

And the Elohim said, let there be light, and there was light,

Tehillim 33:6

Appendix I

A report by Prof. Marcus Weston, exclusively written for the Religions section of this book

The General view that this theory illustrates, shows how the universes and all beings came to exist from nothing. And the “nothing” from which everything arises, is outlined in a research-based context and measured with mathematical precision, although this accuracy can’t be confirmed or denied by me. Interestingly, the author holds an entirely research-based look at the debate of creation with no part left out, even the topics that are usually assumed “unscientific” and brought the whole creation into the concept of religion through numerous chapters from different new angles. In reading the book, I assumed the scientific sections correct and carried on with the sections related to religions as well as some shared sections between religions and humanities. As going through the book, I came across terms that play key role in comprehending the abstract idea of the book, so I looked at these terms more closely to provide a more accurate explanation of what they are all about, although in many parts there are an obvious lacks for such explanations.

Consciousness is one of the most outstanding ones that is used in almost all discourses and is well described, however, in some parts this explanation seems to be somewhat insufficient if not irrelevant. I have provided extra explanations of the inherent nature of consciousness where the Kabbalah mysticism is explained through the best of my knowledge, which needless to say, is complementary to the author's explanations. Of course, it should be noted that the explanations provided here, are only in the field of religious mysticism and not necessarily gone through scientific discourses (the author has looked at this topic from a very diverse perspective, which is beyond the scope of this article). In fact, the author has also used scientific documentations to prove the function of consciousness, which is outside my specialty and I didn’t get into it. But regarding the humanities and theoretical foundations, I can say the provided

references are quite valid to the best of my knowledge. However, in many parts we see only the author's final conclusion, and rarely a complete and plausible explanation is provided as a ground for certain discussions. In addition to examining and evaluating the author's conclusions impartially, I have also attempted to provide additional explanations on each subject under discussion in the relevant discourses. I have also tried to make it easier for the next reader to understand, but it does not necessarily rely on my comments and the main author's words remain the focus of the conversation, because otherwise I would fall into the same pitfall that the author was caught in.

The meaning of life is one more discourse considered in the book. The fact is that I don't believe that there is a clear meaning to life, at least from a philosophical point of view it varies from person to person, because people have different worldviews about life. Philosophers believe that in order to find the true meaning of life, it must be studied from different angles, and consequently, each person's life can have different meanings in different dimensions. Because people's priorities in life can vary between individuals depending on geographical, cultural, political and even family circumstances. So attempting to find a same single meaning for life is pointless. I have dealt with some aspects of it both in the discussion of salvation as well as in parts of the discourse on Kabbalah mysticism, and more importantly, throughout the discussion of faith. But since it is not the main focus of the book, I have contented myself here with the same amount. However, some aspects of this discussion are once again, outside my field of study. In any case, I have dealt with each of these concepts in the relevant sections

Throughout the discourse, based on the subject of God (deity) as the meaning of life, I see the existence of mankind so important to achieve the goal set by God. Although I have discussed this later, yet the familiar idea is that God has a functional plan for the universe, and that a man's life is already meaningful somehow, so if he asks, God will help him to cause to happen this plan. Of course, in the certain way that man is taught, and if he fail to do, from a religious point of view, his life turn out meaningless. Some scholars may disagree on God's purpose of creation, which may have a unique meaning in life, but the most influential argument however, has been the one that the only purpose can be the source of immutable ethic rules. Soul-centred arguments support the idea that meaning of life is largely due to having an

immortal spiritual essence that is adjacent to one's body while alive, and is separated forever after death. Some envisage life after death as a person's soul entering a transcendent and spiritual realm (heaven), whereas others consider the possibility of a person's soul reincarnate in another body on earth. Whichever of two given alternatives is the case, if a person cannot manage to put his soul in the right order, again, his life would be meaningless.

Theoretically, there are generally three arguments for the meaning of life: the first is that in order to provide a meaning for life, we must do something that is worth doing, and of course, whether something is worth doing or not, determines only when it can impact a permanent change in the world. Something as Leo Tolstoy says: *it deserves immortality*. The second argument is that life without soul would be meaningless, and doing justice is necessary to give meaning to life. When the wicked are in grace and the righteous suffer, life seems meaningless - at least assuming that there is no other world in which these injustices can be compensated - whether by God or a karmic forces - both the positive and negative type of karmic aftermath. However, even considering that "*afterlife*" is required for perfectly fair results, yet it is not clear that eternal life after death could be necessary for them. And then there is an idea that some lives, (like the lives of famous personalities) have been meaningful precisely in the pursuit of virtue and in face with injustice. This issue is explained in detail in the discussion of salvation.

The third argument is the need for having a kind of "free will" without which, once more our life would be meaningless. Emmanuel Kant is known for having maintained that *if we were merely physical beings, subjected to the laws of nature like everything else in the material world, then we could not act for moral reasons and hence we would be unimportant*. It is also eloquently stated in religious terms: *The moral spirit finds the meaning of life in choice. It finds it in that which proceeds from man and remains with him as his inner essence rather than in the accidents of circumstances turns of external fortune*. Even in the story of Aladdin, seems that it's the spirit of God that comes out of the magic lamp, whenever a human being rubs the lamp of his moral conscience, a spirit does appear; this Spirit is God, says David Swenson,

It is in the “*thou must*” of God and man’s “*I can*” that the divine image of God in human life is contained¹.

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In Order to understand the correctness and incorrectness of this article, we must first provide a concise and understandable description of the philosophy of Kabbalah, something that the author gave a few brief explanations and jumped directly to conclusion of the tradition of Kabbalah. Although he focuses deep on the religious concept, yet most of the author's arguments are based on Kabbalah as well as some concepts derived from Islamic and Hindu mysticism, yet doesn't provide a plausible “*targeted*” ground for his argument, so his explanations in this section often seem inadequate.

Understanding the core concept of Jewish mysticism requires a very broad and complex discourse, but knowing the concepts of Kabbalah and the *Tree of Life* can be very crucial in understanding the book - and judging whether the claims are right or wrong. Although the explanation of Kabbalah in a concise paper like this by no means can express the nature of Jewish mysticism, however, since the author's arguments are derived from Kabbalah, I'll try to explain the subject in the simplest way and then move on to the related concepts with the article "All'n'none".

Kabbalah was first taught by God Himself to a group of chosen angels who established a theosophical school in Paradise. When the angels descended, most graciously communicated this heavenly doctrine to the disobedient offspring of earth, to furnish them with the means of returning to their pristine nobility and felicity. From Adam it passed over to Noah, and then to Abraham, the friend of God, who took it to Egypt where the patriarchs allowed a portion of this mysterious doctrine to give out. According to Kabbalists, the attributes of God are linearly related to one another, so they believe that God himself is incomprehensible, but He has revealed attributes that interact with each other as well as the universe: these traits are known as Sefirot. The real

¹ The Dignity of Human Life, 1949, Princeton University Press

nature of Kabbalah and its significant contribution to Western thought and notions, without mentioning the miasmatic form of "*folk wisdom*", requires a detailed description of its development over the centuries up to our time.

One of the most fundamental concepts necessary for understanding Kabbalah (as well as Jewish mysticism) is Da'at. Without understanding Da'at, studying any concepts of Kabbalah will be unproductive and useless, and fail to achieve the desired facts. Da'at - roughly translated as "*consciousness*" - is the place (a mystical state) where all ten Sefirot in the *Tree of Life* come together and unite as one. Since all Sefirot radiate self-giving divine light infinitely, so within Da'at, it's never possible to distinguish one Sefira from another; thus they are one. Da'at is not usually depicted in representations of the Sefirot; but could be abstractly imagined as an "*empty space*" - later on we'll discuss the concept of *negative existence* - into which the embryo of any Sefira can be placed in. that's why although the divine light is always shining, but not everyone is capable of seeing it.

The terminology is based on the ground that some sort of dramatic awakening come about our minds at Da'at, a state of consciousness, a realization that "*I exist*". Consciousness usually means knowledge about things outside one's worldly self, but nevertheless, Da'at represents the one who is fully aware of his own "*self*". Nothing is more frightening than being conscious about one's "*self*" and yet nothing is more empowering than that either. Without consciousness, there'll be no way out to take your life into your own hands. Everything become possible only once you can look back at your own self and ask "Whether the fate controls my life?", "what defines me and what makes me, I?", "where does the soul live and when does consciousness begin?" and the answers to these questions are only available within Da'at.

Consciousness is everything and everything is consciousness: just as Kabbalists say, the world comes into being, since consciousness knows the basic structure of which all things are put together. Science-wise, electrons know their direction towards positive and negative poles within their electromagnetic field; every atom knows the other atoms in the universe; every living cell knows the code to its own reproduction in order to survival; spiders know the geometry of their webs; beavers know the structure of their dams; birds know the skyways as they

migrate. But none of them sit to ponder their own rituals: a spider never questions its urge to spin web, a bird never seeks advice about the wisdom of its migration route, and electrons never strike a rebellion against their electromagnetic field. So, only by knowing our "self" and choosing to become whatever we want to become - in this regard, we stand even far beyond angels². And this is the peak we climb on just the moment we become conscious. This is what Da'at is.

Kabbalists believe that the discovery of Torah and its secrets is the goal of Jewish mysticism. So Jewish mysticism - or Kabbalah - is in fact the key to decoding the mysteries that are hidden in the inner layers of Torah. They believe that the words of Tanakh³ are like an outfit and the truth is shrouded in mystery, and that it's the responsibility of Jewish mystics to grasp the root of Torah by pondering and scrutinizing it. Another attribute in Jewish mysticism is the belief in fellowship and cooperation with God through the understanding of Kabbalah. For Kabbalists, the act of main revelation - the general revelation on Mount Sinai - is something whose true meaning has not yet been revealed. The "secret" and personal revelation is a real and decisive thing for Him. The most exciting of all, Kabbalah is a constantly evolving living tradition that grows, dies, reborn humans - and sometimes monsters. From this perspective, God created man to be His partner in restoring the original order of life. Kabbalah has always emphasized the contemplation of a deity with whom even in the highest transcendences one can neither unite nor attain unity. Kabbalah is scattered, ambiguous, and esoteric, yet it is never without purpose to solve, illuminate, and reveal the simple "sources" of divine wisdom. For a kabbalist, revelation is never merely an event at a certain point in history that puts an end to direct relationship between God and mankind. Kabbalah is often branching out into four subdivisions:

The Practical Kabbalah: the practical kabbalah deals with talismanic and ceremonial magic, and doesn't fit the discourse of this work. It involves techniques aimed specifically at altering natural states or events. It includes expertise like incantation of El⁴ names and inscription of such names upon amulets. The Practical Kabbalah

² More detail about this debate is provided in the *Meaning of Life* and *faith* debates

³ Hebrew Bible

⁴ God

concerns magic, such as proper ways to make *talismans* and *amulets*, and lore about angels and demons.

The Literal Kabbalah: the literal Kabbalah concerns the relationship between the letters of Hebrew alphabet and numbers. It is divided into three parts: Gematria (assigning numerical value to words), Notarikon (deriving ideas by using initials), and Temurah (reorder sacred words so that to get new meanings). It features the deciphering of relationships and correspondences through Gematria, a system for determining the numerical values of words and names; the finding of acronyms through Notarikon, in which the first letters of existing words are used to make new words and concepts; and an encryption system of Temurah, in which letters are transposed into codes. They plays also a role in interpreting Torah and making talismans.

The Unwritten Kabbalah: The term "*unwritten Kabbalah*" is applied to certain knowledge which is never entrusted to writing, and only handed on orally and passed down through generation as "hearsay". I may say no more on this point, not even whether I myself have or haven't received it. As a matter of fact, until the second century nothing was recorded for Kabbalah in historical Judaism. Unwritten Kabbalah concerns the study of *Tree of Life* and is the most important practice among Jewish mystical traditions. Unwritten Kabbalah links Hermetic principles and philosophy together, creates a philosophical, mystical, and magical system for the practice of ritual magic and plays a practical role casting spells. This system, has been highly contemplated by Western scholars and sometimes it is called *Western Kabbalah*.

The Dogmatic Kabbalah: The dogmatic Kabbalah contains the doctrinal segment. It is a method of non-critical, non-historical, and metaphysical thoughts, based on dogmatic beliefs inclined to lay down as principles, that is, opinions, arguments, and beliefs. Dogmatic Kabbalah is to test on the basis of new knowledge as well as new practical teachings of Kabbalah and its epistemological value. There are a large number of treatises of various dates and merits which go to make up the written Kabbalah, but they may be reduced to four heads: the *Sefer Yetzirah*⁵ and its dependencies; the *Zohar* with its developments and

⁵ Book of Creation: the earliest book on Jewish mysticism

commentaries; the *Sefirot* and its expansions; the *Aesch-Mezareph*⁶ and its symbolism.

Once an oral tradition is thoroughly written down, many passages are preserved, and at the same time, many of them are likely to be omitted, in part, because of the scribe's purpose of organizing and sometimes systematizing large volumes of indigestible material, or perhaps the inability to link the mythological threads, legends and documented history that were once part of an inseparable plan. The word *monotheism*, which literally means "*believing in oneness of God*", does not only refer to the unification and denial of the inherent multiplicity of God, but it's also the belief in oneness of essential attributes with the divine essence and the negation of the superfluous attributes of God. According to the doctrine of Kabbalah, since all the names of God refer to the attributes with which He reveals himself among the creatures, so there is no certain name for the essence of God. As a consequence, when the followers of Kabbalah tend to be more precise and explicit in their words, they refrain from using names such as "*Yahweh*" and "*Elohim*" which is used in Torah to mention the *existence of God*, not to His essence. Just as human beings are made up of different inner traits or personality tendencies that all interact with each other, so God is also made up of different inner traits or as Kabbalists say "*drives*". The image used to describe the Sefirot and their relationship is often visual, physical, and even venerate. In fact, a Kabbalist, if he is sincere in his faith, can find all creation in even a single word of Torah.

There are 10 Sefirot in kabbala that are intricately layered, some calling them the "*Tree of Life*," and sometimes used as a common name to mention the Torah as well. These layers are: *Keter* (crown), *Chokmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (understanding), *Chesed* (love), *Gevurah* (strength), *Tiferet* (adornment), *Netzach* (eternity), *Hod* (glory), *Yesod* (foundation), *Malkuth* (sovereignty).

Shekhinah, literally translated as dwelling, is also another layer which describes the presence of God on earth and is also a symbol of manifestation of His presence. Shekhinah is used in Torah for the presence of God in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, Kabbalists

⁶ Literally means *Purifying Fire* is the first work on Kabbalah to be translated into Latin in the 16th century. The original Hebrew text, doesn't appear to have survived.

believe where there is such a presence, and connection with God is much easier. In Judaism, especially Talmud, Shekhinah is considered the feminine attribute of God and perhaps the spirit of God, which is capable of prophetic miracles. In Kabbalah, Shekhinah is considered as the feminine aspect of God which is associated with all the Sefirot. Each of these layers represents an aspect of divinity, an aspect of omnipotent powers. Kabbalists also mention any part of the body or distinctive aspects of human personality with specific colours and names. Based on doctrine of Kabbalah, as we accept that the Sefirot is God or is issued as a manifestation of the essence of God of Kabbalah, then we must consider the essence of God as a compound. If we go to the diagram of the Sefirot layers, the attributes of God are intertwined and interrelated with one another. According to the Kabbalists, every Sefirot contains all the other Sefirot attributes, in other words, each Sefirot represents a part of a whole and has an image of this wholeness within itself. By understanding their interrelationships we can understand the process of creation to some extent.

The Keter (crown - sometimes called *Keter Elyon*, the *supreme crown*) represents the first impulses of the will in divinity: an initial impulse that goes even further than thought and is necessary to perform any action. These initial impulses are also called ritual of “*nothingness*” since they originate from the infinite “*noughl*” created by deity. When Jews seek oneness with God through prayer or ecstatic meditation, they don’t desire this state, but seek to destroy the whole “*self*”. The name of God associated with the Keter *Ehyeh*⁷: which is what God says as He asks Moses who speaks to the burning bush: “*I will become what I choose to become*”. In some Kabbalistic scriptures, this Sefirot is associated with the letter Yud in the four commandments (the name of four letters of the unpronounceable name of God that is never said, but written in Hebrew as Yud, Hey, Vav, Hey⁸).

The Chokmah (wisdom) represents the first motivation for creation that is aroused within the Creator. This “*early Torah*”, the absolute divine wisdom, is the overwhelming of intuition and inspiration that precedes consciousness. In other words, Chokmah is the “*seed*” that fertilizes Binah as the first step in the process of creation. One aspect of God's infinity is that although He is genderless, He encompasses both

⁷ Roughly translated as “*I am what I am*”

⁸ Despite the spelling, most often it is pronounced *Adonai*.

masculine and feminine attributes. The name of God associated with Chokmah is Yah or Yod in the four Tetragrammaton commandments. The part of the body associated with Chokmah is the right hemisphere of brain and is represented in blue.

The Binah (understanding) represents a point at which divine inspiration emerges and takes on a definite form. Some refer to Chokmah as a contemplative and synthetic element of divine thought, and see Binah on the opposite as analytical and distinctive one. The highest feminine element of the Sefirot is Binah, which is the womb in which the Chokmah "*sperm cell*" is placed, from which seven lower Sefirot are born. In other words, Binah, which also translated as "*insight*" or "*discernment*", is the point at which the spark of intuition becomes a conscious thought. Binah is accompanied by "Hey" in four Tetragrammaton and with the name of Deity Elohim. In the body, Binah is usually associated with the left hemisphere of brain or forehead and is displayed in green. There are fifty gates of Binah in the teachings of Kabbalah, anyone receiving something from another, is indicated by the word *Dalet*. The name is derived from the Hebrew word "dalut" meaning "*poverty*" since the recipient has nothing of his own. This can be understood through conscious (Binah), therefore Binah is a recipient from Chokmah. Chokmah is indicated by Yud⁹ and is the first creature to emerge from "*nothing*". At the beginning of each letter is a dot, which is written by the letter Yud. So "*You create everything with conscious*". This is the very first stage of creation, bringing "*something out of nothing*" and therefore, the Yud is the smallest letter of all¹⁰.

The Chesed (love) represents the generous, benevolent aspect of God, and expresses the quality of unconditional divine love. Chesed is often translated as "*compassion*" or "*kindness*". Chesed is associated with the divine name *El* or *Elyon* (the supreme Deity) and is also associated with the right arm in human body and is represented in white. Kabbalists emphasize that Chesed is not just a romantic feeling or infatuation kind of love: it's the process of practical faithful and reliable love that only God has.

⁹ The letter Yud is written as a simple dot, which is Chokmah

¹⁰ According to the Rabbinicism, Yud is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet that symbolizes *nothing*, since it's so small, represents the supernatural, and the things that are above the physical dimension and appears twice in the divine name.

The Gevurah (strength) brings Chesed in balance. This side of God is for those who have a superficial understanding of the Bible as well as sacred scriptures; it's the essence of divine judgment. In Bahir (an anonymous scripture) Gevurah is Gabriel. It is believed without Gevurah, the world would be so immersed in the divine love then it would be re-absorbed back in the divinity. Without Chesed, God's judgment would let the destructive forces go in the world. It should be noted that the seeds of Sitra Achra (translated as "*the other side*" refers to evil forces) are also found in Gevurah. In the teachings of Sifrei Kodesh¹¹ ha-Zohar it is stated that overdo in Gevurah would lead to ultimate evil. It is balance of justice and mercy that is repeatedly evoked in Tanakh, Talmud and Midrash and its equipoise is the key to the prosperity of the world. This equipoise, which is necessary in the divine throne, is also necessary in human endeavour. Gevurah is associated with Elohim as a name of God and is located on the left arm of the human body, which is represented in red colour.

The Tiferet (adornment, also translated as *splendour*) is in the middle of the Sefirot tree, a balancing force between Chesed and Gevurah, who is in fact their offspring. This equipoise is essential for the proper functioning of the universe. Tiferet is a Sefira that unites the other nine higher layers so is considered the main attribute of God (in some versions of kabbala this attribute is mentioned as *merciful*). Tiferet, often associated with the written Torah (Tanakh), corresponds to the Tetragrammaton itself. In some systems, Tetragrammaton is associated with Tetragrammaton Vav. The torso is the part of human body that Tiferet represents and its colour is purple.

The Netzach (eternity) and Hod (glory) are counterparts: they can be considered more terrestrial versions of Chesed and Gevurah, respectively. The first shows God's active grace and benevolence in the world, and the second is the way God rules over earth. The Hod is also associated with the power of prophecy. Netzach and Hod are associated with the divine names YHVH Tsva'ot (Lord of Sabaoth) and Elohim Tsva'ot (God of Hosts¹²), respectively. Netzach is related to the right foot, and Hod to the left, but they are often associated with the left and right kidneys (in Talmudic mythology), testicles, or breasts (first the

¹¹ Scriptures of Jewish literature (generally works of Torah) that are considered sacred.

¹² Collective angles

sources of fertility, and the second alimnet). Netzach is represented in light pink and Hod in dark pink.

The Hod (glory) represents the lower channel through which Elohim's judgment comes down to the world, it is also associated with the power of prophecy as the *army of God*, which angels are among them too. Hod is the eighth Sefira of Kabbalah that sits below Gevurah and across from Netzach in the tree of life. As all the Sefirot are likened to different parts of human body, Netzach and Hod are likened to the (left and right) feet: while hands are the main implements of action, the feet are the implements of movement that help bringing a person to where he wishes to execute that action, and the combination of the two in Jewish mysticism is a symbol of prayer and ascension towards heaven. Prayer is seen as "*submission*" and yielding to a superior force. So on the contrary to Netzach, Hod is explained as an analogy - instead of "*conquering*" an obstacle in one's way - subduing oneself to that "*obstacle*" so is related to the quality of Hod. Hod is the widest sense can be ever given by any language, being the key to the "*mystery of form*". Our unconscious desires come from Netzach, and are shaped up in Hod, manifesting unconsciously through Yesod to Malkuth. As it is quoted, *Hod is like doing your dirty laundry*¹³

The Yesod (foundation) is a passage that links the other two middle faces of the "*tree*". In other words, it is the means by which Tiferet, the divine male principle, Shekhinah or Malkuth, conceives the manifestation of the divine female. Yesod is the way in which divine creation and fertility are revealed to all creation. According to Kabbalah, Yesod is the underlying basis upon which God has built the world. It also serves as a link between all the above Sefirot, and the reality below them. Yesod is a compound of Deity's names El Hai (living God), El Shaddai (omnipotent God), that correspond to it all. Yesod is associated with the phallus, its colour is orange, and the point at the bottom of the Vav in the Tetragrammaton.

The Malkuth (sovereignty) is the culmination of all the attributes of God and the recipient of all the forces that play a role in the subtle balance of universe: Malkuth is something as measured against other things that connects the eternal ruler to the earthly world. Malkuth is perhaps best known as the Shekhinah, or divine presence, the inherent

¹³ The first step: a guide for the new Jewish spirit, *Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*, Bantam Books, Toronto 1983

and feminine aspect of God, and is the way in which we experience the divine matter. Ancient scriptures say that when the Jews were in exile, Shekhinah travelled with them, and when their exile ended with the coming of the Messiah, wandering of Shekhinah would end. Unlike no other Sefirot, Malkuth is the only attribute of God that doesn't come directly from the *essence of God*, but from the *creation of God*. In some Kabbalistic traditions, Malkuth corresponds to legs, but in others it is said to be associated with mouth. It makes no difference which one is taken, both stand for the connection with earthly world anyway. Malkuth is associated with the name Adonai (our Lord) or the final Hey of the Tetragrammaton, and its colour is blue and black.

One of the most mysterious and powerful feature of the ten Sefirot is that while they exist separately, yet they are one. Even more confusingly, every single Sefira is a part of God, but at the same time each is God alone on its own. Sefirot are God's messengers or appendages: since God is infinite, God's energy is vast for the earthly world in which humans live. God used Sefirot to translate His infinite energy into worldly language. As a result, Sefirot are amorphous and composed solely of the energy that reflects the source of all of God's strength and vitality in the universe. That's why Kabbalists often describe Sefirot as light.

Kabbalah *Tree of Life* shows the importance of femininity and the attributes known to us as womanly characteristics. In the *Tree*, the masculine and feminine energies are complementary to each other, and despite the inherent differences, their interaction maintain the balance of the world, also propound the idea that "*mating*" is an essential activity in the process of universe. The masculine side of the *Tree* represents pure energy, which indicates the extent of the force. The left or feminine side however, indicates a constraint that includes steerage and direction of force from the right side. The two sides need and are necessary to each other in such a way that the absence of one will violate the existence of the other, and the product of this essential correlation between these two sides is "*growth*". The masculine and feminine energies of Keter, Chokmah and Binah combine to form up a force strong enough to create the other seven layers of Sefirot. These three Sefirot show how in Kabbalah the power of God comes from its masculine and feminine aspects. Nothing more than *Tree of Life* Sefirot distinguishes Kabbalah from other common religious thoughts. The foundational principle of Sefirot is that deity is made up of many things,

however, religions often insist that we should believe in only one God, a belief is known as monotheism. Polytheism (believing in more than one divine being) is completely unacceptable to religions, especially the Abrahamic religions, so many of them consider Kabbalah to be polytheistic due to its numerous Sefirot; since they consider each Sefira to be a sect with somewhat different belief. Kabbalists argue that the Sefirot and God are not two separate issues. Conversely, Sefirot originates from God, and represents different features of God, Kabbalists believe that the presence of God throughout the world is not always the same.

The medieval expression of Kabbalah is distinguished by its image of God¹⁴ as the ten hypostatic Sefirot that constitute divinity and the creation of universe; by reasoning however, a leading twentieth-century scholar of Kabbalah¹⁵ reveals the ontological adaptation of valid scientific disciplines and how they contribute to the understanding of Kabbalah as a real, objective, and tangible "*divine science*" in the modern age. So, one who begins to study this area must first learn all the designs, as well as how all the layers of the universe are stacked onto one another. These diagrams are important to Kabbalists since they are in stark contrast to their relative invisibility to hard science. As Scholem says, even when they are recognized as inherent features of Kabbalistic function, still they are rejected as "*concealing much more than they reveal*". Similarly, as a result of prejudices that strongly prefer word to image, scientific facts have been ignored by generations of science historians. However, this neglect was replaced by a steadily-growing-interest from about thirty years ago.

With the recent tendency to track down to the ancient sciences in order to discover more and more unknowns, the visual coordinates of Kabbalah have now found a place far beyond the concepts of theosophical based on their potential contribution. Many scholars examine the epistemological, hermeneutic, executive, and educational dimensions of Kabbalistic culture, and tend to reread the ancient scriptures of Kabbalah. Much of this work reveals the common discourse and schematic structures of Kabbalah through modern science. They've turned their attention to medieval resources to

¹⁴ צלם אלהים, a theological doctrine in Judaism (as well as Christianity, and some Sufi sects of Islam)

¹⁵ Gershom Scholem

examine the attribution of visual and rhetorical languages of astronomy and natural philosophy by classical Kabbalists and what it reveals, is about how they conceptualized their efforts. The fact that basic research on Kabbalistic diagrams - beyond systematic collection, classification, and grounding - began only a few centuries ago, not in modern era, yet does not negate their importance to Kabbalists scholars.

In this new perspective, we find the Kabbalah *Tree of Life* contemporaneous with the Bible, Talmud, and Midrash, and the outcome of their discourse is that heralds of those religions were aware of Kabbalistic cosmology. Even some age-old parchments that are now kept in museums around the world, confirm this fact too. Many diagrams of divinity reflect the specific epistemological, theological, and cultural orientations of their producers, which today are closely in line with recent scientific achievements. However, despite the great variety in the ancient scriptures attributed to numerous religions, what Kabbalists' Sefirot demonstrate for divinity, express more than any other modern science. Kabbalah refers to various expressions of medieval Jewish esotericism that portray God as the ten hypostatic forces influenced by human actions, whether positive or negative. These ontological attributes are originated from the divine genius and determine the structure of the universe from top to bottom. It was assumed that Sefirot, whether perceived as aspects of deity or as divine modes of action, were meaningfully arranged and are dynamically creative: their emergence, order, and interrelationships provide not only the key to the holy books of Quran, Bible, Torah, Tanakh, etc. but also to the *Book of Nature*¹⁶; and today this sequence can be explained in detail through the language of science.

But how do Kabbalists theologically distinguish between the two aspects of divinity? The "*true*" God, who was conceived as infinite and even called "*nothing*"¹⁷, and can be influenced by Maimonides' negative theology - and undoubtedly tries to develop this idea that it isn't possible for mankind to know God, so we can only say what God *is not*. Spontaneously, this dimension is far beyond imagination, and certainly can't be described the biblical character called "*God*". In Genesis, the

¹⁶ A 14th century book by Conrad Megenberg, which was, in a sense, the first book attempted to explain Kabbalah scientifically.

¹⁷ פ'ק

famous beginning of Zohar, "God" is read as a concealed subject. Sefer Yetzirah, a cosmological aphoristic work with an archaeological origin that has no analogues in mysticism and was common in the early tenth century, declared in an innovative tone that God created the universe in thirty-two amazing ways of wisdom (and in twenty-two letters of Hebrew alphabet) which are believed to be the ten Sefirot: the Kabbalists found it a plausible matrix on which to base their theoretical content. The ascension of the Sefer Yetzirah was surely due to the fact that it was regarded as a scientific work in a cultural context that the Jews could value on their own, and in point of fact granted it Sharia¹⁸ status and considered as a Jewish scientific work.

The ten Sefirot shared in Kabbalah theology, are more than just names and numbers that have been developed and are inaugurated as the basic elements of creation: according to Kabbalists, the higher Sefirot identify six vectors of three-dimensional space, two vectors (or endpoints) of time, and two vectors for valuation good and evil. The lower Sefirot however, are output nodes of an intricate network, ten features - perhaps not coincidentally identical to Aristotle's ten virtues - the endless creative potential that expresses a creator. These Sefirot, the reflection of which forms the heart of medieval Kabbalah theology, come with borrowed characteristics.

In contrast, the ten Sefirot of Kabbalah theology are abstract: none of them have intrinsic signs of places in space, whether in two or three dimensions, nor they even have an obvious relationship with each other. However, the earliest available Kabbalistic scriptures contain Sefirotic diagrams, and epistemological illustrations that are "explicitly made to accompany or even replace the explanations conveyed by speech or writing". Such diagrams must be understood in their literary and cultural context, so that Kabbalah has emerged through any classification, regardless of time and place. Kabbalah, something beyond philosophy, has been a sign of a deep partnership between philosophy and science, and the occasional conflict between those who, from either philosophical or scientific point of view, is perceived as "closeness/similarity" rather than "distance/difference".

According to many scholars, early Kabbalah may be understood as an expression of Platonic science rather than Aristotelian, which is

¹⁸ Religious laws of Islamic tradition

associated with most medieval Jewish philosophers. Early Kabbalists held the Platonic view that scientific knowledge was not related to the natural world known through the humans' five basic senses, rather, to rational forms, immortal, timeless, and immutable realities arranged in a hierarchical order. To put it in an uncompromisingly forthright way, Kabbalah constitutes the only comprehensible "*science*", but understanding such knowledge is only the privilege of God and a number of His companions. Obviously, the Kabbalists are among the companions of God, and their knowledge is the true knowledge of God. In Hebrew, Kabbalah was often referred to as a science¹⁹, to the extent that many Christian scholars accepted and even promoted such an understanding, perhaps the most famous among them is *Pico della Mirandola*, who stated that: *there is no science that affirms the divinity of Christ more than Kabbalah does.*

I emphasize this in order to continue my main argument: in giving a tangible idea to what Sefirot are, both conceptually and visually, Kabbalistic thought is the only discourse that can spell out the universe, science, and philosophy altogether. Astronomy gave Kabbalah the nesting circles of Sefirot, it then took the tree-like diagram from philosophy - in fact, the idea became so popular first, then it was given the name "*Tree*" and later on, inspired the pedigree chart, and ultimately, it was the "science" that incorporated the overlapping layers into Kabbalah. Kabbalah has been the only discourse that provided a defensible image of the true *constellation of Godhead*. Drawing Sefirot diagrams in concentric and overlapping circles confirms their cosmic priority and initial perfection. Kabbalists however, needed their embodiment more than the immutable perfection they could offer. After creating the concepts of Sefirot as categories of the element from which all creation came to being, the Kabbalists engaged in contemplating their interactions and dialectical compositions, and that's exactly what created the diversity of creation. Note the Kabbalistic *Tree*: It may look like the Porphyrian tree²⁰, but on a closer inspection we'd see that instead of reasoning from general to specific, it is categorized ontological elements arranged in triplets and a more productive way. Nabl and delta combine those contradictions and distinguish unity. The tree-like design provides a conceptual richness that is unattainable by astronomical circles and allows the Sefirot to interact dynamically

¹⁹ חכמה

²⁰ Also known as "scale of being"

and endlessly with each other. It is also possible to dismantle part(s) of the Kabbalistic tree in order to form the "*square of opposition*", another standard and perhaps the most pervasive syllogistic figure of medieval natural philosophy. I have tried to provide a comprehensive and abstract description of the classical Kabbalistic diagrams, which nevertheless, follow a specific scheme. This means setting aside a more detailed list of Kabbalistic iconography, as well as constantly addressing important questions from *place of life*²¹ and their various uses, from meditation, to memory, to magic and considering the very prominent issue of their media influence or *New Year of trees*²² as academic material.

It is certainly hard to accept that classic Kabbalists were serious followers of astronomy and natural philosophy, yet they nevertheless understood the basics of philosophy and astronomy scientifically. They didn't lay out any gap in the range of scientific activities, on the contrary, Kabbalah was for them a science arising from divine knowledge that revealed the truths of the universe to them, and they also opposed it simultaneously. So it's natural for Kabbalists to adopt the visual and rhetorical language of astronomy and philosophy - the most prestigious scientific disciplines of their times - in conceptualizing and transmitting this divine knowledge. Astronomy and philosophy were not what the Kabbalists would talk about, rather, it was the way they look at them. For Kabbalists - if not for philologists - the connection of Sefirot with concealed mystery of the universe has always been clear. The mystery that existed negatively even before the equilibrium of the universe was formed, and based on the *Tree of Kabbalah*, there's no other Sefira - as well as equilibrium by their formation in triplet - had not developed prior to the first Sefira but they exist within it, just as the tree exists in the seed from which it originates. In many early versions of Kabbalah, this Sefira is referred to as "*Ancient*", which means the first Sefira, the Keter, from which the idea of "*negative existence*" is interpreted with Eyn Sof²³. When it is balanced in the pure equilibrium: *and whensoever the white locks of the Ancient of Days*²⁴ *reach forward into Microprosopus, it is written that, Prov. i. 20: 'Wisdom crieth without...then are those letters equilibrated -*

²¹ Sitz im Leben

²² Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot (in Hebrew: ראש השנה לאילנות)

²³ God prior to any self-manifestation.

²⁴ A name for God in early scriptures.

that is, from their virtue cometh the light- *and these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites; Genesis 36:31*

Kabbala is the concealed mystery: it is the “*equilibrium of balance*” which means the harmony of any kind (symmetry, equilibrium, balance, conformation, order) results from the analogy of contraries, it is the dead centre where the opposition of opposing forces being equal in strength, rest succeeds motion. The term is applied to the two opposite natures in each triplet of Sefirot, the doctrine of “*equilibrium and balance*” is a fundamental Kabbalistic idea. According to Kabbalah, where there is a “*negative existence*”, the equilibrium is suspended.

Perhaps one of the key phrases in Kabbalah is *equilibrium of balance*, about which much has been said and written. But what is really meant by the terms “*equilibrium of balance*”? in short, equilibrium is a harmony which upshots from the analogy of contraries where there is no change with respect to time, *equilibrium* is a dead-centre where in the opposition of opposing forces with equal strength, rest is always succeed motion and if you consider a system in equilibrium then it's in a state in which all chemical, thermal, mechanical etc. opposing forces or influences are in fair proportions. It is the central point: it is a “*point within a circle*” from ancient symbolism. Equilibrium of balance is the live combination of counterbalanced components form a connected whole. Based on this definition, forms also can be described as the equilibrium of light and shadow. If you eliminate any of these factors and then, the form would be viewless and “unable to be seen”. That means there is no change in its potentials, and no flow in forces on that system at that moment.

The term balance however, simply means that there is equal distribution of quantities over a same entity. Thus, when we make a balance we assume that influx is equal to outflux. So in Kabbalah, it is applied to the two opposite natures in each triplet of Sefirot, their balance forming the third Sefirot in each triplet. I shall recur again to this subject in explaining the Sefirot. Perhaps the idea of equilibrium and balance is the most fundamental Kabbalistic doctrine; but before that we have to go to the concept of “negative existence” and explain it somehow.

Now, what is negative existence and what is positive existence? The distinction between these two is another essential nature of Kabbalah. Defining negative existence clearly is impossible, for when it is distinctly defined it ceases to be negative existence; it is then negative existence

passing into static condition. In other words, defining a “negative” existence is almost impossible since once an existence can be defined clearly, then it is no longer a negative one. So a negative existence is a positive one, which goes into a static state. Yet, if we think deeply, we shall see that "negative existence" is an unknown, nameless primordial form that more explicitly, we refer to as Godhead. He is absolute, but how do we define the absolute? Even when we define it, it goes beyond our comprehension, since our perception does not have the capacity to accept an "absolute" issue. When absoluteness is defined, it stops and then it no longer remain absolute. So do we want to say that a negative, infinite, and absolute phenomenon, is logically absurd, just because our intellect cannot define it? He is in all, distinct from all, and greater than all. His very name is ineffable; and yet this name only expresses the human ideal of His divinity. What God is in Himself, it's not given to man to know. God is the absolute of faith; existence is the absolute of reason, existence exists by itself, for the reason that it exists. The reason of the existence of existence, is existence itself. We may ask, why does any particular thing exist? That is, why does such a thing come to exist at all? But we can never ask without being absurd to do so, why does existence exist? For this would be to suppose existence prior to existence. For negative subsistence can never be anything but negative subsistence; it cannot vary, it cannot develop; for negative subsistence is literally and truly no thing. Therefore, negative subsistence cannot be at all; it never has existed, it never does exist, it never will exist. But negative existence bears hidden positive life in itself; for in the limitless depths of the abyss of its negativity lies hidden the power of standing forth from itself, the power of projecting the scintilla of the thought unto the utter, the power of re-involving the equilibrium into the inner.

In the doctrine of Kabbalah, there are three veils for negative existence that formulate the hidden ideas of Sefirot that haven't been called into being yet, that prevent them from being attained, which are concentrated in the Sefira of Keter which in this sense is Malkuth of the hidden ideas of Sefirot. The first veil of the negative existence is the Eyn (roughly translated as *nothing* and *lack*): it is the main divine source of all creation, as opposed to Eyn, which meant to be the infinitely insignificant. As stated in Zohar: before He gave any appearance to this world, before he create any form, He was alone, with no form and no resemblance to anything; now who can tell what He was like before creation? Hence, it is forbidden to consider him to have a form, or even to call Him by his sacred name, or to limit him by a letter or a dot; but

after He created the form of the *man of heaven*, He put on the form to come down, then He wants to be seen by this form, to be called by this sacred name "YHWH". In some other contexts of Zohar it is reduced to Eyn which means *nothing*. This means that the human mind is so limited that man's understanding of him is equal to negative existence. The word Eyn, which consists of three letters, also indicates the three Sefirot and the related numbers. The second veil is AIN SVP (Eyn Sof), consists of two parts, Eyn (nothing) and Sof (limited) which is the first stage of creation, and is the gathering of God, which creates an empty space. Which implies limitless and made up of three letters, and therefore overshadow the first three Sefirot or numbers. The third veil however, is the AIN SVP AVR, Ain Soph Aur which translated as *limitless light* and this again consists of nine letters that symbolizes the first nine Sefirot, but of course in their hidden idea only. Nevertheless, when we come to the number nine we cannot go farther without returning to the first number, which is the repetition of "*unity*" derived from the negative existence.

Of course, this is evident in Arabic numerals, where the circle represents the *Negative*, and the "*I the Unity*". This – as well as the ones before - arranged as if they were to depict the gradual growth of God from negative to positive existence. It describes when deity had just begun to manifest itself in its primal negative form; when it is balanced in the pure equilibrium. So according to Kabbalah, the universe is like a garment worn by deity; He is nothing, but at the same time He is not only contains all, but also He is all and exists in all. *That is, when the white locks of the most holy Ancient One send down the lights and names...*²⁵ then are those letters equilibrated. The "lights" and "names" are the ten Sefirot and the divine names associated with, which are comprehended in the Tetragrammaton IHVH: A righteous man, when praying sincerely, links the pathways. The number ten is *nothing* but a repetition of the unity formed only by negative existence, as is seen in Arabic numerals, the circle shaped 0 (zero) indicates the existence of negative and unity. It's *nothing* in value, but it identifies the other numbers as it stands next to them.

Now, we find that before the deity conformed Himself thus as male and female that the universe could not subsist, or, in the words of Genesis, "*the earth was formless and void.*" These prior worlds are

²⁵ The Book of Concealed Mystery, 2000, Bloomsbury Academic

considered to be symbolized by the “*these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites*” Genesis 36:31. And they are therefore spoken of in the Kabbalah as the “Edomite kings”. Therefore, the infinite ocean of negative existence does not emanate from a source, since there is no source, rather focuses on the providing a source, which is the first Sefira, the Keter. For that reason, it is to be the Malkuth (number ten) the Sefira hidden in veil. Then, “Keter is in Malkuth, and Malkuth is in Keter. In other words “heaven is on earth, but in a terrestrial way, and the earth is in heaven, but in a celestial way”. So, as it’s been illustrated before, Kabbalists see negative existence as an unspeakable subject that is by no means separate from unity, but see it exactly the same as existence. Accordingly, they applied the same terms and epithets indiscriminately to both negative and positive existence, such as: “*The Occult of the Occult*”, “*The Ancient of the Ancients*”, etc. The first principle and axiom of Kabbalah is the name of deity, translated in our version of Bible, “*I am that I am*”. A better translations are: “*existence is existence*,” and “*I am He who is*”. This can be synonymously seen as the same philosophical concept that Aristotle described as the “*unmoved mover*”, which implies as an “unmoved” that is the main cause of all movements in the universe; something that drives all movements but it never moves itself.

Once again, along the way as I reviewed the book, I found some definitions and key concepts - not necessarily wrong - but severely inadequate and lacking the quality required for the purpose. So I expand and explain them according to the book. The point is that the definitions and materials provided here are not my personal view, rather they’re adopted from classical philosophy and comprehensive in terms of encyclopaedic information of religions. I include my personal, impartial view within the final review.

Regarding the concept of faith, the book does not provide a significant account of the subject, this can be both because everyone understands the general meaning of faith, and so it can be attributed to the author's negligence. However, from a technical point of view, it require to be addressed more carefully. In the lexicographical sense however, faith is an acceptance that a statement about something is true, without the need for rational reasons and empirically provable means. But when it comes to “*having faith*”, there are intellect and mental capacity through which we can logically reach rational conclusions, and consequently faith. Faith can be described as a position that a particular claim cannot

prove by citing reason. Thus, it is believed to include a belief system that involves either making an absolute and explicit commitment from the believer. This basis for one's faith is usually derived either from the status of revelation or personal belief. This revelation is either through some kind of direct or indirect inspiration, such as the testimony of a higher source. As a matter of fact, as we see in the book, the author tries to validate faith by presenting scientific evidence and documents, and from this point of view, if the concept of faith is not expatiated on, it can be fall in contradiction with the definitions provided by the author.

Faith is a broad term that expresses a range of different abstract ideas. In the sense of the book, faith means "*trust*", yet, this concept is specifically related to religious faith. From a philosophical point of view, religious faith (a theistic position involve belief in a deity) is a term that deals exclusively with religions understood in the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and Abrahamic traditions. But the question also arises as whether faith – with the same definition – applies to other atheistic contexts that are not usually considered as religious or not? Undoubtedly, while reading the book, this question comes around as to whether it is possible to speak of faith of a humanist or even an atheist with the same definition and using the same general meaning of faith used for theism? In my view, there is no single "established" term to define the concept of faith. For instance, the belief in the existence of God through obtaining the knowledge about certain truths revealed by God, is entirely different from the "emotional" faith as a feeling of certainty of the existence of an issue, like security or something. Belief in God means trusting in His wisdom and mercy, which is not a proposition, but the "*self*" of God. While emotional faith is in fact a statement that can also be translated as "hope". The concept of religious faith, which is more prominent here, means to accept the statement provided by sacred traditions, without any argument. However, there is a broad distinction between faith as an individual state of mind, and faith as a practical action, which is part of one's journey in life.

From a religious point of view, faith is a state in which a person finds himself, and this includes doing the things he is required to do. In Christianity, for example, faith is a gift from God; but in Islam, religion is seen as a "need" for mankind so faith is a "must" for him. But whichever one we consider, the main criteria of faith is understood by satisfaction, in terms of that their faith is something that they are

satisfactorily and receptively active in. Nonetheless, whether we consider faith as a gift to be received or as a venture to be practiced, there are obvious tensions between the two. One can therefore expect the book's account of faith to clarify this apparent contradiction. Of course, the book provides a principle for classifying all models of faith, based on which the identification of active components in faith and how to recognize them, and that principle is "*satisfaction*". Which, of course, is quite true at this level (but not sufficient).

Enumerating the different types of faith that are differently known and emphasized in three general categories of emotional, cognitive and practical in this book and theory, can be very useful. These types can be seen from the author's preferred perspective and in accordance with his approach in the main discussion of the theory. One of the factors of faith however - which many philosophers believe that faith should be identified with such a state - is a special kind of emotional psychological state. That is, a state of feeling of confidence and trust. In this sense, faith provides a valuable basis for florescence and prosperity: its loss is equal to a psychological breakdown and usually known as the "*loss of faith*". While theistic faith is basically just faith in God, without its validity and truthfulness is evaluated or its deliberate purpose is valued. Therefore, it can be argued that faith can not necessarily be reduced down to something completely emotional, and some cognitive components are required to achieve it. Now the question arises that what kind of cognitive component belongs to faith? Can faith be identified as the knowledge of "special truths" revealed by God? In answer to this question, some philosophers define faith as a knowledge based on God's mercy to His believers, based on His promise - through Christ, or other saints of God – incarnated in our minds.

So far, faith can be considered as a dependence on a particular cognitive source, even if its truth is not fundamentally deductive for the believer. Some philosophers²⁶ have called this feature "sense of divinity"²⁷ , which refers to belief in the acquisition of a knowledge that God designed it for this purpose only. Christians, for example, believe that the Holy Spirit provided the Gospel to believers through Christ in order to reveal great truths. Primarily, faith means appealing to a higher God-

²⁶ Including John Calvin

²⁷ It's also called "*seed of religion*"

given cognition that philosophers such as Al-Ghazali refer to as *Deliverance from Error*. Although he had studied philosophy, he was deeply sceptical of the effect of philosophy on religious belief, in the second half of his life however, he suffered a mental crisis of doubt and abandoned everything and became a wandering ascetic. Finally, he introduces himself as a seeker philosopher. He believed that a philosophical search is a kind of search that, wherever it begins, must end in a journey; like a ship in the ocean that does not find a port to anchor. Therefore, faith is a kind of epistemological cognition in which there is a certainty that eliminates doubt. On the other hand, faith can not necessarily be limited to cognition, if, as in Al-Ghazali's case, the knowledge of faith is not only "incarnated in our minds" but also "sealed to our hearts" since, according to this model, faith is also involved an evaluative emotional component that includes the acceptance of the received knowledge. This model of faith shows that particular knowledge and something to receive. Christians, for example, may believe that in their sinful state, they are compelled to offer resistance to their faith, which they may be able to overcome only by the grace of God. Another key concept that may contribute to religious beliefs, stems from our ability to humanize objects. Like you may see an apparition of a person who later you find out that it is actually just a coat hanging on the wall. This capacity to attribute human characteristics and behaviours to inhuman things shows that we can easily attribute the same characteristics of ours to non-human beings and appraise them as gods, thus making it easier them to comprehend. Another thing that defines faith in the field of epistemology is intellect. In the field of epistemology, it seems that faith involves some sort of perception that goes beyond what is usually defined by intuition, in this sense, faith involves the acceptance of something that cannot be achieved through human cognitive abilities: the truth of faith cannot be established through "brain-based skills", but it can be perceived by intuition without any recourse to conscious reasoning. As Immanuel Kant puts it in a forthright way: *I have found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith*²⁸, succinctly expresses his attitude towards faith. However, theistic philosophers usually want to show that faith is by no means contrary to reason. Either way, of course, rational faith must also conform to an intuitive principle, since rationality requires to be based upon credible evidence.

²⁸ Critique of Pure Reason

Now, according to what has been said, faith conflicts with rationality, and taking a particular position on faith and reason would be different. This creates a brand-new division of faith. This new division of faith also brings a new branch in epistemology, according to which, ordinary cognitive abilities do not acquire a specific knowledge of theistic truths, they produce a higher cognitive power which compensates this contradiction and guarantees faith: if faith is derived from beliefs that have an epistemic status for us, then surely it cannot be irrational.

As Alvin Plantinga states, the rationality of belief in God as "*without any evidence or reason*" that is met non-inferentially in the believer, as soon as a way is found to rid the cognitive powers of empirical evidence, the rational requirements for rational faith are also met. If faith is not based on theistic truths as a "knowledge", then it can be said that it is relevant as a goal and will be merely a belief with a theological content - that God exists, He is benevolent to us, He has a plan of salvation, and so on and so forth - then a person of faith is one who has only a theoretical belief in the existence of God. This type of faith is based on theological beliefs, and if such beliefs are based on rational evidences, they may become the knowledge of the erroneous epistemology of contemporary "justified correct beliefs". In any case, the rationality of faith in this form depends on the extent to which the relevant beliefs can be substantiated by evidence. Some philosophers argue that the truth of theism is based on vague evidences - that is, all available evidences are interpreted in a same way. For example, theism based on evidence - or the presumption of evidence - the correctness of phenomena such as the resurrection is likely to get into question against scientific constants such as physics and mathematics, and theistic belief will no longer be reasonable. In this model of faith as acceptance, the only thing that separates faith from its theological content is the strength with which only the propositions of faith are true. Just as a firm belief in correctness of a scientific claim is not counted as "true" simply just because of the lack of appropriate content, This faith, therefore, shares its view of theological content with "special knowledge" as what gives rise to theistic faith, and thus rejects the theory that the same faith are found in theistic religious traditions can be found elsewhere. This assumption leads those who think that theological claims are not logically accepted on the basis of evidence, to consider it worthless and intellectually shameless.

Now with this assessment, faith is something you believe, while you know it is not true; or if believers simply abandon theological explanations, whenever they fail in opposition of compelling scientific facts, their God will be reduced down to "God of the gaps". This shows that certain theological claims that are considered real hypotheses, are well supported by all available evidence. However, those who doubt that this condition exists, or can be met to exist at all, may view faith as a model whose cognitive content plays a role other than an explanatory hypothesis just as scientific hypotheses do. Therefore, faith as confirmation of "truth" based on trusted source of divine revelation is possible only for those who only believe in the existence of God and whose faith has been revealed through the relevant sources. The question now is whether such a belief that - imagining a possibility rather than reality - supported by the arguments of theology and alleged evidence for the miraculous confirmation of prophets that God exists and that religion is His means of communication with mankind? In this case, faith may have a purely rational basis. But it is hard to accept that this argument comes true for all believers, because not all those who believe in such evidence necessarily have access to it, or if they do, they cannot properly evaluate it. Moreover, and more importantly, even if a rational evaluation of the available evidence may lead one to faith, one never thinks that such evaluation can ever satisfy him - only proof can achieve it and therefore a higher level of proof is required. For that reason, all believers need God's grace: satisfaction with faith, which is its main foundation, is the God through whose grace we move from inside.

The justification of belief in the existence of God is a seminal issue in the philosophy of religion. However, theistic traditions always claim credible sources. What is undeniable is that this is not just a matter of believing in God, rather, it is the belief that God exists and that His word and wisdom are revealed by the prophets through the sacred scriptures. Thus the rationality of theism is as much related to the metaphysics of existence as it is to the rationality of the epistemology of revelation, and raises the question of how one can expect the "hidden" God to identify Himself to His creatures. This argument holds that a loving God makes His existence possible to see only for those who don't resist knowing Him - such a claim, however, can be another point of contention. Theologians believe that God provides only "hidden" evidence of His existence, and deliberately satisfies our "cognitive" expectations, and that, in addition, considerable limitations

arise in individuals to allow unambiguous divine revelation to finite minds.

Another issue of faith is trust: something crucial in theistic faith that may be replaced with "*trust in God*" instead of "*faith in existence of God*". It can be argued that in this context, "*belief*" is neither a term of "*believing in God*" nor it can be reduced down to that. Thus, the acceptance of divine revelation as an indisputable truth is based on belief in God by believers, and it is a "*belief*" blended with "*trust*" that shapes the nature of faith. While "*faith*" is a virtue, "*believing in faith*" is not. In other words, a belief is not faith, as long as "*trust*" isn't merged into it. So faith is a practical attempt, not necessarily a state of mind. What is practical faith in God? Believing in God means making a practical commitment - in a way that involves trust in God, or in other words, a firm belief in the reliability of God. In the New Testament, *Pistis* - a Latin word, for trust and reliability - is synonymous to *faith*. Faith then, goes along with trust that counts as reliability, not just an emotional state, rather, as a practical application of trust. In this type of faith, being "*practical*" is the basis of faith, and "practicality" is the greatest principal, however, it may also be its default cognitive components too.

As mentioned, the practical application of "*faith*" is closely associated with "*trust*". Therefore, it is worth paying attention to the nature of faith that is also considered as a kind of trust in Theism. Conceptually, a person trusts an agent - trustee - for some desirable, assumed results. Then trust involves a venture; and so faith does. Faith therefore, is the capital of any kind of venture in trust. A venture is an action that puts the person and the results he is considering, significantly in control of the agent. The trust is the same as venture: when we trust, we commit ourselves to another's control, we accept the decisions of the trustee, and we cooperate "*patiently*" if needed. Trust means reliance on the assumption that someone is about to do something for you that he knows you need it. Especially when there is insufficient evidence to make this assumption, and there is no sign of how he can fulfil his obligation too, and the fear that if this assumption is wrong, it will have bad consequences, so the issue of "*trust*" would convey an impression to be dangerous. But *faith* needs no reliable evidence, and yet it requires trust of the believer to accept the risk of vulnerability to seemingly unexpected intentions. The consequences of this problem may be avoided by arguing: when one can reasonably trust another? Should a trust be held by theoretical calculation? Should credible evidences be

considering first? Is there a potential high risk of the outcomes if I place my trust in it? So it may make no sense in some cases to trust someone when there is little reason to trust him, but we have to do since only by doing so, a valuable result can be achieved. But when it comes to practical faith, it's a virtue as we pin our trust in God in such circumstances, without any prior evaluation or estimation. However, there's still a significant difference between trust with theistic faith, and interpersonal trust. It seems that venture in a loan is not a real risk if God is really trustworthy, and being aware of that is faith. As God declares: "*motherly care may be stopped for the baby she gives birth to, she may be forgetful, but I will remember you, because my love is an unchangeable love*". Given the existence of a God as unchanging love, man ultimately trusts a full course security. By venturing in faith, we actually challenge ourselves to God so we can accept that there really is such a trustworthy God. While many people already have enough evidence to support this claim, others however, as mentioned earlier, believe that everyone should test the validity of fundamental theistic claims with a positive ambiguity.

For those who think that the existence of God as saviour cannot be rationally resolved on the basis of available evidence, venturing on his trust may not be a venture with sanity and common sense. There is a God in this belief and it may be possible to rely on Him for salvation, but trusting in God in a situation beyond the plausible evidence seems to be quite risky, in other words, there is a trust in God, but, if so, the question would be whether and under what circumstances one might be enter to such a venture beyond the evidence. Many reject this idea that one may not dare to risk a trust while still believing in God: ventures are voluntary, but believing in outcome, is not directly in control of the volunteer. But trusting in God requires a practical commitment to the truthfulness of the statements of theological faith – as well as commitment to the truthfulness of the statement in practical reasoning may be under direct voluntary control. Placing trust on the statements of theological faith, is exactly the same as practical faith.

Another remarkable essential of faith is hope. Some philosophers suggest that the epistemological challenges of advancing the statements of faith (as belief) by interpreting the theistic commitment to hope beyond the evidence, should be avoided. Theistic hope does not seem to be mere "hardship" and "stick to one's hopes", rather, the attitude is more complicated. For example, some suggest that one who hopes to keep his life open to a statement of faith, it has no place for him, nor

does he think so. Hope sees him as constructively related to his own well-being or his concept as a person. Through this argument, hope sits higher than faith. That is, both epistemologically and religiously superior to faith. On the other hand however, by no means faith is understood as competing with hope, but some philosophers identify faith with "a hope that the claims of faith are true".

Unlike trust, hope is more of an attitude rather than a practical commitment, and at least in this respect it contradicts the attitude of faith, that is, it has little meaning as a response to the discovery of the goal is one's faith. In fact it is really so, while there is no need for anything inappropriate in fulfilling one's hopes, it can exist in any situation and doesn't require any special prerequisites. Hope is an optimistic state of mind based on expecting positive results from the given events and conditions, which is in fact roots in trust, and is sometimes the main motivator of practical faith. In other words, hope is defined as the perceived ability to extract pathways towards desired goals and to motivate one's faith through worship in order to get and use those pathways. Faith is the confidence and reliability of a person, thing or belief that is not based on evidence. Hope is an optimistic mental attitude based on an expectation, faith says it is so now, and hope says it will always be so.

In fact, the main source of hope is in the worldview we get at life for what we gain – or expect to gain - from this life. Hope says that believer's intellectual path must be aligned with faith - and not just hope alone. The bible declares, *faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrew 11:1*. Faith is the essence of all that we hope for, which means that we must have a mind-set based on faith to receive what we need from God. We must truly be aware and believe that what we have in mind and focus as belief, is what will "*definitely*" become the case. Hope speaks of what is to come, yet faith speaks of what is here in life NOW. Hope is the seed of faith: so when hope is established in faith, we will begin to see the growing fruit from the seed of our thought. We sow seeds every day, even when we think we don't. Our thoughts are the seeds of our lives, so what else do we do? For that reason, *hope* is a more appropriate model of *faith*. Some may find faith in practicing hope or inspired by it. Such a faith that contains belief and trust but is free from hope, will be nothing more than a risky model of *faith*. Those who believe in God, but are always hesitant in *trust*, are those who have not yet attained the hope of faith. Furthermore, hope

without faith, and only acting out hope for the "*existence of God*", violates the correctness of this claim in practical reasoning, but this violation may be indistinguishable at the level of behavioural consequences. A model of faith as "*practical hope*" also sets aside the "*emotional certainty*" that is widely thought to characterize faith, and is always the same as risky ones: *blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God. Psalm 146:5*

Another important subject that must be issued here, is faith itself as a virtue. Faith has traditionally been considered as one of the theological virtues. If we accept that a virtue is a "personality trait that demonstrates, or promotes the response to one or more essentials", then God-believing faith is qualified since it is "a response to hope and practical trust". Provided that, the claims of theistic faith are fairly true. If it is also accepted that faith can be ill-advised, evil-purposed, or whatsoever that lead to a "false end", correspondingly, faith will no longer be considered a virtue, since it means a belief in something wrong or malevolent. To be virtuous, faith must be regarded in a morally good deity: it is faith in God that is theologically a virtue, and not necessarily any faith in anything. More generally, faith is only virtuous when man deserves it. Therefore, describing a conditions in which faith is permissible is the key to the ethics of faith. In the case of various models of faith as a special kind of knowledge, or as a firm belief, it may seem confusing that how faith can be considered a virtue - unless such models are specifically studied further, then some implicit practical components also emerge. For example, there may be a case with the claim that what is "involuntary" may be commendable too. Models of faith do not necessarily provide sufficient non-circular conditions for entitlement as knowledge or belief, unless the truth of their statements is proved by reasoning and independent evidence. If faith is to be considered a virtue of the "pious" type, then it seems that there must be adequate degrees of stability made in their commitment. Faithful people are loyal to the subject of their commitment, although the salient type of loyalty may be due to the constant renewal of faith rather than maintaining it unchanged. The Bible defends loyalty as a "collective" virtue such as courage, arguing that it is a "personality virtue" for a person of faith.

Don Quixote, for example, which is discussed in the book, is a very good example of the function of "faith": According to the novel, Don Quixote is practically a symbol of one who is got behind the social

relations of his time and lives in a figment of his overheated imagination, in other word, he lives by his own "*faith*". The cultural and political relations that govern Don Quixote's world come directly from his belief and have absolutely nothing to do with the real world. For example, somewhere in the first parts of the novel, Don Quixote walks into a roadside inn to rest and recover from the day's journey, but because of his faith he "believes" himself to be a drifter warrior, he considers the place to be a castle and the person in charge to be the caretaker of the castle, along with noble ladies of the court. He sees the dog food to be a delicious fried salmon! This is exactly the concept of faith that almost all philosophers agree on: we are what we believe we are, and many religions have emphasized the same. The most important characteristic of Don Quixote is that he lied so "seriously" that he took his figments as faith, in other words, Don Quixote believes in what he think he is, and as the story goes on, we see despite he's never been in any real war before, he manifests a courageous and fearless warrior. This is the function of "faith" in human life, which the author also eloquently describes. Needless to say, I don't mean to use the story of Don Quixote mentioning the idiosyncratic side of belief, rather, I use it as a case study exemplar from the book in order to express how faith functions. Of course, Don Quixote's can also be used on the other way around, as an exemplar of "*faith*" as a "*false idea*" that also discussed before.

Now the principal question is what is the potential scope of faith? In some models, the faith that is associated with theism is the criterion of faith. In theism, "special knowledge" and "belief" are inherently linked to theological content. The theological content of Christianity can be defined as a single set of teachings that are transmitted to the favoured minds of mankind through the application of divine grace. However, true faith can be materialized in different ways, on different objects, which are incompatible with each other. This pluralism is an important feature of faith reports. John Dewey strongly rejected the concept of faith as a special kind of knowledge, and also that his "justification of faith" was based on a permissible thesis, under which diverse and conflicting faith obligations may be equally identical. If faith is understood as a commitment beyond objective testimony to the truth of some general interpretations of experience and reality, then all those who commit themselves to such a worldview, will be faithful people. Faith of this kind may be religious, and of course it may also be off theism, like classical Buddhism or Taoism. Some have argued that faith

is a universal human affair: for example, Cantwell Smith describes it as the "planetary feature" including the capacity for perception, symbolism, and rich in terms of transcendent dimension of life for the mankind. There may also be secular faith: for example, "scientific atheists" or "naturalists" may be making some sort of faith ventures as they imagine something to find there is nothing more that can actually be discovered by the natural sciences. However, those who maintain the "*assumption of atheism*" resist the suggestion that disbelief is based on a venture of faith. In any case, the danger of an atheistic faith may be strangely described, as it provides no basis for practical hope or trust. Providing such a foundation may be necessary for a reasonable faith - the truth to which the venturer is committed must be existentially important; that is, it's existentially important and necessary. Some argue that the truth accepted by faith must be a "saving" truth - the solution to deep problems of the human condition. So their view is that faith is essentially religious, and then they enter into a debate about which religion offers the best solution to the human problems.

Schellenberg's argument is that the only kind of religious faith that can be justified (if it exists) is a sceptical fundamentalism in which one comes up with an imaginative value of metaphysical, axiological concept, and considers it as real: an ultimate soteriological reality. Nevertheless, some may argue that a vital existential faith that underpins hope can belong to a purely secular context too - that is, without being recognizably "religious" in a distinct sense. Cantwell Smith, for example, argues that "*the Greco-Roman heritage and its fertile role in Western lifestyle can be seen as one of the core spiritual traditions of our world*" and suggests that the secular equivalent of faith in God, which we have in ethics as well as in our need of science or the acquisition of knowledge, is faith in human society and its evolving practices. More broadly, some believe that meaningful spirituality is compatible with a secular atheistic naturalism, and see something like faith as a necessity for spirituality. Robert Solomon, for example, sees spirituality as "the great, thoughtful interests of life" and argues that "living according to those feelings" requires us to see the world as "benign and meaningful life" a sad fact that should be accepted and never be denied. So we see that faith is not only a simple and superficial concept, but also contains many intricate components, the defect of each can disrupt its overall process. In addition, faith itself is part of the same structural component of faith, and not necessarily just a belief in God or religious conviction, but anything that falls within the scope of these attributes will be

considered within the bounds of faith. As we saw in the description of Kabbalah, faith is a double-edged sword that can both be exalting and awakening evil in man.

One more important concept that readers will come across while reading through the book, is salvation. I found it necessary to be explained a little bit more, since I guess knowing its conception will surely help the reader to get a reasoned understanding of the book, especially when it comes to the parts dedicated religions. The author's final conclusion about the common concepts, I have to say, is quite correct, however, as in the previous cases, the information provided here is quiet insufficient. As we know, there is far more misinformation than information about conceptions such as salvation. I believe that the information grounding must be presented in order to ultimate conclusion can be reached. For this reason, I first provide necessary groundings and then examine the author's perception. Once again, the material presented here, are by no means my personal view, rather the information are validated by authoritative resources. In cases where the content provided contains my personal opinion, it will be explicitly stated.

Technically, salvation is a term – mostly religious - that describes protection oneself from harm which refers to the act of saving the soul from sin or suffering. The term is shared in almost all belief systems, from Abrahamic religions to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. The means to attain salvation varies in different sects and religions, some by practicing yoga and meditation and some by worship. Some have also recommended certain rituals to achieve salvation, but the basics are always the same. Generally, four ways are suggested for salvation: in some beliefs, self-sacrificing deeds for a greater purpose without expectation of any personal gain, lead to salvation; in others however, knowledge, philosophy, and persistent study are recommended; Abrahamic religions ordered God worshiping to reach salvation, as says: *for it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- Ephesians 2:8*. In some religions also, salvation is achieved through the practice of yoga and meditation techniques.

But the salvation which neither I nor the author speak of here, is by no means what is frequently said as going to heaven, eternal happiness and so on. It is not even the soul's going to paradise, or a blessing on the

other side of death. Rather, we are concerned only with that salvation which is directly consists of two general parts, justification and satisfaction.

Salvation is the freedom of mankind from atrocious conditions of hardship, iniquity, and death. Also, salvation is advancement from the earthly world towards a higher realm. The idea of salvation is a philosophical concept that has been - and still is - a deep human concern. It can be logically argued that the primary goal of all religions is to provide salvation for their followers, but there are differing views among them regarding the attainment of salvation. However, the fact that salvation can be used meaningfully in connection with many religions shows that this common concept between people distinguishes a wide range of cultural traditions. The basic idea of salvation is to be saved from doom and gloom, which technically implies that humanity is already in such a condition. This includes a series of related hypotheses about mankind and the hidden power he believes to control his future life events. The myths of creation in many religions express the beliefs about the condition of mankind when he first fell downwards from. Many of these myths conceive of an idyllic condition at the beginning of the world, when early humans lived in peace and happiness, free from disease, declining and death, in harmony with the divine order. In such myths, the idyllic state is usually torn down due to the wrongdoings of human beings, and as a result, evil, disease, and death entered the world. Perhaps, one of the most famous of these myths, is the story of Adam and Eve, and now salvation must be achieved through the repentance of humanity and God's forgiveness. Zarathustra says that everything He created is pure and should be treated with love and respect, so asks human beings to align themselves with the goodness embodied in the God the "*Wise Lord*", because their salvation in the victory of the cosmic principle of good over evil is embodied in demon "*evil spirit*". Thus, once again, the concept of salvation in Zoroastrianism is in fact a return to the perfection of everything. Even some ancient theologians (mostly Christians) envisioned an ultimate salvation in which even evils as well as mankind would be saved. Of course, this idea was condemned by the church as heresy.

In all Abrahamic religions human beings are supposed to be essentially spiritual beings, so salvation requires the resurrection of body and soul to reunite, and this is the prelude to their ultimate salvation (or curse).

In contrast, there are other religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism, suggest that the "body" which is the dwelling place of evil, in which the soul is trapped and is a perishable substance. Then, salvation in these religions basically means to set the soul free from the body lock-up and let it return to its ethereal home. Such religions generally suggest that the physical body is the source of evil. The doctrine of Abrahamic religions (especially Christianity) link the destiny of individuals with the cosmic order and considers the resurrection, with the Second Coming of Christ to be the end of the world, and souls will resurrected to be reckoning for their deeds. So it will lead to the eternal happiness of those whose souls are purified in purgatory, and the eternal curse will fall on the wicked. As already mentioned in the discussion of faith, hope is also an important part of the religious rituals that encompasses the "*hope of salvation*" as well. However, the idea of achieving salvation is different in various belief systems, but the tools and methods can be divided into three important categories: The most common is the belief in the effectiveness of ritual magic such as the rituals of the ancient mysterious religions. Salvation through personal effort, usually through the acquisition of esoteric knowledge, ascetic discipline, or heroic death (as martyr), is also another way to attain salvation in some religions. Expecting a "*divine saviour*" to save people who cannot do anything for themselves, as suggested by Christianity, Judaism and Islam, is another way of achieving salvation.

Death has always been a source of human concern. Preserve from disease or misery, became relatively less important, although it often expresses more immediate concerns. But death has a different order for mankind because of his deep awareness of the issue of "*time*" and his ability to comprehend the pace of life. This awareness of "*time*" that doesn't exist in any other creature with such a clarity, enables man to use the experiences of the past in present and to plan for possible future events. But this has also given him another ability: understanding the pace of life makes mankind aware that they are exposed to a process that brings them change, aging, decay, and ultimately death. So man knows something that no other creature is aware of - that they are mortal. By projection, man can predict his death. Man's death rituals and burial ceremonies from the past to the present bitterly show that death has been his greatest concern ever since mankind was able to record history. As we know, inhumation is not done any creature other than human and has a history as age-old as man himself. Thus the idea of death is inextricably linked to human awareness of time. The

inevitability of death has led man to think of salvation and consequently led him to provide a deeper analysis of his situation in the world. Man's obedience to time is the real reason for the evil that has befallen him and accordingly, in chasing to avoid death, man has enslaved to the destructive cycle of time. How death can be avoided has been thought in various ways in different cultures, the oldest known examples are found in the religious scriptures of ancient Egypt. So, man lives in a state of existence beyond change. As mankind is forced to obey the inevitable law of time and death, his subsequent attempts to manage and master "*time*" in order to avoid death have created the importance of "*the great unknown*" and consequently, the issue of salvation.

Such attempts to understand the "*time*" are generally based on the idea that the wheel of time proceeds in a recurrent cycle, not in linear direction. In this sense, the belief in Metempsychosis (transmigration of the soul) can be easily applied, because the idea that souls go through a set of incarnations, becomes more comprehensible in the recurrent cyclical process of time. Provided that, this trend to be seen periodically and in accordance with the cycle of time that seemingly reigns the world. This concept has been explained in many ways in numerous religions including Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism shares doctrine of Samsara, where all beings pass through a never-ending cycle of birth, death and rebirth until they find a way of setting themselves free from the cycle and flee to the safe world of Nirvana to be saved, otherwise, he would stay by Avidya (ignorance) in the suffering world of karma. Buddhists find their salvation within Nirvana where the fire of greed, disgust, and ignorance is put out. Then the human is re-born again and as Richard Gombrich says, this "sorrowful weary wheel" emphasizes how the soul is doomed to endure a series of infinite torments over and over. In these systems it is interpreted that by accepting the physical world as reality, the soul becomes a subject to the wheel of time.

Man's spiritual need for salvation generally comes from focusing on the soul's involvement with matter, which is also introduced as the cause of human misery. The sharp distinction between soul and matter is the main reason for this need: that is, soul is inherently good and transcend, while matter is essentially evil and corrupting. Through the material body, humans become a part of earthly world and participate in the process of its fertilization, growth, decline and death. Many myths seek to explain how the soul is trapped in the body. Even for the phenomenon of fertilization and sexual intercourse, stories are often

told to explain how the soul intervenes in matter and becomes the source of creation. Even some belief systems attribute illness and sickness affecting the body or mind to gods and human creation. That's why salvation is generally conceived as the soul disembodiment from body and the earthly world and suggest that soul can be existing without the body. Surprisingly, some mystical and theosophical beliefs even use planetary powers that are thought to be in control of human destiny in the universe. The idea that mankind is in a dire situation and struggling to break out, doesn't necessarily explain the reason why. The reasons presented in different religions are generally divided into two categories: one attributes the cause to some primary negligence of mankind and holds human responsible for it. Another considers mankind to be a victim of Satan's deception and malice. In contrast, the Hebrew story of Adam and Eve that God created them to live in peace in the Garden of Eden, but they demoted from that position by eating the forbidden fruit, and the present world was formed full of suffering and injustice. Although mankind is afraid of death, yet it is hardly seen as a natural phenomenon. The causal relationship between sin and death is described by St. Paul; according to his doctrine, every human being must share in Adam's sin since they have a common identity with him, means a child even at birth and before actually committed any sin, deserves the wrath of God in advance for Adam and Eve's sin. Since each person inherits the sin of Adam and Eve, moreover to being a partner in their original sin, he also has an innate tendency to sin. This doctrine denotes that one cannot save oneself by will and effort, as opposed to, one's salvation is determined entirely by the grace of Christ the Saviour. Wherever human nature, the fear of death, and the afterlife are regarded in a particular light, there is also a need for salvation. In each of these belief systems, the means by which salvation can be achieved are closely related to how salvation is defined, and what is considered to be the reason for man's need for it. Thus, in ancient Egypt, for example, they believed when one dies the soul still needs a body to travel towards salvation, and if one's body rots after death, the soul is condemned to wander alone forever and will never be saved, that's the reason why they invented an elaborate mummification method to save the body from disintegration and could be kept in a well-equipped tomb. Ritual magic is also used in those religions that oblige believers that they are to be born again, for example, baptism in water in Christianity or in bull's blood in cult of Cybele, etc. and by symbolic communion with a deity through a ritual meal in Eleusinian

Mysteries, Mithraism, and Lord's Supper. In all these belief systems, the ritual of salvation is formed through a gradual process, over many generations and has been evolving. In ancient Egypt, for example, the salvation rituals were first associated with the divine kingship of pharaohs, and over time developed into an official ritual, then turned into a mortuary cult, and in the end only those who could afford to pay, could hope to enjoy their salvations. Another examples can be religions that see the root of all human sufferings as a kind of ignorance, and offer a certain knowledge that guarantees salvation. Such knowledges are esoteric and usually offered as "*divine revelation*". Whereas, the knowledge provided includes mystical techniques designed to achieve salvation, in many other belief systems. Whenever mankind needs divine help in order to reach salvation, a one who has a special relationship with the respective deity is introduced as *saviour*. But because Judaism, for example, is basically an ethnic religion, so its salvation is based primarily on the fate of Israel as the chosen people, Jehovah (YHWH) often referred to as God of Israel, sees salvation as God's miraculous intervention in world affairs. The principles of Christian salvation however, can be summed up in such a way that humanity deserves God's curse since the original sin inherited from Adam and Eve. Every human being deserves a curse for their sins. Christians see the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the culmination of a divine plan to save humanity. Nevertheless, salvation in Islam means avoiding the future torment that will befall sinners in Judgement Day. The logic of salvation in Islam is that submission to God is the only way to be saved, because God is merciful. Indeed, hopeful surrender to the will of God is the basic principle of Islam.

With all these descriptions along with diversity of beliefs, the big question is whether there can be a strategy for achieving salvation that encompasses all belief systems and can be practically applied by modern man with any belief? Is there any explanation for salvation that all religions and belief systems, even atheists and agnostics, could understand and come around to reach consensus on, and in the meantime, can be concerned with an actual application rather than just being an ideas; something that everyone can actually benefit from?

As it is said, it's accepted that salvation is a religious concept, and every religion holds a doctrine of salvation for its followers, and it is hard to think of a religion without it. But on the other hand, it is not necessary for a religion to be unquestionably theistic, having a strategy to get out

of the impasse is still a must for any system of faith. Every religion must show its followers a way out of predicaments, unless it suggests the "*living in this world*" as an unwelcome situation. One can even speak of salvation in the purely physical sense, for example, a person is saved from a deadly unfortunate incident, and his salvation is not in line with religious beliefs since it's only his worldly life that has just been saved. His normal life has been preserved so he'll live and get back to his normal life and return to what he used to do. His salvation may bring about a moral or spiritual transformation in him and, perhaps, he puts aside binge drinking the frittering away that previously enjoyed in his lifestyle, but this salvation does not guarantee his ultimate salvation, and perhaps for a time, then again, he may go back to his old bad habits. What is saved? What has he been saved from? Why was he saved? In a non-religious sense, the body is saved from physical destruction in order to stay alive physically, to proceed with pursuing his worldly goals, can religious salvation be equated with non-religious salvation? Is there a third option through which any person, anywhere in the world can achieve salvation?

In trying to explain salvation, the author concludes the source of salvation is not in Freud's psychoanalytic theories, rather, in a state of "*satisfaction*". Although there is no doubt about the validity of this idea, yet this is not the first time that the idea of satisfaction and salvation correspond, is offered. For example, the Satisfaction Theory of Atonement that exists in Catholic Christianity is a classic one. The author's argument however, is entirely different. He bases his argument on scriptures, but also uses scientific evidences as well. His definition of satisfaction is essentially "happiness" that arises from the admitting mutual rights for everyone, whether achieving a common goal or a blessing for which you haven't struggled. According to him, satisfaction, whether comes from the behaviours of the others, or as a result of what you do towards them, is delightful and is one of the foundations of salvation. However, the level of satisfaction is quite relative and is determined through comparison. If you are in bliss now, but you still starving for blessing, then you are ungrateful to your ongoing situation, suddenly you fall from prosperity and your paradise is lost.

Although logically I can't stand a confliction against this theory, but in my personal view, the question of satisfaction, has in fact, no definite answer since the substance of question is itself variable in different

situations. Perhaps you may want to know what the word "*satisfaction*" means first; but then your question is a word-of-mouth and probably you got a more interesting picture in mind: whatever your mental image is, it doesn't mean anything but pleasure, prosperity, and so on. However, we can never answer this question until we get to an agreement for the definition of *satisfaction*. Philosophers usually see satisfaction in two things, each of which corresponds differently to the meaning of the word: first, something as a state of mind, and second, a goal in life that you are moving towards. In the first case, our satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) is merely a mental issue. Just as "pleasure" that is primarily concerned as a psychological thing, satisfaction - which is also considered a psychological sense - is essentially a state of mind. So what exactly is this *state of mind* that we call happiness? Typical answers include joy, pleasure, delight, etc. So we have to change the direction of question and put it in another view: how valuable is (or can be) this *state of mind*? Since "satisfaction" is just a psychological condition, it can be said with certainty that it is not valuable at all; unless you are an intellectual theorist who thinks that only fools can be happy who should be pitied for! But in the latter case however, our satisfaction is a kind of value, that is, what philosophers today tend to call prosperity, usefulness, or flourishing. In the second sense, satisfaction becomes valuable because it is something useful and effective for someone or something that makes him feel better, serves his interests, or is desirable to him for whatever reason.

But the author of All'n'none comes to a better idea that is quite new, at least for me: he considers satisfaction to be something experienced by each of two (or more) parties towards one another. He believes that satisfaction is valuable when it brings pleasure to one (from the others) and to others (from the one). We now see that the concept of salvation fits in well with all the other functions and concepts of creation, we know it as a law of nature. We can also see that there is no creature in a state that can be entirely satisfied and saved. He defines satisfaction with the term symmetry, saying that the more symmetrical the more satisfied, and vice versa. Then consequently, the more perfect the symmetry is, the more satisfied it becomes. He goes on to ask a more important question: how can satisfaction be achieved - not necessarily as a state of mind? Of course, the answer he gives is even more important: most people never know what they want, or what they lack. They don't really know what they want: either they have something and they are NOT aware of it, or they lack something and again, they are

NOT aware of it. He concludes by citing these two reasons that if one understands one's existence as it is, then identifies and accepts it. Now it can be said that he is his own god, in which case he who enjoys and gets completely satisfied. The book believes, even with the illness, poverty, and experiencing a hell of a life, identifying the "*destitute*" can potentially attract endless opportunities around man, and push them into reality. This view can lead to satisfaction and consequently salvation. He considers this phenomenon as internal and external satisfaction and proves them via scientific means (which cannot be rejected or confirmed by me). Finding satisfaction for yourself as well as the others is never easy at all, unless you basically require to find a meaning for your own first. This meaning can be anything you like; it can come from your ego or elsewhere. No matter where the meaning comes from, it comes from your beliefs, and as explained earlier, if you trust your *beliefs* then you strike a symmetry and consequently you are *satisfied*. But the author's philosophical view of the application between proper/improper meaning and the functions of creation. Despite the truthfulness of religious concepts and determined attempt of religious jurists, have any religious country been successful enough in developing a moral society? He sees the answer in the way we should be looking at salvation, which, of course, is something often failed to notice. He looks at salvation as a subject, from a scientific perspective and claimed that it can be measured by means of science. He believes, any meaning we attribute to salvation will be invalid since salvation has no meaning in itself, unless someone ascribes it to a meaning and only then it can hold up a value. To put it more clearly, from the author's scientific perspective, salvation has a "zero coefficient" and everyone determines the value of salvation by setting a "*meaningful goal*" for it, and if this meaning is imposed on the person from outside the scope of "*self*", then, it will have no (zero) value. To prove his theory (in language of mathematics), he uses variables such as the "*right to choose meaning*", "*divine right*" and "*expectation*" in mathematical equations, and provides a system for calculating salvation. Whether these equations are mathematically correct or not, the author's argument in calculating salvation - and that salvation is computable in principle - seems perfectly valid. He attributes the failure of religions to come up with a collective definition regarding salvation, to their inability to examine the problem from a scientific point of view, and believes that with a scientific approach, no longer there'll be a disagreement between religions since the language of science is the common language of the

world. The author's argument comes neither from philosophy, nor revelation, and nor supernatural; he studied the concept of salvation scientifically through deductive and inductive reasoning, and then sought help to prove it through physics, mathematics, as well as psychology. He even claims that man is inherently a "*mathematical*" being. The author argues that the reason for the superiority of Western societies is not necessarily in their moral orientation, but in the existence of the "*right to choose meaning*" in those societies. By adducing words of wisdom from thinkers and Eastern philosophers, he tries to say that all religions speak on a same subject, but like an elephant in the dark whose features can only be described by touch, everyone has a different perception of what the elephant really is. Because everyone touched the elephant in a different place and consequently inferred a different description of it. He sees his theory as a beacon that, if illuminated, will dispel the differences between the religions and unite them. He even cites religious scriptures (the three important of Abrahamic religions) which prove that religions have a same view regarding the salvation, and any difference between them arises from the interpretation of the ways they offer to achieve it.

Another important topics of the book (on which the theory is based) is the discourse of consciousness and its distinction with cognition. As explained in the Kabbalah discussion, consciousness is the whole essence of this universe that has been able to make human reality, and now it has transcended man in social networks, and without mastering consciousness properly, it won't be possible to rely on past theories. The jurisprudential sources that the author cites in his book are correct and the interpretations given in the context are also valid. Although some of the links in the book were not accessible to me, but according to the contents (and my own knowledge) the introduced references can be said to be perfect. Of course, there are some conclusions within the book that are presented exclusively by the author and therefore they can be neither rejected nor confirmed at the current level so should be studied as a new theory. Nonetheless, there are some interpretations in the book showing that the issue of consciousness is understood in the verses of the religious scriptures with different words, which in my personal opinion is flawless and thought-provoking. Finally, the author tries to provide a scientific definition of the concept of deity. From a classic perspective however, this (and previous) debates violate some religious principles, especially Islam. In Islamic texts, there are dozens of discourse about heresy in religion have been narrated from the

Prophet or Imams that violate religious doctrine. It is narrated in a discourse that the Prophet said: *whoever creates something in our religion that is not part of it, that thing is rejected* or in another discourse it is said that it is prohibited to relate something to religion, which is not part of religion" or For example, Imam Ali is quoted as saying: *no one has ever presented a heresy except by which a constitute practice has been abandoned*. Of course, some contemporary authorities have interpreted that these discourses are relevant only to the principles of religion, as in the past, similar interpretations were offered that were initially contrary to the doctrine of Islam, but today are accepted issues. Al-Ghazali believes that anything new that is innovated after the prophet Muhammad is prohibited. He didn't mention its secession, but denied heresy. Now, although it is a lexical innovation. He says: *heresy is everything that doesn't exist in the original Islamic laws, and anything that has a reason to be exist in this laws is not considered heresy*; rather it is a verbal innovation. Thus, the Prophet's statement that *every heresy is misguidance* can be interpreted as a verbal innovation, and consequently it can be argued that the theory of All'n'none doesn't contravene the principles of Islam. However, this issue needs to be discussed at the higher level. On the other hand, this theory also contributes to the philosophical debate of existence of God: because it has documentations that religious scholars are unable to argue on their own. We know that throughout history there have been many religious scholars who have been excommunicated simply because their speeches were different from the higher religious authorities - and inevitably misunderstood - but centuries later, by returning to their thoughts, the truth of their argument became clear.

The concept of *self-sacrifice* is also seen as a kind of perfection of human consciousness as a superior choice. In self-sacrifice, enduring hardship and giving up one's own existence, the altruistic prefers people to himself, chooses to save the others for the sake of God. In fact, the altruistic devotes himself to the pleasure of God to restrain himself from anything else, he goes beyond hardship and even gives up his own life. In self-sacrifice, the altruistic gives up his most valuable possessions without noticing himself and what he is sacrificing and doesn't expect anything in return. He does not even consider sacrifice as his own, rather, as the sacrifice belongs to God. Because in this position, sacrifice means giving up what one claims to own. But in self-sacrifice, the altruistic gives up something that he basically considers to belong to God and not himself, believes that he has returned the effects to its owner. In ethics, sacrifice is tied to the idea of transcendence of the

"*self*". In self-sacrifice, the altruistic goes even further, gives up his personal effects for the sake of his values and obligations, that is, his own "right" to give up. And this is while the act of taking life is condemned in ethics and is potentially used to justify the most brutal acts against human. Despite the important role that sacrifice plays in moral thinking, even moral philosophers have had surprisingly little to say about the phenomenon of *self-sacrifice*. This lack of attention to the doctrine of self-sacrifice is particularly important given that self-sacrifice also plays an important role in several key discussions in the philosophy of ethics. This concept has the most prominent feature in the discussion of moral demand. Many moralists now argue that the theory of self-sacrifice is flawed and should be reconsidered. In the All'n'none theory, sacrifice is one of the key concepts in the supererogation debate. Since numerous articles on sacrifice have been widely accepted, in this theory self-sacrifice is one of the basic features of supererogation discourse. Many ethics philosophers explain that one of the characteristics of supererogatory is that, supererogatory acts are somewhat beyond what is needed, because they involve some trivial sacrifice for the self-sacrificing factor and challenged with arguments that also use the concept of sacrifice. In the theory of All'n'none it is claimed that any action can still be supererogatory even if it has no requirement for self-sacrifice. Also, self-sacrifice is the concept that connects the two arguments over demand and links them together. According to the author, self-sacrifice also plays an important role in discussions about the *nature of salvation*. It is claimed that self-sacrifice is also instrumentally valuable from the point of view that it is only the fulfilment of God's will, because it has a higher meaning than "*giving up ones possessions*" that sacrifice does not have. One of the criticisms of self-sacrifice is that it is "*erroneously*" assumed that the act of self-sacrifice not only cannot advance the personal interests of the altruistic, but also it is not clear who the beneficiary of the act of "self-sacrifice" is. But All'n'none claims that if an action can promote an individual, then it will be able to promote the entire humanity. On the other hand, self-sacrifice also has an important function in ethics discourse, since ethics has been proposed as a human approach so it pays attention to human experience in a way that traditional philosophers of ethics do not. Given the nature of sacrifice for some important topics in contemporary ethics philosophy, we might expect there to be a significant philosophical debate that examines the nature of self-sacrifice too, but this is not the

case. In fact, the author's view of Self-sacrificing as something which in itself deserves a sustained philosophical examination.

In the field of philosophy of religions, the debate over the nature of self-sacrifice remains in its infancy and there are not many articles in this area. Hence, the theory of All'n'none can provide a stimulus to resume and promote a more explicit and direct discussion of the concept of sacrifice and its importance in the philosophy of ethics. Previous articles have examined the nature of sacrifice and haven't significantly contributed to our understanding of self-sacrifice. Hence, the critical study of Self-sacrifice by thinkers in the field of ethics philosophy will also help to understand the concept of self-sacrifice in morality.