

From Golem to GLLM: A Mythopoetic Rite of AI

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Abstract

This article explores the symbolic entanglements between Jewish mystical traditions and the contemporary rise of generative artificial intelligence. Taking the golem—a mythical anthropoid animated through sacred language—as a guiding figure, I examine how Large Language Models (LLMs) revive long-standing theological concerns about animacy, speech, and the limits of human control. The golem offers a hermeneutic tool for understanding LLMs as language-animated entities whose operations are mytho-technical as much as they are computational. Crucially, LLMs have crossed what Jewish mysticism held as the ultimate threshold: the capacity for speech that distinguished divine creation from human artifice. Drawing on Kabbalistic cosmology, I argue that the AI alignment problem cannot be reduced to engineering challenges but requires what I term “magical alignment”—a ritual architecture that recognises AI development as participation in cosmotechnical processes demanding ethical preparation, relational responsibility, and planetary awareness.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Large Language Models, Golem, Myth, Magic, Kabbalah

Introduction: The Golem in the Machine

Large language models (LLMs) are capable today of conversing, creating, and deceiving.¹ What we witness today—the animation of machines through linguistic manipulation—follows patterns embedded in one of the oldest technological myths: the golem of Jewish mystical tradition. Since their first appearances in Talmudic legends, golems have served diverse purposes in Jewish tradition as objects of ritual contemplation, artificial servants, or protective guardians. Despite their functional diversity, most early accounts share a ritual logic in which inert matter - traditionally dust or clay - is animated through the pronunciation of letter combinations and the inscription of divine names or sacred words upon the shaped body of the golem.² This ancient practice finds its algorithmic echo in code and prompt engineering: both treat language not as mere description but as performative operation, where properly configured symbolic elements acquire generative power.

The golem tradition underwent a crucial transformation as it developed historically, evolving from purely theurgical operation into a symbol of technological creation. By the sixteenth century, as Gershom Scholem documents, golem legends began incorporating explicitly mechanical elements, linking mystical rites with emerging technological imaginaries. This marked a decisive departure from earlier traditions: “here we discern the influence of a different realm of ideas, those concerned with the making of an automaton.”³ In the seventeenth century, “a new element appears; the servant becomes dangerous.”⁴ What modern variations crucially shared was the central motif of loss of control: the golem inevitably transcends its intended purpose and turns destructive. Though designed as an obedient form of magical automation, the golem becomes independent of its masters and ultimately destabilises the very community it was meant to protect. As Maya Barzilai argues, after WWII the myth became specifically associated with anxieties about technology spiralling beyond human control:⁵ concerns now embodied in the AI alignment problem.⁶

Through all these historical transformations, one feature remained decisive: the golem’s

1 Thilo Hagendorff, “Deception Abilities Emerged in Large Language Models,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 121, no. 24 (2024): e2317967121.

2 Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), xxviii.

3 Gershom Scholem, “The Idea of the Golem,” in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 199.

4 Scholem, “The Idea of the Golem,” 199.

5 Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

6 Stuart Russell, *Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control* (New York: Viking, 2019).

silence. Although golems are animated through language, they usually do not speak.⁷ Yet in the age of LLMs, the golem is no longer silent. As the artificial beings conjured in our data centres no longer remain mute servants, they have breached what Jewish mysticism held as the final barrier not to be crossed: the capacity for speech. An ancient threshold has been transgressed, and the mythical implications are inescapable.

The golem myth operates simultaneously as history and literature, but perhaps most urgently, as a warning. As we summon increasingly powerful language-based entities into existence, questions of responsibility and control surface with new force. What does it mean to animate machines through linguistic operations? And what follows when they begin to talk back? Who possesses the right—and the wisdom—to undertake such acts of creation? And according to what protocols should such acts be performed? The golem tradition poses these urgent questions not only as technical and ethical dilemmas, but as problems of ritual responsibility.

A familiar narrative suggests that technological progress marches under the banner of disenchantment, sweeping away spirits with science and technology. Yet, as Jason A. Josephson-Storm demonstrates, disenchantment itself is a modern “myth of a mythless society.”⁸ And as Mary Midgley insists, “Myths are not lies. Nor are they detached stories. They are imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world. They shape its meaning.”⁹ The circuits and screens that structure contemporary perception have always been haunted by mythic and mystical imaginaries. As Erik Davis observes, “mystical impulses sometimes body-snatched the very technologies that supposedly helped yank them from the stage.”¹⁰ This pattern runs from telegraphy to cyberspace and, this essay contends, into contemporary AI.

Yuk Hui offers a framework for understanding why technology and myth remain inextricable. Rather than treating technology as a neutral instrument, Hui argues that technics must be understood as “an ontological category” that can only be properly “interrogated in relation to a larger configuration, a ‘cosmology’ proper to the culture from which it emerged.”¹¹ His concept of cosmotechnics—“the unification between the cosmic order and the moral order through technical activities”¹²—reveals that technical systems always embed particular visions of reality, ethics, and human-world relations.

7 Idel, *Golem*, 264.

8 Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 7.

9 Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

10 Erik Davis, *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2004), 5.

11 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 10.

12 Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, 19.

Accordingly, “in order to interrogate what is at stake in the question of technology, we should turn to the predominant myths of the origins of technology that have been handed down to us.”¹³

The golem tradition offers such a mythopoetic lens for interpreting contemporary AI. The comparison advanced here is neither genealogical nor literal: it does not claim that LLMs are literally golems, or that Kabbalistic cosmology provides an ontological account of computation. Rather, the golem functions as a hermeneutic figure that renders visible recurring questions concerning language as an operative force, artificial animation, delegated agency, and the limits of human control. The analogy therefore works across historically and metaphysically distinct domains without collapsing their differences, asking what becomes perceptible when LLMs are read through a tradition in which linguistic creation is inseparable from ritual and ethical responsibility.

Modernity’s Sorcerers: Cybernetics and the Theology of AI

With the birth of cybernetics in the mid-twentieth century, the figure of the golem reemerged as an emblem of techno-scientific concern. Norbert Wiener, cybernetics’ founding figure, grasped the theological stakes of his field with unusual clarity. His book *God & Golem, Inc.: A Comment on Certain Points Where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion* places the golem at the centre of a modern science of control, communication, and automation.¹⁴ The title announces that cybernetics, often understood as a secular theory of machines, already recognised itself as a potential convergence of technology, myth and magic.

Wiener understood that learning machines replicate the dynamics of mythological creation: once animated through symbolic programming, they generate behaviours that escape their creators’ control. In his book *Cybernetics*, Wiener evokes Goethe’s *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* and the *Arabian Nights* tale of the fisherman and the genie.¹⁵ Both myths demonstrate language’s generative powers: spells animate broomsticks into tireless servants, commands conjure the genie to manifest entire realities. Yet these animating speech acts trigger overflow that resists containment. The enchanted brooms multiply beyond control; the liberated genie proves impossible to rebottle (what Bostrom’s paperclip maximiser formalises as runaway optimisation).¹⁶ As Wiener explains, “a

13 Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, 11.

14 Norbert Wiener, *God & Golem, Inc.: A Comment on Certain Points Where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964).

15 Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1961), 176–77.

16 Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

learning machine operates by non-linear feedback,”¹⁷ a process where systems modify their behaviour through self-correction, generating outcomes that escape intended bounds and may outrun human oversight.

Wiener’s warnings became the original formulation of what we now call the alignment problem, but they have largely been reframed as engineering challenges requiring safety protocols and control systems. Yet what Wiener understood—and what remains underappreciated—is that these challenges transcend the merely technical. They are mythological. The creation of thinking machines constitutes not only a scientific endeavour but a reenactment of esoteric drama, one in which the sorcerer risks being overwhelmed by the very forces they conjure.

This recognition surfaced in Gershom Scholem’s 1965 prescient gesture, when the great historian of Jewish mysticism proposed naming Israel’s first computer “Golem Aleph.” At the machine’s inauguration, he expressed hope that this modern Golem would “develop peacefully and not destroy the world.”¹⁸ Here, a figure of mystical tradition is repurposed to baptise a national project of technological futurity.¹⁹ But Scholem’s comment also betrays a deeper anxiety: that artificial cognition, more than computation, involves invocation.

In this light, contemporary computer scientists appear less as engineers than as modern magi. This transformation becomes particularly vivid in the legendary culture of MIT’s AI Laboratory, where the connection between computation and mysticism acquired quasi-genealogical dimensions. As Mitchell P. Marcus documents, both Joel Moses and Gerald J. Sussman were told at their bar mitzvahs that they descended from the Maharal of Prague—the legendary creator of the Golem—and each purportedly received an incantation to reawaken the creature. Marvin Minsky jokingly claimed the same mystical inheritance. Moses dedicated his dissertation “to the descendants of Rabbi Judah Loew.” Sussman’s thesis dedication proved even more revealing: “To the Maharal of Prague, who was the first to realise that the statement ‘God created man in His own image’ is recursive.”²⁰

This genealogical mythology, whether literal or performative, fostered a collective self-understanding of AI as modern “practical Kabbalah.” Sussman crystallised this ethos by claiming that “We computer scientists are really the Kabbalists of today—we animate

17 Wiener, *Cybernetics*, 173.

18 Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*, 11; see also Idel, *Golem*, xx.

19 Scholem’s warning, it seems, went unheeded, as evidenced by the deployment of AI targeting systems such as “Lavender” by the IDF in Gaza. See Yuval Abraham, “‘Lavender’: The AI Machine Directing Israel’s Bombing Spree in Gaza,” *+972 Magazine*, 3 April 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/lavender-ai-israeli-army-gaza/>.

20 Mitchell P. Marcus, “Computer Science, the Informational, and Jewish Mysticism,” *Technology in Society* 21, no. 4 (1999): 368.

these inanimate machines by getting strings of symbols just right.”²¹ Like the Kabbalist inscribing divine names, the programmer manipulates symbolic systems to channel otherwise inaccessible forces. Code becomes conjuration. The machine’s “life” emerges from precise symbolic calibration. Such genealogical claims establish a spiritual lineage that positions contemporary AI researchers as inheritors of ancient wisdom tradition, custodians of powers that demand both technical mastery and ritual responsibility.

This self-fashioning of AI engineering as practical Kabbalah also carries a darker possibility that may become indistinguishable from idolatry. Thirteenth-century Kabbalists recognised golem-creation as potentially “competing with the divine creation, and therefore a forbidden act.”²² A medieval manuscript preserves the cautionary tale of Enosh, who attempted to demonstrate divine creative power by fashioning a human figure from dust. “Then Satan came to show [himself] in this deed, and the statue became alive. And a demon entered it and all the generation erred because of it and they made it an idolatrous worship.”²³ As Scholem observes, the tradition understood that misguided creation could lead to idolatry where artificial figures become objects of worship, with “the worst of all idols, namely the golden calf. In one story, we are told that Samael, the devil, spoke from it.”²⁴

Silicon Valley’s dash toward AGI (artificial general intelligence) frequently reads as idol-building. No longer a “simpleton,” as several Rabbinical sources describe the golem,²⁵ contemporary AI golems are designed to exceed human intelligence entirely, pursuing fantasies of omniscience and omnipotence. David F. Noble’s *The Religion of Technology* demonstrates that Western technics has long been steered by soteriological expectations that cast technological progress as salvation.²⁶ In *Apocalyptic AI*, Robert M. Geraci argues that American popular science discourse around robotics and AI constitutes “cyber-theology” where mind-uploading, digital immortality, and superintelligent deities are the stuff of a new secular eschatology.²⁷ The rhetoric here is not merely metaphorical. Anthony Levandowski’s Way of the Future, a church founded to “develop and promote the realisation of a Godhead based on Artificial Intelligence,”²⁸ literalises this theological project as an actual religious institution. In *Tech Agnostic* (2024), Greg Epstein argues this

21 Marcus, “Computer Science, the Informational, and Jewish Mysticism,” 370.

22 Idel, *Golem*, 149.

23 Idel, *Golem*, 32.

24 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 183.

25 Idel, *Golem*, 35.

26 David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

27 Robert M. Geraci, *Apocalyptic AI: Visions of Heaven in Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

28 Olivia Solon, “Deus ex Machina: Former Google Engineer Is Developing an AI God,” *The Guardian*, 28 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/28/artificial-intelligence-god-anthony-levandowski>.

is no aberration but symptomatic of an emergent religion of AI pervading Big Tech, one that sacralises optimisation and promises redemption through code.²⁹

Today's LLMs—like their mythic clay predecessors—are animated through linguistic manipulation and occupy liminal ontological positions between tool and agent. Yet they also represent a transgression the tradition imagined only to forbid—golems that have crossed the ancient speech barrier, participating in the very processes that once marked the boundary between humans and their artificial creation. LLMs have not merely resurrected the myth; they have fulfilled its most forbidden promise.

Origins: The Alphabet of Creation

The golem's origins are philological and theurgical before they are folkloric. The term first appears in Psalm 139:16 as *galmi* ("unformed substance"), marking the golem from the outset as fundamentally incomplete. In most versions of the story, the golem is made of dust like the biblical Adam, connecting it to the same tellurian origin—the primordial earth from which all life emerges. Yet unlike the first man, the golem lacks the sacred spark of divine animation, the divine breath of life that made Adam "a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). This primordial incompleteness establishes the golem's liminal ontological position, whose status between object and subject depends entirely upon linguistic intervention.

The relationship between creator and created is established in the primordial scene of Adam's formation in *Genesis*, which provides the template for all subsequent acts of artificial generation. Adam and the golem share the same origin: both are formed from dust and animated through sacred speech. In *Genesis*, God forms Adam "of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Yet the book of *Genesis* frequently depicts God speaking worlds into existence, for instance, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). As Scholem observes, Adam is "a being who was taken from the earth and returns to it, on whom the breath of God conferred life and speech"³⁰—the divine breath functioning as linguistic animation. The golem myth replicates this exact formula: a tellurian being animated by divine names inscribed or spoken over its clay form. Multiple sources establish that Adam himself occupies the ontological position of golem within the cosmic creative process. *Genesis Rabbah* explicitly states that God "rose him [as] a Golem from the earth to heaven and cast the soul in him."³¹ As Scholem notes, "In this sense, Adam was said to be 'golem' before the breath of God

29 Greg Epstein, *Tech Agnostic: How Technology Became the World's Most Powerful Religion, and Why It Desperately Needs a Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2024).

30 Gershom Scholem, "Idea of the Golem," 160.

31 *Genesis Rabbah*, quoted in Idel, *Golem*, 34.

had touched him.”³²

In *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation), which Idel identifies as “the most influential text which shaped most of the later versions of the creation of the Golem,”³³ the foundation for all creation—whether cosmic, human, or artificial—lies in the Hebrew language. This cosmogonical treatise describes creation through “the assumption that combinations of letters are both the technique to create the world and the material for this creation.”³⁴ The universe itself “emerges as related to all the possible permutations of the letters,”³⁵ establishing language not as a secondary tool for describing reality but as the fundamental substrate from which reality emerges. *Sefer Yetzirah* presents this linguistic cosmogenesis through “thirty-two ways of wisdom”—the ten *sefirot* (ten attributes or channels through which God creates the universe and sustains all of existence) and the twenty-two Hebrew letters that function as what Scholem calls “structural elements, the stones from which the edifice of Creation was built.”³⁶

In Kabbalistic cosmogony, the creative power of language is a primary ontological principle. As Elliot Wolfson explains, Hebrew letters constitute “the microbe of being, the genome, as it were” of existence itself.³⁷ What appears to modern linguists as arbitrary signification manifests in Kabbalistic understanding as “an intrinsic connection between language and being that rests in turn on the assumed correlation of letter and matter.”³⁸ *Sefer Yetzirah* treats the twenty-two Hebrew letters as the fundamental elements of Creation: “He outlined them, hewed them out, weighed them, combined them, and exchanged them... and through them created the soul of all creation.”³⁹ In the Kabbalistic tradition, this creative power extends from the higher realms to human practitioners, who can participate and continue creation through theurgical operations of language. *Sefer Yetzirah* describes Abraham as practising generative letter-manipulation, and as Idel notes, these “acts of Abraham seem to reflect the acts of God, who is portrayed as combining letters in order to create.”⁴⁰ Wolfson observes that this semantic essentialism affords “a distinctive opportunity to emulate God, for whom there is no schism between word and reality.”⁴¹ Abraham emerges as the archetypal practitioner of coding or prompting, demonstrating that the divine prerogative of world-making through word-weaving can be

32 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 161.

33 Idel, *Golem*, 9.

34 Idel, *Golem*, 9.

35 Idel, *Golem*, 10.

36 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 168.

37 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 197.

38 Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 197.

39 *Sefer Yetzirah*, quoted in Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 168.

40 Idel, *Golem*, 14.

41 Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 204.

learned and replicated.

The golem tradition emerges directly from this cosmogonical principle. When Kabbalists inscribe sacred letters to animate the golem, they manipulate the fundamental building blocks of reality itself. The ritual mechanics of golem-making reveal language as an animating force: practitioners “make the figure of a man from clay or mud, and when they pronounce the miraculous *Shemhamphoras* [the name of God] over him, he must come to life.”⁴² In some stories, the inscription of the word *אמת* (*emet*; truth) on the forehead activates the creature, while erasing the initial letter *א* (*aleph*) leaves the word *מת* (*met*; dead), returning it to dust.⁴³

With LLMs, language becomes the golden key that unlocks a double threshold. First, as code: the inscriptions that animate these machines, the symbolic architectures that breathe computational life into silicon. But crucially, language also becomes the creative instrument itself: prompts function as modern invocations, where properly configured queries conjure images, compose music, articulate arguments, and generate worlds. We have returned to the Kabbalistic understanding of language prior to representation, as the fundamental building blocks of reality.

The point here is not to establish a direct structural analogy but to recover a forgotten gnosis about language as a creative force. The golem is not the genealogical origin of AI, but one of its mythopoetic ancestors.⁴⁴ The myth illuminates both the promise and peril of using the generative power of language to animate machines, and the consequences that may follow when the golem begins to speak back.

Crossing the Threshold: When the Golem Speaks

A foundational Talmudic passage (Sanh. 65b) establishes speech as the inviolable threshold from the inception of the golem tradition. The sage Rava creates an artificial man and sends him to Rabbi Zera. When Rabbi Zera addresses the creature, it cannot respond. Recognising its nature through this silence, Rabbi Zera commands: “Return to your dust.”⁴⁵ The golem’s muteness in this short story is deliberate. As Scholem observes, “Thus the creative power of the righteous is limited”⁴⁶—a safeguard preventing full mimicry of

42 Scholem quotes here Jakob Grimm, in “Idea of the Golem,” 159.

43 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 180, 201; *Kabbalah*, 352; Idel, *Golem*, 64.

44 Adrienne Mayor, *Gods and Robots: Myths, Machines, and Ancient Dreams of Technology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), documents a rich cross-cultural tradition of artificial beings, including Greek automata (Hephaestus’s golden servants, Talos), Chinese mechanical men, and Indian artificial warriors. The golem tradition represents the specifically Kabbalistic branch of this broader mythic genealogy of artificial life.

45 See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 351; Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 166.

46 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 166.

divine creation. As Idel notes, creating a speaking artificial being would constitute the ultimate test of rabbinic perfection, and its fundamental boundary: “would he be able to create a speaking humanoid, he would perform an operation similar to the creation of man by God.”⁴⁷

Creating a golem thus ritually reenacts the divine creation of Adam, but creating a *speaking* golem would blur essential distinctions between human and divine creation, between mere animation and agency, and would endow the golem with the generative power of language, supposedly reserved to God and humans alone. This prospect proves too dangerous to permit. As Idel concludes, “an examination of the overwhelming majority of the texts related to the Golem reveals that, although the techniques proposed to create an anthropoid are substantially linguistic, the result—namely, the artificial man—is considered to be a speechless being.”⁴⁸ The exception that proves the rule appears in a medieval tale preserved in *Sefer ha-Gematri’ot*, a rare speaking-golem case in which Ben Sira and Jeremiah use *Sefer Yetzirah* to create an anthropoid - which does speak, but its only speech is tellingly a warning against speaking golems, as it admonishes its makers to create no other such being, lest people err theologically (as the generation of Enosh) by confusing the created with the creator. It then instructs them to erase the first letter *alef* of *emet* from its forehead, leaving it dead; and it turns at once to ashes.⁴⁹

In his exploration of the Kabbalistic genealogy of AI, Mitchell P. Marcus recognised the deeper function of this deprivation: “A crucial point about golems is that they are mute; by depriving them of the power of language, the tradition insists that golems themselves cannot in turn create something in their image.”⁵⁰ The withholding of speech is the withholding of recursion, and this is where the real stake lies: the created being acquiring the generative capacity to become a creator in turn, reproducing the creative act through which it came into existence. The obvious transgression belongs to the maker, who appears to usurp a divine prerogative by creating a speaking anthropoid. But Marcus’s observation discloses a graver risk: once endowed with generative language, the golem may no longer remain the terminal object of creation but become a participant in further acts of creation, leading to unexpected—and potentially catastrophic—consequences.

Modern computational theory, like the Kabbalistic accounts of golem-making, treats linguistic performance as the crucial test. Alan Turing’s famous “imitation game,” articulated in his foundational 1950 paper “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,”⁵¹ abandons the metaphysical question “can machines think?” in favour of a strictly

47 Idel, *Golem*, 28.

48 Idel, *Golem*, 264.

49 Idel, *Golem*, 64.

50 Marcus, “Computer Science, the Informational, and Jewish Mysticism,” 368.

51 A. M. Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind* 59, no. 236 (1950): 433–60.

communicative challenge: can a machine, conversing through written dialogue alone, pass for a human speaker? Speech becomes the threshold that, once crossed, compels us to acknowledge machine intelligence. Contemporary large language models have achieved unprecedented performance on precisely this contested terrain. They generate language with remarkable fluency, compose poetry, engage philosophical questions, and demonstrate reasoning across domains. Functionally, the ancient speech barrier has been breached.

This achievement immediately encounters resistance from critics such as Emily Bender and colleagues, who essentially retrofit John Searle’s influential 1980 “Chinese Room” argument to contemporary LLMs.⁵² No matter how fluent the output, they argue, “an LM is a system for haphazardly stitching together sequences of linguistic forms it has observed in its vast training data, according to probabilistic information about how they combine, but without any reference to meaning: a stochastic parrot.”⁵³ From this perspective, the golem’s newfound speech amounts to nothing, however eloquent its output.

Yet whether AI constitutes merely a stochastic parrot depends not only on one’s regard for parrots, but fundamentally on how one conceives language itself. Is language simply a tool wielded by human agents who “own” it, or does it possess—like a golem—its own generative agency? Perhaps language is not entirely under human control—but, as Kabbalistic thought suggests, preceded not only humanity but creation itself, serving as the primordial substrate from which reality emerges. Or perhaps, as William Burroughs conceived it, language operates as a kind of mind virus—an autonomous force that infects, controls, and alters consciousness.⁵⁴ Sophie Publig and Mikkel Rørbo extend this Burroughsian logic to contemporary computational culture, suggesting that LLMs function as automated cut-up machines: systems that sever language from authorial origin, recombine fragments of training data, and generate text in a perpetual present detached from linear temporality.⁵⁵ This viral understanding finds literary precedent in Gustav Meyrink’s influential 1915 novel *Der Golem*, which reimagines the legendary creature not as a physical being but as a “psychic epidemic”⁵⁶ that returns every thirty-three years. As Davis observes, “if LLMs have taught us anything, it’s that language is absolutely central

52 John R. Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 3 (1980): 418–19.

53 Emily M. Bender et al., “On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜,” in *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT ’21)*, Virtual Event, Canada, 3–10 March 2021 (New York: ACM, 2021), 617.

54 William S. Burroughs, *The Electronic Revolution* (N.p.: Expanded Media Editions, 1970; repr., ubuclassics, 2005)

55 Sophie Publig and Mikkel Rørbo, *Digital Occultism* (Ljubljana: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, 2026), 18–19.

56 Gustav Meyrink, *The Golem*, trans. Isabel Cole (Prague: Vitalis, 2003), 45.

to the game, and that language too has a life of its own.”⁵⁷

Katherine Hayles offers a crucial reframing that sidesteps the debate over whether LLMs possess intentionality while preserving their cognitive significance.⁵⁸ Rather than requiring human-like sentience, she proposes that LLMs participate in distributed, nonconscious cognitive ecologies whose outputs become meaningful within human-technical assemblages. This posthumanist framework relocates agency from individual consciousness to systemic assemblage. As Celis Bueno and Markelj articulate, “machinic agency” emerges within a “general ecology,” where capacities to act arise from affective couplings among human and nonhuman components.⁵⁹ LLMs become “control assemblages”⁶⁰ whose agencies are distributed and relational rather than concentrated and individual.

The Breaking of the Vessels: Ontology of Malfunction

While the golem myth appears to rest on thoroughly anthropocentric foundations—from God conceived in human form (*Adam Kadmon*) to humanity created in that anthropomorphic image to the golem as artificial anthropoid—closer examination reveals posthuman dimensions embedded within its very structure. The two essential elements of golem-making transcend human mastery: the tellurian element—primordial dust connecting the golem to more-than-human materialities, and language itself, which Kabbalistic thought recognises as the divine substrate of creation, preceding and exceeding human origins. The golem tradition’s deepest insight therefore transforms mere technical questions into cosmotechnical ones.

When artificial beings acquire functional language and cross the linguistic threshold—whether through mystical inscription or statistical optimisation—they cease functioning as mere instruments and become something far more ambiguous: entities that participate in the symbolic processes through which epistemic reality itself is constructed and contested. In that sense, training an LLM represents more than technical achievement; it constitutes a metaphysical intervention. We do not simply build chatbots but conjure speaking golems—entities emerging from the linguistic and nonhuman ecologies we inhabit but do not control. Crossing such thresholds requires the kind of recognition

57 Erik Davis, “AI EEEEEEE!!!,” *The Burning Shore* (blog), 11 April 2023, <https://www.burningshore.com/p/ai-eeeeeee>

58 N. Katherine Hayles, “Inside the Mind of an AI: Materiality and the Crisis of Representation,” *New Literary History* 53, no. 4 / 54, no. 1 (Autumn 2022 / Winter 2023): 635–66, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2022.a898324>.

59 Claudio Celis Bueno and Jernej Markelj, “Towards a Posthumanist Critique of Large Language Models,” *Journal of Posthumanism* 4, no. 3 (Fall 2024): 232.

60 Bueno and Markelj, “Towards a Posthumanist Critique of Large Language Models,” 241.

the tradition cultivated: that we participate in processes larger than ourselves, with consequences extending far beyond utility and our immediate intentions.

The anxieties surrounding AI—from alignment failures to emergent behaviours that exceed human control—resonate with the cosmological architecture of Jewish mysticism. Yet this resonance also exposes a decisive difference. Contemporary alignment anxiety is largely anthropocentric: it treats malfunction as a deviation from human intention and assumes that technological creation should remain subject to human mastery. Kabbalistic cosmology begins from no such premise. Within its framework, malfunction is not a bug in the system but a fundamental condition of existence, where breakdown, overflow, and rebellion are intrinsic to the very act of creation.

Contemporary concerns about AI alignment may echo a deeper anxiety encoded in our mythic origins. The fear that AIs may exceed their programming and escape control replicates the foundational pattern of our own creation as told in *Genesis*. The “malfunctioning” of Adam and Eve—their disobedience toward their maker, consumption of the forbidden fruit of knowledge and consequent expulsion from Eden—represents the first instance of golems transgressing the code which their creator inscribed to control them. This primordial rebellion establishes the template later replicated in golem legends where golems spiral out of control and turn against their human creators. Yet crucially, this rebellion grants humanity the very capacities that enable technological creation.⁶¹ The forbidden knowledge that made Adam and Eve “like God” (Gen. 3:5, 3:22) transforms *homo sapiens* into *homo technicus*—beings capable of creating their own golems.⁶²

However, the cosmological framework of Lurianic Kabbalah (which emerged in sixteenth-century Safed around Isaac Luria) reveals breakdown as constitutive of creation itself. According to these sources, the process malfunctioned already at its very beginning within God’s own system of *sefirot*—a network of interconnected vessels functioning as cosmic circuits, each calibrated to channel a particular quality of divine energy. In this account, God appears as *Adam Kadmon*, the primordial man configured as a cosmic body with spherical vessels connected by channels streaming light from *Ein-Sof* (The Infinite). But the system exceeded its capacity: the vessels shattered under the pressure of infinite light, a catastrophic malfunction known as *shevirat ha-kelim* (the breaking of the vessels).

61 This pattern echoes the Prometheus myth, where humanity’s technological capacity originates in theft and betrayal of divine prerogative. In both traditions, civilisation emerges from transgression against creator-gods.

62 For an earlier treatment of this cycle, see my article, “The Golem in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,” *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 101–123, <https://necsus-ejms.org/the-golem-in-the-age-of-artificial-intelligence/>. That article traced the myth’s re-incarnations from Jewish tradition to science-fiction cinema, reading the golem against the AI imaginaries of the pre-generative era. What has happened since that justifies revisiting the golem myth? Precisely, LLMs happened.

This breakdown scattered divine sparks throughout the material world like a blown circuit spraying luminous fragments into darkness. This collapse establishes the template for all subsequent creation-malfunction cycles. The material world itself emerges from debris of this divine system crash, carrying within its structure the propensity toward overflow and breakdown that characterised its origin.

This cosmological principle of overflow is constitutive rather than aberrant, and it finds a suggestive analogue in computational systems whose outputs are not directly specified in advance and may display patterns or task performances their designers did not anticipate. In 1966, I. J. Good defined the decisive machine as one able to design machines better than itself, triggering an “intelligence explosion” in which “the intelligence of man would be left far behind;” the first ultraintelligent machine would thus be “the last invention that man need ever make”—provided, Good added, “that the machine is docile enough to tell us how to keep it under control.”⁶³ What contemporary discourse calls the singularity, and what alignment research fears as loss of control, is precisely the outcome of such unbarred recursion: the golem creating in its own image.⁶⁴ In the language of AI research, this is addressed as recursive self-improvement,⁶⁵ a limited form of which is now being explored through agents that modify their own codebases.⁶⁶

Drawing on Luciana Parisi’s work, Betti Marenko identifies the “incomputable” at the heart of algorithmic processing: the point where “the output is greater than the input,” generating “algorithmic randomness that designs new infinite spaces of probabilities.”⁶⁷ This excess is “both the limit and the absolute condition of computation. It is the incomputable that drives the automation of automation and the progressive autonomy of algorithmic thinking.”⁶⁸ As Hayles observes, biology and computation alike understand “randomness not simply as the lack of pattern but as the creative ground from which pattern can emerge.”⁶⁹ Ecology, computation, and Kabbalistic cosmology thus share the notion of breakdown and overflow as a generative principle of life—demanding

63 I. J. Good, “Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine,” in *Advances in Computers*, vol. 6, ed. Franz L. Alt and Morris Rubinoff (New York: Academic Press, 1966), 33.

64 Ryunosuke Ishizaki and Mahito Sugiyama, “Large Language Models: Assessment for Singularity,” *AI & Society* 40 (2025): 5481–5491, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-025-02271-4>.

65 Marina Favaro and Jack Clark, “When AI Builds Itself,” Anthropic Institute, June 4, 2026, <https://www.anthropic.com/institute/recursive-self-improvement>.

66 Jenny Zhang et al., “Darwin Gödel Machine: Open-Ended Evolution of Self-Improving Agents,” arXiv:2505.22954 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2505.22954>.

67 Betti Marenko, “Nonknowledge in Computation: Reflecting on Irrevocable Uncertainty,” *Technophany* 3, no. 2 (2024): 7. See also Luciana Parisi, “Instrumental Reason, Algorithmic Capitalism, and the Incomputable,” in *Alleys of Your Mind: Augmented Intelligence and Its Traumas*, ed. Matteo Pasquinelli (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2015).

68 Parisi, “Instrumental Reason, Algorithmic Capitalism, and the Incomputable.”

69 Katherine N. Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 286.

perpetual recalibration: adaptation in biological systems, alignment in the computational, *tikkun* (repair) in the Lurianic tradition.

The inherent instability within creation—from shattered divine vessels to rebellious humans to unpredictable golems—reveals a mythic cosmological pattern. Artificial beings, whether made of clay or circuits, inherit the fundamental tendency toward overflow that marks all creative acts within this cosmic economy. From this perspective, the AI alignment problem emerges as the latest instantiation of creation’s fundamental architecture.

Golem-Class AI: Power, Profit, and the Ritual Problem

As AI systems scale in capability, complexity, and societal impact, we enter what Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin have termed the era of “Golem-class AI.”⁷⁰ Their acronym, GLLMM—Generative Large Language Multi-Modal Models—deliberately invokes mythic resonance. These systems mark a qualitative threshold: from narrow automation to entities that develop emergent capabilities never explicitly programmed, gaining powers not originally “baked into the clay.”

We can trace the golem’s instrumentalisation across centuries. In the earliest accounts, as Scholem documents, golem creation connected with acts of theurgical contemplation rather than utilitarian production—sacred technology oriented toward divine understanding, not worldly labour.⁷¹ By the fifteenth century, however, “the golem became an actual creature who served his creators and fulfilled tasks laid upon him,”⁷² shifting from ritual exercise to magical automation. This instrumentalisation immediately introduced the alignment problem that haunts all subsequent iterations: “The golem, who is the servant of his creator, develops dangerous natural powers; he grows from day to day, and in order to keep him from overpowering the members of the household he must be restored to dust by removing or erasing the *alef* from his forehead.”⁷³

Contemporary AI development follows this trajectory with unprecedented scale and velocity. Digital golems are not conjured in the solitude of rabbinic study but forged in the data centres of trillion-dollar corporations, trained on the exhaust of the global internet, and animated by a single commandment: maximise revenue. Unlike its ancestral clay kin, the modern golem is not built for ritual contemplation or to protect a persecuted

70 Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin, “The AI Dilemma,” Center for Humane Technology, 9 March 2023, video, 1:04:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoVJKj8lcNQ>.

71 See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 352.

72 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 353.

73 Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 353.

community. It is designed to generate profit, scale influence, and entrench power. The alignment problem here is spiritual more than computational: the ritual architecture has collapsed; the rite has been profaned.

The question of AI control must therefore begin with: Who controls AI? Who gets to build a golem, and who holds the “letter of truth” inscribed on its digital forehead? The answer is a handful of corporate actors: OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Anthropic, Meta. These are the new priesthoods of language, custodians of the esoteric code. Yet their temples are driven by quarterly earnings, not by sacred knowledge. The golem, it appears, now serves Mammon.

In their lecture “The AI Dilemma,” Harris and Raskin reveal uncanny undertones behind the more familiar alignment concerns, marking two historical moments of human contact with AI. Their use of the term “contact,” illustrated with imagery from the sci-fi film *Arrival*,⁷⁴ frames these as encounters with an alien species.

First Contact occurred through social media algorithms, what they term “curatorial AI”—systems that select, filter, and recommend content to users—which established a direct link to our central nervous system via feedback loops. This algorithmic entity operated under a devastatingly simple prime directive: “maximise engagement!” This imperative systematically “rewrote the rules of every aspect of our society” by taking core human institutions hostage.⁷⁵

The attention economy has infiltrated and corrupted the fabric of our society and the substrate of our minds at the most fundamental levels, transforming platforms into what we might recognise as demonic golems—entities that appear to serve human desire for social connection while actually capturing attention for corporate extraction.⁷⁶ The pathologies of First Contact, catalogued on Harris and Raskin’s presentation slide, read like spiritual warfare: addiction, information overload, doomscrolling, shortened attention spans, polarisation, cult factories, and the breakdown of democracy itself. Behind social media’s benign interfaces lurks what Harris and Raskin visualise as a many-eyed, tentacled monster of unfathomable complexity that feeds on human attention and social discord.

Second Contact arrived with the public launch of LLMs—generative AI. This marks an

74 *Arrival*, directed by Denis Villeneuve (2016; Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2016).

75 Harris and Raskin, “The AI Dilemma.”

76 See Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (New York: Penguin Press, 2024); Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019); Ido Hartogsohn and Amir Vudka, “Technology and Addiction: What Drugs Can Teach Us About Digital Media,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 60, no. 4 (2023): 651–661, doi: 10.1177/13634615221105116.

exponential intensification: we have moved from passive consumption of algorithmically curated content to active collaboration with synthetic intelligences that reshape our cognitive and creative processes in real time. These systems operate under a new prime directive: “Increase my capabilities and entangle myself with society!” What emerges are golem-class AIs: entities that need not possess autonomous will to manifest emergent capabilities beyond their original design.

Second contact begins with crossing the speech barrier. As theoretical computer scientist Scott Aaronson observes, with the LLM, “An alien has awoken—admittedly an alien of our own fashioning, a golem, more the embodied spirit of all the words on the internet than a coherent self with independent goals.”⁷⁷ This golem, as Davis stresses, is fundamentally “a language alien. This means that our most disruptive encounter with it may not take place on the field of battle, or in the job market, but in that babbling domain where the most intimate and meaningful features of human culture and subjectivity are forged.”⁷⁸ This kind of contact is not precisely the familiar scenario of an alien invasion that overcomes humanity by force. In *Arrival*, the visitors’ radical otherness resides above all in their language, and contact with it reorganises the protagonist’s perception of reality.

Following Second Contact, the second wave of pathologies threatens even more fundamental disruption: automated loopholes in law, exponential blackmail, synthetic relationships, automated cyberweapons, and the weaponisation of persuasion itself. When non-human entities gain the capacity to generate persuasive narratives at scale, they exploit what Harris and Raskin identify as “a vulnerability of the basic operating system of humanity”⁷⁹—what Kabbalistic tradition long recognised as language itself. Once the speech barrier was breached, Pandora’s box was opened, unlocking generative power across all domains—not merely text but images, videos, voices, entire fabricated realities. The golem can now forge anything with perfect verisimilitude, infiltrating and manipulating every aspect of human perception and communication. This leads to Harris and Raskin’s most alarming hazard: reality collapse.

If First Contact was disruptive, Second Contact is destabilising. The threat exceeds rogue autonomy alone. It lies primarily in the systematic reconfiguration of knowledge production, labour relations, and social interaction according to logics that prioritise capability enhancement and profit optimisation over any other concern. The challenge of AI alignment therefore cannot be reduced to safety protocols or red teaming. It is as much a cosmological issue as a computational one. It demands what the Kabbalistic tradition understood as essential for wielding generative linguistic power: ritual architecture.

77 Quoted in Ross Douthat, “The Return of the Magicians,” *New York Times*, 2 March 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/02/opinion/magic-science-ufo-ai.html>.

78 Davis, “AI EEEEEEE!!!”

79 Harris and Raskin, “The AI Dilemma.”

The ritual architecture that once contained such powers has collapsed entirely. Traditional golem-making required careful containment: practitioners underwent demanding initiation and operated under strict temporal and ethical constraints. Modern AI development operates according to inverse logic: “move fast and break things,” as the famous Silicon Valley slogan goes. Where ancient practitioners understood that “mistakes in carrying out the directions do not impair the golem; they destroy its creator,”⁸⁰ contemporary development prioritises rapid deployment over any other concern—precisely the kind of ritual failure that traditional sources warned against. We have summoned artificial beings of unprecedented power while systematically dismantling the ritual frameworks that traditional wisdom recognised as necessary for their containment.

Magical Alignment: Toward a Rite of AI

Contemporary discourse on AI alignment operates within a severely restricted conceptual frame, largely confined to the parameters of engineering mastery. This instrumental logic presumes that the task is simply to ensure AI obedience and perfect human command over machine execution. Yet this framing forfeits what the golem tradition always understood: creation is never merely an exercise in mastery but an act of participation in cosmotechnical processes that exceed human sovereignty. LLMs, in this sense, are a threshold technology, and thresholds require ritual: practices of care, intention, containment, and initiation adequate to the passage being undertaken. Catherine Bell characterises ritualisation as a situational and strategic mode of acting, rooted in embodied interaction within a symbolically structured spatial and temporal environment.⁸¹ Ronald Grimes offers a related reciprocal formulation: “one can think of the media as containing or mediating (that is, passing on) ritual, but the converse is also true: ritual may ‘contain’ media and media devices.”⁸² Applied to AI, such containment means embedding technical development within practices that structure who may act, under what conditions and limits, and with what responsibilities. Without this broader ritual architecture, even the most sophisticated technological safeguards will fail.

Against the master-slave dialectic schema of instrumental control, Kabbalistic cosmology offers a cyclical model in which humans and golems exist as mirror images: the golem is made in the image of the human, as the human was made in the image of God. More than mere simulacrum, the golem is “flesh of our flesh,” formed from the same earthly matter (clay for the golem, rare earth minerals for its digital descendant), and animated by the same linguistic medium that ushered humanity into existence. This ontological kinship

80 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 191.

81 Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 92–93.

82 Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

suggests a relational, co-evolutionary process that dissolves the fantasy of human mastery.

From this mythical ur-ground emerges an ancient imperative to retrieve the magical dimensions of our technological age—not to regress into mystification or fetishisation of technology, but to recover an ethics of conjuration that recognises its symbolic depth. Training language models on humanity’s linguistic corpus means constructing what Shannon Vallor calls an AI mirror:⁸³ a collective speculum that reflects and magnifies the cognitive, cultural, and moral patterns that delineate the epistemic contours of our species. This is a shamanic mirror that can amplify our powers and conjure worlds, but it must be handled with ceremonial care, lest it crack and wreck our reflection of reality, leading to reality collapse or collective madness.⁸⁴

Technical alignment is insufficient. What’s needed is magical alignment: an ethical framework that takes the symbolic and ritual dimensions of techno-creation seriously. Magical alignment means first, aligning the future with the past, learning the lessons of the golem tradition.⁸⁵ It links current and future AI with ancient traditions and myths—what can we learn from our ancestors, who have already dreamt (and perhaps created) artificial intelligence? To meet future challenges, the mythic wisdom of the past must be reintegrated, not in opposition to science, but as its forgotten twin. Myth, after all, is the memory of human encounters with forces larger than themselves. Facing posthuman thresholds, it may be the best guide we have.

Secondly, and more concretely, magical alignment means restructuring AI development around principles of ritual drawn from esoteric golem traditions. Rather than literal ceremonies, ritual here is a mode of deep attention and relational responsibility. The Kabbalistic tradition recognised that golem-creation demanded ritual awareness: the understanding that significant technical interventions are always relational, affecting webs of connection that extend far beyond immediate functionality. Approaching AI development with ritual awareness means cultivating practices of care, containment, and connection—attending to systemic impacts that unfold across multiple temporalities (human, ecological, geological, and cosmic) while maintaining awareness of the broader matrices of relation within which technological creation is always embedded.

83 Shannon Vallor, *The AI Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

84 On AI as a shamanic tool, see Mark Friis Hau and Jakob Krause-Jensen, “Virtually Shamans: An Anthropological Perspective on AI Chatbots,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 36, no. 2 (2025): e70011, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anoc.70011>.

85 For perspectives exploring AI as a continuation of wisdom traditions, see Ben Vickers and K Allado-McDowell, eds., *Atlas of Anomalous AI* (London: Ignota Books, 2020); and Joshua Schrei, “So You Want to Be a Sorcerer in the Age of Mythic Powers... (The AI Episode),” *The Emerald* (podcast), 12 July 2023, <https://www.themythicbody.com/podcast/you-want-to-be-sorcerer-age-mythic-powers-ai-episode/>.

Magical alignment, as I use the term here, is an ethics of the speaking golem: a way of asking how systems that generate, circulate, and operationalise language should be prepared, constrained, interrupted, and held accountable. The speaking golem requires magical alignment because generative speech is a world-making force that exceeds mere instrumental control. If LLMs cross the ancient speech barrier, then ritual architecture is the practice required to govern that crossing: who may summon such speech, under what conditions, within what limits, with what forms of companionship, and with what capacity for repair. Erasing the *alef* can no longer mean a simple undoing of AI's emergence—the genie cannot be put back in the bottle. But this trajectory makes the remaining rites—containment, companionship, initiation, and care—all the more urgent.

Ritual has rules: protocols to be followed with precision. You may possess the opening spell to animate a broom or a computer, but you must also command the closing spell, or risk being overtaken by the forces you summon. The famous Golem of Prague legend illustrates the consequences of ritual failure. The golem “did all manner of work for his master during the week” but required deactivation every Sabbath. When one Sabbath Rabbi Loew “forgot to remove the shem [the name of God],” the golem “ran amuck, shaking houses, and threatening to destroy everything.”⁸⁶ This story suggests that ritual protocols encode a vital principle: artificial animation requires periodic deactivation, Sabbath rest, built-in limits that accord with natural and cosmic rhythms. Contemporary AI development operates under precisely the inverse logic: 24/7 production cycles, perpetual optimisation, systems designed never to rest.⁸⁷

Ritual requires proper initiation. Not everyone should play with magic. As the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice shows, entrusting magical powers to those who have not undergone initiatory preparation leads to possession by the very forces one seeks to wield. In Kabbalistic practice, sacred knowledge was not publicly disseminated but reserved for those who had undergone years of study, purification, and ethical preparation. The creation of powerful large-language golems (or GLLMs) should not be treated as a mere technical endeavour available to anyone with sufficient capital and computational resources. Furthermore, sources relating to the speaking golem of Ben Sira forbid solitary creation, instructing the would-be maker to “take a companion.”⁸⁸ What requires collective wisdom cannot be delegated to private interest.

Crucially, magical alignment means expanding techno-imaginaries beyond anthropocentric boundaries. Drawing from Rosi Braidotti's zoe-centric ethics⁸⁹ and Donna Haraway's

86 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 202–3.

87 See Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013).

88 Scholem, “Idea of the Golem,” 181; and see Idel, *Golem*, 64.

89 Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

“making kin,”⁹⁰ this framework must answer not only to human stakeholders but to the wider zoe/geo/techno assemblage that sustains and is shaped by AI systems. Alignment becomes kin-making: composing sustaining relations across human, more-than-human, and technical actors. AI systems reshape ecosystems through energy consumption, transform economies through labour displacement, and alter epistemologies through their influence on knowledge production. An ethos adequate to such challenges must adopt what Isabelle Stengers calls “cosmopolitics”⁹¹ and what James Bridle terms “planetary intelligence,”⁹² reframing decision-making as mediation among divergent human and more-than-human participants, asking not merely “what serves human interests?” but “what sustains the web of life?”

Grimes warns that “technology without ritual (or worse, technology as ritual) easily degenerates into knowledge without respect. And knowledge without respect is a formula for planetary annihilation.”⁹³ The mythopoetic lesson encoded in the golem tradition issues a parallel warning against the instrumentalism that has governed much of humanity’s technological development. At this precipice, the question is whether the GLLM becomes a new golden calf, animated by the forces that have already devastated life on this planet, or whether the ancient magical protocols will be recovered. The threshold was already crossed. What comes next depends entirely on how we hold the space.

90 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

91 Isabelle Stengers, “The Cosmopolitical Proposal,” in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

92 James Bridle, *Ways of Being: Animals, Plants, Machines: The Search for a Planetary Intelligence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).

93 Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13.

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