



AWAKENING YOUR UNIQUE SELF

Sacred Texts and Notes On Evolutionary Mysticism *Week 2 Readings*

Excerpted from Chapter 8 of Your Unique Self

The Unique Self mystic Abraham Kook, truly one of the greatest realizers, scholars, and poets of the Kabbalah, and one of the two essential lineage sources from which I live and teach, offers two pivotal teachings on Being, Becoming, and the evolutionary nature of the divine.⁶ (see Chapter 8 footnotes below). These are radical teachings, expressing the evolutionary cast of Hebrew mysticism. It is worth noting that the word “evolution” is not my overlay on Kook’s teaching. Rather, Kook used the modern Hebrew word for evolution, with all of its modern implications.

The First Teaching

We perceive there to be two types of Perfection in absolute divine Perfection: one type of Perfection is so great and complete that no additional evolution is relevant to it. If, however, there were no possibility of additional evolving whatsoever, this in and of itself would be an imperfection. For Perfection that is constantly waxing greater has great advantage and is pleasurable, and is uplifting. For we yearn for it exceedingly, proceeding from strength to strength. Divine Perfection can therefore not be lacking the dimension of perfecting, which is the evolving process of perfecting and unfolding power. This is why divinity has the ability to be creative, to instigate limitless cosmic being and Becoming, proceeding through all its levels and stages and growing. It therefore follows that the essential divine soul of Being, that which gives it life, is its constant ascending. That is its divine foundation, which calls it to be and to evolve. . . .

The Second Teaching

The theory of evolution, which is presently conquering the world, is aligned with the most profound secrets of the Kabbalah, more than any other philosophical theories. Unique Self and Evolutionary Spirituality Evolution, which proceeds on an ascending trajectory, provides an optimistic base for the world, for how is it possible to despair when one sees that everything is evolving and ascending? And when we penetrate the very center of the principle of ascending evolution, we discover that it is the divine principle that is enlightened with absolute clarity. For it is Infinity in realization that realized itself through bringing infinity from infinite potentiality to infinite actuality. . . . Evolution enlightens all dimensions of reality, all of God’s manifestations. All of reality evolves and ascends, as is evident in its parts, and this ascension is general as well as particular. It is self-evident that good and the whole are interrelated, and reality is prepared to attain this quality, in which the All absorbs all of the good in all its parts.⁷

For Kook, the evolution of the part is part of the evolution of the whole. The whole—the love intelligence that animates All-That-Is, God—is in a constant state of evolutionary development. Perfection itself is constantly perfecting. According to Unique Self mystic Abraham Kook, by consciously aligning yourself with the evolutionary principle, your “entire existence is divinely transformed and exalted.”



Footnotes from Chapter 8: Unique Self and Evolutionary Spirituality

1. On the distinction between Being and Becoming, see Alfred North Whitehead, who first formulated this nomenclature. I refer to this distinction in my original work on Soul Prints, which pre-dates by some five years my first encounter with my dear friend and Integral mentor Ken Wilber and the contemporary community of Integral evolutionary mystics.

The dialectic between Being and Becoming is a perennial philosophical theme running back to Zeno and Heraclitus. It figured prominently in the philosophy of Plotinus and in some of the debates of the medieval philosophers. Kant, Hegel, and Marx took up the issues, as did Emerson and the American pragmatists. More recently, Whitehead provided a synoptic view of the history of the debate by way of distilling the main theological implications of a thoroughgoing evolutionary worldview.

I heard the specific term “ecstatic urgency” from my friend and colleague, spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, after I gave a talk at his Foxhollow center on Soul Prints and kabbalist Ibn Gabai’s evolutionary teaching, which I have termed “God Needs Your Service,” as well as during my conversations with him on evolutionary spirituality during a weekend that we cohosted and cotaught in Israel in December 2005.

It is my delight to credit him with the term. Andrew has done a great deal to evolve and teach the evolutionary worldview. The root source of Andrew’s teaching, beyond his own realization, seems to be at least in part Hindu mystic Aurobindo. The source of my teaching, beyond my own humble realization, is the kabbalistic lineage in which I live. Some of our differences in nuance and emphasis, particularly in terms of the relationship between the relative and the absolute, the personal and impersonal, may be rooted in the different original sources of our teaching.

2. See Abraham Kook, adduced in this chapter. This footnote in its entirety is adduced from , *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 392–393. The reason I cite it in its entirety is to ground in scholarship my claim, which I have put forward in public teaching for many years, that evolutionary spirituality is not rooted in the Friedrich Schelling school of German idealism. It seems to me more accurate to root evolutionary spirituality in the core matrix of Zoharic and primarily Lurianic Kabbalah, which greatly influenced Schelling and his colleagues.

On the influence of kabbalistic sources on Schelling, see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 409–19 and p. 412–77; Idel, *Kabbalah*, p.134 and 200; Schulze, “Schelling und die Kabbala,” p. 65–99, 143–170, 210–232; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 264; A. Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit*, p. 42–44; Schulte, “Zimzum in the Works of Schelling,” p. 21–40; E. Beach, *Potencies of God(s)*, p. 1–2, 6–13, 25–45, 22–230; Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, p. 83–85; Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, p. 12–13; Kosolowski, *Philosophien der Offenbarung*, p. 565–771.

3. This is a core teaching of evolutionary mystic Abraham Kook.

4. As kabbalist Abraham Kook indicates, the core kabbalistic category of *tikkun*, which is usually translated as “to fix or to heal,” is actually better translated as “to evolve.” The entire goal of Kabbalah is what scholars have referred to as “theurgy,” that is to say, to effect a cosmic *tikkun* through personal



action, which means to evolve God. The nature of Hebrew mysticism is evolutionary. Kabbalah interprets all of life as taking place in an evolutionary context. Indeed, the Lurianic and post-Lurianic is best characterized as a kind of proto-evolutionary mysticism. I use the term “proto” because to the best of my knowledge, Luria does not discuss evolution in the biosphere, although the possibility is clearly implicit. This is not a vague idea retrojected onto old sources. For those who know how to read the sources, this is the very lodestone on which Kabbalah rests. In the kabbalistic realization, the entire world exists within the divine. Every human act is for the sake of *tikkun*, to evolve the Godhead, that is to say, all of reality. Every human action is for the sake of the whole and impacts the whole. Every human being is necessary, born to fulfill a particular function in the evolution of All-That-Is.

The Kabbalists had significant influence on Fichte and Schelling, who are often listed as the originators of evolutionary spirituality. On the influence on Kabbalistic sources on Schelling, see Eliot Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 392n2. This influence is not a minor fancy of some scholar, but a major insight of the most respected scholars in the field.

5. In Kabbalah, both the first *ani* before *ayin* and the second *ani* after *ayin* are three-letter names of God. For the teaching of my teacher on Unique Self in the context of these two names, see Mei HaShiloach, vol. 1, *Likkutim, Vehineh*. That both expressions of *ani* are names of God is one of the esoteric hints that the ego prefigures Unique Self.

6. In my teaching I refer to Kook both as a Unique Self mystic and as an evolutionary mystic. Both are correct. Kook’s understanding of Unique Self, which informs my own, locates Uniqueness firmly within an evolutionary context. More than that, Kook explicitly sees the personal address of evolution inviting, even obligating, every person to live their unique life, to give their Unique Gift. It is to be lived as a Unique verb of God—according to Kook’s Kabbalah, which is rooted in Luria—which is the very essence of one’s life and the purpose of one’s birth at a particular place in time. The realization that one is needed by God, by All-That-Is, by the great evolutionary process, all of which are one, is the greatest source of human joy, which is the joy of all the kosmos. For more on Kook’s evolutionary mysticism, see for example Yosef Ben Shlomo’s study of Kook, *The Song of Life*, Chapter 12, and the relevant footnotes there that give a nuanced accounting of the evolutionary mysticism that lay at the core of Kook’s teaching, and which was rooted in his Kabbalistic lineage. Ben Shlomo points out the striking parallels between Kook’s thought and that of Teilhard de Chardin and Henri Bergson. Most important, however, it is critical to realize, as Ben Shlomo does, that Kook’s evolutionary mysticism is a natural expression of the Lurianic matrix of thought that formed Kook’s mental and spiritual furniture. Luria’s concepts of *yichud*, *zivug*, and *tikkun* are all infused by a proto-evolutionary mysticism.

7. Kook, *Orot HaKodesh*, Vol. 2, p. 507. The first and second quotes are also from Kook, *Orot HaKodesh*, Vol. 2, p. 532.3, 548.

8. The precise Hebrew word used is “Yichud,” which in many texts is deployed in a virtually identical manner to the term “*tikkun*.” *Tikkun*, as I discuss elsewhere, is often translated as “to evolve.”