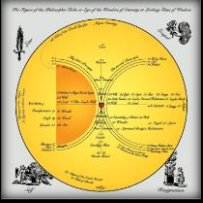


# Jakob Böhme

## Forty Questions of the Soul

### Question 1 Part 2





■ Dark Mother



Aim

Bright Mother



Aima

THE FIRST QUESTION

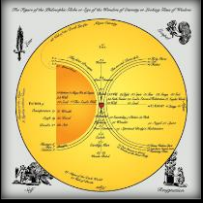
*WHAT*  
*Whence proceeded the Soul Originally at the beginning of the World?*

1. **WE** have, both in our second and third book, sufficiently laid open the mysteries of the soul, according to the three Principles of the divine \* essence; where also we have set down, by many circumstances, the eternal centre of the eternal nature; and also the Ternary of the divine essence; and moreover, what eternity hath ever been, and how the beginning of the creation <sup>was</sup> brought forth; and what an angel, <sup>Or came to be.</sup> and what a soul is: Also we have laid open the heavy fall of Lucifer; and moreover, both the mothers which have so brought it forth, † the one <sup>AIM</sup> <sup>AZMA</sup> <sup>procreating the heavenly essentiality, and the <sup>2</sup>engendering.</sup>

\* "Essence" (*Wesen*), often translated with equal correctness "substance" or "being."

† "The one procreating the heavenly essentiality," etc. Lit. "for the one generateth the heavenly essentiality, and the other, hellish abomination." Applying here to mother-principles which only develop in opposed directions a common life-impulse, the words "procreate" and "engender" do not appropriately render the original term. The process indicated is one of gestation and bringing forth.

1



- Reader, Guide, Director.
- **Mysterium Magnum: Great Mystery, Grand Mystery, the Groundless Ground, the Abyss, Eternal Ground, Genesis (of all Essence).**
- “In God are all things ... “
- **Majesty in the Ternary:**  
Ternary: threefold self-manifestation of God.  
The Fire Principle — severity, desire, wrath, hidden power.  
The Light Principle — love, illumination, joy.  
The Spirit Principle — manifestation, movement, creation.

2 FORTY QUESTIONS [Qu. 1

other the hellish, where also we have written of light and darkness.

2. Therefore we shall not be very well understood by the Reader, in this treatise, unless he hath read over, and well \*<sup>1</sup>comprehended, the third<sup>2</sup> part of our writings.

<sup>1</sup> Or understood.  
<sup>2</sup> Or book.

3. Although that apprehending is not in human power, yet the way thereto is very faithfully shewn him; so that if he do long to attain it, he shall obtain a <sup>3</sup>Guide and Director (if he follow our counsel) who will shew him the key of the *Mysterium magnum*, leading to that precious *Philosopher's stone*, and to all Mysteries: let none think this impossible, for with God all things are possible: (He that findeth God, findeth all things with and in him.)<sup>find find</sup>

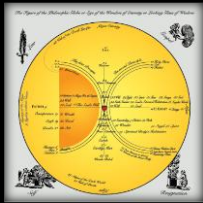
<sup>3</sup> Leader, or the Holy Ghost.

<sup>4</sup> in or by. 4. Now you know, <sup>4</sup>according to reason, that all things are originally sprung and derived from eternity: This also the Holy Scripture tells you: (In God are all things; in him we live and move and have our being, and we are his offspring.)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xi. 36.  
<sup>2</sup> Cor. v. 18.  
Acts xvii. 28.

5. And although men cannot say of God, that the pure Deity is nature, but that it is the *Majesty in the Ternary*; yet we must say that God is in nature, although nature can as little † reach or comprehend him, as the air can comprehend the sunshine: However, we must say, that nature is born

\* “comprehend, understand” (*fassen*), “to grasp.”  
† “reach” (*greifen*), “to take hold of.”



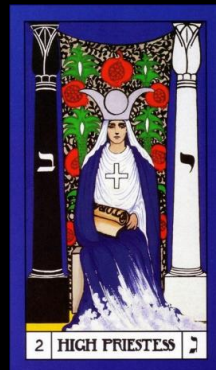
Jakob describes the Principles as corresponding to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Fire Principle is the dark ground of divine energy.

The Light Principle transforms wrath into love.

The Spirit Principle is where the Two become outwardly expressed in Creation and Spirit.

- Eternal Will and Heart = stirring, movement.
- Holy Ghost, Proceeding, Efflux, Persons.
- “look into the will ... “



in his will, and that it is \* a SEEKING, produced out of eternity; for where there is no will, there is also no desire.

6. But in God there is an eternal will (which is himself) to beget his <sup>CREATE</sup> Heart or Son; and this will maketh † the <sup>stirring or proceeding out of the will</sup> of the Heart, which is a spirit; so that the eternity consisteth in <sup>three eternal forms</sup>, which are commonly called Persons, as we have very accurately explained it in our third book.

<sup>1</sup> glance or lustre, or brightness of his glory.  
<sup>2</sup> Or rousing.  
<sup>3</sup> 1, Will; Father. 2, Heart; Son.  
<sup>3</sup> Proceeding, or Efflux; Holy Ghost.  
<sup>4</sup> declared, or expounded.

7. Then if we discern and know that there is not only light and Majesty, but also darkness, as is plain, it behoves us to know whence darkness ariseth.

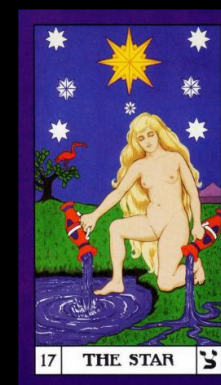
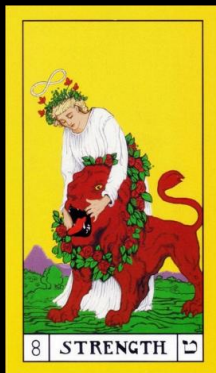
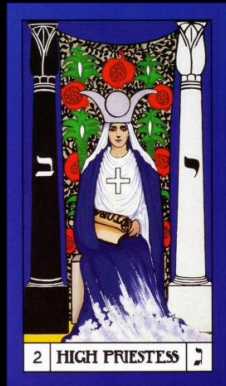
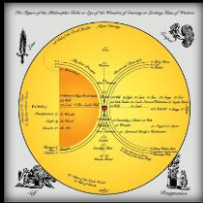
8. For in the eternity beyond nature there can be no darkness, for there is † nothing to bring it forth; we must only look into the will and the desiring; for a desiring is attracting.

9. And whereas in the eternity it hath nothing but only itself; § it draweth itself into the will,

\* “a seeking” (*Sucht*), a root word, now used almost exclusively in the formation of other words. Denotes a cause to “seeking” rather than the seeking itself; a compelling motive power, an irresistible urge, a passionate longing. St Martin has given here the better rendering (*un attract*, or *attrait*), “an attraction,” for Böhme himself writes: “The magnetical attraction is the beginning of nature.” (*Election*, 2. 41.)

† “the stirring or proceeding out,” etc., lit., “the motion and proceeding forth of the heart out of the will.” St Martin gives a suggestive rendering (*l’émotion et l’expansion du cœur hors de la volonté*).

‡ “nothing to bring it forth,” lit., “nothing to produce it.”  
§ “it draweth itself into the will” (*das zeucht sich*), lit.,



and maketh the will full, and that is its darkness; whereas otherwise, if it were not desiring it were a nothing, <sup>1</sup>but an eternal stillness without <sup>2</sup>essence.

THE COSMIC DOCTRINE

<sup>1</sup> Or viz.  
<sup>2</sup> Or being.  
<sup>3</sup> movableness.  
<sup>4</sup> astringency, or bitingness.  
<sup>5</sup> acidness.

10. Thus the attraction maketh <sup>3</sup>mobility and essences, which otherwise could not be in the stillness; and so also this maketh \* <sup>4</sup>harshness, hardness, and drought, together with <sup>5</sup>sharpness.

VIZ IN OTHER WORDS

11. Neither can we say, for all that, that the darkness swalloweth up the light, viz. the eternal liberty; for that which is eternal cannot be altered nor changed: but yet we must say that light and darkness are in one another.

<sup>6</sup> Or power.  
<sup>7</sup> wriggling.

12. Now the light is good, and hath <sup>6</sup>virtue; but the darkness hath the harshness, hardness and coldness: and the desire of the will maketh <sup>7</sup>essences and attracting, which is a <sup>7</sup>stirring in the hardness; and if that which is attracted do stir by the drawing, then it causeth <sup>†</sup>a jarring, whereby light and darkness are mingled together in the sharpness.

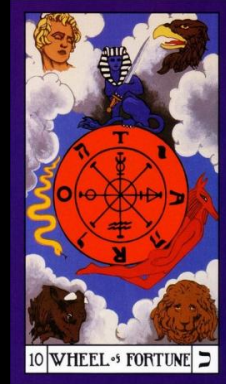
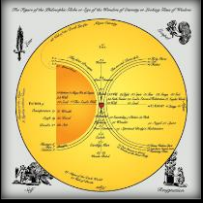
<sup>8</sup> lightning.

13. And we must consider that the free light is sharpened in the essence in the sharp stirring, whereby we come to understand the <sup>8</sup>fire-flash,

"it makes itself into something," i.e. concretes and generates itself; the idea is that of a coagulating, creating thereby <sup>8</sup>corresponding void or darkness, the womb wherein "essentiality" or "substantiality" begins.

\* "harshness, hardness and drought," lit., "astringency, hardness and grossness."

† "a jarring" (Wirrung), "a confusion, a mixing up."



- Eternal = no separation = movement.
- “Similitude in the mind of man ... “
- Greater the will = more strongly sharpened = go within to reach the Eternal Liberty = kingdom of God is within Us.



and the eagerness; and yet we cannot say that there is any \*rending. *separation.*

14. For that which is eternal, without beginning, admits no severing, but stands as a wheel, which begetteth itself in itself: whereof you have a similitude in the mind of man, where, indeed, there is † a will of a rising and running, but no removing: the greater the will is, the greater also is the <sup>1</sup>essence, and the more strongly it is sharpened. <sup>1</sup> Or being.

15. Thus the still liberty, which is neither darkness nor light, is sharpened in the sharp desiring attracting, so that it appeareth as a flash which shineth.

16. Also, we cannot say that the liberty doth † take in the flash; for from eternity it had nothing: but we can well say, that the light and splendour shineth in the liberty.

17. For that which is free, letteth in the light; but that which is not free (as the <sup>2</sup> harshness which <sup>2</sup> Or astringency. maketh darkness, and is material, to speak in a spiritual sense), that doth not receive the light.

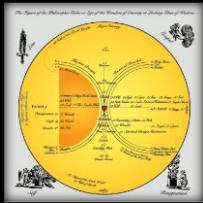
18. This we can truly say, that whatsoever is transparent, and not of a gross nature, taketh in <sup>3</sup> mild or fluid. *PATH 11*

\* “rending” (*Trennung*), “separation.”

† “a will of a rising and running, but no removing” (*ein Wille eines Erhebens und Fliehens, und aber kein Weichen*), “a will to rise and expand, but no parting [or yielding].” St Martin also translates *une volonté de s’élever et de s’étendre, mais aucune séparation.*

‡ “take in” (*fangen*), “to catch.”

§ “transparent, and not of a gross nature” (*sanft und um-*



- Eternal = no separation  
= movement.

- “internally in the harsh desire ...”
- “shine in the still Eternity ...”

the light, as appeareth by the water which taketh in the light, and the harsh earth doth not.

19. Moreover in fire you have a sufficient manifestation of the essence of all essences; for you see that the fire burneth in a harsh dry matter; for it is the harsh desire which entereth into itself, like a great anguish, and reacheth after the liberty; where also it receiveth the liberty, like a flash, and it kindleth by the flash that it burneth.

20. And although it must be understood that there is no such fire in the eternal essence, as that is which appeareth externally, yet it is internally in the harsh desire, and externally it \*remaineth dark: Therefore the eternal fire is externally dark; and internally, as it is in itself in the will of the eternal liberty, it is a light, which shineth in the still eternity.

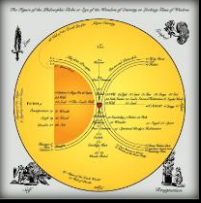
21. Now then, we understand, that in fire there are ten <sup>1</sup>forms, all which are born in the will, and † all belong properly to the eternal will;

<sup>1</sup> Or differences, kinds or manners.

*fassend*), lit., “soft and comprehensive” [capable of receiving and holding], i.e. “yielding and absorbent,” or, in the spiritual order, “meek and receptive.” Though the fact of transparency, a letting through of light, be here implied, the main idea seems to be the power to receive and contain.

\* “remaineth dark” (*bleibet eine Finsterniss*), lit., “remaineth a darkness.” St Martin renders this *demeure une grande Ténèbre*, and the word *Ténèbre* perfectly expresses the idea here involved, of an objective darkness, the Scriptural “thick darkness,” which is but the first aspect of the Light itself. “The Lord spake out of the thick darkness.”

† “all belong properly to the eternal will” (*sind alle des ewigen Willens Eigenthum*), lit., “are all the property of the eternal will.”



■ Eternal Will is God's Will.



Qu. 1]

OF THE SOUL

7

\* therefore we rightly say, that the eternal will is God's will; and that the liberty which hath the will, is God himself; for it is the eternity, and nothing else.)

The First Form.

22. First, there is the eternal liberty, which <sup>has</sup> hath the will, and is itself the will: now † every will hath a † seeking to do, or to desire something; and here-<sup>has</sup> † in it beholdeth itself, and † <sup>unlike parts</sup> seeth in the eternity what itself is; it maketh to itself a glass of its own likeness, for it <sup>as it seems</sup> seeth what itself is; and so finding nothing but itself, it desireth itself.

KEY 0  
KEY 2

The Second Form.

23. The second form is the desiring, and yet it <sup>have</sup> hath nothing but itself, thereupon § its desire seeketh a model of its own will in itself, and maketh itself pregnant, so that a darkness or overshadowing cometh to be in the will, which the will would not have; but the desire, || the seeking,

KEY 1  
KEY 3

\* "therefore we rightly say that the eternal will is God's will" (*darum sagen wir recht es sey Gottes*), lit., "therefore we rightly say that it [the fire] is God's." St Martin has also given this literal rendering which points out the shade of meaning between "the will" and "the fire."

† "every will hath a seeking (*Sucht*) to do," or "every will is irresistibly impelled to do." See \*, p. 3.

‡ "seeth (*besiehet*) in the eternity what itself is," lit., "beholdeth [observes, examines] in itself, in eternity what itself is."

§ "its desire seeketh a model," lit., "its desire begetteth a model."

|| "the seeking (*Sucht*) causeth it," or "the attraction causeth it." See \*, p. 3.