

Man Bites Dog



Stan Tenen

Science tells us that "It" comes from "Bit" -- that the world is based on information -- and that information is based on contrast. We know that contrast attracts our attention. And we know further that what catches our attention also engages our awareness and self-awareness. Our awareness and our self-awareness enable us to decide how we shall act in response to what has attracted our attention. Thus, awareness and self-awareness are also driven by high contrast. The opening line of the Sh'ma tells us that *everything* comes from the One Highest Contrast: Hashem-Elokim.

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We are naturally curious about the unusual. The more unusual, the more interesting. Moreover, surprises—events that stand out in sharp contrast to the ordinary—are often threatening. We need to notice the wolf among the sheep because while the sheep are not threatening, the wolf may be.

Things and events that are unusual stand out against a background formed of the ordinary and the usual. They attract our attention.

Anomaly is thus an attractor, perhaps the attractor, for consciousness. The greater the anomaly, the greater the attraction. Thus, the greatest anomaly in the world having the highest contrast with the ordinary will be the most effective attractor of our consciousness.

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As Professor Roger Penrose points out in *The Emperor's New Mind*, the source of highest contrast in our physical world is our hot, small sun in the cold, dark sky. Not only are all of the heavy elements needed for life produced in the nuclear furnaces of the stars, not only is our sun the source of the nuclear energy which warms our planet, not only is our sun the source of heat and electro-magnetism needed to drive physical processes in the solar system, but the hot, small sun against the cold, dark sky also provides us with the neg-entropic gradient—the information—needed for the self-organization of life.

While we receive energy as heat, light, and electromagnetic radiation from the sun, neither we nor the Earth are net users of energy. We reradiate the energy we receive so as to maintain ourselves in energy equilibrium. If we did not, we would either heat up or cool down.

Professor Penrose has given us examples of the effects of high contrast at different levels of energy and information and has pointed out that it is not the energy per se but the neg-entropy, the information, we get from this high contrast that enables life to self-organize and evolve. However, for our purposes Professor Penrose does not go far enough. Since, as we are told, the neg-entropic gradient needed for the self-organization of life is due to the difference in entropy between the relatively organized visible photons coming from the hot, small sun and the relatively disorganized infra-red photons our plants (and planet) re-radiate into the cold, dark sky, we might then speculate about the effects of an even higher source of contrast.

We know that contrast attracts our attention. And we know further that what catches our attention also engages our awareness and self-awareness. Our awareness and our self-awareness enable us to decide how we shall act in response

to what has attracted our attention. Thus, awareness and self-awareness are also driven by high contrast.

But what high contrast are we discussing? The physical sun provides the highest possible contrast against the sky. The sun attracts the attention of the plants because it nourishes them. At every level the principle of high contrast becomes more explicit. Instead of the nuclear furnace of any star, instead of even the energetic and neg-entropic gradient of our star against the sky, we need an even higher light to account for our self-awareness. We could account for the attractor that draws out and engages our attention, and our awareness, and entices our self-awareness to grow, by the discovery of an infinitely compact, infinitely energetic and neg-entropic source—against a perfectly cold, dark sky. By definition, this ultimate, abstract idealization would provide infinite contrast.

If there were such an extreme contrast between exquisite singularity and all-encompassing wholeness, it alone would be the ultimate source and highest attractor of our awareness, our self-awareness, and our conscious will. What less infinite light could compete for our attention? We would look to this infinite-sun against the background of its infinite-sky for our spiritual growth from the physical plane just as a plant looks to the finite physical sun in its physical sky for its growth from the physical earth.

In the Five Books of Moses, there are two names for G-d. Ha'Shem (meaning "The Name" in Hebrew), also known as the ineffable Tetragrammaton (meaning "Name-of-four letters" in Greek)—often translated as "L-rd"—represents the most compact and Exquisitely Singular aspect of G-d. Elokim (properly spelled with an h instead of a k), sometimes called the Five-Letter-Name and translated as "G-d,"

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represents the most expansive All-There-Is-Whole aspect of G-d. The relationship between the complementary aspects of Exquisite Singularity and All-There-Is Wholeness is defined as infinite contrast. This highest contrast is also represented by the first letter, bet (meaning "house," the distinction between inside and outside), of the Hebrew text of Genesis, from which the cosmos is said to unfold. In Kabbala the contrast of Absolute Unity in the context of Complete Wholeness is known as tsimtsum (meaning "self-constriction" or "compactness"). Kabbala teaches that Creation continuously unfolds from the tsimtsum process. In this philosophical context, the undeniable existence of our personal awareness (our self-awareness, and our conscious will) directly infers (but, of course, cannot prove) the existence of a One-Whole L-rd G-d.

Material in [regular brackets] is part of the quoted English translation.

[Our ellipses are indicated inside italic brackets]

RE: Contrast is Necessary

From Chapter 3, p. 293:

"An illustration of this is the light of the sun which illumines the earth and its inhabitants. [. . .] However, there in its own place, this radiance is considered naught and complete nothingness, for it is absolutely non-existent in relation to the body of the sun-globe which is the source of this light and radiance, inasmuch as this radiance and light is merely the illumination which shines from the body of the sun-globe itself. It is only in the space of the universe, under the heavens and on the earth, where the body of the sun-globe is not.

RE: Hashem-Elokim Sun-Shield Model

From Chapter 4, p. 295:

"It is written: For a sun and a shield is *Hava'ye Elokim*." [. . .] Now, just as the covering shields [i.e., conceals] the sun, so does the name *Elokim* shield [i.e., conceal] the name *Hava'ye*, blessed be He."

From: Chapter 6, pp. 301-303

"Now, the name *Elokim* is the name which indicates the attribute of *Gevurah* and *Tzimtzum*, hence it is also numerically equal to *hateva*(1) (nature), for it [*Elokim*] *conceals* the Supernal Light which brings the world into existence and gives it life and it appears as though the world exists and conducts itself in a natural way.(2) And this name *Elokim* is a shield and a covering for the name *Hava'ye*, to conceal the light and life-force which flows from the name *Hava'ye* and brings creation into existence from naught, so that it [the light and life-force] should not be revealed to the creatures, who thereby would become absolutely nullified).(3)"

Endnotes

An earlier version of *Man Bites Dog* appeared as an appendix to a longer, peer-reviewed paper, published previously. Subsequently, it became apparent that a related discussion appears in *Shaar Hayichud Vebaemunah* – which this author suggests provides a traditional perspective on the same basic ideas.

Here are three quotations from *Shaar Hayichud Vebaemunah* Chapter 3 p. 293, Chapter 4 p. 295, and Chapter 6, pp. 301-303 from the Hebrew-English edition of *Likutei Amarim Tanya*, ©1981 "Kehot" Publication Society, Brooklyn NY.

I N T E G R I T Y



A
POINT
OR BIT, BEING
SO SMALL, MARKS
INFINITE CONTRAST WITH THE ALL.

The "Zim-Zum" Contraction of the ALL is marked by the line "Qav" - the "Finger," the Pointer, the Cardinal One - that distinguishes One from Many, Mind from World, and the Infinite Contrast of One Utter Uniqueness from All else.

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