

F.W.J. Schelling's Later Philosophy of Religion:  
A Study and Translation of "Der Monotheismus"

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## Abstract

F.W.J. Schelling's Later Philosophy of Religion: A Study and Translation of "Der Monotheismus"

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The present dissertation offers a study and the first translation into English of an important but overlooked work by the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), namely his treatise *Der Monotheismus*. This text belongs to the corpus of Schelling's later philosophy (*Spätphilosophie*), which he developed and expounded over the last four decades of his life. In addition to offering a detailed analysis of the text, the present study considers the genesis and development of the treatise. Through an analysis of the concept of monotheism in Schelling's so-called "middle period" works, and an evaluation of recently published diaries containing the earliest materials of his later works, it shows the importance of *Monotheism* in the formation of the later philosophy. Further, the study sheds light on the significance of this work by considering its place and role in the structure of this later philosophy. It notably considers the function of the treatise in the construction of Schelling's positive philosophy of religion. Together with the *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, to which it is formally connected, *Monotheism* presents a historical-analytical or inductive access to the positive concept of religion. Based on an analysis of the universally accepted concept of monotheism, the treatise explains how the unity (and therefore truth) of God should be understood. After defining God as a unity in plurality, it shows how the constitutive potencies of God's being operate in creation and human consciousness. The historical emergence of mythology is consequently proven to be the product of a theogonic process in human consciousness. The study concludes with a consideration of what it means for Schelling that all religion derives from monotheism. It explains the entire history of religions as passage from a monotheism that is blind and innate to the essence of the human being, to a freely recognized monotheism, a monotheism of the spirit.

## Résumé

La philosophie de la religion du dernier Schelling: étude et traduction de son « Monothéisme »

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Cette thèse offre une analyse détaillée et la première traduction (en anglais) d'une œuvre importante mais peu étudiée du philosophe allemand Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), à savoir son traité sur le *Monothéisme*. Cette œuvre appartient au corpus de sa dernière philosophie (*Spätphilosophie*), celle qu'il développa et enseigna durant les quatre dernières décennies de sa vie. Le présent travail offre une étude sur la genèse et le développement de ce texte. Il montre l'importance de ce traité dans la formation de la dernière philosophie schellingienne à travers l'examen du concept de monothéisme dans les œuvres de sa période intermédiaire et son journal datant de la même période et récemment rendu publique. De plus, ce travail examine le rôle et la place de *Monothéisme* au sein de la dernière philosophie, surtout par rapport à la fondation de la philosophie positive. Avec l'*Introduction historico-critique à la philosophie de la mythologie*, auquel il est formellement lié, *Monothéisme* représente un point d'accès historico-analytique ou inductif au concept positif de la religion. Par une analyse du concept de monothéisme universellement admis, ce traité explique comment l'unité (et donc aussi la vérité) de Dieu devrait être comprise. Ayant défini Dieu comme l'unité dans la pluralité, Schelling montre comment les potences qui composent l'être de Dieu opèrent dans la création et la conscience humaine. L'émergence historique de la mythologie se révèle être un produit du procès théogonique dans la conscience humaine. En conclusion, l'étude cherche à éclairer le sens de la thèse schellingienne selon laquelle toute religion dérive du monothéisme. Il s'agit de montrer que toute l'histoire des religions n'est qu'un passage d'un monothéisme aveugle et inné dans la nature humaine au monothéisme librement reconnu, le monothéisme de l'esprit.

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## List of Abbreviations of Schelling's Works

- AW1     *The Ages of the World* [1811]. Translated by Joseph P. Lawrence. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020.
- AW2     *Ages of the World* [1813]. Translated by Judith Norman. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- AW3     *The Ages of the World* [1815]. Translated by Jason W. Wirth. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- BL        *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Translated by Bruce Matthews. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- DS        *Schelling's Treatise on "The Deities of Samothrace": a Translation and an Interpretation*. Translated by Robert F. Brown. Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977.
- EHF       *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*. Translated by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- EP        *Einleitung in der Philosophie*. Edited by Walter E. Ehrhardt. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989.
- GPP       *Grundlegung der Positiven Philosophie: Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*. Edited by Horst Fuhrmans. Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1972.
- HCI       *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*. Translated by Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- HMP       *On the History of Modern Philosophy*. Translated by Andrew Bowie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- IET       *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*. Translated by Thomas Pfau. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- MOT       *Der Monotheismus*, in SW XII, 1–131.
- NLV       "Übersicht meines künftigen handschriftlichen Nachlasses. Dokumente zur Schellingforschung IV: Schellings Verfügung über seinen literarischen Nachlaß," edited and presented by Horst Fuhrmans, *Kant-Studien* 51 (1959): 14–26.
- PaR       *Philosophy and Religion*. Translated by Klaus Ottmann. Putnam, Conn. Spring

Publications, 2010.

- PET *Philosophische Entwürfe und Tagebücher 1809–1813. Philosophie der Freiheit und der Weltalter*. Edited by Lothar Knatz, Hans Jörg Sandkühler, and Martin Schraven. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994.
- PMAm *La philosophie de la mythologie de Schelling d'après Charles Secrétan (Munich 1835-1836) et Henri-Frédéric Amiel (Berlin 1845-46)*. Edited by Luigi Pareyson and Maurizio Pagano. Milano: Mursia, 1991.
- PMRoSc *Philosophie der Mythologie: in drei Vorlesungsnachschriften 1837/1842*. Edited by Klaus Vieweg, Christian Danz, and Georgia Apostolopoulou. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1996.
- PMSe *La philosophie de la mythologie de Schelling d'après Charles Secrétan (Munich 1835-1836) et Henri-Frédéric Amiel (Berlin 1845-46)*. Edited by Luigi Pareyson and Maurizio Pagano. Milano: Mursia, 1991.
- PO *Philosophie der Offenbarung: 1841/42*. Edited by Manfred Frank. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- PR *Philosophy of Revelation (1841-1842) and Related Texts*. Translated by Klaus Ottmann. Thompson, Conn.: Spring Publications, 2020.
- SysWA *System Der Weltalter: Müncher Vorlesung 1827/28 in Einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx*. Edited by Siegbert Peetz. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990.
- SW *Sämmtliche Werke*. 14 volumes. Edited by Karl Friedrich August Schelling. Stuttgart, Augsburg: Cotta, 1856-1861. Cited by volume number in Roman numerals and page number.
- UPO *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*. Edited by Walter E. Ehrhardt. Hamburg: Meiner, 2010.

## Introduction: For the Literal Schelling

*Es ist Zeit, Schelling zu "buchstabieren," zurückzufinden zu jenem mühsamen und genauen Interpretieren des von ihm Gesagten, darin nicht einfach grosse Conceptionen—so bedeutsam sie sind und bisher Übersehenes erhellen können—zu versuchen, sondern offen zu sein für all das Tastende und Werdende, das Spellings Spätwerk eigen ist.<sup>1</sup>*

*Das Wort meines Systems ist Monotheismus.<sup>2</sup>*

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This dissertation offers a study and the first translation into English of an important but overlooked work by the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), namely his treatise *Der Monotheismus*. This text belongs to the corpus of writings of what is commonly known as Schelling's later philosophy (*Spätphilosophie*), which he developed and expounded over the last four decades of his life. In addition to offering a detailed analysis of the text, the study considers the historical and conceptual genesis of the treatise. Through an analysis of the concept of monotheism in Schelling's so-called "middle period" works, and an evaluation of recently published diaries containing the earliest evidence of the text of *Monotheismus*, it sheds light on the origins of the later philosophy. Further, the study examines the significance of this work by considering its place and role in what Thomas Buchheim describes as the "systematic structure" of the later philosophy.<sup>3</sup> In particular, it considers the function of the treatise as a foundation of Schelling's positive philosophy of religion, as an entryway into the positive philosophy, and as presenting one of his earliest attempts at justifying the concept of positivity.

Schelling's preoccupation with religion goes back to his earliest writings. However, in his later

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<sup>1</sup> Horst Fuhrmans, introduction to GPP 6.

<sup>2</sup> "Niemand hat sich gegen das Schaale und Leere des bloßen Theismus schärfer erklärt als ich, das Wort meines Systems ist Monotheismus u.s.w." (Schelling, *Schelling und Cotta, Briefwechsel 1803-1849*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans [Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1965], 227).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Thomas Buchheim, "Zur systematischen Form von Schellings Spätphilosophie" (unpublished paper, 2018).



philosophy, religion acquires unprecedented centrality and significance, as suggested by the titles of his two main works from this period: the *Philosophy of Mythology* and the *Philosophy of Revelation*. The philosophical interpretation of historical religions undertaken in these works presupposes a distinction made by Schelling between two types of philosophy: a purely logical, “negative philosophy,” concerned with explaining the world according to the laws of rational thinking, and a historical, “positive philosophy,” which rests on the originary freedom of God. Religion, understood as the actual relation of human consciousness to the divine, is the subject par excellence of the “positive philosophy.” Thus, the latter involves a philosophy of religion that explains the development of the historical religions as the expression of a religious process in human consciousness from its immemorial origins and mythological beginnings to Christian revelation and the not-yet-existing “philosophical religion.” Gradually, through this process, God reveals Himself to human consciousness, and human consciousness enters a free relation with Him. In this way, the essence of religion becomes manifest.

Yet the relation of philosophy to religion in Schelling’s later thinking remains ambiguous and poorly understood. On the one hand, Schelling wants to affirm the irreducibility of religion to philosophy, and of philosophy to religion. On the other, he views philosophy as embedded in the history of religion, and religion as embedded in the history of philosophy. Thus, philosophy reveals the meaning of religion: it constructs a history of religions that explains the essence and goal of religion, and is intrinsically tied to the religious development of human consciousness through the formally necessary, but not-yet-existing “philosophical religion.” At the same time, religion is, historically, at the origin and end of philosophy. As Schelling insists throughout his later writings, the philosophy of religion is not merely the application from without of rational principles to a religious content, but rather is religion explaining itself. Religion—both mythological and

revealed—contains its own principles of interpretation, and therefore it alone is able to explain itself. In other words, the philosophical interpretation of religion is inherent to, and an extension of, the religious process in human consciousness. Further, Schelling places religion at the end of the history of philosophy in the notion of the “philosophical religion,” suggesting a latent religious motivation to and telos for philosophy. Thus, religion and philosophy appear to be intrinsically enmeshed in one another in a variety of ways that require analysis.

These ambiguities are at the centre of Schelling’s late philosophy; their implications extend to a series of crucial questions, including the much-debated question of the passage (*Übergang*) from the “negative philosophy” to the “positive philosophy,” as well as the relation of those two philosophies in general. As the “foundation” of the *Philosophy of Mythology*, and by extension, of the entire philosophy of religion, and as the “hinge” between the “negative” and “positive” philosophies (at least as indicated by Schelling in his literary will), and, finally, insofar as it contains an exhaustive treatment of the concept which Schelling calls the “common center” of philosophy and religion, *Monotheism* is uniquely valuable in shedding light on the abovementioned questions, particularly on the nature of religion and of philosophy, and the relation between these two.

As regards the methodology and presuppositions of this study, it follows Horst Fuhrmans in seeking to “spell out” Schelling’s philosophy, to understand the letter of his philosophy with the hope that, by staying faithful to the letter, it may also faithfully present its spirit, without any prior supposition as to its truth or falsehood. Fuhrmans’ guideline in the epigraph is as relevant today as it was fifty years ago. Thus, insofar as Schelling describes his later philosophy as a “system of monotheism,” the study explains in what sense this is to be understood, on Schelling’s own terms.

Contemporary research on Schelling tends to approach his later philosophy as a heterogeneous

collection of works and to treat these works in isolation from one another. Moreover, the main works from this period—including the *Philosophy of Mythology*, the *Philosophy of Revelation*, and the *Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy*—remain untranslated into English.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, students of the later Schelling often fail to see the “big picture”—they miss the forest for the trees. Far from being a mishmash of disparate works, the later philosophy—namely the works contained in the four volumes which make up the second series of Schelling's *Sämtliche Werke*—was intended by its author to be approached and understood as a system, i.e. an integrated structure made of parts fitting together. In fact, each work of the later philosophy has a specific role which determines its significance in relation to the other works and to the encompassing structure. Without this holistic perspective, one lacks the means by which to evaluate comprehensively the significance of each work. Therefore, this study considers *Monotheism* not only in itself, but also in relation to other works, thereby shedding light on its central role and position in the systematic structure of the later philosophy.

Our emphasis on the systematic character of the later philosophy should not obscure the ever-changing and unfinished character of what Xavier Tilliette has aptly described as Schelling's "philosophy in becoming."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, over the forty or so years from when he began working on the text whose “final” version is here offered in translation, Schelling never stopped revising *Monotheism*. At least with regard to its form, the treatise was continuously a work in progress. This is notably suggested by the particularly large number of manuscripts of the work which Schelling left to the editorial care of his son, and as further evidenced by a comparison of the

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<sup>4</sup> A translation into English of Paulus' pirated edition of Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation* has recently been published (PR in the List of Abbreviations). For all its otherwise unique aspects, the *Paulus-Nachschrift* does not adequately reflect the systematic character of the later philosophy. It notably lacks the important presentation of the taxonomy of religions found in Lecture IX of the version of this work in the *Werke*.

<sup>5</sup> Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir*, 2 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1970).

*Nachschriften* of Schelling's lectures (some of which were unavailable to previous generations of scholars). Indeed, although the ideas presented in *Monotheism* remained, at least since 1827, largely unchanged, the significance of the work, as we have noted, partly depended on its role and position in the complex edifice of the later philosophy, such that changes made to one part, or to the structural order as a whole, necessarily affected, to a lesser or greater degree, the situation and function of the other parts. In no case was this truer than with *Monotheism*, which underwent important changes in structure and role during Schelling's career.

That being said, the changing role and situation of *Monotheism* should not be seen as a symptom of haphazardness and unsystematicity in Schelling's thinking. On the contrary, it reflects the fundamentally organic and unified character of his later philosophical project, and his persistence in ensuring a logical connection between its individual parts as well as the formal coherence of the whole. This concern for systematicity—which is characteristic of German idealist philosophy in general—explains Schelling's obsession with the problem of "transition" (*Übergang*), whether from mythology to revelation, from the negative philosophy to the positive philosophy, from the ideal to the real, from essence to existence, or from being to becoming. Indeed, Schelling's main objection to the philosophy of his great rival, Hegel, is that it failed to explain adequately the transition from thought to concrete being, from the logical to the real.<sup>6</sup> This issue, as we shall see, is at the heart of the argument of *Monotheism*. Therefore, to the extent that the problem of "transition" comes up in various areas in the later philosophy, it is but the expression of the restless desire of its author to explain, systematically and coherently, the relation between the parts and the whole.

That an important text such as *Monotheism* should have remained untranslated and largely

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. HMP 134ff.

overlooked until now is partly indicative of a certain negative preconception in contemporary scholarship with regard to Schelling's later philosophy of religion. This bias is perceptible even in the way Schelling's thinking is typically periodized. Indeed, the division of Schelling's thinking into various "periods," even during his lifetime, has often served polemical purposes. However, although the conventional periodization of Schelling's philosophy into different "periods" can help understand the development of his ideas over time, it often obfuscates more than it clarifies. This is evident in the case of the division between the so-called middle and later periods. This division, even if warranted to some extent, often conceals the assumption that Schelling's "later philosophy"—namely, the philosophy associated with the period beginning in 1827 and ending with his death in 1854—contains little more than a mishmash of half-baked philosophical ideas, bizarre theosophical notions, and reactionary Christian ideas. Therefore, the splitting up of his philosophical development into neatly distinct periods—such as a "middle" period and a "later" one—often justifies a selective approach to his philosophy. Thus, one ignores certain texts, while reading others out of context, leading to a skewed representation of his ideas.

The distinction between a "middle" period and a "later" one, therefore, has to be taken with a grain of salt. For one, the distinction between "middle" and "later" periods was foreign to Schelling. For him, there was no break, but continuity, development—progress in the same direction. In later life, Schelling situated the starting point of his "positive philosophy" at the turn of the 1810s.<sup>7</sup> Further, Schelling's original lectures on the positive philosophy in 1827 were titled *System der Weltalter*, indicating the intended continuity with the project begun in the so-called middle period. Commentators have sometimes dismissed Schelling's views about his own

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<sup>7</sup> In his *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling said: "I did not reveal the positive philosophy—even after it had been discovered—except in an elusive manner (on the occasion, among others, of the well-known paradoxical theses formulated in the polemic with Jacobi)" (SW XIII, 86). Cf. the Paulus *Nachschrift*: "the *Denkmal auf Jacobi* (1812) contains the beginning of the positive philosophy" (PO 138).

philosophical development. Thus, when Schelling insisted that all his writings were just “pieces of a whole,” Windelband held that we could do the philosopher no greater injustice than to “take him at his word.”<sup>8</sup> To be sure, scholars have a duty to exercise critical judgement with regard to an author’s claims. However, they have an equal duty to take the totality of facts into account before drawing conclusions. With regard to the periodization of Schelling’s philosophy, the recent publication of the series of Schelling’s *Entwürfe and Tagebücher* supports his claims about the early origins of his later philosophy and the continuity of his thinking between the middle and later periods. Moreover, it encourages us to read the works from both periods in conjunction, as we here seek to do.

The study therefore offers an interpretation of Schelling’s philosophy sensitive to the inner unity of his thought. It is not concerned with assessing external influences on his thinking, although it highlights the influence of controversies on his philosophical development. It benefits from the work of his foremost interpreters, to which it occasionally refers. For the main part, however, it offers an original analysis of primary works. These include texts that have not received any extensive treatment in English, such as *Nachschriften* of his Munich lectures as well as his personal diaries—texts which are crucial for studying the intentions of his later philosophy.

My approach combines diachronic and synchronic perspectives. On the one hand, I situate Schelling’s ideas in bio-bibliographical context, and remain attentive to their development across the last four or so decades of his life. The *Spätphilosophie* was a “construction site” (to use Xavier Tilliette’s image) that underwent constant adaptations. While some works—e.g. the *Philosophy of Revelation*—remained essentially unchanged across the Munich and Berlin periods (1827-1841

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Victor Hayes, introduction to *Schelling’s Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation: Three of Seven Books Translated and Reduced with General Introduction*, by Schelling, trans. Victor C. Hayes (NSW, Australia: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1995), 24.

and 1841-1854, respectively), others, including *Monotheism*, underwent considerable revisions that warrant close attention. On the other hand, I also present the systematic structure of the later philosophy, as outlined by Schelling himself in his literary testament, and as reflected in the sequence of works in the posthumous edition of his writings edited by his sons.

Chapter 1 sheds light on the textual and conceptual prehistory of *Monotheism*. In particular, it shows how the concept of monotheism emerged in Schelling's thinking. It looks at his essay *Philosophy and Religion* (1804)—the first work in which the concept of monotheism appears—and identifies Schelling's controversy with Eschenmayer as the context in which Schelling first sought to “reclaim religion for philosophy.” Further, it shows how Schelling's controversy against Jacobi in 1811/12 drove him to outline the project of a “scientific theism” which would reconcile naturalistic and theistic conceptions, anticipating the position of *Monotheism*. Moreover, it examines Schelling's *Tagebuch* of 1810 insofar as it contains the earliest textual traces of *Monotheism*. Finally, it shows how *The Ages of the World* and *The Deities of Samothrace* partly anticipate *Monotheism*.

Chapter 2 looks at the significance of *Monotheism* in Schelling's later philosophy. It argues that Schelling developed his positive philosophy in an attempt to overcome the dilemma between rationalism and fideism with which he had been faced since his controversies with Eschenmayer and Jacobi. Schelling defines religion as a historical phenomenon which alone can provide the material for what might be a philosophy of religion that avoids the dilemma of rationalism and fideism. In his *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling demonstrates on historical grounds the originally God-positing or monotheistic nature of human consciousness as a presupposition to mythology. The treatise on *Monotheism*, which is formally connected to the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, analyzes the historically-given concept of

monotheism to establish its possibility on universal principles.

Chapter 3 considers Schelling's argument in *Monotheism*. It shows *Monotheism* to be the foundation of Schelling's positive philosophy of religion. Schelling presents the idea of monotheism as an already existing reality and criticizes the doctrine of monotheism as traditionally formulated. By analyzing the concept of monotheism, he develops the principles of a theological ontology. He further outlines a theological cosmogony by determining the principles necessary to think of a real being derived from God. The concept of the universal theogonic process is shown to be a necessary condition for God to be posited in being. Schelling further identifies the theogonic process as the process of creation, and shows human consciousness to be the end of this process. Thus, he reconnects with the result of the *Historical-Critical Introduction* by showing that monotheism is innate to human consciousness, and moreover establishes the structure and law of the theogonic process in human consciousness as those of all religion.



# I. The Conceptual and Textual Prehistory of *Monotheism*

*Alle Metaphysik, sie äußere sich nun speculativ oder praktisch, beruht auf dem Talent, ein Vieles unmittelbar in Einem und hinwiderum Eines in Vielem begreifen zu können, mit Einem Wort auf dem Sinn für Totalität.<sup>9</sup>*

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## A. Presentation of the Text

*Der Monotheismus*, which is herewith offered in translation to the English public, belongs to the corpus of writings that make up Schelling's so-called "later philosophy" (*Spätphilosophie*). The work was first published in 1857 in volume XII (volume II in the second series) of the posthumous edition of Schelling's *Sämmtliche Werke* (henceforth *Werke*). The volume contains the *Philosophy of Mythology* (pp. 1–674), in addition to a public lecture, "Ueber die Bedeutung eines der neu entdeckten Wandgemälde von Pompeji," published as an appendix (pp. 675–685).<sup>10</sup> The *Philosophy of Mythology* itself is divided into two books which encompass a continuous series of 29 lectures: the first book, *Monotheism*, contains Lectures 1 to 6 (pp. 1–131), and serves as the "foundation" (*Begründung*) of the second, the actual *Philosophy of Mythology*, which comprises 23 lectures (pp. 133–674). Thus, the two books combined form the complete *Philosophy of Mythology* (excluding its two introductions, the "historical-critical" and "philosophical," which constitute a separate volume).

*Monotheism* is a work with a long and convoluted history. Although it was only published, along with the other works of the later philosophy, in 1857, its origins go back several decades before—to 1810 to be precise. The first lectures which Schelling gave on the topic of monotheism date from his time in Erlangen (1820–1827). There, the records show, from 1821 to 1823, he taught

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<sup>9</sup> SW VIII, 9.

<sup>10</sup> An English translation of this lecture can be found in PR 345–354.

a series of lectures, under the title *Initia Philosophiae*, in which he offered "a historical introduction, [followed by] a precise examination of the inner elements of Monotheism, then an introduction to mythology."<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the manuscripts of these lectures have not reached us. However, the order of these lectures appears to correspond to the formal thematic sequence of the course on the Philosophy of Mythology as taught in Munich from 1828 and in Berlin in the 1840's, and which normally included, in this order: a historical-critical introduction, the deduction of monotheism, and the actual philosophy of mythology.<sup>12</sup> In the *Werke*, however, this sequence is disrupted by the so-called "philosophical introduction" to the Philosophy of Mythology—namely, the *Exposition of the Purely Rational Philosophy*, Schelling's last major work, composed for the most part in Berlin in the 1840's—which is awkwardly placed between the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism*. I will return in Ch. 2 to discuss why Schelling might have chosen this seemingly unnatural place for the *Purely Rational Philosophy*, and the relation of this work to *Monotheism*. What matters at this stage of our presentation is to note that *Monotheism* was from the very beginning, and indeed, by design, conceived as a part of an integrated course of the Philosophy of Mythology, in which it is properly and formally linked to the *Historical-Critical Introduction* at one end, and to the lectures on mythology at the other.

Schelling taught the course on Monotheism the first time in Munich in 1828/29 and for the last time in Berlin in 1845/46.<sup>13</sup> It was always taught as part of the Philosophy of Mythology, which

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Dorf Müller to Schubert, cited in Dekker, *Die Rückwendung zum Mythos: Schellings Letzte Wandlung* (München: Oldenbourg, 1930), 17. Original cited in Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert, *Der Erwerb aus einem vergangenen und die Erwartungen von einem zukünftigen Leben. Eine Selbstbiographie* (Erlangen: J. J. Palm u. Ernst Enke, 1856), III/2, 518. On Schelling's lectures in Erlangen, see Fuhrmans' thorough presentation in Schelling, *Initia Philosophiae Universae: Erlanger Vorlesung WS 1820/21*, ed. H. Fuhrmans (Bonn: H. Bouvier u. co., 1969).

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis of a *Nachschrift* of the original lectures on the Philosophy of Mythology (given in Munich 1828/29), see Dekker, *Rückwendung zum Mythos*, 3–18.

<sup>13</sup> Xavier Tilliette, *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir*, II (Paris: Vrin, 1992), 207. For an analysis of a *Nachschrift* of the 1828 lectures, see Dekker, *Rückwendung zum Mythos*, esp. 9–18. Although Dekker

also included the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and the actual Philosophy of Mythology.<sup>14</sup> However, Schelling also recycled parts of *Monotheism* in other contexts, notably in his so-called “Munich Introduction,” which typically prefaced his Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation. Thus, in Lectures 30 to 42 of the original “Munich Introduction” (WS 1827/28), we find a condensed version of *Monotheism*, although one largely stripped of its connection to Mythology.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the original lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation* (1831/32), like their counterpart in the *Werke*, replicate in a different context the substance of *Monotheism*.<sup>16</sup> These facts already suggest the central place of this work in the later philosophy.

The text of *Monotheism* as it appears in the *Werke* was edited by Schelling’s son and editor, Karl Friedrich August. In his Preface, he notes that he had “a larger number of older manuscripts at his disposal, in addition to more recent ones.”<sup>17</sup> The abundance of manuscripts is confirmed by Schelling, who in his literary will (*Verfügung*) writes that his Munich materials contain a “particularly large number of papers in which the deduction of *Monotheism* is attempted. All this is very useful, but not for printing.”<sup>18</sup> Faithful to his father’s instructions, Karl, in establishing the text of *Monotheism*, appears to have used the more recent manuscripts, basing himself on a specific one selected by Schelling.<sup>19</sup> Older manuscripts occasionally provided additional material for footnotes in the text. Thus, although *Monotheism* was taught as early as 1828, the text that we have

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assumes that this *Nachschrift* is based on the course on the Philosophy of Mythology which Schelling gave in 1830-31, Fuhrmans revised its date to the original lectures of 1828-29 (see Fuhrmans, *Schellings letzte Philosophie*, 327–328 n. 19). For the lectures of 1846, see PMAm.

<sup>14</sup> In Munich, Schelling taught the Philosophy of Mythology in SS 1828, WS 1828/29, SS 1829, WS 1830/31, SS 1831, SS 1834, WS 1835/36, SS 1837, WS 1837/38, SS 1838, SS 1840, and WS 1840/41. In Berlin, he only taught the Mythology twice: in SS 1842, and again in SS 1845 and WS 1845/46. For a detailed chronology of Schelling’s teaching in Munich and Berlin, see Fuhrmans’ Introduction in GPP.

<sup>15</sup> See SysWA. Cf. similar lectures in the lectures of 1832/33 (see GPP).

<sup>16</sup> See UPO 100ff. Cf. SW XIII, 262ff.

<sup>17</sup> MOT vii.

<sup>18</sup> NLV 15.

<sup>19</sup> MOT vii.

dates from the Berlin period (1841-1856). This, as we shall see, is not inconsequential, since the changes which Schelling's thinking underwent from Munich to Berlin is, to some extent, also reflected in the text we have inherited.

The apparent profusion of manuscripts of this work already suggests a number of things, which will be demonstrated below: 1) the work belongs to an early strata of the later philosophy; 2) it is a particularly important work, which continually prompted Schelling to improve it; 3) its significance changed with time, which necessitated revisions, whether due to internal factors, i.e. issues internal to the work in itself, or external factors, i.e. top-down changes in the role and place that it occupies in the wider philosophical system of which it is a part; 4) it is a work that Schelling was not immediately satisfied with, and which he therefore attempted to rewrite several times (similar to *The Ages of the World*, of which a number of drafts were made, and of which, as we will show, *Monotheism* is fundamentally nothing but an updated version).

Still with regard to the manuscript, and in connection with the third point just mentioned, the fact that Schelling picked a Berlin-era version of the text naturally raises the question of whether, and how, the Berlin version differs from the earlier, Munich version, and the implications of picking one over the other. This question, too, will be addressed below. Unfortunately, the Munich *Nachlass* is no longer extant, having been largely destroyed during the Second World War. However, using *Nachschriften* of Schelling's lectures, we can partly reconstruct the content of the Munich-era *Monotheism* —enough, at least, to shed light on how, if at all, it diverges from its Berlin counterpart. Finally, the fact that far more manuscripts of *Monotheism* than of the *Philosophy of Mythology* appear to have existed suggests that the former, although part of the latter, has a relatively independent status: it is a “treatise” (*Abhandlung*) proper.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> NLV 16.

## B. Contextual Landmarks: Reclaiming Religion for Philosophy

The *Philosophy of Mythology*, including *Monotheism*, belongs to the earliest strata of Schelling's later philosophy. As noted by the editor in his Preface to the *Philosophy of Mythology*, the first materials of this work date from the time of *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815), that is, from Schelling's so-called "middle period."<sup>21</sup> In fact, the works of Schelling's middle philosophy—notably the *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (1810), the *Denkmal der Schrift von den göttlichen Dingen des Herrn Jacobi* (1812), and the drafts of the *Weltalter* (1811, 1813, 1815)—contain the seeds of the later philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Many of the themes which characterize the later philosophy find their first, rawest expression in these works—such themes as metaphysical and theological voluntarism, the notion of divine personality, the Trinitarian view of God, the theory of the potencies, the historicization of the absolute, the idea of creation as a theogonic process, the critique of rationalism, the thematization of the "positive," the radical contingency of being, the rootlessness and sterility of modern philosophy, and the need for philosophy to reconnect with the religious heritage of humanity, among others. In this regard, the division between middle and later periods can be misleading: between the two periods, there is less a dividing line, a change of course, than continuity, progression. Indeed, in many regards, the later philosophy simply developed and refined ideas first conceived during the middle period. This is particularly true, as we shall see, in the case of *Monotheism*.

Before we turn to examine the earliest textual evidence of *Monotheism* in Schelling's personal

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<sup>21</sup> MOT v.

<sup>22</sup> Horst Fuhrmans shows the continuity between the middle and later philosophy in his *Schellings Philosophie der Weltalter* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1954). Schelling himself dated the birth of his positive philosophy to the *Denkmal an Jacobi* (1812).

diary of 1810, we would do well to illustrate, even if briefly, its background. What was the situation in Schelling's mind at that point? Aside from a couple of occurrences, the word "monotheism" does not appear in Schelling's writings before *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815).<sup>23</sup> Certainly, the young Schelling would have been shocked to be informed of the significance which monotheism would acquire in his later philosophy. Nor was the concept of a personal God always one which appealed to him. Imbued, on the one hand, with the pantheism of Spinoza, and, on the other hand, with a desire, catalyzed by Fichte's idealism, for the absolute autonomy of reason, the young Schelling appeared to dismiss the idea of a personal deity as too constraining and unworthy of philosophical attention—indeed, as something human, all too human, and beneath the aimed-for Absolute, the *lapis philosophorum* of German idealism. As the twenty-year-old Schelling, in a letter to Hegel on February 4, 1795, wrote with resolute fierceness:

There is no personal God, and our supreme effort lies in the destruction of personality, the passage into the absolute sphere of being.<sup>24</sup>

To be sure, despite what the explicitly Christian character of his later philosophy might *prima facie* suggest, Schelling never abandoned his youthful aspiration to access an absolute foundation, a knowledge without presuppositions, a beginning beyond which it is impossible to go. On the

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<sup>23</sup> Before the *Tagebuch* of 1810—which, of course, remained unpublished and unknown during Schelling's lifetime—there is little to suggest that monotheism was a topic of special interest to Schelling. The word "monotheism" appears only twice in the *Sämtliche Werke* before that date. The first occurrence is an incidental reference to a "philosophical monotheism" in his 1802/03 lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* (SW V, 425). The second and more significant mention appears in *Philosophy and Religion* (1804): "Die esoterische Religion ist ebenso nothwendig Monotheismus, als die exoterische unter irgend einer Form nothwendig in Polytheismus verfällt. Erst mit der Idee des schlechthin Einen und absolut-Idealen sind alle anderen Ideen gesetzt" (SW VI, 67). We will return to this passage below. The word seems curiously absent from all three drafts of *The Ages of the World* (1811, 1813, 1815). However, in *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815), we find references to the "doctrine of the unity of god" and "monotheism" (SW VIII, 361–362) which anticipate the meaning this concept would acquire in the later period.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. and ed. Clark Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 33.

contrary, he remained deeply concerned with this question to the end of his life, as evidenced by his famous introductory lectures to the *Philosophy of Revelation* given in Berlin in 1842 (known in English as *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*).<sup>25</sup> Nor does Schelling's later preoccupation with religion and theological topics indicate a volte-face, a betrayal of the radicalism of his youth.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. e.g.: "In the positive philosophy, therefore, I do not proceed from the concept of God, as the ontological argument and the former metaphysics had attempted to do. Rather, I must do away with precisely this concept, the concept of *God*, in order to proceed from that which just exists [*dem bloß Existirende*], in which nothing at all is thought other than that which just exists, to see whether the divine is to be reached from it (BL 200; SW XIII, 158). Cf. further: "I cannot, therefore, proceed from the concept of *God* to prove the existence of God, but I can proceed from the concept of that which indubitably exists and conversely prove the divinity of that which indubitably exists" (BL 201; SW XIII, 159).

In a memorable passage of his *Erlangen Lectures* of 1820–1, Schelling states that whoever wishes to access the absolute must leave God behind, and identifies the absolute subject with what the "mystics of old" call the supra-deity (*Uebergottheit*). The passage is one of the most striking in Schelling's *oeuvre*, and is therefore worth quoting at length: "Daher Geometrie = definible Wissenschaft. Allein mit dem Subjekt der Philosophie ist es etwas ganz anderes. Dieses ist schlechthin indefinibel. Denn 1) es ist nichts - nicht *etwas*, und selbst dieß wäre wenigstens eine negative Definition; allein es ist auch nichts nicht, d.h. es ist alles. Es ist nur nichts einzeln, stillstehend, insbesondere; es ist B, C, D u.s.w. nur, sofern jeder dieser Punkte zu dem Fluß der unzertrennlichen Bewegung gehört. Es ist nichts, das es wäre, und es ist nichts, das es nicht wäre. Es ist in einer unaufhaltsamen Bewegung, in keine Gestalt einzuschließen, das Incoercible, das Unfaßliche, das wahrhaft Unendliche. Zu diesem muß sich erheben, wer der vollkommen freien, sich selbst erzeugenden Wissenschaft mächtig werden will. Hier muß alles Endliche, alles, was noch ein Seyendes ist, verlassen werden, die letzte Anhänglichkeit schwinden; hier gilt es *alles* zu lassen - nicht bloß, wie man zu reden pflegt, Weib und Kind, sondern was nur *Ist*, selbst *Gott*, denn auch Gott ist auf diesem Standpunkt nur ein Seyendes. Hier, wo wir diesen Begriff (Gott) zuerst nennen, mögen wir an ihm als dem höchsten Beispiel jenes Frühere nachweisen. Wir sagten: es ist nichts, das das absolute Subjekt nicht wäre, und es ist nichts, das jenes Subjekt wäre. Nämlich das absolute Subjekt *ist* nicht nicht Gott, und es ist doch auch nicht Gott, es ist auch das, was nicht Gott ist. Es ist also insofern über Gott, und wenn selbst einer der vorzüglichsten Mystiker früherer Zeit gewagt hat von einer Uebergottheit zu reden, so wird dieß auch uns verstattet seyn, und es wird ausdrücklich hier bemerkt, damit nicht etwa das Absolute - jenes absolute Subjekt - geradezu mit Gott verwechselt werde. Denn dieser Unterschied ist sehr wichtig. Also selbst Gott muß der lassen, der sich in den Anfangspunkt der wahrhaft freien Philosophie stellen will. Hier heißt es: Wer es erhalten will, der wird es verlieren, und wer es aufgibt, der wird es finden. Nur derjenige ist auf den Grund seiner selbst gekommen und hat die ganze Tiefe des Lebens erkannt, der einmal alles verlassen hatte, und selbst von allem verlassen war, dem alles versank, und der mit dem Unendlichen sich allein gesehen: ein großer Schritt, den Platon mit dem Tode verglichen. Was Dante an der Pforte des Infernum geschrieben seyn läßt, dieß ist in einem andern Sinn auch vor den Eingang zur Philosophie zu schreiben: 'Laßt alle Hoffnung fahren, die ihr eingeht'. Wer wahrhaft philosophiren will, muß aller Hoffnung, alles Verlangens, aller Sehnsucht los seyn, er muß nichts wollen, nichts wissen, sich ganz bloß und arm fühlen, alles dahingeben, um alles zu gewinnen" (SW IX, 217–218). Therefore, the young Schelling's anti-theistic pronouncements should not be immediately taken as indicative of atheism. About the mystical sources of Schelling's thinking, the best study remains Ernst Benz, *The Mystical Sources of German Romantic Philosophy*, trans. Blair Reynolds and Eunice M. Paul (Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick Publications, 1983).

Indeed, these topics had already captivated Schelling during his formative years at the Tübinger Stift. His master's thesis, titled *Antiquissimi de prima malorum humanorum origine philosophematis Genes. III. explicandi tentamen criticum et philosophicum* (1792), and his doctoral thesis, titled *De Marcione Paulinarum epistolarum emendatore* (1795), show that scriptural exegesis and questions about mythological origins were not new to him. This fact alone, of course, does not mean that Schelling's later focus on religion was not also driven by religious, rather than purely philosophical motivations. Indeed, Schelling openly admitted the Christian inspiration of his later philosophy (more so, admittedly, in Munich than in Berlin, although the difference is only one of emphasis). As he says at the beginning of his inaugural lectures in Munich in 1827:

We, in philosophy, must...strive after that pattern and archetype, and that is Christianity in its purity and nobility, by which philosophy must orient itself [*nach dem die Philosophie sich richten muß*]. However, I do not say this to defend myself from those who claim that my philosophy is unchristian and irreligious, because there is no such thing as an irreligious philosophy, since philosophy without religion is preposterous [*ein Unding*]. Rather, I say this because I would consider it despicable cowardice not to explain that I have derived my comfort [*Beruhigung*] from the texts of the New Testament, and hope that others will too. The truly decisive name of my philosophy is *Christian philosophy*, and I assume this decision seriously.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> SysWA 9. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Cf. similar passage in the Berlin lectures of 1842: "Furthermore, and although so much is already apparent, namely, that this [positive] philosophy has the content of religion as its *own*, it will nonetheless refuse to call itself, or allow itself to be called, a *religious* philosophy... If there is a truly irreligious doctrine, it should not be termed an irreligious *philosophy*, for to do so would be to accord it too much. An irreligious doctrine is just as little a philosophy as a fundamentally unethical doctrine can be a philosophy... This is also why the positive philosophy must refuse the title of a religious philosophy, since through it the *true* concept and content of religion will first be discovered... That person for whom *true* philosophy and *Christian* philosophy are synonymous expressions must above all form a higher idea of Christianity itself than the habitual notion that Christianity is a merely historical phenomenon that first appeared in the world approximately eighteen hundred years



However, he immediately adds:

Christianity, therefore, is the foundation [*Grundlage*] of philosophy, in the sense, however, that Christianity has always existed—though not the doctrine, but the matter [*Sache*] itself. In a way, Christianity existed before there was a world. That being said, I am in no way saying that Christianity = reason. My philosophy lays on the basis of Christianity the foundation of a system.... This is beyond what any philosophy has until now been able to achieve.<sup>27</sup>

How can philosophy both depend on Christianity and be independent of external authority? How should this dependence be understood? In what sense is philosophy sovereign? These are all questions to which we shall return later, notably in our discussion of the key Schellingian concept of a philosophical religion. At this stage, we are only concerned with explaining how monotheism, as a theme and as a concept, became important for Schelling in the first place, and thereby explaining the circumstances in which the idea of the treatise of the same name were conceived.

We have noted that although the young Schelling rejected the idea of a personal God in favour of an impersonal absolute, this did not necessarily entail his abandonment of the concept of God altogether—even if this concept, in his early philosophy, remained subordinate to that of the absolute.<sup>28</sup> Further, we have indicated that Schelling's growing preoccupation with theological and

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ago. He must grasp Christianity as that which is truly universal, that which, therefore, even serves as the very foundation of the world... If Christianity is really the content of philosophy, then with this it becomes the content *of our own thought*, it becomes for us our own insight, independent of all authority" (BL 183, 185; SW XIII, 134, 136–137).

<sup>27</sup> SysWA 9.

<sup>28</sup> In the already-cited letter to Hegel from 5 February 1795, Schelling writes: "There is no other super-sensible world for us than that of the Absolute Self. *God* is nothing but the Absolute Self, the Self insofar as it has annihilated everything theoretical; God in *theoretical* philosophy thus equals zero. Personality arises through the unity of consciousness. Yet consciousness is not possible without an object. But for God—i.e., for the Absolute Self—there is no object *whatsoever*; for if there were, the Absolute Self would cease to be absolute. Consequently there is no personal God, and our highest endeavour is aimed at the destruction of our personality, at passage into the absolute sphere of being" (cited in Butler [ed.], *Hegel: The Letters*, 33).

religious topics did not necessarily indicate his relinquishing of reason for faith. In fact, the so-called “turn to religion” often seen as characterizing Schelling’s later philosophy, far from representing a leap of faith, emerged precisely in opposition to the view that knowledge of God could only be found in the certitude of faith, and that the philosophical absolute was a mere chimera of reason, not the actual, living God. These themes were at the heart of notable disputes in the first decade of the 1800 which pitted Schelling against two critics of contemporary philosophy and proponents of the primacy of faith over abstract reason, namely Carl August von Eschenmayer (1768-1852) and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819).

Schelling’s controversy with Eschenmayer was the occasion of an important essay, published in 1804, titled *Philosophy of Religion*.<sup>29</sup> In this work, Schelling addresses the relation of God to the Absolute, and introduces the concept of an “originary unity” (*Ureinheit*) in God, which prefigures the concept of monotheism. But before discussing these themes, a basic question needs to be addressed: how does Schelling justify the concept of God in philosophical terms? More generally, how does a religious notion become pertinent for philosophy? Schelling’s answers to these questions in *Philosophy and Religion* are ambiguous, as indeed is the title of the work (is the conjunction “and” in the title meant to link or to separate the two terms?). On the one hand, Schelling contends that philosophy and religion are two distinct disciplines, not to be confused with one another: this is the main point of his polemic. On the other hand, he concedes a degree of overlap or convergence between the two, at least in origin. In his account, the relation between religion and philosophy is not portrayed as a straightforward or static one. Instead, he characterizes the relation between them in terms of an evolving, dynamic tension. Schelling offers a quasi-

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<sup>29</sup> As Heinrich Heine mockingly wrote: “Anno 1804 God finally appeared to Herr Schelling, full-fledged, in his book entitled: *Philosophy and Religion*... Here philosophy stops with Herr Schelling, and poetry, that is to say, folly begins” (*Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* [Halle: Otto Händel, 1887], 117–118, cited in PR xv).

mythical account of the genesis of the two disciplines and their historical tension leading up to the present:

There was a time when religion was kept separate from popular belief within mystery cults like a holy fire, sharing a common sanctuary with philosophy. The legends of antiquity name the earliest philosophers as the originators of these mystery cults, from which the most enlightened among the later philosophers, notably Plato, liked to educe their divine teachings. At that time philosophers still had the courage and the right to discuss the singly great themes, the only ones worthy of philosophizing and rising above common knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

After this golden age of harmony between religion and philosophy, a split emerged whereby the mystery cults “became public and contaminated with foreign elements from popular belief,” and philosophy, in order to maintain its purity and integrity, “retreated from religion and became, in contrast to it, esoteric.”<sup>31</sup> This divide had detrimental effects on both disciplines. Religion became an “outward power,” and thereby sought to suppress any truth outside of itself, while philosophy found itself dispossessed of the great themes which it had dealt with in antiquity, and consequently “confined to that which had no value for reason.” Thus, philosophy developed into a conceptual knowledge applicable to “objects of perception and finite things,” but remained “blind toward matters of reason”—namely the true, divine origin of ideas. Meanwhile, religion claimed these matters as its exclusive property, transforming them in the process into dogmas, i.e. into items of faith above criticism and free inquiry. Consequently,

because philosophy was acknowledged and accredited now more than ever as the only possible knowledge, the increasingly thorough self-awareness of its invalidity ran parallel to the rising value of its opposite, i.e. *faith*, so that ultimately all that is

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<sup>30</sup> PaR 7.

<sup>31</sup> PaR 7.

essentially philosophical in philosophy was completely given over to religion.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, both philosophy—up to and especially including the Kantian one—and religion faith are incomplete: the former because of its self-imposed methodological rationalism which restricts its scope to finite objects, the latter because it illegitimately claims as its exclusive right a domain of knowledge that is “essentially philosophical,” i.e. capable of discursive, rational explanation. Indeed, according to Schelling, the domain of knowledge which religion claims for itself more rightfully belongs to philosophy. Indeed, in his view, “aside from the teachings on the Absolute, the true mysteries of philosophy have as their most noble and indeed their sole content the eternal birth of all things and their relationship to God.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Schelling’s turn to religious themes, beginning with *Philosophy and Religion*, does not mean his abandoning philosophical speculation for faith. On the contrary, his intention, explicitly, is to reclaim “those topics that have been appropriated by the dogmatism of religion and [Eschenmayer’s] nonphilosophy on behalf of reason and philosophy.”<sup>34</sup> This, for him, is not a matter of complementing reason with faith, and even less of mixing the two to produce some kind of “religious philosophy” (a label which he strongly repudiated, particularly in his later philosophy). As he writes:

It is quite impossible, on the one hand, to accredit a doctrine with being a philosophy, and a complete one at that, and on the other, to declare it in need of being complemented by faith; this contradicts and nullifies its concept because its essence consists in possessing clear knowledge and intuitive cognition of that which nonphilosophy means to grasp in faith.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> PaR 8.

<sup>33</sup> PaR 8.

<sup>34</sup> PaR 10.

<sup>35</sup> PaR 8. Cf. Schelling in 1842: “One who wants to and can believe does not engage in philosophy, and one who does philosophize announces therewith that mere faith does not satisfy him” (BL 184).

The advocates of the primacy of faith and feeling over reason—namely, Eschenmayer and, even more provocatively, as we shall see in a moment, Jacobi—considered the God of the philosophers as a phantom of reason and not as the true, living God, who, they claimed, can only be known through faith.<sup>36</sup> Schelling was deeply suspicious of this criticism. Not only did he believe that philosophy is capable of penetrating the divine mysteries, and of obtaining true knowledge of the living God, but he also turned the tables on the fideists by arguing that religion is a “mere apparition of God within the soul,” by which he meant a vague, fleeting, and subjective impression of unclear origins and questionable value. Moreover, philosophy in his view has an advantage over faith in that it is a “necessarily...higher and, as it were, more tranquil perfection of the spirit.”<sup>37</sup>

In *Philosophy and Religion*, Schelling explicitly identifies the Absolute with God.<sup>38</sup> Since nothing can be conceived above the Absolute, and this idea, by its nature, excludes any kind of limitation, anyone who places anything above the rational Absolute *as* God misunderstands its

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<sup>36</sup> For an analysis of Eschenmayer’s views on the insufficiency of philosophy and the need for it to be supplemented by faith as a standpoint above reason, see Alexandra Roux’s introduction in C.A. Eschenmayer, *La philosophie dans son passage à la non-philosophie*, trans. A. Roux (Paris: Vrin, 2005), esp. 75–91. Cf. Jacobi’s critique of the God of the philosophers as a “phantom,” to which he opposes a God who is a “living, self-subsisting being,” in Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 523–524.

<sup>37</sup> PaR 10. Cf. Schelling’s critique of Theosophy in his later lectures in Munich on the *History of Modern Philosophy*: “Theosophy is in complete conflict with the vocation of contemporary life, the theosopher deprives himself of the greatest advantage of the contemporary state of affairs, of knowledge which distinguishes, differentiates, analyses everything and keeps it separate, which is admittedly also a transition, but in the same way as the whole of contemporary life is a transition. It is not our vocation to live in visions, but rather in belief, i.e. in mediated knowledge. Our knowledge is incomplete, i.e. it has to be created bit by bit, successively, according to gradations and classifications. Whoever has ever felt the beneficial effect of the analysis of his thoughts, of a successive creation of knowledge and cognition will, so to speak, not give up that considered duality at any price. There is no understanding in vision in and for itself” (HMP 181–182).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. “There could be little objection to calling sheer absoluteness, in its simple-per-se nature, *God* or the Absolute, and form, in contrast, *absoluteness*, since absoluteness, in its originary meaning, relates to form and is form... However, with this understanding, God could not be described as that which one can grasp only by premonition, sentiment, etc. For if the form of the determination of the real enters the soul through the ideal as *knowledge*, then the essence enters as the *in-itself of the soul* and is one with it so that the soul, sub specie aeternitatis, beholds the essence itself” (PaR 19).

nature and is prey to an illusion.<sup>39</sup> Further, defining the type of cognition which is befitting the Absolute, Schelling assimilates the essence of the soul to the substance of God:

For as the essence of God consists of absolute, solely unmediated reality, so the nature of the soul consists in cognition that is one with the real, ergo with God; hence it is also the intention of philosophy in relation to man not to add anything but to remove from him, as thoroughly as possible, the accidentals that the body, the world of appearances, and the sensate life have added and to lead him back to the originary state [*Ursprüngliche*].<sup>40</sup>

Given the essential identity of the soul with God in cognition, how does finite particularity emerge from absolute identity? If the absolute is immediately the totality of finite particulars, and if it does not transform itself into an actual multiplicity, how does the universe of particular beings come to exist? Schelling explains the emergence of particular forms as the result of the dialectic between real and ideal involved in the process of the Absolute's self-objectification. The Absolute recognizes itself in its own mirror-image, in its own reflection, and through this simultaneous becoming-other and self-recognition achieves absolute identity.<sup>41</sup> This process produces the eternal "ideas." There is no actual multiplicity at this level. The ideas are essentially identical with the absolute by their "originary oneness" (*Ureinheit*).<sup>42</sup> The ideas produced by the absolute are themselves necessarily productive in the same way:

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<sup>39</sup> PaR 11.

<sup>40</sup> PaR 15.

<sup>41</sup> PaR 22.

<sup>42</sup> "The Absolute would not be truly objective in the real if it did not impart to it its power to transform ideality into reality and to objectify itself into particular forms. This second producing is that of the *ideas*, or rather this producing and the first kind (the producing through the absolute form) together are *one* producing [*Ein Produciren*]. The ideas, too, are relative to their originary oneness [*Ureinheit*] in themselves because the absoluteness of the first has passed into them, but they are in themselves or real only insofar as they are simultaneously in the *originary oneness*; ergo, as far as they are ideal. Since they cannot therefore appear in particularity and difference without ceasing to be absolute, they all coincide with the originary oneness, just as the latter coincides with the Absolute" (PaR 23).

They, too, bring forth only absoluteness, only ideas, and each oneness that emerges from them relates to them in the same manner as they themselves relate to the originary oneness. This is the true transcendental theogony: there is no relation other than an absolute one in this realm, which the Old World knew to express only sensually through the image of procreation [*Zeugung*], whereby the procreated is dependent on the procreating but is otherwise independent.<sup>43</sup>

This passage anticipates some of the themes that we will find later in *Monotheism*. For one, it introduces the idea of a “transcendental theogony,” or the eternal birth of God, which will be developed in *The Ages of the World*, and refined in *Monotheism*.<sup>44</sup> Further, it associates the process of the production of the eternal ideas in God with the imagery of “procreation” (*Zeugung*), anticipating the vocabulary of *Monotheism*, in which the “theogonic process” is described as “the process of the generation [*Erzeugung*] of the divine *Being*.”<sup>45</sup> Where this passage differs from *Monotheism*, however, is in its representation of the eternal procreation of God's being. Here, we have a kind of “mirroring” of oneness stretching into infinity, across all levels of this continuous subject-objectification, such that “the absolute world with all its gradations of essence reduces itself to the absolute oneness of God so that in the form there is nothing truly particular and nothing that until now is not absolute, ideal, all soul, pure *natura naturans*.”<sup>46</sup> Although Schelling later continues to underscore the oneness of God's being with all its determinations, he abandons the model of an infinite identity within God and instead develops—starting with the *Essay on Human Freedom* and culminating with *Monotheism*—a transcendental theogony based on God's progressive self-differentiation, his becoming “unequal to oneself,” and coming out of oneself. It

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<sup>43</sup> PaR 23–24.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the word “Theogonie” appears only twice in Schelling's works before 1804. The first occurrence is an incidental reference to Hesiod's book by that title (SW I, 69), and the second, more significant occurrence, is in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* (1802/03) (SW V, 405).

<sup>45</sup> MOT 91.

<sup>46</sup> PaR 24.

is precisely this power of “becoming other” (*sich ungleich Werdens*), this power of “ecstasy” (*Ekstasis*), which in *Monotheism* constitutes the actual procreating power (*Zeugungskraft*) in God. One can summarize the difference this way: the transcendental theogony of 1804 is one of absolute identity and infinite reflection, whereas the theogonic model of *Monotheism* is a dynamic process willed into being by God. On the one hand, intellectualism, on the other, voluntarism.

Three more innovations of the essay on *Philosophy and Religion* should be pointed out as anticipating, even when indirectly, *Monotheism*: (1) the doctrine of an original “falling-away” (*Abfall*), (2) the idea of human history as the progressive revelation of God, and (3) the view that monotheism is related to polytheism like an “esoteric religion” to its “exoteric counterpart.”

As far as the first of these is concerned, it is a new theme in Schelling, and lies at the core of the book's argument. The “falling-away” indicates the quantitative leap from the infinite to the finite world: “There is no continuous transition from the Absolute to the actual; the origin of the phenomenal world is conceivable only as a complete falling-away from absoluteness by means of a leap [*Sprung*].”<sup>47</sup> Significantly, this leap does not refer, as one might initially assume, to the Fall of Man, but rather to Creation itself, the transition from the infinite or Absolute to the finite world, from the originary oneness of the first divine production (the world of ideas) to reason and understanding.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in *Monotheism*, Schelling, without using the expression “falling-away,” depicts the process of Creation as the consequence of a “reversal” of the potencies that make up God’s eternal being. Thus, Schelling interprets the word *uni-versum* as the “overturned” or “extra-verted” One, meaning the potencies in their mutual exclusion and inverted position. In

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<sup>47</sup> PaR 26.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. “Where the originary oneness, the first counter-image, falls into the imaged world, it appears as reason, for form, as the essence of knowledge, is originary knowledge [*Urwissen*], originary reason [*Urvernunft*] (λόγος); however, the real, as its product, is identical with the producing agent; it is real reason, and, as fallen reason, it is *common sense* [*Verstand*] [νοῦς]” (PaR 31).



this process, God acts *per contrarium*, insofar as the being in which God realizes himself as Spirit is a being posited outside of him.<sup>49</sup> Writes Schelling:

This *universio* is the pure work of divine will [*Wollens*] and of divine freedom... The divine being is not negated [*aufgehoben*] in this tension of the potencies, but only *suspended*: but the goal of this suspension is nothing other than to *really* posit it, to posit it *actu*, which was not possible in any other way. This whole process is only the process of the generation [*Erzeugung*] of the divine *being*—the *theogonic process*... And so the mystery of the divine being and divine life is explained by this *miracle* [*Wunder*] of the *permutation* or *reversal* of the potencies.<sup>50</sup>

Further, the goal of the *universio*, as the process in which God generates himself in a being posited outside of himself, is nothing other than the creation of human consciousness, “the point...reached where all the potencies are restored to their unity, where the God-negating [principle] of the process...is again turned into the God-positing principle.”<sup>51</sup> The human being, however, in order to become conscious of the process through which he came to be posited originally as the “God-positing” being (*Gott Setzende*)—and, through this expanded consciousness, to become the being that posits God with knowledge and freedom—leaves the situation into which he was born at the end of the natural process. This transition corresponds to the Christian account of the Fall of Man, which, as we shall see, triggers for Schelling the mythological process in human consciousness leading to the restoration of the true religion.<sup>52</sup>

This theological interpretation of the meaning of human history is already prefigured in *Philosophy and Religion*. Here, the final cause of history is depicted as a “reconciliation of the

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<sup>49</sup> MOT 93ff, 106ff.

<sup>50</sup> MOT 91.

<sup>51</sup> MOT 118.

<sup>52</sup> MOT 124–126.

falling-away."<sup>53</sup> History is viewed as

an epic composed in the mind of God. It has two main parts: one depicting mankind's egress from its center to its farthest point of displacement; the other, its return. The former is, as it were, history's *Illiad*; the latter, its *Odyssey*. In the one, the direction is centrifugal; in the other, it becomes centripetal. In this way, the grand purpose of the phenomenal world reveals itself in history.<sup>54</sup>

The third point in connection with *Monotheism* which emerges in *Philosophy and Religion* is Schelling's discussion, in a brief but important Appendix titled "On the External Forms of Religion," of monotheism and polytheism as religious forms. Anticipating a distinction made in *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling sees the State and religion as forming a kind of duality of exoteric and esoteric, respectively. The State has an "indirect relationship" to the divine, whereas religion, "if it seeks to preserve itself in unscathed pure ideality, can...never exist—even in the most perfect State—other than esoterically in the form of *mystery cults*."<sup>55</sup> Schelling makes an additional distinction between esoteric and exoteric religion. Exoteric religion is presented in a nation's poetry and art, whereas "proper [esoteric] religion relinquishes the public and withdraws into the sacred darkness of secrecy."<sup>56</sup> Consequently, much like in his later philosophy, Schelling gives special attention to Greek mystery cults. The doctrine taught in these institutions, he contends, "was antithetical to public religion in the most direct and striking way." The secrecy of the mystery cults was not because participation in them was limited to an elite circle—which, in fact, it wasn't, given how widespread those cults were in the ancient world—but rather because the transference of their doctrines into public life would have been

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<sup>53</sup> PaR 50.

<sup>54</sup> PaR 44.

<sup>55</sup> PaR 51.

<sup>56</sup> PaR 51.

considered profanation. In fact, Schelling notes that Christianity “emerged from [paganism] only by making the mystery cults public.”<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, here, like in the later philosophy, Christianity is seen as emerging from polytheism, specifically Greek religion, and not from Judaism. Curiously, however, Schelling does not develop his views about Christianity, whose role here seems limited to having “popularized” the true religion, i.e. monotheism, contained in the mysteries. By contrast, in the *Philosophy of Revelation*, while the mysteries are presented as the culmination and religious zenith of the mythological process, Christianity does not merely represent a vulgarization of the mysteries, but the perfect and true religion (in relation to which mythological religion, including the mysteries, appears as false).

Thus, despite the language of God and of an original “falling-away,” there is nothing specifically and explicitly Christian about Schelling’s views in *Philosophy and Religion*. This is interesting because it suggests that his interest in monotheism—which is here attributed primarily to the Greek mysteries, and only derivatively and imperfectly to Christianity—is not, as one might be inclined to think at first, the consequence of a supposed “Christian turn” in Schelling’s thinking. Indeed, *Philosophy and Religion* appears much more as the work of a pagan Neoplatonist than that of a Christian philosopher. In fact, although Schelling in his *Philosophy of Revelation* would consider Christianity to be, by virtue of its doctrine of the Triune God, the true and highest expression of monotheism, the primary context of monotheism, for Schelling, in 1804 as in 1827, is mythology and polytheism. Indeed, monotheism and polytheism are an inseparable pair for him. As he puts it in *Monotheism*: “If polytheism is impossible, monotheism as a special concept is no

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. “If the notion of paganism had not been abstracted from public religion, one would long ago have realized how paganism and Christianity were together all along and how the latter emerged from the former only by making the mystery cults public—a truth that can be deduced historically from most of the Christian customs, their symbolic rituals and initiations, which were obvious imitations of those prevailing in the mystery cults. The striving of spiritual religion to become truly public and mythologically objective is as futile as it is contrary to its nature—and desecrates it—to mingle with what is real and sensate” (PaR 52).

less impossible. Both concepts stand and fall together.”<sup>58</sup> To this extent, the concept of monotheism, strictly speaking, is not necessarily bound to, and even less historically derived from, Christianity.

What did the teachings of the mystery cults consist in? *Philosophy and Religion* does not expand on this question, although Schelling, in his *Philosophy of Revelation*, would have much of consequence to say about this topic.<sup>59</sup> The main idea in 1804 is captured in this sentence: “The esoteric religion is necessarily monotheistic, just as its exoteric counterpart in any form necessarily lapses into polytheism.”<sup>60</sup> This is the first mention in Schelling's works of monotheism as a religious form, and, significantly, he instantly relates it to polytheism: the former is related to the latter as the esoteric religion to its exoteric counterpart. This anticipates Schelling's later view of the relation between monotheism and polytheism. As he writes in *Monotheism*: “the potencies in their mutual exclusion are...the outer, exoteric [face of God], whereas their inner, esoteric [face] is God. He is *the one* who actually is in *all* the potencies.”<sup>61</sup>

Equally significant, here, is the idea that polytheism constitutes a “lapse” from monotheism. The priority of monotheism, both in order and rank, as we shall see, is one of the main points of *Monotheism* (as well as of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, with which *Monotheism* overlaps on this point, the repetition being indicative of its importance for Schelling). In *Philosophy and Religion*, however, Schelling seeks to explain the transition from monotheism on the basis of the logic of identity developed earlier:

Only with the idea of the one-per-se [*schlechthin Einen*] and an absolute-ideal are

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<sup>58</sup> MOT 15.

<sup>59</sup> See esp. Lectures 22 and 23 in the *Philosophy of Revelation* (SW XIII, 491ff).

<sup>60</sup> PaR 53.

<sup>61</sup> MOT 93–94. Cf. “Monotheism is indeed nothing but pantheism that has become esoteric, latent, internal; it is nothing but pantheism that has been overcome [*überwundene*]” (MOT 69).

all other ideas posited. From it follows, albeit immediately, the doctrine of an absolute state of the souls within the ideas and the original oneness with God, wherein it partakes in the intuition of that which is true, beautiful, and good itself—a doctrine that can also be symbolized in temporal terms as the pre-existence of the souls. This cognition is immediately followed by that of the loss of this absolute state, that is, of the falling-away of the ideas and the ensuing banishment of the souls to corporeality and the sensate world.<sup>62</sup>

This passage contains a hint as to why Schelling later might have felt the need to revisit his explanation of the emergence of the many from the one. Both in the first transition in cognition—from the one-per-se and absolute-ideal to the absolute state of the souls—and in the second transition in cognition—from the state of the souls within the original oneness with God to their loss of this absolute state—the change is described as “immediate.” Indeed, the transitions are ahistorical. We have already seen Schelling describe the falling-away as a “leap” (*Sprung*). Moreover, the determinations within the absolute-ideal are simultaneous, spontaneous, immediate. This model has the advantage of preserving the intellectual world from any defect that may be incurred through contact with finitude, whence the intellectualistic character of this treatise.<sup>63</sup> However, at the same time, it runs into difficulties when it tries to explain not simply how the

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<sup>62</sup> PaR 53.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. “Countless attempts have been made to no avail to construct a continuity from the supreme principle of the intellectual world [*Intellektualwelt*] to the finite world. The oldest and most frequent of these attempts is well known: the principle of emanation, according to which the outflowings from the godhood, in gradual increments and detachment from the originary source, lose their divine perfection until, in the end, they pass into the opposite (matter, privation), just as light is finally confined by darkness. But in the absolute world, there are no confines anywhere, and just as God can only bring forth the real-per-se and absolute, so any ensuing effulgence is again absolute and can itself only bring forth something akin to it. There can be no continuous passage into the exact opposite, the absolute privation of all ideality, nor can the finite arise from the infinite by decrements. This attempt to let the phenomenal world [*Sinnenwelt*] spring from God negatively through mediation and gradual detachment is nonetheless far superior to one that assumes a direct relation of the divine essence or its form to the substrate of the phenomenal world, in whatever way this might actually happen. Only those can pull the thorn of that question out of the soul who, as Plato says, abandon the idea of a continuity between the phenomenal universe and divine perfection, for only then will the latter manifest itself in its true nonbeing [*Nichtseyn*]” (PaR 24).

sensate and corporeal world came into being, but any real movement from the intellectual world to the finite world. Schelling must have been aware of this shortcoming, for it is explicitly one he seeks to overcome later, notably in *Monotheism*. Indeed, starting with the *Essay on Human Freedom*, and even more consciously with *The Ages of the World*, Schelling historicizes the absolute, that is, he seeks not only to explain the formal structure of the absolute as a dialectic of subject-objectification, but also to reconstruct the actual sequence of God's creation and historical existence. This is also why, beginning in 1827, he describes his philosophy as a "historical philosophy."

The historicization of God's existence, and of the human relation to God, will allow Schelling to reinterpret religion as the expression of the same potencies which produced nature before constituting human consciousness as that which posits God. In *Philosophy and Religion*, religion is defined as "cognition of the ideal-per-se," but it is not clear how this cognition emerges in the human being, nor what distinguishes it from reason, proper.<sup>64</sup> In other words, religion remains something ahistorical, and the relation to God in religion is a static one. Thus, Schelling writes: "true mythology is a symbolism of the ideas, which is only possible through forms of nature; it represents an absolute and complete rendering finite [*Verendlichung*] of infiniteness."<sup>65</sup> This reading of mythology stands in sharp contrast with the anti-allegorical and historicized interpretation given in the *Philosophy of Mythology*.

The main problem, then, remains that of how a multiplicity can emerge from unity. Despite the confident, dogmatic character of *Philosophy and Religion*, the question for Schelling appears to have remained unsettled. In any case, it remained a central one for him. In a speech from 1807, "On the Essence of German Science," he placed that problem at the heart of metaphysics as he

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<sup>64</sup> PaR 41.

<sup>65</sup> PaR 52.

understood it. In that text, he identifies science with metaphysics understood as the capacity to grasp the many from the starting point of one and the one from the starting point of the many. Metaphysics in this sense is characterized as a “sense for totality” (*Sinn für Totalität*), an organic way of thinking, feeling, and acting, as opposed to a mechanistic vision of the world.<sup>66</sup> In his *Essay on Human Freedom*, published in 1809, Schelling applied this “sense for totality” to the understanding of God, whom he explained as “a living unity of forces.”<sup>67</sup> This unity is here understood as a unity that has overcome and integrated multiplicity as components of an integrated whole. Marking a break from the language of identity in *Philosophy and Religion*, the *Freedom Essay* describes God no longer simply as the rational Absolute, but also in terms of personality (*Persönlichkeit*). Schelling distinguishes between a self-determining (*selbständig*) being and a basis independent of him, what he calls *Grund* or *Natur*, the “unconscious” of God, or that in God which is not God. God is the “highest personality” through the connection of the ideal principle in him with the (relative to this principle) independent ground, such that both of these “unify themselves in one absolute existence.”<sup>68</sup> Schelling would continue in his later writings to use the word “personality” when referring to God as a unity of potencies. Thus, in *Monotheism*, he describes God as “uni-total” or as “absolute personality.”<sup>69</sup> Further, he would apply the concept of personality in explaining God’s operation in each of his potencies:

It is indeed God who acts and wants something *different* in each potency... But according to the true, inner will, he is only one who wants only one thing, namely unity: this is the *intention*. We can say: God is a different personality in each potency... But this does not make him many [*Viele*] or plural [*Mehrere*]; he remains

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<sup>66</sup> SW VIII, 9–10.

<sup>67</sup> EHF 59.

<sup>68</sup> EHF 59. On Schelling’s middle-period concept of God, see S.J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>69</sup> MOT 85.

only One [*Einer*].<sup>70</sup>

Even more decisive than the controversy with Eschenmayer in shaping the intentions of Schelling's later project was his dispute with Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi in 1811-12. In his book *On Divine Things and their Revelation* (1811), Jacobi accused Schelling's philosophy of implicit atheism and nihilism. Even though Schelling is nowhere mentioned or cited in Jacobi's work, the allusions to his philosophy leave no ambiguity as to whom Jacobi had in mind. Jacobi's critique boiled down to the same issue he had previously raised against Kant and later Fichte in the famous atheism and pantheism disputes, respectively. In sum, he contended that any philosophical system of reason—the idea of grasping the world from one single principle—inevitably leads to the denial of true existence, personality, and freedom.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in his view philosophy could only ever produce a system of rational propositions, and therefore was inherently incapable of grasping any true principle outside of subjective reason. Reason rather presupposes an absolute principle—God—*prior to* and *outside* of knowledge, which gives value to knowledge and to the faculty of knowledge, i.e. reason.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, philosophy as a system of knowledge cannot but exclude what lies outside the grasp of knowledge. As Jacobi had put it to Fichte in 1799: “A God who could be *known* would be no God at all.”<sup>73</sup> In opposition to the perceived atheism and implicit nihilism of philosophical systems, Jacobi proposed what he called a “non-philosophy,” founded on “non-knowledge” as the region of God, personality, and freedom.<sup>74</sup>

Such was the vitriol of Schelling's response in his *Denkmal an Jacobi* (1812) that a modern

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<sup>70</sup> MOT 94.

<sup>71</sup> See George di Giovanni, in *The Main Philosophical Writings of Jacobi*, by Jacobi, ed. G. di Giovanni, 631–632.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 513.

<sup>73</sup> Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 500.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 500, 501, 519.



interpreter referred to this work as the *Annihilationsschrift*.<sup>75</sup> Schelling himself regarded the *Denkmal* as a turning point in his philosophical career. In a letter to his friend Georgii on January 14, 1812, shortly after its publication, he wrote:

It is only now that I can finally say that I am finished with my predecessors. The appearance of this book has been an epochal point in the evolution of my system and in its victory over former laziness of heart and intellectual nullity, which was being passed off as faith, or even as some sort of superior philosophy. Hardly anything happier could have happened to me.<sup>76</sup>

As Schelling's last published work during his lifetime, the *Denkmal* holds an important place in the development of his philosophy. According to Patrick Cerutti, it is the *Denkmal*, more than the treatise *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, which decisively marks Schelling's turn to the themes of his mature philosophy.<sup>77</sup> The philosophical method described in the *Denkmal* as *aufsteigend*, i.e. evolutive, anagogical, because it promotes "a progress and auto-development of the object itself," is the same method Schelling developed after his turn to historicity in 1827 (particularly in his philosophy of mythology and revelation).<sup>78</sup> Later, in his *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling said: "I did not reveal the positive philosophy—even after it had been discovered—except in an elusive manner (on the occasion, among others, of the well-known paradoxical theses formulated in the polemic with Jacobi)."<sup>79</sup> This is re-affirmed in Paulus' pirated edition: "the *Denkmal auf Jacobi* (1812) contains the beginning of the positive philosophy."<sup>80</sup>

Although the bitterness of the controversy on divine things (as it came to be known) concealed

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<sup>75</sup> Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir*, I, 575.

<sup>76</sup> Letter to Georgii on January 14, 1812, in G.L. Plitt (ed.), *Aus Schellings Leben*, II, (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1870), 281.

<sup>77</sup> Patrick Cerutti, introduction to *Monument de l'écrit sur les choses divines*, by F. W. J. Schelling, trans. by P. Cerutti (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 21–22.

<sup>78</sup> Cerutti, Introduction to *Monument*, by Schelling, 25.

<sup>79</sup> SW XIII, 86

<sup>80</sup> *Philosophie der Offenbarung: 1841/42*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 138.

any sympathy Schelling might have had for Jacobi's views, many years later, in his later writings, Schelling would acknowledge, to some extent, the validity of Jacobi's critique. Indeed, in his later philosophy, Schelling implicitly agrees with Jacobi's critique of modern philosophy, notably the incapacity of rational systems to access a real foundation and to obtain knowledge of divine things. Schelling, however, disagreed with the anti-philosophical implications which Jacobi derived from this view. For him, the solution to the impasse of rationalism could never be a "non-philosophy" founded on faith and feeling. Therefore, he dismissed Jacobi's claim that naturalism and theism are incompatible and irreconcilable. It is precisely the rift between these two worldviews, he argued, that is the main cause of the ruin of theism and the real source of atheism.<sup>81</sup> Instead, he affirmed a "living conjunction" between naturalism, as the "the system that posits a nature in God," and theism, the system that "affirms a consciousness, an intelligence, and a free willing in God." He called this integrated worldview "scientific theism," which he also described as "real philosophy."<sup>82</sup> Indeed, for him, the fundamental and original insight of philosophy is precisely the idea of a personal being as originator and governing principle of the world, "the unique and hidden God."<sup>83</sup> The system reaches toward the justification of that personal God as its teleological end, conceived as something "effective, alive." Just as God encompasses all things, so "real theology cannot come into conflict with Nature, nor suppress any system whatsoever."<sup>84</sup> In many ways, as we shall see, *Monotheism* is the realization of Schelling's project of "scientific theism" outlined in the *Denkmal*.

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<sup>81</sup> SW VIII, 67–68.

<sup>82</sup> SW VIII, 69.

<sup>83</sup> SW VIII, 54.

<sup>84</sup> SW VIII, 55.

### C. The Oldest Textual Evidence of *Monotheism*: The *Tagebuch* of 1810

With the recent publication of Schelling's calendars and notebooks, we can establish that parts of *Monotheism* were elaborated as early as 1810, or at the very least, that Schelling began at that time to elaborate the terminology and conceptual framework of what later became *Monotheism*. The early date—earlier even than that of 1815, at which Schelling's son had hinted in his editorial preface—has important implications. For one, it shows that *Monotheism* in part precedes the elaboration of the actual Philosophy of Mythology. We know already that *Monotheism* is the conceptual “foundation” of the *Philosophy of Mythology* (and, by extension, of Schelling's philosophy of religion). With the publication of the *Tagebuch*, however, there is now evidence that the treatise, at least in part, belongs to the earliest textual and conceptual strata of the Philosophy of Mythology. In other words, it was not a later addition to the Philosophy of Mythology, but rather grew with it, if not before it. This suggests the seminal role that *Monotheism* has, not only in relation to the *Philosophy of Mythology*, but also with regard to the entire the later philosophy. As one of the earliest conceptual pieces of this philosophy, and considering its continuing relevance for Schelling, evidenced by the exceptionally large number of manuscripts it generated—to say nothing yet of its philosophical significance—*Monotheism* helps us understand the genesis and aim of the *Spätphilosophie*.

The 1810 diary offers a rare window into the origin and context of *Monotheism*. The evidence contained in it consists, for the most part, of brief, tentative notes written in apparent haste, in a highly abridged, condensed form; the length of a typical entry does not exceed a few lines. These are therefore far from fully-fleshed ideas; quite the opposite, they represent their bare-bone version. There is no clear indication in them that Schelling had the idea of the treatise, *Monotheism*, as such in mind at this stage of composition; we are dealing with the “pre-history” of the text, as

it were. Passages with philosophical content are sometimes interspersed with entries that record Schelling's mood of the moment or mundane activities like his travels, activities, or even the state of his finances. In this regard, it should be noted that the entries that are of interest to us date mainly from January and February of 1810—that is, shortly after the sudden and tragic death of his first wife, Caroline (in September of 1809). Schelling was deeply affected by her death, as can yet be felt in some of his entries. For instance, on January 23, he writes: "In the afternoon, gloomy hours and tearful heart."<sup>85</sup> Four days later, on January 27, he notes: "My birthday—the first without Caroline!"<sup>86</sup> Although this is not the place to speculate about how Caroline's death might have influenced the genesis of *Monotheism*, it has often been remarked that this tragic loss triggered Schelling to deepen his interest in the religious themes (particularly Christianity) that characterize his later philosophy.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it is noteworthy that the origins of *Monotheism* are quasi-contemporaneous with this personal event. Generally speaking, the free, uncensored character of the diary—casually blending philosophical thoughts, inventories, and personal events—only adds to its value as reflecting Schelling's thinking in raw form, and therefore as potentially revealing his innermost beliefs and convictions as well as his thought process.

Notwithstanding the fragmentary and unedited character of the diary, we can glimpse through it tangible concepts. Indeed, the material can be collated to reconstruct a basic structure of Schelling's theory on monotheism, or rather some of its key aspects. One of these aspects is the link between the concept of monotheism and the problem of the one and the many. As far as the concept of monotheism itself is concerned, aside from the incidental, though significant mention in *Philosophy and Religion*—in which, let us recall, the presumed monotheism taught in the Greek

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<sup>85</sup> PET 45.

<sup>86</sup> PET 45.

<sup>87</sup> Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir*, I, 501–503, 542–543.

mysteries is presented as an esoteric religion opposed to the “exoteric” popular religion—Schelling had not, until this point, given the concept any dedicated attention.<sup>88</sup> As we saw in the *Essay on Human Freedom*, and, more forcefully, the *Monument to Jacobi*, Schelling criticized what he perceived as the theism typical of the *Aufklärung* (and which, interestingly, he traced back to the influence of Islamic monotheism).<sup>89</sup> The problem with this theism for him is that it excluded all plurality from God, remaining with an empty concept of God defined as mere Being. This view, according to Schelling, is incomplete and insufficient to explain how a world different from God could have emerged. Indeed, for Schelling, God is both “eternal being and eternal becoming.” He is one only insofar as “being and becoming, oneness and manyness” are equal in him.<sup>90</sup> If God were posited as one, pure and simple, then his oneness would be an empty one: it would not be a

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<sup>88</sup> The word “monotheism” appears twice before in the *Sämmtliche Werke*. In *Philosophy and Religion* (1804): “Die esoterische Religion ist ebenso nothwendig Monotheismus, als die exoterische unter irgend einer Form nothwendig in Polytheismus verfällt. Erst mit der Idee des schlechthin Einen und absolut-Idealen sind alle anderen Ideen gesetzt” (SW VI, 67). Cf. also reference to a “philosophical monotheism” in the *Philosophy of Art* (SW V, 425).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. “Thus the Cabiri doctrine was a system ascending from subordinate personalities or nature deities up to a highest personality ruling them all, a transcendent god. But this description is also far removed from that other contention, which Warburton first decked out and German scholars after him also found acceptable, according to which *the actual secret of all the mysteries of antiquity was the doctrine of the unity of god, and indeed excluding all multiplicity in the negating sense which the current age tied to this concept*. Such a contradiction between the public cult of the gods and the secret doctrine plainly would be unthinkable... [*That*] *so-called monotheism which is not derived from the Old or New Testament but is perhaps Mohammedan, the conception of which in fact lies ever at the basis of those contentions*, opposes all antiquity and the finer humanity which is reflected fully in the utterances of Heraclitus, to which Plato also gives approval: ‘The One wise nature does not wish to be called that exclusively; it wishes the name ‘Zeus’” (*Deities of Samothrace*, 24–25). Italics mine.

<sup>90</sup> “Gott das ewige sein und das ewige werden als Eins – d.h. als selbst zu setzen – kann nur das *ihm* Gleiche sein, d.h. worin ebenfalls sein und werden, Einheit und Vielheit” (PET 39). Cf. “Either we conceived the primordial Being as something complete and immutably present, which is the ordinary concept of God [maintained] by the so-called rational religion and by abstract systems, generally speaking. The more we elaborate this concept of God, however, the less life God appears to have for us, and the less it is possible to conceive of Him as an actual, personal, and properly living being, in the sense in which we consider ourselves living beings. If we postulate a God whom we are to imagine as a living, personal being, we are forced to consider Him altogether human; we must assume that His life bears the strictest analogy to that of the human being, and that alongside the eternal Being there prevails in him an eternal becoming; in short, [we must assume] that He has everything in common with man except for man’s dependency (pronouncement of Hippocrates)” (IET 206).

unity of different things—a unity in difference—but rather a negative unity, the absence of any differentiation, of any content—indeed, a kind of nothingness. A God so defined can hardly be the living God—the one who created the world, spoke by the prophets, and revealed Himself in history. If God's oneness excludes all difference, we would be left with an impotent and empty God, lacking the means to generate the world—indeed, a God who is little more than a postulate of reason. This critique, as we saw, was the crux of Schelling's contention against Jacobi in the *Denkmal*.

In the *Tagebuch* of 1810, Schelling does not elaborate on his definition of God as “eternal being and eternal becoming.” He does not linger on the topic of God as such. Rather, he seems more interested in the relation between God and the human consciousness of God. He establishes an analogy between God and the human being on the basis of the theme of the one and the many. The power (*Kraft*) “to posit the one,” which Schelling (recalling the language of *Philosophy and Religion*) calls “originary unity” (*Ureinheit*), becomes aware of itself in human consciousness. In the human being, it appears as a “freely [posited] unity,” whereby the one and the many are reconciled.<sup>91</sup> This originary unity, which is reconciled in human consciousness—as the simultaneous positing of the one and the many—is “that which posits God, as Spirit.” Indeed, it is the power and precondition which makes it possible for the human being to posit God. The human being is therefore defined as the “*God-positing* nature.”<sup>92</sup> This is a crucial theme in *Monotheism*—indeed, the entire treatise leads up to this concept, in the sixth and final lecture—and is the keystone of Schelling's theory of religion, as we shall explore further.

In the human being, there is a repetition of the (theogonic) process—of the positing of God as One, as Spirit—according to which Schelling explains the process of creation. Just as God is

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<sup>91</sup> Schelling calls this originary unity “die Kraft, die als Eins setzt.” This power “ist sich nun im Menschen bewußt, da sie in ihm zugleich aussereinander und Eins ist—freie Einheit—*im* Menschen versöhnt” (PET 39).

<sup>92</sup> PET 43.

posited as One according to his eternal concept, a positing which is also the goal of the (theogonic) process of creation, so too does human consciousness, as a kind of mirror-image of that originary unity, posit God. The human being, however, originally posits God “blindly,” “unhistorically,” since “he is not aware of the moments of becoming underlying this consciousness.”<sup>93</sup> To the extent that the human being becomes aware of the moments of the process which led to the constitution of his consciousness as inherently God-positing—to the extent, that is, that his awareness of his divine origin increases—he enters into an actual, historical relationship with God: God becomes a living God (*Lebendige*) for him, just as he becomes a concrete person vis-à-vis God.

At the same time, however, the force of originary unity that underlies human consciousness, feeling its uniform unity threatened by this process of self-knowledge—a process of progressive differentiation—seeks to repress this development, causing thereby the emergence of primordial (*urgeschichtlich*) polytheism. Generally speaking, therefore, polytheism is born out of the struggle of the prehistoric (*vorgeschichtlich*), substantial monotheism, which constitutes the essence of human nature, and the movement toward deliberate, desired (*gewollten*) monotheism. The negation of movement, of sequence and succession, after plurality has already been posited, produces Sabaism, a “primordial (*urgeschichtlich*), and for that very reason also prehistoric (*vorgeschichtlich*) polytheism.” Since the plurality cannot be destroyed, but that only the movement whereby it becomes a “successive” plurality is negated, it becomes “materialized” into a still, “simultaneous” plurality.<sup>94</sup>

To the extent that the original unity of human consciousness is “broken up” (*auseinandergehen*), it ceases to posit God (as one), or rather, it posits God at the same time as it becomes many (*Vieles*)—it becomes, therefore, both one and many. Thus, insofar as this oneness

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<sup>93</sup> PET 42.

<sup>94</sup> PET 42.

can be broken up, the general possibility of polytheism is established.<sup>95</sup> This clearly recalls the idea expressed in *Philosophy and Religion* that “the esoteric religion is necessarily monotheistic, just as its exoteric counterpart in any form necessarily lapses into polytheism.”<sup>96</sup> This “lapse” from monotheism to polytheism is here more specifically defined as a “coming apart” (*auseinandergehen*). Whereas the idea of a “lapse” from monotheism to polytheism suggests a transition from one object to another—a transition, however, which remains ahistorical, and therefore unexplained—the “coming apart” (*auseinandergehen*) rather indicates that the content or substance of polytheism is the same as that of monotheism, that polytheism is not merely the “exoteric counterpart” of monotheism, but actually derives from it, such that one could say that polytheism *is* monotheism, but in a fractured, disjointed form. In *Philosophy and Religion*, the relation between monotheism and polytheism is defined formally, structurally, as one between esoteric and exoteric, whereas, here, rather than a formal relation, the connection between the two is organic, historical, and indicative of an actual transition. Rather than two separate religions, one esoteric and the other exoteric, there is one religion, which originally exists in consciousness as a monotheism and is broken up or dislocated into a polytheism.

Schelling proceeds to outline three “possible theories” of how polytheism emerges in human consciousness:

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<sup>95</sup> “*Eben diese im Menschen versöhnte, zur Ruhe gewordene Ureinheit ist das Setzende von Gott, als Geist—indem sie nun auseinandergeht, ist sie dies nicht mehr—oder vielmehr sie ist es auch nur und ist zugleich Vieles, dadurch also—Polytheismus im Allgemeinen entsteht*” (PET 39). In his 1804 treatise on *Philosophy and Religion*, Schelling uses the term “Ureinheit” to describe the “first county-image” of the Absolute, that is, the whole in which the ideality and reality of the ideas are reconciled (cf. PaR 23). It is further identified with reason: “Where the originary oneness, the first counter-image, falls into the imaged world, it appears as *reason*, for form, as the essence of knowledge, is originary knowledge [*Urwissen*], originary reason [*Urvernunft*] (λόγος)” (PaR 30–31). Cf. the *Essay on Human Freedom*: “Reason is in man that which, according to the mystics, the *primum passivum* [first passivity] or initial wisdom is in God in which all things are together and yet distinct, identical and yet free each in its own way” (EHF 76).

<sup>96</sup> PaR 53.



- 1) The emergence of polytheism in human consciousness is triggered by a desire in the original consciousness to emerge from the monism in which it finds itself—in which it is nothing but an undifferentiated God-positing—and to assert itself as an independent, knowing, free consciousness. This leads to the breaking apart of this originary unity (*Ureinheit*) in order that the human being may obtain unity for himself, as his own property. The struggle which ensues between the originary unity—which, as a force, wants to remain undivided—and the human desire to acquire unity for oneself (to become a self), leads to the emergence of polytheism in consciousness.<sup>97</sup>
- 2) The opposite of the first view: the human being wants to free himself from the originary unity and, by affirming his individual will, breaks it apart. However, the originary unity opposes this division (*Scheidung*). This opposition goes on until the human being discovers himself as himself (*Sich als sich finden*). Using the symbolic notation of potencies, this movement can be expressed as follows: B—the potency which has been overcome, brought to a state of rest in original human consciousness at the end of the process of creation, posited as something past—emerges again from its state of rest.<sup>98</sup>
- 3) The human being is originally the witness (*Anschauende*) of plurality as unity (*Vielheit als Einheit*), or of the oneness of the natural and the spiritual. This unified representation of the world somehow deteriorates (*sich trüben*), and is instantly replaced by the originary force of unity in consciousness.<sup>99</sup>

The first and second of these theories appear to be the closest ones to the explanation given in *Monotheism*. However, rather than excluding one another, it is better to see these theories, to some

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<sup>97</sup> PET 40.

<sup>98</sup> PET 40–41.

<sup>99</sup> PET 41.

extent, as complementing each other. Indeed, each one represents an aspect or stage of the process of the emergence of polytheism out of the original monotheism of human consciousness. All three will be reworked, expanded, integrated in Schelling's explanation of the creation of human consciousness in Lecture 6 of *Monotheism*. One should also mention that the account of the emergence of polytheism as the result of the disintegration of original monotheism in human consciousness is not unique to *Monotheism*; it is also found in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, as part of Schelling's explanation about the meaning of mythological representations.<sup>100</sup> In *Monotheism*, the positing of original consciousness comes at the end of Schelling's explanation of the process of Creation (as a theogonic process).<sup>101</sup> In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling works his way from mythological representations back to the hypothesis of the necessary derivation of polytheism from an original monotheism of consciousness., whereas in *Monotheism*, Schelling works his way from the first principles, through the universal theogonic process, down to the positing of human consciousness at the end of the process of Creation. We will return in Ch. 2 and Ch. 3 to discuss the theory of the original monotheism of consciousness in the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism*. Here we are only interested in showing how the *Tagebuch* anticipates the ideas found in these works.

Still in the diary of 1810, we find a rudimentary sketch of the transition from the original monotheism of consciousness, not only to possibility of polytheism, but to actual mythology. (In the later philosophy, this transition corresponds to the end of *Monotheism* and beginning of the actual Philosophy of Mythology.) Thus, Schelling refers to the religion of Sabaism—the first actual religion after the original monotheism of consciousness—as originating through the “maximum

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Lectures 6, 7, and 8 of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. MOT, all of Lecture 6.

contraction“<sup>102</sup> of originary unity: multiplicity is posited, but unity reasserts itself with overwhelming force, resulting in a multiplicity that is posited as the materialized One (*materialisierte Eine*), “merely A + A + A—a merely numerical polytheism—a merely expanded monotheism.”<sup>103</sup> (This is the first occurrence of the word “monotheism” in the *Tagebuch*.) If Sabaism is the first moment of this process—the moment where unity overpowers plurality—the second moment represents the period during which unity and division are equally powerful, where the two are engaged in a struggle to dominate the other. This is represented in the Greek myth of Kronos, who, fearing a prophecy that he would be overthrown by his own son, swallows each of his children as they were born.<sup>104</sup> The third moment indicates the triumph of plurality—“the historical moments emerge as historical.” But unity, here, retains sufficient power to allow it to hinder utter separation and disintegration (*das Auseinandergehen*), and at the same time to impart real being to these successive moments, to assign a fixed essence to each them. Nevertheless, this third phase necessarily leads to the weakening of the God-positing unity, its fading into the background, and the simultaneous emergence of historical polytheism. The latter is not a motley of disjointed religions, but constitutes an internally coherent and linear progression, or, to use Schelling's word, a “successive polytheism.” The individual religious moments of this procession are connected as part of a wider and fuller context (*Zusammenhang*), and therefore only acquire their proper meaning when interpreted *as* successive moments.<sup>105</sup>

The concept of “the positing of God” (*das Setzende Gottes*) is the leitmotif and engine of Schelling's later philosophy of religion. Indeed, religion for Schelling is nothing but this positing

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. this passage in the *Stuttgart Lectures* (1810): “In  $A = B$ ,  $B$  itself is the contracting moment, and when God restricts Himself to the first power, this especially ought to be called a concentration [*Contraction*]. Concentration, then, marks the beginning of all reality” (IET 203–204).

<sup>103</sup> PET 41.

<sup>104</sup> PET 42.

<sup>105</sup> PET 42–43.

of God innate to human consciousness at the end of the process of Creation. To the extent that the human being becomes aware of the moments which led to his becoming a God-positing nature, he (i.e. his consciousness) becomes a self-conscious theism (*der sich selbst wissende Theismus*), that is, a positing of God that is aware of itself as such.<sup>106</sup>

Although the *Tagebuch* is scarce on details about how human consciousness comes to be posited as the essentially God-positing nature—that is, as will be explained in *Monotheism*, about the theogonic process which unfolds from God and culminates in the creation of human consciousness as a being separate from God—it is evident that original consciousness, and the primordial monotheism which it posits, is the product of a dynamic process—namely, the process of Creation—involving a plurality of potencies which come to a resting position at the same time as the positing of consciousness (before this process is triggered again, this time in consciousness). Thus, the original unity of consciousness, and the monotheism which it expresses, is the unity of a plurality of moments insofar as it is a unity. The same principles which constitute the inner life of God, and which are active in the process of Creation, are the same as those which make up human nature or consciousness. As we have seen, the human being is the result of a process in which the principle of unity (A) and the principle of multiplicity (B), which are originally equal in God, become temporarily unequal. Although we are not given the details of how exactly this process unfolds, or what causes it—details which the *Ages of the World* and, later, the treatise on *Monotheism* would fill in—we know that it results in human nature (or human consciousness, which is the same thing). Human consciousness, in fact, is entirely constituted by the principles of unity and multiplicity derived from God. Human consciousness is = to A after it has been posited again over B. Human nature can therefore be designated as A(B).

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<sup>106</sup> PET 43.

If human nature is originally posited as a unity over a plurality, as A(B), how does polytheism emerge in consciousness? We have seen Schelling outline possible theories to explain the emergence of polytheism out of the original monotheism of consciousness. Another passage from the *Tagebuch* sheds further light on this issue. “As A(B),” Schelling notes, “the human being is monotheistic, but not in a way that B + B + B cannot [re]emerge.”<sup>107</sup> For polytheism to be possible, human consciousness has to be able to emerge from the original state in which it came to be at the end of the process of creation. Without any further possibility or movement or transformation, human consciousness would remain stuck in a blind and unconscious state of being as a nature which posits God. Therefore, human consciousness originally (i.e. at the end of the process of creation) is not simply the essence which posits God: as a new creation, it also has the freedom to leave this state, i.e. to become that which negates God—not by essence, by in fact—and thereby trigger another theogonic process—this time in consciousness itself—through which the potencies would seek to restore their original, God-positing status. This is precisely what Schelling will seek to demonstrate in his *Philosophy of Mythology*.

To conclude this overview, let us list, without any particular order, the main themes from Schelling’s *Tagebuch* of 1810 that will be developed in the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism*:

- 1) The human being is a "God-positing nature.”
- 2) The human being is the nature that posits God "blindly" (*blindlings*), that is, unconsciously and by nature.
- 3) This positing of God is initially "unhistorical" (*ungeschichtlich*) and "unknowing" (*unwissend*).

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<sup>107</sup> PET 47.

- 4) The original, blindly God-positing state of human consciousness is but a “moment of becoming” (*Moments des Werdens*).
- 5) The human being is not originally conscious of the moment of becoming which underlies the ground of (his) consciousness.
- 6) When the human being, by an act of freedom which parallels God’s freedom in creation, seeks to acquire knowledge of his nature as God-positing—when he seeks to become aware of this moment of becoming as the ground of his consciousness—the unity that constitutes his originary consciousness emerges in reaction against this movement of knowledge.
- 7) Human consciousness is the “seat” of religion.
- 8) The first product of this reaction is a “pre-historical” religion, Sabianism, i.e. the deification of celestial objects and worship of heavenly bodies, which represents a “materialized” or “frozen” plurality.
- 9) Original polytheism is born from the struggle between two opposing, active principles in human consciousness: the principle of originary unity (of being), which is unconscious, and the principle of differentiation, i.e. consciousness.
- 10) Polytheism and monotheism are internally connected by the potencies that underlie human consciousness.
- 11) Polytheism and monotheism are but different moments in the dynamic evolution of the potencies.
- 12) The struggle between the potencies in the theogonic process in human consciousness finds expression in the variety of historical religious forms.

#### **D. The *Ages of the World* as the Prototype of *Monotheism***

*Monotheism*, more than any other work of the later philosophy, displays the continuity of Schelling's thinking since the *Ages of the World*. Indeed, although *Monotheism* is formally concerned with the question of demonstrating the possibility of a universal theogonic process, and addresses this question through an analysis of the concept of monotheism, the bulk of the treatise (Lectures 2 to 5), as we will show in Ch. 3, consists of explaining how God emerges into being and creates a world. To this extent, *Monotheism* vastly overlaps with the content of *The Ages of the World*, notably the draft of 1815. As Xavier Tilliette points out, *Monotheism* is nothing but *The Ages of the World* "cleansed of [the] pantheistic vestiges" which are still present in the version of 1815.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, both these works are concerned with explaining the form of God's life, the constitutive principles of his being, and the theogonic process by which he posits a world.

Given the many parallels between the two works, an obvious question raises itself: on what points do they actually differ? What made Schelling abandon the project of *The Ages of the World*, and what was so different about *Monotheism* that he considered, if not the work itself, then at least the system based on it—namely, the system of the late philosophy, which he described as a system of monotheism—his philosophical triumph? As Xavier Tilliette points out, *The Ages of the World* is still largely under the sway of pantheism. Although Schelling posits an original freedom in God, it seems that God immediately passes into being. Similarly, human freedom is hard to define in the context of *The Ages of the World*. Nor is it clear how philosophy relates to religion; this relation will be clarified in later works. Finally, the role of human beings in bringing about the theogonic process in human consciousness seems absent. Instead, religious conceptions (from which, curiously, monotheism is absent here) are simply presented as "moments" in God's self-revelation.

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<sup>108</sup> Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir*, II, 210–215. Cf. Dekker, *Rückwendung zum Mythos*, 13.

There is a progressive, linear development of conceptions of God, which reflect different stages in his life. In the same way, the *Ages of the World* purports to present the development of an “organic system of times,” in which the historical progression of “times” corresponds to the progression of religious worldviews.<sup>109</sup> Each worldview is true in its own time and place. Taken in and of itself, however, each worldview is false, incomplete. Schelling writes:

If we are right in supposing that accident plays no part in the origin of human worldviews, and that the eternal being can disclose itself to the human spirit only in the order of progression that it observed in first revealing itself, then the three main moments through which the divine life has developed itself up to the present can well be understood as the seeds out of which the three great original systems of all religion and philosophy first arose.<sup>110</sup>

By contrast, *Monotheism* insists on role of original human freedom in triggering the theogonic process which produces various religious forms. Human consciousness is not simply a passive template reflecting the moments of the divine life. Instead, the development of religion in human consciousness corresponds to the gradual emergence of human freedom. Likewise, in *Monotheism*, God in his essence remains above the process, free from historical entanglement. Thus, *Monotheism* affords a greater role both to human and divine freedom than does the *Welterter*.

### **E. Polytheism and Monotheism in *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815)**

Thus far, we have traced the genesis of the concept of monotheism in Schelling’s thinking

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. AW1, 70, 142, 172, 175, 176, 185, 186, 206, 208.

<sup>110</sup> AW1, 149.



before the later philosophy. If we exclude the lectures of 1821-23 in Erlangen—which apparently dealt with the “inner elements of monotheism” as part of a course on mythology (though not quite yet the Philosophy of Mythology proper)—Schelling, as we noted, offered his course on *Monotheism* for the first time in Munich in 1828. However, the idea and text of *Monotheism* did not appear overnight. As this chapter has shown, Schelling started working on the materials of what would become *Monotheism* as early as 1810. The theme of monotheism itself has an even longer history: it first emerged, along with other related themes which were developed in later works (e.g. the “originary oneness” of the world of ideas, the idea of a “transcendental theogony,” the production of the world as the result of a “falling-away,” the idea of God’s progressive revelation in history, etc.), in Schelling’s landmark essay of 1804, *Philosophy and Religion*. In this work, as we saw, Schelling, in an appendix on “the external forms of religion,” and using religion in ancient Greece as the template for his discussion, affirmed that “the esoteric religion is necessarily monotheistic, just as its exoteric counterpart in any form necessarily lapses into polytheism.”<sup>111</sup> Although Schelling had in previous works dealt with the idea of polytheism, including in relation to Christianity—notably in his *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study* (1803) and his lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* (1802/03)<sup>112</sup>—the concept of monotheism proper made its first appearance in *Philosophy and Religion*, where, as we’ve just seen, it was immediately paired with the concept of polytheism. From this point on in Schelling’s thinking, monotheism and polytheism are inseparable concepts. As he put it succinctly in *Monotheism*: “If polytheism is impossible, monotheism as a special concept is no less impossible. Both concepts stand and fall together.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> PaR 53.

<sup>112</sup> For references to polytheism in the *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study*, cf. SW V, 288, 299; in the *Philosophy of Art*, cf. SW V, 430, 432, 436, 448, 454, 622.

<sup>113</sup> MOT 15.

In his dissertation on *The Deities of Samothrace*, Schelling investigates the origin and meaning of the Kabiri, an important group of deities of Pelasgian origin. This investigation serves him as an occasion to explain how “the multiplicity of divine natures may be harmonized with the humanly necessary and indelible idea of the unity of god.”<sup>114</sup> He criticizes the theory which seeks to represent the diverse gods as merely emanations of One (God), arguing that neither the indeterminateness nor the boundlessness of this view can be compatible with the “determinateness and sharpness of the outlines of every individual form, as also with the limited number of these forms.”<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the view according to which all beings emanate as radiations from One (*Ein*) highest being is incapable of explaining the reverence and “sincere emotional piety” which worshippers of the mythological deities directed to these traditions. Instead of this top-down emanationist explanation of the origin of the various gods, he proposes that they be viewed as “gradations of a lowest power lying at the basis, which are all finally transfigured in One highest personality.” On this view, the different deities are as “links of a chain ascending from the depths into the highest, or as rungs of a ladder, the lowest of which cannot be bypassed by one who wants to climb to the higher one.” Thus, the gods are “mediators” between human beings and God; they are “messengers, proclaimers, heralds of the coming god.” Only this fact explains the “lustre” of the multiple deities for their worshipers, and how the cult rendered to them “strikes roots so deep and almost ineradicable, how it can maintain itself for so long.”<sup>116</sup> With this explanation, Schelling here reverses the view which presents the God of faith as existing in an origin conceived in some sense as past. This view, according to Schelling, implies a denial of any positive meaning to created being, since the latter can then only be conceived as something removed from God. Indeed, in the

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<sup>114</sup> DS 23.

<sup>115</sup> DS 23.

<sup>116</sup> DS 23.

emanationist model, the more one moves away from One, the more unity is broken; the more one descends through lower realities, the less divinity one finds. Schelling's theory does not deny this, but rather begins at the bottom and ascends to the top, rather than vice versa. The gods form a "series ascending from below, as do numbers."<sup>117</sup> Thus, his view might be described as emergentist, developmental, and future-oriented, rather than emanationist, regressive, and past-oriented.

Schelling's theory is not to be taken as meaning that the multiple deities ontologically precede the one supreme God, which would be a patent contradiction. Rather, the ascensionist theory he proposes is a cosmological doctrine—i.e. applicable only to the worldly or created order of being. In his interpretation, the primordial mythological deities are "the very same powers through whose action and rule the whole world chiefly was constituted...they are worldly, cosmic deities."<sup>118</sup> Insofar as the gods belonging to this series appear from the lowest to the highest, they are not so much divine as they are "god-producing, theurgic natures," such that the whole chain presents itself as increasingly theurgic. At the top of this ascending series of theurgic personalities is a "highest personality ruling them all, a transcendent god."<sup>119</sup> Thus, this system allows a multiplicity of divine beings to be harmonized with the idea of the unity of god. Consequently, Schelling rejects the view according to which the mysteries of antiquity taught "the doctrine of the unity of god" in a such a way that it would have excluded "all multiplicity in that negating sense which the current age tied to this concept."<sup>120</sup> He argues that the contradiction between the public cult of the gods and the secret doctrine implied by this view would be "unthinkable."<sup>121</sup> This way of thinking, he claims, "might perhaps suit an age accustomed to deception [yes even boasting of deception] in so

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<sup>117</sup> DS 23.

<sup>118</sup> DS 24.

<sup>119</sup> DS 24.

<sup>120</sup> DS 24.

<sup>121</sup> DS 25.

many situations, but one which antiquity, so honest, sound and robust, repudiates as with one voice.”<sup>122</sup> Rather:

All likelihood is rather that exactly the same thing was depicted in the mysteries as in the public cult, but only according to its concealed references, and that the former differed no more from the latter than the esoteric or acroamatic discourses of the philosophers differed from their exoteric ones.<sup>123</sup>

Apart from the fact that Schelling in this account seems to view the public cult in a more favourable light—i.e. they are not an impure version of the mysteries, but merely their outward, exoteric face—this passage recalls the duality made in *Philosophy and Religion* of monotheism as an esoteric religion and polytheism as an exoteric religion.

Although *The Deities of Samothrace* announces some aspects of Schelling’s later theory of Mythology—e.g. its definition of monotheism as implying polytheism and vice versa, its turn to historical religion, and the justification of the deities of polytheism as real, actual beings—lacking here is a theory of the process, of the history of the moments of consciousness, and an understanding of the potencies leading this movement. Most importantly, the mythological narrative which Schelling develops here lacks the concept of human consciousness as the original place and seat of mythology.<sup>124</sup> Although, as we saw, Schelling was already working on these ideas as early as 1810, they were not systematized until later.

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<sup>122</sup> DS 25.

<sup>123</sup> DS 25.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir*, I, 647.

## II. The Significance of *Monotheism* in the Later Philosophy

*The philosopher who really wants a completed system must see far out into the distance, not just stare myopically at details and what lies nearby.*<sup>125</sup>

*It is fitting and proper to true science to encompass everything as much as possible within defined boundaries and to enclose everything within the limits of conceptuality.*<sup>126</sup>

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### A. The Positive Philosophy as a System of Freedom

We turn now to a consideration of the significance of *Monotheism* in Schelling's later philosophy. In order to do so, we first need to explain what Schelling was trying to achieve in his later philosophy. Ever since *The Ages of the World*, Schelling wanted to develop nothing less than a complete system of reality—that is, a philosophy that could explain the whole order of being, from its origin in God to finite being and human existence. To be sure, the idea of a total system of existence was not new to Schelling. In earlier philosophical works, notably the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), he had also aimed at constructing a totality within which each particular finds its meaning and place. However, beginning around 1810, and without explicitly renouncing his earlier attempts, he conceived a new kind of philosophical system, which he tirelessly endeavoured to perfect for the rest of his life—almost half a century.

His controversies with Eschenmayer and Jacobi, in 1804 and 1811, respectively, had brought him face to face with issues that he could not adequately explain on the premises of his earlier views, notably the problem of both human and divine freedom. In this respect, Jacobi's damning critique—according to which Schelling's philosophy amounted to a form of nihilism and

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<sup>125</sup> BL 150; SW XIII, 87.

<sup>126</sup> HCI 237.

atheism—proved to be a major catalyst. Indeed, Schelling later acknowledged that his scathing response to Jacobi, the *Denkmal*, was the first time he revealed his “positive philosophy,” even if only through hints. Despite its inaugural significance, the *Denkmal* turned out to be the last work of Schelling published during his lifetime.<sup>127</sup> Not that this signaled the end of his philosophical activity. Far from it, in the remaining forty or so years of his life, Schelling continued writing, teaching, and developing new ideas—his posthumously published works are a testament to his activity during that time. Instead, it seems that Schelling hesitated a long time before putting out his new ideas in public, as evidenced by the history of his thrice-begun but never completed work *The Ages of the World*. Given the epic proportions of this undertaking, and probably also his heightened reticence and caution following his intensely public and hostile controversy with Jacobi, Schelling might be forgiven for letting his ideas simmer and mature in silence. Indeed, the very nature of the philosophical task he set for himself demanded great planning. As we shall see, even as early as *The Ages of the World*, it was not only one work which gestated in Schelling’s mind, but a complex system composed of many components.<sup>128</sup>

Schelling announced his new, “positive philosophy” for the first time in his inaugural lectures in Munich in 1827. As suggested by their title—*System der Weltalter*—these lectures were considered by Schelling as the culmination of the project begun nearly two decades earlier.<sup>129</sup> Although Schelling would drop this title in subsequent versions of the “Munich Introduction” (as it is called in the *Forschung*), its content would remain largely consistent throughout the 1830s,

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<sup>127</sup> SW XIII, 86. Cf. POPa 138.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Schelling’s “Postscript” in *The Deities of Samothrace*: “According to its original designation the preceding treatise belongs to a series of works which related to the *Die Weltalter* as common focus... Not in itself but in the intention of the author a supplement to another work, it is at once a beginning and a transition to some others the intention of which is to bring the actual primordial system of humanity to light from long eclipse, according to scientific development and where possible in an historical manner” (DS 30).

<sup>129</sup> SysWA 21.

until it was replaced, in 1842/43, with the famous “Berlin Introduction,” also known as *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*. Although the “Munich Introduction” was not retained in the edition of Schelling’s works—it has only survived in parts, namely the lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (SW X, 3ff.), and the *Presentation of Philosophical Empiricism: Introduction to Philosophy* (SW X, 227ff.)—it contains the earliest form of Schelling’s later philosophy. Therefore, the Munich materials are indispensable to anyone who wishes to acquaint themselves with the original intentions of the later philosophy—that is, before the significant revisions which this philosophy underwent in Berlin. Since *Monotheism* was already part of Schelling’s original teaching in Munich, we turn next to consider the intentions of his new, positive philosophy.

Schelling presented his new philosophy as one that could measure up with the “depth of life” and human experience.<sup>130</sup> Although the idea of positivity was not new in Schelling—one finds it, for instance, in the *Freiheitschrift*, where it refers to everything that is the expression of a force or will<sup>131</sup>—he had never before used it as a label for his philosophy. From 1827 onward, “positive” for Schelling means something that is the expression of will, freedom, or action, as when one speaks of positive law or positive religion.<sup>132</sup> The positive philosophy, accordingly, is a philosophy

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<sup>130</sup> SW IX, 359. Cf. SysWA 1–6.

<sup>131</sup> For instance, in the *Freiheitschrift*, Schelling argues that evil should be seen as something “positive,” not a mere lack or deficiency of good: “The proposition that everything positive in creatures comes from God must also be asserted in this system” (EHF 23–24). Cf. “In more recent times Franz Baader especially has emphasized this concept of evil, the only correct one, according to which evil resides in a positive perversion or reversal of the principles... All other explanations of evil leave the understanding and moral consciousness equally unsatisfied. They all rest fundamentally on the annihilation of evil as a positive opposite and on the reduction of evil to the so-called *malum metaphysicum* [metaphysical evil] or the negating concept of the imperfection of creatures (EHF 35–36). Cf. “Imperfection in the general metaphysical sense is not the common character of evil, since evil often shows itself united with an excellence of individual forces, which far more rarely accompanies the good. The ground of evil must lie, therefore, not only in something generally positive but rather in that which is most positive in what nature contains, as is actually the case in our view, since it lies in the revealed *centrum* or primal will of the first ground” (EHF 36–37). Cf. “But, in this regard, it is to be noted that inertia itself cannot be thought of as a mere deprivation, but actually as something positive, namely as expression of the internal selfhood of the body, the force whereby it seeks to assert its independence” (EHF 38).

<sup>132</sup> SysWA 10ff.

that deals with objects that emanate from an explicit will, an express action, notably human and divine acts, and that deals with them as expressions of will or action.<sup>133</sup> This philosophy is positive also in that it is itself an expression of a will, insofar as it rejects determinism and demands freedom; it assumes a free creator of the world, and therefore also that the universe does not exist by a necessity of its own nature, but rather as the result of a free and autonomous decision and of a particular act.<sup>134</sup> As opposed to a "system of necessity," it is a "system of freedom."<sup>135</sup> Instead of deriving worldly being through a series of necessary determinations that do not involve any personal agency, the positive philosophy seeks to explain the world as the free creation of a living God.

Schelling was keen to emphasize the unprecedented nature of this philosophy. Although he recognized the attempts of philosophers before him to establish a system of freedom, he considered his to be the first philosophy to succeed in this undertaking.<sup>136</sup> For Schelling, the positive philosophy stood in contrast to virtually all systems of philosophy since Descartes and including his own earlier philosophy of nature.<sup>137</sup> The common characteristic of all modern philosophies is that they explain the world purely in terms of logical connections. Illustrating how these systems conceive the relation between God and the world is the geometric rule that the sum of angles in a triangle equals two rights angles. On this view, things result from God like from the nature of a

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<sup>133</sup> EP 8.

<sup>134</sup> SysWA 10. Cf. "Die Philosophie ist, was schon ihr Name aussagt, ein Wollen, ein Streben nach Weisheit. Worin aber dieses primitive Wollen, dieses erste Bedürfnis der Menschheit besteht, darüber herrscht wohl kein Zweifel. Nicht um das, was jemand meint, sondern um das, was wirklich ist, ist derselben zu tun. Gott, Mensch, Natur, Freiheit imd Moralität, diese sind die Angelpunkte jenes primitiven Bedürfnisses, darüber ist man auch von je her in allen Philosophien im Reinen... – nur über die Art der Begründung dieses Wissens kann man sich nicht vereinigen; und in dem Verzagen [vor] einer objektiven Begründung ist der Grund jener subjektiven Systeme zu suchen" (EP 7).

<sup>135</sup> SysWA 11. Cf. EP 5.

<sup>136</sup> See notably HMP.

<sup>137</sup> SysWA 22.



triangle. There is no room in this view for any act or intervention: one admits, between God and finite (human) things, no connection other than a logical one. Finite things, to be sure, are distinguished from God's nature, but they are a necessary emanation from God, a necessary consequence of the divine idea, which proceeds without the intervention of his will.<sup>138</sup>

Unlike these logical systems, the positive philosophy is "historical" (*geschichtlich*) insofar as it seeks to explain the actual, objective sequence of acts, both human and divine, in contrast to the merely logical, subjective connections between things.<sup>139</sup> Although the positive philosophy does not entirely reject rationalism—on the contrary, it subsumes it, in a sense, as its foundation—it is not based on logical connections, but facts (*Thatsache*). The statement that God freely created the world does not express a logical connection, but a fact. When one assumes a factual (*faktisch*) relation of God to the world, then one cannot accept a purely logical relation. The two systems, however, the historical one and the logical one, are not completely unrelated to one another. Citing Proverbs 3:19 ("In wisdom You have made them all"), Schelling acknowledges that the relations of things to each other and to God are determined according to logical categories.<sup>140</sup> In fact, unlike what his critique of philosophical rationalism might at first suggest, Schelling was not absolutely opposed to rationalism in philosophy.<sup>141</sup> Rationalism and logical systems in general are acceptable, indeed they are necessary, but only insofar as they are subsumed under the positive. Where logical systems go wrong is when they exclude the positive and pretend to replace it (as notably Hegel

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<sup>138</sup> EP 5.

<sup>139</sup> SysWA 11–12. Cf. EP 8–10.

<sup>140</sup> SysWA 12.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. "Wenn ich nun aber sage die Philosophie dürfe nicht Rationalismus sein, so sage ich damit nicht ihre Wahrheit werde irrational sein. Niemand wird sich die Philosophie als eine Unvernunft denken wollen. Ihre Wahrheiten dürfen der Vernunft nicht widersprechen und wir müssen die durch die Vernunft erkennen [etc.]" (SysWA 38–39). See Lecture 10 in the same work (pp. 38–41) for his critique of "subjective rationalism" and "objective rationalism."

does in his philosophy, in Schelling's perhaps not impartial assessment).<sup>142</sup> By contrast, the positive systems have no choice but to include the negative.<sup>143</sup> "The positive [system]," he writes, "is as little constrained by the negative as a blind person is by the sighted or a deaf person is by those with hearing—the positive is a plus."<sup>144</sup> (As we shall later see, *Monotheism*, while being, strictly speaking, neither a work of purely positive philosophy nor a work of purely negative philosophy, it combines both positive and negative elements.)

Although the positive philosophy is theoretically applicable to all positive realities—e.g. the State or royalty—it is primarily and eminently a philosophy of religion. In his inaugural lecture in Munich, Schelling immediately associates the significance of the positive philosophy with the rediscovery of the true meaning of religion. Sounding the *Zeitgeist*, he announces a turning point (*Wendepunkt*) whereby the "worthless religious views of a flat period have given way to deeper ones."<sup>145</sup> He goes on to attribute this religious revolution to a philosophy—namely, his own—that has "grasped life more profoundly, and has recognized the true fullness of knowledge in the positive." This expanded philosophy is a prerequisite for bringing out the deeper content of religion: "selbst der tiefere Gehalt der Religion ist durch die tiefere das positive wieder einsetzende Erkenntniß bedingt worden."<sup>146</sup> As during his disputes with Eschenmayer and Jacobi, Schelling dismisses accusations that philosophy is dangerous for religion and faith, praising instead those whose seek to conquer the "deeper content of religion and higher life for scientific consciousness."<sup>147</sup> Therefore, not only is philosophy not incompatible with religion, but it is well-

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<sup>142</sup> SysWA 11–12.

<sup>143</sup> SysWA, lecture 6.

<sup>144</sup> SysWA 23.

<sup>145</sup> SysWA 3. Cf. "Selbst der tiefere Gehalt der Religion wird durch die tiefere, das Positive wieder einsetzende, philosophische Erkenntnis bedingt" (Koktanek 51).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. "Selbst der tiefere Gehalt der Religion wird durch die tiefere, das Positive wieder einsetzende, philosophische Erkenntnis bedingt" (Koktanek 51).

<sup>147</sup> SW IX, 359.

placed to resolve disputes in the realm of religion, such as between rationalism and supernaturalism, or reason and Revelation.<sup>148</sup>

As we saw in the last chapter, Schelling attributes a similar role to philosophy in his 1804 essay on *Philosophy and Religion*. In that work, Schelling wants to "reclaim" the content of religion for philosophy. That being said, the line demarcating religion from philosophy in that work remains somewhat unclear. Indeed, Schelling posits a quasi-mythical age where the two were practically indistinguishable. Their divergence emerged only after the truths that were originally common to both of them acquired an increasingly dogmatic character in religion, becoming in the process contaminated by popular imagination. Thus, after falling into disunity with philosophy, religion became the carrier of truths which were either distorted or allegorized, and therefore whose form could be discarded after their true content had been extracted and (re)interpreted in rational terms, i.e. into abstract truths of reason. The reality of religion outside of its doctrinal content, however, is unclear and only indirectly hinted at through its association with the State (a view that foreshadows the complementarity of religion and the State in the positive philosophy). Further, religion appears to be ahistorical: the only significant transformation that it undergoes—its divorce from philosophy and subsequent association with the legal power of the State—is described as an unfortunate accident. Its nature therefore seems static: it has no independent, living root which develops in history; any change which it undergoes is accidental, the result of external circumstances, and by no means an expression of a law or a process inherent to it. That being said, Schelling's recognition of an esoteric monotheism of reason and an exoteric polytheism of popular imagination in the Greek mysteries, as well as his synoptic view concerning the godward orientation of history (as the return journey, or "Odyssey," of the finite world back to God)

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<sup>148</sup> SW IX, 365.

anticipates aspects of his later philosophy.

This brief digression serves to highlight the ways in which Schelling's thinking on religion evolved in the twenty or so years since the essay on *Philosophy and Religion*. We have noted that, from the very beginning of his teaching career in Munich, Schelling saw religion as a preeminent object of philosophical speculation. Indeed, he presented the positive philosophy as the only one capable of truly understanding the origin and meaning of religion. But what is it about the positive philosophy which made it uniquely qualified to explain religion? Notably since his dispute with Jacobi, Schelling worked to find a way by which philosophy could interpret the content of historical religions—in particular polytheism and Christianity—in a way that agrees with reason, without, however, emptying them from their positive content—that is, without transforming the content of religion into a system of moral principles (Kantian religion). It was this dilemma which spurred the development of the later philosophy of religion: either to rationalize religious truths, but thereby also lose their historical, positive content, or to accept this positive religious content as something beyond rational comprehension—something which only faith could access—but thereby also accept the defeat of philosophy and its subordination to faith.

The positive philosophy of religion was developed as a way out of the Scylla of rationalism and the Charybdis of fideism. It offered a new solution to Lessing's "ugly broad ditch" between the accidental truths of history and the necessary truths of reason. This necessitated a completely new understanding of the scope of reason and of the nature of religion. Schelling had come to realize that as long as religion is understood as a body of theological doctrines or moral teachings, the philosophy of religion would consist in leading religious doctrines back to abstract truths of reason—that is, ridding religious representations from all historical content, until nothing is left in them that does not coincide with the necessary truths of reason. At the same time, Schelling

understood that as long as one assumed (as Jacobi had) that the only possible philosophy is a system of logical propositions, a system of necessity—a system that excluded all freedom and historicity, and that was in this precise sense “negative”—then the philosophy of religion condemned itself to seeing and valuing in religion only that which can be explained by the premises of rationalism, converted into a product of abstract reason, which entailed discarding all positive content to the ash heap of history. However, by approaching religion merely as an inferior and imperfect system of reason, rationalism leaves the actual religious experience of humanity, with the great convictions and spiritual richness that it represented, without explanation, or worse, views it as a series of collective hallucinations whose study belongs to the domain of psychology or sociology much more than that of philosophy.

The positive philosophy was conceived precisely as an antidote to the conspicuous poverty of rationalism and rationalist interpretations of religions. As he writes in his lectures of 1827, “one must not step into philosophy with the intention to deny all that is real, but rather so that the reality of all that is real to me can also be understood, with love and enthusiasm, scientifically.”<sup>149</sup> To be sure, the doubt of existence, such as found in Descartes, is a valid component of philosophy—indeed, such doubt is even necessary at the beginning of philosophy—not, however, when it is directed at all reality outside of me, but rather only to relative ways and forms of existence; otherwise, there would be nothing left for me to explain.<sup>150</sup> According to Schelling, thinking must be directed outside of itself. As he writes in his introductory lectures of 1830: “Whoever wants to think about thought ceases thereby to think...[True thinking] is in fact a thought that is directed at something outside of itself.”<sup>151</sup> This does not mean that thinking should uncritically accept objects

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<sup>149</sup> SysWA 23.

<sup>150</sup> SysWA 23, 25.

<sup>151</sup> EP 14.

outside itself. Rather, philosophy should be “experiential” (*erfahrungsmässig*), meaning that it should consist in

thinking that reflects [*nachdenken*] on experience [*Erfahrung*], given that immediate experience is not presented [*dargestellt*] by itself, but only through a mediated knowledge. Philosophy is therefore a matter of successive research, not a mechanism of thought [*Denkmechanismus*] which once set in motion runs by itself without any reflection.<sup>152</sup>

The positive philosophy is therefore a science which seeks to access the true beginning of existence. It proceeds on the basis of “documents” (*urkundlich*), deriving all things from the first beginning in the order of formation and development.<sup>153</sup> This does not mean abandoning rational research and accumulating facts. Rather, the method that Schelling is proposing in his Munich lectures combines empirical research and rational investigation. In line with this orientation, the *Philosophy of Mythology*, for instance, rejects principles of explanation “prior to research and independently of facts.” Instead, it purports to be “simultaneously completely scientific and completely historical, completely empirical and completely philosophical.” Indeed, according to Schelling, “what is genuinely historical is essentially indistinguishable from what is integrally scientific.”<sup>154</sup>

A scientific and historical interpretation must adapt and regulate itself according to its object, follow the latter’s immanent development. This involves “discovering the principle of development, the objective principle that is internal and immanent to the object itself.” One must reject preconceived schemes and “follow the object in its own self-development.”<sup>155</sup> Schelling

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<sup>152</sup> EP 15, 19.

<sup>153</sup> EP 19.

<sup>154</sup> SW XII, 138.

<sup>155</sup> SW XII, 138.

defines his historical-empirical method as follows:

The principle of every explanation is to do justice to the object that needs to be explained, without reducing it, without trimming its scope, without lessening or truncating it to make it easier to conceptualize. The question here is not about which viewpoint (*Ansicht*) needs to be imposed on the phenomenon in order to calmly explain it in accordance with some kind of [pre-established] philosophy, but rather which philosophy is required to meet the level of, and is suited for, the studied object. It is therefore not a matter of knowing how the phenomenon must be turned and upturned, simplified or deformed, to explain it in function of principles which one would have decided in advance not to transgress, but rather to what height our thoughts must expand so to accord with the phenomenon.<sup>156</sup>

It is in this sense that Schelling considers religion not as a doctrine (*Lehre*), but rather as a “reality” (*Sache*). As such, religion has an objective and independent existence—like nature—and which therefore cannot be reduced to mere thought. It is something “given” (*gegeben*), and therefore something which philosophy must proceed from before it can explain it.<sup>157</sup> Consequently, unlike systems of the necessity of thought, the historical philosophy “does not ground (*gründen*) its own historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*),” but rather seeks to understand “the object given to it” (*gegebenes Objekt*).<sup>158</sup> For this philosophy, writes Schelling,

Christianity and Revelation are not...the doctrine (*Lehre*) which they are usually considered to be, but a matter (*Sache*) which wants to be examined up to its first principles and known according to its first causes. Christianity has no authority for philosophy other than that of an object (*Gegenstandes*), which allows it to be examined without prejudice in order to search for the truth.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> SW, XII, 137.

<sup>157</sup> EP 35.

<sup>158</sup> EP 9.

<sup>159</sup> EP 9–10.

## B. The Role and Function of *Monotheism* in the System of the Later Philosophy

Schelling's later philosophy is not an incongruous assortment of isolated works. Quite the opposite, although the later philosophy remained unfinished at Schelling's death, he intended for it to be a complete, integrated structure made of different parts, each with its respective role and place in relation to the whole. The systematic structure of the later philosophy can be established on the basis of three independent sources: (1) Schelling's literary testament (from February 1853), in which he expresses the intended sequence of his works, which is more or less accurately reflected in the *Werke*<sup>160</sup>; (2) Schelling's own explicit indications in his works; (3) the inherently systematic nature of his philosophy.

To be sure, there are many reasons to question the degree to which the sequence of the *Werke*—the arrangement of the four volumes containing the later philosophy—can be said to represent a coherent system.<sup>161</sup> For example, the place of the *Purely Rational Philosophy* between the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism* interrupts the natural sequence between these works, and links with them poorly on both ends. Similarly, the so-called “Berlin Introduction” as well as the general part of the Philosophy of Revelation (except the *Mysterienlehre*) interrupts the natural transition from the end of mythology to Christianity. These, among other clumsy aspects, raise the question of whether Schelling's insistence on the systematic form of his later philosophy is an artificial interpolation, a last-minute effort designed to give a disorganized mass of works the

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<sup>160</sup> Some scholars question the extent to which Karl, in his edition of the four volumes of the later philosophy in the *Werke*, remained faithful to his father's instructions (see e.g. Thomas Buchheim, “Zur systematischen Form von Schellings Spätphilosophie”). While we cannot enter here into the specifics of this discussion, it is this author's opinion that Karl stayed overall true, if not always to the letter, at least to the spirit of his father's wishes. Indeed, Schelling himself considered Karl and another of his sons, Hermann, to be the most qualified interpreters of his later philosophy (see NLV 16). Therefore, in the few instances where the arrangement of *Werke* strays from the letter of Schelling's instructions, Karl's editorial decisions should first be tested for their hermeneutical soundness before eliciting immediate condemnation.

<sup>161</sup> See the critical considerations in Buchheim, “Zur systematischen Form von Schellings Spätphilosophie.”



appearance of coherence (and compounding, in the process, the enormous hermeneutical complexities of the later philosophy, which can only be skimmed here).

However, even if one might question the extent to which Schelling and his editor managed to present the later philosophy as a well-articulated system, this fact alone does not invalidate the inherently systematic structure of his philosophy. Indeed, there are internal reasons why Schelling's philosophy presents a systematic structure. This is particularly evident in his philosophy of religion, in which historically later stages of religious development necessarily presuppose earlier stages of religion, as we shall consider in more detail in Chapter 4. In other words, there is an internal connection between various parts of Schelling's later philosophy, and it is primarily this organic interdependence between these parts which confers on the later philosophy its character as a system, regardless of how well the sequence of these works reflects it.<sup>162</sup>

To be sure, Schelling's later philosophy did not present from the start a ready-made, fully developed system: between 1827 until 1854, the form of the philosophical system underwent significant changes, as Schelling revised some of its parts and added others. Two main periods can be distinguished in the development of the later philosophy: the Munich period (1827-1841) and the Berlin period (1842-1854). To go into the complex history of the later philosophy in detail would take us too far afield. Our focus in this chapter remains to explain the significance of *Monotheism* in the later philosophy. However, given the interdependence of the different parts of this philosophy, and the specific role and place which each work was attributed within the whole structure, it is necessary to consider the system as a whole, and the relation between its different

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<sup>162</sup> The question of the ordering or sequence of Schelling's works is not a minor one, as evidenced by Schelling's own preoccupation with this question in the final years of his life. Manfred Schröter—one of the foremost scholars of Schelling in his time—published an edition of Schelling's works with a different arrangement which he believed reflected more faithfully Schelling's thinking than the ordering of the original edition.

parts, when seeking to determine the significance of each of its components. Given the holistic character of the later philosophy, one should consider whether, and if so, how changes made to the systematic form affected the function and meaning of its individual parts.

In the case of *Monotheism*, the text itself and its role appear to have undergone important changes from Munich to Berlin. Although *Monotheism*, from the very beginning, and by design, belonged to the course on the Philosophy of Mythology, serving as the latter's foundation, its situation in the philosophical edifice shifted. In Munich, the work, or parts thereof, seems to have served a double function: as part of the deduction of monotheism in the general introduction to the positive philosophy (the so-called "Munich Introduction"), and as an introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology*. As part of the "Munich Introduction," *Monotheism* was not identified as a distinct a work, but rather as a stage in the deduction of the principles of the positive philosophy, typically following the lectures on the history of modern philosophy and the so-called exposition of philosophical empiricism. When Schelling in his *Verfügung* refers to numerous Munich-era manuscripts "in which the deduction of *Monotheism* [sic] is attempted," this is likely in reference to those sections of the "Munich Introduction" in which the deduction of monotheism was attempted on the basis of the positive principles.<sup>163</sup> Although the "Munich Introduction" would not be retained for publication, its content was recycled as part of the general part of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, including the deduction of monotheism, and this as early as 1832, when Schelling taught the *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*. Thus, in the *Werke*, a substantial parts of the six lectures of *Monotheism* are duplicated, in a condensed form, in the general part of the *Philosophy of Revelation* (roughly from Lectures XII to XVI). Significantly, however, both in the "Munich Introduction" as well as the *Philosophy of Revelation*, the deduction of monotheism

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<sup>163</sup> NLV 15.

proceeds differently than in the treatise under discussion. Although a comparative analysis between these different presentations of the “deduction of monotheism” in various contexts would certainly shed more light on the evolving and multi-faceted significance of this theme in his later philosophy, we shall here limit ourselves to a couple of general observations:

1) The fact that Schelling developed the concept of monotheism in various contexts and works—whether as part of the general deduction of the principles of positive philosophy in the “Munich Intro” and the general part of the *Philosophy of Revelation*, or as an introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology—already suggests the significance of this concept in his later philosophy. Our thesis is not concerned with the different “deductions of monotheism” found across Schelling’s later writings, but merely with the discrete treatise which in the *Werke* is part of the *Philosophy of Mythology*. This text, we believe, suffices to show the importance of the concept of monotheism for Schelling.

2) Whereas, in the full course on the Philosophy of Mythology (taught for the first time in Munich in 1828 and for the last time in Berlin in 1845/46), and indeed in the sequence of the *Werke*, *Monotheism* formally presupposes the *Historical-Critical Introduction* (to which we shall turn below), the deduction of monotheism in other contexts which lack this presupposition, appears to relativize the dependence of *Monotheism*—or at least of some of its content—on that introduction. This is suggested by Schelling himself in a passage in Lecture 1 of *Monotheism*. There, he indicates that he could have arrived at the same result reached in *Monotheism* without resuming the line of development of the historical-critical investigation, but by moving, following the “demand of the positive philosophy” at the end of the *Purely Rational Philosophy*, “directly from the beginnings of the positive philosophy, first to the concept of a theogonic process *in general*, and then to this concept *in consciousness*.” Despite this seemingly more direct trajectory,

he decides to “reserve this method for another lecture”—presumably, the general part of the *Philosophy of Revelation*—and chooses to resume with the “analytical method” of the historical-critical investigation by examining the presuppositions of its results.<sup>164</sup> This passage therefore suggests that the discovery and elucidation of the concept of monotheism (and the concomitant concept of a theogonic process) is not strictly tied to the “analytical method” used in the treatise *Monotheism* and the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, but can be reached differently, namely through the development of the principles of the positive philosophy. This seemingly obscure consideration or technicality hides a much more crucial and fundamental question, namely that of the point of access to the positive philosophy. This important question, which remains overlooked in research on the later philosophy, entails further that of the justification of the positive philosophy in general.

In the passage just cited from *Monotheism*, Schelling refers to the “demand of the positive philosophy” at the end of the development of the *Purely Rational Philosophy* (the so-called “philosophical introduction” to the *Philosophy of Mythology*), an idea he takes up and develops also in his Berlin lectures on *The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy*. In fact, as we shall see in a moment, after moving to Berlin—where his critics, particularly among the young Hegelians, denigrated his positive philosophy—Schelling became preoccupied with the question of defining the situation and function of the negative philosophy in relation to the positive one. His main work from this period, the *Exposition of the Purely Rational Philosophy*, presented a complete negative philosophy which, although itself purified from positive elements, nevertheless concludes with an aspiration for the real, actual God, which it itself cannot access. Having reached the end of its development, the negative philosophy cannot go any further, it stops at its ultimate concept: being

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<sup>164</sup> MOT 8.

itself, the “potency that is.” Having reached this stage, reason is ecstatic, stunned, silenced. But even in this exalted state, reason can only ever obtain the possibility of God. It is only through a personal will that God not only be an Idea, but something more than the Idea, that the real principle is gained. In this sense, the negative philosophy leads beyond itself to the “demand” for the positive philosophy.<sup>165</sup> Even though the two philosophies are distinct, there is a correlation between the two. The positive philosophy is actually *in* the negative—not yet as actual, but initially only as “seeking itself.”<sup>166</sup>

However, as Schelling notes, the positive philosophy could start off purely by itself, simply by claiming: “I want what is beyond being.”<sup>167</sup> This practical incitation, this will to possess God, is not a postulate of practical reason, but rather a “will of the spirit” which, through an inner necessity (*Nothwendigkeit*) and the aspiration to achieve its own liberation (*Befreiung*), cannot be content with a God who is merely enclosed (*eingeschlossen*) in thinking. It is not reason, therefore, but the individual, the I, who “being itself a personality (*Persönlichkeit*), longs for (*verlangen*) a personality, demands (*fordern*) a person who would be outside of the world and beyond the universal, a person who can hear him, a heart that would be similar to him.”<sup>168</sup> This yearning of the person for the real and living God, who is outside of reason and worldly being, and in whom alone he can find his salvation, is nothing but the manifestation of the need for actual religion, which therefore cannot be reduced to postulates of reason.<sup>169</sup> In fact, this will allows the transition from the negative philosophy to the positive philosophy. Thus, the positive philosophy begins with that which the negative philosophy at the end of its highest development can only point to but not

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<sup>165</sup> See the entire Lecture 24 of *DRP* (SW XI, 553).

<sup>166</sup> SW XI, 565.

<sup>167</sup> SW XI, 570.

<sup>168</sup> SW XI, 569.

<sup>169</sup> SW XI, 568.

access: that which is *above* Being, the irreducible, indubitable, absolute beginning.<sup>170</sup>

Despite obvious parallels between the content of the *Purely Rational Philosophy* and *Monotheism*—notably in their deduction of the principles of being—both works were retained in the *Werke*. Although it does not belong to the original sequence of Mythology, the *Purely Rational Philosophy* was assigned the role of a “philosophical introduction” to the Philosophy of Mythology, and placed between the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism*, interrupting the formal continuity between them. In his *Nachlassverfügung*, Schelling indicates: “This second part of the introduction [i.e. the *Purely Rational Philosophy*] should not replace the treatise on *Monotheism*, which itself achieves the transition to the real [positive] development.”<sup>171</sup> The instruction that the *Rational Philosophy* should not “replace” *Monotheism* suggests a degree of similarity or overlap in their content, as we have already indicated and shall further explore below. However, and more importantly, it points to the fact that, in spite of their similarities, *Monotheism* belongs to a different order of development than the *Rational Philosophy*. This brings us back to the question: why did Schelling choose to retain *Monotheism*?

In the preceding discussion, we have pointed to the problem of the point of access to the positive philosophy. We have indicated that, in Berlin, Schelling attempted to show how the rational philosophy developed to its ultimate consequences leads beyond itself to the “demand” for the positive philosophy. We have further seen Schelling indicate that the positive philosophy could start off purely by itself—that is, without the presupposition of the negative philosophy—simply by claiming: “I want God outside of the Idea.”<sup>172</sup> This direct access to the positive principle is showcased in the “Munich Introduction” and the general part of the *Philosophy of Revelation*.

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<sup>170</sup> SW XI, 570.

<sup>171</sup> NLV 16.

<sup>172</sup> SW XI, 570.

In addition to these two approaches to the positive philosophy, there is a third one, which might be described as the “inductive” or “historical-critical” approach, which Schelling also describes as “analytical.” This is the approach demonstrated in the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism* (and to some extent also in the *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, which precedes the deduction of monotheism in the line of development of the “Munich Introduction,” but which, like the lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, were excluded from four volumes of the *Werke* presenting the system of the later philosophy.)

These two works, as noted in the last chapter, belong to the very earliest strata of the later philosophy. Both derive their first materials from the *Tagebuch* of 1810. Therefore, they both originally predate the conceptualization of the negative and the positive characteristic of Schelling’s later thinking. Indeed, as we noted, both works, as part of the full course on the *Philosophy of Mythology*, appear to have been complete even before 1827. This is one reason why neither of these works fits neatly into the dichotomy between the positive and the negative philosophy.<sup>173</sup> They precede the problematization of the dual philosophy, and like the other works of the middle period, contain both positive and negative elements. In Berlin, Schelling, of course, tried to redefine their respective roles in terms of the positive-negative distinction. This is especially true with regard to *Monotheism*, which is situated exactly at a middle point between the rational philosophy and the positive philosophy, and which reflects aspects of both these approaches, notably by demonstrating the transition from “monotheism as a concept” to “monotheism as a dogma,” as we shall see in the next chapter.

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<sup>173</sup> As Thomas Buchheim points out, since both the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism* “ausdrücklich einer historisch-kritischen bzw. begriffsanalytischen Methodik folgen und damit weder der Philosophie im negativen noch im positiven Sinn zuzurechnen sind, fällt der Beginn einer entschieden positiven Philosophie in Schellings spätester Zeit mit dem Anfang von MYL [= *Philosophy of Mythology*] zusammen” (“Zur systematischen Form”).

### C. The Analytical Entryway to the Positive Philosophy

As the first in the series of works which make up the system of the later philosophy, the *Historical-Critical Introduction* has a foundational role. Partly due to the tendency in scholarship on Schelling to read his later works in isolation from one another, and partly because of the historical character of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, which cannot be easily assigned to either the negative or positive sides of philosophy, the significance and implications of this text have been, if not altogether ignored, then largely misunderstood. In fact, this work is significant in spite of, or rather precisely because of the fact, on which Schelling insists, that it is not a work of philosophy. Rather, as suggested by its title, it is a “historical-critical” introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology. Thus, Schelling emphasizes that this work does not proceed “from any preconceived view, least of all from a philosophy.” The result obtained in this work is therefore “one that has been found and solidified independently of all philosophy.”<sup>174</sup> Since Schelling is concerned with the factuality of mythology, his research does not proceed through pure rational deduction. His immediate aim, here, is closer to that of a historian or a scientist: to determine the existence of an objective fact.

The apparently non-philosophical character of this work, however, does not make it any less important in Schelling’s philosophical project. Indeed, as we have shown, one of the original factors in the development of Schelling’s later philosophy is its recognition of the historicity of being. Philosophy has to be concerned with facts, it must develop a real relation with facts. Consequently, the Philosophy of Mythology calls for a preliminary critique that establishes the

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<sup>174</sup> SW XI, 251.



“pure factuality” (*rein Thatsächlichkeit*) of mythology, and by extension, of all religion.<sup>175</sup> As he writes:

We have not taken up mythology at any other point other than where everyone finds it. For us philosophy was not the measure according to which we repudiated or accepted the views that presented themselves. Every type of explanation was welcome, even the one most distant from all philosophy, *if only it actually explained*. Only in steps, in consequence of a purely historical development visible to everybody, did we reach our result, in that we presupposed that for this object will be true also what Baco had shown with respect to philosophy: through successive exclusion of that which is proven as false, and through the purification of that which is fundamental truth from the false that clings to it, the true will be finally enclosed into such a narrow space that one is to a certain extent necessitated to perceive and declare it. Accordingly, not so much eclectically but rather on the path of a progressive critique gradually removing everything historically unthinkable, we have reached the point where only *this* view of mythology remained.<sup>176</sup>

Although the HCI is not an example of “negative” philosophy—indeed, it is not even a philosophical work, properly speaking, in Schelling’s understanding—its methodology can be described as “negative” insofar as it proceeds by “progressive exclusion,” or a “progressive critique” that removes “everything historically unthinkable.” There is a wide misconception that, since the subject matter of the HCI—mythology—is historical, that this work must be part of the positive philosophy. This is not case, for the reasons just outlined. In fact, although it shares aspects with both the negative and positive philosophies, the *HCI* fits neither.<sup>177</sup> This fact, combined with the foundational significance of this text, defies the neat and cliché categorizations of the later

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<sup>175</sup> SW XII, 4.

<sup>176</sup> SW XI, 251.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. footnote 173 above.

philosophy, suggesting a need to reevaluate the Schellingian philosophy of religion.

Since the *Historical-Critical Introduction* is formally connected to *Monotheism*—indeed, *Monotheism* presupposes it—it is important here to clarify the role and nature of this work. In the first three lectures of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, in conformity with his method of “progressive exclusion,” Schelling reviews a number of established theories concerning the meaning of mythology. These mainly boil down to two: poetic interpretations and naturalistic ones. According to the poetic hypothesis, there was no truth at all originally in mythology; that is, mythological representations are essentially fanciful, the product of a poetic imagination, and can therefore have no claim to objective truth. In naturalistic theories, on the other hand, mythology is seen as containing an original truth, but one that is encoded, as it were, in mythological language. From this point of view, mythology is a kind of proto-science, which once had the role of explaining natural phenomena to uneducated masses. Schelling reviews both theories and finds them equally incapable of explaining adequately the nature and origin of mythological representations. Indeed, according to him, neither of these theories can properly explain the religious significance that mythology once had among people: “mythology was, as it is, meant as truth...it originally has religious meaning.”<sup>178</sup>

The belief in gods or polytheism, moreover, must presuppose belief in God in general or theism. “Gods proper can only be called those that take God as their basis.” Having reached this point in the argument, Schelling considers various possible views or presuppositions with which an original religious meaning might be conceptualized. The first possible view—“always the one that assumes the least”—presupposes a minimum actual knowledge of God, and presupposes the potency (*Potenz*) or seed of this. Traditionally, this is represented by the notion of a *Notitia Dei*

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<sup>178</sup> HCI 51.

*insita*, that is, the notion of a “merely *potentially* present consciousness of God, which, however, would in itself have the necessity to transition to the *actus*, to raise itself to the actual consciousness of God.”<sup>179</sup> On this hypothesis, then, mythology was the product of a “religious instinct.” God here is only the “dark, vague goal that is striven for.” With this “inborn, dark lore of God,” the human being would first go into the world blindly seeking God. However, this explanation itself rests on a presupposition which has yet to be conceptualized: the religious instinct itself.

What is the relation between the relative, pre-historical God in human consciousness, and the true God? In other words, what is the relation between relative monotheism and absolute monotheism? Schelling tackles this question in Lecture 8 of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*. The one God in original human consciousness acted as a “powerful force of attraction, [holding] humanity, with gentle but irresistible power, enclosed in the sphere in which he deemed it appropriate to hold them.” God acted upon consciousness through a force; he was not imparted to humankind through a doctrine, a teaching, whether philosophical or religious. Instead, the relation was “real,” and for this reason had to be a relation to God in his actuality—that is, to God as active in his creation—rather than to God in his essence, that is, to the true nature of God, and thus also to the true God. The God who is felt as one God in original human consciousness is not immediately known as the true God. Although the one God of original humanity is an actual, real God, and that in him also the true God is, he is not known as such. Thus, humanity worshipped what it did not know, to what it had no ideal (free) relation, but rather only a real relation.

#### **D. The Relation of *Monotheism* to the *Historical-Critical Introduction***

As we have just seen, the *Historical-Critical Introduction* leads to the conclusion that

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<sup>179</sup> HCI 56.

mythology in general emerges through a process, specifically a theogonic process, in the consciousness of original humanity. In showing that the meaning of mythology is essentially a religious one—that is, that mythology refers to an actual theogonic process in human consciousness—Schelling arrives at the conclusion that "a religion independent of philosophy and reason, just as of revelation, has been proven."<sup>180</sup> Indeed, mythology is recognized a "phenomenon just as real, necessary, and universal in its own way as nature."

The *Historical-Critical Introduction*, therefore, is hugely important insofar as it demonstrate a source of religion that is independent both of reason and Revelation. Schelling has only proven that the process by which mythology emerges into being is a *subjective* one, that is, that for the humanity affected by it, this process has only this religious meaning. However, this conclusion does not establish the objective meaning of this process, i.e. its meaning independent of human consciousness. Schelling asks: "But, also considered *absolutely*, does *it* have—and for this reason does the process by which it emerges also have—only this particular but no *general* meaning?"<sup>181</sup>

Schelling has determined that the real powers by which consciousness in the mythological process is moved, whose succession itself is the process, are the same powers through which consciousness is originally and essentially that which posits God.<sup>182</sup> However, as he notes near the end of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, "a satisfactory, generally convincing conclusion" to the investigation into the meaning of mythology cannot be reached "with merely empirical or contingent assumptions." In order for this result to become a result "independent of an individual mode of thinking," that is, a result established on universal principles, one must succeed in "leading mythology back to presuppositions of a universal nature and in deriving it as a necessary

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<sup>180</sup> SW XI, 244; HCI 169.

<sup>181</sup> SW XI, 215; HCI 150.

<sup>182</sup> SW XI, 215; HCI 150.

consequence from out of such presuppositions.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, after having shown the reality of religion as a principle independent of reason on “empirical” grounds, that is, as a result of a “historical-critical” investigation, there remains the task of establishing this fact as true, that is, as a necessary consequence from the presuppositions of universal principle.

What does Schelling seek to achieve in *Monotheism*?

1) To determine the precise content of the concept of monotheism.

2) To establish in what consists the true unity or truth of God. Once the concept of monotheism has been understood, the elements that allow us to understand the theogonic process in general will have been given, and at the same time the means to understand the possibility of a theogonic process in consciousness, as well as its necessity under certain conditions.

3) Once the possibility of a theogonic process in consciousness has been established, we will be able to demonstrate in mythology itself the actuality of such a movement.

In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling recognized mythology as the product of a theogonic process, in which the inner center of humanity has been displaced with the first actual consciousness. However, the concept of a theogonic process has been discovered and recognized through mere deductions—it was not discovered on the basis of itself, on the basis of its own premises. It was only the “limit” that was reached through “historical-philosophical” investigation. How to understand such a process, which is based on an actual relation between human consciousness and God—a relation that is independent of reason?

The *Philosophy of Mythology*, including *Monotheism*, is “formally and immediately” connected to the *Historical-Critical Introduction*.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, *Monotheism* picks up where the *Historical-Critical Introduction* ends: it presupposes the result reached in the latter. To understand

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<sup>183</sup> HCI 157–158.

<sup>184</sup> SW XII, vi.

the role of *Monotheism*, therefore, it is necessary to explain its relation to the *Historical-Critical Introduction*. The two texts, as previously indicated, overlap, to some extent, in their function: both serve as introductions to the *Philosophy of Mythology* in that both seek to establish the reality of religion—the *HCI* by proving the reality of mythological representations on the basis of the God-positing nature of original human consciousness as the essence of all historical religion, and *Monotheism* by explaining through rational analysis the *a priori* concept of God (what Schelling calls “monotheism as concept”) necessarily presupposed by the historically given fact of monotheism (“monotheism as dogma”) established by the *Historical-Critical Introduction*. Therefore, although both serve as introductions to the *Philosophy of Mythology*, *Monotheism* presupposes the *Historical-Critical Introduction* in that it receives from it the concept of monotheism as an already existing and generally accepted concept (*einer schon vorhandenen und allgemein zugegebenen Begriff*).<sup>185</sup> Although neither the *HCI* or *MOT* can be considered works of positive philosophy proper, they nevertheless represent the fact-oriented, “positive” character of the later philosophy. Indeed, together they establish the reality and nature of religion as a foundation of the positive philosophy.

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<sup>185</sup> MOT 10.

### III. The Foundation of Positive Religion: The Contribution of *Monotheism*

*Aus dem Monotheismus ist alle Religion*<sup>186</sup>

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#### A. “The First of All Concepts”: Monotheism as Fact and as Doctrine

A reader opening the volume on the *Philosophy of Mythology* for the first time may be surprised to discover, at the beginning of a work presumably dealing with mythology, a treatise on *Monotheism*. Even more surprising may be the claim, made by the editor in the Preface, and by author in Lecture I, that monotheism is the “foundation” of mythology. Indeed, in the general understanding and common use of this concept, monotheism is a specific religious doctrine—it refers to the concept of the one God, common to the so-called Abrahamic religions—whereas mythology, generally speaking, refers to a much broader phenomenon in the history of religions. Further, it is commonly held that monotheism is a late development, a religious tradition that originally emerges within polytheism—as a cult devoted to one god among other gods, before morphing into the cult of the one true God to the exclusion of other gods. In the latter sense, monotheism appears even as the opposite of mythology. The question of what it means for monotheism to be the “foundation” of mythology, therefore, raises itself naturally. In what sense should this be understood?

The concept of monotheism has a central significance in Schelling’s later philosophy. The concept initially emerges in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, as we saw in Ch. 2. There, the first condition of the theogonic process, as of mythology in general, is shown to be a “potential

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<sup>186</sup> MOT 79. Cf. “On dira: notre monothéisme n’est que l’emprunt fait au Christianisme. Nous répondons: au contraire, le Christianisme comme les autres religions sort du monothéisme” (PMAM 79).

monotheism,” i.e. monotheism posited with the essence of human consciousness. Thus, monotheism is natural to consciousness, in the sense that consciousness “carries it within itself and cannot move or detach itself from it—it is [therefore] unified with it, one with it.”<sup>187</sup> Since this “potential monotheism” is the “foundation” of the theogonic movement of consciousness—as was established in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*—the concept of monotheism in general must contain “*the law* and, to a certain extent, *the key* to the theogonic movement”—that it, it must be able to explain the causes as well as the content of the theogonic process.<sup>188</sup>

In keeping with the analytical method of the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling does not propose to derive the concept of monotheism from universal principles. He does not proceed from an *a priori* investigation of the principles of reason to deriving from these a rational concept of monotheism. Rather, he assumes the concept of monotheism as a “fact” (*Thatsache*), an objective reality, and proceeds to investigate its meaning, its actual content, with no other presupposition other than that it has a content and a meaning.<sup>189</sup> The factuality of the concept of monotheism—its existence as a reality that is not simply a product of reason—is evidenced by its exceptional ubiquity. Indeed, “among all philosophical *or* religious concepts, we cannot find another one that is so universally recognized as *true*,” despite the divergence over its actual content. It is common both to revealed and mythological religions, and is the supreme concept of the revealed religion(s). In fact, not only is it found as a particular doctrine within mythological religions, but, as was proven in the historical-critical investigation, all polytheism presupposes an underlying monotheism. Further, outside the domain of historical religion, even rational religions at least pretend to contain it.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, virtually everyone apart from dedicated atheists wishes to

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<sup>187</sup> MOT 8.

<sup>188</sup> MOT 8.

<sup>189</sup> MOT 8.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Schelling’s discussion of the significance of the concept of God in modern philosophy in HMP. For



be seen not as a polytheist, but as a monotheist.<sup>191</sup> The concept of monotheism is therefore “world-historical.” It is not, at least in origin, a product of reason, but something “given” or “already existing” (*vorhanden*), and it is precisely insofar as it is a given concept that Schelling wishes to explain it. It is not a question of producing a rational concept that has never existed, but of “becoming aware of what can be thought and what cannot be thought in an already given and universally accepted concept”—that is, the explanation must also be able to account for the ubiquity of the concept, its historical genesis.<sup>192</sup>

Although the ubiquity of the concept—the fact that “it does not belong to mere school, but to humanity, and is not merely a scientific, but a world-historical concept,” indeed a concept in which “we must recognize the ultimate foundation of our entire intellectual and moral culture”—makes it seem like a self-evident concept, it is far from being so. Indeed, it is precisely its self-evidence which demands explanation:

One would think that a concept whose foundation in humanity has required so many long struggles, which has only ruled for about 1500 years, and which even today rules among the better and more civilized, but still only smaller half of the human race—that such a concept must have a *special content*, not an immediate and self-evident one.<sup>193</sup>

But how could this concept have acquired the universal and historical significance which it has, if it has not been understood according to its true content? To this question, Schelling answers

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an illuminating study of philosophical religions, see Carlos Fraenkel’s *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza: Reason, Religion, and Autonomy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

<sup>191</sup> This is probably as true today as it was during Schelling’s time, at least in the western context, as the contemporary phenomenon of “Moralistic therapeutic deism” (MTD) would seem to suggest. Schelling would have been horrified by “pagan revivalism,” even though, ironically, he is, indirectly, one of its philosophical and historical progenitors in the context of western culture, notably through his influence on analytical psychology (Jung, Hillman, Miller).

<sup>192</sup> MOT 10.

<sup>193</sup> MOT 11.

that “things...exist in humanity before their scientific concept.” For example, royalty and the State exist in the world since time immemorial, long before any attempt was made to justify them in rational terms. Even if one assumes that the transition from the cult of many gods to the recognition of only one true God happened through science, the relation is not one of cause to effect (for how the idea of the only God first emerged even in scientific consciousness would then need to be explained).<sup>194</sup> Consequently, Schelling considers that previous attempts at understanding the true content of the concept through which such great change has been brought to have been misled. Indeed, in his view, the general acceptance of this concept, as that of any concept, is inversely proportional to the degree to which it has been understood:

Once a state of affairs that is desirable and pleasant to everyone has been established, one no longer asks about its origin, but rather one prepares oneself to enjoy and use it, without any further research into its foundation. Indeed, since a long time now, one no longer dares to do the latter with an impartial spirit, in part for fear of shaking the whole edifice of accepted doctrines and concepts. The general acceptance of a concept does not guarantee its scientific explanation [*Ergründung*]. One could rather affirm without paradox that the scientific explanation of a concept is for the most part inversely related to the generality of its use. As a general rule, it is precisely the concepts that everyone uses and, in a way, are common currency, which are those used most blindly—everyone trusts everyone else and thinks that such a widely used concept must be beyond all doubt.<sup>195</sup>

Schelling’s willingness to admit “given” concepts as objects of philosophical investigation does not mean that he is blindly submitting reason to the authority of religious facts. On the contrary, he wishes to explain how the “sacred cows” of our culture come to acquire their swaying

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<sup>194</sup> MOT 11.

<sup>195</sup> MOT 11–12.

power and significance in the first place. He does not start from religion, but rather goes toward it: in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, starting from the question of the meaning of mythological representations, he established on historical grounds that their only valid meaning, at least to those in whom those representations first appeared, was the religious one. He did not start by uncritically assuming the religious significance of mythological representations, but critically considered a range of possible explanations of these representations until the only valid explanation that was for which mythology is the expression of a religious process in human consciousness. Similarly, in *Monotheism*, Schelling does not assume the absolute religious significance of monotheism: although he has previously shown that it has a religious significance in original human consciousness, the question remains to know whether, and if so, how, the unity of God expressed by this concept, and the concomitant concept of the “true” God, correspond to the actual unity and actual truth of God.<sup>196</sup> Put differently, Schelling wants to analyze the apparent religious significance of the concept of monotheism to see whether, in addition to its already proven religious significance in human consciousness, it also has a general significance independent of human consciousness.

Schelling presents his study as the first to explain the true significance of the concept of monotheism. Among rationalist theologians, positive theologians, and philosophers alike, both ancient and modern, he does not find a satisfactory explanation of the concept of monotheism. Theologians have failed to explain this “first and, as it were, simplest of all concepts,” while philosophers in general try to steer clear from it.<sup>197</sup> The embarrassment of philosophers and theologians alike vis-à-vis the concept of the unity of God can be understood, since the prevalent formula in which this concept has found expression—to wit: “there is no God but (*außer*) God”—

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<sup>196</sup> MOT 10.

<sup>197</sup> MOT 12.

is, according to him, tautological and illusory.<sup>198</sup> It is conceivable to posit, outside of a God, another or many other gods. However, once God, purely and simply, has been posited, it is superfluous to posit him again. Writes Schelling:

How can one prove what no one would think of denying, or refute what no one would think of affirming? If I can simply think of a God other than God, I would have already posited the latter not as God, but immediately rather as *a* God. Conversely, if I deny that there is a God other than God, I consequently only reposit him as *God*, but not as the unique God, which would be a complete pleonasm. Theology usually deals with excessively obscure dogmas. Here it is in the reverse situation, as it were: it is rather the excessive clarity which is the cause of its inconvenience here. One is embarrassed to express as a special doctrine, even as a dogma, a proposition that is so perfectly evident.<sup>199</sup>

Schelling's argument is basically this: once you posit that there is only God, it is a pleonasm to add that there is no other God. Either God is, or God is not. But to say that there is no God other

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<sup>198</sup> In *Monotheism*, Schelling seems to attribute this definition to Christian theologians, whereas it is, in fact, identical to the Islamic statement of faith: *la ilāha illallāh*. Schelling acknowledges this in a similar passage from the *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, which predates the text of *Monotheism*. Cf. “denn die Formel, mit welcher der Begriff der Einheit Gottes ausgedrückt wird, ist jene des Muhammedaners, daß nämlich außer Gott kein anderer Gott ist (Cf. Alcorani textus universus, ex correctioribus Arabum exemplaribus descriptus et ex arabico idiomate in latinum translatus, appositis notis atque refutatione. His omnibus praemissus est prodromus – auct. Ludov. Maraccio. Patavii, 1698. fol.). Sie werden eingestehen, daß Sie nie eine andere Erklärung des Begriffes Monotheismus gefunden haben. Wenn nun dies die allgemeine Erklärung des Begriffes ist, so kann man sich über jene Verlegenheit nicht wundern.” (UPO 102–103). As a previously cited passage from *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815) suggests, Schelling (who could read Arabic) attributed the false, “deistic” understanding of monotheism to Islamic influence (see footnote 89 above). In fact, modern historians have shown the widespread influence of Islamic notions in the European Enlightenment. In a future study, I would like to examine Schelling’s critical reception of Islam in the context of the wider reception and influence of Islam in the European Enlightenment. In a sense, *Monotheism* can be read both as the response of a Christian philosopher to Islamic monotheism. Interestingly, and ironically, the French scholar of Islamic theosophy, Henry Corbin, in his essay “The Paradox of Monotheism” points to Schelling’s understanding of monotheism as being similar to that of Islamic theosophers (notably Ibn ‘Arabi and his school). In fact, Corbin opposed the Islamic-Schellingian understanding of monotheism to the orthodox Christian one, and particularly to the doctrine of the Trinity. Considering that Schelling, as we shall see, considered the doctrine of the Trinity to be crucial to his idea of monotheism, Corbin’s reading shows that he was an extremely selective reader of Schelling..

<sup>199</sup> MOT 14.

than God is strange: how does one come or begin to think a God other than God in the first place, if there is only one God? Either I think of a unique God, purely and simply, or of no God at all. Thus, the doctrine of the one God, or of the unicity (*Einzigheit*) of God, as traditionally defined, leaves no room for polytheism. By negating the very possibility of polytheism, however, this definition robs monotheism of its foundation, without which the concept of monotheism would be superfluous, for then one would not need to affirm the unicity of God, but merely God, purely and simply. Monotheism can therefore only be adequately understood if it is placed in relation to polytheism—the two must be possible at the same time for either one to exist. If polytheism is impossible, then monotheism as a special concept is no less impossible. “Both concepts stand and fall together.”<sup>200</sup>

To establish further the internal unity between monotheism and polytheism, Schelling seeks to show that the unicity of God expressed in the doctrine of monotheism is an internal unicity—it is the unicity of God *as such*, the unicity of God in relation to himself—as opposed to an external unicity, which expresses the view that God is single in the sense that he is one alone, that there is no one but him (as per the traditional formula). Schelling considers the popular arguments which try to demonstrate the unicity of God with reference to the concept of supreme cause. The unicity that is obtained in this way is not necessarily an unconditional one. While, for instance, one may attribute a primacy to God as regards the production of things, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that a second cause may exist which, in itself, i.e. not in consideration of its action, would be identical to God.<sup>201</sup> Thus, one could imagine, next to the supreme cause, and without canceling this concept, another cause, an anti-God. Indeed, the spectacle of the world does not necessarily lead us to assume the existence of a supreme cause that excludes all collaboration. The

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<sup>200</sup> MOT 15.

<sup>201</sup> MOT 16.

world instead shows us two principles independent in their operation, one that opposes all form and order, and another that brings things back into form and order. Even if one could infer from the spectacle of the world the absolute unity of the supreme cause, a cause therefore authorizing no kind of collaboration, the supreme cause or God would be single by the fact of his action as supreme cause, and not by nature. By contrast, theologians have normally defined the unicity of God as being one of nature, of essence.

The usual statement of monotheism is not only tautological, but also illusory. The statement that there is no God other than God leads Schelling to address another question, namely whether there is anything at all other than (*außer*) God? If unicity is among the attributes that belongs to God before all action, by mere nature, then one should feel compelled to admit that there is nothing other than God, since one derives all non-divine being from the free causality of God. If there is no God but God, and if there is even nothing other than God, then there is no need to speak of the single God: it suffices to speak of the One, pure and simple (merely *o monos*, and not *o monos theos*).<sup>202</sup> Therefore, the formula of monotheism, to avoid its tautological character, would have to be reformulated: there is not one God, outside of which there would be another god or other gods, but rather there is only God. This statement, like the earlier one, affirms just one thing: God Is. However, it is clear that it affirms nothing of God, but merely repeats the concept of God itself. In other words, the usual formula does not express monotheism, but mere theism. The opposite of theism—the view that there is a God, that God is—would be atheism. By contrast, monotheism only has meaning and significance in relation and opposition to polytheism.<sup>203</sup> Thus, just as the *Historical-Critical Introduction* had shown that historical polytheism presupposes an original monotheism as its foundation, Schelling establishes that the concept of monotheism, if it to avoid

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<sup>202</sup> MOT 22.

<sup>203</sup> MOT 23.

being a tautology, must in itself presuppose polytheism.

## **B. “The Idea that Makes All Hearts Beat”: The Principle of Pantheism and the Freedom of God**

Having rejected as tautological the traditional understanding of the concept of monotheism, Schelling proceeds to re-interpret the idea of divine unicity. The tautological definition of this idea is rooted, in his view, in the failure to distinguish between two fundamental understandings of unicity with respect to God: the unicity of God and the unicity of God as such. Any analysis of the unicity of God must start with the simple concept of unicity, or “absolute unicity.” This is because the mere concept of unicity is prior to that of God as such. Indeed, the concept of God presupposes it. Writes Schelling: “Whoever says the name of God does not feel that, by doing so, one has declared a unicity, but rather that one has presupposed it. One must, in fact, think this unicity in order to think God (and not: a God), therefore before even truly thinking God as such.”<sup>204</sup> The concept of God implicitly and necessarily excludes there being another like him. If another God could be thought alongside God, then God would not be God. Absolutely unicity, therefore, is a precondition of God being God. Thus, it is agreed upon in advance, “before God is God,” that he is not simply that which has no equal (as in the Islamic profession of faith), but rather that which *can* have no equal. This distinction is subtle, but crucial: it is the basis of Schelling’s refutation of the tautological definition of monotheism.

How to think that which can have no equal? If something has an equal, the two things must be identical in that which is common to them. Similarly, if there could be something other than God, this other thing would have the mere fact of being, at least, in common with God; that is, both

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<sup>204</sup> MOT 24.

would have an equal claim on being. But since God is that which can have no equal, he cannot be a being, that is, a mere participant in being (in the way, for instance, a white, tall, or beautiful object merely participates in whiteness, tallness, or beauty). Since God, therefore, is not a being, a mere participant in being, he can only be Being itself (*das Seyende selbst*), or, to use scholastic idiom, *ipsum Ens*. God, insofar as he is single in the absolute sense, cannot be said to have being in the same sense other beings partake of being. God can never be conceived as not being, and this fact is not contingent—something added to his essence—but rather constitutes the very essence of what he is. In this sense, he is the necessary being, and this defines his absolute unicity. According to Schelling, this is the “necessary pre-concept of God, which one must posit in order to posit God (and not: a God).”<sup>205</sup> To be that which is (*Seyende*), in the sense just outlined, is not what makes the divinity of God—what makes God God—but is rather the “presupposition” of his divinity or his being as God.<sup>206</sup>

We have just shown that only Being itself (insofar as it implies absolute unicity) can be God. This, however, does not necessarily entail that it is God. For it to be God, another qualification is needed. To the extent that that which is (*Seyende*) can receive determinations, can be a subject with properties, it can be called material (*Materie*). Thus, for God to be Being itself is not the divinity in him, but rather the material of his divinity. “If God were nothing but that which is (*Seyende*),” writes Schelling, “it would be absurd to speak of a single God.” Just as it would be absurd to refer to red itself or white itself as the single red or the single white, respectively, so it

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<sup>205</sup> MOT 25.

<sup>206</sup> In *Monotheism*, Schelling sometimes appears to use “das Seyende” and “das Seyende selbst” interchangeably. There seems to be a nuance, however. The former, “das Seyende,” points to “what is” or “that which is” (its sense is captured better by the French word *étant*) in its brute facticity. It is existence without, or rather before, further qualification. In this sense, it is what makes being possible as its actual material. “Das Seyende selbst” also refers to this facticity, but insofar as it is self-existing, and, in this sense, single. It is only used with reference to God. It is the absolute precondition of all being.



would be absurd to say that Being itself is the single being. Yet monotheism states that God is single.

In what sense, then, should the unicity of God as such be understood? Schelling has identified the unicity of God, in the first sense, as Being itself; this unicity presupposed in the concept of God is not God as such, but rather the material of his divinity. If God were distinct from Being itself, from the universal essence (*ens universale*), but if the unicity attributed to him were merely derived from the *fact* that he is Being itself, his unicity would merely be a necessary unicity. In this case, all that we would be able to say of God is that there can be no God but God—a God whose unicity is merely necessary: the God of Spinoza and classical theism. For Schelling, however, this view of God is not the one expressed in monotheism, since the unicity expressed in and by the latter is not a rational, necessary, self-evident principle, but rather a contingent fact, something which did not exist at one point, and came to exist later. He asks rhetorically: “If the unicity thought in monotheism were a necessary one, how can one explain that this concept only became universally accepted after Christianity, that is, beginning almost 1500 years ago? The unicity affirmed in monotheism must be such that we can only say that it Is, and not that it cannot ever not be. It is not a self-evident unicity.”<sup>207</sup>

Schelling distinguishes three ways of understanding the doctrine of the single God. They represent (although he only identifies them at a later point in the treatise) pantheism, theism, and monotheism, respectively. The first position expresses what can be called the Eleatic or pantheistic view. It involves saying that God is Being itself. But if I say this, I cannot say that he is the single God. If I say that God is Being itself, I must also say that he is the One. But this would mean that unicity would not be predicated of him, but that he himself would be the One. If unicity cannot be

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<sup>207</sup> MOT 26.

predicated of God, then we cannot speak of monotheism.<sup>208</sup> The second position distinguishes between God and Being itself, but at the same time determines the unicity of God to be that of Being itself. Thus, in this view, the unicity of God is identified with the necessary unicity of Being itself, i.e. absolute unicity. In this necessary unity, I do not think of God especially as the unique God, but rather as the Unique in general: unique not according to his divinity as such, but according to the substance, material thereof. Insofar as it derives from God's mere substantiality, the unicity affirmed in theism is always his unicity in general, or absolute unicity: it is by virtue of the latter that one can say that there can be no God other than God.<sup>209</sup> This unicity, however, is not the one expressed by monotheism insofar as it is a dogma, that is (although Schelling does not use this word here), something positive:

If monotheism is a dogma, that is, something that must be expressly asserted, the unicity conceived in it cannot be the necessary one, whose opposite is impossible. It can only be a factual [*faktische*] one, for only factuality [*das Faktische*] can properly be an object of affirmation.<sup>210</sup>

Far from rejecting the idea that God is Being itself, Schelling calls it “*the concept of all concepts*, the highest one from which one can start, the supreme concept of all philosophy.”<sup>211</sup> Indeed, this concept is the presupposition of all thinking. For in thinking any object, I think that which is (*Seyende*). The concept of “that which is” separates human beings from animals: animals do not have this concept, and therefore are unable to think.<sup>212</sup> This concept is not itself an actual

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<sup>208</sup> MOT 27.

<sup>209</sup> MOT 29.

<sup>210</sup> MOT 29. In numerous places across his later writings, Schelling defines positive as that which is the object of an express affirmation. See, e.g. EP 8.

<sup>211</sup> MOT 30.

<sup>212</sup> It is the concept which precedes thinking here. It is not that animals do not have the concept because they do not think, but vice versa, they are incapable of thinking in general because they lack this concept. This concept is the presupposition of all thinking. The very possibility of thinking is founded on this concept. Cf. Schelling's critique of Jacobi's argument for God's existence in BL 171.

being, but is rather the “universal subject, the universal possibility of a being (*Seyn*).” However, in and of itself, this concept does not contain any real being, but merely the possibility thereof. Therefore, if one wants to attain a real being who is God, and not simply the concept of his possibility—what Schelling has called the “pre-concept of God,” that is, absolute unicity—then there has to be a transition from the possibility of God to his real being. That toward which one transitions, i.e. the goal, must not already be given with that from which one proceeds, from the beginning of the movement. Schelling’s aim here is precisely to proceed from absolute unicity (which rests on the mere fact that God is Being itself) to the unicity of God as such.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, philosophy finds its role and triumph precisely in that it “[leads] God out of this being that is identical with his essence in order to bring him to the being that is distinct from essence—to the explicit, actual being.”<sup>214</sup> Insofar as philosophy in this way discovers the true God, insofar as it “frees” his actual being from the idea of a necessary being, it anticipates what Schelling calls the “philosophical religion.”

Although Being itself is not what Is, it is for this reason not nothing. Rather, it is that which will be.<sup>215</sup> The statement “God is Being itself” should therefore be understood in the sense just defined: God in himself and before himself, viewed in his pure essence, is what will be. This definition corresponds to the oldest attested document in which the true God—the God of monotheism—is mentioned, or, indeed, where God gives himself a name: “I will be” (*JAHWEH*). This is the “supreme concept of God,” insofar as it expresses the idea that God is “outside of being, above being...[he is] a lucid freedom to be or not to be, to assume or not to assume a being.” Therefore, God is not the necessary being, in the sense we have just seen, but rather the “Lord of

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<sup>213</sup> MOT 30.

<sup>214</sup> MOT 32.

<sup>215</sup> MOT 32.

Being” (*Herr des Seyns*).<sup>216</sup> Thus, God is Spirit, since he can be or not be, manifest or not manifest—he is that which is not compelled to be or to manifest. He is free from all compulsion.

The transition we have just outlined, proceeding from the concept of God as the necessary Being, to the concept of God as the “Lord of Being,” is central to the role of philosophy as paving the way for what, as we shall later see, Schelling calls the “philosophical” or “free” religion. He writes:

A philosophy that goes back to that which is in itself and starts with it, already leads us directly and by itself to a system of freedom, and has freed itself from the necessity that weights like a nightmare on all systems that stop at pure being, without rising to *that which is in itself*... To go beyond being, and to stand in a free relation to it, is the real aim of philosophy.<sup>217</sup>

Since Being itself (*das Seyende selbst*) is the universal subject, of which all being (*Seyn*) is predicated, it is the *prius* of being—it has an *a priori* relation to it. Therefore, by determining the modalities of Being itself—of “what-is” or “that which Is”—we simultaneously determine the modalities of all being. Thus, Schelling seeks to establish the possibilities under which God, insofar as he is an actual being, can be conceived. In fact, the bulk of the treatise is devoted to establishing the determinations of being—of all being as well as of God’s being. Here *Monotheism* overlaps with the *Purely Rational Philosophy*.

To be able to conceive an immediate relation between that which is, or Being itself, and being, one must conceive of the former as that which can be, or as the immediate and intrinsic ability to be (*das seyn Könnende*). This is the universal principle of being, the universal *potentia existendi*, without or outside of which nothing can come into being. It can be identified with the general

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<sup>216</sup> MOT 33.

<sup>217</sup> MOT 33–34.

power (*Macht*) of being in God. Consequently, one can say that all being is only the being of God, a viewpoint normally associated with pantheism. The determination according to which God is the immediate power to be—that is, the fact that he can be through mere will (*Wollen*)—can therefore be called the “principle of pantheism,” which is to be distinguished from pantheism as such. As Schelling defines it here, pantheism is not the idea that all being is the being of God, but rather the doctrine that attributes to God a “blind, and in *this* sense, necessary being, a being in which he remains *against his will*, and where he is deprived of all freedom.”<sup>218</sup> This is notably Spinoza’s teaching (as Schelling conceives it here). In scattered remarks which echo the *Denkmal*, Schelling rebukes theologians who want nothing to do with pantheism. He writes: “We cannot avoid determining God as the immediate *potentia existendi*.” However, he immediately qualifies this statement by adding that if God were “nothing but” the *potentia existendi*, then this would lead us to pantheism, i.e. “the system of blind being, whereby God is only the power [*Potenz*] of his own being.” This power or ability is originally a will at rest—a “lucid, non-willing will.” However, since nothing is more natural for the will than to emerge from its state of rest and pass into act, to become actual willing, the pure *potentia existendi* or original will “gives itself” or “puts on” a being. “There is nothing for it, between non-being and being, other than mere willing, i.e. the realization, positivization, activation of the will.”<sup>219</sup> In doing so, in becoming active, the will ceases to become a will, and becomes an existent (*Seyende*) devoid of will and, in this particular sense, necessary. By coming out of itself, becoming active, the *potentia existendi*—as the first determination of Being itself—is no longer that which is free from being, but is now “afflicted” (*behaftete*) and “entangled” (*befangene*) with being, and becomes, to this extent, subordinated to being. It is no longer the subject of being, but an objective being.

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<sup>218</sup> MOT 35.

<sup>219</sup> MOT 37.

Having become a being posited “outside of itself,” and no longer possessing itself, that which is Being becomes “that which is necessary and exists blindly, that which, *in* being, has ceased to be the source of being, and has become blind substance deprived of will, therefore the exact opposite of God, the real non-God.” It is the Spinozistic *causa sui*, but which has ceased to be *causa* and has become mere substance.<sup>220</sup> True pantheism only knows the *potentia existendi* according to this form—that is, in the form it took on as soon as it came out of itself and disappeared, as it were, into being. Pantheism would not be a blind system if it recognized something before this blind being, “which is only infinite and limitless inasmuch as it does not comprehend itself.” The problem with pantheism is that it understands its object too late, as it were, after the principle has passed into act. Thus, pantheism is “surprised” and “outstripped,” as it were, “by the being that blindly rushes into it—a being of which it knows, in fact, no *beginning*, and which therefore *must* appear to it as beginning-less, eternal, as well as fathomless...in the face of which it has no strength...loses all freedom, and [to which it] must surrender itself blindly, as it were,” since it is unable to dominate it.<sup>221</sup> For this same reason, Spinoza is incapable of explaining how the being which is blind and infinite nevertheless receives limitations, affections, and modifications: he declares that things proceed from God’s nature in a purely logical way—the same way that, according to the triangle’s nature, the sum of its two angles is = to two right angles—but cannot explain that finite things result necessarily and intrinsically from the nature of this substance—he merely declares it.

Schelling aims for a middle ground between Spinozism and anti-pantheism. Having shown that the concept of God must include the concept of the immediate and intrinsic ability to be, he argues that pantheism cannot simply be ignored, but that it must be accepted in principle before it

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<sup>220</sup> MOT 38.

<sup>221</sup> MOT 38.

can be overcome. His is not an outright rejection of pantheism: he acknowledges its power and attraction—a power and attraction which, it bears recalling, he struggled to free himself from in the drafts of *The Ages of the World*. In this respect, *Monotheism* can be read as Schelling's second, mature response to Jacobi. The following passage contains clear echoes of the old dispute concerning divine things:

Present-day theologians are so terrified of pantheism that, instead of abolishing it *in* its principle, rather try to ignore it, denying to it even the possibility of manifesting. But to be *actually* abolished [*aufgehoben*], to be negated at its root, this principle must manifest *in an actual way*, and must be recognized at least as *existing* [*daseyend*], as impossible to exclude. It cannot just be silently put to the side. Simply ignoring it is not to overcome it. It must be explicitly contradicted. It is a concept that, by nature, cannot be excluded—a concept that must be addressed. Because they close their eyes to this principle, their whole theology remains vacillating: this principle *must* therefore be satisfied. [The claim] that only being is with God, and consequently, that *every* being is only God's being, this idea cannot be denied to either reason or feeling. It alone is the idea that makes all hearts beat. Even Spinoza's rigid and lifeless philosophy owes the power which it has always exerted over hearts [*Gemüth*]*—and not the most superficial among them, but especially the religious ones—it owes this entire power only to the fundamental idea that can no longer be found anywhere else. By rejecting the principle of pantheism (apparently because they do not dare to conjure it), theologians deprive themselves of the means to achieve true monotheism. For true monotheism is perhaps nothing other than the overcoming of pantheism.*<sup>222</sup>

The idea that God, by virtue of being *potentia existendi* (as the first determination of Being itself), can “transition” or emerge into being—can therefore cease to be will at rest to become active will—means that God has the power to move, is capable of movement, and therefore also

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<sup>222</sup> MOT 39–40.

capable of “coming out of himself.” This is a defining aspect of Schellingian monotheism. Without it, we are left with an “impotent theism” which is incapable of explaining, for example, creation: “The power of immediate being, of coming out of oneself, of becoming unequal to oneself, this power of ecstasy [*Ekstasis*] is the true procreative force [*Zeugungskraft*] in God.” To deprive God of the “principle of pantheism” is therefore to deprive him of the power to create. This power, however, is not what constitutes his divinity. Rather, it is the “material” of his divinity. Since this potency in and of itself is not God, it is also, insofar as it exists outside of God—to wit, in its extra-version—the potency of the non- and even anti-divine being (as becomes manifest in the theogonic process in human consciousness). In the more familiar terminology of the *Essay on Human Freedom*, it is that in God which is not God, the original ground (*Grund*) of divine existence, and the basis for the matter of the universe. However, while God is not God by this potency, neither is he God without it: in its intro-version—that is, insofar as it remains a principle within God—it is the “foundation, the beginning, the ‘position’ of the divine being.” As such, however, it is that which God must overcome in order to posit himself as Spirit. (We will see, in a moment, how this overcoming occurs. The discussion, up to this point, concerns conceptual determinations of the divine being, and has not addressed the real being of God.) Thus, “the true concept of God” is “the essence that can only be *as* essence, *as* spirit, by negating the adverse being.” If one eliminates this potency, one also eliminates from God the possibility to posit and generate himself *as* Spirit.

The idea of a “beginning” in God is not an innovation of *Monotheism*: we find it, presented in almost the exact same wording, in the three drafts of *The Ages of the World*. In this work, like in *Monotheism*, Schelling specifies that he is not speaking about an “external,” but rather an “internal” beginning of the divine being.<sup>223</sup> This does not contradict the idea that God is eternal.

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. AW1 136; AW3 17.



Indeed, this beginning is not one that is a beginning at one time and ceases to be one later, but a “beginning that always is, that is no less a beginning today than it was since time immemorial. The eternal and everlasting beginning of the divine being, in which God posited himself not once and for all, but in which he eternally begins to posit himself, is the immediate power posited as the mere *foundation*.”<sup>224</sup> Like in *The Ages of the World*, but with the added duality of negative and positive, Schelling in *Monotheism* distinguishes between two concepts of the eternal: a negative one and a positive one. In the negative concept of the eternal, no real being is posited: one considers the pure concept of Being itself without further determination. However, as soon as we want or think Being itself as having being, there is necessarily in that being a beginning, a middle, and an end. Thus, in the positive concept of eternity, the customary statement: “there is in God neither beginning nor end,” signifies, with respect to his divine being, “that there is in God no beginning to his beginning, and no end to his end.”<sup>225</sup> For to be without beginning and without end is not a perfection, but rather an imperfection, since it implies the negation of all action. But since we want the absolute—that is, following the Latin word *absolutum*, the perfected—we cannot be satisfied

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<sup>224</sup> MOT 42. Cf. “Granted that the will that wills nothing is the highest, one has to recognize that there is no transition out of it; the first thing that follows it, the will that wills something, must create itself. It must spring forth in an absolute way. And so if the eternal is eternal, it can precede everything that follows it only in the order of possibility. This is why the beginning of longing within it must be understood as an absolute beginning” (AW1 136). Cf. also: “The currently accepted teaching about God is that God is without all beginning. The Scripture to the contrary: God is the beginning and the end. We would have to imagine a being regarded as without beginning as the eternal immobility, the purest inactivity. For no acting is without a point out of which and toward which it goes. An acting that would neither have something solid upon which to ground itself nor a specific goal or end that it desires, would be a fully indeterminate acting and not an actual and, as such, distinguishable one. Certainly, therefore, something that is eternal without beginning can be thought as not actual but never as actual. But now we are speaking of a necessarily actual God. Therefore, this God has no beginning only insofar as it has no beginning of its beginning. The beginning in it is an eternal beginning, that is, a beginning that was, as such, from all eternity and still always is and one that never ceases to be a beginning. The beginning that a being has outside of itself and the beginning that a being has within itself are different. A beginning from which it can be alienated and from which it can distance itself is different than a beginning in which it eternally remains because it itself is the beginning” (AW3 17).

<sup>225</sup> MOT 43.

with a being without beginning and without end—as Being itself, without further determination, might be considered to be—but rather with a “finite and self-contained being.”<sup>226</sup>

Until this point, Schelling has been concerned with the mere concept of God. There has been no talk yet of the reality of God. The concept of God defines an *a priori*—it determines in advance which being will or can be a divine being. The concept of the divine being implies a series of moments. The first moment, as we have seen, is that in which God posits himself as not having being, as a negated or purely potential being. But God only posits himself in the first being as not having being so that he can posit himself in a second being as merely having being. The first being, in its negation, is therefore the possibility or potency of the second. Without the possibility or potency of being, the second being would not have the capacity to be, and without sheer being, nothing would be conceivable in the first place. The two—that which is not (*nicht Seyende*) and sheer being (*rein Seyende*)—are indissolubly chained to one another and cannot be separated from each other. They are united in God, who encompasses both determinations as moments of his being. Thus, God is neither particularly the negated being, which can be designated as 1, nor the positive being, which can be designated as 2. God is God as neither of these two particulars, but rather in 1 + 2. These two terms are not two Gods, but rather two “figures” of the one God.<sup>227</sup>

Consequently, Schelling is able to redefine the “limiting” or “restrictive” aspect of the concept of monotheism. In the traditional definition, as we have seen, this restrictive side is understood as expressing that there is nothing apart from God, that there is no God but him. The mistake, however, was in thinking the unicity of God from the outside—as there being nothing outside of him—instead of understanding the unicity as referring to God himself. In the latter sense, God is only single insofar as he is God, or according to his divinity. In other respects, however, or apart

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<sup>226</sup> MOT 43.

<sup>227</sup> MOT 44–45.

from his divinity, he is not single, but rather plural (*Mehrere*).<sup>228</sup> Thus, monotheism has a positive content—it cannot consist in a mere negation. In the latter sense, it is merely taken to mean that there can be no other Gods apart for him. In this statement, however, there is no affirmation. To say that God is one only means that he is not plural: it is merely a negation. The real affirmation—and, so, the positive definition of monotheism—is the statement according to which God is *not* one, but plural, although not *as* God. In the normal understanding of the concept of monotheism, the unicity of God is affirmed first. For Schelling, however, what is immediately affirmed is rather plurality. Unicity is only indirectly affirmed, and only in opposition to plurality. God contains plurality, but plurality cannot be predicated of God *as such*. It is only *as God* that he is single—that he is not many gods. This is not to say that he is not also plural. On the contrary, if he is the only God—that is, if his unicity is taken as referring to his divinity—then this statement requires that, in other respects, i.e. insofar as he is not God, he be plural.

Schelling's re-interpretation of the concept of monotheism in a way that allows for the possibility of a plurality in God—indeed, in a way that makes his plurality a presupposition of his unicity *as God*—contains far-reaching consequences for his interpretation of religion. As well as establishing the ontological presuppositions of the possibility of the emergence of polytheism, the allows Schelling to explain Revelation, and the concept of the One and Triune God which was propagated through it, as indissociable from the (historically preceding) polytheism—indeed, in a way, as being compatible with it and presupposing it. It is precisely this potentially unsettling implication which, in his view, explains why it was deemed good, following Christianity, “to conceal the actual positivity of this concept [of monotheism], to treat it as such a mystery (*Geheimniß*) that we have ended up losing it.”<sup>229</sup> Subsequently, monotheism was made into an

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<sup>228</sup> MOT 45–46.

<sup>229</sup> MOT 47.

inviolable presupposition, but was thereby withdrawn from all critique and examination. Indeed, that monotheism necessarily contains the principle and possibility of polytheism might have been too uncomfortable a truth for the early and historical Church in its life-or-death fight against paganism to admit: it was not until after the Reformation and the revolution of modern philosophy, whose combined effect was to free human consciousness from the dogmatic authority of Revelation, that it became possible, for the first time, to discover the true meaning of monotheism. For Schelling, this only means recovering the original meaning of monotheism, the one it had when it was first announced in the world:

If one wants to discover the *true*, real meaning of such a concept, which belongs not to a school, but to humanity, one must see how it first announced itself in the world. There is no better attested word about God's unicity other than the capital and classic address to Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] your God [Elohim] is single [*einzig*] LORD – יהוה אחד" [*Deut.* 6, 4] –; it does not mean: "he is single"; "he is אחד" or One [*Einer*], purely and simply, but rather: "He is a single *Jehovah*," i.e. that he is only single as Jehovah, as the *true* [*wahre*] God or according to his divinity, and it is therefore permitted to say that, leaving aside his being-Jehovah, he can be *plural*.<sup>230</sup>

### C. "The Form of the Divine Life": The Schellingian Doctrine of Uni-Totality

We have seen how, according to Schelling, for the concept of monotheism to be thinkable, God has to be defined as plurality. In the first place, absolute unicity was attributed to God insofar as he is Being itself (*das Seyende selbst*). However, the determination of God as Being itself does not suffice to arrive at monotheism, for according to the definition of this concept, God is also the

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<sup>230</sup> MOT 48–49.

single being. If God were only Being itself, there would be no sense to determine him further as a single being. God is the single God. This proposition should be understood in the sense that God is *necessarily* the single God, which does not mean that there is no God other than God, but that there *can* be no God other than God.<sup>231</sup> The concept of monotheism therefore also implies the unicity of God as such. Insofar as the unicity of God as such includes his absolute unicity as its foundation, as its material, the two principles are both integral and necessary to the concept of monotheism. The concept of monotheism therefore refers to the unicity of God as such insofar as the absolute unicity which he necessarily presupposes is contained and subjugated by him.

Alone, Being itself is not yet God. Rather, it is what *can* be God. How to conceive the transition from Being itself, insofar as it is originally only the capacity to become God, to the being who simply is, i.e. to God insofar as he is posited as a being? To clarify the relation between the different elements of the plurality in God, Schelling, beginning in the third lecture, presents his doctrine of potencies—the theoretical engine of the entire later philosophy—in order to define the modalities of all being. That which is (*das Seyende*), in its transition to *being*, is in the first place merely a power that can be (*Seynkönnende*), and in a second moment, that which simply is. In the first moment, or in the first potency of its being, that which is is pure potentiality, *potentia pura*; in its second moment it is pure being, *actus purus*. There is a perfect compatibility between the two: “the first is pure potentiality only insofar as the second is pure being, and vice versa, the second can only be *actus purus* to the extent that the first is *potentia pura*. Therefore, although 1 is the first, the antecedent [*Vorausgehende*], 2 the second or the consequent [*Folgende*], there is no real before or after here, but we must imagine both of them posited at the same time.”<sup>232</sup> From another perspective, Schelling determines the first potency as a “motionless” or “non-willing” will, and

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<sup>231</sup> MOT 27.

<sup>232</sup> MOT 50.

the second potency, namely what is as sheer being, as “lucid willing, a willing, as it were, devoid of all will.”<sup>233</sup> In both, there is an equal selflessness, and therefore the perfect mutual acceptance (*Annehmlichkeit*). The first is a perfect negation of the being-*outside-itself*, while the second negation of the being-*in-itself*. The second is to the first what object is to subject.<sup>234</sup> The two—non-being and pure being, *potentia pura* and *actus purus*, subject and object, among other designations—are indissociably linked to one another.

God *as such* contains both of those terms as moments of his being. He is neither the first, nor the second, but rather he is only God in 1 + 2. This is not to posit many Gods, but only one God in whom two terms have been posited—two “figures” of the One, who is in 1 + 2.<sup>235</sup> It is the same being that takes on one figure as 1, and another figure as 2. As 1, it is subject of itself as 2. Although God contains both terms, there is a progression from the first term to the second. The first, as *potentia pura*, as infinite ability, can be a *beginning*, which Schelling understands as the capacity of attracting (*anziehen*). Thus the first potency is able to attract the other to itself, to clothe or cover itself with (infinite) being, so that only the latter can be seen, but not the ability itself, the *subjectum*, which “remains deeply hidden...[as] the real mystery of the divine being, which, lacking all being in *itself*, covers itself externally with infinite being, and because it is nothing for *itself*, is therefore another (namely, the infinite being).”<sup>236</sup> Thus, in the expression “A is B,” A is the subject of B—that is, it is not itself and by nature B (otherwise the proposition would be tautological), but is also what can *not* be B. In this sense, the infinite ability or non-being is infinite being, that which infinitely is.

Schelling is concerned with explaining all the possible (logical) determinations of Being itself

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<sup>233</sup> MOT 51.

<sup>234</sup> MOT 51–51.

<sup>235</sup> MOT 44–45.

<sup>236</sup> MOT 53.

(*das Seyende selbst*). As we have just seen, Being itself is always actually a subject, a power (*Macht*) to be. Yet we cannot immediately posit the first potency as *being*. In the first place, Being itself is posited as pure subject, as the pure power to be, but also, at the same time, as the power to not be. Thus, according to its substance, the subject, 1, is also in 2—subject and object, in this sense, are the same being: the subject is the subject only if posited as subject, and the object is the subject only posited as object. Consequently, the subject is also the second, but only insofar as it has been “objectivized,” converted into being, into object, so that the subjective is now latent, concealed.

These two terms are only moments or potencies in the deployment of the concept of Being itself. Each of these two potencies is incomplete by itself in that it requires the “cooperative influence” of the other in order to be what it is.<sup>237</sup> Yet, paradoxically, neither can coexist simultaneously with the other in its pure condition, given that their essential natures are inherently incompatible. However, according to Schelling, neither of these moments can be “what we want.” There is an oscillation between them in that each undermines the other even while it requires its opposite. What we really want—that is, what the conceptual system of metaphysical determinations truly “wants”—is the determinacy of an objectivity (A+) which nevertheless retains the capacity for self-negation and transformation (A-).<sup>238</sup> This “need” is resolved in the third potency (A±), as the fulfilment and balance of the first two potencies. Since the two first potencies exclude each other immediately, this determination can only come third—as a *tertium exclusum* which presupposes the first two—as an object which, as such, is also subject, or the subject, which, as such, is no less object.<sup>239</sup> Thus, A±, while it is equal to A+, remains power to

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<sup>237</sup> The felicitous expression “cooperative influence” is taken from Beach, *The Potencies of God(s)*, 125.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Beach, *The Potencies of God(s)*, 125.

<sup>239</sup> MOT 55–58.

be, and thus equal to A- (free from being), and conversely, while it is lucid power to be—that is, insofar as it is equal to the first potency—is no less something that is (*seyende*), and thus equal to A+. As the mediating interface between the two, it is the principle of "being-with-itself" (*bei-sich-Bleibende*), which stands above the other two. As the self-possessed principle, integrating the other principles while remaining free from them, the third potency is "spirit." With this third moment or third potency, "what we wanted from the beginning" is reached, namely that Being itself, *as such* (and therefore not through another, as A- through A+), has being.<sup>240</sup>

The progression that we have outlined from one form of being to another (A-, A+, A±) is not an actual one—that is, it does not refer to the real being of God, but rather defines the *a priori* concept of the divine being.<sup>241</sup> This does not establish the existence of God, but rather proves only that *if* God were to exist, he would only be able to exist under the three forms or figures of being. There has been no talk yet of a real God, only of the concept or rather "pre-concept" of the divine being—that is, the form of the divine life, in contrast to actual life. This concept at the same time contains all the elements that would allow us to reach a complete concept of monotheism. Indeed, to the being whose concept unites, before even any actual being, these three forms and figures of being, Schelling gives the name of "All-One" (*All-Eine*). These forms exist in God as a "self-determined plurality." Since God is that in which there is only being, these forms contain all the possibilities of being, the modalities of every being. Schelling therefore describes them as the "true original concepts, the true original potencies of all being, [which] contain the basis of all logic and all metaphysics." In this sense, also, then, God is the *All-One*. This may seem like an expression of pantheism, but according to Schelling, it is rather pantheism which excludes something from itself, since it only knows God as a blind being, whereas this concept "does not exclude

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<sup>240</sup> MOT 58.

<sup>241</sup> MOT 58.



anything.”<sup>242</sup> Further, he is All-*One* because he is not God in these forms taken separately, but only as their indissoluble unity and sequence. These forms are only “points of passage” for his being (both the form of his being, and as we shall see, his real, actual being). Having thus proven the “fact” that the divine being, if he were to be, can only be this uni-totality, Schelling simultaneously establishes the “true, unique content of the *concept* of monotheism.”<sup>243</sup>

#### **D. “The Tree of All Religion”: Monotheism as the True Religion**

Up to this point in the treatise, Schelling has been concerned with explaining the concept of monotheism in a way that satisfies logical restrictions. He has not broached the question as to whether the God who is the subject of monotheism actually exists, but only established the *a priori* determinations in accordance with which the specific concept of monotheism must be thought. To the extent that these determinations are true, the concept of monotheism that they constitute must also be defined as true. In Lecture 1, Schelling hinted at the “old necessity that unconsciously works in us,” by which it is customary when discussing the single God, to add the epithet “true” by saying: “the only true God.” For Schelling, this only means that “the true God and the single God are synonymous, that the truth of God consists in his very unicity, and conversely, that his unicity is at the same time his truth.”<sup>244</sup>

Closely connected to the concept of the “truth of God” or “true God” is the question of religious truth. What is the relation between monotheism and religion? More specifically, what are the implications of the concept of monotheism, as Schelling defines it, with regard to the dogmatic expression of monotheism in religion? In Lecture 4, Schelling addresses these questions

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<sup>242</sup> MOT 61.

<sup>243</sup> MOT 61.

<sup>244</sup> MOT 15.

tangentially in the context of a discussion about the differences and relations between monotheism, pantheism, and theism. He does not consider religion in historical existence, in its positive reality, but merely insofar as it represents a particular conception about the divine that can be derived from the principles that constitute the divine being. Resuming with his earlier discussion about the potencies of God, he seeks to determine more closely the character of these potencies as regards the divinity of God. Insofar as the potencies constitute the being of God as separate moments in his transition to being, God might be said to be plural. He *is* each of these potencies—he is 1, he is 2, he is 3—although he is God neither as 1, nor as 2, nor as 3 in particular, but only as 1+2+3. Thus, although God is plural, he is not many Gods, but *one* God.<sup>245</sup>

God's unicity in the sense just defined, however, should not be confused with pantheism. The latter identifies God with the immediate power (*Macht*) of being, which, taken on its own, leads merely to the “blind being” of the Spinozistic substance. The true concept of God, by contrast, is that which contains this principle in the state of negation or mere potency. By thus subordinating this potency, monotheism contains pantheism as merely possible. It is important for Schelling that monotheism should include, rather than simply exclude the infinite *potentia existendi*, for he recognizes this principle as “the foundation of divinity and of all true religion.”<sup>246</sup> This explains the “spell” that pantheism has exercised since all times, a spell which has been impossible to extirpate. By distinguishing between pantheism and the principle at its foundation, and including the latter as the foundation of monotheism, Schelling seeks to neutralize the spell of pantheism. Indeed, monotheism for him is nothing other than “pantheism that has become esoteric, latent, internal...pantheism that has been overcome (*überwundene*).”<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> MOT 66–67.

<sup>246</sup> MOT 68.

<sup>247</sup> MOT 69.

With this idea, Schelling believes he has offered the definite solution to the problem of pantheism, which never ceased to haunt him. In the following passage, he picks up again the thread of his old dispute with Jacobi. At that time, Schelling criticized the “empty theism” of Jacobi for failing to recognize the principle of pantheism as a necessary foundation of God. Without this foundation (*Grund*), God is a hovering, undefined being that cannot be the basis for a scientific understanding of worldly being. In other words, although theism affirms God, it does so negatively: the unity of God that it asserts is an empty unity, with the consequence that God has no means to originate any being, including his own—he is, strictly speaking, an “absolutely impotent” God.<sup>248</sup> The following passage recalls the invective of the *Denkmal*:

The constant resistance and polemic of many philosophers and theologians against pantheism only shows that *they* have not mastered it, that they have not found the system capable of truly bringing it to rest, of appeasing it—which can only take place in monotheism. Since they thought they had already possessed this in their theism, this confusion of theism with monotheism, sooner or later, had to create this indescribable confusion and disaster that would lead even those who are religiously inclined to imagine pantheism as the only necessary scientific system, to which they would not be able to oppose anything but a superficial faith. That fundamental concept, which is also the presupposition of monotheism,...[and] according to which God is the immediate potency of being [*Potenz des Seyns*], thereby the potency of *all* being, according to which also, in turn, every being is only God’s being, this fundamental idea is the nerve of every religious consciousness, it cannot be touched without shaking the latter in its depth.<sup>249</sup>

It bears repeating: the principle of pantheism is the “nerve” of all religious consciousness, and the source of all true religion. Indeed, this principle expresses the idea that God is the immediate

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<sup>248</sup> MOT 74.

<sup>249</sup> MOT 69.

source of all being, the power that sustains and animates all being. However, in pantheism, this principle is without reflection, it is a blind substance that immediately, by nature, goes toward being. There is no room in this conception for freedom, for consciousness, for life as a progression of different moments: the blind substance of pantheism or Spinozism, is unfree, unconscious, inert. There is no proper beginning in it, nor of the world it generates. Lacking the concept of an intensification of potencies (*Steigerung*), as well as that of a living process, it remains incapable of arriving at a concept of creation. Monotheism, by contrast, posits a free beginning of the world whose author is a living, conscious God.<sup>250</sup> Therefore, although the principle of pantheism is the “foundation of all true religion”—that is, the foundation of all actual (*wirklich*), real (*real*) religion, as opposed to religion conceived as a system of rational postulates—pantheism itself is not the true religion, no more than the infinite potency of being, in and of itself, is the true God: it is merely the *foundation* of the true God as of the true religion.

The true God, like the true religion (understood here only as an abstract viewpoint, not a historical reality), is the one whose concept expresses the idea of the One-All. This idea of God, insofar as it constitutes a religious viewpoint, has been shown by Schelling to be true not on the basis of a dogmatic assertion, but on the basis of its conceptual necessity. The starting point of Schelling's investigation was the doctrine of monotheism as a “fact.” The question he has been concerned with all along in this treatise up to this point is to know what this fact means, what its proper content is. Although he began the investigation by taking monotheism as a “fact,” he has established the concept of monotheism through rational determinations. This reflects Schelling's intention in his later thinking, which was noted in the last chapter, to “expand” the limits of philosophy. This does not mean abandoning rational methodology, but rather redirecting

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<sup>250</sup> MOT 74.

philosophy to objects which are not found *a priori* in reason itself, but which are discovered in experience, *a posteriori*. However, philosophy must not remain in this external dependency. As he writes in his *Berlin Lectures*:

Who could it occur to...to deny the external historical dependency of our entire culture and, to this extent, of philosophy, on Christianity? Through this dependency, even the *content* of our thought, and thus even the content of philosophy, is determined; it would not, however, be the content of philosophy if it remained perpetually in this dependency, that is, if it were only to be accepted on authority. If Christianity is really the content of philosophy, then with this it becomes the content *of our own thought*, it becomes for us our own insight, independent of all authority.<sup>251</sup>

To be sure, the concept of monotheism which Schelling has defined diverges from the traditional formula with which he started his interpretation. However, he points to the obvious parallel existing between his concept of the One-All or Uni-Total and that of the Christian dogma of the triune God or Trinity.<sup>252</sup> The apparent convergence between the two concepts is surprising at first sight, for one concept was established purely on the basis of conceptual determinations, whereas the other—the dogma of the triune God—is considered (by rationalists) as an arbitrary invention of Christianity, or (by fideists) as a mystery that is impenetrable to reason. Although Schelling did not start from the dogma of the triune God, he has shown that the concept of the All-One is neither arbitrary, nor impenetrable to reason: indeed, it was established on the basis of necessary deductions arising from the analysis of the concept of monotheism. At this stage, he does not positively demonstrate that the concept of the All-One is identical to the dogma of the Trinity—he merely declares it on the basis of the similarities between the two. The concept of the

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<sup>251</sup> BL 185.

<sup>252</sup> MOT 76.

All-One expresses the idea that God is not single, but plural, and that he is single only insofar as he is God, therefore with respect to his divinity. Similarly, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity holds that God is one God in three Divine Persons. Because the doctrine of the Trinity points to three divine persons in God, and that this number is the same as that of the potencies in God, Schelling notes that the word triune (*Dreieinige*) expresses precisely the idea of the All-One.

How is it possible that Schelling could from an analysis of the concept of monotheism arrive at the concept the Trinity? He did not initially assume that monotheism is a kind of trinity, but merely sought to explain the doctrine of the unicity of God without any assumption about its meaning or content. It was only later that the concept of monotheism was shown as essentially coinciding with the dogma of the Trinity.<sup>253</sup> Far from being a mere coincidence, the perceived identity between the doctrine of the Trinity and monotheism, according to Schelling, proves this dogma is “universally human”—that is, based on universal principles—and moreover, that it is “already *given*” with the concept of monotheism, i.e. the uni-total God.<sup>254</sup> The identity between monotheism and the doctrine of the triune God is further corroborated by the historical “fact” that “monotheism only became world-historical with and through Christianity.”<sup>255</sup> Conversely, whenever the doctrine of the Trinity is excluded, one is left with theism, not monotheism.

If the identity between the dogma of the Trinity and that of monotheism is true, how could rational theologians, who seek to establish religious dogmas on the universal principles of human understanding, fail to see this connection? Schelling's answer is that the incomprehensibility attributed to these dogmas does not come from the dogmas themselves, but rather from the principles on the basis of which these theologians undertake their research. These principles, writes

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<sup>253</sup> MOT 76.

<sup>254</sup> MOT 76.

<sup>255</sup> MOT 76.

Schelling, “are so empty, in themselves so little positive (in the sense in which the doctrines of philosophy should also be positive), that there is no intelligible passage from such vacuity and negativity to Christian doctrines, not because they are Christian or positive in *origin*, but because they are positive in *content*.”<sup>256</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, the positive philosophy does not accept religious dogmas on authority, but rather seeks to explain them insofar as it finds them as “facts.” The positive philosophy is not anti-rational. It is eminently rational, but applies reason to objects which lie outside of what it can predetermine on purely rational grounds: it seeks to explain religions and religious concepts as “facts,” without initially assuming their religious meaning. Only later, when it enters the domain of historical existence, is the concept which it has merely defined as possible confirmed as true in actual experience. This is the meaning of the crucial distinction which Schelling establishes between “monotheism as concept” and “monotheism as dogma.”

Since monotheism has been shown to be the true concept of God, all religion, including the Christian one, grew out of monotheism. It is not Christianity that has invented this idea, but rather Christianity which derives from it. Monotheism is “all of Christianity in the bud, in design (*in der Anlage*),” and for this reason it must be older than the Christianity of history. Similarly, Schelling situates the “ultimate root” of the Christian Trinity in the idea of uni-totality:

One might imagine that this tree of all religions, which has its roots in monotheism, in the end necessarily results in the highest appearance of monotheism, that is, Christianity. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity contains materially what our concept of monotheism contains, but it contains it at a superior degree of potency, which we presently cannot access.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> MOT 78.

<sup>257</sup> MOT 79.

With these remarks, Schelling already anticipates the leitmotif of his Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation. Indeed, the idea that all religion grows out of monotheism captures, in a nutshell, the significance of this concept for his positive philosophy of religion.

### **E. “The Divine Art of Disguise”: From Monotheism as Concept to Monotheism as Dogma**

Up until the Fifth Lecture, Schelling has merely discussed the concept of monotheism—that is, what one must think when one thinks monotheism. God has only been a hypothesis. The result obtained through the first part of his investigation is that God, if he actually is, can only be as the Uni-Total being. The actual reality of God, the reality of his being, has not yet been demonstrated. Schelling presently turns to consider the question: how can God be in the predetermined way that has been shown?

To think of God as a real being, this being must be associated with an act. In the being of God that Schelling has thus far determined, there is no need for an act: the predetermined being of God is true, as a set of logical relations, regardless of whether one associates this being with an act—that is, regardless of whether this being is *real*. In the concept, the relations between the potencies are posited simultaneously. Although a necessary sequence has been posited in the gradual determination of the three potencies—the first as *terminus a quo*, the second as *terminus per quem*, and the third as *terminus ad quem*—there has been no actual movement. For there to be actual movement, there has to be an act which *separates* beginning, middle, and end.<sup>258</sup> As long as the potencies are considered in the divine concept, there is perfect equality between them, perfect mutual acceptance, perfect selflessness.

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<sup>258</sup> MOT 80.



For there to be an actual separation between them, for a real antithesis to occur, there has to be selfhood (*Selbstheit*). The first potency was determined as the ability to be self'ed, and the second potency as the ability to be non-self'ed. But the first, as long as it is only an ability to be self'ed (*selbstisch*), without actually being it—that is, as long it remains only that which is potentially self'ed—is like that which is inherently non-self'ed, like 2. Similarly, the second potency, *actus purus*, because it is *actus purus*, is not an actual being. The hypothesis of a being-in-action can only be admitted where some resistance has been overcome, where a passage *a potentia ad actum* can be shown, whereas *actus purus* has already been established as a being without passage *a potentia ad actum*. In this sense, it is, in a sense, nothing, since it cannot be thought as an actual being in action.<sup>259</sup> The two figures are identical insofar as each lacks the self'edness that would allow a real opposition to emerge between them.

As far as the third potency is concerned, then 1, the lucid power to be, is exactly like the power to be which is *as such*, therefore like 3. But this is merely a determination in our thinking, insofar as 3 can only be the power to be which is *as such* if it excludes from itself the power to be which is not *as such*. But since 1 is also the power to be, 3 cannot exclude it from itself, i.e. posit itself *as such* against it. Similarly, as far as the relation between 2 and 3 is concerned, we have seen that 2 or *actus purus* = 1 or *potentia pura*. In relation to these two, the third potency (the power to be which is *as such*) was determined as an excluded third. However, since the first two are not mutually exclusive, then the exclusion of the third is not real, but merely logical. The three potencies therefore occupy the same place, their difference is only in thinking. They are different in nature, in concept, not in act.<sup>260</sup>

The only way to obtain an actual being is if that which, according to its mere nature, is not,

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<sup>259</sup> MOT 81.

<sup>260</sup> MOT 81–82.

would actually become that which is not. This transition from being that which is not by nature to being that which is not in effect is only possible by virtue of an actual act. However, this transition to actual non-being presupposes that that being which, according to its concept, is not, were to be posited in advance as being. It could not be posited as non-being if were not already being. This transition, as we have seen, is not possible by virtue of its mere nature. Only one solution remains, namely to consider as posited as being by a divine will, a divine act.<sup>261</sup> This idea appears counter-intuitive at first. Indeed, it seems to involve the negation of the concept of God, in that it would posit God as non-being. However, since God, as we have seen, is that being who, by nature, is  $-A$   $+A \pm A$ , and therefore necessarily and irrevocably *uni-total*, he *can* be *actu* the opposite, since, by nature, he cannot truly, absolutely, be another.<sup>262</sup>

The hypothetical divine act required so that the potencies can be posited in real being, as actual potencies, results in a temporary reversal or suspension of the nature of these potencies. Thus, since  $-A$  is by nature that which is not, the process by which it is posited as its opposite, as that which is, is only posited as such so that it can be negated again, to be posited again as  $-A$ . This reversal of  $-A$ , the first position in the process by which God is posited in real being, entails further the exclusion of pure being,  $+A$ , which finds itself at the beginning of this process posited as negated, as non-being. However, it is only negated so that it can be posited again in the process that generates real being as that which is. Therefore, that which purely is (*das rein Seyende*),  $+A$ , is not negated as a result of the positing of that which is not (*das nicht Seyende*) as something which is, as something positive, but, on the contrary, since according to its conceptual nature, it is that which lacks all selfhood, it becomes now a self'ed being, acquires a being of its own. Since the first potency is no longer a subject for it, refuses itself to it, the second potency finds itself

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<sup>261</sup> MOT 84.

<sup>262</sup> MOT 84–85.

compelled to withdraw into itself, and given that it was that which is without any potentiality (as pure being), it now becomes a self-standing potency. However, since this potentiality goes against its nature, it must strive again to negate in itself this potentiality, this negation of being in it, to become restored as *actus purus*.<sup>263</sup>

In their transition into being, the potencies acquire new designations. A, as the potential to be (*Seynkönnende*) in general, which can transition directly *a potentia ad actum*, is posited in the first potency as A1. The second potency, as that which purely is, is posited as A2, because it cannot be actualized by itself, but only through another. However, as soon as it emerges into being, A ceases to be a potency, ceases to be the source of being, and becomes unequal to itself: A becomes B, which is the first potency in its elevation, its “becoming-other” (*Andersgewodenseyn*). With the resulting exclusion of that which purely is, A2 ceases in the process to be that which is, in order to become that which can be. Since the presently mutually exclusive two potencies cannot be separated, are indeed compelled by divine unity to exist in the same place, the result is a process by which what was negated (i.e. pure being) seeks to negate what negates it (i.e. that which is not in its elevation to being) and restore it in its original nothingness, and to restore itself as pure being. However, this second potency only seeks to displace that which should not be (*das nicht Seyn Sollende*)—that is, the first potency which emerges into being, thus operating against its own nature—not in order to assume being for itself, but, on the contrary, in conformity with its original nature as pure object, lacking all selfhood, in order to rid itself of its proper being, which the former imposed on it, and to be restored in the original selfnessness of the *actus purus*. Thus, the process consists in that, in the place of that which should not be, that which should be (*das Seyn Sollende*) should be again posited, which cannot be posited immediately, but only after the first has been

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<sup>263</sup> MOT 87.

overcome by the second. This being, therefore, because it presupposes the first two, is the potentiality of being *tertio loco*, A3, that is, as we have seen, the spirit as such, the inseparable subject-object.<sup>264</sup>

Whereas this third potency, as the inseparable subject-object, must necessarily be posited as spirit, it is not God. God is more than spirit, he is that which is beyond spirit, the exuberant being itself (*Ueberschwengliche*). As such, he is that which is *free* from the necessity of being spirit. Thus, he treats spirit merely as one of his potencies. As we have seen when defining the determinations of the divine being, God is in all the potencies, but he is none of them separately, only in their indissociable unity. He is in them as “the one operating all in all,” and as such differentiates himself from his potencies by the indissociability of his unity.<sup>265</sup> God is free in the sense that he is always and necessarily the One-All. It is precisely through his being necessarily all the potencies that he is free. Thus, in this sense, one could say that the necessity of God is his freedom, insofar as the necessity of his being (as One-All) and his freedom are one. Since God is one operating all in all, he is only different in appearance, externally: internally he remains the same. The potencies in their mutual exclusion and inverted position are therefore “God only insofar as [He is] externally disguised (*verstellte*) by divine irony. They are the inverted (*verkehrte*) One, to the extent that what should have remained hidden, inoperative, is in appearance manifest and operative, where what should have been positive, manifest, is in appearance negated and reduced to the state of potency.”<sup>266</sup> For this reason, Schelling calls the potencies in their extraverted state the “overturned (*umgekehrte*) One,” or *Universum*, although not in reference to the material universe, but rather to the world of pure potencies as a purely spiritual universe.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> MOT 88–89.

<sup>265</sup> MOT 89.

<sup>266</sup> MOT 90.

<sup>267</sup> MOT 90.

The overturning or *universio* by which the potencies are posited as the external face of God is a work of divine will and divine freedom. The potencies in their inversion are merely the instruments or means by which God effects the process of the generation of the divine being—that is, the *theogonic process*, whose general concept Schelling set out to explain at the beginning of the treatise (insofar as that concept could be used to explain positively the origin and meaning of the theogonic consciousness in human consciousness). In a triumphant passage, he remarks:

[T]he mystery of the divine being and divine life is explained by this *miracle* [*Wunder*] of the *permutation* or *reversal* of the potencies. And a universal law of the divine mode of action is thereby at the same time applied to the highest problem of all science, to the explanation of the world... The existence of a world different from God (because the potencies in their tension are no longer God) is based on a divine art of disguise, which affirms in appearance what it intends to negate, and vice versa, negates in appearance what it intends to affirm. What explains the world in general explains also the course of the world, the many great and difficult riddles that human life as a whole and in its details offers.<sup>268</sup>

With this development, Schelling has explained the significance of the theogonic process insofar as it is independent of human consciousness. This theogonic process, as we have seen, does not involve God himself, in his essence, who as such is permanent and ungenerated, but rather it occurs in the divine being insofar as he has been negated. The possibility of the negation of the divine being presupposes a free divine act by which the potencies are ejected from their position and significance in the eternal being of God and, without losing the significance of their nature as such, act in a way that initially contradicts this significance. Because the operation of the potencies in the theogonic process contradicts the role which each is accorded in the pre-concept of God, the

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<sup>268</sup> MOT 91–92.

negation of the divine being cannot be absolute. Indeed, this negation is merely temporary, a suspension, whereby the opposite being behaves first and directly as that which negates the divine being, but indirectly and at its end—when it is brought back to its original non-being, i.e., when it is restored as mere subject to that which explicitly posits the divine being—affirms God. The potency whose reversal (from A1 to B) leads to the suppression of the divine being is the same potency which, in the process, behaves as the theogonic principle, as that which (indirectly) generates the divine being.<sup>269</sup>

The question remains as to how this theogonic process, whose possibility was derived from the concept of monotheism, leads to the expression of monotheism as a *dogma*, as a positive reality (*vorhanden*). Schelling has established the conditions under which God, *if* he were to exist, is generated in being, and has shown the necessity and significance of the theogonic process. However, he has not yet shown whether and how this God is related to monotheism, and thereby also polytheism, insofar as these are historical realities. His next step is therefore to explore whether and the extent to which monotheism as a dogma, and with it the objective possibility of polytheism, are posited with the *universio* as positive realities.<sup>270</sup>

As we have seen, the potencies in the *universio* act as the external or exoteric face of the divinity. God is their internal, esoteric face. In respect of God's operation in the potencies, two wills can be distinguished. In each of them, as the explicit will in each, God directly wants separate things, but internally, i.e. indirectly, he wants one thing, i.e. *unity*, as the intention of the entire process.<sup>271</sup> With the determination of the potencies in the theogonic process as being the exoteric face of the divinity, it becomes possible to think polytheism, and only now is the significance of

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<sup>269</sup> MOT 93.

<sup>270</sup> MOT 93.

<sup>271</sup> MOT 93–95.

monotheism as *dogma* founded. Before this process, monotheism could be established as a concept, but not as a dogma. For what is dogmatic, and therefore also positive, only has meaning if it has an actual antithesis (in contrast to the apodictic certainty of mathematics). In the concept of monotheism, although the plurality of the principles in God had been established, there was not yet any actual opposition between them. This only became possible with the hypothesis of the theogonic process.

Thus, from the perspective of the theogonic process, the dogmatic significance of monotheism becomes possible: only here does it make sense to say that “there is no God but God,” now that God has been understood as the Uni-Total. The tautology of this statement can now be avoided by understanding God as being essentially and necessarily uni-total, such that the Uni-Total is the *single* God. This affirmation presupposes the existence of something other than God, which was established as Being itself (the principle of pantheism), that which is the foundation of God’s divinity, but is not = to God. The meaning of the doctrine of monotheism is therefore no longer: only the Uni-Total is (=pantheism), but rather: only the Uni-Total as such, the Uni-Total that is a positive reality in the process of the separation of the potencies, is the true God. To affirm that there is no God but God requires that there be something outside of him. This becomes thinkable from the perspective of the potencies, who are outside of God (in the theogonic process).<sup>272</sup> Posited outside of the divine unity, they are not God, nor are they concrete things, but spiritual essences. They are the potencies posited outside of their divinity but who have the potential to be restored in their divinity (through the process which this reversal initiates): they are God, though not in effect, only potentially.<sup>273</sup> Since they are not absolutely non-God, but without being the real God,

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<sup>272</sup> MOT 96.

<sup>273</sup> MOT 97.

they are the pseudo-Gods (Schelling identifies them with the Biblical Elohim).<sup>274</sup> This evokes a perspective that might be described as “non-dual” (as Sean McGrath has called it), since it implies seeing the actual plurality beside the Single, but insofar as they are mutually exclusive, i.e., seeing that they are not God.<sup>275</sup>

Monotheism therefore cannot imply the absolute impossibility of polytheism. On the contrary, monotheism only acquires its significance and value as a dogma to the extent that polytheism is something objectively possible and objectively true. Polytheism, properly understood, does not absolutely contradict monotheism, since it does not consist in saying that the true God, i.e. the essentially uni-total God, can be posited more than once, but only in saying that he cannot be recognized for a plurality of Gods, but instead that only the separated potencies can. In the theogonic process, at every level, God is, as it were, in *becoming*. He is, at each degree, a figure of this God in becoming (the God of being), and since this series is a progressive ones, it creates a series of Gods. This explains how an actual polytheism and polylatry would be born out of an original monotheism.<sup>276</sup> To this extent, polytheism seems like something natural—something whose possibility is not excluded *a priori*.<sup>277</sup> By contrast, the abstract theism of rationalist theologians remains incapable of accounting for phenomena such as mythology and paganism.<sup>278</sup> Therefore, having established monotheism in general and the possibility of polytheism, Schelling is now in a position to establish the possibility of monotheism in human consciousness, and the transition from this original monotheism to mythology.

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<sup>274</sup> MOT 98.

<sup>275</sup> MOT 98.

<sup>276</sup> MOT 103.

<sup>277</sup> MOT 107.

<sup>278</sup> MOT 106.



## **F. *Homo Religiosus*: The God-Positing Nature of Human Consciousness**

Having established the general concept of monotheism, and having further derived from the hypothesis of a theogonic process in general the possibility of monotheism as a dogma and of polytheism, Schelling asks if (and, if so, then how) this theogonic process is linked to the theogonic process in human consciousness, which was proven on historical grounds in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*. The general meaning of mythology in human consciousness revolves around this question. In the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, the real powers by which consciousness in the mythological process is moved were determined as being precisely the same powers through which consciousness is “originally and essentially that which posits God.”<sup>279</sup> But with the concept of the theogonic process in human consciousness immediately came the “departure point of a new development... [in which] that process will be the only object of the *science* [*Wissenschaft*]” for which the *Historical-Critical Introduction* served as an “introduction.”<sup>280</sup> Thus, while this work sowed the *subjective* meaning of the theogonic process, i.e. the meaning which it had for the humanity affected by it, it did not answer (and was incapable, on its own premises, of answering) the question concerning the *objective* meaning of this process. Having previously shown that the powers that create consciousness and which set it in motion are inherent it—i.e. they are not the product of imagination, but natural realities found in human consciousness—Schelling concluded that those powers must be the same through which nature is posited and created, since “no less than nature is human consciousness something that has become, and nothing *outside* of creation, but rather its end.”<sup>281</sup> There, he announces, without yet actually proving it (this is the task of *Monotheism*), that the theogonic process in human consciousness has an objective significance,

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<sup>279</sup> HCI 150.

<sup>280</sup> HCI 142.

<sup>281</sup> HCI 150.

i.e. outside of that which it has for humanity:

It is not in itself thinkable that the principles of a process that proves to be a theogonic one can be something other than the principles of *all* Being and *all* Becoming. Thus the mythological process does not have merely religious meaning—it has *universal* [*allgemeine*] meaning. For it is the universal [*allgemeine*] process that repeats itself in it; accordingly, the truth that mythology has in the process is also a universal [*universelle*] one, one excluding nothing.<sup>282</sup>

Just as this was the result of the historical research undertaken in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*, Schelling now arrives at the same transitional point, but on the way down, as it were. The question he proposes to treat at the beginning of Lecture 6 is the following: “Does monotheism have an *original* relation with *human consciousness*?”<sup>283</sup> This question defines the significance of the treatise as the “foundation” of the Philosophy of Mythology, and by extension, of all positive, real religion. His answer to this question presupposes all the preceding development; it is the culmination of a development which began by defining monotheism as a positive reality that demands explanation (Lecture 1), to establishing, in Lectures 2 to 4, the principles of a transcendental theo-ontology, to a theo-cosmogony defined as a universal theogony in Lecture 5, to, finally, in Lecture 6, a determination of this theogonic process as being at the same time the process of creation, that is, the actual positing of a being outside of God, leading up to the creation of actual human consciousness as the originally God-positing nature. Lecture 6 offers the clearest and most detailed account of the positive nature and meaning of religion for Schelling. It is the foundation stone of his positive philosophy of religion.

Up until this point, Schelling has only explained the concept of a theogonic process in general.

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<sup>282</sup> HCI 149.

<sup>283</sup> MOT 108.

This concept is “universal”; it receives its significance and exists independently of human consciousness. The divine *universio*, as we have seen, is only the instrument of the realization of the absolute Spirit (who, after its free decision to be, cannot be in any other way than that demonstrated in the theogonic process). We have also seen that God in this process achieves his goal *per contrarium*, since the process presupposes a temporary negation of the divine being. At the end of this process, the three potencies, which appear as extraverted in the theogonic process, are restored to their introverted state in God—notably the first potency, whose transmutation from A1 to B, initiating the process, is brought back to its original role as the pure power that can be. Only then is that Spirit actually realized as absolute Spirit that stands above all the potencies.

While the mechanism and conditions of this process have been explained, its aim remains unclear. It has been defined as a theogonic process—that is, a process by which God gives birth to himself in a being posited outside of him (the inverted potencies or *Universum*). However, God as absolute Spirit being free, this realization is not necessary for himself. Even without it, he knows himself to be the insurmountable All-One. What could therefore lead him to the free decision of becoming apparent in this process? Since the aim cannot be one that he wanted to achieve in relation to himself, the reason for his decision must be something outside of him, something that he wants to achieve by means of this process, something that is not yet but should be formed by means of this process. That which is not yet, but which is made possible by the process, can be nothing else than a creature that God sees as future. Consequently, the theogonic process must also be a process of creation. Schelling has not yet proven this; it is merely a dialectical conclusion. It needs to be “proven and verified by the act (*That*)”—that is, the process which has been recognized as theogonic must be *shown* to be the process of creation.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> MOT 109.

Up until now, there has been nothing concrete; the entire development has been purely spiritual. For something that previously did not exist to emerge, what is required is the cooperation of the potencies. These were shown, in the first place, as existing in the divine being, as being in one and same point. With the emergence, by an immediate divine will, of non-being into being, a process is posited by which the potencies, while being compelled to exist in one and the same point, become mutually exclusive, without being able to be absolutely apart. The being generated by this tension operates immediately on the potency that has been defined as pure being (2), which finds itself negated and forced to withdraw into itself, to become potential. This exclusion transforms it from a being that is for another (in its original configuration as object to the first potency as subject) to a being that is for oneself. Thus, it becomes substantialized, hypostasized by the exclusion. This negation makes of it that which must be (A2 = *das Seynmüssende*): this role is tantamount to bringing that which should not actually be (B = *das nicht Seyn Sollende*) back to its original potency. However, the second potency negates the first one not in order to usurp being for itself, but rather so that, by bringing the first potency back to its originary non-being, it can turn the latter into the support, the foundation, of that which ought to be (*das Seyn Sollende*), of that which alone it is right to be, i.e. Spirit that is as such, which is posited in the third place.

For something to emerge into being, these potencies must operate as *causes*. Thus, Schelling particularizes the first potency, that which ought not to be = B, as the *causa materialis* (that from which all things emerge). It is that which is changed and modified in the entire process which seeks progressively to convert it into non-being. The second potency is *causa efficiens*, through which everything becomes. In the current process, it is A2; it is what transforms, what acts on and alters the first potency. The third potency, *causa finalis*, is the goal or end toward which everything becomes, A3. These three causes, insofar as they are ordained to joint action, presuppose a fourth

one, a *causa causarum* the cause of causes, whom the Pythagoreans have named God. It is the will of the Divinity itself, and to the extent that it acts through the three causes, every product is the work of a divine will. This idea is conveyed in the popular saying that the Divinity reveals itself in all things, in some things less perfectly, and in other things more perfectly. Thus, the natural explanation of things (the explanation from the three causes) does not exclude the religious one, and vice versa.<sup>285</sup> As well as forming a bridge between naturalism and theism, these occupy the middle space between concrete, material reality and merely abstract concepts, the region of true, real universals.<sup>286</sup>

If the theogonic process is the process of creation, it would have to result not just in being in general, but “the concrete being in all the variety of its gradations and ramifications.”<sup>287</sup> Therefore, we must presuppose that the process of creation unfolds in stages, that the principle which is overcome in this process (=B) can only be overcome through a succession of moments, which is only conceivable as resulting from an explicit divine will that a variety of things distinct from God be produced. If there were no distinguishable moments, no middle terms, then the unity which was negated at the beginning of the process of creation and as its presupposition would be immediately restored. According to the divine intention, there have to be middle terms so that all the moments of the process integrate consciousness at the end of this process (i.e. the human one) not just as discernable (such as the potencies were in the divine being), but as having been realized as actually distinct moments. The will which is the object of overcoming in this process (i.e., B) is therefore overcome in a different way at every stage of the process, whereas the potency that overcomes it

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<sup>285</sup> MOT 113. This idea recalls Schelling's attempt in the *Denkmal* to justify the scientificity of theism—the system that affirms a conscious, intelligent, and free-willing God—by “grounding it in naturalism—the system that posits a nature in God. In that work, Schelling affirmed a “living conjunction” between the two, and identified “real philosophy” as a “scientific theism.”

<sup>286</sup> MOT 115.

<sup>287</sup> MOT 116.

can only be realized insofar as it acts on the first. In this way, all the determinate forms will be produced as kinds of images (*Abbildungen*) of the highest unity, which, being itself the supremely concrete, acts as a model for all that is concrete. All things that emerge through this process are products that have been determined as having emerged from the potency that underlies this process and that have been more or less brought back into it.<sup>288</sup> Therefore, each thing is to some extent the collective work of the three potencies, and insofar as the will which works through the potencies for the production of a determinate thing is the divine will, a “flash of divinity” can be said to run through all things.<sup>289</sup>

The human being or human consciousness (the two are indistinguishable for Schelling) is the end of the process of creation, which has been characterized as a theogonic process. Human consciousness is nothing but “the end and goal of all the process of nature.”<sup>290</sup> The elements which are at work in the process of creation are the selfsame that create human consciousness. To this extent, nature represents the “past” of human consciousness, it is the “unconscious” of human nature, containing all the moments which led to the emergence of human consciousness. In human consciousness, the point is reached where all the potencies are restored to their unity, where the God-negating principle underlying the process (i.e. B) is again turned into the God-positing principle (*Gott Setzende*), that is, becomes subject. As we have just noted, human consciousness is constituted by the same potencies which are at work in the process of creation and in all of nature. But, whereas in the rest of nature, the potencies are extraverted, in human consciousness, these potencies are restored in their unity.<sup>291</sup> The original human being is essentially nothing but consciousness, since he is essentially nothing but B brought back to itself, and to be brought to

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<sup>288</sup> MOT 117.

<sup>289</sup> MOT 117.

<sup>290</sup> MOT 118.

<sup>291</sup> MOT 118.

oneself is to be conscious of oneself.<sup>292</sup>

As we have seen, B originally appeared in the pre-concept of the divine being as the foundation of all divinity, as positing God (in which form it was designated as A1). We have also seen how, by being upturned, as it were, by the free divine will, B appeared as that which originally negates God, or rather which posits God indirectly, as part of a process whose aim is to generate God in being. It appears as a theogonic principle, that produces God. In human consciousness, where it has been brought back to its original position as A, it operates again as that which posits God. Since it constitutes the proper and pure substance of human consciousness, this principle in human consciousness is that which posits God naturally. The human being is therefore an originally (i.e. by nature) God-positing being, before any idea of God could be externally communicated to it. Indeed, the original human consciousness is nothing but the positing of God—it is God-positing “*before* all invention and all science, and also *before* all revelation and the possibility of all revelation...not *actu* nor knowingly and voluntarily—there is no room here for any of these things—but rather in non-act, in non-will, and in non-knowledge.”<sup>293</sup> With this result, we have reached the point of intersection between the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism*.

Once B has been reconverted into A in human consciousness, and has therefore become the substance of human consciousness, it is both human consciousness at the same time as God-positing principle: the two are indistinguishable here. As we have previously seen, A is that which necessarily posits God. For this reason, B reconverted into A is what allows it to posit God before all act or decision. In a sense, human consciousness might be said to be connatural with God, since

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<sup>292</sup> MOT 118.

<sup>293</sup> MOT 119. Cf. “That which is deepest in the (original) human being is the God-positing [principle], but only *in itself*—not in act, but in non-act. It is the God-positing [principle] without any effort on its part, without any movement of its own—not that it could become itself conscious of the movement that made it the God-positing [principle]. It is only consciousness at the *end* of the whole path that it has led, as it were, through the stages of creation” (MOT 126).

the principle which constitutes its consciousness is the same principle which in the divine pre-concept posits God. To this extent, human consciousness itself might be said to be the “product of monotheism *expressed* in creation.”<sup>294</sup> Since consciousness has God in itself, as an *a priori*, it is misleading to ask how consciousness came to the awareness of God. Rather, the first movement of consciousness was a move away from God. Thus, the original knowledge that the human being had of God was not produced by him nor derived from an external source, but was the foundation of his nature before all thought and knowledge, as the pristine essence of the human being as such.<sup>295</sup>

The next development is crucial, as Schelling shows the freedom of the human being. The essence of the human being is not = to B, but to B that has been overcome and brought back into its state of latency by A. It is a new essence, independent of B. Neither is it mere A, but A that has B as its foundation, A that has overcome B. Thus, with human consciousness, something new has emerged, which did not exist before. Since human consciousness is neither A, nor B, it is an intermediary, a third vis-à-vis the two. This centrality with respect to both potencies makes it free in relation to them: it is a distinct, independent being (*Wesen*). This new being which did not exist before, and which exists in the manner just outlined is thus *free*. Insofar as it is A containing B as a potency, it is capable of putting B again in motion and raising it up *in itself*, independently of God.<sup>296</sup>

Insofar as the human being can, through a free act, reactivate the potency in him, bring it out of the state of rest in which it came to be at the end of the process of creation, the human being is free. Since B, by nature, can only be the God-positing principle, the process in which it finds itself

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<sup>294</sup> MOT 120.

<sup>295</sup> MOT 121.

<sup>296</sup> MOT 122.



a second time is also a theogonic process, and is therefore necessarily one that aims to bring that potency back to its state of rest. However, the B which is the substance of human consciousness, as we have seen, is not the same B that existed in the theogonic process, but rather B that has already been spiritualized in being brought back to potency. Therefore, the two theogonic processes—the universal one, and the one which begins with the human being—are not entirely identical. On the one hand, both follow the same path leading to the positing of the human being, or the positing of God, which, as we have seen, is the same thing (since the human being was shown to be end of the universal theogonic process). On the other hand, this new process, although it has an objective significance insofar as it is but a repetition of the original process which made the human being the essence that posits God, happens *in* human consciousness.<sup>297</sup>

To what end did the human being trigger this new process? The human being, as we saw, is God-positing according to nature, but has no knowledge of this fact at the beginning. He has God within himself, in his essence, due to no effort or merit of his own. In order for human consciousness to come to know itself as God-positing, the God-positing principle had to come out again of its place, triggering the theogonic process in human consciousness. This process repeats the universal theogonic movement. It distinguishes itself from the latter “not...in the principle itself, but because the very same principle *as* a principle of human consciousness, or after becoming a principle of human consciousness—therefore, at a *higher* stage—goes through the same path toward the human [being], toward the positing of God, as that which it had gone through in creation at an earlier stage.”<sup>298</sup> Therefore, both processes have the human being or the positing of God (both are one and the same thing) as their end. As Schelling puts it, “the essence of the human being is so connatural with that of God that it cannot move itself without God himself

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<sup>297</sup> MOT 123.

<sup>298</sup> MOT 127.

moving toward it."<sup>299</sup> The whole process that follows can be considered as the transition from the merely essential monotheism, which is innate to the human being, to the freely recognized monotheism.<sup>300</sup>

Just as the universal theogonic process was also the process of creation, the theogonic process in human consciousness is also the process of the development of religious consciousness in history. It is behind all mythological representations; indeed, it produces them, as “pure, internal emanations” or “modifications” of human consciousness.<sup>301</sup> Thus, these representations were not imparted to consciousness from an external source. Rather, as was shown in *Historical-Critical Introduction*, human beings experienced these representations as produced in themselves with “irresistible force.” The inexorable power with which those representations affected human consciousness is an indicator that they were not the product of any particular activity, like imagination or rational deliberation, but that they could only have arisen *with* consciousness after it had been posited outside itself. Mythological representations’ “consubstantiality” and “connaturality” with consciousness, their inseparability from the latter, allows us to explain “how a millennial struggle, which in some parts of humanity has not yet ended, and which was associated with atrocities of all kinds, was needed to extirpate them from consciousness *with* their roots.”<sup>302</sup>

Religious representations and scientific (or philosophical) notions are different in this sense. Religious representations are “interwoven with consciousness, and in a way that representations

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<sup>299</sup> MOT 125.

<sup>300</sup> MOT 126.

<sup>301</sup> MOT 128.

<sup>302</sup> MOT 128. Cf. “Of course, I do not want to deny that the concept of monotheism as usually explained is to a certain extent self-evident, as well as perfectly clear. But it is precisely this self-evidence of the concept that constitutes the difficulty here. One would think that a concept whose foundation in humanity has required so many long struggles, which has only ruled for about 1500 years, and which even today rules among the better and more civilized, but still only smaller half of the human race – that such a concept must have a *special content*, not an immediate and self-evident one” (MOT 11).

that are the product of the most prudent reasoning and of a knowledge aware of its own reasons can never be.”<sup>303</sup> Religious representations are embedded in the fabric of consciousness, as it were, while philosophical notions, based on scientific reasoning, remain, if not superficial, then at least independent, to some extent, from the determinism of consciousness. Indeed, scientific representations are obtained in freedom, the result of philosophical labour, whereas mythological representations emerge naturally and have an inexorable hold on consciousness.

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<sup>303</sup> MOT 128.

## Conclusion: From Mythology to the Philosophical Religion

*Our period suffers great evils, but their true remedy is not to be found in those abstract concepts that negate all that is concrete, but rather in the revival of tradition, which has only become an obstacle because it is no longer understood by anyone.*<sup>304</sup>

*Only monotheism is the true religion.*<sup>305</sup>

*The true religion is the religion of the future.*<sup>306</sup>

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We are now in a position to ask whether *Monotheism* achieves what Schelling intended for it to do. In Chapter 2, we showed that Schelling's later philosophy aimed at explaining reality as a whole, and religion in particular, in a way that surpassed the dichotomy between philosophical rationalism and religious fideism. Defining and fueling the context and the stakes of this undertaking were the controversies which pitted Schelling against two of his critics, Eschenmayer and Jacobi. Whatever other differences might have existed between these two thinkers, they fundamentally agreed that a philosophical system of reason—the idea of grasping the world from one single principle—inevitably leads to the denial of true existence, personality, and freedom.<sup>307</sup> Indeed, in their view, philosophy could only ever be a system of rational propositions, and therefore was inherently incapable of grasping any true principle outside of subjective reason. Reason rather presupposes an absolute principle—God—*prior to* and *outside* of knowledge, which gives value to knowledge and to the faculty of knowledge, i.e. reason.<sup>308</sup> Consequently, philosophy as a system of knowledge cannot but exclude what lies outside the grasp of knowledge. As Jacobi

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<sup>304</sup> SW XIII, 178–179.

<sup>305</sup> SW XII, 181.

<sup>306</sup> SW XIV, 129.

<sup>307</sup> George di Giovanni, in *The Main Philosophical Writings of Jacobi*, by Jacobi, ed. G. di Giovanni, 631–632.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 513.

famously put it in his *Jacobi to Fichte* (1799): “A God who could be *known* would be no God at all.”<sup>309</sup> To combat the perceived necessary atheism and implicit nihilism of philosophical systems, Jacobi and Eschenmayer proposed each their own version of what they called a “non-philosophy,” founded on “non-knowledge” as the region of God, personality, and freedom.<sup>310</sup>

Despite the vitriol of his response to Jacobi in the *Denkmal*, and even as he tried to defend his own philosophy of identity from the charge of atheism, Schelling implicitly agreed with aspects of Jacobi's critique of modern philosophy, notably the incapacity of rational systems to access a real foundation and to obtain knowledge of divine things. Schelling, however, profoundly disagreed with the anti-philosophical conclusion of Jacobi's critique. For him, the solution to the impasse of rationalism could never be a “non-philosophy” founded on faith and feeling. Therefore, he dismissed Jacobi's claim that naturalism and theism are incompatible and irreconcilable. It is precisely the rift between these two worldviews, he argued, that is the main cause of the ruin of theism and the real source of atheism.<sup>311</sup> Instead, he affirmed a “living conjunction” between naturalism, as the “the system that posits a nature in God,” and theism, the system that “affirms a consciousness, an intelligence, and a free willing in God.” He called this integrated worldview “scientific theism,” which he also described as “real philosophy.”<sup>312</sup> Indeed, for him, the fundamental and original insight of philosophy is precisely the idea of a personal being as originator and governing principle of the world, “the unique and hidden God.”<sup>313</sup> Just as God encompasses all things, so “real theology cannot come into conflict with Nature, nor suppress any system whatsoever.”<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 500.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings*, 500, 501, 519.

<sup>311</sup> SW VIII, 67–68.

<sup>312</sup> SW VIII, 69.

<sup>313</sup> SW VIII, 54.

<sup>314</sup> SW VIII, 55.

In the drafts of *The Ages of the World* and *The Deities of Samothrace*, Schelling laid down the rudiments of his new naturalistic theism. In the former, Schelling tried to explain the creation of the world and the beginning of historical existence as deriving from theogonic potencies in God. However, as we know, Schelling never published *The Ages of the World*. And while different theories have been put out as to why he remained dissatisfied with this thrice-begun, thrice-abandoned work, one avenue of exploration which has thus far received little attention is to compare and contrast the drafts of *The Ages of the World* with their upgraded and differently named later version, to wit, *Monotheism*. Indeed, in many respects, the content of both works overlaps—notably with respect to the deduction of the potencies from a divine being and their view of creation as a theogonic process. By contrast, the distinction between the divine act and the divine essence; the empirical verification of God's will as the exclusive object of *a posteriori* or positive knowledge; human consciousness as the product of the potencies and as a new, unforeseeable creation endowed with freedom; and the history of religions as the expression of a theogonic process in human consciousness—these, among other elements, only find expression, or rather find their fullest elaboration in *Monotheism*. Similarly, although *The Deities of Samothrace* showed how mythology necessarily presupposes an original monotheism from which it emerges and toward which it evolves, it lacked the idea of a process in human consciousness and an understanding of the potencies leading this movement. Indeed, while it established the positivity of religion, the foundation of religion in human consciousness remained lacking.

This is precisely what the *Historical-Critical Introduction* and *Monotheism* seek to establish. The *Historical-Critical Introduction* shows that mythological representations have their proper seat and irreducible origin in human consciousness. It defines consciousness as the proper seat of all religion. Meanwhile, *Monotheism* explains the objective significance of the theogonic process

in human consciousness, thereby establishing the possibility of verifying the truth of the theogonic process in human consciousness (i.e. as actually deriving from God). However, unlike *The Ages of the World* and *The Deities of Samothrace*, *Monotheism* does not immediately assume the reality of the theogonic process—it does not start *in* being—but establishes first that which is above being, and thereby, posits being as contingent. Indeed, being only derives its reality through a free act from God, namely the act of creation. In conformity with its analytical-critical approach, *Monotheism* only establishes the reality of God and of creation after showing that the theogonic process in human consciousness, which it has merely shown as possible, is actually identical to the theogonic process in human consciousness which was proven as a fact on historical grounds in the *Historical-Critical Introduction*. Thus, the rational concept is only verified as true when its definition “coincides” with the empirically given fact which it seeks to explain (in this case, monotheism as a dogma or the theogonic process in human consciousness).

*Monotheism* therefore proceeds neither in a purely *a priori* way (which would only yield a purely rational concept, as in the *Purely Negative Philosophy*) nor on purely *a posteriori* grounds (as the *Historical-Critical Introduction* does, yielding via “progressive elimination” a concept which it itself cannot explain, and must therefore “pass on” to *Monotheism* for rational analysis). Indeed, *Monotheism* establishes how things must necessarily be, but does not itself immediately establish the actual reality of these things; it only establishes their reality—or rather, their reality is suddenly established when their rational concept is shown as matching their empirical reality. One might describe this procedure, as Schelling in his *Berlin Lectures* indeed does, as a “metaphysical empiricism.”<sup>315</sup>

Further, unlike *The Ages of the World*, which views the religious systems of humanity as stages

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<sup>315</sup> BL 171ff.

immediately deriving from God's self-revelation—therefore, without any human agency involved—*Monotheism* proves the reality of human freedom by showing that the theogonic process in human consciousness is only conceivable on the assumption of a free act of human nature which originally (unprethinkably) sets this process into motion. Only *a posteriori*, that is, only because the theogonic process in human consciousness has already been proven on historical grounds as true, does *Monotheism* establish the reality of an original freedom (both of God and in man). Although this study could not consider the rest of Schelling's philosophy of religion, it should be clear by now why Schelling considered *Monotheism* to be the "foundation" of the Philosophy of Mythology. By establishing the possibility of a theogonic process in consciousness, and defining the structure and law of this process, *Monotheism* also provides the means by which to demonstrate the actuality of such a movement. At this point in the development, the actual Philosophy of Mythology begins. However, the theogonic process in human consciousness determines the content and movement not only of mythology, but indeed of all religion. In Schelling's theory, actual or real religion is nothing but the expression of the action of the potencies in human consciousness. To the question: "What qualifies as real or actual religion for Schelling?" the technical answer is: anything in human history whose essence can be shown to correspond to a determinate moment in the dialectic of the potencies in the theogonic process in human consciousness.

This is admittedly an unusual kind of definition of religion, one that we are unlikely to find in contemporary textbooks of religious studies: it is both vague and precise, flexible and constraining. It is vague and flexible insofar as it allows, at least in theory, for anything to be potentially considered as actual religion, and not only what is generally admitted to be religion. (This possibility is important if Schelling's theory is to be extrapolated to a philosophy of culture.) It is



precise and constraining in that the criteria by which something can qualify as actual religion are predetermined and inflexible. It is vague and flexible in a further—and perhaps more problematic—sense, in that, given that the theogonic powers that create human consciousness are also those which posit nature—those which, indeed, as Schelling states in *Monotheism*, explain “the course of the world [and] the many great and difficult riddles that human life as a whole and in its details offers”—there is technically nothing which falls within the purview of human life that cannot be considered, in some sense, as religious. And it is further precise and constraining for the same reason, namely that, on this definition, the entirety of human experience is encompassed and preordained by the dialectic of the theogonic potencies. Here, complete indeterminism, there, overdeterminism—both of them problematic implications.

Although we could not, unfortunately, consider the rest of Schelling’s philosophy of religion—our focus has been almost exclusively on *Monotheism* as a “foundation” to the Philosophy of Mythology—there may be a solution to some of these problems in Schelling’s *Philosophy of Revelation*. As we saw in Ch. 3, monotheism not only determines the content of mythology, but of all religion. Monotheism is not merely a species of religion among others. To use Schelling’s expression, it is the “tree of all religion”—all religion derives from it. Thus, monotheism necessarily undergirds and determines the entire religious history of mankind. This history is described by Schelling as a “passage from a monotheism that is purely essential and connatural to the *essence* of man, to the freely recognized monotheism.”<sup>316</sup>

But how does one arrive at the freely recognized monotheism, if the theogonic process in human consciousness is a necessary one, and moreover, as we have shown, that this process determines not only what is casually taken to be religion, but indeed all aspects of human

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<sup>316</sup> MOT 126.

experience? In other words, how does humanity obtain freedom again after having lost it with the fall which triggered the theogonic process? The answer to both these questions for Schelling lies in Revelation, Christianity. The natural or mythological religion has the revealed religion as its consequence. Whereas the former emerges spontaneously, as the result of a process independent of human thought, the latter, the revealed religion, because it expresses “a will and purpose,” has the natural religion as its “ground” and can only be in the second position. The revealed religion is therefore mediated by the mythological one, of which it is a consequence, and this mediation alone makes it comprehensible. Indeed, if the revealed religion is recognized as the supra-natural (*übernatürliche*) one, it assumes a natural basis in relation to which it presents itself as supra-natural. Through its relation to the natural religion, the supra-natural one becomes to an extent natural itself, whereas the “wholly unmediated supernaturalism (*Suprnatulismus*) can only appear as unnatural. (This, incidentally, resonates with Schelling's intention in the *Denkmal* to “ground” theism in naturalism.) Thus, with the presupposition of the natural religion, the position and status of the revealed religion is changed. Indeed, it is no longer the only religion independent of reason and philosophy (as was assumed before): “if one calls rationalism the type of thinking that comprehends none other than a rational relationship of consciousness to God, then [what is] first opposed to this relation is not the revealed religion but rather the natural religion.”<sup>317</sup> As the mediated form of the real religion—that is, of the religion independent of reason—the revealed religion is necessarily second in historical order.

Common to both natural and revealed religions is their emergence into existence through a process, and not through science (*Wissenschaft*). As we have seen, mythology, as the “naturally self-producing religion,” presupposes that a naturally religious principle exists in the human being,

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<sup>317</sup> HCI 171.

an original principle which posits God *natura sua*. Since it is natural for this principle to be “that-which-posit-God,” it is also natural for it, assuming it came out of its original position in which it posits God, to return to this position or relation through a necessary process (namely, the theogonic process in human consciousness).<sup>318</sup> Mythology can be explained through such a natural principle, whose nature it is to be that which posits God, and through which the human being is by nature “bound” (*verpflichtet*) to God, before all thought and all knowledge.<sup>319</sup>

Revelation similarly presupposes an original relation of the human being to God—that is, a relation outside of that which the human being has or can have in free thought and knowledge (e.g. such as may be obtained through philosophical research). This relation is therefore “originally real” (*ursprünglich reales*), meaning that it is not born with Revelation, but rather presupposed by it. The revealed religion is therefore comprehensible through its relationship to the natural one. Without this presupposition, its actual significance remains floating, as it were. Writes Schelling:

Christianity presents itself as the liberation from the blind power of heathendom, and the reality of a liberation is measured according to the reality and power of that from which it frees itself. Were heathendom nothing actual, then also Christianity could be nothing actual. Conversely, if the process to which man has been subjected in consequence of his stepping forth from the original relation, if the mythological process is not something merely *imagined* [*Vorgestelltes*], but rather something *which actually happens*, then also it cannot be ended through something that is merely in the imagination, through a doctrine, but rather it can only be sublated through an *actual process*, through an act independent of and in fact surpassing human imagination. For only an *act* can stand in opposition to the process, and this act will be the content of Christianity.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> SW XIII, 191. Cf. “The knowledge of God that we attribute to the original human being is neither *transmitted*, nor self-produced. It is a *ground* that precedes all thought and knowledge, it is the very *essence* of the human being, by which he is bound to God, in advance and before any *actual* consciousness” (MOT 121).

<sup>319</sup> SW XIII, 191.

<sup>320</sup> HCI 172.

In this sense, revelation has its "material presupposition" in the natural or mythological religion. This material is nothing other than the potencies which constitute human consciousness and which determine the content—indeed, are the substance—of all actual religion. Since it is through these theogonic potencies that human consciousness comes to be constituted, and since it is these same theogonic potencies which define the content of all religion—that is, of all “real” or “actual” religion in the sense we have seen Schelling use these expressions—one can define a “universal principle,” according to which “actual religion cannot be different from actual religion.”<sup>321</sup>

But, how, then, are religions different? How do we distinguish them? Since both natural and revealed religions are “actual religion,” according to Schelling's definition, then there can be no difference according to their content. Both presuppose the same elements. Their difference is rather in the *meaning* which these same elements will have in the one and in the other. Thus, whereas, in mythological religion, consciousness is engaged in a naturally-posited, necessary process, the “formal meaning” of revelation is to be “the overcoming of the merely natural, unfree religion [i.e. mythology].”<sup>322</sup> Since the difference of both is only that the first one—the natural or mythological religion—is the “naturally posited religion,” and the other—the revealed religion—the “divinely posited one,” then “*the same* principles that are merely natural in the one will be taken as divine in the other.”<sup>323</sup> Their “specific difference” is, in the one, that which is “natural in its course of events,” and in the other, that which is supra-natural.<sup>324</sup>

In light of the above, the religion which derives from Revelation obtains a new status. The

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<sup>321</sup> HCI 173.

<sup>322</sup> HCI 172.

<sup>323</sup> HCI 173.

<sup>324</sup> HCI 171.

revealed religion is no longer only opposed to what is traditionally known as the rational or natural religion, but is now also opposed to the religion which is natural in Schelling's understanding, namely, the mythological religion. Previously, the system of religion was based on two concepts: 1) the natural religion, which is indistinguishable from rational or scientific theology, and therefore also philosophy; 2) the revealed religion. By contrast, the Schellingian taxonomy of religion distinguishes three concepts: a) natural religion = mythology; b) supra-natural religion, which derives from Revelation; c) the religion of "free philosophical knowledge," which is to be distinguished from the religion which is merely identical with rational knowledge (i.e. natural or rational religion in the former sense).<sup>325</sup> These three concepts of religion can be classified in terms of logical categories. Taking religion in general as the supreme *genus*, the two next subaltern *genera* of religion are: a) scientific religion; b) non-scientific religion, which includes the two *species* of non-scientific religion (i.e. not generated through science): 1) natural religion = mythology; 2) supra-natural religion, which derives from Revelation. Thus, the *genus proximum* of the revealed religion is no longer religion in general, but the non-scientific religion, which is not generated through reason. Its specific difference distinguishing it from mythology, as we pointed out, and as will be further demonstrated below, is that its content is a supra-natural content, whereas the content of mythology is a purely natural series or process. Therefore, the complete taxonomic definition of the revealed religion is that it belongs to the *genus* of non-scientific religion, i.e. it is produced not through science, but through a real (*real*) process. However, unlike mythology, the revealed religion has a supra-natural origin and content.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> SW XIII, 192.

<sup>326</sup> SW XIII, 193.

Religion ( <i>genus supremum</i> )		
Scientific religion ( <i>subaltern genus</i> ) = the philosophical religion (Schelling also calls it: the religion of spirit, the free religion, the true religion, the religion of free contemplation, the religion of free knowledge)	Non-scientific religion, i.e. religion which is not generated through science or reason  ( <i>subaltern genus</i> )	
	Natural religion ( <i>species</i> )  = mythology	Supranatural religion ( <i>species</i> ), i.e. derived from  Revelation

What about the so-called scientific religion, that is, the religion generated through reason? As we saw, Schelling in his later philosophy regarded the so-called rational religion—insofar as it consisted of a system of rational values or a natural theology—not as a real, objective religion. At best, as he writes in his *Berlin Lectures*, the negative philosophy can “encompass religion only as the religion of absolute subjectivity.”<sup>327</sup> We hinted at this in our discussion of the end of the negative philosophy in Chapter 2. However, the negative philosophy properly understood and stripped from all positivity, and as developed by Schelling in his *Purely Rational Philosophy*, is equivalent to previous systems of rationalism, where awareness of the nature and therefore also limits of the negative is lacking, such that even a “religion of absolute subjectivity” as emerges at the end of the negative philosophy, would not have been possible. Indeed, as Schelling writes at the end of the *Purely Rational Philosophy*:

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<sup>327</sup> BL 183.

Without an active God (who is not merely the object of contemplation), there cannot be religion—for [religion] presupposes an actual (*wirklich*), real (*real*) relation of the human being to God.... There is therefore in rational science no religion, [and] therefore, in a general sense, no *rational religion*. At the end of the negative philosophy, I only have a possible religion, not an actual (*wirklich*) one, a religion “within the limits of pure reason.” If we see in the conclusion of the rational philosophy a rational *religion*, there is here an illusion (*Täuschung*). Reason does not lead to religion, as was moreover also the theoretical result of Kant: that there is no rational religion. One *knows* nothing of God, this is the result of all authentic rationalism, rationalism which understands itself (*selbst verstehenden Rationalismus*).<sup>328</sup>

Therefore, if rational religion is an illusion, then what is the philosophical religion, and how does Schelling allow for the possibility of a religion generated through science? This is one of the most important and yet cryptic aspects of Schelling’s philosophy of religion. Here, we tread on very difficult ground. The philosophical religion, as Schelling defines it, is “generated (*erzeugen*) through itself *as* third [in this series], mediated by the two other concepts.”<sup>329</sup> Three things can already be noted here: 1) unlike the previous two religions, which are generated through a process, whether natural or supra-natural, the philosophical religion is generated through itself; 2) at least in this passage, it is not the religions as such which mediate the third, philosophical religion, but their “concepts.” This religion thus presupposes the concepts of the previous two religions, and generates itself necessarily as the third in this sequence. Schelling writes:

Only after [the philosophical religion has generated itself *as* third in this series] will the other two [concepts] be presented in their true and historical relation, which at the same time conforms to their natural genesis. The true relation is the following. Natural religion is the beginning, it is the first religion, it is for an epoch of the human race the

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<sup>328</sup> SW XI, 568.

<sup>329</sup> SW XIII, 193.

*universal* religion. The purely natural religion is at the same time as such the necessary, blind, *unfree* religion, the religion of superstition, if we take this word in its deeper sense. Revelation is the process through which humanity is liberated from the blind, unfree religion, through which, therefore, the true religion, the spiritual religion—the religion of free contemplation, of free knowledge—is first mediated (*vermittelt*) and made possible. Therefore, a philosophical doctrine of religion which wants to exclude this original captivity (*Gebundenheit*) [of consciousness] and the *liberation* (*Befreiung*) from this captivity, would be totally without content and unhistorical.<sup>330</sup>

Since it is mediated by Revelation, whose function is to free human consciousness from the blind and necessary process of mythology, the third religion is the realized “free religion,” the “religion of the spirit”—it can only be discovered in full freedom. Since the true understanding of the previous two religions is only possible through philosophical research, it can only be realized as a “philosophical religion.” Christianity only “mediates” the free religion, but does not “posit it” directly.<sup>331</sup> To attain the philosophical religion, Schelling states, consciousness must also be free from Revelation. This allows Revelation to become the source of a knowledge which, at the beginning, is “unfree.” The freeing of consciousness from Revelation allows it to approach Revelation freely. Early Christianity is embodied by the historical Church, which Schelling sees as engaged in a mortal struggle against paganism. The “primitive oppression” of the struggle of the early Church with paganism constitutes a “yet non-elucidated mystery...it cannot be the mere product of human arbitrariness.” The early Church, and the spirit of early Christianity as a whole, was governed by something that had to be as real as paganism, with an “external and blind counter-power.” As Schelling says: “it is not, in fact, the ‘reasonable discourses of human wisdom’ (1 For

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<sup>330</sup> SW XIII, 194.

<sup>331</sup> SW XI, 258 ff.



2.13), that were able to triumph over paganism.”<sup>332</sup> In this view, early Christianity, although it represented the liberation from paganism, and effectively planted in consciousness the seed that would ultimately free consciousness from the blind powers of paganism, was itself under the spell and as if “driven” by a force which it did not fully comprehend. Because it had to combat paganism on its own level, early Christianity still had something pagan in it.

The mortal struggle represented in the tension between Christianity and mythology as two opposite principles is resolved, historically speaking, during the European Renaissance and Reformation, two events that coincide and contribute to the birth of modern philosophy. For Schelling, the enthusiasm and love for classical antiquity manifested in the Renaissance is a sign that Christianity no longer saw an antithesis in paganism. This “renaissance” was not the emergence of something “new,” argues Schelling, but something that was already present in the Church. This explains the “casualness” and “freedom” with which paganism was considered in this period.

The Renaissance merely brought to light the pagan background of the Church, something that was not lost on the Reformers. “The power of a clergy endowed with great privileges, which suddenly appeared in Christianity, the constant sacrifices, the penances, mortifications, exorcisms, the divine office founded on external and dead forms, the cult of the Angels, Martyrs and Saints, all this appeared in the eyes of the first Reformers as such a background of paganism. To this paganized Christianity they opposed the primitive Christianity of the period where, still oppressed by paganism, it had remained pure and free from it. They relied on the proclamation of the Apostles who themselves had had the vision of a kingdom of perfect freedom which they characterized as goal [*Ziel*], and also prophesied the interregnum of an inescapable anti-Christianity.”<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> SW XI, 259.

<sup>333</sup> SW XI, 259–260.

In wanting to go back to primitive Christianity, the Protestant Reformers wanted to reclaim the original Christian “vision of a kingdom perfect freedom” as their goal. Schelling writes: “By an irresistible transition to which Christianity itself contributed, consciousness, having become independent from the Church, had to be free also from Revelation itself, had to abandon unfree knowledge in which it still found itself vis-à-vis the latter, to access the state of a perfectly free thought in relation to it, even if initially deprived of knowledge. However, it could not remain at that thinking, at that freedom empty of content—inside of which many people want to restrict themselves. A new development was bound to follow.”<sup>334</sup> The Reformation, through a critique of the Church, sought a return to Revelation. The critique of Revelation was an “inevitable” consequence of the Reformation, which sought a return to the source of Revelation. Although it started as a critique of the documents of Revelation, the critique ended by contesting the possibility of any Revelation.<sup>335</sup> Thus, the possibility here emerged for the time for consciousness to become “free from Revelation itself,” to reject all “unfree knowledge,” that is, knowledge that could not meet the free consent of reason. Thus, to the extent that *Monotheism* helps bring about a “freely recognized monotheism”—independent from all external authority, whether mythological or revealed—it paves the way for the philosophical religion. As to the question of how religion, which in Schelling’s own definition, is something independent of reason, can be, in the philosophical religion, produced *through* science—this is a question which we will address on a future occasion.

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<sup>334</sup> SW XI, 260. Cf. “Romanisme, Protestantisme, Criticisme — Trois degrés d’affranchissement dans le Christianisme. Le paganisme c’est la religion aveugle. L’Église recommença le procès aveugle, et naturel, mais sans le vouloir et nécessairement. Elle se forma en un système formel. – Appuyée sur les écrits mêmes, document de la Révélation, la Réformation brisa cette religion aveugle. Mais une seconde émancipation devait suivre pour amener la religion libre, et elle a suivi, lorsqu’on a soumis la Bible même à la critique” (PMAm 60).

<sup>335</sup> SW XI, 260.

*MONOTHEISM*

**An Annotated Translation of F.W.J. Schelling's *Der  
Monotheismus* (SW XII, 1–131)**

Translated and annotated by Hadi Fakhoury

## Editor's Preface

<V> The following presentation of the Philosophy of Mythology was publicly given for the last time in Berlin, in the years 1842 and 1845/46. This is also when it received its final revision and when some of its parts were rewritten. But the Philosophy of Mythology in its *entirety* was already since 1828 the subject of Schelling's lectures. The earliest lectures on mythology itself (and not only on the Introduction or the general part thereof) date back even further, and the preliminary works even date from the time the essay on the Divinities of Samothrace was published<sup>1</sup>.

Of the two books gathered here under the general title of *Philosophy of Mythology*, the first one, *Monotheism*, contains the grounding of the second, the actual Philosophy of Mythology.

Returning to the result of the *historical* part of the Introduction, the first book answers the question: how is a polytheism or – since the Introduction described polytheism as the product of a theogonic process – how is a theogonic process possible, in itself as well as in human consciousness? The starting point of this investigation could only be <VI> monotheism. The latter is then taken up as an accepted [*zugestandener*] concept, whose presuppositions are discovered using the same (analytical) method that the Historical-Critical Introduction used in order to discover the concept of mythology. To this extent, we also return here – as regards the scientific method – to the first part of the Introduction we have just cited. On the other hand, the implementation [*Ausführung*] of the positive philosophy, up to which the conclusion of the Introduction had led, will be left for the last large section of the complete presentation (*cf.* p. <7> below)<sup>2</sup>. The reason for this obviously lies, on the one hand, in the natural effort to pursue in a regular way the earlier investigation – which was immediately related to mythology – to the end, as well as to explain it in its ultimate premises; on the other hand, in that the highest point of view

should be reserved for the presentation that has the task to explain mythology *and* Revelation as the two interdependent parts of the unique divine Plan of the world. This is the same reason why the author, on p. <632> of this volume, reserves the detailed presentation of the doctrine of the Mysteries, “as the apex of the purely natural development,” until the context of the Philosophy of Revelation.

In light of what has just been said, the Philosophy of Mythology is formally and immediately related only to the historical-critical part of the Introduction, but in a merely indirect way to the purely [rational] philosophy. But the attentive reader will not fail to notice that between the philosophical principles, as they precede the Philosophy of Mythology here, and those on which the rational philosophy is based, there is the relationship of a progressive development from the purely rational or logical, to the real. In this regard, there is an inner relationship between the two, however different the next goal <VII> may be to which in both cases the same basic speculative concepts are applicable. These, in fact, had served (in the Presentation of the Rational Philosophy) to find a final [step] in the idea – which itself is no longer included in the idea, i.e. the ideal of reason = God. Here, rather, God is *what is presupposed*, and it is only a matter of explicating his “forms of existence” (cf. *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* [SW II/1], at the bottom of p. 189<sup>3</sup>), and to derive from these the content of monotheism as well as (under specific conditions) the possibility of polytheism. After this is done (in the first book), the next task will be to follow the theogonic process through its individual moments, to demonstrate it in actual mythologies as such, which is the content of the second book. Since “the principles of this process are at the same time the principles of all being and all becoming” – the mythological process will then really be proven as “the universal or absolute process, only repeated.” This means that mythology will be presented as a “philosophical object,” or as an object of equal rank to those

already recognized. It therefore belongs to philosophy, just as, in its time, the Philosophy of Nature had claimed this [status] on account of nature (see *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* [SW II/1], p. 216 and 217).

As far as the manuscripts used in this volume are concerned, the editor had, for the first book, *Monotheism*, a large number of older manuscripts at his disposal, in addition to more recent ones. In establishing the text, I have only retained the latter, basing myself on a specific manuscript which was picked by the author himself. But I have not refrained from recalling older ones, adding in footnotes, and with explicit reference to this source, everything that <VIII> appeared to me as worth mentioning at this or that point of the development. For the second book, the *Philosophy of Mythology* itself, I had at my disposal only one main recent manuscript, which was continuous but twice reworked in individual parts. Another manuscript, older, was used almost exclusively for the citations it contained.

In addition to his principal work on the *Philosophy of Mythology*, there are diverse, smaller essays, in Schelling's own hand, related to the domain of mythology. One of them is already mentioned on p. 117 of the *Introduction*, note 1<sup>4</sup>, another on p. 257 of the present volume<sup>5</sup>. A third deals with a passage in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. We will find the place and occasion to publish it in a subsequent volume<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, we have attached in the annex of this volume an essay, which appeared in 1833 in Nos. 66 and 67 of the journal *Kunstblatt*, concerning the wall painting recently discovered at Pompei<sup>7</sup>. By content it belongs in fact to the framework of the *Philosophy of Mythology*; it joins the last development on Greek theology. Not only does it define the outline of the object of its interpretation, but it also illustrates to some extent the whole theory of mythology, which is reflected here on a small scale, as it were.

*Eßlingen*, January 1857.

K.F.A. Schelling

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LECTURE 2: Point of departure: the difference between the absolute unicity of God and the unicity of God as such. Development of the first concept: that of that which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*], p. 24. Transition to the concept of the unicity of God as such through an analysis of the concept of that which is in itself, p. 29. The relations between that which is in itself and Being [*Seyn*]: 1) that which can be (the first figure of that which is in itself), p. 34. To what extent is this determination of God as that which can be the principle of pantheism; on the difference between pantheism and the *principle* of pantheism, p. 35. The importance of the latter for the explanation of monotheism: it is in God as mere potency (non-being, possibility (= also, in the ground and at the beginning, to the nature in God), p. 41. Transition to the second figure (form) of that which is = sheer being. Provisional agreement over the proper (restrictive) character of monotheism, p. 44.

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<sup>1</sup> This table of content, prepared by K.F.A. Schelling, refers to the pagination of the *Sämmtliche Werke*.



*besitzenden Seynkönnen*] = the spirit, p. 54. Result: God is the one who *has the ability* to be in these three figures (forms): whence the complete *concept* (in contrast to dogma) of monotheism, p. 59. Remark on the <XI> negative and the positive attributes, and their relation to mere theism (or pantheism) and to monotheism, p. 62.

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Introduction), p. 119. The *free* position of the original human being between the potencies and the possibility of a new theogonic process that unfolds through (mythological) representations in the altered consciousness of the human being; its end is the freely-recognized monotheism, p. 122. Mythological representations according to their physical aspect, p. 127.

[K.F.A. Schelling]

## Lecture 1

<3> The expression “philosophy of mythology” immediately situates mythology in a category of objects that are neither purely contingent, nor purely contrived [*Gemachtes*], purely factitious (*factitii quid*), but which exist with a sort of necessity. When I say, for example: philosophy of nature, I presuppose a certain necessity to the existence of nature. The same applies when I say: philosophy of history, philosophy of the State, philosophy of art. Although the State, it would seem, is something that has been *contrived* by humans, although art is undeniably something that is practiced by humans, I nevertheless presuppose that the State as well as art have a reality that is independent of human free choice; I suppose, at least, that both of them are ruled by completely different potencies than free choice, or that these potencies in both cases are subjected by the latter to a higher law and to a principle above them. To choose the most general expression, we will say that in every object with which the concept of philosophy is connected in the indicated manner, we must presuppose a *truth*. Such an object cannot in any way be something contrived, something subjective, but must really be objective, just as nature, for example, is objective. If we speak of a philosophy of mythology, we must also attribute an objective truth to mythology. Yet this is exactly what we feel unable to do. In fact, we see in mythology the opposite of truth. It first appears to us, as is commonly <4> said, as a world of pure fables. We can only imagine this world as a pure invention, or at least as a distorted truth. Philosophy, however, would have nothing to do with such a product. The real relation between philosophy and mythology cannot be discovered, therefore, until a sustained critique establishes the *pure factuality* of mythology, by removing and discarding everything that is merely hypothetical in the mode of comprehension and explanation that has hitherto been in force. As long as one accepted a type of purely *subjective* emergence of mythology (as in all previous explanations), as long as one considered it possible that mythology

contains a system – religious or philosophical – which had merely come out of its joints, one could relegate philosophy to the lesser task of discovering this system, which is supposedly buried and laid to rest, as it were, in mythology, and to reassemble it from its fragments. Its relation to philosophy, however, appears to us now in a completely different light. We have shown in previous lectures that mythology is an objectivity that is entirely different from any scientific or religious system. We have recognized it as a phenomenon that is just as real, necessary, and universal, in its own way, as nature. The theogonic process in which it emerges does not take place according to a special law of consciousness, but rather according to a universal law, we could say, according to a *law of the world* – it has a cosmic significance. Its content is universal, therefore; its moments are truly objective moments; its figures express concepts that are necessary and, in this sense, not merely transitory, but permanent. The theogonic process is itself a universal concept, which receives its significance independently of human consciousness and outside of it. Philosophy has never made real progress (to be distinguished from merely formal improvements, which are generally only caused by it) except as a result of an expansion of experience. This is not only a matter of new facts emerging, but that one was forced to see in the already known [facts] something different from <5> what one was used to seeing in them<sup>8</sup>. How has the world of philosophy, taken in a purely material sense and aside from his critical contribution, been expanded through Kant – how else, if not through his becoming so concerned with the fact of human freedom – which had mattered much less even to a spirit like Leibniz – that he declared himself ready to give up everything else<sup>9</sup>? It was not long after him, as is well-known, that everything was really given up. Since, however, the different sides of human knowledge always balance each other (the best proof that their systematic connection is not something contrived by philosophy, but objective and natural), the other aspect of human knowledge emerged all the more forcefully. As long as one

regarded nature as a merely passive being [*Wesen*], which had nothing to do but to be created and preserved in its being [*Seyn*], one could be satisfied with the misunderstood concept of creation, on the one hand, and with a merely formal knowledge of nature, on the other. But since, in contrast to a one-sidedly idealistic philosophy, it was recognized that nature is not a mere not-I, a mere non-being, but that it is also something positive, a I, a subject-object, it had to enter philosophy as a necessary element. As a result, the latter was changed from inside to the extent that it became impossible for it to return to one of the earlier points of view<sup>10</sup>.

Although one generally resists the expansion of concepts that have already been understood, no way of thinking, as deeply rooted as it may be, can resist recognized facts for a long time. One can safely assume that what a period considers as philosophy is always only the result of a certain sum of facts, or is calculated on them. What lies outside this limited circle is ignored, kept in the dark, or one seeks to push it aside by more or less shallow hypotheses. Of course, at present, a generally accepted way of thinking will be reluctant to see that facts that it believes had been removed are brought to the fore or even placed in a more important light than it had previously thought found to be good. Had Goethe himself not hesitated for a long time before admitting that new geognostic observations may require different explanations than those he had previously held<sup>2, 11</sup>?

The concepts of post-Fichtean philosophy were based on *what it knew*, and to this day many people cannot image that the world we are dealing with is no longer that which had been taught to them 50 years<sup>12</sup>. But aside from this world, there is another world that is no less real. Our lectures have begun to show it, and those who are expecting a mere historical investigation may find themselves in the same situation as those who, according to Heraclitus, on their descent to the

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<sup>2</sup> [*Goethes Werke*, Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand, 60 Bände, mit Nebentitel:] *Nachgelassene Werke* [20 Bde = 41-60, Stuttgart-Tübingen, Cotta, 1827-42, in-16°;] cf. Bd. 11 [=51], p. 190.

underworld, discovered there what they neither expected nor imagined<sup>3</sup>.

But when it comes to going back from unnatural and formal puffiness to nature and healthy, robust knowledge, one may well remember Socrates' method of working in some Platonic dialogues. Starting from inconspicuous, even at first sight unfamiliar motives, he knows how to free his pupil from false philosophical pompousness, which he disperses like smoke<sup>4</sup> with questions which seem to us to be veritable children's questions, and then, through an unexpected turn, knows how to place the pupil directly in front of the highest objects. Thus, what seemed to hover in an inaccessible distance appears to the latter in surprising proximity and in a clarity which makes on him a lasting impression, and safeguards him forever from all nebulosity and empty fog. The Socratic dialogues are no longer for our times, but this was similarly said of mythology when it was in decline. At the time I started these conferences, the decline of a great, universal, and obvious phenomenon served me in a similar way <7>. If an arid formalism, owing to accidental circumstances, was able to dry up the sources of true knowledge, and to strike philosophy for a time into a kind of stupor (*stuporem philosophiae inducere*), one could hope that contact with a fresh fact, which has been left untouched by philosophy until now, would impart a new impulse to it. Narrow and limited views in philosophy have resulted in an equally narrow *language* in which no explanation [*Auseinandersetzung*] is possible, and which, because it applies on everything a grid of stereotypical phrases and generalizations, ends up degenerating into incoherent utterances. Much was gained, therefore, when the investigation was raised to a new level, when it became focused on an object that requires new means of understanding, and which no longer allows the use of old, confusing formulae, but rather demands free and clear expression.

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<sup>3</sup> Ἄσση οὐκ ἔλπονται οὐδὲ δοκέουσιν, in *Clem. Alex. Strom.* IV [Chapter 22. Cf. *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, ed. and trans. Charles H. Kahn, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 67 (fragment LXXXIV) "What awaits men at death they do not expect or even imagine".]

<sup>4</sup> Allusion to Plutarch's expressions in his treatise *de Deo Socratis*.

We will feel all the more compelled, therefore, to inquire even further into the fact of mythology, which we sought to substantiate in the first part of these lectures, by picking up where we left off. In any case, the previous investigation led us to a result at which we cannot stop.

We have recognized mythology as the product of a theogonic process, in which the inner center [*das Innere*] of humanity has been displaced [*versetzen*] with the first actual consciousness. But this concept of a theogonic process has been discovered and recognized through mere, if indeed irreproachable deductions – it was not discovered on the basis *of itself*, on the basis *of its own premises*. It is only the limit that we have reached through historical-philosophical investigation, at which point the latter was provisionally interrupted. We had to admit that for understanding such a process, which is based on an actual relation between human consciousness and God – a relation that is independent of reason – present-day philosophy offered no means. This prompted us to distance ourselves for a while <8> from our immediate object, to turn to the purely philosophical development and present the rational philosophy in its entirety to show that it ultimately ends with the demand of positive philosophy. We could now develop the latter, and thus try to move directly from the beginnings of the positive philosophy, first to the concept of a theogonic process *in general*, and then to this concept *in consciousness*. But this is not our present intention. We reserve this method for another lecture, and will now instead go back to our earlier (analytical) method, by examining the presuppositions of the last obtained result.

The first condition of the theogonic process has already been shown provisionally and *in general*. This condition is the potential monotheism posited with the essence of the human being. In this allegedly natural monotheism of consciousness, a monotheism that is inherent to it, and of which it cannot rid itself – this monotheism which is connatural to it must contain the basis of the theogonic movement of consciousness. On this assumption, it is also easy to see that the concept

of *monotheism in general* must contain *the law* of, as well as *the key* to, as it were, the theogonic movement. It is from there that one should discover the factors and whole content of the theogonic process.

The next investigation must now focus on this concept (that of monotheism in general). We will not attempt to deduce it from the beginning, that is, to deduce it from most universal principles. But like we previously did with mythology, we will now treat *this* concept as a fact, and only ask *what it means, what its proper content is*, without assuming anything in advance except *that* it has a content and a significance.

Treating the concept of monotheism as a fact, in a way, is all the more easy to do, given that in the whole mass of <9> philosophical *or* religious concepts, there is no other to be found that is so universally recognized as *true*, even if there is no clear agreement about its meaning or proper content. It is 1) the common center of mythological and revealed religion: in the latter, it is unquestionably the highest concept. Without an underlying monotheism, however, the former is not real polytheism. 2) Even the so-called rational religion wants at least to contain it. In fact, anyone who does not frankly declare oneself to be an atheist wants to be regarded, not as a polytheist, but as a monotheist. Whether or not one is actually a monotheist in the true sense is a different question, of course.

With the reservation that its actual content will be defined more narrowly (and this is precisely our intention), therefore, it is a concept that *everyone* accepts, and there is no investigation that can begin with a more general approval than this one.

Therefore, to give an overview of the path that still needs to be covered, we will have to:

- 1) explore the sense or the precise content of the concept of monotheism: a task that we cannot under any possible view evade. In an investigation dealing with monotheism, everything remains



undetermined until one knows with complete certainty what its opposite means. In the previous development, we already defined this concept, partly in contrast to mere theism – which merely posits *God* in general or in an indeterminate way – partly in contrast to the merely relative monotheism – which is already basically polytheism. We have defined it, in relation to the former, as the determinate concept of the *true* God, and in relation to the latter, as the concept of the absolute or authentic One. This was provisionally sufficient. But exactly what [2)] the *true* unity and therefore truth of God consist in, this is the question that remains to be answered. And, despite all the efforts in the development so far, there remains obscurities and uncertainties which we could not remove, and which <10> hinge on the answer to this question. In a mode of investigation such as the present one, which, starting from that which is indeterminate, reaches the truth only through successive determinations, only the ultimate and final result can offer complete satisfaction. Here, the teacher must demand the audience's trust that he will not lead them in vain. Assuming then – and we have every reason to assume this – that the [properly] understood concept (of monotheism) contains the elements that enable us to understand a *theogonic process at all*, we will also be given the means to see the *possibility* of a theogonic process of *consciousness*, and to see its necessity under a certain condition. And only when the possibility of a theogonic process in consciousness is given will we then be able 3) to demonstrate in mythology itself the *reality* of such a (theogonic) movement of consciousness. This last [point] will be the immediate explanation: it will be the *philosophy of mythology* itself.

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We will therefore take the concept of monotheism as a *given*, and the only question is knowing what it contains. It is not a question of obtaining or producing a concept that is not yet a given anywhere, but only of becoming aware of what can be thought and what cannot be thought in an already given and universally accepted concept. One could oppose this discussion of the concept of monotheism by asking: what is there to discuss about this simple concept, known to every child that has had a Christian upbringing? I will answer this question first. Every discussion of a concept presupposes a doubt about its scientific meaning or content. But how could the content of a concept in which we are born and raised, and in which we must recognize the ultimate foundation of our entire intellectual and moral culture, be open to doubt? <11> If there is one concept beyond doubt, it should be (it would seem) this one, which, moreover, does not belong to mere school, but to humanity, and is not merely a scientific, but a world-historical concept<sup>13</sup>. – Of course, I do not want to deny that the concept of monotheism as usually explained is to a certain extent self-evident, as well as perfectly clear. But it is precisely this self-evidence of the concept that constitutes the difficulty here. One would think that a concept whose foundation in humanity has required so many long struggles, which has only ruled for about 1500 years, and which even today rules among the better and more civilized, but still only smaller half of the human race – that such a concept must have a *special content*, not an immediate and self-evident one. The importance and significance that this concept has acquired through its world-historical success is all the more a reason to doubt whether its purported content is its true and actual [content]. To this one could object: if this concept has not been understood according to its true content, how could it have acquired such a hold over the more intelligent and scientifically-informed part of humanity? Things, however, exist in humanity before their scientific concept. For example, royalty exists in the world since time immemorial, and yet, if one wanted to hold a survey today about its actual

cause and true meaning, one would receive the most varied answers. – Regardless of how this first great transition from polylatry to the recognition of the only God took place, whether through science, or perhaps some other way understood by ancient humanity, the relation is not one of cause to effect. It is therefore probable that later reflection on the actual cause, i.e., on the true content of the concept through which this great change has been brought about, has been misled. Once a state of affairs that is desirable and pleasant to everyone has been established, one no longer asks about its origin, but rather one prepares oneself <12> to enjoy and use it, without any further research into its foundation. Indeed, since a long time now, one no longer dares do the latter with an impartial spirit, in part for fear of shaking the whole edifice of accepted doctrines and concepts. The general acceptance of a concept does not guarantee its scientific explanation [*Ergründung*]. One could rather affirm without paradox that the scientific explanation of a concept is for the most part inversely related to the generality of its use. As a general rule, it is precisely the concepts that everyone uses and, in a way, are common currency, which are those used most blindly – everyone trusts everyone else and thinks that such a widely used concept must be beyond all doubt.

One may still be particularly surprised nowadays by the following situation. While so many theologians are no longer capable of holding back their vain and fruitless philosophical pretensions, it has not occurred to one of these gentlemen, not even, for example, a Daub, to clarify this most basic and, as it were, simplest of concepts, without descending into incoherence. Everyone knows, however, that it is a common human mistake to go looking in far and boundless realms for what is near, and to venture into the most complicated things before grasping the simplest of concepts.

As for the teachings of rationalist theologians, whom one should expect most of all to be clear on this concept, I must confess that in both older and newer textbooks, I have failed to find a

satisfactory presentation of this most basic of concepts. With regard to philosophical textbooks, I have noticed that they mostly seek to sneak past the concept of the unity of God, probably because it is self-evident and too clear to require dwelling on. But as far as positive theologians are concerned, and not just newer ones, but also older ones, no impartial spirit will be able to avoid perceiving even in them <13> a striking hesitation in the treatment of this concept, a wavering even in the choice of words (e.g. German speakers do not know whether they should say *Einheit* or *Einzigkeit*, unity or unicity of God), and a certain suspicious haste with which they try to bypass this most basic of concepts, as if it could not tolerate a stable appearance, or was averse to seeing itself deepened<sup>5</sup>.

The cause of this embarrassment is also not difficult to discover. The formula by which they express the concept and doctrine of the unity of God is well-known: *there is no God other than [außer] God*. (Starting from this formula in my critique of the concept, I ask all of you to recall whether you have ever encountered anywhere any other explanation of the concept of monotheism.)

If we consider this explanation, it is obvious that the proposition: there is no God other than God, actually contains a purely superfluous assertion. For I might be tempted to think of *one* or many gods other than a God whom I would have already assumed. But after positing not *one*

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<sup>5</sup> The various *statuses* that have been given to this concept in the whole of Christian dogmatics can already be considered as a proof of this uncertainty. One might have certainly expected that this concept, which separates, as it were, two worlds or two sides of history – pagan history and Christianity history – from one another, would have been established first, before all others, as underlying them and therefore absolutely independent in relation to them. In older textbooks, even before the question of the so-called attributes is tackled, one finds a special chapter on the unity of the divine being, e.g. in Johann Gerhard (see his *Loci Theologici [cum pro adstruenda veritate, tum pro destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate, per theses nervosa solide et copiose explicate]* cf. Vol. 3, Ch. 6), with the feeling, indisputably, that everything that could be said afterwards can only be said correctly of the unique *God*. But it is completely different in the later manuals. Here unity or unicity, as it were, ceased to be the object of a special teaching. It no longer appears as such, but rather in the general doctrine of the attributes. It is hidden, as it were, next to and among others, while these are regarded as being obvious (self-evident) to a certain extent, like eternity, aseity, infinity, etc.

God, but purely and simply God, it is absolutely impossible to see what reason <14> I could have, or indeed how it could even be possible, to posit God once or many times again – it would be a pure absurdity. If, however, it is not [merely] a possible error, but rather a pure absurdity to posit one or many Gods other than God after I have posited him as God, then the opposite assertion, presented as an affirmation, is also an absurdity. This suffices to explain the kind of stupidity that comes over some theologians when they are supposed to give an account of the concept of the unique God or of monotheism. Indeed, how can one prove what no one would think of denying, or refute what no one would think of affirming? If I can simply think of a God other than God, I would have already posited the latter not as God, but immediately rather as *a* God. Conversely, if I deny that there is a God other than God, I consequently only re-posit him as *God*, but not as the unique God, which would be a complete pleonasm. Theology usually deals with excessively obscure dogmas. Here it is in the reverse situation, as it were: it is rather the excessive clarity which is the cause of its inconvenience here. One is embarrassed to express as a special doctrine, even as a dogma, a proposition that is so perfectly evident.

The earlier Wolffians were proud to be able to demonstrate with their so-called *Principium indiscernibilium*, that even if one were to posit God other than God, or to posit God a second time, still only One God would be thought<sup>6</sup> (not really a second being [*Wesen*], but only the same being again). But they ought to have at least shown first how one can go about positing a second God outside of God. Incidentally, this very application of the principle of indiscernibles serves to prove that one has understood the doctrine of the unity of God in this sense, and not another. There could never have been polytheism in this sense, that if A signified God (truly *God*, and not a God), one <15> would therefore posit A + A + A... The opposite, therefore, thought in the same sense, cannot

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Canz [Israel Gottlieb, 1690-1753], *Philosophiae Leibnitianae et Wolffianae usus in theologia*, p. 275.

be monotheism. One of two things: either I do not think God at all, which is atheism, or I think God, but in doing so I would have already thought him as the unique God, purely and simply. There is no place for polytheism here. In this sense, Hermann was entirely right to consider polytheism as impossible, and in accordance with that, to have made every effort at finding another and figurative sense to historically-given polytheism, at least in its origins. But if polytheism is impossible, monotheism as a special concept is no less impossible. Both concepts stand and fall together.

I remind you, moreover, that by virtue of an old necessity that unconsciously works in us, it has become customary when discussing the unique God, to add the epithet “true” by saying: the only true God. One should conclude from this that the true God and the unique God are synonymous concepts, that the truth of God consists in his very uniqueness, and conversely, that his uniqueness is at the same time his truth. Accordingly, that proposition would be expressed as follows: there is no God other than the unique true God. But who is the God spoken *of* in this proposition, that is, who is the subject of the sentence? Answer: the subject of the proposition is already the unique God. The proposition itself presupposes the unique God. For it only says of the *unique* God, that there is no God other than him. But who then is this unique God, this God of whom it said here that there is no God but him? Is it again the one other than whom there is no God? Impossible! Or else the proposition would be expressed as follows: the God other than whom there is no God, is the God other than whom there is no God – this tautology would be even more severe than the previous one. The uniqueness already posited in the subject of the proposition must therefore be a different uniqueness than the one affirmed in the actual statement. But the latter is considered uniqueness from the *outside*, as is evident from the fact <16> that the only question is only about what is not *outside* of God. So, the first uniqueness, which is already expressed in the

subject of the proposition, cannot be external uniqueness, either, but only the inner uniqueness, the uniqueness of God in relation to himself, that is, the uniqueness of God *as such*, and only this can be expected to contain the actual concept of monotheism.

Some *proofs* of this proposition have been given, because proofs were required to give a special doctrine its appearance. One of the most common arguments for the unity or uniqueness of God – as I said, there is disagreement even concerning the choice of words – is based on the concept of *supreme cause*. Now there is no denying that a supreme cause, *as such*, can only ever be one. But *this* uniqueness would not be the unconditional uniqueness that is associated with the concept of God. Such a uniqueness would still be compatible with a mere *primacy* or *principalship* that one ascribes to God in the production of things, but it would not prevent one from positing next to him a second cause, that could still be in *itself*, that is, apart from his *action*, what He is, such that the one we now call God would claim, in the production of the world, an exclusive right to the name of God, not by his *essence*, but merely by the absolute superiority of his *action*. One could picture the relation in such a way so as to assume that, that God, who is the *supreme* and, for this reason, *unique* cause, only *pre-empted* the other in the first outline of a creation. The latter would not be able to find any space for his own creation, since all the possibilities would have already been realized by the first creation. Thus, without having to think of him as evil by nature, if he does not want to be destined to complete and permanent inactivity, nothing would be left for him except to gain influence over the creation of the other, naturally causing it to wither away. The first Author <17> would have tried to remedy the corruption with all his might, but would have been unable to completely suppress the action of a cause that was *essentially* or inherently equal to him. This would have given rise to this mixed world, where a constant alternation of coming into being and decay can be seen; where one thing is always opposed to the other; where nothing

exists in its pure state, and without a hidden enemy that undermines its existence, as it were. In this way, the other God would have therefore also had a part in this mixed world – his *part* – even if contested and subordinated. This is more or less how, alongside the *supreme* cause, and without abolishing this concept, one could place another cause, an anti-God. If one does not want to go as far as to posit another *God* alongside the first one, the mere concept of the supreme cause would not rule out at least a lesser co-cause, such as a nature originally averse to all order and all rules. The rational [*verständige*] nature in itself, such as the Anaxagorean νοῦς, as a stronger nature, would have then surpassed it<sup>7</sup>, and taught it order and reason [*Verstand*], despite [the weaker nature's] aversion and unwillingness [to submit] to rules and form. Neither of these two concepts can be refuted from the mere concept of the supreme cause. If one wanted to understand the *supreme* cause as excluding all participation [*Mitwirkung*], one would be even less able to infer a supreme cause in *this* sense from the spectacle of the world. Rather, the world consistently shows us two principles that are independent in their action, one of which seems to contradict all forms and shapes, while the other always brings everything back within limit and within measure. As to whether one of these principles – in our opinion the worse one – derives from the best (which, in any case, would be difficult to understand), or whether both together derive from a higher principle, or whether they have always coexisted in mutual independence, the world, at least, cannot <18> bear witness to any of this. But supposing, finally, that the spectacle of the world, which does not allow us to infer a first cause, would allow us to draw a completely convincing conclusion with regard to the *absolute* unity of this first cause, [a unity] allowing no kind of participation [*Mitwirkung*], then the supreme cause or God would not be unique other than, as they say, by the fact itself, *ipso actu*, and not by nature. But the theologians call the uniqueness of God a uniqueness

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<sup>7</sup> Εἴτα νοῦς ἐπελτὼν αὐτὰ διεκόσμησεν, a citation attributed to Anaxagoras.



according to *nature* or essence, so that, properly speaking, not only is there no God other than God, as they usually express themselves, but there *cannot be* a God other than God, since it is by nature impossible for God to have something besides himself, something that would be equal or unequal to him<sup>8</sup>.

It seems that, in the development of the concept of monotheism, only actual polytheism has ever been considered. The system we have just described, however, cannot be considered as the direct opposite of *monotheism*, since, in fact, it is not polytheism. One cannot say that this doctrine is directly opposed to the dogma of the unique God. For the God it calls good is, in fact, for it as well, the only true God, whereas the other being is the non-God [*Nicht-Gott*], the false, untrue God. And yet we hold this doctrine to be a false system, opposed to the *true* religion. For the true God of the dualistic system is only accidentally called the true God, just as it is only accidentally called the *good* God. The other God, the one who is regarded in the system of the two principles as the principle or cause of evil, presumably has the same power as the first, and therefore the same right and the same justification to be, that is, the same right and the same justification to manifest and to act, to surround <19> himself with a being, to create for himself a being, an empire. Therefore, he has the same right as the first to call evil what is opposed *to him* and makes him feel inhibited, hindered in *his* being (*Seyn*), or attacked and contested in *his* being. Evil for him is what the good is for us, who live in the creation of the other God, and vice versa, the good for him is what for us is evil: it all depends on the point of view. Therefore, it is inconceivable how a modern writer (Friedrich Schlegel) could have allowed himself to be carried

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<sup>8</sup> Deus autem est unicus non modo *actu ipso*, ut tamen plures Dii essent possibiles, sed quia contrarium ne fieri quidem potest. Unde patet (ut hoc obiter moneam) hanc unitatem non dedere probari *ex sufficientia* unius Dei; ostenderet haec ratio, non opus esse, ut *actu ipso* plus quam unus existat Deus, non vero plurium *possibilitatem* refellit, utpote quae, si cetera essent paria, tamen locum habere posset. *Weissmann*, Institt. Theol. p. 198.

away by his passion against the system of pantheism to the point of praising the system of dualism, and presenting it as the better of the two because it establishes in an absolute way the eternal difference between good and evil. Yet we have just seen the opposite of this, namely how dualism merely relativizes this antithesis, merely determines it at all times from a partial and therefore biased point of view. If, therefore, dualism cannot be omitted in a complete list of all possible religious systems – and it is well-known that in a group of concepts that are homogenous and relative to the same object, not one of them can be thoroughly determined without the others – one can, however, when considering or mentioning dualism, leave entirely open the question whether the system has ever existed historically in the sense in which it was taken here, especially whether Parsi dualism at its origin was really meant as dualism. It is enough that dualism, as a system that is equally distinct from polytheism and monotheism, occupies a special place amidst the possible religious systems. If, on the one hand, this system is undeniably wrong and reprehensible, without, on the other hand, being indirectly or directly opposed to monotheism, it must therefore be in contradiction with *another* concept: the concept that is necessary for the true system – monotheism – which is therefore already presupposed by monotheism. For the true concept is everywhere the last, final, and complete concept, <20> the one *toward* which one progresses, but for which precisely there is a starting point. This starting point for monotheism cannot be other than mere *theism*. We would therefore define the relation correctly if we said: polytheism is opposed to monotheism, and dualism is already opposed to theism. But as for what should be understood by mere theism in its distinction with monotheism, this will be explained through further reflections, to which we now proceed.

The formula by which monotheism is usually expressed is an empty, tautological one. This was our first point. But it is also 2) purely illusory. Because from the point of view of theologians

speaking of the unity of God, the question naturally arises, when one hears that there is *no God other* than God, whether there is anything else *other than* God. Theologians can only answer this question in the negative. For they themselves include unity or uniqueness among the attributes that God has *before* all *acting*, before all *actus*, *merâ naturâ*. From this point of view, they must say there is nothing other than God, since they derive all extra-divine [*außergöttliche*] existence only from God's free causality (just as everything that, *before* all *actus*, would be *other than* God, must therefore already have an existence [*Vorhandenes*] independent from God, be originally *almost* equal, and to this extent, equipollent to him, in such a way that – also for this reason – the proposition: “there is no God other than God,” would from the current point of view only mean: there is nothing other than God). But if there is no God other than God, if there is even nothing other than God, then God is no longer the only [*einzig*] God, but the Unique One [*Einzig*] (merely ὁ μόνος instead of ὁ μόνος θεός). If what is negated here is not the existence of another God, but of *every* existence, then it is no longer a question of the unicity of God *as such*, but only of his absolute unicity<sup>9</sup>. – To give the impression that what is the absolute <21> unicity of God is his unicity as such, theologians introduce this “no other God,” and thus get caught up in this tautology or purely superfluous assertion.

Theologians (among whom I do not always merely include those whom it is customary to call by that name, but also philosophers, to the extent that the latter deal with speculative theology), these, therefore, basically know of no unicity other than that which I already express when I say: God (and not: a God). But if one looks into the meaning of this absolute unicity, or if one asks why God is not “a” god, but God, I cannot answer again that it is because there is no God other than

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<sup>9</sup> This conclusion (there is *nothing* other than God) is also the result of the proofs of the unicity that theologians extract from the nature of God, for instance that which is deduced from his infinity. This is to prove too much. They prove, in fact, that there is no God other than God, but also that there is nothing other than God.

God. Because then I would only be going in circles. Therefore, if he is God, it is not because there is no god other than God, but only because there is *nothing* other than him (which, of course, does not yet explain what he is himself). On the other hand, the fact that there is nothing other than God always leads me back to the concept of *God* or of the absolutely Unique One, and not to the concept of the only God. It would therefore be easy to give the usual formula a form that would allow it to affirm *something* and to avoid its tautological character. One would have to express the sentence as follows: there is not *a* God, outside of which there could be one or many others – but there is only God. This expression makes it obvious that this sentence contains nothing more than the previous one: God Is. It becomes evident that this proposition does not affirm something *about* God, that is, it expresses nothing other than God – it says nothing of God, but merely repeats the concept of *God*. Thus, it becomes obvious that this proposition does not contain monotheism, but mere theism. To express the content of this proposition: there is – not a God, outside of whom one or more Gods could be, but – only God, to express the content of this proposition, the word *theism* would be completely sufficient, and the composite [*zusammengesetzte*] monotheism <22> would be completely superfluous<sup>10</sup>. It is thus evident that the conventional explanation of the concept of monotheism, when it is brought back to its true value, that is, freed from its mere pretense [*Scheinbaren*] which is but a tautological illusion, contains only theism, not monotheism. This is a very important and major difference. Nevertheless, I cannot deny that there are some who declare themselves to be fully satisfied with this. Nothing is needed in theology, according to them, other than mere theism: one can be satisfied with it, and a special concept under the name of monotheism is purely superfluous. There was a time when the label theism was not favourable. To say of

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<sup>10</sup> Schleiermacher understands the true relevance of the matter when he says (christl. Glaube 1. Th. S. 306) that the unity of God cannot be proven any more than the being of God can, which means that it contains no more than what mere theism itself does.

someone that he was a mere theist was almost the same as saying he was an atheist, namely one who does not assert the *true* God, but rather a mere phantom or simulacrum of the true God. But this second and pejorative connotation that was associated with the word theism has completely disappeared in recent times – its memory has almost been lost<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, it seems that Christian dogma [*Glaubenslehre*] cannot ignore the concept of monotheism, and that, if only for this reason, the still operative tautological concept must be retained. This term will be needed at least when the difference between Christianity and paganism is mentioned, something which surely cannot be passed over. It is a problem <23> that cannot be eluded. But, given the views that have so far been accepted quite generally about the meaning of polytheism, *this* alone is also not really necessary. Because it is very simple to say: monotheism originally had no meaning and significance except in relation to polytheism and in opposition to it. Now that the danger and even the very possibility of polylatry [*Vielgötterei*] have disappeared for us, nothing prevents the definite disappearance, ultimately, of monotheism as a special concept, since it has already tacitly disappeared since a long time. Nothing prevents the tautological and basically purely pleonastic proposition: the “unique God,” from dissolving into the superior and more universal concept of God, which requires no addition. For, in fact, there are only theists and atheists. Theists are above all the Jews, from whom our Christian faith derives, and the Mohammedans, who started out from both the Jews and the Christians. There is actually no polytheism. The so-called gods of the pagans have only acquired religious significance by chance, and are not inherently gods, but rather, for example, personifications of merely natural forces. The theism [*das Theistische*] of their representations is

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<sup>11</sup> One might well ask: How can theism be = to atheism? Answer: one cannot speak of God *in general* if one really speaks of God. Whoever only speaks of God in general does not speak of the true God, but rather of something else which he only names God. His theism is therefore = to atheism, this word taken in the negative sense. The very concept of God, θεός, is inherently empty, a mere word. In order to speak of the real God, who is not just θεός, but as the Greeks themselves distinguish, ὁ θεός, the determinate God, a determination must be added. One also does not say: θεός is One, but ὁ θεός εἷς ἐστίν.

only apparent and originally deprived of any religious significance. The polylatrous pagans are therefore actually only atheists. One could evoke, with regard to this interpretation of polytheism as being actually atheism, the authority of the Apostle, who says to the Ephesians: Ἦτε ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, you were without God – like atheists – in the world<sup>12</sup>. You see how important the concept of monotheism is for our research: it even decides whether mythology is real or not.

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<sup>12</sup> *Eph.* 2, 12.

## Lecture 2

<24> I come back to my earlier argument that, as strange as it seems, the concept of monotheism has so far not been properly defined. Therefore, it is now up to us to give its correct definition. This will not be possible save by trying, on the basis of the previously recognized distinction between the unicity of God and the unicity of God as such, to define precisely each of these according to their respective meaning. However, we cannot but start from the *absolute* unicity which first presents itself to the mind. Whoever speaks the name of God feels that he has not – *thereby* – announced a unicity, but rather presupposed it. One must, in fact, think this unicity *in order to think God* (and not: a God), therefore before even truly thinking God as such. Had there been a God – not a *real*, but a possible god – other than God, then God would not be God, but a God. It is therefore agreed upon in advance, and as it were, before God is God, that he is not that which has no equal, as it is commonly said, but that which can have no equal [*Gleichen*]. But what is that which can have no equal? What has an equal has something in common with the latter, even if only being. That which we are speaking of, as well as that which we compare it with or consider as its equal, are both but one being. Similarly, if there is something other than God, this [other thing] has being [*Seyn*] in common with him <25>, that is, it is in the same way that he is. If there *can* be nothing other than God, God himself cannot be a *being*, be such that he would merely participate in being (just as, for example, what is white, red, or beautiful, merely participates in whiteness, redness, and beauty, without being whiteness, nor redness, nor beauty itself). If God is not a being [*Seyn*], something that merely participates in being, all that remains for him is to be *that which is in itself* [*das Seyende selbst*], *ipsum Ens*, αὐτό τό Ὄν; this is the necessary pre-concept of God that we must posit in order to posit God (and not: a God). God is therefore that which is in itself. To be that which is [*Seyende*], however, is not the divinity [*Gottheit*] in him, but merely the

presupposition of his divinity. Only that which is in itself [*was das Seyende selbst ist*] can be God, but this does not mean that that which is, in itself, is God: an additional determination is required in order for it to be God<sup>13</sup>, and to the extent that, in logical terms, we call “matter” what assumes or is able to receive a determination, we can say: to be that which is [*Seyende*] is not divinity itself, but the matter of divinity. If God were *nothing* but that which is, it would be absurd to speak of a unique God. I do not say that that which is whiteness or redness itself is the only whiteness or redness (this can only be said of a specific whiteness or redness). Similarly, I cannot say that that which is in itself is that which is unique. *Because*, however, the matter of divinity consists in being that which is in itself, in being the universal essence [*Wesen*] (the *ens universale*), *precisely for this reason*, I definitely cannot say of that which is in itself that it is that which is unique. But I can certainly say that *God* is the unique God. I cannot say this as if this were only accidental; I have to think that it is not just accidental, but necessary, that he is the unique God, and this cannot be expressed by the proposition: there is no God other than God, or: God *has* no equal (as also Schleiermacher <26> asserts)<sup>14</sup>. If God is, in fact, *distinct* from that which is, from the *ens universale* (or if his concept is thought to include *more than* that which merely is), but his unicity is derived only *from the fact that* he is that which is in itself, then this unicity is only his necessary unicity, and all we can say is that there *can* be no God other than him. This unicity is therefore not the *factual* one which is thought in monotheism. For [monotheism] can only be [said to express] his factual unicity. If the unicity thought in monotheism were a necessary one, how can one explain that this concept only became universally accepted after Christianity, that is, starting almost 1500 years ago? The unicity affirmed in monotheism must be such that we can only say that it *Is*, and not that it cannot ever not be. It is not a self-evident unicity. The famous Hugo Grotius, a man of

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<sup>13</sup> This supplementary determination is first of all that he be *actu*.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Christliche Glaube*.



great experience and practical intelligence, had understood this, among other things, and he teaches on this subject a doctrine opposed to that of Schleiermacher. The latter says, as I have already mentioned, that God's unicity requires little discussion, as little as his existence [*Daseyn*]. Hugo Grotius, however, says here – not, as you might think, in his highly recommended book *de Veritate religionis christianae*, but in his no less famous work *de Jure belli et pacis*<sup>15</sup>: the concept of God's unity is less evident than that of his existence (the philosophy of that period considers as evident everything that necessarily follows from any concept – Hugo Grotius therefore must have thought with regard to God's unity something different from that which necessarily follows from his concept). A later theologian (*Dr. Storr*), known for his discernment, goes even further, by attributing to the human being a mere presumption (*suspicio*) of God's unity, which he could not have done if he had not seen *more* in the doctrine of the unique God than what follows *necessarily* <27> from the mere *concept* of God. For one perhaps may not *think* of a proposition that follows from the concept of a being [*Wesen*] with necessity – this is possible – but if one thinks of it, it is not with a mere *suspicio* or presumption, but such that it appears to us as certain, given the impossibility of its opposite. So, to close this parenthesis, I would now ask you to distinguish between two approaches. Under the name “God,” I cannot 1) think anything other than that which is in itself, or the universal essence [*Wesen*]. In this case, I cannot use the word *unique* as a predicate. Precisely because I say: God is that which is in itself, I cannot say: he is that which is unique. Just as I say: God is that which is in itself, I must also say that he is the One itself, which expresses the fact that unity is not attributed to him as a predicate, that it is not *ex-pressed* of him (i.e., in such a way that he would be viewed as *terminus a quo*), but that he himself is the One<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> reference

<sup>16</sup> We could apply, in this perspective, the ancient saying: *unitas non superadditur essentiae*, unity is not added to the essence, that is, that it cannot be thought of as a predicate.

Given that here I cannot turn unity into a predicate, this expression of unicity would be impossible, which is already the reason why there is nothing from this perspective that could be called monotheism. Or 2) I distinguish indeed God from that which merely is [*bloßen Seyenden*], that is, I think in God something else and more than that which is in itself, even while I also think of him as the latter. It is, of course, possible to formulate an expression here, to wit: God is the unique God. But the meaning of this statement is as follows: he is *necessarily* the unique God. This proposition does not mean that there is no God other than God, but that there *cannot* be another. By distinguishing here between God and that which merely is [*bloßen Seyenden*], the universal essence [*Wesen*], I already determine the latter as matter [*Materie*] of his divinity (I have already noted that the term matter does not indicate anything corporeal, but should rather be taken in the logical and metaphysical sense). The proposition: he is necessarily unique God, i.e., outside of whom there *cannot* be another, has <28> therefore *the following* sense: there is a lack of matter, as it were, of material [*Stoff*] for another God. That which is in itself cannot be multiple times, since it cannot be as a reiteration. What is the true God, however, must, in advance, in and, as it were, *before* himself<sup>17</sup>, i.e. before its divinity, already be *that which is in itself*, the universal essence, or it has as its basis, as ὑποκείμενον, as matter of its divinity, the fact that it is the universal essence. If being the universal essence, being the absolute unity of the universal essence *which* is the One itself, constitutes the basis [*Grundlage*] of its divinity, this absolute unity of the universal essence *prevents* and is opposed to there being more than *a single* God, because the basis, the material for a second God, is no longer given [*vorhanden*]. The object of negation is therefore not another God (as theologians put it), but the possibility (the presupposition, the matter) of another God is denied. This determination is important, because many philosophers and theologians who

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<sup>17</sup> This is the only correct expression. Incidentally, it can be noted here that one should not say: in and *for* itself, an expression that has given rise to erroneous applications.

have felt the difficulty in this doctrine, and who have tried to escape it in various ways, have tried to prove, among other things, the unicity of God, *which* we are presently discussing, from the fact that it is not *necessary*, in order to obtain a perfect explanation of the world, to resort to more than *one* God, but that one God is abundantly sufficient. But this completely distorts the meaning of the concept. It is accepted that, from the perspective of divinity, there could be more than one God<sup>18</sup>: if the phenomenon of the world forced us to admit more than one God, nothing, from the perspective of divinity, would be opposed to it. One sees here an effort to distance oneself from the *necessary* Unique One [*Einzig*en], that is, the feeling that monotheism proper, the actual dogma of the unique God, cannot be contained in the necessary unicity implied by the word: God (and not: a God). Likewise, <29> the fact of saying: God (and not: a God) stems from the fact (or, what amounts to the same, derives from the unicity which has its foundation in the fact) that what is thought in him is not an existing thing [*ein Seyendes*], but *that which is in itself* [*das Seyende selbst*]. If this necessity derives from the fact that God is that which is in itself, this unicity does not derive from his divinity, nor from what he is as *God*, but from what he is in himself and in a way before himself, that is, before his divinity: it derives from the basis and, as it were, from the matter of his divinity. Therefore, I think – even in this necessary unicity – *God* not specifically as the unique God, but only as the Unique One *in general*: *not* according to his *divinity*, but as mere substance (according to substance – *substantia est id quod substat*; substance is therefore the same thing as *basis*, as ὑποκείμενον); I think of it as unique according to mere substance, and not according to divinity, that is, I do not at all think monotheism by this unicity. If monotheism is a dogma, that is, something that must be expressly asserted, the unicity conceived in it cannot be the necessary one, whose opposite is *impossible*. It can only be a *factual* [*faktische*] one, for only

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. the passage cited at p. <18>.

factuality [*das Faktische*] can properly be an object of affirmation. – This necessary unicity, which derives from God's mere substantiality, is always his unicity in general or his *absolute* unicity: it is by virtue of the latter that I can say that there can be *nothing* other than God, and to say that there cannot be a *God* other than God. Or rather, if there *can* be no God other than God, this is because there cannot be, in general, anything other than him, because, in general, there is no material, no possibility of being outside of him, because He *himself* is the universal essence.

Therefore, it is now a question of finding, from this absolute unicity, the way to God's unicity *as such*. For only the latter will give us the *third* [term], monotheism. Toward that end, however, we must determine our starting point with more precision than has until now been necessary.

Our starting point is the proposition: God is *that which is in itself*. <30> Now carefully consider this concept: one could say it is *the concept of all concepts*, the highest concept from which one can generally start, the supreme concept of all philosophy. I say that it is the concept of all concepts since I can only think an object insofar as I think in it that which is. The ultimate content of every concept is only that which is, the *ens universale*, as the ancient scholastic philosophy had well understood. If the animal does not *think* things, it is just because it lacks the concept of that which is [*das Seyenden*]. This concept of that which is [*Seyenden*], which man possesses, makes all the difference between him and the animal. You should recognize first of all in this concept that it does not yet contain in itself any *real* being [*Seyn*]: it is rather only, as it were, the title, the universal subject, the universal possibility *of* a being [*Seyn*], but *it* for itself does not yet contain any real being [*Seyn*] *in itself*<sup>14</sup>. If any progression [*Fortgang*] is possible, it is therefore toward *it* (actual being). It is necessary that what I must proceed towards has not already been posited with that *from which* I proceed. Our investigation must also move in this direction if,

as we have said, it must proceed from absolute unicity (which is based solely on the fact that God is *that which is in itself*) to God's unicity as such.

Incidentally, it would be quite natural if after what has just been said we were asked the following question: if that which is in itself is still the mere universal possibility of being [*Seyn*] (old scholasticism said: *aptitudo ad existendum*; according to this expression, however, that which is in itself appears as merely *passive*, as only disposable to real being, which is not the true sense) – if that which is in itself is the mere universal possibility of being, and I do not therefore think of it itself as *being*, precisely because it is still only the title of a being, *how* then should I consider it? I cannot, as we have just said, consider it as being [*seyend*], and yet I cannot think of it as absolutely non-being. – Yet it must nevertheless be, in a certain way, even as a mere universal subject of being. A distinction is therefore necessary here between *the* being already given <31> by the fact that it is that which is in itself, and *the* being *of which* it is only the universal possibility. This latter being can only be added to it, as you can see, and from the present point of view it is therefore only future. In addition, because it is *added* [*hinzukommen*] to it, and can only be *added* to it by an act, it is actual (real) being. Yet this being which is already posited in it by the fact that we think of it as that which is in itself, is sheer being in the *concept*. You see, therefore, that that which is in *itself*, since it has no being *outside of* its concept, does not *exist* itself other than as *concept*: *here* is therefore the *place* where one can say that the concept and the object of the concept are one, which means that the *object* itself has no existence other than that of the concept, or, to put it in different words, that here concept and being are one. In other words, being here is not outside of the concept, but *in* the concept itself. The one who is that which is in itself already has its being in its concept, and not outside of it, as something special and different from it. But you see yourself how poor, how narrow this concept is, and that one cannot actually begin anything

with this unity of being and concept, since it is in fact merely negative. The very common formula in philosophy and theology also applies here, namely, that in God essence and being are one. This only means that what is thought in God (but only from a certain perspective, precisely when he is merely thought as that which is in itself) is not a being beyond or distinct from essence, but only the being which is already thought *as* it is determined as *that which is in itself*. This proposition would be completely wrong if it referred to God in general, that is, to every possible point of view. As I said, it only applies to those in whom God is, in fact, still thought of as that which is in itself. It is in no way the interest of philosophy to remain in this confinement, and a philosophy that knew God only to the extent that, in him, being is one <32> with essence, or is itself the essence, would be a sad and very restricted philosophy. Rather, the interest of philosophy is precisely in leading God out of this being that is identical with essence, into that which is different from essence, into the explicit, actual being. Therein actually lies the triumph of philosophy. If one wants to call this being identical with essence the *necessary* being, there is nothing wrong with that. Only then is it not God's being *as such*, but only his being in and before itself. In his interiority and anteriority to himself [*An-und-vor-sich*], God is the necessary being, i.e. the one for whom being refers to essence and, to *this* extent, is his essential, but not actual being.

Since, initially, that which is in itself is nothing but the general title of being, it is by no means nothing, or an οὐκ ὄν<sup>15</sup>. It is not that which already Is; if we understand being to mean what is added to the essence [*Wesen*], that which is *apart* from essence, that is to say, which is still particularly special – I could also call it the qualifying [*eigenschaftliche*] being, the one that can be expressed, predicated of the subject of the essence. However, this is not the case of the being which, *because* it is not different from that which is in itself, is not compatible [*zukommen*] with it, nor can be ascribed to it. In other words, that which is in itself is not what already Is, namely,

in the sense we have just determined, but it is not nothing for that matter: rather it is what *will be*. This last determination will make it completely clear to you. That which *will be*, therefore, is not yet *being*, but it is not nothing. And the one that is that which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*], conceived purely as such, is not yet being, but without for that reason being nothing. For it is what *will be*: “God is that which is being in itself” means, according to what has just been said, as much as: God in himself and before himself, viewed in his pure essence [*Wesen*], is only what *will be*. I would remind you again here that, in the very oldest document in which the true God is mentioned, this God gives himself the name: I will be<sup>19</sup>. Thus, it is very natural that, speaking in the first person, therefore of himself <33>, he calls himself AEJAEH, that is, I will be, and that, when mention of him is made in the third person, when someone else speaks of him, he is called JAWOH, or JIWAEH, in short: *He will be*. This actually leads us to the highest concept of God, inasmuch as God is determined as Being itself. We see, in fact, that a free relation of God to [his] being is expressed in the fact that he is determined as what is not yet purely *free* from being, nor afflicted with being (everything which is *a* being is, as it were, bound [*verpflichtet*] to being, trapped [*verhaftet*] by it: for as long as it *is* a being, it does not have the choice to be or not to be, to be *so* or not, and this is what the ancient idea of the misery of every being, or, as a French philosopher expressed it, of the *malheur de l’existence*<sup>16</sup>, is based on). In *this* sense, God is beyond [*außer*] being, above being, but he is not merely free himself *from* being, pure *essence*; rather he is also free also vis-à-vis [*gegen*] being, that is, a lucid freedom to be or not to be, to assume or not assume a being: which is also included in the “I will be who I will be.” One can translate this as follows: I will be who I *want* to be – I am not the *necessary* being (in this sense), but *Lord* of being [*Herr des Seyns*]. You see then how God, who is defined as that which is in itself, is thereby

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. [*Historical-Critical*] *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, p. 171, cf. p. 165.

defined as *Spirit*. For Spirit, in fact, is what can be or not be, what can manifest [*äußern*] or not manifest, what does not *have to* manifest. Similarly, my body has no choice but to fill the space which it fills up, which it must fill up, whereas as spirit I am completely free to manifest or not, to show myself as this or that, to exhibit this or that [aspect] of myself. You see, also for this reason, how a philosophy that goes back to that which is in itself and starts with it, already leads us directly and by itself to a system of freedom, and has freed itself from the necessity that weighs like a nightmare on all systems that stop at pure being, without rising to *that which is in itself*, despite all their chatter about *movement*. To go <34> beyond being, and to stand in a free relation to it, is the real aim of philosophy. That which is in itself is already *in itself* also what is free from being and free towards [*gegen*] being. Overall, we are only interested in that which is in itself. Being has no importance whatsoever, it is in any case only an accessory, a complement that is added to *what Is*. It is the latter that we want to know, and the knowledge of *what Is* is actually the knowledge sought after in philosophy. If all the other sciences, even when they seem to deal with that which is [*dem Seyenden*], end up only being concerned with being [*Seyn*], or at least not with that which is in itself [*Seyenden selbst*], philosophy differs from all other sciences in that it concerns itself with *what Is* (and not with being), that it is the science of the essence [*Wesen*] (which we [also] call *what Is*, or that which is in itself), that it is *scientia entis*, ἐπιστήμη του ὄντος, as it is quite rightly defined, although one should consequently add, as we shall see, another determination. To begin philosophy with being is to turn it upside down, to condemn oneself, and never to penetrate to the heart of freedom.

But precisely because that which is in itself is only the universal title of being, its universal subject, we are obliged to proceed from it to reach being. That which is in itself is related to this being as its *prius*, and because we start from the *latter*, we come into an *a priori* relation with



being, or we are positioned to determine this being *a priori*. And since it is easy to see that *all* being can only be the being of that which is in itself or of *what Is*, by deriving the modality or modalities of that which is in itself, we will derive and determine the modality or modalities of *all* being.

One can think of no direct relation between the one that is *that which is in itself* and being, however, unless the former is the immediate and intrinsic ability to be (without any intervening means), and indeed unless the two concepts, that of that which is in itself, and that of the intrinsic ability to be, coincide <35> so *immediately* that they are almost inseparable, and that the second concept could be substituted for the first. Accordingly, we could have derived the *necessary* uniqueness of God. It is generally admitted [*zugestandener Maßen*] that God is that outside of which nothing *can* be, that is, nothing that has the power [*Macht*] to exist. God alone, then, is the power to exist. It is that – *penes quod solum est esse* (in which alone being is), therefore the universal principle of being, the universal *potentia existendi*, whence it follows that *all* being is nothing but God's being. The latter is what is usually called pantheism. One can therefore see in this, in the determination of God as the immediate ability to be (I note that the ability to be cannot be thought here in the passive sense in which we say that contingent things can be and cannot be, namely under certain conditions, and when these are given; what I mean, rather, is an unconditional can-be [*Seynkönnen*], a lucid power and force [*Macht und Gewalt*] to exist, and when we say that God is the immediate capacity-to-be, we want to express the fact that he can be through his mere will [*Wollen*], without requiring anything other than wanting [*wollen*]) – one can see, in the determination of God as the infinite capacity-to-be, the *principle* of pantheism, and if theologians and philosophers said *this* only, we would not contradict them. Pantheism, in fact, does not consist in saying, as one might imagine, that all being is only the being of God. For no one has yet found

a way to deny this, even if one is usually loathe to affirm it. Pantheism does not consist in this, but rather in ascribing to God a *blind* and, in *this* sense, necessary being, a being in which he is *against his will*, and in in which he is deprived of all freedom, such as this is the case, for example, in Spinoza's system. Only this could be called pantheism, if one wanted to keep this name at all costs. *This* is the sense in which I affirm that the principle that expresses God's first relation to being is the principle of pantheism. It has also been noted by others <36> that the constant resurgence of this system in the most varied ages, e.g. in the age of the Indian Buddha as well as that of the Greek Xenophanes, and also in the most different parts of the world, e.g. on the peaks of Tibet as in the low plains of Holland, prevents us from considering this as a purely *accidental* product. Rather, it must be a natural product whose germ lies in the original and necessary primordial concepts [*Urbegriffen*] of all being. And this is exactly what is *dis-covered* here. We cannot avoid determining God as the immediate *potentia existendi*. But if he were *nothing* but *this*, it would inevitably lead us to pantheism, i.e. to a system of blind being, whereby God himself is only the power [*Potenz*] of his own being. *Existencia sequitur essentiam (causa sui) – Deus non alio modo causa rerum quam suae existentiae*. One could, consequently, say that this is the *principle* of pantheism, but it is premature to say that this *is* pantheism. I say: the *mere* concept of *potentia existendi*, whether posited exclusively or alone, the concept of the immediate ability to be (or of the ability of passing into being), would lead to pantheism. I explain this in more detail as follows. A mere *potentia existendi* cannot just pass into act [*Actus*], to rise into being, but it is *natural* for it to do so<sup>17</sup>. From the moment it is, it is natural for it to rise into the actual being. For all ability [*Können*] is, properly speaking, only a will [*Wollen*] that is not yet actually wanting [*wollendes*], therefore a will at rest<sup>18</sup>. The will [*Wille*] is the power, the possibility of willing [*Wollens*], willing [*Wollen*] itself is act. But it is natural for the will [*Wille*] to will [*wollen*], in the same way that we

say that it is natural for a creature endowed with free movement to move, i.e. (and this is the actual meaning of this expression) it requires no special willing [*Wollens*], but only a non-refusal [*nicht Nicht-Wollens*], such that an actually opposite (explicit) will would be required for it *not* to move. Therefore, also, nothing is required of that dormant will [*ruhende Wille*], which is assumed in the absolute *potentia existendi*, other than <37> to want [*wollen*], and not to want *something* (for there is nothing *in front of* it that it could want, it is the will absolutely devoid of any object), but only to want in general. Nothing is more difficult than to understand the original genesis [*Entstehung*] or generation [*Erzeugung*] of being. Many things appear difficult to us precisely *because* of their closeness. In fact, every being is *act*, as the general philosophical language recognizes. But every non-original act, i.e. every act conditioned by a potency, can only be *willing* [*Wollen*]; every original ontological generation [*Erzeugung*], therefore, takes place only in willing [*Wollen*]. Every will [*Wille*] that emerges in my initially dormant Heart [*Gemüth*] is a *being* which previously did not exist, and which consists precisely in mere willing [*Wollen*]. The *pure potentia existendi* is therefore itself still a lucid, non-willing will, and if it gives itself a being or puts on a being, that it is only because it *wants*. It is *being* in willing [*Wollen*], or rather willing itself is its being. There is nothing for it, between non-being and being, other than mere willing, i.e. the realization, positivization, activation of the will. The latter, *because* it has nothing in front of it that it could want, can no longer properly want *something* – it can only ignite itself, become active. But it is easy to see that the potency which has thus come into being by immediately rising *ex potentia in actum*, is no longer potency, and therefore no longer *will*, but that which is [*Seyende*] devoid of will and, in this sense, necessary. The potency posited outside *itself*, brought outside itself [*von sich gekommene*], is what, above *being* [*Seyn*], has ceased to be that which is [*Seyende*]. – It is now also that which is [*Seyende*], but in the opposite sense of what we have called that which is in

itself [*das Seyende selbst*]. There we thought of it as that which is free from being, which is still *above* being, but here it is that which is afflicted [*behaftete*] and entangled [*befangene*] with being, and which in this respect is subordinated to being (*existentiae obnoxium*). It is no longer the *subject* of being, as before, but that which is no longer but an *objective* being [*Seyende*] (as has always been said, and as Fichte said of Spinoza's substance, that it is a *mere* object, i.e. that which is <38> blind and necessary [*Seyende*]) – it is certainly *existing* [*Existirende*], this word taken in the sense of the Greek ἐξιστάμαι, from which the Latin *existo* apparently comes. That which is Being [*Seyende*] is an Εξιστάμενον, a being posited outside of *itself*, which longer possesses itself, blind [*besinnungsloses*]: in this sense it is that which is necessary and exists blindly [*blindlings Seyendes*], that which, *in* being, has ceased to be the source of being and has become blind substance deprived of will, therefore the exact opposite of God, the real non-God, which Spinoza aptly names the *causa sui* (cause of itself), but which, in fact, has ceased to be *causa* (cause) and is merely substance. Incidentally, I ask you not to understand what has just been said as if pantheism, which really emerged as a system, were itself to go back to the lucid essence, to the absolute *potentia existendi*. True pantheism does not know this *potentia existendi* in any other form than that in which, as it were, it appeared as soon as it disappeared into being. It would not be this blind system if it recognized something *before* the blind being, which is only infinite and limitless inasmuch as it does not comprehend itself, i.e. if it understood itself at the origin. Rather, it shares the blindness of its object. Surprised and outstripped [*übereilt*], as it were, by the being that blindly rushes into it [*hereinstürzenden*] – a being of which it knows in fact no *beginning*, and which therefore *must* appear to it as beginningless [*anfanglose*], eternal, as well as fathomless, because it is indeed the being that has lost its presupposition [*Voraussetzung*] – it loses against *this* being to which it knows *no* beginning, about which it cannot presuppose anything, in the face of which

it has no strength, against which it is completely powerless – in relation to this being, it loses all freedom, and must surrender itself to it blindly, as it were, without subsequently having any hold over it. Thus, for example, Spinoza cannot offer *any* explanation as to *how* this being, which is blind and infinite by nature, nevertheless receives limitations, affections, and modifications (determinations of the understanding), which he must acknowledge, since it would not be possible for him to imagine a single finite being without these limitations. There is absolutely no ground for such modifications in its <39> *principle*. Although Spinoza assures us that finite singular things proceed from God's nature in the same way that, following the triangle's nature, the sum of its two angles is = to two right angles – he thereby admits a purely *logical* consequence between God and things – this nevertheless remains a mere declaration. While geometry *shows* that this thesis follows from the triangle's nature, Spinoza cannot *show* that finite things result necessarily and intrinsically [*von selbst*] from the nature of his substance – he merely *says* it.

If we return from this explanation concerning pantheism in the context of our development, the situation is now like this. If God is a lucid essence, and if he is that which is in itself [*Seyende selbst*], we cannot exclude from him, either, the concept of the immediate and intrinsic [*von selbst*] ability to be [*seyn Könnens*]. For the essence is the *prius* of being, it is what was thought before being, and therefore cannot immediately be anything other than *potentia existendi*. But this principle, as we have just shown, is the *possible* principle of pantheism. But the principle of pantheism, for all that, is itself still not pantheism. But present-day theologians are so terrified of pantheism that, instead of abolishing it *in* its principle, rather try to ignore it, denying to it even the possibility of manifesting (which is also the main reason why they want to substitute the absolute uniqueness of God for the uniqueness of God *as such*, i.e. monotheism). But to be *actually* abolished [*aufgehoben*], to be negated at its root, this principle must manifest *in an actual way*,

and must be recognized at least as *existing* [*daseyend*], as impossible to exclude. It cannot just be silently put to the side. Simply ignoring it is not to overcome it. It must be explicitly contradicted. It is a concept that, by nature, cannot be excluded – a concept that must be addressed. Because they close their eyes to this principle, their whole theology remains vacillating: this principle *must* therefore be satisfied. That only being is with God, and consequently, that *every* being is only God's <40> being, this idea cannot be denied to either reason or feeling. It alone is the idea that makes all hearts beat<sup>19</sup>. Even Spinoza's rigid and lifeless philosophy owes the power which it has always exerted over hearts [*Gemüth*] – and not the most superficial among them, but especially the religious ones – it owes this entire power only to the fundamental idea that can no longer be found anywhere else. By rejecting the *principle* of pantheism (apparently because they do not dare to conjure it up), theologians deprive themselves of the means to achieve true monotheism. For true monotheism is perhaps nothing other than the overcoming of pantheism. One may also think, by anticipation, that true monotheism is nothing other than absolute uniqueness directed toward the unicity of God *as such*.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore – to show at present this transition – one cannot exclude from God this principle of the immediate being, the immediate power [*Macht*] to rise into being, with which every relation between that which is [*das Seyende*] and being [*Seyn*] begins. – God contains in himself that power

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<sup>20</sup> The proposition that expresses the mere uniqueness of essence or substance cannot itself be monotheism, but only the latter's *negative* side. If monotheism had this absolute uniqueness as its content, Spinoza would have to pass for a monotheist as much as alone the most convinced Christian can be called a monotheist. It is true that Hegel, in his *Encyclopedia*, cites the Eleatic system, Spinoza's system, and other similar ones, as monotheism. He even speaks of monotheisms in the plural, thereby showing, although he sought to connect church dogmas with his philosophy, that he never examined this most basic of concepts. If one had to think of monotheisms (in the plural), these should be just as few as there are several unique Gods. The one is as contradictory as the other. What is even more remarkable, however, is how others were able to use as their basis a system that had not even explained a concept so essential, so decisive for the entire Christian doctrine, and containing it so exhaustively, as the concept of monotheism, in order to establish with this system a so-called revolutionary critique of the entire edifice of Christian truths.

not as the matter of his being in general, *but* of his being *as* God. For if he really emerged [*hervortreten*] in that being of which he is the immediate potency [*Potenz*], he would be blind in this being, i.e. <41> non-Spirit (as well as the non-God). But *by* negating himself as non-Spirit, by this negation he manages to posit himself *as Spirit*, and so this principle itself must serve his being *as* God. God is therefore not *simply* that which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*], but (and this is *the* determination which we said should be added to the concept of *that which is in itself* [*Seyenden selbst*] in order for that concept to become completely identical to the concept of God) – God is that which is in itself [insofar as] *it is*, i.e. [insofar as] it truly is – he is τὸ ὄντως ὄν, which here means: he is that which is in itself, which, even *in being*, does not stop being that which is in itself, i.e. Spirit (which, even in being, remains as essence, as that which is in itself, i.e. as Spirit). Accordingly, it will no longer be difficult to show the transition to monotheism.

God, to the extent that he is that which is in itself, is also what can immediately transition into being, emerge into being. Those who deny this and who dispute that God is what can immediately emerge into being, insofar as he is able to come out of himself – those who dispute this thereby deprive God of every possibility of movement, and, just like Spinoza, transform him, but in a different way, into an essence that is no less motionless [*unbewegliches*] and absolutely powerless [*unvermögendes*]. They therefore see themselves compelled to admit, for example, that every actual creation is something incomprehensible to reason. *This* creates that insipid and absolutely impotent theism or deism, which is incapable of explaining anything, and which is the unique content of our so-called purely moral and puffed up [*ausgeblasenen*] religious teachings. This power of immediate being, of coming out of oneself, of becoming unequal to oneself [*sich ungleich Werdens*], this power of ecstasy [*Ekstasis*] is the true procreating [*Zeugungskraft*] force in God, which they deprive him of at the same time *as of* that principle<sup>20</sup>. For precisely in this (in

the fact that he is the immediate power), he has not only merely the universal matter, but the primary *material* of his divinity. This power in its *extra*-version, however, is the potency of the non-divine, even anti-divine, being. But this is precisely why, in its *intro*-version, it is the potency, <42> the foundation, the beginning, the “position” of the divine being – το γόνιμον, or, if I may use the bold expression of an apostle, το σπέρμα του θεου<sup>21</sup>. God is not God *by* this potency, but neither is he God *without* it. The true *concept* of God (I ask you to note that there is no talk yet of its reality), the true *concept* of God is the essence that can only be *as* essence, *as* spirit, by negating the adverse being. If you eliminate the power of this adverse being, you take away from God the possibility to be *as* Spirit, to posit himself, to generate himself *as* Spirit. The possibility of the adverse being is given precisely in this immediate ability to be [*Seynkönnen*]. But God – according to his concept – is that which has the ability to be [*Seynkönnende*], not in order to *be* something in accordance with himself (that which has the ability to be) – therefore, that which is blind – but rather in order *not* to be so, therefore in order to have in *himself* that being, *as* a pure *possibility*, as a mere foundation (what is only a foundation does not yet itself have being [*nicht seyend*]), as mere *beginning of his* being. Do not be surprised that I am talking about a beginning of the divine being. Since I am using this expression for the first time, I will also explain it to you. You can see for yourself that this is not about an external, but *internal* beginning of the divine being; we can therefore only think of him as *eternal*, i.e. permanent and everlasting. This is not a beginning that is a beginning at one time and ceases being so later, but a beginning that always is, that is no less a beginning today than it was since time immemorial. The eternal and everlasting beginning of the divine being, in which God posited himself not once and for all, but in which he eternally begins to posit himself, is this immediate power posited as the mere *foundation*. It is customary to say

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<sup>21</sup> John, 1<sup>st</sup> Letter, 3:9.



that in God there is neither beginning nor end. If one considers that which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*], but *without taking account* of being, it certainly has neither beginning nor end. But as soon as we move into *being*, i.e. as soon as we *want* or *think* that which is in itself as having being [*seyend*], <43> there is necessarily in that being a beginning, a middle, and an end – but, as we have said, an eternal beginning, an eternal middle, an eternal end – and the statement: there is in God neither beginning nor end, signifies, with respect to the divine being, only this: that there is in God no beginning to his beginning, and no end to his end. This is the only positive concept of the eternal and of eternity, whereas the common formula: *Aeternum est, quod fine et initio caret*, is only the negative concept of eternity. If one says that in the pure concept of that which is in itself no beginning and no end are thought, it only means that beginning and end have not *yet* been posited, i.e. in this absence of beginning and end, nothing positive is thought, but rather a pure negation, a lack: similarly, the concept of that which is is only perfected in the concept of *God*. To be *without* beginning and without end is not a perfection, but an imperfection; it is the negation of all action<sup>21</sup>. For where there is an action, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Besides, one also determines God as the *Absolute*. But the Latin word *absolutum* means nothing more than the *perfected* [*das Voll-endete*]: not that which has no end [*Ende*] in itself, nor the purely and simply infinite, but what is finite and self-contained, as the Latin language describes him more fully by the expression: *id quod omnibus numeris absolutum est*. However, in every action, in every movement, there are only three *essential* moments or numbers: beginning, middle, and end. Therefore, what contains these moments is *completely* perfected, or *omnibus numeris absolutum*.

For further explanation, we can also say that this power of the immediate being is the natural or also the *nature* in God, as we noted earlier that it is *natural* for him to transit [*übergehen*]. In the concept of nature only an ability [*Können*] is thought. The nature of a being [*Wesen*], of a

plant, for example, is what enables it to be a plant, that by virtue of which it *can* be a plant. The nature of a being is, therefore, distinct from his *actual* essence [*Wesen*]. The nature of a being is the <44> *prius* of this being, its being is the *posterius*. But it is precisely by his *not* being what he should be *merâ naturâ* – by mere nature – it is precisely because of this *that* he is God, i.e. the Supra-natural. It is in conformity with the concept of God that he posits himself, in that potency, as not having being (*that* he keeps it as a *mere* potency, a mere possibility) – *this is how*, I say, that potency is determined by the concept of God. For, as we have already recalled, there is no talk yet of reality at all, but merely of the *concept* of God, to the extent that he *Is*. – It is an *a priori* concept that we are establishing – we are determining in advance *which* being will or can be a divine being, and we say: in the concept of the divine being, this *immediate* being, which would be posited through the immediate passage *a potentia ad actum*, is posited as *negated* [being], *as* purely potential being. The concept of God therefore implies that he posits himself in this being as not *having being* [*seyend*], but he cannot be posited [in it] as not having being without being posited in another as *having being*, and in this latter as *merely* having being, i.e. as having being without transition *a potentia ad actum*. We will leave aside this last determination for the time being, to explain it in more detail later. At present, it is only a question of clarifying this relation between an antecedent [*Vorausgehenden*] and a consequent [*Folgenden*], *in general*. God, in accordance with this concept, and therefore *as* God, posits himself in this first being as not having being, but only to posit himself in a second being as merely *having being*. That first being, in its negation, is therefore the possibility or the potency of the second, or this second has its potency, its possibility – one could also say, its *material* – it has them in the first [being], and in the negation of this first [being]. The two – that which is not [*nicht Seyende*] and sheer being [*rein Seyende*] – are therefore indissolubly chained to one another and cannot be separated from each other. If we therefore ask

what God really is *as such*, it is evident that he is neither particularly the negated being, which we would like to denote by 1, nor the positive being, which we <45> would like to denote by 2, that he is therefore God as neither of these two in particular; but rather that God is only God in 1 + 2, i.e. as posited as having being [*seyende*] *through* negation of 1 and 2. And *since* he is God neither as 1 nor as 2, but only as 1 + 2, there are not two Gods that are posited, but only *one* God, even though two terms have been posited: not two Gods, but – we can only say – two *figures* of the One [God], who is in 1 + 2. You see here immediately (as regards the more specific definition of 2, I keep myself from entering this discussion only so that you may be more willing to follow me by seeing where it goes) – you note here, as I said, immediately, that something appears that, we could say, contains the unity of God *as such* or according to *divinity*, and so something that really limits [*einschränkt*] the unity or unicity of divinity.

That the concept of monotheism contains a limiting, restrictive side, has been also recognized in the way – inadmissible, as I have shown – of speaking about it. One felt that it was not enough for monotheism *to deny* that anything else existed apart from God, and so one has come to deny that there is no other God other than him, i.e. one has limited the negation in that proposition to divinity. The mistake, however, was that one thought about the Unique One only from the *outside*, instead of referring the unicity to God himself. One saw the immediate content of monotheism not as the *concept* of the unique God, but also as the *statement* [*Aussage*] of uniqueness. Since one has only looked for unicity on the side of the *statement*, all that remained on the side of the subject of the statement is the indeterminate and universal concept of *God*. If one admits, however, as one should, that the *concept* of the unique God, i.e. the concept of monotheism, is not about something *apart from* God, but only about God *himself*, and yet at the same time thinks that this concept necessarily contains a restriction, i.e. that the uniqueness is

limited to God as such, i.e. to God's divinity, the only sense <46> that remains in this way of thinking is that God is only unique – as *God* or according to his divinity, and, therefore, that in other respects, or apart from his divinity, he is not unique, but rather – since no other antithesis is thinkable here – *plural* [*Mehrere*].

At the very beginning, among the reasons given against the usual explanations of monotheism, we could have put forward that according to which monotheism as a dogma, as the distinctive doctrine that it is, must have a *positive* content, and cannot consist in a pure negation; in the latter, one merely asserts that are *not*, or as one rather ought to say, that there *cannot* be one or many other gods apart from him. This does not contain any *affirmation*. An affirmation cannot, *in any way*, consist in saying that God is One [*Einer*]. This only means that he is not plural, it is a mere negation. The real affirmation can rather only be in the contrary, in the statement according to which he is *not* one, but plural, although not as God or according to divinity. The error of the usual presentation therefore consists in that one believes that what is *immediately* affirmed in the concept of monotheism is unity, whereas what is immediately affirmed is rather plurality. Unity, and God's unity *as such*, is only indirectly affirmed, it is [affirmed] only in opposition to plurality. To express ourselves in more rigorous terms, we must rather say: far from unity being *immediately* affirmed in the rigorous concept [of monotheism], it is rather immediately contradicted. It is denied that God is unique in the sense in which one principle, e.g. the one we denote by 1, – is one. In *this* sense God is rather *not* unique. With the just feeling of unicity rather *denied* in this sense (in the sense of exclusivity), the earliest theologians, e.g. John of Damascus, to whom we can attribute almost the entire speculative side of our theology up to now, say: God is not so much unique as he is supra-unique [*übereinzig*]: more than just singular, *unus sive singularis quis*. Plurality <47> is not denied of God in general, but only of God *as such*. It is only *as God* that he is singular, i.e.

non-plural, or that he is not many *gods*. This does not prevent him from being plural, but, on the contrary, if in fact he is the only *God*, unique in accordance with divinity, then this statement *requires* that, *in other respects*, i.e. insofar as he is not God, he be plural. – That God, as such, is the unique God, only has meaning, and can only become an object of assertion, if he is *not* unique *at all*, and, therefore, if he is considered *plural* – *not* as God or apart from his divinity. In general, if one wants to know what such a world-historical concept means, there is no need to consult textbooks or compendia. For no matter how one represents the first emergence of the concept of the unique God in humanity, it certainly did not emerge through mere reflection and school wisdom. In particular, we *know* that *we*, i.e. modern humanity, did not *invent* this concept at all, but that we have merely inherited it from Christianity. One could well explain why it was subsequently deemed good to conceal the actual positivity of this concept, to treat it as such a mystery [*Geheimniß*] that we have ended up losing it; and it is no less understandable that this concept, after acquiring some authority, was immediately raised to become the canon of all higher research, an inviolable presupposition, but at the same time was thereby withdrawn from all critique. If one wants to discover the *true*, real meaning of such a concept, which belongs not to school, but to humanity, one must see how it first announced itself in the world. There is no better attested word about God’s unity other than the capital and classic address to Israel: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] your God [Elohim] is one [*einzig*] LORD – יהוה אחד” [*Deut.* 6, 4] –; it does not mean: “he is unique”; “he is אחד” or One [*Einer*], purely and simply, but rather: “He is a unique *Jehovah*,” i.e. that he is only unique as Jehovah, as the *true* [*wahre*] God or according to his divinity, and it is therefore permitted to say that, leaving aside his being-Jehovah, he can be <48> *plural*.<sup>22</sup> Here, then, in the first word with which the doctrine of the unique God is announced, we

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<sup>22</sup> Neither the grammar, nor the genius, of the Hebrew language, as far as I know, contain something which would prevent us from saying, instead of יהוה אחד יהוה אלהינו, Jehovah your God is one Jehovah, אחד

*have*, expressed in clear and distinct words, the restriction that must be thought of in the concept of monotheism.

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יהוה אחד, Jehovah your God is one. One must therefore admit that this repetition of the main term is intentional. Cf. *Zach.* 14, 9. <Trans.: Cf. SW II/3, 270.>

### Lecture 3

<49> I have now provisionally and generally shown the passage from absolute unicity to God's unicity *as such*. You see that what in God is the foundation of absolute unicity itself becomes an element of his unicity as God, that is, what is the *principle* of pantheism itself becomes an element of monotheism. I will now, however, try to explain in more detail the special relationship between the two first discovered elements of the plurality.

That which is [*das Seyende*], in its progression to – *being*, is, at first, mere *ability to be*, but only in order to be, in the second place, sheer being, that is, the being that contains just as little *ability* [*Können*] as the first contains something of a *being*. That which has being, considered in these *two moments*, therefore as 1 + 2, is the essence containing the infinite *potentia existendi* as mere potency, as mere ability [*Können*]. Insofar as it *contains* the latter, it cannot be *that* which is contained, but on the contrary, in order to be able to *contain* that potency of being, it must be that which is with the same overabundance as that infinite *ability* [*Können*], i.e. infinite non-*being*. The infinite lack of being in one can only be compensated by the infinite abundance [*Ueberfluß*] of being in the other, and this is how the first can be kept in power. The immediate ability to be is of such a kind that a possibility of *keeping* it in ability [*Können*] must first of all be given or explained. That which contains something else is always at the same time <50> what satisfies it [*Begnügende*]. To contain, in Latin, means *continere*, and we can say: *quod continet, CONTENTUM reddit id quo continet*, i.e. what contains satisfies what it contains, *contentum esse aliqua re*, to be really contained in [*durch*] something or by [*von*] something, means the same as: to be content with something, satisfied by it. The overabundant being of the second [moment] thus silences the actual being of the first, so that the latter becomes inactive as *pura potentia*, as pure

ability [*reines Können*], and does not desire to pass into a being of its own<sup>23</sup>. Just as the first is *potentia pura* (lucid potentiality), so is the second *actus purus*, i.e. it is not what first passes *a potentia ad actum*, but rather is *immediately* act. That which is, in its second moment (I say *moment*: it is generally known that moment, as much as *movimentum*, come from *moveo*, and what we are considering *here* is the transition, i.e. the movement of that which is [*Seyenden*] toward being: these differences are, in fact, movement or passage points of the divine being, we could therefore also call them moments, or also, since these moments are what make the divine being possible, the possibilities of this divine being, we could therefore also call them *potencies* of the divine being): – in its first moment, then, or in the first potency of its being, that which is is *pure* potentiality, *potentia pura*; in its second moment it is likewise pure being, *actus purus*. But the first is purely potentiality only insofar as the second is pure being, and vice versa, the second can only be *actus purus* to the extent that the first is *potentia pura*. – Therefore, although 1 is the first, the antecedent [*Vorausgehende*], 2 the second or the consequent [*Folgende*], there is no real before or after here, but we must imagine both of them posited at the same time. The immediate non-being [*nicht seyende*] is not posited until sheer being [*rein seyende*] has been posited as well; there is the highest compatibility between them (they are in mutual agreement), *because* what is negated in one is posited in the other, and <5I> vice versa<sup>24</sup>. – What behaves as *potentia pura* is, to that

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<sup>23</sup> In the unity, 1 and 2 are eternal Sufficiency [*Genüge*]: they both together represent poverty and abundance, from whose union Eros emerges, according to the famous Platonic tale. (Extracted from another manuscript.)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *SW* II/3, 232: “Gerade, daß sie im *reinen* – nicht im theilweisen – Gegensatz miteinander stehen, daß jedes die reine Negation des anderen ist, das eine, indem es nicht *außer*, das andere, indem es nicht *in* sich ist, oder umgekehrt, jenes indem es nicht Objekt, dieses, indem es nicht Subjekt von sich selbst ist, macht unmöglich, daß sie sich ausschließen. Denn z.B. zwei Seyende, deren jedes Subjekt und Objekt von sich selbst wäre, würden sich ausschließen, aber das reine Subjekt schließt das reine Objekt und das reine Objekt schließt das reine Subjekt nicht aus, und *ein und dasselbe* kann *beide* seyn. Gerade aus dem *reinen* Gegensatz folgt hier (um mich dieses Ausdrucks wieder zu bedienen) die höchste gegenseitige Annehmlichkeit.”



extent, merely subject, but not subject *of itself* (for then it would be at the same time object), but subject of the second or *for* the second, it is subject without being object. Thus, in turn, the second (which we have named *pure* or *infinite* being) is pure object: not for itself, for then it would also be subject; but it is pure object for the first, and therefore mere object, without being subject. Each is infinite in its own way, the one *infinite* subject, the other *infinite* object. So here we have a finite-Infinite, i.e. a formed Infinite: not formless [*formloses*], but, I would say, organic, because each is finite vis-à-vis the other (to the extent that it is not what the other is), but considered in itself, it is infinite. After what has already been said about the nature of ability [*Können*] (that which has being as *potentia pura*), we can compare the first to a motionless [*ruhenden*], that is, non-willing, will [*Willen*]. By contrast, that which is [*das Seyende*] as sheer being [*seyende*] is, we must say, identical to a lucid willing [*Wollen*], a willing, as it were, devoid of will [*willenlosen*]; as an example of such a willing devoid of will we could consider the overabundant goodness of a being [*Wesen*] that, as it were, cannot *refuse* to give itself [*sich versagen*]. Of the two, the *potentia pura* is what can or could refuse to give itself; if it wanted to be subject, possibility, potency of itself, that is, if it wanted or adopted [*annehmen*] a being [*Seyn*] of its own, it would thereby refuse to give itself to the second, and would exclude it from itself. The *potentia pura* is the will that is *potentially* selfish [*selbstisch seyn könnende*], but that, precisely because it is merely potential [*seyn könnende*], is not selfish, but non-selfish [*unselbstische*]. The second is what cannot refuse to give itself, selfless [*Selbstlose*] in itself, what cannot but give itself to the first. The first is enchantment, the magic that brings and determines the second to rise above all selfness [*Selbstheit*] to the overabundance of pure being. The more one deepens itself, that is, negates its selfness, the more the other rises above all selfness. The first must be nothing (I mean nothing for itself) so that overabundant being [*überschwenglich Seyend*] <52> can become something for it, and vice versa,

the second must be infinite being [*unendlich Seyende*] to maintain the first in its non-egoity [*nicht-selbst-Seyn*]. In both there is an equal selflessness or, to recall an outdated, but apt expression, the same perfect self-unacceptance [*Selbstunannehmlichkeit*]<sup>22</sup>, and thus the greatest *mutual* acceptance [*Annehmlichkeit*]. The first is, in fact, an absolute negation of the being-*outside-itself*, [while] the second [is] an equally perfect negation of the being-*in-itself*. The first (the *potentia pura*) does not *put on* [*anziehen*] the being that is in it as a possibility. This is precisely the reason why the second is that which is not [in] *itself* [*Sich Seyende*], but rather that which is only for the first, indeed, what cannot be other than the first, and is therefore its *pre*-supposition. Because the first (the beginning) can essentially only be subject. That which is cannot immediately be object. To be object [*Objektseyn*] is second, and presupposes *that* for which it is object. Hence, that which is can immediately be mere subject, and it can only be *pure* subject, mere subject, if it is not subject *of itself*, i.e. provided it is *at the same time* its own object. That which is, therefore, is necessarily one thing insofar as it subject, and another thing insofar as it is object. It is the same existent [*Seyende*], but the *same* thing is one thing as 1, and another thing as 2; it is, therefore, a real *plurality*. It is, as 1, subject of itself as 2. To this extent it is the same [*dasselbe Seyende*], but 1 and 2 are not the same: each is different, because the one excludes the other, and is not what the other is. 2 is mere object, and this is precisely why it can only be 2, *secundo loco*, that is, it presupposes another. This sheer infinite *ability* [*Können*] *can*, by contrast, be a *beginning*, and if it is a *beginning* – although for the time being merely an internal one – it is a beginning precisely because it *attracts* [*anzieht*] this infinite being [*unendliche Seyende*] as object. *To begin* [*AnFANGEN*], in fact, or, as one also says, *to start* [*AnFAHEN*] and *to attract* [*anZIEHEN*], are but one word. The beginning is in *at*-traction, but what attracts to itself must be lacking, poor in

one's being. As Christ said: Blessed are the poor *in spirit*<sup>25</sup>, that is, for the spirit, so that they may attract the spirit to themselves. For if one were full of one's own being<sup>26</sup>, <53> one would not be able to *at*-tract any being, but would rather push it away. (You naturally feel the deep moral meaning contained in these supreme concepts. This is at the same time a proof of the truth of these concepts, and it is precisely this moral meaning that allows us to understand them.) However, also on *that* understanding of the word *anziehen*, where it means the same as *to clothe* [*bekleiden*], in this meaning the first potency is also the potency which attracts the other to itself. This sheer naked ability [*Können*] (bare of all being) *clothes itself*, as it were, by attracting the infinite being, or rather covers itself with this being, so that we only see *the latter*, but not [that ability] itself. It itself remains deeply hidden, it is the real mystery of the divine being, which, lacking all being in *itself*, covers itself externally with infinite being [*unendlich Seyende*], and because it is nothing for *itself*, is therefore *another* (namely, the infinite being). This is, in fact, the true meaning of the expression: *to be* something. When being is affirmed *cum emphasi*, the expression: *to be* something is = to this one: to be a *subject* of something. The "is," the copula in every sentence, e.g., in the sentence: A is B, if it has any meaning at all, if it is emphatic – that is, if it is the copula of a real judgement, "A is B" means: A is subject of B, that is, it is not itself and by nature B (in this case the proposition would be an empty tautology), but: A is also what can not be B<sup>23</sup>. If what occupies in that proposition the place of the subject, if, therefore, A, in the case we have just mentioned, were such that it could *only – be* what occupies the place of the predicate, without also being able not to be this, then this sentence would not express anything: it would be meaningless. I can only say of a person that he *is* healthy insofar as I suppose, not that he is above and beyond any possibility of being sick (for then the sentence would not signify anything), but rather and only that this

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew 5:3.

<sup>26</sup> If one were selfish.

possibility is subjugated in it, that is, that it is only subject or – latent. By denying that he is ill, I simultaneously allow the possibility of the opposite *to shine through* (this is the real meaning of the word <54> *emphasis*<sup>27</sup>). Similarly, when I say of any geometric figure, whether it is drawn on a blackboard or represented physically: this is a circle, or this is an ellipse, then this is a judgement. The subject in this proposition is what I see, the matter by which the figure is represented. If I therefore judge that this *is* a circle or that this *is* an ellipse, I am expressing that what I see and which is now a circle could also be a different geometrical figure or not be one at all. It is only to the extent that I presuppose this that I can say with determination or *cum emphasi*: this *is* a circle or this *is* an ellipse. And in this sense we say here: the infinite ability [*Können*], the infinite non-being [*unendlich nicht Seyende*], is the infinite being, that which infinitely is. – Do not be surprised that I dwell so long on explaining these potencies and their relation. For it is precisely these potencies with which we will have to deal later: we must therefore grasp their meaning and their relations in order to recognize them again and again under all their forms and disguises.

It becomes immediately evident that we cannot be satisfied with duality. The aim of this development is actually to show or explain what that which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*] is like. Now, however, that which is in itself is always actually a subject, a power [*Macht*] to be. Yet, *immediately*, as we have just seen, and *primo impetu*, if I may so express myself, we cannot, either, posit the power to be *as being* [*seyend*]. The being intended here is objective [*gegenständliche*], real [*objective*] being. But nothing is *immediate* object <55>, it is only object for another, i.e.

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<sup>27</sup> One should not judge the meaning of emphasis according to its modern meaning, e.g. the “*avec emphase*” of the French, where it only partially exists, but rather according to the Marcus Fabius Quintilianus’ explanations (*De institutione oratoria*, 9, 2, 3) [Göttingen, 1738. Leipzig, Vogel (hrsg. v. G.L. Spalding), 1798/1816. He interprets this term as follows: “*plus quam DIXERIS significationem*” (IX, 2, 3), and further says: *non ut intellegatur efficit, sed UT PLUS intellegatur* (VIII, 2, 11), or rather: *ALTIOREM præbens intellectum, QUAM VERBA PER SE IPSA DECLARANT* (VIII, 3, 83). Regarding the word “latent” that I have used above, I would cite IX, 2, 64: *Est emphasis, cum ex aliquo dicto LATENS ALIQUID eruitur*.

insofar as it presupposes another. That which is in itself [*das Seyende selbst*] cannot therefore be posited in the first moment i.e. to the extent that nothing else is presupposed for it, except as pure subject, as a lucid power to be, but with the explicit determination of non-*being*. That which is, therefore, in its *first moment*, is nothing but *potentia pura*. In a second moment, it posits itself again, and now as object (because it is already subject), but it is precisely the subject posited in pure and completely objectivity, that is, as the *opposite* of itself. Taken *substantially*, according to mere substance, the subject is also in 2 (for there can be nothing other than what is subject; subject and object are, in *this* sense, the same, the subject being the subject only posited as subject, the object [being] the subject only posited as object). Taken in the purely substantial sense, the subject is therefore also in the second, but it is the subject that has been completely objectivized, converted into being (namely, into the object), so that the subjective [*Subjektive*] in it is now latent, concealed, and tacit, as this was the case also in 1, where *being* or the objective [*das Objektive*] was posited in a latent and concealed state. We could say that just as in 1 *being* (which here is always understood as attribute, objective) is latent, so in 2, the subject, selfness, as mere *possibility*, is accordingly completely latent. We therefore now have in the one, in 1, the pure *ON* (the pure *ens* in the subjective sense, the *what Is*, but *without* any being, with abstention from all being); in the other, in 2, we also have the pure *ON*, but in the reverse, merely objective sense, as that which has been poured out entirely into being, without returning to itself, without subjecthood, without selfness. But, apparently, what we want is in neither of these two terms in themselves, although it is also inevitable that we should first posit both together: what we actually want can only be found in them separately. For what we really want is the subject, the lucid power to be, which *as such* is [*seyend*]. We therefore want the *subject*, which *as such* and without it *ceasing* to be *such*, i.e. lucid power to be, is *object*, and we want the *object*, which, because it is object – *being* – <56> does not

cease to be subject, lucid power, *potentia pura existendi*. But these very determinations exclude each other *im*-mediately. We *can* only posit, immediately or *primo momento*, the pure subject without being, and *secundo momento*, pure being without subjecthood, and only in the third place, only as *tertium exclusum*, as excluded third, will we be able to posit the object, which, as such, is also subject, or the subject which, as such, is no less object or real [*seyend*]. Only in the third place, I say, i.e. only to the extent that we *pre*-suppose for it the other two. If you think that we are trying to start from this last concept, it will immediately disintegrate for us. The concept is: the subject as such that is *posited* or that is [*seyend*]. But all being is an ex-sistence [*Hinausgesetzt-seyn*], an ex-position [*Exponirt-seyn*], a standing out [*Hinausstehen*], as it were, as the Latin *Exstare* expresses. Since we presumably have nothing against which the subject can be *extra*-posited, stand out [*ex-stirend*], it falls back for us in the centre, in the depth of its mere subjecthood, and we therefore have, despite having wanted to start with the higher and perfect concept, we have the pure subject, the subject which indeed is not *ex-stans*, but *in-stans* (in-standing). This beginning with what does not have being is absolutely necessary, inevitable, although we may not *want* it. We posit this beginning not because we want it, but because we cannot do otherwise: it is the non-wanted (it will later appear to us as such in mythology), it is that which, without being truly posited, cannot be limited to not being posited, that which, without actually having being, cannot be limited to not having the power to be, that which we cannot but posit. We may now start from this point, and henceforth we are allowed to posit *being*. – But beyond being, beyond the object, we lose sight of the subject; we now have that which is pure being, that which is infinite, but without having it as power to be. For what is *power* to be, is also power not to be. But this power *not* to be is what the second in a sense lacks. It is that which cannot <57> refuse itself, or rather what can *only* be, i.e. what is necessary, and therefore also sheer, infinite being, that which is completely eccentric,

as 1 is absolutely concentric. It is only in the third place, where that which is can *no* longer deviate – neither to the right nor to the left – only when that which is is posited in a third moment, when it can neither be pure subject (since the place of the pure subject is already occupied by 1), nor pure object (because its place is already occupied by 2), when all that remains for it, in contrast to, or to the exclusion of, 1, is to be object, and in opposition to, or to the exclusion of, 2, to be subject: it is only then that that which is must become immobile as the inseparable subject-object, as the [subject-object] in *being* or *as* having being. Because while it is = to 2 (equal to the second), it remains power to be (therefore free from being), thus = to 1, and conversely, while it is the lucid power to be, and insofar as it is = to 1, it is no less something *having being* [*seyende*], therefore = to 2. And since it remains, *in* being, *free* from being (power to be), the ability to be possessing itself, the power to be possessing itself (it is what possesses itself, because as subject, i.e. inasmuch as it possesses itself, it is at the same time object, i.e. the object of its own possession): we could also say, in other words, that it is what is perpetually in act, without ceasing to be potency (source of being), what, in *being*, maintains a command of oneself, and conversely, when it is potency, this does not mean it is any less in act – what cannot be lost, the abiding-*in*-oneself. The abiding-*in*-oneself contains two [terms], namely a) the going-away-from-oneself, [b)] the being-outside-of-oneself, as is the case of 2. What cannot, in fact, go away *from* oneself, what cannot be eccentric, is purely *in* oneself, attached to *oneself*, as it were, as is the case of 1. Of what is purely *in* oneself, that does not go away from oneself, one cannot really say that it is within oneself. Being-*in*-oneself means to remain and abide in the being-*outside-of*-oneself *in oneself* (in one's essence), to not lose, in the being-*outside-of*-oneself, one's in-oneself [*An-sich*], one's essence, one's self. But language has no other word than *spirit* to designate this self-possession, this abiding-*in*-oneself, which, in acting, remains potency, and in being, remains power to be. Only to spirit is it given <58> to

remain potency while in action, to remain source of willing, i.e. will, *in* willing, and vice versa, to be lucid *will* while willing. Thus, with this third moment or third potency, what we wanted from the beginning is reached, namely that that which has being, *as such*, has being [*seyend*], but we must never forget that this is not possible immediately, but only through a progression from one form of being to another, through a movement (not external, but internal) in which that which *merely* is, and which consequently does not *have being*, is the eternal beginning; in which *sheer* (i.e. pure) being, and which consequently is not in command of oneself, is the eternal middle; in which that which, in being, stays free from being, i.e. the power to be, is the eternal end.

After the last development, we must recall what was noted at the beginning: that before and until now the discussion was only about the *concept* of the divine being, not yet about a real being [of God]. The concept developed so far is only the concept of the divine being *a priori*, i.e. the concept that we have of this being *before* his real being. All we can say so far is that God (who, as such, is not a being that has being, but is the freedom to be or not to be, the *supra*-being, as the Ancients already called him), God, *if* he is, is he who *can* be in this way, in these three forms or figures of being – but we have not yet touched on the question about *whether* he *Is*. If we see *being* or the act as the positive, and, subsequently, non-being or mere potency as the negative, and if we call that which has being A, then (I recall the already known signs) that which has being is in the first moment or in the first potency of its being –A (by which we express that it is that which does not *have being*, that it is not object); in the second potency of its being, it is +A (where there is no negation, sheer and infinite being); in its third potency or figure, it is the ability to be as such, the power that has being, which as such is therefore  $\pm A$ <sup>28</sup>. <59> To use these terms also here, I say:

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<sup>28</sup> Here, the  $\pm A$  does not therefore mean this *negative* indifference that A possesses <59> in itself before all determination. It is the positive indifference of what is no longer mere –A, nor mere +A, but the third, the *positive* indifference, this *equivalence* that we must think in the absolute freedom to be and not to be, to manifest and not to manifest.



the foregoing has given nothing but the pre-concept of the divine being. Until now, God has only been the one that *can* be in be these three forms, as  $-A + A \pm A$ , but he is not yet the one that has being, the actual being [*Wirkliche*]. Only the form of the divine life is given, not yet actual life, the living God himself. Yet it is precisely through this concept that what will become afterward is determined beforehand. The concept of God determines in advance the fact that God is the immediate potency of being, not in an indeterminate way, as an indeterminate duality, as *ἀοριστος Δύας*, to use an expression of the Ancients, but as potency that can both remain potency and pass over into being (therefore *to cease* being potency). The *concept* of God, or his *nature* (because this has the *exact* same meaning) determines (therefore *a priori*) that it is the immediate power of being only *in* intro-version [*Hineinwendung*], in concealment, in secrecy. This potency is therefore the original (*because* already posited by nature), immemorial mystery of his divinity, what is before all thought, posited as subordinated, as latent, already by God's *nature* (the discussion is not yet about any action). It is therefore also what cannot manifest through God's nature, but only, *if* it must manifest, through his *will* (you see here the great thing that our development has made possible). This potency is therefore what we will always find later, *however* we may find it, as destined by the divine nature to mystery (to potency).

The foregoing development has given us the concept of God, but it has given us with it also the only thing that we are actually looking for at present: the concept of monotheism, and now in its entirety. <60> To the one which can only be in such a way, as  $-A + A \pm A$ , and whose concept unites, *before* even any actual being, [and] with an indissociable link, these forms and figures of being, we should give the name of All-One [*den All-Einen*] *naturâ suâ*. It is the One-*All*. Because these forms are not a plurality that is merely undetermined, but rather a self-determined plurality, i.e. they are a true *All* or *παν*, and what we have already anticipated as a necessary consequence of

the concept, to wit, that God Is he in whom there is only being, *penes quem solum est esse*, what we have anticipated as a necessary consequence of this concept, to wit, that the modalities of the divine being must be the modalities of every being<sup>29</sup>: this could certainly be demonstrated now, <61> if I did not reserve this for a later discussion<sup>24</sup>. If, however, you assume that *all* the possibilities, all the principles of being, are contained in these three forms (and, indeed, these three concepts are the true original concepts, the true original potencies of all being; they contain the basis of all logic and all metaphysics), if you assume this, then God in *this* sense, also, is the *All-One*. He is the *All-One*, not [only] because he excludes something from himself, as in pantheism, which *only knows God as* a blind being [*blind Seyenden*], but because he does *not* exclude *anything*. He is not mere totality, but is also the *All-One*, because he is not God in any of these three forms taken separately, neither as  $-A$ , nor as  $+A$ , nor even as  $\pm A$ . These forms are only points

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<sup>29</sup> Editor's note: In the manuscript, we find here this comment in the margins: "Hegel's Logic, First Part, p. 393." That is where we find the well-known criticism of the theory of potencies. I re-transcribe it for comparison: "The ratio of powers especially has recently been applied to *conceptual determinations*. Thus the concept has been called 'the *first* power' in its immediacy; 'the *second* power' in its otherness or difference, in the existence of its moments; and 'the *third* power' in its turning back to itself or as totality. – It immediately occurs against this usage that power, as so used, is a category that essentially belongs to quantum and has no conceptual connection to the *potentia*, δύναμις, of Aristotle. The ratio of powers indeed expresses determinateness in the truth that it has attained as difference – but difference as found in the *particular concept* of quantum, not as it is in the concept as such. Quantum contains the negativity that belongs to the nature of the concept but not as in any way already posited in the determination which is specific to it; so far as the concept is concerned, the differences of quantum are superficial determinations; they are still far from being determined as they are in the concept. It was in the infancy of philosophical thinking that numbers were used, as by Pythagoras, to designate universal essential differences, and for this purpose, *first* power, *second* power, etc., have no advantage over numbers. This was a preliminary stage in the process of comprehension by pure thought; only after Pythagoras were the determinations of thought themselves discovered, that is, they were *explicitly* brought to consciousness. But to step back in this process to number determinations is the symptom of a thought that senses its incapacity and, in an effort to stand up to the contemporary philosophical culture which is accustomed to thought determinations, now adds the comedy of pretending that its weakness is something new and superior, a step forward" (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic* ed. and trans. George di Giovanni [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 280-281). Book One: The Doctrine of Being, Section II: Magnitude (Quantity), Chapter 3: Ratio of the quantitative relation, "C. The Ratio of Powers," Remark (§3). General information about the meaning of the theory of potencies can be found below, at the beginning of the sixth lecture <61>. One can also refer to the remarks concerning the use of *numbers* in philosophy in the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (SW II/1, 312).

of passage for his being, and therefore, if he is *God*, it is as none of these forms separately, but only as their indissoluble (spiritual, personal) unity and sequence<sup>25</sup>. In this regard, therefore, he is the *All-One* – namely, according to his *concept* or his *nature*, and therefore, essentially, indissolubly, and necessarily. But the very *fact* that he is the *All-One*, or rather, as we should express ourselves from the current point of view, he who can only be uni-total, is also the true, unique content of the *concept* of monotheism. We therefore have here what we are looking for, but since we know God, first of all, only as the *All-One* according to his *concept* (according to his essence), we still only have monotheism as a concept or in the concept, and not yet as a *dogma*. This will not be the case for much longer, we will press on toward this goal. But we have monotheism as a concept. For alone can be called the unique *God* that which, according to his concept, is the *All-One*, who is not unique in the negative, pejorative sense<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> The absolute uniqueness, from which we started, can also be called the negative uniqueness, because it does not grasp any divine relation. – If theology recognizes no place for the doctrine of the unique God except under the so-called negative attributes, that is, those that approach God before and beyond all acting [*Thun*], therefore before and beyond all relations, if in <62> this way it only allows the meaning of monotheism to consist in this negative uniqueness, it becomes evident that what has lacked in theology until now is the actual concept of monotheism. – As is well known, theologians oppose the negative attributes to the positive ones. Without a doubt, this very old distinction between negative and positive attributes rests on an even older dogmatic tradition, which had already been vulgarized and lost its scientific character in the earliest accounts. One could say: among the admitted divine attributes, the negative ones are merely theistic, the positive ones are monotheistic, or are those that are only possible and appear with *mono*-theism. One might therefore expect that those who feel some inclination for mere theism will mostly use negative attributes to designate God, like the French, for example, who when calling God, say: *L'ÉTERNEL*, the *Eternal*, *L'ÊTRE INFINI*, the *eternal Being*, etc., which is also true of God, but which does not express the actual divinity of God at all. It has remained unnoticed that there is no transition from the negative attributes to the positive ones, given that no one yet has succeeded in showing that eternity, infinity, etc. imply wisdom, goodness, and justice, whereas it is very easy to derive one of these negative attributes from the others.

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*Editor's note:* The latter ideas (on the dialectic of the negative and positive attributes) are treated in greater detail in an *older* manuscript. Although the account in that manuscript differs from the present one, the following note, which is extracted from it, will not, I believe, distract the reader.

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If one followed the explanations of the Moderns, negative attributes would not be understood as meaning anything other than predicates resulting from expressions in which some imperfection is removed from God, e.g. invisibility, incorporeality, [im]mortality, etc. The ancient theologians, who received this concept from Tradition, have seen in it something else and even deeper. At least a trace of this can still be found when one of them expresses himself as follows. What is stated affirmatively (καταφατικῶς) of God, does not show the nature, but what gravitates around it (τα περι την φύσιν), that is, what is added to nature, and goes beyond nature, what envelops it and covers it, as it were. What one calls nature, the other calls essence, when he says: sanctity, justice, follows nature (δε ουσίαν δηλοι), but does not show the essence itself (οὐκ αὐτὴν δε την οὐσίαν δηλοι) [\*Suicer. Tom. I, p. 488. 1376]. In fact, if one examines, which attributes the Moderns count among the negative ones, and which among the positive ones, without taking their explanations into account, one soon becomes convinced that they, undoubtedly also as a result of tradition, consider among the former <63> those which mere theism, and therefore pantheism no less than monotheism, also recognize, namely being-of-onself (*aseitas*), eternity, infinity, uniqueness, etc., all which Spinoza contents himself with for his system (after having made them positive, actual [*reel*]). But among the positive ones, they include understanding, free will, and what comes from both, wisdom, goodness, justice, *etc.*, in short, those which only monotheism properly recognizes.

Now, however, they let these two classes of attributes stand side by side, without explaining either how the positive ones have become masters [*Herr*] of the blind, negative attributes, or how the latter have become tied to the former, and have been submitted to them as negative attributes. This is, in fact, the blind spot of the present theology. This is the origin of its wavering position and scientific uncertainty vis-à-vis mere theism and pantheism. In fact, the transition from the negative attributes to the positives ones is nothing but the transition from theism to monotheism itself. According to the first attributes, I mean if these were considered on their own, there would be nothing but blind, beginningless and endless, all-consuming substance. Now, however, that *which, of itself*, would be only this (blind substance), cannot also be, of itself as well, freely willing subject, pondered wisdom, love, and goodness. Only through the mediation of a second [term] is it possible that the same subject – which cannot be in itself and before itself or beforehand (*antecedenter* or *a priori*) other than blind being [*Seyende*] – subsequently (*consequenter* or *a posteriori*) also be lucid love and absolute intelligence. The first attributes are, if we apply to them the relations in Revelation, the mere nature of the Father, considered without taking the Son into account, [while] the other attributes [are] those of the Father as such or in his relation to the Son, for he is only Father vis-à-vis the Son and in the Son. This is also true in the strictly scientific sense: no one comes to the Father except through the Son [Jn. 14, 6: λέγει αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦς Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· οὐδεὶς ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα εἰ μὴ δι’ ἐμοῦ.]

If an immediate and necessary transition from the attributes of the first type to those of the second type could be found, then the pantheists would also have found it.

In place of the distinction between positive and negative, later theologians substitute attributes which are, incidentally, equivalent to *dormant* [*ruhenden*] and active, or which indicate an operation (*attributa quiescentia et operativa*) [\*footnote: It would not be undesirable to know by which theologians, and with which explanations, those expressions were first introduced]. It is not easy to understand how they wanted to bring inactive [*unthätige*] attributes in line with the principle that God is lucid acting, unless they posited this acting in the inactive (ineffective) activity of a [subject] underlying those attributes. The latter, therefore, had to be represented not as originally ineffective, but only as having been made ineffective, or rather “passivized” [*ein Quiescirtes*], to use a very common expression among us, although neither particularly popular <64>, nor, as a gross solecism, recommendable.

The negative attributes [*Attribute*], therefore, are attributes [*Eigenschaften*] of the *real* God, but which are not expressed of him except by virtue of *substance*, that is, by virtue of his negative [aspects], those which are posited *as* purely essential. They are therefore not 1) attributes of God in himself: God considered absolutely is neither unique, nor eternal, etc., but the Unique, the Eternal, etc., that is, what will

later be posited in the real God as predicated (*posterius*) is still only posited in God absolutely considered as the subject (as the *prius*). Hence the total impossibility of declaring them as positive attributes. For where they are still positive, they are not predicates, and where they are predicates, they are rather negated than affirmed. But if one may call them positive, it is not because of the real being, but only because of the latter's still subsisting *possibility*. They may be described as negative (even if non-attributes), because no real being has yet been posited in them, just as the subject of a proposition can be said to be negative because it is neither object, nor what is really wanted: they are what offers itself by itself, that is, without acting, without thinking. Thinking, like, in God, willing, only begins after it is denied as real. They may be described as negative in the sense that the starting point (*terminus a quo*) of a movement can be described as relative in relation to the latter, since it itself is not a product of the movement, or posited by the movement, but is presupposed by it. Only when posited as predicates are they posited *as* negative, that is, actually denied *as* positive. This is precisely where they are not attributes, but only different views or expressions about the unique absolute subject. This is why they can be mutually dissolved into one another, and can be derived from one another, as has always been the case in the so-called proofs. Yet no one has ever considered it possible to derive the positive attributes from the negative ones, and to show, for example, that what is eternal must by its very nature also be wise, good, etc.

They become attributes 2) in the real God, but only because he negates them as real [*reell*], or posits them as attributes that he only has *in* himself, without elevating them in himself to reality. Since God is only the real God in overcoming his exclusive original nature [*Wesen*], the latter is not the *temporary*, but eternal and everlasting *prius* of his divinity [*Gottseyn*]. In the real God, 1) *being-of-oneself* [*das von-selbst-Seyn*] is negated, although it is also posited as negated, namely as the basis of the higher life where he is not of oneself, that is, by nature, but by lucid will and freedom, as *true causa sui* (that is, what, in being, remains cause, unlike the Spinozist cause which consumes itself in being and becomes substance) [\*footnote: Plato's saying is well-known: εργαζομαι τὸ το ἄλλα καὶ εαυτον. The later Neoplatonic saying is even more exact: "God is not how he is encountered, but how he himself acts and wants."], in the *supernatural* being, which can only be thought in the rising above a natural being, so that where <65> no nature (in overcoming or submission) can be thought, no supernatural can be thought either. The expression *a se esse* (and the barbaric *aseitas* formed from it) is therefore incorrect and actually says the opposite of what it wants to say. *Sponte, ultra, naturâ suâ esse*, would be correct, but one should not say spontaneity in the same sense, since this word possesses a completely different use, at least in modern philosophical language. The natural impossibility of not being, which is found in God, in himself and ahead of himself, once it comes into effect, would be *eternity*; for that which has always existed [*schon immer Daseyende*], and which, in being itself, intertwines beginning and end, cause and effect, principle and produced, is eternal, annihilating all beginning and all end. But also this eternity is only posited in the real God as substantial or essential: without ever having been, it has, *before all being*, become past [*zur Vergangenheit wurde*], and it forms, in this pure essentialization vis-à-vis the higher [term], the starting point which one intends when one says: God is *from* all eternity. This is, indeed, the expression of the positive eternity of God, as opposed to the expression: God is eternal, can only be understood from the essential, negative eternity. (Similarly, being-of-oneself [*von-selbst-Seyn*] is the negative, being-of-oneself [*von-SICH-Seyn*], the positive.) Here, by giving eternity itself, namely essential [eternity], as the foundation of his real eternity, God, that is, the will without substance, which only can be called God, by separating beginning and end, makes himself the eternal beginning of himself. The same applies 3) for *infinity*, since God, infinity in itself and before itself, or considered absolutely, by installing himself in the three forms, makes himself finite *vis-à-vis himself*. And just like this, 4) *uniqueness* is also a mere negative attribute of the real God, since he makes of the absolute, exclusive uniqueness the foundation of a completely different, *positive* uniqueness, which does not exclude anything, outside of which not nothing can be, but rather nothing *Is*. With the exclusive uniqueness *brought to rest*, a monotheism is therefore already posited, but it is not this uniqueness, considered absolutely, which is the content of monotheism, and we must first show exactly *how* it is brought to rest, before one can recognize in it the foundation of monotheism.



## Lecture 4

<66> Monotheism is, *in general*, already a restrictive concept. It is already so *to the extent that* it affirms, not that there is, in general, only one [thing that is] (which could also be a mere dead substance), but that there is only one God. But, as we have previously seen, either monotheism has no sense, or it has *this* particular sense, that God is only one according to *his divinity*. Only in this sense, we are convinced, can we say that he is the unique *God*. This is can be perfectly derived from our concept. For, indeed, according to this concept, God is not the singular *in general*, but plural. He is 1, he is 2, and he is 3. However, because he is God neither as 1, nor as 2, nor as 3 in particular, but only as  $1 + 2 + 3$ , he is, although plural, not many Gods, but rather only *one* God<sup>3126</sup>.

What is posited here is a *plurality*, not a *multiplicity*. There is a multiplicity when B, C, D are posited, without any one of them being the other, but when the one is *what the* other is, for instance A, such that in this way  $B + C + D = A + A + A$ ; and A, inasmuch as it is neither B, nor C, nor D in particular, is related to them as their common or generic concept. But the three potencies cannot be subsumed in general under <67> a common generic concept, because they themselves are the supreme genres or species (*summa genera, sive εἶδη*) of being, and one cannot, in particular, call God their generic concept. God is, in fact, individually these [potencies] as such, given that they are God not separately, but only together or considered in unity, that  $B + C + D$  is here not = to  $A + A + A$ , but only = to A (to God). It is therefore not three natures or three substances that are posited. Although one could say that these three potencies have taken the place of the only and unique substance, they are not for that reason substances themselves, but rather mere actualities, since they would be nothing outside of the act (of unity), and that none of them

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<sup>31</sup> A distinction should be made here between the expressions “unicity” and “unity.” If uniqueness is no longer located in substance (God’s matter, see p. <50>), but rather in God: uniqueness, with regard to that *plurality*, should here be called *unity*.

is therefore *for itself*, that is, separated from the others, what it is, but rather each [is so] only in indissoluble actual unity. And since this plurality, in regard to God, is his *divinity* [*Gott-seyn*], they also cannot be many Gods<sup>32</sup>.

<68> Monotheism is particularly opposed to *pantheism*, since according to the latter, in fact, God is only One, namely he is the blind being, which does not appear in the *true* concept save as a potency of the divine being. To *this* extent, pantheism is, properly speaking, nothing less than *pan*-theism, because it has its ultimate foundation in the concept according to which God is the infinite *potentia existendi*, although it does not, as we have seen, itself go back to this concept. However, the *true* concept of God is not this immediate power of being [*Macht des Seyns*], which

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<sup>32</sup> The genesis of monotheism, as it has been presented until now, clearly shows that the uniqueness of substance, which previously existed alone, cancels itself in order [to give] a true plurality of potencies which we can qualify as substantial, partly because this uniqueness actually underlies substance, takes its place, just as one could say, inversely, that this uniqueness was in its place and therefore in all of their places (*omnium instar*), partly because these potencies, although supremely living in themselves, only actually behave, in relation to the eternal *will* by virtue of which alone they exist [*da sind*], and which alone is the *real* link of their unity, and therefore alone God properly speaking, *toward this will* which has nothing substantial, these potencies only actually behave, as I was saying, as substances. If the original uniqueness of substance can be called the matter of the three potencies, then the three potencies can be considered again as the immediate matter of the will which is rising and falling in them, and which actually is *the God*. The expression substantial plurality, or that according to which God, but only posited *as such* – as *unique*, is necessarily plural *according to substance*, would only be shocking if one thought of the original uniqueness of substance as annihilated in some sense and no longer enduring in any way. This only means that it does not endure as a [uniqueness] *having being* [*seyende*], [as] present, and not that it would not endure as a [uniqueness] which does not have being [*nicht seyende*], and in some way, as a constant (permanent) past. For it is only contained in the plurality in a continuous suppression and exclusion. But to be constantly suppressed, it must also *exist* [*daseyn*] constantly (*nunquam non*). It is precisely what does *not* cease to exist [*Daseyende*], without ever rising to actual being, what is only given and found <68> in constant negation, what is posited not in order to be posited, but rather in order not to be so, to be negated, what can only be posited in non-positing, what is known in ignorance (since it is never raised to the rank of object of knowledge, of real being): this explains, among others, what is to be thought of those who transfer this *being-known in ignorance* (*ignorando cognoscitur*) to God himself. This always-already-being-there [*immer schon DASeyende*], non-willed, appearing of itself, is the wonder over which our entire philosophy must stumble under this or that name, and which embarrasses most people, for if the philosopher must to some extent refuse to posit it, he cannot elude it or *not posit* it: it follows that he must posit it without positing it, that he must explain what induces him there into error, and interpret it *as* what is only posited in order to be negated and therefore not really posited, as what can only be negated as being posited also, but somewhat involuntarily, and in such a way that we know it as non-willed. For real knowledge, like real thinking, begins only with its own negation and non-willing. (Passage extracted from another manuscript.)



taken by itself and in absolute terms, could only lead to this blind, motionless being of the Spinozist substance, which does not know itself; the *true* concept of *God*, the concept of *God* in the proper sense of the word, is only what contains [this immediate power of being] in the state of negation or potency. But that is precisely why the foundation of divinity and of every true religion is this immediate power to be, through whose subordination pantheism itself is maintained as a mere possibility – that foundation, we can therefore say, is pantheism itself in its mere possibility. Here, as already noted, lies the magic that pantheism has exercised since all times on so many, a magic that cannot be abolished by the discourses of those who do not themselves go back to the original concept. <69> Monotheism is indeed nothing other than pantheism that has become esoteric, latent, internal, it is nothing other than pantheism that has been overcome [*überwundene*] – not one that has only received condemnation and blame, or been effeminately deplored, but, as we have said, pantheism that has been overcome. Nothing has acquired a true hold over the human heart outside of *this* underlying pantheism, but only after it has been overcome, brought to rest, and satisfied (pacified). The constant resistance and polemic of many philosophers and theologians against pantheism only shows that *they* have not mastered it, that they have not found the system capable of truly bringing it to rest, of appeasing it – which can only take place in monotheism. Since they thought they had already possessed this in their theism, this confusion of theism with monotheism, sooner or later, had to create this indescribable confusion and disaster that would lead even those who are religiously inclined to imagine pantheism as the only necessary scientific system, to which they would not be able to oppose anything but a superficial faith. That fundamental concept, which is also the presupposition of monotheism, without which there would not be monotheism, but only flat theism, the fundamental concept according to which God is the immediate potency of being [*Potenz des Seyns*], thereby the potency of *all* being, according to

which also, in turn, every being is only God's being, this fundamental idea is the nerve of every religious consciousness, it cannot be touched without shaking the latter in its depth. Where the [consciousness] that has been overcome by the true idea of God is lacking, this idea cannot exist [*seyn*] either, and mere theism, which refuses to recognize this principle in God, is to *this* extent a system that is as unsatisfactory to feeling as it is to intelligence. This principle, according to which every being is in God and is God's being, is precisely the one that corresponds to the true feeling.

– Since it is very important, not only for the present time, but also especially for the rest of the present investigation, that you distinguish these three ways of thinking, which are called theism, pantheism, and monotheism, and that you memorize <70> these differences deeply, I would like to take this opportunity to add a remark concerning this diversity of religious ways of thinking, where monotheism and pantheism are closer and similar to one another than either is to theism.

*Since* it is not merely a question of recognizing God *in general*, that is, of only seeing in him that which is [*das Seyende*] in general, but to see in him also that which *is* also *as* Spirit, that which is determined, the being *that it is* [*DAS ES ist*], it is necessary to add, as has already been noted, an explanation of the word theism. Theism is the concept in which God (*θεός*) is merely posited in general, and not the determinate [*bestimmte*] God (*ὁ θεός*), the God who is [*der es ist*].<sup>33</sup>

The true God, the one *who is* also *as* Spirit, cannot, as this has been shown, be other than the Uni-Total. Theism can therefore be understood as the way of thinking that has not gone as far as recognizing the living God, that is, the uni-total God. To this extent, theism is a pure lack. And

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<sup>33</sup> There must be, incidentally, a particularity already in the concept of God, which contains the reason for which God can be posited also in an indeterminate way, simply as *θεός*, and not in a determinate way as *ὁ θεός*. This *ὁ θεός* means in Greek as much as *ὁ ὧν θεός*, which we must paraphrase as: the God who is. This God who is is opposed not directly to the God who is *not*, but only to the God who *is* not, a difference that the German language has difficulties expressing: the God who is *not*, in Greek, would be: *ὁ οὐκ ὧν θεός*, the God who *is* not (which lacks something as regards the authentic concept of God), would merely be: *ὁ μὴ ὧν θεός*.

true philosophy, that is, scientific philosophy, cannot be content with it, but rather necessarily leans toward either pantheism or monotheism. Theism is indeterminate. To characterize the right way of thinking, something additional is in any case needed. There are, however, only two compounds with the word theism: pantheism and monotheism. These two ways of thinking have in common the fact of being *more* than mere theism. Jacobi, who used to boast about being a pure theist, although, on the side, he affirmed that the idea of a personal God, therefore of the living God, is impossible according to the concepts of reason, Jacobi has <71>, in his polemic against the so-called philosophy of Identity, translated in all calmness the word pantheism into the doctrine of the All-One or uni-totality, with the undeniable aim to present it as Spinozism. He had not considered the fact that, in general as well as in Christian language, the unique God has since long ago been called the uni-total God, and that therefore not only pantheism, but also monotheism, are doctrines of uni-totality<sup>27</sup>. The difference between the two doctrines or two concepts cannot therefore reside in uni-totality as such and without closer determination. On the contrary, it is common to both to assert more than a mere empty unity: a uni-*totality*. But their difference is this: pantheism, as it is has been expressed in Spinozism, knows in itself only one principle, the blind substance. But one cannot build a system merely with the blind substance. Thus, Spinoza was compelled to establish [*statuieren*], next to unity, a totality. His philosophy is not an *empty* doctrine of unity<sup>34</sup> – Spinoza is not a mere successor of the Eleatics, his One is not the abstract Parmenidean One, but a true One-*All*<sup>28</sup>. A spirit like Spinoza, in whom the maturing intelligence of a grown-up period that wanted the *thing* itself first spoke out, such a spirit could not return to the miserable

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<sup>34</sup> One can therefore distinguish again in pantheism itself between a more negative pantheism, and one that is positive in relation to the former. The purely negative pantheism is that which knows nothing other than mere infinity, pure undifferentiated substance. This is the doctrine of unity and, one could say, the pantheism of Parmenides. In relation to this last, *positive* pantheism is that which nonetheless contains differences in this substance, and in this sense contains a *totality*.

elements that the Socratic dialectics had already shown to be sterile, and in which only an anti-Socratic dialectics of our age can see great wisdom – a spirit like Spinoza could not return to these elements of abstract speculation at its very beginnings. A substance is not a merely empty One [*Eins*], but it [*er?*] contains extended and thinking substance. Its extended substance is obviously nothing more than the one that has passed over *a potentia ad actum*, and which has been lost as essence, as subject, as potency. It corresponds to our ability to be [*Seynkönnende*] of the first potency, <72> which in being is no longer potency, but has become selfless and *substantia extensa*. (The passive expression *substantia extensa* already shows that it is rooted in something else, and that as *substantia extensa* it is only a product [*Gewordenes*, lit. “something which has become”]). *Thought*, as the second attribute under which Spinoza views substance, could be equated with our second potency, which the first serves as a subject, as a [term] modifiable (*Modificables*) through it. But, basically, Spinoza merely borrowed this second attribute from Descartes, who alongside extension set up thought as an independent principle, and Spinoza also leaves the two attributes in the same indifference and absence of mutual interaction as that in which Descartes had left them. They are only mediated for him through the common substance, and this is how Spinoza falls back into the dead universal substance, where we have the third potency as Spirit. In the place of our third, he only knows how to posit again substance itself, whose essence is *the same* in thought and in extension – *pure* indifference. Spinoza’s mistake, then, is not in affirming a uni-totality, but rather in that this uni-totality is dead, motionless, lifeless. The polemic against pantheism could therefore be twofold. One can blame him for establishing *more* than theism, namely, a universal uni-totality, instead of a merely empty God, containing nothing, and unique [*Einen*] in this negative sense. This is the polemic of that theism which is satisfied with this merely negative unity [*Eins*], but which is impotent by its own admission. Until now, this empty theism had only one antithesis,

actual pantheism. It had not thought about monotheism, it did not occur to it that there is a third [term], outside of theism and pantheism, to wit, monotheism. I can say that, in these lectures, I have restored [*wieder geltend*] *this* concept for the first time. However, pantheism cannot be refuted with mere pantheism. True refutation in philosophy does not consist, generally speaking, in addressing so-called criticisms to a system or a position, but rather in establishing its <73> positive antithesis. Theists could not do this much in relation to pantheism. For its positive antithesis is monotheism, which they themselves have not reached. Mere theism therefore excludes totality from God, and thereby the very *positivity* of the concept of monotheism. Pantheism presupposes totality, but on the other hand, it understands the unity in this totality as merely *substantial*. However, since a unity that does not have a substantial totality as its basis cannot itself be maintained *above* mere substantiality, the unity affirmed in theism is reduced to a merely substantial one. Theism and pantheism are therefore equivalent with respect to *unity*. The God of Spinoza is also a God outside of which there is no other God, and if the explanation which a much-esteemed theologian (Reinhard) gives of the unity of God, when he says: unity is *illud attributum Dei, quo negatur plures substantias infinitas esse*, is correct, then Spinoza is as good a monotheist as this theologian. How can one then distinguish *scientifically* theism from mere pantheism? It is commonly said that that the God of Spinoza is impersonal, whereas that of theism is personal. But there is no scientific difference between the personality of God that one denies, and that in which one allegedly believes, but which one, in fact, is incapable of understanding, or even sees as *impossible*. – *Faith* is also part to science, but here this above all means: show me your faith with your works, then I will believe that you have faith. But whoever contradicts one's faith with one's positions, by affirming, for example, that a personal God is impossible, therefore irrational, that person's faith, at the very least, cannot be called a rational faith [*Vernunftglaube*]. Another

common distinction is the following: “the God of pantheism is unconscious, that of theism self-conscious.” But one cannot think of a self-consciousness without positing in the self-conscious [God] three internal differences. The self-conscious [God] is 1) the one *who* is self-conscious, 2) the one *of whom* he is conscious, and it is only because the former is not another and not “given” [*vorhandener*] from outside of him, but <74> is rather one and the same with him, that one think of him *tertio loco* as the self-conscious [God]. In the empty and undifferentiated infinity that mere theism posits in God, self-consciousness is as incomprehensible as personality – one must even say with Fichte, who was for this reason accused of atheism more than thirty years ago, that in a merely empty infinity, consciousness and personality are absolutely impossible.

With regard to creation, theism is as impotent, or rather more impotent, than pantheism. Theism also claims that all being is in God, but this is only meant negatively, it is only meant that there is no possibility of being outside of God, but there is no such possibility in him either, therefore he is an absolutely impotent God. – Jacobi, for whom, as his own friend J.G. Hamann said, Spinozism remained as a hard stone in his stomach, pretended not to want pantheism, but neither did he want *what* actually negates it. Rather he expressed the same apprehension toward everything that goes beyond the empty theism of the so-called Enlightenment period, which had gradually assimilated it. But pantheism cannot be silently eliminated. To push it aside, one must want its antithesis. In these conditions, all that remained for the philosopher, in particular, was to theoretically justify pantheism. Jacobi was tolerant of pantheism: it was basically the only content of his own philosophy. He had to *want* pantheism to continue, because this gave his philosophy its only interest. Similarly, there are some people who want to be sick because this gives them the opportunity to speak about themselves and to make their otherwise uninteresting personality interesting through such talking. – Spinoza lacked the concept of intensification [*Steigerung*] [of

potencies], as well as the idea of a living process.<sup>29</sup> But this is probably the reason why he was neither recognized nor tolerated by this empty theism. In the same way that a subsequent philosophy tried to turn Spinoza's dead and motionless uni-totality into an internal, and <75>, thereby, creative, productive uni-totality – currently the very name of pantheism no longer seems sufficiently reprehensible. Jacobi has given this philosophy, which certainly contained a genesis, a becoming, a process, the name of *pure* naturalism, opposing to it his pure theism, without being concerned why, or probably without knowing why, in theological language, naturalism and theism were perfectly synonymous concepts.

Incidentally, theologians who are more profound also know the true depth of pantheism, and know that it cannot be overcome by mere words, but only by a positive knowledge that is opposed to it. If one considers that it is precisely those who boast of being *pure* theists who shout and warn the loudest against the onset of pantheism, not just in scholarly writings or behind lecterns, but also from pulpits and in textbooks for schoolboys, one cannot but think that behind this fear of pantheism there is only that of *monotheism*, i.e. the fear that something positive should finally come about in science. The fear that the empty theistic talk which has long been widespread in general and even public instruction – in connection with the edifying discourses drawn from a purely personal feeling, whereby speakers do not want to glorify God, but actually only themselves, and in which only their person still appears to be something – the fear that all of this must give way to the abundance of a true and positive knowledge. They may not be so wrong to be afraid simultaneously of the end [*Untergang*] of what they call their freedom of thought, by which they actually mean their freedom *from* thought, their freedom not to think, the freedom of arbitrary and thoughtless speeches about the highest affairs of the State, science, and religion.

After I had shown that monotheism only makes *sense* if it is understood as the concept

according to which God is actually not one [*Einer*], but plural [*Mehrere*], and that he is only one as *God* or as the deity, you must have been reminded, automatically and by yourselves, of a doctrine which is generally regarded as specifically Christian, <76> the doctrine of the *tri*-unity of God. It would be affectation if I wanted to avoid explaining this connection. I will therefore note right away that if instead of the All-One [*All-Einige*] we said triune [*Dreieinige*], this would only be the more precise expression of the All-One. This may seem unexpected to some, either because one was accustomed to see the doctrine in which the expression “triune” [*dreieinig*] is found as exclusively Christian, indeed even as an arbitrary and accidental statute [*Satzung*] of Christianity, or because one is accustomed to imagine the doctrine of the triune God as an impenetrable and incomprehensible mystery. For both, it must be unexpected to see this doctrine proven as universally human, and as one that is already *given* with the concept of monotheism, i.e. of the uni-total God [*des all-einigen Gottes*]. To the first, who may be astonished to find a doctrine which they consider to be partly Christian, and to which, they believe, for this reason alone, they must withhold the assent of what they call their reason – to find this doctrine as *identical*, essentially, to a doctrine upon which they themselves build, and which they would not dare to contradict, namely the doctrine of the one and only [*einzig*] God, to these I will only ask one question. If the doctrine of the triune God, which supposedly belongs solely to Christianity, is not connected in any particular way to monotheism, if indeed, essentially, it is even identical to it, how do they explain the striking fact which they cannot deny, that monotheism only became world-historical with and through Christianity? But as for the others, those who want to keep this Christian doctrine, if not in absolute mystery (because it must be preached), at least in incomprehensibility [*Unverständlichkeit*], I would like to ask them if they are not already aware of the embarrassing situation in which they find themselves, and which is obvious and cannot be concealed, whenever



they must develop the doctrine of the one and only God, that *this*, too, is by no means a doctrine that is self-evident, but rather a doctrine that is accepted in general and by *themselves*?

<77> If, given all that has just been said, every doctrine that lacks the concept of the unitotal [*all-einen*] God can only be theism, it was a right tact that led those who were averse to Revelation as well as its *positive* doctrines, those who were called naturalists by their opponents, to call themselves deists. By deists, I mean in particular those whom we call the unitarians, that is, all those who deny plurality in God. In recent times (I do not know exactly to whom we owe this meaningful invention), theists have wanted to distinguish themselves from the latter, probably only not to profess being naturalists, or because each sect likes to have another one lower than itself, against which it can present itself as pure and more truthful [*lauter*]. Kant explains the difference as follows: a deist is someone for whom God is a mere blind root of being, and thus especially the Spinozist; a theist, by contrast, is one who accepts a wise [*vernünftige*] Author of the world [*Welturheber*]. But those who used to call themselves deists, for example, the English naturalists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were not all Spinozists *either*; on the contrary, most of them were perhaps too moderate and sensible not to know how to combine belief in a wise Author of the world with their rationalism, as some today who claim to be pure theists or rationalists. Because both bring about one thing. Everything that is not monotheism, whether one calls it deism or theism, is not appropriate to Christianity. The latter is essentially monotheism, so that its entire difference with the so-called pure rational religion [*Vernunftreligion*] consists only in being monotheism, and the acceptance or rejection of this monotheism decides on the acceptance or rejection of Christianity itself.

It is impossible for me to pass over in silence another remark related to theology here. If it is true, and I believe I have given irrefutable proof for it, that we only really speak of God when

we speak of the Uni-Total – whether *essential* or *actual* – how to understand what ordinary theology presents in its article *de Deo*, which the article *de Deo ut trino* only follows? <78>

Wherever one rules out the doctrine of the trinity, that is, of all-unity, which characterizes true monotheism, can one present anything other mere theism? If so, it is not particularly surprising that the battle which the theologians are waging against the rationalists has so far been of so little consequence. This battle cannot be decided at the point to which it has been led up to now, it must be decided much earlier. The rationalists also only rise up against the incomprehensibility of central doctrines in which Christianity either stands or falls, and it is, incidentally, a reasonable desire that leads everyone to connect what one seems to believe, even if one does not see it clearly (more is needed for that, of course), to connect it at least with a concept, some sense or intelligence [*Verstand*]. The rationalists demand *universally human* doctrines. Only, of course, they do not see them in Christian doctrines – but neither do the theologians: they have nothing to reproach each another. However, the incomprehensibility does not come from the doctrines themselves, but from the principles which the theologians themselves put forward in advance. From *these*, however, there is no way into Christianity. They are so empty, in themselves so little positive (in *the* sense in which the doctrines of philosophy should also be positive), that there is no intelligible passage from such vacuity and negativity to Christian doctrines, not because they are Christian or positive in *origin*, but because they are positive in content.

As for the opinion that the concept of the trinity is an exclusively Christian one, we shall have opportunity in the following to show that it is not so. It has always been common to seek traces and hints of the Christian idea in pagan religions. One only needs to think of the Indian Trimurti, which, as will be seen later, is only a very partial form of that idea – but a triad of

potencies appears as its actual basis.<sup>35</sup> What does the claim <79> that this idea is particularly Christian one mean anyway? *Every* religion grew out of monotheism, and therefore, of course, also the Christian one. The true relationship is therefore the reverse of what one wants to express with it. It is not Christianity that created this idea, but the other way around, this idea that created Christianity. It is already all of Christianity in the bud, in design [*in der Anlage*], and this is why it must be older than the Christianity appearing in history. Incidentally, my opinion is only this: the ultimate root of the Christian Trinity resides in the idea of all-unity. So no one should think that with everything that has been said up to now, with the concept of monotheism, that Christian doctrine with all its determinations is already given (all of our present development has, in general, mythology, not Revelation, in mind). One might imagine that this tree of all religions, which has its roots in monotheism, in the end necessarily results in the highest appearance of monotheism, that is, Christianity. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity contains *materially* what our concept of monotheism contains, but it contains it at a superior degree of potency<sup>30</sup> which we presently cannot access.<sup>36</sup> I must instead wish that you put this memory aside for now and follow the further development as a pure philosophical one. I have not mentioned this connection in order to base something on it, but rather to fend off all premature interference, and therefore I return to the purely scientific development.

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<sup>35</sup> One can only see how Plutarch, without knowing anything about this Christian dogma, tries to prove this, *de Iside et Osiride*, c. 36.

<sup>36</sup> Only the first lines are drawn, which, perhaps at the end and in the last version, extend to this high doctrine; but this must first be shown. An even greater injustice would be done to me if one were to equate my argument, which, as I said, was limited to the concept of monotheism and had no further intent, if one were to equate these arguments with the deductions of the doctrine of the trinity which these days is handled so lightly.

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## Lecture 5

<80> So far we have the mere *concept* of monotheism. God, if he is real, *can* only be as the All-Unified [being]. This is the result of what has been said. There has not been any talk yet of a real being. But now the question is about real being. More specifically, the question is: *how* can God be in the way that is now predetermined? This being is understood as a real being, associated with an act. If we think of God as being immediately in the predetermined way, namely in such a way that in the first potency he is as *that which* purely does not have being (as  $-A$ ), in the second as that which purely has being (pure  $+A$ ), in the third as *that which is* in non-being (i.e. in potential-being), and vice versa, as that which is *not* in that which is being (as potency, *power* to be): if we think of him in this way, it is easy to see that in *this* being there would be not *any* act whatsoever, thus that this being would not be an actual, *real* one. I say: there would not be any *act* in this being. Because an act, which is always simultaneously a movement, is only there where the beginning, the middle, and the end are *separate* and unequal to each other. Where the beginning, middle, and end coincide or are in one another, there is no movement, no act. But in the being whose hypothesis we have admitted, these three *termini*, the *terminus a quo*, the *terminus per quem*, and the *terminus ad quem* cannot really be separated. Because that which has the ability to be [*das Seyn Könnende*], as long as it is only *this* and not that which *really* is (as long as it is not itself that which is), is *subject* of that which purely is or the second, or else: it *is* <81> the second (in the pregnant [*prägnant*] sense that we have asserted earlier for the *is*), therefore not unequal to it, but equal. It only becomes *unequal* to it when it rises itself into being. But as long as it remains within non-being, it is *what* 2 is, namely, as we have also seen earlier, the same perfect selflessness as this one. *Every* distinction comes from selfness [*Selbstheit*]. Where there is no selfness, there is no contradiction. The ability to be [*das Seynkönnende*], without disturbance and without

contradiction, is in sheer being. We have determined 1 (the first potency) as the ability to be selfish, 2 (the second potency) as the ability to be non-selfish, as non-selfish in *itself*. But that which merely *has the ability* to be selfish, without being it, as long as it remains potential, is like that which is inherently non-selfish. The two are not mutually exclusive. That which can only be selfish excludes the non-selfish from itself only when it really *becomes* selfish. The identity of both figures rests on the fact that they have *no* selfness in relation to one another. We have determined 1 as that which is not *actu*. But the second potency, that which purely is, +A, which we have determined as *actus purus*, precisely *because* it is *actus purus*, is not that which is *actu*: to this *extent*, the *actus purus* is = *potentia pura*. I say that what is *actus purus* is precisely for this reason *not* that which is *actu*. For [the hypothesis of] a being-*in-act* is only perceived and accepted where there is a transition *a potentia ad actum*, where through being every resistance is overcome. But this is precisely what is missing here, because we have just explained that what is *actus purus* is without a transition *a potentia ad actum*. What is in such a way is therefore also = to nothing, insofar as it cannot be thought of as that which is *actu*, in act.

If we compare the first two potencies with the *third*, then 1, the lucid ability to be, is *exactly like* the ability to be that is *as such*, therefore like 3. Because 3 is different from 1 only in that it is the ability to be *that is as such*. But this is a mere determination in our concept, in our thinking, because 3 is not *really* the potential to be that is as such. It could only be [the ability to be] that is *as such* only <82> if it excludes from itself [the potential to be] which is not as such. But since the prerequisite for 1 (the first potency) is also the ability potential to be, 3 cannot exclude it from itself, that is, it cannot posit itself as *such* against *it*. As long as 1 itself remains lucid ability to be, it is *eodem loco* [in the same place] as 3, and cannot be driven out of this place. To make this clear, we want to express ourselves as follows: the first potency is posited by the concept of God as that

which should not be [*das nicht Seyn Sollende*] (as what is destined not to be, to be a mystery); the third potency, by contrast, is posited by this same concept as that which *should* ex-ist, which *should* be manifest, as that of which it is *fitting* to be [*dem gebührt zu seyn*], as that which, by nature, has being [*Seyende*], like 1 is that which, by nature, does not have being [*nicht Seyende*]. That which should not be, however, as long as it is only this, does not really emerge, is not unequal to that which should be; it only becomes unequal to it when it really is, like, for example, in the child evil is still hidden *in* the good and cannot be excluded from it. If we now also compare the second potency with the third, the third is the potency that is as such. Now we have already shown: *actus purus* = *potentia pura*. So *these* two are not mutually exclusive. We have determined the third potency (the potential to be that is as such) as an excluded third, but this exclusion is not a real one, but a merely logical one. The three [potencies] are *eodem loco*<sup>31</sup>. And if 2 also stands out, because it is that which is not *actu*, but rather that which, by *nature*, by essence, is, it does not stand *above* essence, and all the differences go back to mere essence. That which, by *nature*, is not, as long as it is *that which is not actu*, and that which, by nature, is, as long as it is not *actu*, are equal precisely in that each is *naturâ*, i.e. essentially, what it is.

If we grasp this relationship from the highest point of view, God differs from *mere* essence [*Wesen*] only in that he is the *essence that is* as *such*. But the essence that is as *such* is *like* mere essence. There is a difference in the concept, in thinking, but not a real difference, not a difference in essence, because <83> the being of the essence that is as such is itself *still* (namely until now and if nothing else happens) = to the essence, or [it is] a being that is indistinguishable from the essence. Perhaps more clearly: the essence that is *as* such is provisionally posited – as far as we have recognized it so far – only in the essence, in the concept, and not in the being. I want to use the analogy I used earlier. The geometric point can also be viewed as a circle of infinitely small

diameter, where the periphery, diameter, and center coincide. There is the same relation between the point *that is a circle*, i.e. that I think as a circle, and the *mere* point, as between the essence *that is as such*, as long as I merely think it, and the mere essence. Now you cannot see from the point I made here on the board whether it is a mere point or a point that is a circle. The difference is only in my thoughts. The mere point and the point that is a circle are not different from one another in *being*. The being of the latter is like the being of the former. I *think* differences in the latter, but I cannot distinguish these different thoughts. The periphery is what the center is – namely a point – just as the diameter is what the periphery is and what the center is – namely a point. In the same way, the difference between mere essence and the essence that is as such is merely a difference in the concept, and not in being, since I cannot distinguish the differences (the potencies) in the latter. The non-being [*das nicht Seyende*] that I think in him is non-*being* not *actu*, but only by nature, and insofar as the pure being [*das rein Seyende*] that I thought in him is also that which exists [*seyende*] only by nature and not *actu*, the two are not really different, and this is also true of the third. The third, for the time being, is only that which, *by nature*<sup>37</sup>, is simultaneously potency and

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<sup>37</sup> In book IV [715e] of Plato's *Laws*, we find a remarkable passage, cited as a *παλαιος λόγος* – a phrase of Orphic, perhaps, or Pythagorean origin, and which, if one were penetrate its true <84> meaning, could be translated as follows: God, who contains the beginning, middle, and end of things, creates a way for himself by his action, or: cuts a way through to movement, while, by nature, he would move in circles. This is to be understood as follows: If the beginning, middle, and end, coincide, there is no movement. For there to be a movement, the beginning or *terminus a quo*, middle or *terminus per quem*, and end, *terminus ad quem*, must be separate. In the divine concept, as we have seen, beginning, middle, and end are one and are not mutually exclusive. That which can be [*Seynkönnende*], which still has being *in front of* itself (the lucid can-be [*Seynkönnen*]), and which, as something that *is not* [*als nicht seyendes*], can still be the opposite of itself, the blind being (which is closest to being, that is, to the beginning), this [that which can be] is still = the can-be *that is* as such, and is therefore *permanent*, which has being behind itself and has as it were already overcome it (this being the end). Similarly, that which is the middle, because it is *actus purus*, not *actu*, but rather by nature, is itself = to that which can be, and since it is = to the first, it is also = to the third. The potencies cannot be dissociated by virtue of the mere divine *concept*. If one wanted to think a movement here, as long as God is only in his essence or nature, this could only be a rotary movement. In fact, a rotary movement is one that remains in one point. That is why it says in that passage: if there is to be a real movement, a real *way* of God (*Bewegung*, movement, comes from *Weg*, way, and the Old Testament and other oriental scriptures are not alone in speaking of a way of God [e.g. *Ps* 25:4], but, in connection with that passage, also Plato, and further Pindar), if there is to be a real way, the beginning, middle, and end,



act. We will only reach <84> an *actual* being when that which is non-being [*das nicht Seyende*] by mere *nature*, becomes non-being *actu*. But this is only possible if it is posited by an actual *act* as non-being [*nicht seyend*], and such an act of transition to non-being presupposes, as you can see, that it be posited in advance as something that is [*seyend*]. Because if it is not already something that is, it cannot be posited as something that is not. It also cannot be re-positing as something that has being [*seyend*] by virtue of the mere concept or of God's nature (because it is precisely by virtue of this concept that it is non-being). There is only one solution left, namely that it is posited as something that has being [*seyend*] by divine *will*, by a divine act. Now you might want to say: all of this amounts to *negating* the concept of God, and far from positing God as really having being [*seyend*], it would rather posit him as non-being. But <85> it is not like that. Rather, since God, according to his *concept*, that is, by *nature*, is the one who is *in this way*, namely the one who is  $-A + A \pm A$ , or, to put it more briefly, *since* God is uni-total by nature, and therefore necessarily and insuperably [*unaufheblich*] uni-total (= absolute personality), he *can actu* be the opposite, owing to the fact that, by virtue of the insuperability of his nature, he does not truly become another. From the fact that in his *concept*, the first potency is already posited as such and therefore posited *as* that which is non-being [*das nicht Seyende*], as  $-A$ , it follows that, even if it is *really* or *actu* the opposite of him, it is this opposite only *in order* to be negated as such, and therefore to be again *actu*  $-A$ . From the fact that God is by nature and therefore indissolubly the uni-total [God], it follows that, *if* he *really* emerges in this potency, which is destined by *his* nature to be mere potency, pure being ( $+A$ ) would now be excluded from it, but it is not for that reason *negated* (the divine nature, which is inseparably uni-total, does not allow it). This (the fact that it is negated) is impossible, because God cannot stop being the Uni-total, i.e. the unity of the three

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have to become unequal to each other. [Cf. SW II/3, 275. Cf. also SW I/9, 313–323.]

potencies. That which purely is [*das rein Seyende*] (+A) is thus not negated by the fact that *that which is* non-being [*das nicht Seyende*] becomes positive or existing, but on the contrary, since it is was *previously* or in the mere concept that which is not *selfish* [*das nicht sich Seyende*], it becomes only now a *selfish* being [*ein sich Seyendes*] by the exclusion of the first potency, i.e. it comes into a being *of its own*. Because the first potency is no longer a *subject* to him (which it can only be as long as it does not itself have being [*selbst seyend*]), because it *refuses itself* to him, no longer allows him access – that it is no longer the one that posits him – it [the second potency, that which purely is] finds itself compelled to withdraw into *itself*, to become a subject, and given that it was that which *purely* is without any *potentiality*, that which *purely* is receives – by the exclusion or negation that the first potency exerts over it – a *potentiality* itself, a potency in itself, it becomes a *self-standing* potency. But since this potentiality goes against its nature (because it is by nature *pure* being [*das rein seyende*]), it must strive to <86> negate again in itself this potentiality, this negation (because all potentiality is a negation of being), to restore itself to what it is by nature, the *actus purus*. It can only do so by striving, for its part, to lead back that which negates it (that which puts it in a [state of] negation – of potency), to lead back that which, against nature or against the concept, as it were, has become an *existing, positive product* [*seyend, positive Gewordene*], to its original non-being, to the potentiality [*Potentialität*] that befits it, in order for it [the second potency] to be realized *as act*, not so much by a transition *a potentia ad actum* in itself, as by a reverse transition *ab actu ad potentiam* outside it [the first potency]. – Precisely because it is that which is not, by nature, *potency*, but *actus purus*, it cannot be actualized [*verwirklichen*] directly like the first [potency], which is *in itself* potency, and can therefore transition directly *a potentia*, i.e. by *itself, ad actum*, but it must first be *given* a potency in order for it to be *actu*: – that is, it is that which can only be *in the second place*, the potential to be [*Seynkönnende*] of the second

potency, and if we denote the potential to be in general by A, the potential to transition directly *a potentia ad actum*, because it can be actualized directly, without presupposing anything other than itself, this potential to be [*Seynkönnende*] of the first potency would therefore be A<sup>1</sup>. But that which *purely* is [*rein Seyende*], because it cannot be actualized by itself, i.e. transition [by itself] *a potentia ad actum*, because it must first be *given* to it to have in itself life, i.e. the ability to move itself [*Beweglichkeit*] towards being, that which purely is is the potential to be of the second order, A<sup>2</sup>. (It is easy to understand, however, that this first potency is the potential to be [*das Seynkönnende*] of the first order and therefore A<sup>1</sup> only insofar as it remains the *potentiality* of being [*das seyn Könnende*], in its latency, in its non-emerges (it is only A as –A). As soon as it emerges, as already shown, it ceases to be a potency, therefore A. Above *being*, it ceases to be the power or source of being, it <87> becomes another, unequal to itself, we would say that it ceases to be A and becomes B. By B we also want to refer, in what follows, to this first potency in its elevation – in its becoming-other [*Andersgewordenseyn*] – in its blind being. The exclusion, the negation that the first potency in its actual state, as B, exerts on that which *purely* is, *will raise* [the latter] to potency, and will posit it as that which no longer is, but merely can be [*seyn Könnende*], therefore as A<sup>2</sup>. Because that which by *nature* does not have being [*nicht seyende*], therefore that which *must* not be [*seyn Sollende*], does not negate, *when* it comes into being, that which by nature has being (this is not allowed by the divine all-unity, which is posited by the concept of God, and is therefore necessary and insuperable), and because the two presently mutually exclusive potencies (B and A<sup>2</sup>) cannot be separated, but rather, *by the fact* of their mutual exclusion, are compelled by divine unity to be *uno eodemque puncto*, the only result can be this: a *process* in which what should have been pure being [*rein Seyende*], but which is now inhibited and negated in its being, seeks to negate, for its part, what negates it, to lead it back to its original nothingness

[*Nichts*], to its potentiality, and thus to restore itself *as pure* being, as *actus purus*. As you can see, we assume here that the potency opposed to pure being is overcome. You will be able to understand this overcoming if you recall what has been said earlier, namely that the potency of the beginning, this immediate potentiality of being [*Seynkönnende*], is nothing, properly speaking, but a will at rest [*ruhender Wille*], which is ignited and activated by a mere *act of will*, so that the *being* of this first one or B, as we have once called it, is nothing other than an *act of will*. There is nothing in the world that *resists* except for an act of will (all resistance consists only in an act of will), and just as nothing resists except for an act of will, so there is nothing that can be overcome except for an act of will<sup>32</sup>. Just as an act of will that suddenly rises in us (for example, anger) <88> and, as it rises, for a moment displaces and expels [*ausschließt*], as it were, the better and higher part of our nature, just as such an act of will is brought back into itself by words of comfort, lead back to its original nothingness, to the mere potency from which it emerged, and gives space again now to all those higher and better powers [*Mächte*] so that they can fill our inner being again: in the same way that the willing in which the original potentiality of being [*Seynkönnen*] rose into [*als*] being, and which – as a will that *should* neither operate, *nor* want – we can call, in its real being, the *unwill* [*Unwille*] (as a *mis-deed* [*Unthat*] signifies, not an act that never happened, but an act that should not happen), also, I say, this un-will, i.e. this will operating against nature, against what *should* be, can be overcome by a higher potency<sup>33</sup>. But the latter – the higher potency – now *seeks* to *dis-place* again from *being*, that which should not be, not in order to take it (*being*) for itself, but on the contrary, to rid itself of its proper being, which the former had imposed on it, to restore itself in the original selflessness of the *actus purus*. But the first potency cannot give up the proper being to which it had risen without putting in its place, the place which it now leaves vacant and unoccupied, as it were, another [being] in existence [*ein anderes als seyend*]. Thus the process

consists *in that*, in the place of that which should not be, that to which it belongs to be, that which should be, properly speaking, is again posited, and if the second potency overcomes the first, this is not in order for the former itself to be, but so that the latter, by being brought back to self-renunciation [*sich-selbst-Aufgeben*], to expiration, becomes again, in its expiration (as it is according to the concept or the nature of the divine being), becomes again, in this expiration, the exhalation, the “position” [*Setzenden*], or, to speak in mythological terms, the seat and throne of the Highest, of the one to whom alone it belongs to be, and this because the actual being is mediated for him by *two* potencies, because he is posited neither by the first, nor by the second, but <89> only by the first that has been overcome by the second: because he therefore presupposes *both*, he is only that which has the potential to be *tertio loco*, the potentiality of being of the third order, which we will hereafter and for the sake of brevity designate by A<sup>3</sup>, and which, as have seen earlier, is the spirit that is as such, possessing itself, the *inseparable subject-object*.

This potentiality of being of the third potency, which we call the inseparable subject-object, is the *necessary* spirit, the one that must stay within itself, but which *as* such is always only one the potencies, although the highest, not the exuberant being [*das Ueberschwengliche*] itself, *nor God*. Here you can grasp, more clearly and precisely than before, the difference of this third, which is *spirit* and yet not God. It is, as we said, the necessary spirit, i.e. what is necessarily spirit, what can *only* be spirit. But God is more than [spirit], he is *beyond* [spirit]; he is the free Spirit, i.e. who goes beyond [*überschwingen*] what makes him spirit in order to be free from it; who is not tied to himself as spirit, and treats the latter as merely one of his potencies; who thus is not *merely* spirit, but also the other potencies, although none of them separately, but only in the indissoluble and unbreakable unity. In fact, God is only in the three potencies as the one operating all in all, but this is why he is *beyond* [*erhaben*] them and that, although operating in them, differentiates himself

from them by the indissolubility of his unity or all-unity.

If we compare our current presentation of the process with the concept that we previously derived, this first potency of being is determined in the former as that which is not [*nicht Seyende*], as subordinate to [its] higher [term], as the subject of the latter, and as a non-being [*nicht seyend*] in relation to it. It is determined as that which is not, but this does not say whether it is so in a direct or indirect way. By virtue of the divine *concept*, it can only be –A, but nothing prevents it from becoming positive and active by divine will, divine freedom. This freedom is given to God by the necessity of his nature – by the fact that his all-unity is necessary, from which it follows that He <90> is always and necessarily the All-One, *however* he may be. In this sense, or from *this* perspective, one could say that God's necessity is his freedom, insofar as necessity and freedom are one in him. But with such formulas, everything depends on their being correctly understood. The danger of philosophy consists in that some formulas can be produced by means of purely formal combinations. But philosophy is not like mathematics, which also has formulas for things that are not real. In philosophy, the *formula* is of no use to me without the thing, and nothing worse could happen to philosophy than if formulas based on knowledge of the thing are repeated or accepted by those without any knowledge of the thing. Nothing prevents, as I said, this potency of being, which according to the concept, should have always been a potency, from rising to act – not in order to remain *act*, but to be negated *actu*, to be posited *actu as* potency, so that the concept (or the in-itself insuperable and indissoluble divine nature) is nevertheless asserted. God is only externally and apparently different, internally he is the same. The potencies in their mutual exclusion and their inverted position [*verkehrte Stellung*] against each other, are God only [insofar] as [He is] externally disguised [*verstellte*] by divine irony. They are the inverted [*verkehrte*] One, to the extent that what should have remained hidden, inoperative, is in appearance manifest and

operative, where what should have been positive, manifest, is in appearance negated and reduced to the state of potency. The potencies in this position are therefore the extra-verted [*herausgekehrte*] or overturned [*umgekehrte*] One (whose interior is external, and whose exterior is internal), *Universum* (this word signifies nothing other than that that the One is in some sense inside out [*umgewendete*]). The philologists among you will not object that Lucretius, the only poet in which, to my knowledge, the word *universus* or a derivative thereof appears, reads the first syllable as short, whereas the first of *unus* is long. This term cannot be read differently in the hexameter, and *cannot* be anything but precisely – *unum versum*). – If, however, we call the potencies in their present form “the universe,” you must not yet <91> think of it as the material universe, the universe made up of concrete things. *This* universe is still the world of pure potencies, and *to this extent* it is still a purely spiritual world<sup>34</sup>.

The potencies in this position, where they are the directly external [face] of the deity, are posited by a *universio*. This *universio* is the pure work of divine will [*Wollens*] and of divine freedom. This potency of the beginning, which according to the concept, should not *be*, is: it is to this extent affirmed, but it is only affirmed in order to be negated, to be actually negated, and the apparent affirmation is only the means of its *actual* negation, in the same way that the apparent negation of the other potencies is only the means of their actual affirmation or position [*Position*]. The divine being is not negated [*aufgehoben*] in this tension of the potencies, but only *suspended*: but the goal of this suspension is nothing other than to *really* posit it, to posit it *actu*, which was not possible in any other way. This whole process is only the process of the production of the divine *being* – the *theogonic process*, whose *most universal* and *highest* concept has now been found, and whose concept is shown to be eminently real. And so the mystery of the divine being and divine life is explained by this *miracle* [*Wunder*] of the *permutation* or *reversal* of the

potencies. And a universal law of the divine mode of action is thereby at the same time applied to the highest problem of all science, to the explanation of the world.

Those who have seen the deepest into the mystery of the divine ways have always asserted that God does everything *κατά τινα οίκονομίαν*, i.e. according to some kind of disguise, that he usually shows the opposite of what he actually wants.<sup>38</sup> No one thought of applying this principle to the explanation of the world itself. The existence of a world different from God (because the potencies in their <92> tension are no longer God) is based on a divine art of disguise, which affirms in appearance what it intends to negate, and vice versa, negates in appearance what it intends to affirm<sup>35</sup>. What explains the world in general explains also the course of the world, the many great and difficult riddles that human life as a whole and in its details offers. It is therefore not for nothing that we are so often reminded in Scripture to be *clever* [*klug*] – not in the common sense of the word, but rather [in the sense] that we not let ourselves be fooled by the outer appearance of things and the course of the world, that we recognize non-being in being, and being in non-being. God, as Scripture says, is a wondrous God.<sup>39</sup>

I would like to remark the following regarding the concept of a theogonic process that has now been reached: our present investigation was induced by the concept of the theogonic process, about which we formally drew necessary conclusions, but which we did know how to link to an idea. Our opinion was that this theogonic process has in consciousness itself an objective meaning. On this assumption, however, the concept of a *theogonic process* must also have a meaning

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<sup>38</sup> Κατ'οίκονομίαν, *feri aliquid dicitur, cum aliud quidpiam specie tenus geritur, quam quod vel intenditur, vel revera subest*. SUICER [op. cit.], t. II, p. 459.

<sup>39</sup> Many years ago I wrote in the autograph book of a famous Frenchman from the good old days, who was fairly atheistic, but who was a very good-natured man, like *many* of his type (more good-natured than the bigots who followed): “The world is only the suspended divine being. He (God) laughs at those who allow themselves to be led by it, and taking into account the pleasure which their haste affords him, he will one day graciously forgive them for having denied him.”



*independent* of human consciousness. But a movement in which God would really generate himself or be generated seems to contradict all our received notions. Since God [in] himself, or according to his essence, is ungenerated, the concept of a process that generates God can at least only refer to a negated [*aufgehoben*] divine being. But we lack all the means even to think of such a being. Through the previous discussion on the concept of monotheism, we now find ourselves at a point where such a negation of the divine being no longer seems so unintelligible <93>. The negation of the divine being, which is the condition of the theogonic process, cannot, of course, be *absolute*: this is impossible. This negation is only temporary, it is only a suspension. Here, as you can see, the opposite [*conträre*] being behaves first and directly as that which negates [*negierende*] the divine being, but indirectly, and at its end – where it is overcome again by potentiality [*Können*], by the original non-being – it behaves as that which explicitly [*ausdrücklich*] posits the divine being, which affirms God, but in *transition*, i.e. in the process, as the theogonic principle that generates the divine being. Before we develop this further, however, it is important for us to show the extent to which, with the *universio* and the resulting division of the potencies, monotheism is given as a *dogma*, and with that, the extent to which the (objective) possibility of polytheism is also “given.”

If we look at the All [*das Ganze*] according to the *universio* or in it, the potencies, which are mutually exclusive and find themselves in reciprocal tension, are the outer or exoteric [face] of the divine. They are a *true* plurality, a *real* plurality – (since, as we have seen, they could not be separated, nor exclude each other, [as long as they were] in the concept, they now really exclude each other, in that each of the three potencies has come into itself and into tension against the others. The *basis* [*Grund*] of the exclusion, the potency that excludes everything, that puts everything into tension, is the first one, the principle of the beginning that should not be; this is

*omnia excludens*, if we think of the other meaning of the Latin *excludere*, which has the same meaning as *parere*, the *omniparens natura* or *potentia*<sup>40</sup>). The potencies <94> in their mutual exclusion are therefore the outer, exoteric [face of God], whereas their inner, esoteric [face], is God<sup>36</sup>. He is *the one* who actually is in *all* the potencies, *the one* who is in non-being, *the one* who operates all things, as one of the Apostles says: ὁ τα πάντα ενεργών κατα βουλην του θελήματος αυτου<sup>41</sup>, where even his double will is indicated. The θέλημα is the outer will, that which posits the tension (which remains as an unbreakable will, as an absolute cause [*Ursächliches*], without itself entering into tension, although it cannot any more *now* than it did in the *original* unity be imagined *outside* the potencies – as a fourth, specifically existing being<sup>42</sup>; but he is *in them* – without for that reason being them – as the spiritually sovereign [God] – the one who, not outside the inverted but in the inverted, operates all in all<sup>37</sup>. The βουλή, by contrast, is the actual will, the will in which one finds the *intention*<sup>43</sup> that only wants tension as a *means*, and rather wants unity (which was not real in the mere concept) as an *actually realized* [*verwirklichte*] unity<sup>44</sup>. It is indeed God who acts and wants something *different* in each potency (namely according to θέλημα or the outer will): in B he wants the blind being, which he negates and overcomes in A<sup>2</sup>. But according to the true, inner will, he is only one who wants only one thing, namely unity: this is the *intention*.

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<sup>40</sup> Of the three potencies, the first behaves as something that cannot itself be excluded, but that excludes all the rest. We have already learned to recognize the latter at the beginning as something that is *only* not to be excluded [*das nur nicht AUSzuschliessende*] – as something not to be actually affirmed, but only not to be negated. But as something that cannot itself be excluded, it excludes all things (*omnia excludens*), whereby it is fully appropriate to bear in mind not only the logical, but also the real meaning of the word *excludere* = *parere*. (Here one sees *how* the logical concepts are at the same time *real*, living concepts, which they can never become by their own, i.e. <94> once again, by merely logical movement. To attack these concepts, which are *simultaneously* logical and real, is not any better than to go a campaign with lead soldiers against living, real soldiers.)

<sup>41</sup> Eph. 1, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the previous volume, p. 313.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. the significant “βουληθεις,” Jac. I, 8.

<sup>44</sup> God makes of the unity posited in his self-concept, so that it is really posited, the aim and the end of a process which therefore necessarily derived from a reversal of unity.

We can say: God is a different personality in each potency; the personality that wants B is obviously different than the one B overcomes. But this does not make him many [*Viele*] or plural [*Mehrere*]; he remains only One [*Einer*]. From this point of view, there is now something <95> similar to the Christian doctrine of the three personalities of God, and we see *how* this doctrine is indeed consistent with monotheism, but is already a higher application of the last concept<sup>45</sup>. If we can accept what has not yet been proven, but which soon will be, namely that the process posited by the *universio* is the process of creation, then creation is actually based on the operation of God in the three different personalities. It is these Elohim who make up the *inner*, esoteric history of creation, as they are represented in the Mosaic story of creation in which they consult with one another about creation, saying: Let us make man! Had man remained in the interior [*im Inneren*], where he originally was, he would consort [*verkehren*] with these Elohim themselves. But man was thrown out of the interior, and from this merely external and exoteric standpoint, he also succumbed on his own [*für sich*] to the mere potencies. From this standpoint, polytheism is now *possible*<sup>38</sup>, and it is only from this standpoint that monotheism takes on its meaning as *dogma*. Only that which has an opposite is a dogma. Mathematical theories, those of the purely rational sciences in general, of which the opposite cannot at all be thought, apodictic truths – these are not dogmas.<sup>46</sup> Only from the current standpoint does monotheism make *sense* as dogma. It is only here that one can say with understanding: that other than God, namely other than the essential Uni-Total [*All-Einigen*], there *is* no other God (not: there can be no other God, as in the earlier standpoint, in which *all* being is with [*bei*] God, therefore other than him – not: <96> [there is] no

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<sup>45</sup> Monotheism is related to the doctrine of the Trinity (cf. supra p. <79>), but the two are not identical.

<sup>46</sup> Since Kant, it has generally been accepted to represent Spinozism as the very model and most accomplished system of dogmatism. If this was only a question of method, there is nothing serious to object to that. But if it is a question of the system's content, one must on the contrary say that the peculiarity of this system consists rather in the total lack of dogmatism and positivity, and that it is the most complete system of anti-dogmatism [*vollendete System des Undogmatismus*].

*other* [God], but rather no *possibility* of another. Here, however, we can say that besides God, besides the essentially and necessarily uni-total [God], there is no other, or rather that the essential Uni-Total is the only *God*<sup>47</sup>. Affirming this requires the following: 1) that in the first place there be, *in general*, something other than God. Here, too, monotheism is *restrictive*; no one denies that there is something other than God, but only that that which has being [*Seyende*] is other than God (which is therefore already assumed here, but which could not be so in the very first standpoint, where God was only Being itself [*Seyende selbst*], the universal essence), no one denies that there is *something* other than God, but only that that which is besides God is God: it is not the being, but the divinity [*Gottheit*] of that thing that is denied. The meaning of the affirmation [*Satz*] is not: only the Uni-Total Is, but rather: only the Uni-Total as *such*, i.e. the essential Uni-Total (the Uni-Total that is, and as such remains in dissociation<sup>39</sup>), is the true God. If this standpoint is the only one that allows one to speak of the one [*einzig*] God in the sense that *any another God other than him* is denied, so too is it the only one that allows one to speak of the *true* God, as will be clear from the following. Indeed, to be able to say that there Is no God *other than* God, the following is necessary: 1) (as already said) there must be, in general, something other than him, which is only the case from the current standpoint, according to which the potencies are something *other than* God (if not *extra*, at least *praeter Deum*); 2) it is necessary that *that which is* other than God not be absolutely *non-God*, as is the case, for example, of concrete and merely produced [*bloß gewordenen*] things, which do not allow any comparison with God (one could say that the polytheists also worshiped concrete things as God, that the fetish-worshippers even worshiped

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<sup>47</sup> There, unicity did not derive from divinity [*Gottseyn*]; it is rather only by virtue of that exclusivity (absolute unicity, as we called it) that he is God. But here unicity comes from divinity. We could say that it is not the mere unicity of God, but the unicity-of-God. What is affirmed here is a unicity that is *in God himself*: not a merely *natural, material* unicity, to which he would be merely entitled by virtue of what *He himself* is not, but a *formal, actual, spiritual*, in a word, *divine* unicity.

stones, blocks of woods, animal claws, etc. and <97> that Egyptians even established a divine cult to animals, like the sacred bull Apis – however, 1) it is possible that degenerations and corruptions have taken place within polytheism; the *original* cult in polytheism certainly referred to something other than concrete things; 2) if one refuses to admit this, then, for example, one may very well doubt whether for the fetish-worshiper the cult is addressed to concrete [things] *as such*, and wonder whether his worship of concrete things is not purely accidental in his devotion), therefore, to be able to say that there is no God other than God, it is necessary 2) that *that which is* outside of God not be something that cannot be thought of as God in any way, such as purely produced things, but rather that it be something that can be thought of as God in a certain way, without it *being* God; this is the nature of the potencies of the divine being that are currently placed under tension and are mutually exclusive: they are, in fact, *aliquid praeter Deum*. Posited outside of unity, they are not God: yet they are not nothing for that reason, but something. On the other hand, they are not concrete things, but rather spiritual essences, *potentiae purae et ab omni concretionem liberae et immunes*, as one might say in Latin, outer Elohim, even if not those *inner* [potencies]: and although they are not God, they are still not absolutely *non-God*, namely *non-God* according to [their] material being [*Stoff*]. They are the potencies posited outside of the divinity, but which precisely for that reason have in themselves the possibility of being restored in their divinity, therefore they are God not *actu*, but *potentiâ* or δυνάμει, just as they are, already now, at least, and even in their mutual exclusion, the theogonic potencies, which *generate* God. – (You see how we have come very close to the subject of our investigation. In Greek usage, mythology and theogony are synonymous words. Herodotus even speaks of a theogony of the Persians. Our main source for Greek mythology is the poem of Hesiod called *Theogony*.)

One can also express monotheism as a doctrine, as a dogma, <98> as follows: God is only

the one who is Unique [*Einzig*], who has no equal. This presupposes, however, that there are other [things] that, while having their equal, are not Unique: this is the case with the potencies that have their equal among *themselves*, but none of which is unique *in* the sense that it does not have its equal. It is as if one were to teach monotheism as follows: Do not think of God as [the potencies] that are plural and have their equal, but rather as the one you see as Unique, who is not line with the plurality, but rather who stands *above* it as its unity. However, in order to understand this teaching, it is assumed that one thus taught actually sees the plurality beside and apart from the Unique, and this plurality also must be of such a kind that one is able to say of them, not absolutely, but insofar as they are *plural* (separated, excluding each other): they are not God. Monotheism (no longer merely as a concept, but as a doctrine) would therefore have no sense if there did not exist, in fact, a mutually exclusive plurality, and in such a way that they would not absolutely not be God, but only *as plurality* and in mutual exclusion; of which, then, one recognizes at the same time that, in unity, they would certainly be God, and which, although not God as external Elohim (as they presently are), would be God as internal Elohim. How can we speak of a *true* God, the one of whom we speak in monotheism expressed as a doctrine – whose meaning is: the true God is the one who is the Unique<sup>48</sup> – how can I speak this way if I did not presuppose, beside the true God, a plurality which, from a purely *material* point of view, are not absolutely *non*-God, but are not the true God, and are therefore pseudo-Gods [*scheinbare Götter*]<sup>49</sup>? Except for God, ordinary

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<sup>48</sup> An Apostle expresses monotheism as a dogma with the words: ο θεος εις εστι (Galatians 3:20), which can be translated as follows: the one who is God is the only to be [*einzig*], or rather is One alone [*Einer*].

<sup>49</sup> In monotheism as a mere *concept* (not as a dogma) this plurality was only potential, and it was possible to deny that this plurality was a *possible plurality* of Gods, and to say through some kind of preliminary (proleptic) anticipation and affirmation that this plurality, <99> although it really appears as such, will not become many Gods: this amounts to saying that they are not possible Gods. This is to declare as impossible beforehand that there could be real Gods *to come*: monotheism as an explicit dogma, on the other hand, holds that, other than [*außer*] God, there are no *real* Gods. Both these assertions presuppose that this plurality is [a plurality of] pseudo-Gods.

theology has nothing <99> but concrete, created things. The principle that nothing but [*außer*] God is God has only one meaning, namely that things are not God: but mere things can be regarded neither as false nor as true Gods. False gods can only be those who have at least the appearance of Gods. But mere things are not even apparent Gods. By contrast, the potencies in their separation *can*, although erroneously, be nevertheless regarded as Gods, because while they are not the true God, they are however not non-God in every respect. Although they are, in fact, no longer God in this tension and insofar as they are understood in this [tension], they do not cease for that reason *to be that which, in its unity, is God*; they are not *nothing*, and also not – *things*, but are *lucid potencies*, pure and *therefore divine forces*. Although they are not God in [their] separation<sup>50</sup>, they are, for that very reason, not *actu* God, that is, they are not absolutely non-God, in every way, namely also by sheer *power* [*der blossen KRAFT nach*]. But the present investigation is precisely concerned with knowing how something that is neither the *true God*, nor absolutely *non-God*, can indeed be a dominant power [*Macht*], and to this extent it has no other purpose than to explain paganism and polytheism. The Old Testament, in numerous passages, also does not deny the reality of the Gods; it only says that none of them is the true God, the real God<sup>51</sup>. The true, real God, as the Old Testament teaches us, is always only <100> the Unique, i.e. the only one to be<sup>52</sup>. – He appears as this Unique, *in* his unicity, when the potencies are placed under tension. The potencies are, in fact, = to him, and yet not Himself. Therefore, if he places them under tension, in such a way that they are no longer = him, he appears as Himself and, after having ejected the material from his being, as it were, stands in his absolute nakedness [*Bloßheit*], where the essence for him is = (instead of) being<sup>53</sup>. Monotheism in this sense is the complete opposite of Spinozism, where

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<sup>50</sup> The separator, that which thwarts unity (τὸ διαβάλλον τὴν ἐνότητα), is the first potency.

<sup>51</sup> For example, 2 *Sam.* 7:23. Moses proclaims: Who among the gods is like you? (*Exodus* 15:11).

<sup>52</sup> *Is.* 45, 18.

<sup>53</sup> As οὐσία ὑπερούσιος, supra-substantial essence, as the ancient theologians put it, like Pachymeres in

God is the universal substance or *the One*. As long as God is only posited absolutely, God as such (Himself) is still covered, as it were, by that being that he has in himself as something hidden [*ein Verborgenes*]. There also he is *παν*, so he must be able to free himself from it in order to appear in his true unicity. – The original being of God consists in that he is the unity of all the potencies. Conversely, the potencies in their unity, their non-difference, are the being of God. By placing them under tension, he actually gives up this being; thus, he now stands there, but only as Himself, in his solitude and his unicity raised beyond everything<sup>40</sup>. The concept of unicity contains that of *isolation* [*Absonderung*], of exclusion [*Ausscheidung*], and one can say that the primitive concept of God consists precisely in being that which is isolated from all the rest, and, far from being that which is equal to everything, he is rather *that which is equal to nothing* (ατερος των αλλων, as the Pythagoreans say) and in this sense the Unique<sup>54</sup>. It has often been said that the highest <101> concept under which God can be thought of is the Holy [*der Heilige*]. The Holy, in accordance with language, at least Hebrew, from which this concept is actually derived, is the concept of he who is removed [*Abgesonderte*] from everything<sup>55</sup>. <102> If polytheism cannot be explained

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*Dion. Areop. de div. Nom. c. 5:* Κυρίως οὐσία ἐπὶ θεοῦ οὐκ ἂν λέγοιτο, ἔστι γὰρ ὑπερούσιος [Georges Pachymeres, *Γεωργίου του Παχυμέρη Παράφρασις εις τον του αγίου ιερομάρτυρος Διονυσίου του Αρεοπαγίτου λόγος* = *Paraphrasis in omnia Dionysii Areopagita, Athenarum episcopi, opera quae extant* (Paris: G. Morelius, 1561); paraphrase of the *Περὶ θεῶν ονομάτων* [*On the Divine Names*] (Ch. 5), pp. 293–312.] For later theologians, cf. *J. Gerhard, Loci Theologici* [op. cit.] t. 33, col. 251, § 60. John of Damascus even says in the same vein that God is ἀνούσιος. Incidentally, the determination of the ὑπερουσιότης is already posited by the fact that he is a He, not a mere It (what is a He can always be regarded as an It, but not vice versa).

<sup>54</sup> God himself is not absolute indifference (= that to which nothing can be unequal), but absolute difference (= that to which nothing can be equal), hence the *absolutely definite* (*id quod absolute praecisum est*), which by nature <101> is cut off from everything, the absolute solitary, and, in a word, *unique* in the highest sense, a term which would be completely wrong if God were only the *universal essence* [*Wesen*].

<sup>55</sup> *Editor's Note:* In one of his OLDEST extant manuscripts, which contain works on the theory of monotheism (the one already mentioned), one finds the following note about the possibility of applying the CONCEPT OF NUMBER [BEGRIFFS DES NÜMERISCHEN] to God, and here seems that here is the right place to present it. It reads:

One could rightly say of *this* God, who is lucid act, and insofar as one does not think of him as absolute, but rather explicitly distinguishes him from the substance, one could therefore rightly say of the real God *as such* what one could not say of the simple [concept of] God, as shown, without expressing a



completely empty tautology and also a contradiction: namely that he is *externally unique*, or that *there is no God other than God*. The subject of the statement is not the same in the former and the latter. In the former, the subject was none other than the one who could only be exclusive, and it was purely superfluous to affirm that there is no one other than him. But in the latter, the subject is rather the (substantially) *non-Unique*, and this absolute, primordial Unicity, lacking all properties [*uneigenschaftlich*], has here become merely a property [*eigenschaftlich*] of this Unique [which is] only *actu*, because the latter makes this exclusive ability-to-be [*Seynkönnen*] the foundation of his being-as-God. The *definite* God might even be called *quantitatively unique*, but, it is worth emphasizing, apart from the substance. A numerical multiplicity, whose expression is  $A + A + A \dots$ , is based on the fact that there are a plurality [of beings] which according to the ground [of God] (the matter, the essence = A) are only one, but which must be distinguished according to the act of existence. To the extent that the real God as act can be distinguished from the ground [of God], he is *in general* equal to those things that can be numerically many (whereas the application of this concept to the simple [concept of] God was absolutely impossible, because in the latter there can be no question of either a ground, which is only thinkable in relation to an act, or therefore of an act). According to this distinction, the real God as such falls under the concept of number in general. However, in particular, he is once again unequal to things that can be numerically many, because of the fact their ground can be repeated indefinitely, whereas his own ground is by nature *incapable* of being more than once [*mehrmals*]. To this extent, therefore, he no longer falls under this category, and is unique in a sense in which nothing else is – so that, for the reason just mentioned, he *can only be* unique.

In fact, the real God as such is (externally, <102> as one should always recognize in the first place here) unique *actu*, because he is in himself act. Nevertheless, and although he really (*actu*) exists, *he is not merely* (or, depending on how one takes it, not at all) *unique by the pure act of his existence*: he is unique in such a way that the contrary is impossible. These apparently contradictory determinations – because the numerical unicity absolutely presupposes an act, but *that which can only be* unique in this sense is something essential, substantial – these determinations can only be reconciled by means of our deduction. In fact, the real God considered without taking the substance into account (and not simply in distinction from it) is not the *essentially* and, in this sense, necessarily Unique (that which *can only be* unique). There is in him nothing *essential* [and, in this sense, necessary,] because he is lucid act. For himself, considered *abstracte* from what became his matter [*Materie*], he would not be the necessarily unique [God], but if what is related to him as [his] mere (non-actual) essence were not that which can *only be* unique, then there would not be anything, in the concept of the actual [God] itself, to prevent there being a second, actual one. But since the former is the exclusive ability to be or *that which is exclusive in pure possibility*, which by nature cannot be more than once, a second God is therefore impossible. The real God is therefore numerically unique as act, but he *can only be* numerically unique (insofar as he is not yet *numerically* unique) according to the essence. The true meaning of the statement that externally states the unicity is: He who is *actu* the only God or the only *existing* [God], is at the same time the *only existing* [God] *possible*. The foundation of this unicity does not lie in the act, but in the possibility. The only thing missing is the possibility, the presupposition and, as it were, to make ourselves quite clear, the material of a second God. It is not the God that is as such that excludes other [Gods] from himself, since the concept of exclusivity cannot be applied to God; but rather, if the actual God is the One [God], it is because this possibility of God himself is of an absolutely exclusive nature and cannot exist more than once.

This view now explains many other things, e.g. it explains why the theologians, as one can see in J. Gerhard, posit a numerical unicity, but at the same time negate it. On the one hand, the diversity of expression: for which reason, although there is not one of them who does not recognize this external unicity as necessary, they are usually content to simply affirm that *there is no God other than God*. Indeed, in respect of the lucid act, one could simply say that he *is* unique, but this does not negate the fact that, in other respects, namely in respect of matter, he *can only be* unique. On the other hand, the purely negative explanation of this unicity. When one hears the utterance: God is unique, one naturally <103> expects to understand the positive ground of unicity, which lies in *God himself*, namely in that of whom it [this unicity] is said.

without the potencies, and if monotheism as a doctrine only makes sense in relation to these <103> potencies, it is easy to see why philosophers and theologians have not only found great difficulty in explaining polytheism, but also why they are incapable of speaking about monotheism (the first and the most essential of all doctrines) in a way that allows it to have a real *meaning* and to not appear as a pure and empty tautology. According to the usual explanation, monotheism would only mean that other than the uni-total God, there is no other God who is also the [uni-total] God, which is a meaningless statement. Polytheism cannot consist in saying that the true God, i.e. the essentially uni-total [God], can [be] more than once, but only in saying that he cannot be recognized and taken for a plurality of Gods, but instead that only the separated potencies can. If then the separation of the potencies, as we have to assume, results in a process, then at every level *God* is, as it were, in becoming – he is then, at each degree, a figure of this God in *becoming* – and since this becoming is a progressive one, this creates a series, a succession of Gods, and only then would an actual polytheism, a *poly*-latry, be born.

That one and the same [being], namely God, can be one and not one, or that precisely what is God in his supra-substantial unity can be separated as a substance (and monotheism does not deny this, it denies only that this separated [being] is God), this fact *alone* is what makes polytheism possible. Therefore, we can *only* say the following: while many people who philosophized about mythology believed that the concept of monotheism gave them a means to demonstrate the impossibility of an *actual* polytheism, and thus to demonstrate their hypothesis that the Gods of paganism should only be misunderstood personifications of natural forces, used to convey didactic instruction to mass audiences [*unter die Arme zu greifen*], in fact, what these explanations call monotheism is not really monotheism. Monotheism cannot assert a *necessary* unicity <104> under which polytheism would be an absolute impossibility. Rather, monotheism

itself can only be a dogma to the extent that polytheism is something, and something that is objectively possible. As is well known, dogma, like the Latin *decretum*, which is also used for assertions, for theorems, means a decision, and only then an assertion. A dogma is something that must be asserted, that is, it cannot be thought without a contradiction (an antithesis).

*The* belief that there is only one God, which, according to the saying of an Apostle, makes demons, i.e. natures that have completely turned away from the divine unity, tremble, must be a completely different and stronger belief than that of our moralizing theologians: these, as the saying goes, imagine a good, carefree God, who lets matters take their course<sup>41</sup>, and imagine him removed from the world, and at best in a merely negative relation with the separation of the potencies that is posited in the world. If the potencies, whose supra-substantial unity is God, are the external and manifest [face] of the world, God, by contrast, is its hidden [face], and if human consciousness, by venturing to transgress the limits of original essentiality, fell into this kingdom of the separated potencies, then polytheism was for it something natural, and, by contrast, monotheism could only have appeared to it merely as something to be asserted in contradiction to reality. If things seem different to us, if monotheism appears to us to be simplest thing in the world, this is only because of the fact that our consciousness – in a way that cannot yet be explained – is posited outside of the real tension of the potencies, in which former humankind was found. But as a result of the direction that free reflection has increasingly taken since then, we have been progressively excluded from the living unity and become engaged in the complete nullity that today is called the purely spiritual or purely moral religion<sup>56</sup>. Is it not obvious that, at the same time and <105> in the same proportion as nature found itself increasingly removed from all

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<sup>56</sup> The *living* unity is that which at the same time is *totality*; it is totality that fills and vivifies unity.

divinity, sinking to a mere, dead aggregate, the living monotheism increasingly evaporated into a theism that is empty, indefinite, and lacking in content? Was it merely by coincidence and not rather by a very certain instinct, that the followers of this merely negative, absolutely impotent theism, especially and before all others, rose up against the renewed higher view of nature? Today's rationalist thinks he stands far above blind paganism. But that above which one should stand must first be *understood*, and not explained away with poor and absurd hypotheses. The true judgement that the *public* of so-called cultivated people have on culture turns out to be that these people, with their so-called culture, are on the opposite side of ignorance and blindness, but with the blindness *of* paganism.

It is only at this point of our development that we can recognize monotheism as it emerges in universal consciousness and life. But it itself must have lost more and more of its meaning in life, since this meaning requires something that is other than God, and yet that is not absolutely non-God. But for some time now our theology and philosophy have had nothing in the middle between God and concrete things: they know, aside from God, nothing but concrete things. *These*, however, as they *are*, have all the markings of a product, indeed of the most accidental of products, the mere fruit of a series of accidents: to say that concrete things are not God is not to say anything of special value. If one had nothing to add, this teaching could at best be addressed to the Negro peoples of central Africa or other fetish-worshippers.

If this theory of monotheism makes it possible to understand, for the first time, the origin of paganism, it may also explain the distinction between God as such, or God *in himself* [*in sich*], <106> invisible, and God outside of himself, as he is still in the separated potencies (because, as I have said, these are not simply non-God, but only God posited outside of himself, the inverted, overturned God): it may explain, at the same time as this distinction, some enigmas of the Old

Testament in particular, and notably some of its expressions, which are inapplicable to the actual God, to Jehovah, in his absolute spirituality, but which are used for the other [God] with too much authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] for them to be explained away in the usual manner as *mere* figurative expressions. They are certainly figurative, but only to the extent that God *cannot* be absolutely separated – by this separation of the potencies that has been freely posited by him: these potencies remain one even in this tension – so that none of them at any moment can become independent [*für sich seyn*]. On the contrary, they are continually posited as one *in* the separation itself, and this is what places them in the necessity of the process – if they could be completely apart, there would be no process. Since they always remain one in some way, are only the One turned upside down [*umgekehrte*], they are, in fact, only the figurative God, who is posited outside himself. Thus, namely because these so-called figurative expressions certainly do not apply to God according to his essence, but insofar as he exists in the potencies in tension – only in this way can these expressions be called figurative. It makes a big difference whether the potencies are recognized as God himself, or in general neither as God, nor even as the figurative God – this is a kind of atheism<sup>42</sup>, and that is precisely why purely abstract theism shows itself entirely incapable of understanding not only those expressions, but also many other phenomena<sup>57</sup>, the most remarkable of which is that of paganism and mythology.

<107> I have thus not only shown you the true concept of monotheism, both merely as a concept and as a statement [*Aussage*], but I also showed how, from there, polytheism appears to be something natural to a certain extent – something that is not outside of all possibility. – After what I have just shown you regarding monotheism in general, it remains for me to show

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<sup>57</sup> Maybe this irony, which is not uncommon, is also appropriate here, where against common practice, the noun, God, in the singular, is combined with the verb (indicating an action) in the plural, as in *Job* 35:10: “God, my creators,” i.e. which seem to be plural (*actu*), but *are* only one.

monotheism in human consciousness and, from there, the transition to mythology (to polytheism),  
also in human consciousness.

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## Lecture 6

<108> We pose ourselves the question: does monotheism have an *original* relation to *human consciousness*? In order to answer this question, we must first explain the process by which consciousness in general is posited. We therefore return to the process posited by the divine *universio*, knowing already that is a theogonic process. The entire living chain in which we see the potencies during the tension in which they mutually exclude each other, without being able to separate, this entire living chain is only the means of the realization of the absolute Spirit which cannot be (in any other way); which, in its ultimate production, at the end of all this work, achieves its goal *per contrarium*; [and] which, therefore, when the three potencies are enclosed again, when blind being is brought back to the pure ability-to-be [and is] = to the spirit posited as such – *then*, I say, is that Spirit truly realized as absolute Spirit that stands above all the potencies.

What aim, one could ask, does this process in which God is realized as such have<sup>58</sup>? This realization is not necessary <109> for *himself*. Even without it he knows himself [to be] the insurmountable All-One. For him, this movement, this process would be without result. What can then lead him to the free decision of becoming apparent [*hervorzutreten*] in this process? The reason for this decision cannot be an aim that he wanted to achieve in relation to *himself*. There must be something outside of him (*praeter ipsum*), something that he wants to achieve by means of this process, something that is not yet, but that should be formed by means of this process. That which is not yet, but which this process makes possible, as you can easily see, can now only be the creature that God sees as future [*künftiges*], as possible. It follows either that one cannot think of

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<sup>58</sup> Before the process, God possesses himself in the pre-concept of his being as the All-One. This has also been called his *original* being. By means of the process, he realizes himself as the All-One, i.e. he makes himself *actu* what he is already in advance *naturâ*. If he were not the All-One *naturâ* or according to his concept, he would not be able to make himself *actu*.

any aim of the process that we have already described as theogonic or that this process must at the same time be the process of creation. For the time being, however, this is merely a dialectical conclusion. It has not yet been proven and verified by the act [*durch die That*]. It must therefore be shown that the process we have recognized as theogonic is at the same time the process of creation (which, however, is to be distinguished from the act of creation, of which it is only the consequence<sup>59</sup>), it must be shown that the principles or potencies that we have learned to recognize as the potencies of a theogonic process, that even these behave at the same time as the causes of a possible emergence [*Entstehens*] of *previously non-existing* [*nicht vorhandener*] things. You will notice here that there has been nothing concrete yet. Everything in our development until now has been purely spiritual. Even the contrary [*conträre*] principle, which as material [*Stoff*], as a modifiable subject that underlies the whole process, is yet nothing concrete in itself, [but] is = to a will [*Wollen*] that has become effective [*wirkend*], until now, i.e. before it is affected by the opposite potency: it is rather, in its boundlessness, the opposite of everything concrete. *Here* we then move on to the concrete. The latter only arises [*entstehen*] from the cooperation <110> of the potencies. In order to show this, and at the same time to show how this cooperation gives rise to something that previously did not exist, we must once again recall, in general, the process posited by the tension and the mutual exclusion of the potencies. I am glad to repeat it. Because, in all that follows, we will be concerned with these potencies. It is important to consider them often and to become familiar with them in order to recognize them in every form in the future.

Because these potencies are mutually exclusive and yet cannot be absolutely apart, but are compelled to subsist [*bestehen*] in one and the same [being], to be, as it were, in one and the same

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<sup>59</sup> The *act* of creation can only be at issue in the presentation of the positive philosophy, and not here, where the [author's] intention was only to understand monotheism analytically and to use it to find the key to the understanding of polytheism (the theogonic movement). The theory of creation is only developed insofar as it is necessary for this purpose. The ed.



point, a process is necessarily posited between the potencies that exclude each other without being able to be absolutely apart. This being generated [*entstehend*] by an immediate divine will [*Will*] operates exclusively on pure Being. The latter is thus negated and withdraws into itself. The exclusion makes of it necessarily a being that is for oneself; it is therefore hypostasized, substantialized by this exclusion. The completely new being, B, emerges as if suddenly, posits it *ex puro acto*, potentializes it (all these expressions mean the same thing); the negation, or the fact that it is posited as non-being [*nicht seyend*], allows it to be in itself, whereas it had previously been outside itself, without retuning to itself; negation makes it into that which must be ([that which must] establish itself in being), what is not free to operate or not to operate: it can by nature be nothing other than the will to bring back the principle that should *not* actually have been to its original potency (in the manner that a will can be brought back). But this principle, which by nature is merely mediating, negates the first, that which ought not to be, not *in order* to usurp the being that this potency renounces, but, as I said, in order to make the principle that has been overcome, that has been led to renounce itself, into the support [*Setzende*] of the Most High, of that which ought to be [*Seynsollende*], of that which alone is fit [*gebühren*] to be: the Spirit that is as such. That which ought to be [*Seynsollende*] is that which can only be *tertio loco*. That which ought to be only really is in <III> the overcoming of that which ought not to be = B; its actual realization therefore presupposes 1) that which ought not to be = B (it is necessary for the latter to really be), 2) it presupposes that which negates or overcomes what ought not to be = A<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore only the ability to be of the third order, A<sup>3</sup>. It itself cannot (immediately) overcome that which ought not to be, because otherwise it would be that which must be, and would appear in being as the operator [*Wirkende*], not as what is free to operate or not to operate, as what is free to make or to

start what it wants with its being<sup>60</sup>. The process is therefore the following. First, mere divine will [*Wollen*] posits what ought not to be = B (which is not to be thought of as *evil*, because nothing that is through divine will, and to the extent that it is through the latter, can be evil: it is simply not that which *ought* to be, nor that which is *the goal*, i.e. it is the *means*. No means is that which actually ought to be; otherwise it would be the goal, not the means. That is why the means itself is not evil). The first [principle] that appeared in being = B operates immediately and exclusively on pure Being and posits it as that which must be [*Seynmüssende*], but it operates also indirectly on the third; where that which ought not to be is, that which ought to be cannot be. If, however, the principle which by appearing in being excludes everything else from being, [if that principle] is led back into *itself*, it leaves the space which it previously occupied unoccupied, so to speak; therefore, it cannot itself withdraw into non-being without leaving another in its place, in the place which it currently leaves empty – not the one by which it has been overcome and which only Is in order to overcome it, and which demands nothing else but to withdraw into its original being <112>, without potency, detached [*gelassen*] (detached = in which there is no will; the will is only posited in it through negation; it has nothing to will [*wollen*], since it is pure Being, it must become non-being in order to will): B, therefore, when brought to expiration, leaves empty the space which it itself occupied, and cannot withdraw into non-being without positing another in its place, not the one by which it was overcome, but a third, namely, that which ought to be, which, as we have already seen in advance, can only be in the third place.

There are as many *causes* (*αἰτίαι*) as there are potencies, and indeed *pure* (purely spiritual)

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<sup>60</sup> In other words: as that which *ought* to be, and therefore as *that which is* not, it must be negated, *prevented* from being: but in order for it to *be*, this negation must be overcome, and not by itself; because otherwise it would not appear in reality as that which is pure freedom to act or not to act. The negation must therefore be overcome by an intermediary, a mediator, so that *that which ought to be* presupposes both: that by which it is excluded from being, as well as that by which what excludes it is brought to non-being, to expiration.

causes, but in particular those three causes that must always cooperate in order for something to emerge or come into being, and which the Pythagoreans recognized even before Aristotle<sup>43</sup>. First, the *causa materialis* (this is the name given to that *from which* all things emerge). The *causa materialis* is what ought not to be = B; it is what is changed, modified in the entire process, indeed, what is successively converted into non-being, into mere potentiality [*Können*]. Second, the *causa efficiens*, *through* which everything becomes. This is in our current process A<sup>2</sup>; it is what transforms, what alters the first potency, B. Third, the *causa finalis*, the goal or end *toward* or *in* [view of] which everything becomes. It is A<sup>3</sup>. In order for something to come into being [*zu Stande kommen*], a *causa finalis* is always necessary. To come into being means to stand fast [*zum Stehen kommen*], as in the Old Testament it is said of God: He spoke and things stood fast<sup>44</sup> [*es steht*] (and not as is commonly translated: things stood there [*es steht da*]), i.e. they became fixed [*es bleibt stehen*], did not evolve any further; only *in this way* are things defined as *these* things, these things in particular, and nothing else. – Another way of expressing these three causes is that which one also finds among the Ancients: the first principle, B, is αἰτία προκαταρκτική, the pre-beginning [*voranfangend*] cause<sup>45</sup>, which gives the first cause [*Anlaß*] and [the first] beginning for the entire process; the second is αἰτία δημιουργική, the actual creative cause; the third is [αἰτία] τελειωτική, which brings all things to perfection, [and] which, as it were, stamps its seal on all that comes into being<sup>46</sup>.

<113> These three causes, however, are only ordained to joint action and, ultimately, to harmonious production, by the one who is the *causa causarum*, the cause of causes, as the Pythagoreans already named God<sup>47</sup>. The will, in which the three causes agree among themselves to produce a definite product [*Gewordenes*], can only ever be the divine will, the will of the Divinity itself. To this extent, every product is the work of a divine will. It is a very common

phrase: the Divinity reveals itself in all things, only in some things in a more imperfect, hidden way, and in other things in a more perfect, manifest way. What the three potencies do, the Divinity also does, and vice versa. The natural explanation of things (the explanation from the three causes) therefore does not exclude the religious one, and vice versa<sup>48</sup>.

These causes are the principles or ἀρχαί, and from the earliest times researching and studying them was regarded as the main task of philosophy<sup>49</sup>. Philosophy is nothing more but ἐπιστήμη τῶν ἀρχῶν, the science of pure principles. These can be derived and named in various ways, but their relationship and the nature of each ἀρχή will appear to be the same under any expression. In a way similar to the Platonic account, the first principle behaves as that which is posited outside its potency and thus outside its periphery, as the unlimited principle, τὸ ἄπειρον, which is in need of a limit. The second ἀρχή behaves as the determining [*bestimmende*] [ἀρχή], as the *ratio determinans* of all nature, as that which posits limits. (Whenever there is something that can be + or –, have being or not have being, there must be a determining [*determinierende*] cause.) The third ἀρχή is the *self-determining cause*, the cause that is itself *its own* material or object, and the cause of determination and limitation: Subject and Object = spirit. The sequence is presented here as follows: first, the unlimited, the undetermined; second, the limiting, the determining; third, the self-understanding, self-determining substance, which only appears under the form of Spirit<sup>50</sup>.

We have called these causes or principles *potencies*, <II4> because they really behave *as such* – in the divine pre-concept as the possibilities of the future being, different from God – in the real process (after they have been put into action) as potencies of the divine being, equal to God, which must be produced by them<sup>51, 61</sup>. The expression “potencies,” in particular that of a first,

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<sup>61</sup> Before the process, there was nothing in them that was *potency*, and therefore we cannot call them potencies, properly speaking. Their potency, i.e. their possibility of also being the opposite of what they are in the divine pre-concept, is entirely suspended [*aufheben*] by the act of the original divine life; they are entranced, as it were, and engulfed in the divine life, and none of them is something for itself. But in order

second, and third potency, was criticized as being brought over from mathematics into philosophy. This criticism, however, comes from sheer ignorance and lack of knowledge about the matter. Potency (δύναμις) is *at least* as much an original expression in philosophy as it is in mathematics.

– Potency means the potential to be, τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον εἶναι, as Aristotle calls it<sup>52</sup>. But we have seen that the potential to be – by which we specifically mean the *immediate* potential to be – that which must be, and that which ought to be – that these together are potential to be, therefore, potencies, but potential to be of different orders. The potential to be that is specifically designated by *this* name – the *immediate* potential to be – and that which must be are only potential to be in an indirect way, whereas that which ought to be is mediated twice, and is therefore the potential to be of the third order. When we speak of an A of the first potency, an A of the second potency, and an A of the third potency, we mean nothing other than that the potential to be really appears in increasing degrees of potency and at various levels. But what makes this doctrine incomprehensible and unacceptable to many is the following. Most people can only grasp the concrete or palpable, what appears to their senses as discrete bodies, <115> as discrete plants, etc. However, these pure causes are nothing palpable: they can only be grasped and understood by pure intelligence. Apart from what falls under our senses, what is palpable, many do not find anything in themselves other than a stock of abstract concepts that have absolutely no existence outside us: concepts such as existence [*Daseyn*], becoming, quantity, quality, substantiality, causality, etc. And a recent philosophy even thought it could found the whole of philosophy on a system of these abstract concepts – going as far as to accept as method a successive elevation from concept to concept, a successive increase, a progression from the emptiest concept to the fullest<sup>53</sup>. This feat

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to *think* of them as absorbed in the divine life, one must necessarily also think that they *could* be something independently of the divine life. We negate their being-for-onself, but in order to negate it we think it implicitly [*unwillkürlich*], and to this extent they can be called potencies. (Extracted from another manuscript.)

of a badly applied and therefore also misunderstood method failed and suffered a shameful shipwreck, as soon as this philosophy had to turn to real existence, and first of all to nature.

The potencies we are talking about are neither something palpable, nor are they mere abstractions (abstract concepts). They are real [*reale*], operative, and therefore actual [*wirkliche*] forces, they stand between concrete things and merely abstract concepts, and are therefore in the middle: they are, no less than the former, but in a higher sense, true *universalia*, that are realities at the same time, not unrealities like abstract concepts. But this region of true, i.e. real [*reell*] universals, is inaccessible to many. Crude empiricists speak as if there were nothing in nature but that which is concrete and palpable; they do not see, for example, that gravity, light, sound, heat, electricity, magnetism, that these things are not palpable, but true *universalia*. Still less do they notice that these *universal* potencies of nature are alone worthy of science, that they are the sole preoccupation of intelligence and scientific research. Our potencies, which only the mind [*Verstand*] can grasp, and in this sense are purely intelligible, are related to natural universals (gravity, light) as their *universalissima*. There will also be opportunities in this development to show, or at least to indicate, that these *universalia* are merely derived from those *universalissimis* <116>. Incidentally, I take here the occasion to note also that these ἀρχαί, potencies or principles, are equally capable of a rigorous and purely rational deduction<sup>62</sup>, in the same way that here, in keeping with the special nature of the object, they are deduced from a standpoint that already presupposes God.

After these explanations, which relate to the operative causes, forces, or potencies of the process that we have described as 1) theogonic, because the suspended divine being in it is restored, produced, [and] 2) as a process of creation, by showing that the cooperation of the indissolubly

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<sup>62</sup> Which was given in the [*Presentation of*] the *Purely Rational Philosophy*. Ed.

linked potencies necessarily produces a concrete being, a being that did not exist before, we now proceed to a wider consideration of the process itself.

If this process is the process of creation, it will not only have to produce some concrete being in general, but the concrete being in all the variety of its gradations and ramifications. For this reason, we must absolutely presuppose or assume that the process only unfolds in stages, i.e. that the principle which is the object of overcoming in the process can only be overcome *successively*, which, of course, is only conceivable as a result of the express divine will *that* a variety of things distinct from God be produced.

If the principle which is the ὑποκείμενον, the subject, the basis, or the object of the entire process, were to be unintentionally overcome, in a flash, as it were, then unity would be restored *immediately* without intermediary links. But, according to the divine intention, there must be intermediary links, so that all moments of the process can be integrated into the *final consciousness* – that which we are *properly* dealing with – [and to do so] not merely as distinguishable, but as really different [moments]. But if we assume a successive overcoming, we do not immediately reach the highest unity which is the goal of the process. However, the will that is the object of overcoming <117>, and of which we can say that it only wants *Itself*, will be overcome in *some* way in every moment, whereas the other will, which overcomes it, and which is *only* realized in the first will once this one has been overcome or negated, [this second will] will also be realized to some extent in every moment. And the third, that which ought to be, properly speaking, will then always and necessarily be posited in some sense. This explains the production of certain forms or formations, all of which are more or less images [*Abbildungen*] of the highest unity, which is the model [*Urbild*] of all that is concrete, [and which is] immaterially concrete in the same way things are materially concrete – this, I say, explains the production of forms or formations, all of

which are more or less images of the highest unity, and which, because they represent all the potencies in themselves, are also complete in themselves, self-contained, i.e. will be *things*, properly speaking. These things – which we do not see where one would otherwise look for if not in the actual things of real [*reell*] nature – are all products of the being that emerged from mere potency, but was more or less brought back into it. They are not, however, the products of this [being] *alone*, but are also those of the cause that brings [the latter] back into potency. And because the [potency] that is overcome can only renounce itself in order to posit the highest [potency], that which ought to be, properly speaking, which serves it as an archetype, as the idea towards which it orients itself, and which it seeks to express in itself, the things that are formed [*entstehend*] will be just as much the works of the highest, all-perfecting, and all-concluding potency. Consequently, each thing is the collective work of the three potencies; this is why it is said to be concrete, many coalesced into one, as it were. Indeed, however far from the highest unity a thing may be, unity is still posited in it, and *the* will in which the three potencies agree or concur in the production of a particular thing can only ever be the will of the *Divinity* itself. This is why a flash of divinity at least runs through each thing, or, to use Leibniz's expression, each thing is at least a *coruscatio divinitatis*. You understand that all <118> these determinations, important as they are in other respects, can only be touched on here.

We have just shown in which sense the process that we have described as theogonic is at the same time the process of creation. It follows from this that true monotheism entails (free) creation, and conversely, that creation is only conceivable and understandable with monotheism.

We have moreover shown (and this is a new point) that this process is also the process that posits human *consciousness*. Because human consciousness is the goal and the end of the entire process of nature. It is in human consciousness that the point is reached where all the potencies are



restored to their unity, where the God-negating [principle] of the process (which B has already been interpreted to be) is again turned into the God-positing principle.

All other things are but shifting images of unity. Each thing among them is a kind of unity of the potencies, but not the unity itself: it is only an idol, a semblance [*Scheinbild*] of it. In all other things there is only a flash of divinity, whereas in man, as the end of the whole, the realized Divinity presents itself in person [*selbst*]. But the original man is *essentially* only *consciousness*: he is essentially nothing but B brought back to itself, returned to itself. But to be brought to oneself is to be conscious of oneself.

The substance of human consciousness is therefore precisely that B which, in all the rest of nature, is more or less *out of* itself, whereas, in man, it is *in* itself. Yet this B has appeared to us in its potentiality or centrality, it has appeared in its pre-concept as the ground of all of Divinity, as positing God. In its eccentricity, where it is subject to a necessary process, it appears as [the principle] that posits God again only *indirectly*, namely by a process, i.e. it appears as the theogonic [principle], producing God. As such, as a theogonic principle, it goes through all of nature. In human consciousness, where it has been brought back <119> to its original position, turned back in itself, and has again become = A, it behaves again as the God-*positing* principle. But it only posits God to the extent that it persists in its pure inwardness, does not *come out* again, nor rises to a new being. The pure substance of human consciousness (its underlying “ground”), therefore, in its pure *substance*, i.e. before any act, is in *itself* what posits God naturally (by nature, according to its first origin). Therefore, we do not accept [the hypothesis] that human consciousness proceeds from an original atheism, but neither does it proceed from a monotheism, whether invented or communicated through revelation. It is *before* all invention and all science, and also *before* all revelation and the possibility of all revelation; in a word, it is, by its very nature, by the very

substance of its own consciousness, the principle that posits God – not *actu*, nor knowingly and voluntarily – there is no room here for any of these things – but rather in non-act, in non-will, and in non-knowledge.

We therefore find ourselves here led back to this *substance* of consciousness which had previously appeared to us as the true beginning and starting point of every development that explains mythology. The *first* actual consciousness proved to be already affected by mythology. But beyond the first *actual* consciousness, nothing more could be thought except the pure substance of consciousness. It is, from the human perspective, that to which God should have *adhered* [*haften*]<sup>63</sup>. But the substance of human consciousness is the *prius*, the principle of creation, which in its opposition to unity and this its own alterity is = B. Returned to itself and again become = A, it is *human* consciousness at the same time as it is the God-*positing* [principle].

Think of the matter in this way: as B, this principle, as noted earlier, is that which is *out of* itself, posited outside itself. Brought back to itself [*in sich selbst zurückgebracht*] and posited again as = to A, it is <120> the [principle] that has been brought *back* to itself [*zu sich selbst wiedergebracht*], that has come to itself, that is, consciousness. However, consciousness is that which has been turned into the God-positing [principle] and which, in this its standing-within [*Innestehen*]<sup>54</sup>, *necessarily* posits God. Human consciousness is therefore also, in itself and before itself, *before* the beginning of a new movement, *in* its standing-within, the [principle] that *posits* God: not *actu*, but rather in non-act. Far from affirming (to repeat ourselves) an original a-theism of human consciousness, which all those who want to produce a theology without God should profess<sup>64</sup>, I am just as far from thinking that humanity began with a system or even with a *concept*

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<sup>63</sup> See the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* [*Historical-Critical Introduction*], p. <185>.

<sup>64</sup> If we assert the unconditional authenticity of mythology in relation to the concept of *gods*, we associate it with the determinate concept that *God* actually underlies the gods, that is, God is the true matter and the ultimate content of mythological representations.

of God. Rather, human consciousness is originally connatural, as it were, with God – (because it is itself only the product of the monotheism *expressed* in creation, of the actualized all-unity)<sup>65</sup> – consciousness has God *in* itself, and not as an object that stands before it. Already with its very first movement, consciousness is subject to the theogonic process. We cannot therefore ask how it *comes* to God. It has no more time to *make* itself representations or concepts of God than it has time to later obscure or distort those concepts. Its first movement is not a movement by which it seeks God, but a movement by which it moves away from him. It has therefore God *a priori*, i.e. before all actual movement or – essentially in itself. Those who admit [the hypothesis] that humanity began with a *concept* of God will never be able to explain how mythology could arise from this <I2I> concept. But, moreover, regardless of how they imagine the origin of this concept, whether the human being acquired this concept by his own activity or by revelation, they have probably not considered that, in both cases, they affirm an original atheism of consciousness, which they oppose in other respects.

The knowledge of God that we attribute to the original human being is neither *transmitted*, nor self-produced. It is a *ground* that precedes all thought and knowledge, it is the very *essence* of the human being, by which he is bound to God, in advance and before any *actual* consciousness. For the principle of alterity, or B, which is no longer the ground of human consciousness in its absoluteness, but only in its overcoming, is in this overcoming or pure potentiality also the [principle] that directly posits God. It posits God, therefore, not to the extent that it *moves*, but to the extent that it does not move, in its pure essentiality and non-actuality. But if we now say: it posits God, not to the extent that it moves, but to the extent that it does not move, we seem to

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<sup>65</sup> This connaturality [*Verwachsenheit*] has often been represented by the image of a marriage of the human being with God, a view that appears closer to mythological representations than one can imagine for the time being.

assume that it can move, that it can once again leave the place in which it was created, that it is free to come out again of this place, *in which it can only be as a pure potency* – therefore, that it is free to become positive again. How can this be thought ? The answer lies in all our development until now.

The essence, the substance of human consciousness is no longer = the mere lucid B which is the prius of creation. Rather, it is B converted from B into A, B which is posited as = A. Therefore, it is a distinct essence, independent from B. On the other hand, however, it is just as little simple A, mere A, but is rather A that has B as its basis. Something new has appeared here. Before, there was only pure B on one side, pure A<sup>2</sup> on the other. Human consciousness is an intermediary, a third vis-à-vis the two, and in the same way that it is independent of B (since it is A), <122> it is also independent of the *second* potency – of the potency that posits it as A (since it is not mere A, but A that has B as its underlying potency). And by coming thus to stand in-between the first potency, which is lucid B, and the second, which is the potency opposite to B, which posits B as A – this intermediary [position] between the two potencies makes it free from both, i.e. it becomes a distinct, separate, and independent being [*Wesen*]. This *separate*, newly produced being [*Wesen*], which previously did not exist in any way, which is independent of mere B by virtue of the A produced in it, and which, by holding B within itself, even if only as a potency, is independent of the cause that produces A in it – this separate being, which is = free *in this way*, is the human being (namely, the original human being), which we therefore describe also as A containing B as a *potency*, and which therefore, by its own act, can put this potential B again in *motion* [*Wirkung*] and raise it up again in oneself, independently of God. For this very reason, if this potency posited in the human being is roused [*aufgerichtet*] again to the actual B, it is not the original [B], which underlies creation, but rather it is the already spiritual B, the B that has already been converted and

brought back to A, that rises up *with* the spirituality that it owes to the previous process. But this [principle], by its very nature, can only be the God-positing [principle]: by raising itself up again [*Wiedererhebung*] it immediately becomes subject again to a new process, by which it is brought back to its original relation, that is, it is converted again into the God-positing [principle]. This process, which should be identified as theogonic, *can only* be the repetition of the *original* process, by which the human being became the God-positing [being]. The beginning and the occasion – [and] further, the middle-term as well as the goal of this process – therefore, the potencies of *this* theogonic process <123> in general, are absolutely those of the previous movement, the universal theogonic movement. Only here God is no longer *initium* (no longer the Author), it is a *natural* movement. And this second movement, this movement in consciousness, differs from the first and universal movement only in that the same principle follows the same path leading to the human, to the positing of God (the two things are one, [the principle] is only human insofar as it is God-positing, and vice versa): only that it follows *as such* this path leading to the human [being], to the God-positing being, and *after* it has already become a principle of human consciousness. It follows that this whole process, although in itself a *real* one, i.e. independent of human freedom and thinking – and therefore objective – only unfolds *in* consciousness, not outside of it, i.e. only through the production of *representations*<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> If our opinion were that the human being, driven by a powerful, but obscure, undeveloped concept in him, seeks God; that he can only advance by degrees, from object to object, as if, one after the other, the scales fell from his eyes; and that he cannot ultimately think God except as being outside and above all things, above the world and as pure Spirit – if this or something similar was the meaning of our explanation (psychological explanations of this kind, as one knows, are capable of infinite variations), then we could hope to be understood and perhaps even to be applauded. At most, we would be blamed for the affected character of the expression, namely that we have described this progress as a subjective theogony. But that is not our opinion. The movement that produces mythology is subjective to the extent that it takes place in consciousness, but consciousness itself has no hold over it. Powers independent of consciousness itself (at least for now) produce and maintain the movement. The movement, therefore, is objective in consciousness itself.

I hope that the following remark will shed some light on what has just been said.

The *prius* of nature that we have sufficiently described here, this being now only accepted as exclusive, is *as such* other than [*außer*] God, it is extra-divine. Exclusivity is indeed the opposite of the *divine* nature. God is that which excludes nothing, he is the All-One. God – is, to be sure, the one who has the ability to want immediately or to *be* immediately, which is the same, but in himself, he is not this <124> exclusively, and not this as such; [it is] not as 1, but only as 1 + 2 + 3, as the Uni-Total – that he is God. For this very reason he is not God in the will when it emerges for itself or *in* exclusion; this exclusionary will is therefore outside of [*außer*] God. We have accepted, however, [the hypothesis] that this will only emerged in its exclusion in order to be brought back into that relation, where, instead of excluding the other potencies, it becomes, through its own *non-being*, their subject, their support, *their* seat and *their* throne. This overcoming or reversal could now be understood as if the will, after it had been posited again *in* God himself, ceased to be extra-divine. But the very first unity would then only be posited again, and we would be back where we started. This, however, cannot be believed. The exclusionary will *remains* in itself what it was in the beginning, something extra-divine, something that is relatively outside of God. Indeed, God takes nothing back: what he did once remains done. The will, therefore, does not cease, in the process, to be something external in relation to God. The intention is for it to be brought back into inwardness (namely, its own) *in* this externality or *as* an extra-divine [will]. It *should* remain extra-divine and, *in* this extra-divinity, once again be divine – to take it back entirely would be *against* the first intention, since then nothing would be produced. By remaining, however, *in* its extra-divinity, but being brought back, *in* the latter, to divinity (namely, to inwardness, to *non-exclusivity*), a [being] distinct from God (*aliquid praeter Deum*) is produced,

[a being] that is still = God, both extra-divine and divine: it is the (original) human being, who, in fact, is only the externally produced, created God, the God that is the product of a process [gewordene], the God in creaturely form. But precisely because that exclusionary will, because B does not actually go *back* to God – for this reason it remains *in* the essence of the human being *as* a possibility, as a potency, which would not be possible if God had taken it back. What is *now* posited and what you have to consider as the object <125> of further consideration is that A, which contains B as a potency, is a completely new concept. With regard to *God*, even though, considered from *one* of his sides, he is that which could have been B, one cannot say of him, however, that he contains B as a *potency*: he was *lord* over being and not being B, just as I am lord over moving or not moving my arm; B did not reside in him as a possibility, in the way that disease does not reside in healthy people as a potency, as a possibility. In the human being, by contrast, B is posited as a potency, as a possibility that he can set in motion again. Indeed, the human being is nothing other than the [being] of nature possessing itself. The possessor is = to A (what is produced in him); that which it possesses itself as (*subjectum*) is B, which has been brought back *ad potentiam*. He possesses only *as* a potency in order to keep it in the state of potency. Nevertheless, as its possessor, he can set it in motion again – to pull it out of its rest. (We have already seen that he is *free*, that is, that he is capable of acting independently.) But the essence of the human being is so connatural with that of God that it cannot move itself without God himself moving toward it. By raising itself up again [*Wiedererhebung*], B immediately excludes from itself the potency that ought to have been realized in overcoming it, in overcoming B ( $A^2$  – because I have already shown that  $A^2$  cannot be realized by passing *a potentia ad actum in itself*, but only by passing, in reverse, *ab actu ad potentiam* out of itself. By bringing B *ab actu ad potentiam* and thereby becoming *actus purus*, it is realized *in* this B that is now placed in a state of potentiality; the latter, as it were, is the material

of its realization). At once, therefore, the newly upraised B excludes A<sup>2</sup> – but indirectly also A<sup>3</sup> (the highest potency): we have here again the same tension of the potencies as in the original *universio*; only now posited merely in *consciousness*, i.e. we have once again all the factors of a theogonic process, but only of one that takes place in consciousness.

The power or force [*Macht oder Gewalt*] that holds human <126> consciousness in this movement cannot be contingent – nor can it be a mere contingent *knowledge* of God. – Just as little can its own will hold it in this movement. We have every reason to assume that it would readily escape this movement if it could. Only its *essence*, which is independent of it, and which precedes it in the being [*Seyn*] that it currently assumes – only its *essence*, therefore, can keep it in this movement. That which is deepest in the (original) human being is the God-positing [principle], but only *in itself* – not in act, but in non-act. It is the God-positing [principle] without any effort on its part, without any movement of its own – not that it could become itself conscious of the movement that made it the God-positing [principle]. It is only consciousness at the *end* of the whole path that it has led, as it were, through the stages of creation. In this respect, it must be said that – in order to become conscious of this *path*, to cover this whole path with consciousness *itself* – in order, therefore, to be this ultimate consciousness of God – which he is *by his very nature*, as it were, *without* his own self, without any action of his own, without any merit – to be [this] *with* consciousness, one could say that, to this end, it had to tear itself away from its original connaturality with God, and that, to *this* end, the God-positing potency had to come out again of this relationship. In doing so, it placed itself in opposition to the *universal* theogonic movement, which we have shown in creation. But the force of the universal movement that *requires* the human *being* [*Wesen*] as its true end, as its own stopping point, this force of the universal movement leads the human being, despite his reluctance, to itself, and subjects him to a process whose end is that



he, as the [being] who inherently posits God, is also realized for himself. The whole process that follows can therefore be considered as the transition from that merely essential monotheism, which is connatural, as it were, with the *essence* of the human being, to the freely recognized monotheism. In this view, polytheism, as a transitional phenomenon, takes on a different meaning <127>, and receives a different justification in relation to the universal plan of Providence, than it does in that other hypothesis, which explains it as the result of a dislocation that leads to nothing [and] that does not serve as a transition to anything – a dislocation – useless and without any rhyme or reason – of a monotheism that is described as original, but which is presented only as a doctrine, as a system, i.e. as something contingent.

All of this justifies the explanation we have given of mythology as the product of a process in which human consciousness is involved in the first transition to actual being [*Wirklichkeit*], a process that is only the repetition of a universal theogonic movement, and which only distinguishes itself from the latter, not, to be sure, in the principle itself, but because the very same principle *as* a principle of human consciousness, or after becoming a principle of human consciousness – therefore, at a *higher* stage – goes through the same path toward the human [being], toward the positing of God, as that which it had gone through in creation at an earlier stage. Consequently, although this process is real and objective in its *principle* or its *ground* – as well as in its causes – it only takes place *in* consciousness, that is, it first makes itself known only through changes in this consciousness, which behave as representations<sup>67</sup>.

We find ourselves here led to consider psychology, the psychic side of mythological

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<sup>67</sup> Since what repeats itself in the theogonic process is the process of creation, it is not surprising to us beforehand that mythology offers so many relations to nature. Also beforehand, it is evident that by presenting the process that produces mythology, we will obtain at the same time a philosophy of nature, but in some sense in a higher reflection. The relation that mythological representations have with nature is itself a natural one and does not need to be explained by the hypothesis according to which mythology would have been invented in prehistoric times by some kind of philosopher-natural scientists.

representations. In this regard, and to conclude this investigation, I will put forward the following propositions, before we move on to mythology itself.

1) Mythological representations behave in general as pure *inner* emanations [*Ausgeburten*] of human consciousness. They <128> cannot come to man from outside, he cannot be aware of them as having been brought to him merely from outside (for example, as Hermann thinks, by transmission of doctrine). If they had been brought to consciousness only from outside, then this consciousness (which, incidentally, according to the usual hypotheses, is assumed to be completely similar and identical to our present one) would not have behaved towards these representations any differently than we do, i.e. it would have been just as little able to admit them as our consciousness admits and accepts them. Man had to be aware of these representations as being produced in him with irresistible force. They could only have arisen and grown *with* consciousness after it had been posited outside itself. Therefore, they could not have

2) appeared as products of any particular *activity*, for example, imagination [*Phantasie*], etc., but only as products of consciousness itself in its substance. Only in this way can we understand their substantiality, their connaturality with consciousness, this inseparability with it which alone explains how a millennial struggle, which in some parts of humanity has not yet ended, and which was associated with atrocities of all kinds, was needed to extirpate them from consciousness *with* their roots. From the beginning, polytheistic representations have been interwoven with consciousness, and in a way that representations that are the product of the most prudent reasoning and of a knowledge aware of its own reasons can never be. Nor can they

3) be considered as the creations of consciousness in its pure essentiality or substantiality. Rather, they can *only* be considered as the creations of the substantial consciousness that has come *out* of its essentiality, *that is, insofar as it outside itself* and given to an involuntary process.

Further, although they are the creations of human consciousness, they nevertheless are not

4) its products insofar as it is human consciousness, but on the contrary, *insofar* as the principle of human consciousness came out of the relation in which it alone <129> is the ground of *human* consciousness, namely from the relation of rest, of pure essentiality or potentiality. They are products of the human consciousness that has *come out* of its ground, and which is only brought back *through* this process into the relation where it actually is human consciousness. To this extent, mythological representations can or must be considered the products of a relatively *pre-human* consciousness – namely as products of human consciousness (as well as of substantial consciousness) inasmuch as it has been restored to its pre-human relation. In the sense we have defined, one can compare mythological representations to the formations and productions of pre-human times of the earth, as Alexander von Humboldt has done – I will not venture to determine in which sense exactly (I doubt he wanted to allude to the monstrosity of both). I cannot help but remark here how fundamentally misleading it is to have mythology personify objects in actual nature. The ideas of mythology go beyond nature and the present state of nature. In the process that produced mythology, human consciousness finds itself again at the time of the struggle that had found its goal with the advent of *human* consciousness, in the creation of man. Mythological representations arise directly from the fact that the past that is already vanquished [*besiegte*] in external nature re-appears in consciousness, that the principle that is already subjugated in nature again takes hold of consciousness itself. Far from being, in the production of mythological representations, *in* nature, man is rather outside the latter, in some sense removed [*entrückt*] from nature, and fallen prey to a force that, in relation to the existing nature (which has come to a standstill, come to rest), or in comparison with it, must be called a supernatural or extra-natural force. This genesis of mythological representations finally allows us to understand

5) first of all, what no other mode of formation could understand: <130> how these representations could have appeared to a humanity that is filled with and caught in them [*in ihnen befangen*] as *objectively*-true and *real*. At first, negatively, since it could not have been conscious of these representations as stemming from itself, as freely produced by it: they were, in fact, the products of a principle that had become objective for man – a principle transgressing the relation in which it is the ground of *human* consciousness – and which only in the end posits human consciousness in its restored subjectivity.

But they also had to appear positively as objectively-true, because the *ground* that produces these representations is the *objectively* or *inherently* [*an sich*] theogonic principle. This is the reason why consciousness experiences its own movement as a movement of God. This is the only way to explain the reality that we must concede to the belief in gods. As long as we do not make it clear how the believer in gods himself must have been convinced of the reality of these representations in way that is free of all doubt, we may well try to explain this or that phenomenon, but without ever actually understanding it and properly grasping its ground [*ergründen*]. Mythology was not a work or an invention of man – it is based on the immediate presence of actual theogonic principles; it is the struggle of original, *inherently* theogonic forces that produces the mythological representations in human consciousness. If, for this reason, someone perhaps felt entitled to believe that mythology was brought about by some kind of suggestion, of inspiration, I would have no objection if what one understands by that is not a divine, but a non-divine inspiration. Indeed, if it is set into motion again in man and comes out of its silence, to this extent, the theogonic ground is not to be called divine. It becomes both divine and human only at the moment of its restoration, where it withdraws into its original mystery<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Consciousness also is originally only posited as divine; only in this sense is it divine. Since it is merely posited [as divine], the possibility remains in it of becoming non-divine again.

<131> There could well be others who believed that the presupposition of such a process in the consciousness of human beings is irreconcilable with divine Providence, just as one also finds it necessary to excuse and justify God for the many things in nature that evoke repulsion and, in part, horror. It should be noted, however, that the movement that produces mythology is involuntary in its unfolding, and even appears to have in some sense an inevitable origin (in the same way that the emergence of the human being from God, in general, appears in some kind of way – namely, taken in its natural sense – as inevitable). Regardless of this, the first beginning and the first occasion of this movement is only an autonomous [*eigen*] act of consciousness, even if it subsequently unfathomable, even for [consciousness itself]. – Thus, we are led to the actual beginning of the *theogonic* movement, i.e. the movement that produces mythology, and with it, we stand at the beginning of a real philosophy of mythology.

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## German to English Glossary

<i>Ableitung, die</i>	deduction
<i>ableiten</i>	to deduce, to derive
<i>abstracte von</i>	without taking account of
<i>Abgesonderte</i>	apart
<i>Absonderung, die</i>	isolation
<i>Actualitäten, die</i>	actualities
<i>Actus, der</i>	act
<i>allgemeine Materie, die</i>	universal matter
<i>All-Eine</i>	All-One
<i>all-einen</i>	uni-total
<i>All-Einheit, die</i>	all-unity
<i>All-Einige</i>	uni-total
<i>in Actus</i>	in act
<i>in Allgemein</i>	in general
<i>An-sich</i>	in-oneself
<i>Anderheit, die</i>	alterity
<i>Anders-gewordenseyn</i>	becoming-other
<i>Anlaß, der</i>	occasion
<i>annehmen</i>	to adopt, to assume, to accept
<i>anziehen</i>	to attract, to put on
<i>Armuth, die</i>	indigence, poverty
<i>Attribute, die</i>	attributes
<i>aufheben</i>	to negate, to cancel
<i>Aufhebung, die</i>	negation, suppression, suspension
<i>aufnehmen</i>	to absorb
<i>aufrichten</i>	to erect, to raise
<i>Aufsteigen</i>	elevation
<i>ausdrückliche</i>	explicit
<i>Auseinandergehen</i>	dislocation
<i>Auseinandersetzung, die</i>	discussion, examination
<i>Ausführung, die</i>	implementation
<i>Ausgeburt, die</i>	emanations
<i>Ausgehen, das</i>	decline
<i>Aussage, die</i>	statemen, declaration
<i>ausschließliche Wille, der</i>	the exclusionary will
<i>aussprechen</i>	to expound
<i>außer</i>	outside of, other than
<i>Außergöttlichkeit, die</i>	extra-divinity
<i>außer Gott Seyende, das</i>	that which is outside of God
<i>außer-sich-Seyns</i>	being-outside-of-oneself
<i>äußern</i>	manifest, express
<i>befähigen</i>	enables

<i>Begrenzende</i>	limiting
<i>Begriff, der</i>	concept
<i>Begründung, die</i>	grounding
<i>bei-sich-Bleiben, das</i>	abiding-with-oneself, the
<i>Bei-sich-seyn</i>	Being-with-oneself
<i>bestehen</i>	subsist
<i>bestimmen</i>	define, determine
<i>Bestimmende</i>	limiting
<i>bestimmte</i>	determinate
<i>bewußtloser</i>	un-self-conscious
<i>Bloßheit, die</i>	denudation
<i>conträre</i>	opposing
<i>daseyend</i>	existing
<i>Darstellung, die</i>	presentation, exposition
<i>Denkart, die</i>	way of thinking
<i>Dogma, die</i>	doctrine, dogma
<i>dreieinig</i>	one and trine
<i>durchscheinen</i>	to show through
<i>Eigenschaft, die</i>	attribute
<i>eigentlich</i>	proper, actual
<i>Eigentlichkeit, die</i>	authenticity
<i>Einer, der</i>	One, the One [God]
<i>einzig</i>	single
<i>Einzig, der</i>	the Single
<i>Einzigkeit, die</i>	unicity
<i>Enthaltung, die</i>	abstention
<i>entsetzen</i>	dis-place
<i>entstehen</i>	to be formed, to be created, to emerge
<i>Entstehung, die</i>	genesis, emergence
<i>Entstehungsweise, die</i>	emergence
<i>entstellte</i>	distorted
<i>Erdichtung, die</i>	invention
<i>Ergründung, die</i>	explanation
<i>Erhebung, die</i>	elevation, surge
<i>erheben</i>	to rise, to ascend
<i>erkannten</i>	recognized
<i>erzeugen</i>	to beget, to produce
<i>Erzeugnis, das</i>	product
<i>Erzeugung, die</i>	generation
<i>Existierendes</i>	existent
<i>Exspiration</i>	expiration
<i>esoterisch</i>	esoteric
<i>Feststellung, die</i>	foundation
<i>Fortgang, der</i>	progression
<i>Fülle, die</i>	plenitude
<i>Gattungsbegriff, der</i>	generic concept

<i>Gefühl, das</i>	feeling
<i>Gegensatz, der</i>	antithesis
<i>Geheimniß, das</i>	secrecy
<i>gehemmt</i>	inhibited
<i>Gemachtes, das</i>	contrived
<i>Genesis, die</i>	genesis
<i>Genüge, das</i>	Sufficient
<i>Gestalt, die</i>	figure
<i>Gewalt, die</i>	strength, force
<i>gewöhnlich</i>	customary, usual
<i>Gewordenes, das</i>	product
<i>Gottheit, die</i>	divinity, the
<i>Gott-seyn, das</i>	divinity
<i>gleich</i>	similarly
<i>Grund, das</i>	ground, foundation
<i>Grundlage, die</i>	foundation, basis
<i>heraus-kehren</i>	extra-verted
<i>Herr des Seyns, der</i>	Lord of Being
<i>hervorbringen</i>	to bring about
<i>Hervorbringung, die</i>	creation
<i>hervortreten</i>	to appear, to emerge
<i>Hineinwendung, die</i>	intro-version
<i>innerlich</i>	inward
<i>inhaltlosen</i>	lacking in content
<i>in-sich-Seyns</i>	being-in-itself
<i>Innerlichkeit, die</i>	inwardness
<i>Innestehende, Innestehen</i>	in-standing, insistence, being in equilibrium
<i>Können, das</i>	potentiality, ability, power
<i>lautere</i>	lucid, pure
<i>Lauterkeit, die</i>	lucidity, pure state
<i>Lehre, der</i>	doctrine, teaching, dogma
<i>Macht, die</i>	power
<i>Mangel, der</i>	lack
<i>Materie, die</i>	matter
<i>Mehrere</i>	plural
<i>Mehrheit, die</i>	plurality
<i>mitteilen</i>	to communicate, to transmit
<i>nächsten Stoff, der</i>	primary material
<i>nachweisen</i>	to demonstrate, to prove
<i>negieren</i>	to deny
<i>nicht seyend</i>	non-being
<i>nicht Seyende, das</i>	that which is not, non-being
<i>nicht seyn Sollende, das</i>	that which ought not to be
<i>nicht-selbst-Seyn</i>	non-egoity
<i>Objektseyn, das</i>	Being-object
<i>Polytheismus, die</i>	polytheism



<i>Potentialität</i>	potentiality
<i>Potenz, die</i>	potency
<i>Potenz-Seyn, das</i>	potential being
<i>real</i>	real
<i>rein Seyende, das</i>	sheer being, pure being
<i>rein Thatsächliche, die</i>	pure factuality
<i>restriktiver</i>	restrictive
<i>Satz, der</i>	proposition, sentence
<i>Schrankenlosigkeit, die</i>	illimitation
<i>Schwankende</i>	hesitation, wavering
<i>selbstbewußter</i>	self-conscious
<i>Selbstbewußtseyn, das</i>	self-consciousness
<i>Selbstheit, die</i>	selfhood
<i>selbstisch</i>	self'ed
<i>Selbstlose</i>	selfless
<i>Selbstlosigkeit, die</i>	selflessness
<i>seyend</i>	being
<i>Seyende, das</i>	that which is
<i>Seyende selbst, das</i>	Being itself, the one that is
<i>Seyn, das</i>	Being
<i>Seyn, ein</i>	being
<i>seyn könnende</i>	potential, potentially
<i>Seynkönnen, das</i>	the potential to be, the ability to be
<i>Seynkönnende, das</i>	that which can be, the ability to be
<i>seyn Sollend, das</i>	that which ought to be, that which should be
<i>sich ungleich werden</i>	become unequal to one another
<i>sich-selbst-Aufgeben</i>	self-renunciation
<i>sich selbst nicht wissenden Seyn</i>	non-self-knowing being
<i>sich wieder bewegt</i>	set into motion again
<i>statuieren</i>	establish
<i>Steigerung, die</i>	intensification
<i>Stoff, der</i>	material, material being
<i>Subjektheit, die</i>	subjecthood
<i>suspendirte</i>	suspended
<i>That, der</i>	act
<i>Thatsächliche, die</i>	factuality
<i>Theismus, der</i>	theism
<i>unmittelbar</i>	immediate, directly
<i>übereinzig</i>	supra-unique
<i>Überfluß, der</i>	abundance
<i>überhaupt</i>	at all
<i>Uebernatürliche, der</i>	the Supra-natural
<i>Ueberschwegliche, das</i>	the exuberant being
<i>überschreiten</i>	to transgress
<i>überschwenglich</i>	exuberant, overabundant
<i>überzugehen</i>	to transit

unbewegliche  
 überwundene  
 Uebergang, der  
 Ueberseyende, das  
 überwinden  
 Unauflösliche, das  
 Unbegrenzte, der  
 Unbestimmte, das  
 unbestimmt  
 Ungereimtheit, die  
 Unitarier, die  
 unmittelbar  
 umgekehrte  
 umgewendete  
 Umkehrung, die  
 Umstellung, die  
 umwandeln  
 Unterordnung, die  
 Untersuchung, die  
 unterworfen  
 unüberwindlich  
 Unverständlichkeit, die  
 unvordenkliche  
 unzerreißbarer  
 unzertrennliche  
 Urheber, der  
 Verborgenheit, die  
 verhalten  
 Verhältnis, das  
 verkehrte  
 Verkettung, die  
 Verkleidung, die  
 Vernunftreligion, die  
 verpflichtet  
 versagen, sich  
 Versicherung, die  
 Verstand, der  
 verstellte  
 versetzen  
 Verwachsenheit, die  
 verwandeln  
 verwirklichen  
 Vielgötterei, die  
 Vielheit, die  
 Voraussetzung, die  
 vorhandene

motionless, immovable  
 dominated, overcome  
 transition, passage  
 supra-being  
 to overcome  
 indissolubility  
 unlimited  
 undetermined  
 indeterminate  
 absurdity  
 unitarians  
 immediately, directly  
 reversed, inverted  
 inside out  
 reversal  
 permutation  
 to convert  
 subordination  
 investigation  
 subject to  
 insurmountable, insuperable  
 incomprehensibility  
 immemorial  
 untearable  
 inseparable  
 Author  
 hiddenness  
 to behave  
 relationship, relation  
 inverted  
 chain  
 disguises  
 rational religion  
 bound to  
 refuse to give oneself to  
 declaration, affirmation  
 intelligence, reason  
 disguised  
 displaced  
 connaturality  
 convert  
 actualized, realized  
 polylatry  
 multiplicity  
 condition  
 given, already existing

<i>wahres</i>	true
<i>Weise, die</i>	mode
<i>Wesen, die</i>	essence, being
<i>wesentlich</i>	essential
<i>wiederbringen</i>	bring back, return
<i>Wiedererhebung, die</i>	to raise oneself up again
<i>Wille, der</i>	will
<i>wirken</i>	to operate
<i>wirkend</i>	operative
<i>Wirkende, das</i>	the agent
<i>wirklich</i>	actual, real
<i>Wirklichkeit, die</i>	actual being, reality
<i>Willkür, die</i>	free choice
<i>Wirkung, die</i>	action, effect
<i>Wollen</i>	will, wanting, act of will
<i>zu Grunde legen</i>	to have as its basis, underlying
<i>zu Stande kommen</i>	come into being
<i>zum Stehen kommen</i>	come to a standstill
<i>zufällig</i>	accidental, contingent
<i>zugegeben</i>	accepted
<i>zugestandener</i>	admitted
<i>zurückbringen</i>	bring back
<i>zurückgehen</i>	go back, derive
<i>zurücktreten</i>	to withdraw
<i>zurückversetzen</i>	to restore
<i>zurückwenden</i>	overturn, turn back, brought back to itself
<i>Zusammenwirkung, die</i>	cooperation
<i>Zweck</i>	aim, goal, purpose

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See DS.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. SW XIV, 7. The method used HCI and of M is described as “analytical,” and connects with the “positive philosophy.” The negative/positive distinction, which becomes prominent Berlin, has not been yet been thematized here. The *Historical-Critical Introduction* is not the “negative philosophy,” although its methodology can be partly described as negative to the extent, as Schelling writes in Lecture 1, that “through the elimination and sublation of all other views (and thus generally speaking in a negative way),” the Philosophy of Mythology is grounded (HCI 11; SW XI, 8). The explanation of mythology therefore makes presuppositions that “can be judged entirely independent of philosophy.” This is a “critique—which by itself does not yet bring along a viewpoint prescribed and, so to say, dictated by philosophy.” By comparing the presuppositions of “every single type of explanation” of mythology “with that which in itself is thinkable or believed, or even with the historically knowable,” the presuppositions themselves “are forced to prove themselves as possible or impossible, each according to how they agree with one or the other or stand in contradiction to it.” This method is at least ostensibly empirical. It is also historical to the extent that it involves a “*historical dialectic*” which accesses a “very dark pre-antiquity” in order to establish the objectivity of mythology itself (HCI 11; SW XI, 9). This method is explicitly not philosophical: “a *philosophical* investigation is in general every investigation that proceeds beyond the mere fact (here the *existence* of mythology) and inquires about the nature, the *essence* of mythology—while the merely scholarly of *historical* research is content to find and state the mythological facts” (HCI 8; SW XI, 5). This preliminary “grounding” (*Begründung*) of mythology establishes the possibility of the actual Philosophy of Mythology (HCI 8; SW XI, 5).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Now, let us assume—in consequence of that which admittedly is not yet understood philosophically but is proved factually through our explanation of successive polytheism—let us assume that God is as much a *multiplicity* according to his own forms of existence as he is *One* according to his divine Self or essence, and then it is understood on what the successiveness of polytheism rests and toward which it aims. None of those forms is for itself equal to God, but if they form into a unity in consciousness, then this emerged unity, as one that *has become*, is also a monotheism attained knowingly, by consciousness” (HCI 132; SW XI, 189–190).

<sup>4</sup> “Ueber das Alter kyklopischer Bauwerke in Griechenland” (SW IX, 336–352).

<sup>5</sup> “Ueber die arabischen Namen des Dionysios” (SW IX, 328–335).

<sup>6</sup> “Ueber eine Stelle im Homerischen Hymnus an Demeter” (SW IX, 324–327).

<sup>7</sup> “On the Significance of One of the Newly Discovered Wall Paintings at Pompei” (PR 345–354; SW XII, 675–685).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. “La Philosophie se mesure par l’expérience : nul système n’est le vrai, s’il ne comprend et n’explique la réalité toute entière. Ainsi nul vrai progrès pour la Philosophie que dans l’expérience et par l’expérience. Le vrai progrès est toujours dans les suites : non qu’il s’agisse toujours de découvrir un fait nouveau ; souvent c’est plutôt un nouvel organe pour voir les faits, de nouveaux aspects ; un jour plus clair, une meilleure expérience” (PMSe 2).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. PMSe 2–3. Cf. “Reelle Fortschritte, von bloßen formellen Verbesserungen wohl zu unterscheiden hat die Philosophie nicht anders gemacht als in Folge einer erweiterten Erfahrung, nicht immer daß neue Thatsachen sich hervorgethan haben, sondern daß man genötigt wurde in den bekannte etwas anderes zu sehen als bisher gewohnt war” (PMRoSc 203). Schelling may be referring here to the passage in the *Critique of Judgement* in which Kant describes the rational idea of freedom as a fact: “Further, things or qualities of things that are capable of being verified by experience, whether it be one’s own personal experience or that of others (supported by evidence), are in the same way matters of fact.—But there is this notable point, that one idea of reason, strange to say, is to be found among the matters of fact—an idea which does not of itself admit of any presentation in intuition, or, consequently, of any theoretical proof of its possibility. The idea in question is that of *freedom*. Its reality is the reality of a particular kind of causality (the concept of which would be

transcendent if considered theoretically), and as a causality of that kind it admits of verification by means of practical laws of pure reason and in the actual actions that take place in obedience to them, and, consequently, in experience.—It is the only one of all the ideas of pure reason whose object is a matter of fact and must be included among the *scibilia*” (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, ed. Nicholas Walker [OUP, 2007], 297 <Akademieausgabe, vol. V, p. 468, lines 20–30>).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. PMRoSc 205.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. “Un observateur attentif se convaincra incessamment que la Philosophie repose toujours sur des faits. Chaque système en a saisi quelques-uns et en rend raison. Nul philosophe n’a réussi à se séparer de toute expérience. Mais le nombre et la valeur des faits d’expérience expliqués par chaque système détermine son importance et lui assigne son rang. Quant aux faits demeurés en dehors du cercle d’explications qu’il embrasse, on leur échappe en les laissant à dessein dans l’obscurité ou en les altérant par une exposition fausse et superficielle. Ce n’est au reste guères en moyen de plaire à son époque que de présenter quelques-uns de ces faits destructeurs des idées systématiques dans lesquelles elle se complait. Chacun mesure le prix de sa pensée aux efforts qu’elle lui a coûtés ; et plus elle a été péniblement arrachée, plus il a fallu d’efforts et de tortures pour lui donner une apparence de conséquence et de solidité, plus il y tient. – Les sciences naturelles fournissent un exemple récent de cette peine qu’un fait nouveau trouve à pénétrer dans les esprit où il ne peut être accueilli qu’aux dépens de vues adoptées. Les découvertes géologiques devant lesquelles le Neptunisme est tombé eurent grand peine à se frayer un chemin, malgré leur évidence. – Goethe lui-même, versé dans ces matières, refusa longtemps de les admettre et alla même jusqu’à écrire qu’on pourrait bien donner à ces faits une explication différente. Les faits étaient clairs, cependant, aussi bien pénétrèrent-ils, avec leurs conséquences, car en dernier résultat on ne peut ni renverser les faits, ni les nier, ni refuser de s’y soumettre soi-même” (PMSe 3–4). Cf. “On peut affirmer que *la philosophie d’un temps est le système d’une certaine somme de faits, qui en font la base*. Les fait en dehors de cette somme sont ignorés, et si on les met en relief à côté de ces systèmes écoulés, il se réfutent eux-mêmes. Goethe eut lui-même bien de la peine à accepter les nouvelles théories géognostiques” (PMAm 66).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. “Die Welt ist im Ganzen noch immer diejenige, die ihr vor 30 Jahren gezeigt worden” (PMRoSc 205).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. SysWA 171; GPP 318.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 227, on the power to be, posited absolutely, as the possibility of its own being, as *transitive*.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. POPa 172.

<sup>16</sup> Schelling probably derives this expression from J. d’Alembert. See X. Tilliette, *Une philosophie en devenir*, vol. 2, 203 n. 90; SysWA 111.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 208: “Denn einer solchen unmittelbaren *potentia existendi* ist es vielmehr *natürlich* sich in das Seyn zu erheben.”

<sup>18</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 205: “Zu diesem Begriff des Wollens sind wir schon darum berechtigt, weil jedes Können eigentlich nur ein ruhender Wille ist, sowie jedes Wollen nur ein wirkend gewordenes Können.”

<sup>19</sup> Cf. “Daß alles *auß* Gott sey, hat man von jeher gleichsam gefühlt, ja man kann sagen: eben dieses sey das wahre Urgefühl der Menschheit” (SW XIII, 280). Cf. “der Gedanke der Alleinigkeit ist ein ewiger Gedanke, daß alles was ist, aus Gott ist und insofern eine extendirte Substanz, durch Gott und in (zu) Gott ist: *Dies ist der wahre Grundgedanke aller wahren Religion*” (SysWA 195).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 209: “Das unmittelbar Seynkönnende außer *sich*, d.h. außer seinem Können, gesetzt, ist also das seiner selbst Ohnmächtige, Vernunftslose, τὸ ἐξιστάμενον, das durch eine falsche Ekstasis außer sich Gesetzte und in diesem schlechten Sinn Existirende.”

<sup>21</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 258: “In der That ohne Anfang und Ende seyn ist nur Unvollkommenheit, nicht, wie man sich vorstellt, Vollkommenheit. Eine Geisteswerk z. B., das weder Anfang noch Ende hat, ist gewiß ein unvollkommenes. Das Vollkommene ist das in sich Geendete, und zwar das nach allen Richtungen Geendete, sowohl indem es einen wahren Anfang, als indem es ein vollkommenes Ende hat. Wenn daher die Theologen unter die höchsten Vollkommenheiten Gottes diese setzen, daß er ohne Anfang und Ende sey, so darf dieß nicht als eine absolute Negation verstanden werden. Der *wahre* Sinn (wie ich schon in einem früheren Vortrag bemerkt habe) kann nur dieser seyn, daß Gott ohne Anfang seines Anfang und ohne

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Ende seines Endes sey, daß sein Anfang selbst nicht angefangen habe, und sein Ende nicht ende, d.h. nicht aufhöre Ende zu seyn, daß jener ein ewiger Anfang, dieses ein ewiges Ende sey. So ist also der Geist in seinem bloßen an-sich-Seyn der ewige Anfang, der Geist in seinem als-solcher-Seyn das ewige Ende seiner selbst, und nur dadurch, daß er der Anfang uns das Ende ist, der vollkommene Geist.”

<sup>22</sup> Cf. SysWA 109; SW XIII, 232.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 228.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 244. The “immediate principles of being” are said to “mediate between empirical being and the *supreme* cause.” These concepts enable us to determine an “objective connection” between God and the world.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 281. Cf. “One must not forget that God is everything only to the extent that he runs through everything, and not insofar as he is something. For it is precisely because he goes through everything that he is everything; he is everything to the extent that he is nothing in particular. <...> Wherever I situate myself in the interminable series of finite things, I never find God himself, but only traces of his passage. According to an ancient maxim, there is nothing that God is, and nothing that he is not. I cannot therefore say that he is b, but neither that he is not b, because he is a + b + c + d...” (EP 73).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 282.

<sup>27</sup> On the perfect spirit as the uni-total spirit, and the difference between the abstract one and the living totality, SW XIII, 260.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. “Was aber die Drei-einigkeit betrifft, so nehme ich gar keinen Anstand daß ich diesen Begriff für nichts anderes als für den wahren Begriff des Monotheism ansehen; freilich nicht wie Spinoza, Parmenides und die Eleaten den Monothism verstehen, denn es giebt nur Einen Monotheism indem ja der dreieinige Gott nichts ist als das bestimmte Begriff des all-einigen Gottes” (SysWA 146). Cf. also: “Spinoza war so wenig ein Eleatiker als sein Scholastiker” (SysWA 194).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. “Spinoza knows that powerful equilibrium of the primordial powers which he opposes to one another as extended (therefore surely originally contracting?) primordial power and thinking (surely, by virtue of the antithesis, extending, outspreading?) primordial power. But he knows only the equilibrium, not the strife arising from their equipollence; the two powers are in inactivity beside each other, without mutual excitement or enhancement [‘Steigerung’]. Therefore the duality is lost in favor of unity. His substance, or the common essence of the two powers, persists therefore in eternal, immovable, inactive sameness... Instead of having to treat mainly of the living strife between the unity and the duality of the two so-called attributes and substance, he concerned himself only with the two opposites, and, to be sure, with each for itself, without speaking of the unity as an active, vital bond of the two. Hence the deficiency in his system with regard to life and development” (AW3 230).

<sup>30</sup> In the *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling describes the Trinity as “the highest and most sublime monotheism” (SW XIV, 66).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 280.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 280.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. SW XIII, 284.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. “[Gott] ist der wahre *all-einige* Gott, weil jene 3 Potenzen des wahren All alles deßen was außer Gott möglich ist. Diese 3 Potenzen sind eine abgeschlossene Totalität, sie sind das Universum, d.h. *ein rein geistiges universum*, den das concrete Universum ist erst ein Erzeugniß des Proceßes in welche sie gesetzt sind” (SysWA 145).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. this passage from the “Munich Introduction” of 1827-28: “Der Gedanke daß der Weltproceß als ein Geheimniß Gottes betrachtet wird, wo die Absicht eine andere ist als im ersten Blicke gezeigt wird, ist so weit entfernt Gottes unwürdig zu sein, daß der ganze Geschichte und der Weltproceß und selbst das Christentum ohne diese Geheimnis unverständlich ist. Das Christentum beruht auf der Ausführung eines von den Weltzeiten her verschwiegenen Planes; die Erscheinung Christi in der Weltgeschichte ist die Erfüllung dieses Planes. Der Schlüssel zur Weltgeschichte ist die von Anfang verdeckte und durch Christus offenbar gewordene göttliche Oeconomie. κατ' οὐκονομίαν etwas thun, heißt: etwas mit einer gewissen Verstellung thun, also etwas anders thun als man beabsichtigt; wie nämlich auch der h[eilige] Chrysostomus sagt: daß Gott διὰ τὸν ἐναντίων seine Absichten ausdrücke. Eben in dieser Möglichkeit ein anders zu zeigen

und zu wollen, zeigt sich die an nichts gebundene Freiheit Gottes. In den Psalmen [Ps 115:3] heißt es: Unser Gott wohnt im Himmel (Himmel ist die wahre Freiheit, was er mag das thut er und das ist gerecht. – *Der Mensch fiel dadurch daß er eben so wie Gott sein wollte*. Wie nun Gott seiner göttlichen Natur nach eine ewige Versöhnung beabsichtige, und nur Eine Versöhnung die ganze Schöpfung ist, so hebt dies die göttliche Freiheit nicht auf, denn dies hindert ihn nicht das Feuer seines Zorns ausbrechen zu lassen. Dem Verkehrten ist Gott auch verkehrt, er ist Gott-los, also ohne Gott auf der Welt, wer ihm entgegen wandelt, dem ist auch er entgegen. Auch gegen den Gottergebenen (Hiob) kann er sich verwandeln um ihn zu prüfen. Und dieser Begriff der göttlichen Prüfung ist in allen Religionen, nicht blos in der christlichen, er zeigt an daß Gott etwas anders zeige als er wirklich thue. Nur dadurch kann Gott den Ernst des ihm Ergebenen prüfen, wenn er ihm nicht seine Versöhnung, sondern seine strafende Hand zeigt. Nicht umsonst werden wir auch aufgefordert klug zu werden, daß wir nicht durch den Schein des Weltlaufes uns irre führen lassen. Wenn vor unseren Augen eine irdische Größe bis zum höchsten Gipfel sich aufgethürmt und nun auf einmal wieder verschwindet, so ist das die erhabene Ironie der göttlichen Weltregierung und auch der Blöße erkennt hier wol den Plan Gottes daß die Gedanken und der Sinn vieler Menschen offenbar und der Verstand daß der Verständigen zu Schanden werde. Wäre es also der Analogie der Wege Gottes gemäß, daß schon die erste That Gottes so war, daß er das, was er nach freiem Entschluß wollte, durch das Gegentheil offenbarte, so hat dieser Begriff einer göttlichen Oeconomie in der Weltschöpfung nichts Bedenkliches und Schwieriges” (SysWA 143–144). On the world as the Revelation of God *per contrarium* and the notion of divine dissimulation, cf. EP 110–116. On the ability of God to disguise (*verstellen*) himself, cf. SW XIII, 264.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. “Polytheism kann nur aus dem zerstörten Monotheism hervorgehen; der Begriff des Monotheism enthält die Möglichkeit, aber nur die subjective Möglichkeit des Polytheism – diese Möglichkeit ist nemlich nur für das Bewußtsein in seiner eigenen Auflösung und Zerstörung. Wenn uns diese Wahrheit eine Schlüssel darbietet, der den Sinn und den Ursprung des Heidenthums aufschließen kann, so erklärt diese Unterscheidung Gottes in den *Gott in sich* (den esoterischen) und den *Gott außer sich* (den exoterischen) manches räthselhafte und dunkle der wahren Religion” (SysWA 145).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. “...Gott ist der Wille der diese Potenzen in Spannung setzt und zusammenhält. *Das Ganze ist nur Ein Act*. Also *Gott ist diese geistige Einheit die in der Nichteinheit fortbesteht*. Daher sagten auch die Scholastiker: Deus est unitas non superadditae essentiae, unissima unitate unus. Die Potenzen in dieser Entgegensetzung sind nicht Deus; eben so wenig aber sind sie Dinge; sie sind also *rein göttliche Mächte*; sie sind nicht schlechthin nicht Gott, denn Gott hat sich in diesen erzeugt. Sie sind die Elohim während Gott im immanenten Sinne dem übergöttlichen Gott Jehova des A.T. entspricht. Denn der Wille, der nicht selbst in die Spannung mit eingeht, sondern Ursache der Spannung, außer der Spannung ist, ist der geistige, aller Substantialität ledigste; und er ist nicht ein Viertes außer den Potenzen, *sondern er ist in ihnen, ohne sie selbst zu sein*; der Alles in Allem wirkt, wie der Apostel sagt <...>” (SysWA 144–145).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. “...in dem *Alleinigen* ist der Keim des Polytheism zu denken, wo die Götter wirkliche Götter sind. Dieser Polytheism kann nur aus dem zerstörten Monotheism hervorgehen; der Begriff des Monotheism enthält die Möglichkeit, aber nur die subjective Möglichkeit des Polytheism – diese Möglichkeit ist nemlich nur für das Bewußtsein in seiner eigenen Auflösung und Zerstörung” (SysWA 145).

<sup>39</sup> On the uni-total being as remaining “in the dissociation of the potencies,” cf. SW XIII, 269.

<sup>40</sup> On the perfect spirit as solitary cf. SW XIII, 261.

<sup>41</sup> The old German saying: “Den lieben Gott einen guten Mann sein lassen” means “to let things take their course” or “to take things as they come.”

<sup>42</sup> Cf. “Wenn uns diese Wahrheit eine Schlüssel darbietet, der den Sinn und den Ursprung des Heidenthums aufschließen kann, so erklärt diese Unterscheidung Gottes in den *Gott in sich* (den esoterischen) und den *Gott außer sich* (den exoterischen) manches räthselhafte und dunkle der wahren Religion. Wenn man diese Worte figürlich nehmen will, so sind sie in diesem Sinne figürlich al man sagen kann, daß Gott in seinem Entschluß sich selbst figürlich gemacht hat. Die Potenzen lassen selbst eine doppelte Ansicht zu; einerseits sind sie gespannt und dann a<sup>1</sup> in beständiger nothwendiger Einheit und Streben diese substanzielle Einheit zu erzeugen. In dieser Einheit sind sie der figürliche Gott und Figürlichkeit in objectiver Bedeutung

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genommen. Dieses Äußere Gottes will erkannt sein was es ist. Es kann also einen doppelten Atheism geben” (SysWA 145).

<sup>43</sup> In *Physics*, Book II, Ch. 3, Aristotle distinguishes four causes or explanatory factors that can be given in to the question of why an entity changes. He discusses the Pythagoreans in *Metaphysics*, Book I.

<sup>44</sup> Ps. 33:9: ”For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast” (KJV). In the Luther Bible: “Denn so er spricht, so geschieht’s; so er gebeut, so stehet’s da.”

<sup>45</sup> The first cause is described as “Voranfang” in EP 121. For other instances of the use of the phrase “voranfangende Ursache” cf. UPO 216 and 263.

<sup>46</sup> The determinations of the causes in this paragraph are applied to the three Persons of the Trinity in SW XIII, 341–342. “Mit dieser Ansicht des inneren Verhältnisses der *drei* Personen bei der Schöpfung stimmt ganz überein, was schon Basilius d[er] G[roße] mit Rücksicht wahrscheinlich auf die früher erwähnte Aristotelische oder vielmehr schon Pythagoreische Eintheilung der Ursachen in die *causa materialis*, *formalis*, und *finalis* über den dieses Verhältniß geurtheilt hat: der Vater sey in der Schöpfung die αἰτία προκαταρκτική Ursache, was ebenso viel ist als, er gebe den Stoff dazu her, der Sohn die αἰτία δημιουργική, die eigentlich schaffende, wirkende Ursache, der Geist die αἰτία τελειωτική, die vollendende. In der Schrift sind jene Unterschiede, die in dem Schöpfer nothwendig gedacht werden müssen, aufs bestimmteste ausgesprochen, und namentlich zeigt die beständig sich gleichbleibende Versicherung, *durch* den Sohn sey alles geschaffen, *durch* ihn sey die Welt gemacht, die innige Beziehung, in welcher die Lehre von der Schöpfung mit der Lehre von dem Vater und Sohn steht.” (SW 13, 342). Schelling seems to be referring to Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, XVI [*The Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and the Son in any way, whether it be in the creation of perceptible objects, the ordering of human affairs, or the coming judgment*], 38, l. 19–20, esp. this passage: “The communion of the Spirit with the Father and the Son may be understood by considering the creation of the angels. The pure, spiritual, and transcendent powers are called holy, because they have received holiness from the grace of the Holy Spirit. The historian has described for us only the creation of visible things and passes over the creation of the bodiless hosts in silence. But from visible things we are able to construct analogies of invisible things, and so we glorify the Maker in whom all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities, or any other reason-endowed nature whose name we do not know. When you consider creation I advise you to first think of Him who is the first cause of everything that exists: namely, the Father, and then of the Son, who is the creator, and then the Holy Spirit, the perfecter. **So the ministering spirits exist by the will of the Father, are brought into being by the work of the Son, and are perfected by the presence of the Spirit, since angels are perfected by perseverance in holiness.** And let no one accuse me of saying that there are three unoriginate persons, or that the work of the Son is imperfect. The Originator of all things is One: He creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit. The Father’s work is in no way imperfect, since He accomplishes all in all, nor is the Son’s work deficient if it is not complete by the Spirit. The Father creates through His will alone and does not *need* the Son, yet chooses to work through the Son. Likewise the Son works as the Father’s likeness, and needs no other cooperation, but He chooses to have His work completed through the Spirit” (St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* [Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980], 61–62). Schelling’s source for St Basil’s was probably Johann Kaspar Schweizer [Joh. Caspari Suiceri], *Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus, e Patribus Græcis ordine alphabetico* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Amsterdam: R. & J Wetstenios & Gul. Smith, 1728], 149. Cf. also: “Die wahre Ursache des Werdens ist jene dritten Potenz, welche wir eben darum, wenn wir die erste Voranfang, die zweite Hervorbringende, δημιουργική, die Vollende τελειωτική αἰτία nennen können” (EP 121).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. “Zwar auch nach unserer Darstellung entsteht die Welt durch einen göttlich gesetzten Proceß, aber durhc einen Proceß, in den Gott selbst nicht eingeht, da er vielmehr als Ursache außer ihr bleibt, erhaben über jene schon erwähnte Trias von Ursachen, als *absolute* Ursache, als *causa causarum*, wie er auch schon von den Pythagoreern bestimmt wurde” (SW XIII, 292). Cf. POPa 487. The “cause of causes” or “*causa causarum*” is a concept found in Scholasticism and early modern philosophy – Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scots, and Francis Bacon make use of it. However, Schelling probably derived the concept from the commentary of Simplicius’ on Epictetus’ Enchiridion, Ch. 31, Lemma xxxviii [Simplicius, *On Epictetus Handbook* 27 - 53, trans. Tad Brennan & Charles Brittain (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 74–75]. The



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relevant passage is cited in L'Abbé Felicité De La Mennais, *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion*, tome 3 (Paris : Librairie classique-élémentaire, 1823), 260. Schelling was a reader of Lamennais.

<sup>48</sup> The effort to reconcile the scientific and theistic explanations of the world has been a central and explicit aim of Schelling's philosophizing since at least the *Memorial to Jacobi*. Cf. "The ongoing dispute between the prevailing theism, on the one hand, and naturalism, pantheism, and other systems, on the other, made it much more evident and sufficiently clear that scientific theism has still not been found, or, if it has been found, that it has still not been recognized. For, scientific theism can just as little leave an object outside itself as God himself can, and just as God allows Nature and the World to be, without worrying about them for his existence, so also real theology cannot come into conflict with Nature, not suppress any system whatsoever. It must rather reconcile everything in the same way God reconciles everything and, according to some, will in the most distant future bring all his works back to himself, and that even Satan himself will appear before the throne of the Eternal to submit with all his horde to Him. Even the most hardened scientific atheist will then drop to his knees before true theism, if only it were to appear in its fullness" (SW VIII, 55).

<sup>49</sup> For the principles as ἀρχαί and as the main object of philosophical research since the beginning of Greek philosophy, cf. SW XIII, 243–244.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. "Man kann sagen: im Denken sind nur zwei Begriffe, wir haben reine ursprünglicheren Begriffe als Subjekt und Objekt; aber ich kann Subjekt und Objekt nicht unmittelbar (im ersten Denken) als Eins setzen, denn beide verhalten sich als Nicht-Seyn und Seyn, – ich kann zuerst und unmittelbar nur Subjekt (– A) setzen, dazu nöthigt mich das *principium contradictionis*, aber ich kann – A schon nur unter der Voraussetzung setzen, das + A ihm folge (+ A verhält sich als *ratio determinans* von – A, dieses Verhältnis von + A zu – A gibt dem Leibnizischen *principio rationis sufficientis* seine spekulative Bedeutung); und ebenso, wenn ich – A und + A gesetzt, muß ich nach dem Grundsatz des ausgeschlossenen Dritten, der hier seine metaphysische Bedeutung hat, ± A setzen" (SW X, 305–306). In the next paragraph, Schelling refers to this as the "organism of reason" [*Vernunft-Organismus*].

<sup>51</sup> Cf. "In the assumption of being or of life on the part of the highest, the same sequence again occurs which took place among the principles in eternal nature... We can therefore also consider this sequence of revelation as a succession of potencies through which being passes to its perfection. Indeed, it will be necessary from now on to make the following distinction. The powers in being, in so far as they have ceased excluding each other and have become expressible, have also ceased being potencies, and we shall therefore in the future call them principles... To be sure, the harmony between the objective and subjective life of a being cannot in general be extraordinary. What a being is within or according to being ['Sein'], that it must also be manifestly or according to what [it] is ['Seienden']. The same powers which in simultaneity make up the being's inner reality ['Dasein']—these... manifesting themselves in a sequence, are again the potencies of the being's life or becoming; they are what determines the periods or epochs of its development" (AW3 197–199). Cf. "The absolute spirit must contain all the potencies of the being that requires explanation, but it will not contain them immediately as *potencies* of this being, but as determinations of itself, of its own being; it is only through mediation that they can be presented as potencies of the being that is different from it. They are contained in it as determinations that are not transitive, but immanent, not externally-oriented (in the direction of a possible being to come), but internally-oriented, and, consequently, not as other than itself, but as *Itself*" (SW XIII, 250).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. mainly Aristotle, *Met.* 1088b; also: *Physics* III.1–2 (201<sup>a</sup>10–11); *De Interpretatione*, ch. 13, line 25.

<sup>53</sup> Allusion to Hegel.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Quint, Eckharts Pred. 2, 24, 7 (E. 13./A. 14. Jh.): der tac [...] der enist in êwicheit niht verrer dan disiu stunde, dâ ich iezuo inne stân. Bibliographie: [Meister Eckharts Predigten. Hrsg. und übersetzt v. Josef Quint. Erster; Zweiter Band. Stuttgart 1958; 1971 (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 1; 2). Zitierweise: Band, Seite, Zeile] or [Pr 38, DW II, S. 232,8–233,3]. Cf. also Franz von Baader, *Sämmtliche Werke* I (Leipzig: Hermann Bethmann, 1851), 275.

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