Zohar, 15a

The mysterious limitless is God's essence, Infinite Space. The King, the most mysterious Power, the Most Mysterious & the Mysterious Unknown indicate God's essence, wholly ineffable. The mysterious point is Kether, the first Sephira, the beginning. Its extension results in the Palace, God's exterior, called "Elohim", pregnant with a holy seed. While it brought forth in silence, that which it bore was heard without (16b). Kether is called "Cause of causes", but is not the "Cause above

all causes" (22b). Kether, the Palace (or extension of Kether) & the holy seed (generating for the benefit of the universe) *are all part of God's exterior*. Kether, the point, is "Cause of causes". God however, is above all causes but causes Kether to emerge (by means of strokes). So the "Cause above all causes" says it has no colleague, partner & number, and therefore it is said : "and *Elohim* is not with me." (22b) Kether is called "mysterious" because as a point shining forth within God's Infinite Space it can not be said to be absolutely distinct from God although from its extension the universe God's exterior Palace is created ("and Elohim said"). The "Cause above all causes" is the Supreme Cause to be distinguished from the Palace (of the Sephiroth). "There are lights upon lights, one more clear than another, each one dark by comparison with the one above it from which it receives its light. As for the Supreme Cause, all lights are dark in its presence." (22b-23a).

God's so-called "negative existence" may be compared with "active emptiness", i.e. the empty set of all possibilities (or $\{\emptyset\}$). This set is not identical with non-existence or "passive emptiness", i.e. the root of all numbers, zero or no possibility at all (or 0). The equation $\{\emptyset\} = 1$ holds only for Kether.

empty set of all possibilities	active emptiness, active void	$\{\emptyset\}$ is all potential identification
withdrawal, contraction	contracted potential manifested	$\{\emptyset\} = 1$
absolute singularity : being	monarch of manifest being	"1" is the First Identified
zero or no possibilities : not-being	passive emptiness, passive void	0 is nothing engendering nothing

The unity of God can never be made manifest, but God enters into the cosmos through the mediation of 9 Sephiroth emanated by Kether (cf. the "Lightning Flash") which are a manifestation of God in the cosmos. The Divine is both outside ("YHVH") & inside ("ALHYM") creation. Devotion & mystical experience ("devekut") are guaranteed because created humanity -by contacting these hyper-beings- returns to Kether and hence to God (regressive accessibility of the One). The "logos" emanates the matrix of the Cosmos (= the third Sephiroth, called "Binah", Understanding).

These first three emanations (Kether, Chockmah & Binah) are called "supernal Sephiroth" because *all other emanations (out of Binah) are triadic reflections of this ultimate triadic hyper-being (i.e. immanent "Divine" triadic being)*. According to the qabalah, 10 Divine "Elohîm" super-exist in the highest plane of the Cosmos (called "olam-ha-Atziluth"). The first three form *the highest possible union of Divine*

immanence possible in a finite & temporal Cosmos.

The "Elohîm" are nothing less than "the Divine-in-process", "Divine Beings" or "hyper-beings" which are *manifestations of God*. They allow us to know that God is (the Palace) but never what God is (the King). God is never known as such (radical apophatism).

Hence, the *absolute beyond* of being, not-being & hyper-being is called "God" (i.e. "YHVH", ineffable and called "Adonai" or "Lord" for ever and ever "Deus absconditus"). The "summum bonum" of created being is called "Elohîm" ("Deus revelatus"). The "Elohîm" are the Divine energies or God's existence immanent in the Cosmos and so represent the absolute & transcendent ("YHVH", God) *within the immanent & relative cosmic arena* ("ALHYM". They are the Divine part of the Cosmos and its source of permanent nourishment.

The Judeo-Qabalistic Model		
transcendent order	essence of God, {Ø}	uncreated, creating Being
"YHVH", God, the Lord	"AIN SOPH AUR"	absolute Being
immanent order	manifest being : "1" + ...	created entity
Kether, Chockmah, Binah	Supernal Sephiroth : the Divine World	supreme hyper-being creating being
7 Sephiroth (Tree of Life)	Creative, Formative & Physical Worlds	being
7 Qlipoth (Tree of Death)	Infernal Worlds	not-being

Radical Christian Apophatism versus Dogmatic Trinitarism

Very intelligent Christians like [ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite](#) invented the neologism "hypertheos" to indicate *the beyond of ultimate, supreme (hyper)being* identified by Christian theologians with the ultimate idea of the Good ("summum bonum"), which it however radically transcends. In that respect John the Scot rightly distinguished between on the one hand the *uncreated & creating order* (God's apophatic hidden

essence, "YHVH") and on the other the created & creating order (God's cataphatic revealing existence ; the Sephiroth emanated by "ALHYM"). Clearly this was heretical thinking !

It was Marcellus of Ancyra, who had pamphleted against Origen's emphasis on *the independence* of Father, Son & Holy Spirit (as three hypostases), who realized that the unity of God *is prior to all plurality*. God as God is one, and can only be called "three" in a relative sense because of the activity of the Divine plan in creation & redemption. *Any distinction between Father, Son & Spirit is temporary & relative to the created order.*

The Christo-Apophatic Model		
transcendent order	essence of God	uncreated, creating Being
the One	Impassible, Ineffable	absolute Being
immanent order	manifest being	created & creating hyper-being
Father (ABBA)	shares in the impassible essence of God	supreme hyper-being creating being
Christ His unique Son	is the salvic "logos" of the Father	the Father's first creation
Holy Spirit	is the mediating love between Father & Son	proceeds from Father & Son

This christo-apophatic model runs against the Platonic idea of the "Good" (cf. Augustine) and unmasks the personal, anthropological representation of the Divine (associated in Judaism with "ALHYM") to discover *the impersonal groundless ground of All*. When we study the history of the formation of the dogmatic notion of "one essence with three persons" *the personalisation of the exterior of God* becomes evident (cf. the Roman Empire resurrected as the Catholic Church). This is even more so when we become aware how the christo-dogmatic model bluntly "tears the veil" by personalising the nameless, impassible, ineffable transcendent order, and this to the extent of actually creating a pre-creational Christ-figure who is one Person with two natures, of which one is human ! In this way they claim that "through and in Christ" humanity is deified. Is this not blasphemy on a gigantic scale ? The fact that

the pre-creational order is *a fortiori* pre-temporal & pre-spatial whereas any "eternal process" still implies an eternal time was beyond the logic of these so-called "fathers of the church". How explain the importance of the historical events of Christ's life if He is essentially beyond time ? Moreover, if evangelical stories like Gethsemane are true, God is also frail & doubtful. Anyway, if "credo quia absurdum est" holds, then anything goes & irrationality reigns beyond repair. The history of religions shows that any religious dogma which is an anachronism will eventually collapse (causing more grief & frustration than any form of continuous revolution & permanent spiritual inspiration - cf. John Chrysostome's "Ecclesia Semper Reformanda").

The Christo-Dogmatic Model		
transcendent order	pre-creational Persons of God	uncreated Triad of Absolute Being
the One Father	the independent Divine nature of God	unborn principle of the Persons without principle, ground of being
Christ His unique Son	the Divine salvic "logos" of the Father	the Father's generation who creates all
Holy Spirit	the mediating Divine love between both	who proceeds from Father & Son
immanent order	manifest being	relative, created being
Mary, mother of Jesus Christ mother of mothers, queen of angels, mother of God	mediates between Christians & Christ	the Catholic Church ruled by Rome

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which *from the beginning of the world has been hid in God*, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

Ephesians, 3:9, my italics.

What is so startling in this Catholic model, is the actual *inflation of the transcendent*

order with catapathic ideas, largely (neo)Platonic philosophies & Late Hellenistic values. Unfortunately, the absence of logic is not felt as a problem (the first massive spread of Christianity was amongst the poor, uneducated, often enslaved classes). Throughout history (as in the more popular versions of Buddhism where Gautama the Enlightened One is actually deified), the Church of Rome cherished an untrustworthy spiritual dialect : although Vatican I (1870) learns that God is "simplex omnino" (completely simple), Christocentric devotion makes the historical Jesus "God" & more than one Marial order or Mary-possessed theologian promotes the idea that Our Lady is ALSO part of the transcendent order (cf. the role of "sophia" in the Wisdom of Solomon).

Learned theologians (like ps.-Dionysius & Thomas Aquinas) stressed the importance of the *unity of God* and clearly incorporated the logical identification between *transcendence & singularity* (this is in conflict with the Dogmatic Model). Nevertheless, the popular personalisations of God, the "official" creation of an army of saints and recently the deification of Mary were not abrogated for reasons of their abstract theology nor were the masses *educated in the truth of the matter* (still reserved to the higher clergy). The massive rise in the last 20 years of the number of official, worshipable, "Catholic" saints (due to John Paul II) is suggestive of the still unsatisfied need for a *personalisation of the Divine* and the elaboration of the *lower, horizontal mediations* (between Saints & Mary) instead of actively promoting the higher (directly in the Spirit between each individual & God). This lack of internal consistency, the unwillingness to accept historical evidence from free, unbiased investigative sources (the "historical contradiction"), and the absence of a real democratic representation (i.e. the spiritual dictatorship of the very small number) makes a postmodern Catholic apologetics impossible (probably the Roman Church was never really "modern"). Clearly, the first thing to do is to get one's fundamental notions straight.

"ALLÂH" and the 99 most Beautiful Names

A radical approach of the difficult task of acknowledging the bi-polarity of the Divine, executed without dividing the Name of the Divine (Judaism) nor confusing it (Christianity), was realised in the "tawhîd" (from the same root as "wahid", or "one") of Islam, i.e. the strong affirmation of *the Divine Unity as the Fundamental Principle of all possible spirituality*. Moreover, this urban religion favoured the acquisition of knowledge (Christianity and free study do not match) and the universal characteristics of the mystical experience became an integrated & living part of the mystical theology and the spiritual practices of Sufi masters like Ibn'Arabî, Junayd, Rûmî ... In principle, the patchwork of Islam allowed for more local deregulation than was the case in the Ancient Mysteries and in Western Catholicism. Nevertheless, Sunnite theology ("kâlam") also raged against heresy (cf. Ibn Yaymiyya's denial of Ibn'Arabî's speculative mysticism).

The first principle of Islâm or *submission to "Allâh"* is given in the "shahâdah", the First Pillar, testifying two facts :

- (1) "ashhadu an" or "I bear witness that" : "lâ ilâha illa'llâh" or "there is not god but 'Allâh'" &
- (2) "ashhadu an" or "I bear witness that" : "Muhammadun rasul Allâh" or "Muhammad is the messenger of 'Allâh'".

The first section ("no god") means (a) by negation ("nafy") that if there is no second, there is no cosmos. The second section ("but 'Allâh'") means (b) by affirmation ("ithbât") that only "Allâh" is real. There is nothing but the Real.

Moreover, "Allâh" reveals Himself to each person *in His own incomparable way*, as the Qu-rân explicidly explains.

The second part shows however that, although each believer is unique, "Allâh" revealed His Book to Muhammad alone and hence only made him His servant elect. This implies that the spiritual community of the Prophet or "sunna" is necessary to complement the message of Islam and allow the emergence of a Muslim community. This "sunna" is recorded in the "hadîth" or recorded traditions.

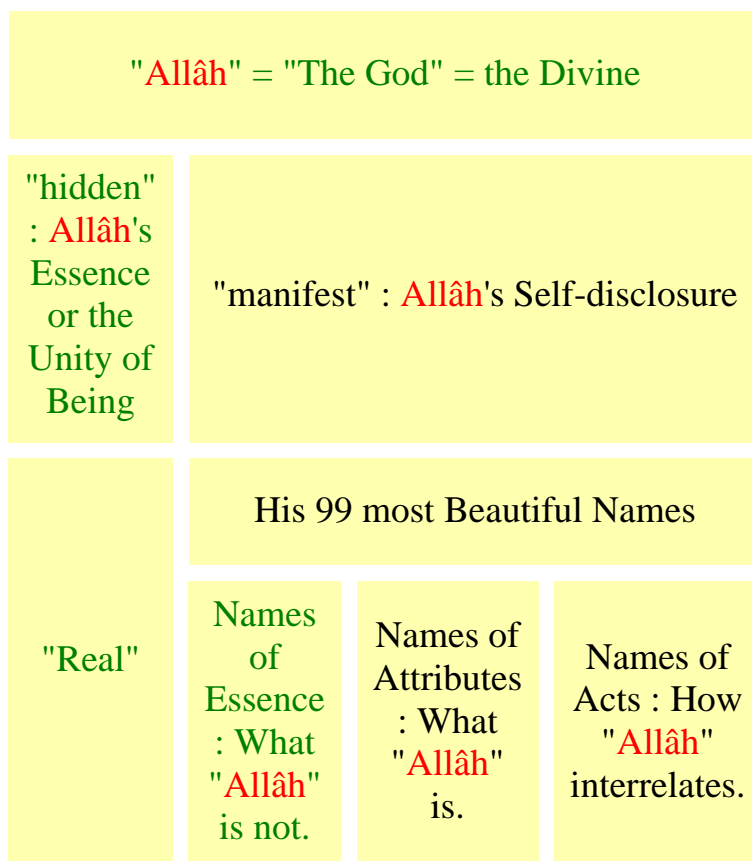
Before Muhammad, the "Ka'aba" was -to many dispersed Arab tribes- one of the more important sacred places. An area of 32 km around it was sacred space wherein no violence was allowed. It housed 360 (presumably Semitical) gods (one for each day of the year) and "Allâh" was considered as the "supreme" (cf. the henotheism of the Middle Kingdom in Ancient Egypt and the tales of Hesiodos & Homeros). At the beginning of the 7th century, "Allâh" had grown in importance, and the "Ka'aba" was regarded as dedicated to Him. A lot of Arabs believed that "Allâh" and the "God" of Jews & Christians were identical. So to unite the tribes, the Qu-rân distinguished between "ilah" (god) and "Allâh" (best translated as "The God"). The word "god" is used in all kinds of situations where human beings *take something else than "Allâh"* as an object of *worship, adoration & service*. So any type of *supposed independent entity* is associating others with "Allâh" (or "shirk", to share, to be a partner, to give someone a partner).

The essence of "tawhîd" ("kalimat al-tawhîd") is the first fact testified in the "shahâdah" : "there is no god but 'Allâh'". How to understand this ?

At first it only seems an affirmation that "Allâh" is the "supreme". This can be understood as if "Allâh" is the "summum bonum" of being, which is the case, for nothing escapes Him. But the equation "Allâh" = "the Heavenly Father" (of Christianity or the "Kether" of the qabalah) -although true- is nevertheless *incomplete*.

The essence of the Divine Unity expressed by "tawhîd" is its *all-comprehensiveness*. Although Divine bi-polarity is acknowledged, no independent, quasi-independent or

pseudo-independent relationship between the transcendent & the immanent order is suggested (as was the case in Judaism & neoplatonism). *Although "Allâh" is the transcendent, He is at the same time the immanent.* He is the "Real" and so from His perspective the Cosmos is illusion, unreal. But when creatures investigate that same Cosmos, they discover the signs of His Self-disclosure and arrive at the truth that the world is Real because He is everywhere & all the time recreating it. These definitions are truly mystical (and always contain formal contradictions & elliptical logics). They try to reveal *the two sides of something simultaneously* with their *arabesque "tertium comparationis"*.



The "tawhîd" implies that "nothing is like Him" (42:11), so no one knows "Allâh" but "Allâh". This guarantees the infinite increase of our knowledge, expansion which will never end, for a new horizon was, is & will always present. This is radical apophatism, for "the Real" is the ineffable, essence of "Allâh". *No creature can move beyond Creation and merge with the hidden essence of "Allâh"*. For good reasons the influence of Hindu theology on Sûfism was criticised by orthodox Sunnites. The foundation of the salvic theory of both Sânkhya, Yoga, Vedânta (based on the Vedas) is the belief that the core of the soul of human beings (the "âtman") is *ontologically identical* with the Imperishable Brahman, i.e. the "hidden" polarity of the Divine. As a consequence some Sufi masters thought that they had become "Allâh" and saw the "Ka'aba" circumambulate around them !

Nevertheless, the revelation of The God *encompassing both His Imperishable Essence & His Creation* (i.e. the notion founding Islam and known as "tawhîd" or the proclamation of the Unity of the Divine) is also very strong in the Vedas. Brahman is

conceived of by him by whom It is not conceived of. He by whom It is conceived of, knows It not (cf. Kena, second "khanda"). Brahman has form & is formless. Brahman is the major category in a non-dual theology acknowledging the bi-polarity of the Divine. The major difference between this form of Hinduism and Sunnite theology being the radical interpretation of "tawhîd". Hence it becomes inconsistent to say that "Brahman" is Imperishable (wholly transcendent) and at the same time ontologically identical with the human soul ("âtman"). The consequences of the Hindu salvic model (ontological unity with the Imperishable) are rejected (for this would imply that creation and the essence of the Absolute would be identical, which refutes the incomparability of the Absolute).

Ibn'Arabî had his own interpretation of "tawhîd" and distinguished between the Absolute in absoluteness and Allâh. The former being the truly ineffable essence of being, i.e. Real Unity, and the latter existing as a modification of sheer being but still Real because of the all-encompassing Oneness of The God. In his view, "Allâh" is pointless without creation, which is His limitation (see also [On Being and the Majesty of the Worlds](#), [Against the Free Will](#), 1999).

The words "Allâh" & "Brahman" both indicate the bi-polarity of the One Divine. These concepts of a *non-dual theology* (the only possible theology consistent with the experience of the mystics) *stress the unity of the Divine* instead of one of the poles of the bi-polarity.

In Judaism the bi-polarity itself is given a name : "YHVH (the) ALHYM". In Christianity the bi-polarity is camouflaged & forced into the intellectual margin (how many priest & bishops are really aware of the difference between "theos" and "hypertheos", let alone its theological consequence for exclusive katapathism ?). Brahmin priests & Sunnite theologians operate with completely different salvic schemes & appreciations of creation. The Hindu wants release from this universe, which s/he considers as illusion (so Divine incarnations are very welcome here). The Arab mistrusts a personalised incarnation of the Divine (even perfect man does not know His essence), and discovers the signs of "Allâh" in the world which is the result of His Self-disclosure (the 99 Names). For the Hindu, Divine beings incarnate regularly (in times of great need). The claim made by a particular human being to be the hidden essence of "Allâh" is -to Sunnite standards- insane. In India, millions worship spiritual masters as incarnations of "Vishnu", "Shiva" or one of the "Shakti's" ... These difference could not be more pronounced.

Second Remark on the Deconstruction of "God"

Divine Name	Old Translation	Better Translation
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"YHVH"	"Kyrios", "Domine", "Lord" or "Jahweh"	"Theos", "Deus", "God", "Dieu"
"ALHYM"	"Theos", "Deus", "God", "Dieu"	<i>can not be properly translated</i>
"YHVH ELOHÎM"	"Lord God"	"God the Elohîm"

The problem with the better translations given above, is the remaining obscurity concerning the first character of the drama, "Elohîm". The extremely important verses of Exodus : "And Elohîm said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, YHVH the Elohîm of Your fathers, the Elohîm of Abraham, the Elohîm of Isaac, and the Elohîm of Jacob, hath sent me to You (...)" are startling when we are forced to consider that "Elohîm" is *a plural* associated with a plurality of patriarchs. Moreover, "Elohîm" is *a feminine form*. This does not make things easier to understand the text and deconstruct it to arrive at an approximation of the various meanings of the One bi-polar Divine, this unique absolute reality, a one-fold polarity, remote & near.

Clearly the use of the word "God" is *not without problems*. One should always check in what tradition it is used and try to find out what is exactly meant. To confront the Christian tradition we rejected the translation of "Elohîm" as "God". The latter word is used to indicate the hidden, remote, totally transcendent Divine order. As a consequence the role of the Divine in the immanent order becomes blurred. Especially in the Old Testament "Elohîm" is impersonal but also personal, although the latter meaning becomes more pronounced in the later books.

In the qabalah, "Elohîm" is associated with the "Shekinah" or the Divine Presence which accompanies Israel. This Presence is feminine, but manifests in different forms. Clearly messianism and the Presence of the "Shekinah" are related themes. The presence of the Messiah guarantees the full return of the "Shekinah" and so He restores the lost bond between "Adonai" and Israel.

In the New Testament, the notion that Jesus is "God" is associated with the inadequate translation of "Elohîm" as "Theos", for -if we consider the Hebrew text- the superb figure invoked in Daniel 7:13-14 is clearly a majestic manifestation of "Elohîm" (the "Son of man" as an "Elohîm"). Christian theology added the uniqueness of the "Son of God", suggestive of the transformation of the plural "Elohîm" into the singular "Eloah" ...

The Islâm does away with all this. It returns to a radical apophatism (known to Judaism) : the essence of "Allâh" can NEVER be experienced, known, understood, grasped etc. However, the identification "Allâh" = "YHVH" is NOT complete, for the latter name is intricately interwoven with "ALHYM" but can not be identified with it ("YHVH" is absent). This contrary to "Allâh" who can be identified both with "YHVH" and "ALHYM" !

Technically, the word "Divine" is used in Sufism (mystical Islâm) to denote Divine Existence only.

"Allâh" = "The
God"

The first fact is : "there is no god but 'Allâh'". "Tawhîd" implies that no being (which is always part of Creation) exists independently from "Allâh". Hence, "Allâh" oversees both transcendent & immanent orders.

"Through this unveiling you will see that the Real Himself is the proof of Himself and of His Divinity, while the cosmos is nothing but His self-disclosure within the forms of the immutable entities, which cannot possibly exist without that self-disclosure. The self-disclosure becomes variegated and assumes diverse forms in accordance with the realities and states of the entities. We gain this knowledge after knowing that He is our God."

Ibn-Arabi : Fusûs al-hikam or Metaphysics of Imagination, III.112.13 (translated by W.C.Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge, SUNY - New York, 1989, p.298.)

So from the point of linguistics the word "God" should not be used to identify "Allâh".

A better translation of "Allâh" is "The God".

The unknown "God" (cf. [De Deo](#), 1995 - "YHVH") is the Essence of "The God".

The known "Elohîm" are the Existence of "The God", i.e. His Self-disclosure as Divine Names and cosmos (His Self-disclosure within entities : *our forms in Him*)

"Allâh" = the All = "The God"

the Essence is an eternally unknown Unity ("tawhîd")
both perspectives simultaneously apply :

(1) Essence of "Allâh" : IT
(pre-creational, Alone)

(2) Existence of "Allâh" :
HE
(out of Aloneness)

The God knows The God
nobody else knows Him as
such
(incomparability -
"tanzîh")

The God Self-discloses
His Essence through the
Names
(similarity - "tashbîh")

Symbolising the bi-polarity of the one-fold Divine

Let us logically characterise the unknown God as " $\{\emptyset\}$ " (the empty set) and the Creator as "1" (the standard).

Suppose following general categories & equations :

(1) The God :	$\{\emptyset\} + 1 +$... 99	God & His Divine Existence
(2) God :	$\{\emptyset\}$	"Deus Absconditus"
(3) Divine Existence :	"1" + ... 10 (99)	"Deus Revelatus"

(1) Hinduism :

A multiplicity of gods & goddesses created by one Imperishable ("nirguna Brahman"), both the impersonal unknown absolute & the personal Lord of the Cosmos, Creation & Creatures. The latter is -broadly speaking- worshipped as "Vishnu" or "Shiva". "Brahmâ" stands aside and is conscious of every event.

The Divine is : $\{\emptyset\} + "1"$ ("1" = a multiplicity of gods & goddesses).

The God :	"Brahman"	Imperishable + "mâyâ"
God :	"nirguna Brahman"	the Imperishable
Divine Existence :	"saguna Brahman" or "Brahmâ" etc.	the Illusionary

(2) Buddhism :

In creation no permanent unity can be found. Phenomenal identity is constructed. Visible unity is emptiness. The worlds are empty. There are no gods or goddesses, no Creator and no Imperishable "Brahman". There is only the Gautama Buddha ("1") who reached "nirvâna" under the *ficus religiosa* (the Bodhi-tree). The scion of a sprout of the original tree is venerated today. The stories about the legendary buddhas (cf. the Buddhavamsa of the Khuddakanikâya - Hînayâna) have no historical foundation.

The Divine is : many reduced to "1" (the "Buddha"), "1" reduced to {∅}

The God :	denied	denied
God :	"nirvâna"	the Other Shore
Divine Existence :	"Buddha"	non-dual consciousness

(3) Judaism :

The "YHVH" is unknown. With 10 "Elohîm" or "Divine Names" He created the Cosmos.

The Divine is : {∅} + "1" ("1" revealed as "10" Divine Beings) :

The God :	"YHVH ALHYM"	God and His Creation
God :	"YHVH"	ineffable, unknown
Divine Existence :	"ALHYM"	Divine Presence ("Shekinah")

(4) Christianity :

The one God is the best of being & creates the world out of His goodness.

The Divine is : {∅} reduced to "1" (called "the one God") but "1" = "3" (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) :

The God :	denied	denied
God :	Father, Son & Holy Spirit	eternal circumincission
Divine Existence :	Divine energies	auto-diffusion

(5) Islâm :

"Allâh" is Inward (essential unity of being) and Outward (Divine existence of attributes or Names).

The God is : $\{\emptyset\} + "1"$ ("1" revealed as the "99" Names of "The God")

The equation : "The God" = "unknown God" + "Creator" holds.

The God :	"Allâh"	hidden & manifest
God :	hidden	Essence ("dhat")
Divine Existence :	manifest	the 99 most Beautiful Names

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The author can be reached at :
spirituality@globalprojects.org

